

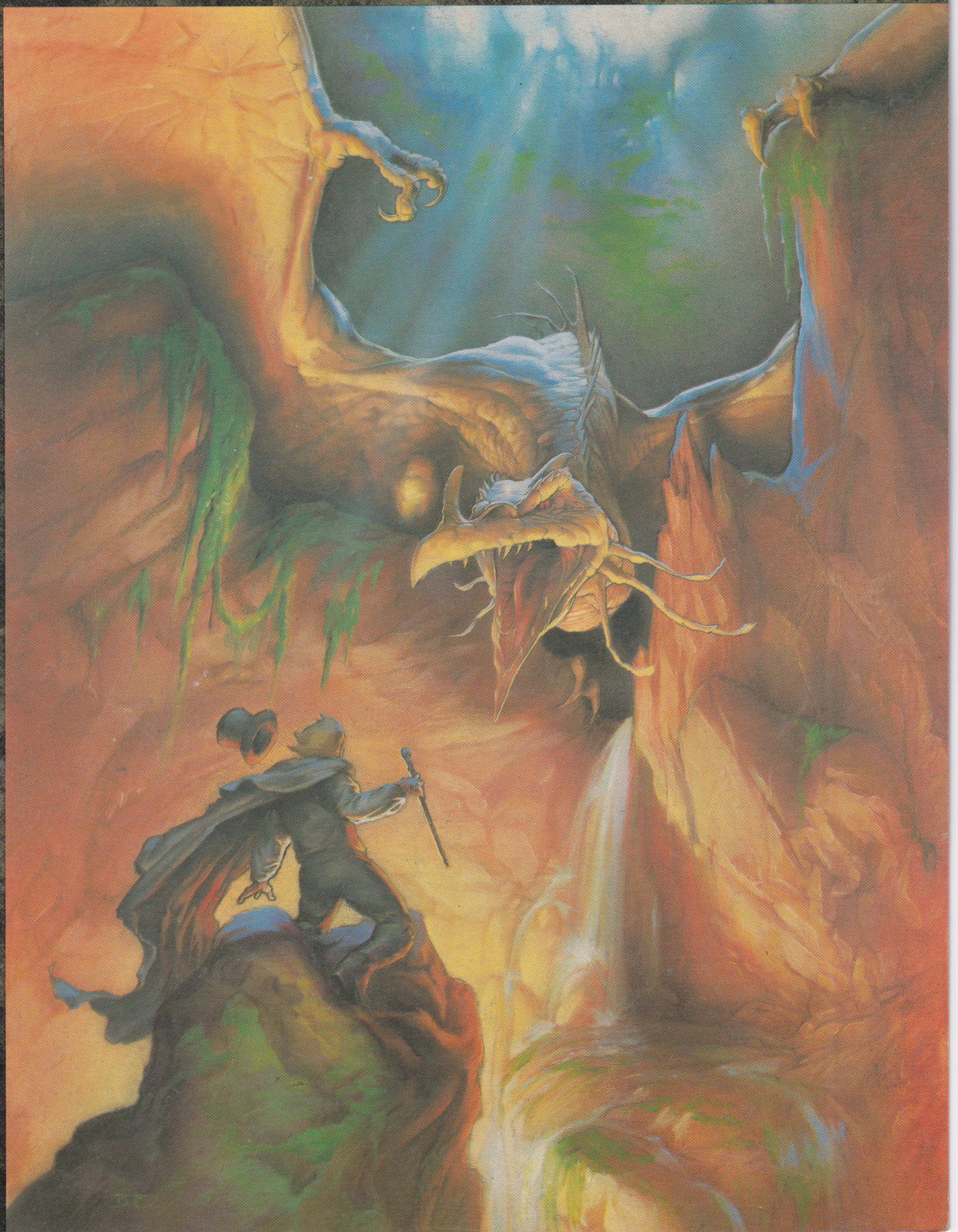
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14

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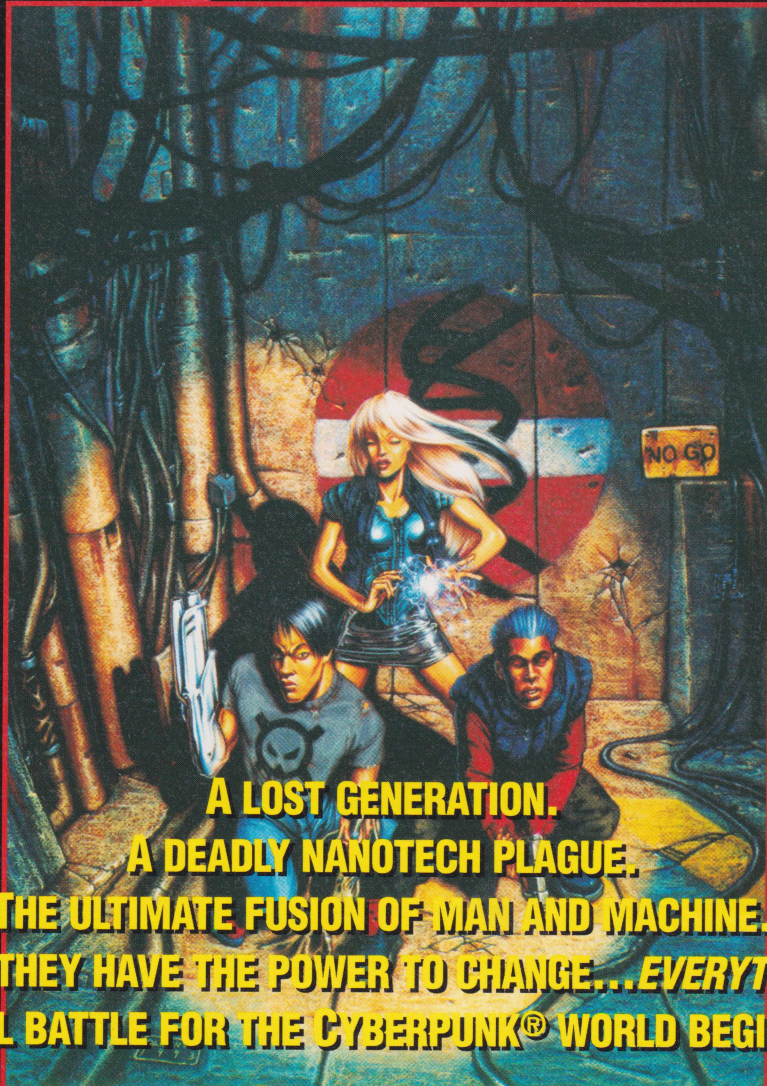
REALMS

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Australian Realms

Issue 14, November/December 1993

The Australian Magazine of Role Playing

Special Feature

THE 1993 AUSTRALIAN GUIDE TO PLAY-BY-MAIL

DICE ARE DEAD SPECIAL	Sixteen pages of PBM, covering the best games available in the country.	19
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Features

LONELY CHILD	A fantasy scenario for AD&D, D&D and WFRP. By <i>Colin Taber</i>	6
BARSAIVE	An excerpt from FASA's upcoming Earthdawn campaign set. By <i>Greg Gorden & Lou Prosperi</i>	10
PIECEMEAL	Rules for piecemeal armour in AD&D's Dark Sun . By <i>Seng Ann Mah</i>	13
CYBERPETS	Chrome creatures for Cyberpunk . By <i>Paul Mitting</i>	16
THE NAMORODO	The Australian Clan for Vampire . By <i>Marianne Payne</i>	36
EVORA	The Unae bandwagon charges onward to Prabesk Medina - Evora. By <i>Andrew Daniels, Colin Taber and Adam Whitt</i>	38
THE RED LINE OF REALITY	Shadowrun : Common sense security. By <i>Malcolm Adler</i>	43
FACING THE CONSEQUENCES	Tips for referees with unruly characters. By <i>Alan Ogden</i>	44

Columns & Departments

EDITORIAL	Ads, sex & chips.	2
LETTERS	Reader feedback.	2
REVIEWS	Cyberpunk , Shadowrun , Battletech and more.	3
MECHWARRIOR BREWER	Battletech returns.	47
ANALYTICAL ENGINE	Book reviews.	48
ADVENTURES OF THE A-TEAM	The first tale comes to a conclusion.	50
NEWS	The latest word on the newest releases.	52

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Editorial Letters

Three issues: ads, sex & chips.

One, advertising.

Some readers have expressed concern that the amount of advertising in *Realms* is on the increase. It is, but so is the size of the magazine as a direct consequence of this fabulous support from the gaming industry. Rest assured that the ratio of ads to articles has been kept constant from the start. Each new ad page means 3 more article pages. That is why we've grown from 32 to 52 pages without a price hike. If we were to do away with ads the cover price of this issue would be \$9.95! Besides, from the response our advertisers have been getting it appears a lot of you find the ads very useful.

Two, sex.

More correctly, sexism. Karen Ogden's article last issue, "A Woman's Scorn" has struck a nerve. We've had a lot of mail congratulating Karen and condemning the sexist attitudes people believe are rife in rpgs and the community. Sexism is a bad attitude. It exists in rpgs because to a large degree games are based in reality, and we gamers, like everyone else, live in an imperfect world. But we don't have to accept that situation. Through roleplaying we have the perfect opportunity to explore the motives and attitudes that drive our society and to adjust our values and those around us. We need to learn from our roleplaying experiences and take these fresh perspectives into our everyday lives. That way we can all take positive steps to changing negative sexist attitudes.

Three, computer rpgs.

We get a lot of mail from readers who either love or hate computer rpgs. Although I agree they are not true 'role playing games', I do believe they have their place. The term 'rpg' has expanded to define a lot more than the traditional across-the-table games we know and love. With Solo, Live, Freeform, Computer, Online and PBM 'rpgs' we are seeing the blossoming of many industries around the core concept of roleplaying. This has to be a good thing for the hobby as more and more people become attracted to it.

Nick Leaning.

Matthew Wilcox
Nundah, QLD

Dear Nick,

Congratulations for producing what is definitely Australia's best RPG magazine, one that outputs articles of a very high quality and substance. This being as it may, I would like to voice a few thoughts that I have on the subjects concerned in your magazine.

One thing makes me tense, agitated, and violent in my latter years [is] the persistence of computer games being labelled as RPGs. The worst offender is (dare I say it...) SSI - these people have gathered the statistics from D&D and wiped away all the "useless" roleplaying stuff, which seems to slow down the game, and presented us with a "really" atmospheric jumble of statistics. It is falsities like this that really put a pall over the image of RPGs in the public's eye. Even games like *Ultima 7* (bless it!) are not true roleplaying games and should not be called such.

Another matter that I wish to comment on is the good work that White Wolf has done for the hobby. They have de-emphasised rules and are breaking all the stuffy moulds that D&D has created. Their material is mature, intelligent and extremely enjoyable (including the Vampire material in *Realms*). Keep including Vampire (Werewolf, Mage etc.) stuff in this magazine and I will continue to skip, happily down to my local newsagent and buy "Australian *Realms*" with Glee...

Matthew, thank you for the generous praise. I have taken up your point on computer RPGs in the Editorial. As for D&D's 'stuffy moulds' let us not forget which game broke the ground, popularised the hobby and in no small way made the third generation of rpgs such as White Wolf's 'storyteller' games possible!

For fans of Vampire there is a Marianne Payne's second Australian setting article this issue and we will publish some material for Mage in issue 15.

Andrew Wright
Eden Hills, SA

Dear *Realms* Staff,

I first wrote to your magazine a year ago about submitting material but due to travel, study and various personal crises, I never got around to sending anything. However, I've (only) just got my hands on the latest couple of issues and I was immediately blown away by the

Unae campaign (especially after reading the 'explanatory' article on Unae in my friend's copy of *Gargoyle 2*) because of its depth and atmosphere. More importantly, its good to see other people are also interested in the 'low magic' style of fantasy campaign which make a refreshing change from the self-gratification frenzy that is the *Forgotten Realms*... Anyway, I was wondering about the possibility of contributing to even a minute corner of the Unae world, as it looks to have an exciting future. Lastly, is there anyway I can get my hands on *Gargoyle 1* and *2*? P.S. The A-Team is better as a comic.

Andrew, Gargoyle is a Subscribers Only fanzine. To get it you have to join up with a Subscription. Parts of the article you mentioned will see print in Realms when we give readers an update on what has been happening in Unae, the Realms campaign world.

Unae is generating a lot of interest and many of you requested the A3 map we gave away last issue. Some of these are still available if you'd like to send us an SSAE. When you have your map, and are using the campaign material we have been printing please keep a diary of events in your game and send them in to Realms. That way the adventures of our readers will contribute to the history and future direction of the Unae world. See the News Page for an update on the A-Team book.

Kerry Morellini
Dawes Point, NSW

Dear Nick,

I have been buying your excellent magazine since issue 8 but have one complaint, it is so hard to find on the newsstands. Why don't you send it to the games shops in Sydney, they would put it near the counter and I'd be able to find it every time.

Anyway, keep up the good job, and tell Karen Ogden I agree with every word in "A Woman's Scorn" - there would be a lot more woman in playing rpgs if it wasn't for the guy's silly fantasies.

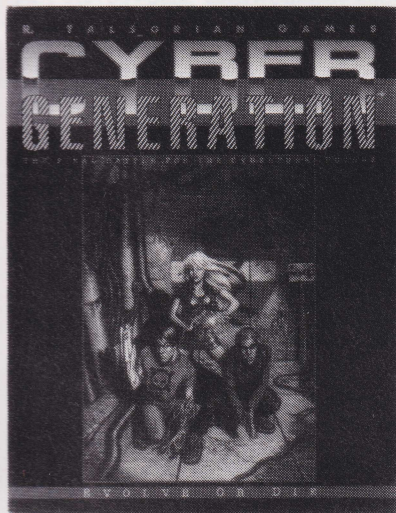
Kerry, the newsagents often don't know where to display Realms, it gets moved around from issue to issue. Your best option is to ask your newsagent to set aside a copy of the magazine. We'd love to stock games shops in Sydney, perhaps you could ask them why they don't! All they need do is contact our distributor (see the Contents Page for details).

Reviews

CYBERGENERATION

Role Playing Game
by R.Talsorian Games

Reviewed by Adam Whitt



Cybergeneration is a class act.
But will it work?

The creators of **Cyberpunk**, Mr. Pondsmith and company are asking you diehard 'punks out there to drop the guns, unplug the chips, trash your deck and start to **ROLE PLAY**.

Cybergeneration is a complete restatement of the **Cyberpunk** system, it has evolved out of that game as a streamlined version designed to encourage role play over gun slinging, atmosphere over noise. The game designers have kitted up a whole new range of roles - *yogangers* and mutated street kids - to make the game feel and play different from its parent system. In their own words, this is a more cinematic, fast paced game with less rules and more action, more fun.

This is perhaps what **Cyberpunk** should have been from the start when it first beat **Shadowrun** to the punch. Somewhere the game went off on a techno-worship tangent, losing sight of its roots in what has to be one of the most fascinating and disturbing visions of the near future in modern fantasy.

So where *does Cybergeneration* take us?

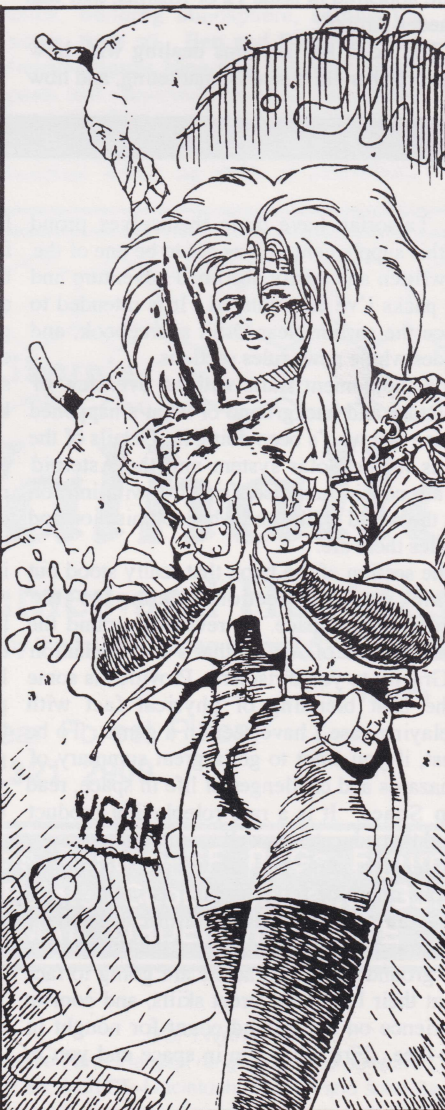
The year is 2027AD and the Corps have pretty much sewn up all the action on the streets. The cyberpunks of yesteryear are mostly working for the man these days. The streets are quieter, more controlled, or so the authorities of ISA would have you believe. The children of the burnt out cyberpunks have inherited these streets, and they, like all new generations, have rebelled against the counterculture of their chromed parents. They saw their 'parents sell their souls for a few chunks of cyberware and a box of Kibble'. And they don't like it. The juvegangers of AD2027 are not wired - but they do want to change the world. Young,

rebellious and mutated (see below) the kids of 2027AD are a hunted breed. This is where the players come in.

This is one rule book where the rules take a back seat. The opening is set out as a story which the referee relates to his players; in a series of short interlinked episodes the players discover and grow their characters by roleplaying rather than roll up a few stats and flesh 'em out if they can be bothered as happens in so many other games.

You start out as a kid on the cold, wet streets, running from a CorpSec (Security Police) dragnet with only a shadowy solo (Morgan) to guide you to a safe house. From there the book sets out to teach both players and referee the game system in storyboard format; guiding you through decisions on character design with the constant focus being role play and atmosphere rather than rule play and power gaming.

Then you begin to get sick. You see, something real bad has happened. A terrible mutating disease has swept the streets, the Carbon Plague. All people over 20 who contract it are destined to die an excruciating death. People under 20, that is all the player



characters, can survive the plague, but not unchanged. The disease is a nanotech virus that alters the molecular structure of the victim and transforms their body so that they have amazing powers (almost like *magic* you might say!). These powers replicate much of what could be done in **Cyberpunk** with 'wares, but are less powerful (for now).

Adult ISA does not like infected kids with 'superhuman' powers roaming the streets so they're rounding them up and relocating them in various installations (none of which are a holiday camp). This is why you are on the run. Just about everyone is out to get you. Because you are a kid you do not have the skills, resources and hardware to deal with adversity that your parents did; you have to live by your wits and a few minor powers in a hostile world - this is the roleplaying challenge of **Cybergeneration**.

You belong to a gang - there are 17 to choose from ranging from 'Leave It To Beaver' BeaverBrats, through 'Weird Scientist' Tinker Tots to suicidal 'undead' Goths. And if you get changed by the Plague (very likely) you're going to be 'blessed' with powers ranging from the body sculpting Tinman to the Virtuality Wizard. All of these role types are kinda crazy, but seem to work and do encourage inventive play over resorting to tech and guns to resolve difficult situations.

The combat system (*Saturday Night Skuffle*) also reflects the shift in focus to atmosphere and story telling. It is a pared down version *Firefight* which runs much faster so you can get on with the story.

Many other things have changed in the year 2027AD. Technology has advanced. Smart Guns have become Genius Guns (guided projectile), Microfactories now manufacture goods direct from a catalogue while you wait, and the Net so dear to the Decker of 2020 has become Virtuality, accessible to everyone. Virtuality is where cyberspace overlays real space and the two interact. Objects in Virtuality are seen by all with the tech to do so, and can be manipulated as if they were real. Now data has a 3D form that you can see, pick up or talk to. Just go to the filing cabinet, drag the file and read it. The only limit to what can *exist* in Virtuality is the human imagination.

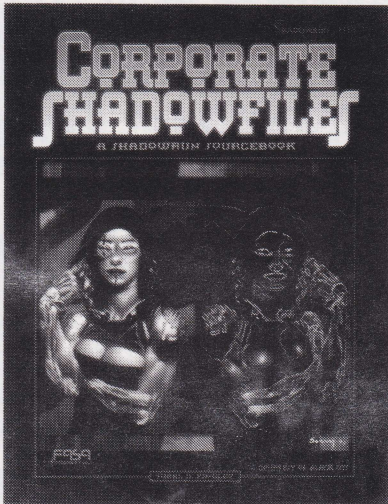
One of the problems of **Cyberpunk** was organising a coherent campaign when every plotline seemed to be - get a job, break through the security, ice a few corp flunkies, grab the stash, run for cover. **Cybergeneration** has solved this in the short term; you know your purpose - evade capture, join up with the Edge (a loose organisation of faded cyberpunks - [read old farts]), and try to build a future. The next challenge for the game designers and referees who adopt this precocious child is "What shape that future?".

Cybergeneration is a good new game. The book reads great, with plenty of graphic wizardry and vibrant text. Give it a try.

CORPORATE SHADOWFILES

Shadowrun Sourcebook
by FASA

Reviewed by Colin Taber



Corporate Shadowfiles is a release I personally had no fixed feelings about when I first read about it on a release schedule. Sure, it sounds useful, but it also sounds like a potential bore; generally speaking business, especially in corporate boardrooms, is a dry, efficient and colourless world. By simple definition not an ideal place for role playing games.

That view has been somewhat changed after reading this sourcebook, the end result looks good, and is good. I'll even stretch my vocabulary on this one and say *great*. This release does what a lot of other dark-future-type products have failed to do, that is bring some depth to the Megacorp villains of near future game worlds. Sure, books have said *this* and *that* before, but they've never explained why or shown how corps are bad, they've just said that they are, marking them all as cliches.

Modern Mordors.

Corporate Shadowfiles changes this, it explains how megacorps came about and also details the extent of their powers. This is one of those books that tells you what you *need* to know instead of *what* you already know.

The product comes in at well over 120 pages and has a 32 glossy colour section at the back profiling the eight biggest megacorps (one profile appeared in issue 12 of *Realms*, that was of Saeder-Krupp).

The book has sections dealing with how megacorps handle business, marketing, and how

they control of the world of 2055. The book also covers competition, takeovers, the Zurich Orbital, the Corporate Court and perhaps most importantly corporate war. All of this information is smattered with *shadowtalk* which provides some worthwhile hooks and suggestions. **Shadowfiles** also covers the historical and contemporary angles that are relevant to the topics covered. Well thought out and executed, this material is quality stuff.

In short, I simply cannot recommend this highly enough. The book looks good, feels good and has enough detailed information to make it stand out. If you are a Shadowrun gamer and feel that you could do with some extra depth to your campaign I strongly suggest you make this purchase.



DEEP SPACE

Cyberpunk sourcebook
by R. Talsorian Games

Reviewed by Paul Mitting



R. Talsorian have done themselves proud with this supplement. It has got to be one of the best written and easily absorbed adventure and rules packs I've encountered. It is intended to replace the earlier *Near Orbit* sourcebook, and includes whole news rules sections.

The supplement starts with an overview of the history and background of what's happened in space and who's been doing it. Details of the planets in the Solar system and the Asteroid Belt are concise and user friendly, with info on what the world is like and what colonisation and facilities there are.

One section of the book that really stood out for me was the section relating to the environment in space. It revolves around the so-called Triad of ARG - that's Air, Radiation and Gravity to you dirtsiders. Provided is some of the best blending of physical fact with roleplaying ease I have seen in a game. To be honest, if you want to get a great summary of the hazards and challenges of life in space, read **Deep Space**. It is a rare roleplaying product indeed that educates as well as entertains!

Extensive stats and drawings accompany sections on space travel (which as yet does not include an interstellar drive), artificial habitats, combat and equipment. One of the difficulties your ground based characters are going to face is that their hard won street skills, and combat experience on the ground count for nought in Zero-Gee. Fire a big gun in space and you're

likely to slam into the bulkhead behind you from the recoil whilst the slug punctures the bulkhead opposite - then the real trouble starts as the air and everything in it (you too, bucko) gets sucked out into the freezing cold vacuum of space. Guns are illegal on space transports - solos are advised to leave them at home and bring a knife.

The rules for ship combat and movement are again a marvellous blend of realism and playability. One word on ship combat - the ships are VERY expensive so think twice before you plug one. You may have to pay for it later.

Scenario-wise, the book provides very lengthy and intensive campaign set on one of the Mars colonies. Not as violent as *Total Recall*, but then that's left a lot up to your players. The scenario read's well, but it is a long term adventure (you're characters are going to be out in space for at least 3 years!) so you may want to consider some satellite busting for shorter term fun.

Overall, I can wholeheartedly endorse **Deep Space**. It's loaded with good common sense rules, reliable information, interesting adventure hooks aplenty, neat illustrations and is well written to boot.

If you want to get your Cyberpunk game into some real high adventure, buy this sucker now!

INVESTIGATOR'S COMPANION FOR THE 1920's

Call of Cthulhu Accessory
by Chaosium Inc.

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

This useful tome is subtitled *Volume 1: Equipment & Resources*, so I guess it is part of a series. The *Investigator's Companion* is targeted at 1920's Cthulhu players who need to know more about the USA of that era. Reading through the 'Chronology of the Roaring 20's' section you come to realise just what a hectic period it was; a time of change after the debacle of the War to End All Wars. The 20's saw the arrival of jazz, liberated women (suffrage was gained in 1920), Mae West, Lon Chaney and the Marx brothers, the Great Gatsby and Lindburgh's flight across the Atlantic.

This book gives you a wonderful feel for the excitement, exploration and newfound freedom America experienced as it really began to flex it's industrial muscle. The inventors delivered more and more consumer goods to a prosperous population; the radio and movies captured the popular imagination and in the shadier background, the rise of gangsters, gang wars and the FBI splashed the newspapers with violence. This book has enough interest to keep any investigator busy never mind the Mythos!

DRAGONLANCE THE PLAYER'S GUIDE

By TSR

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

It was almost unheard of. Women game designers. Then along came Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weis and jointly they developed Krynn, the most successful campaign setting up to that time, and the *Dragonlance* saga was born.

That was 10 years ago!

Now that 10 years have passed, there is a plethora of *Dragonlance* material available, and no doubt TSR are seeking a new audience to join the legions who have already met the pesky kender, the scruffy gully dwarves, the noble knights of Solamnia and fought with exploding draconians. To this end TSR have produced a very user friendly book in *The Player's Guide*. In one very readable tome (no game mechanics or statistics in sight!) is all the background information you need to enter and make sense of the world of Krynn - descriptions of the lands, people, gods, legends and history. A very generous helping plus four lovely short stories in 128 pages. And all illustrated with colour plates, very nice line and shaded drawings and some Karen Wynn Fonstad maps; the *Player's Guide* adds up to a worthy product.

MAGE

Role Playing Game

by White Wolf

Reviewed by Colin Taber

This third game in the *Storyteller Series* of games focuses on modern magic in White Wolf's *World Darkness*.

Mage comes a 300+ page soft back book with a typical storyteller cover. The art and layout inside is good and generally well thought out, though it does suffer from a lack of colour which has become standard for most new games. Visually it seems the White Wolf design studio has come of age with this latest release.

Those of you who are familiar with *Vampire* and *Werewolf* will not find any real surprises with the basic mechanics of *Mage*. They work, are fairly well executed and playable. To this end the game succeeds.

What makes *Mage* different is its background. Here new depth is added to the *World of Darkness*, one which sees magic unveiled as the real power. In this world a war is being waged between the various practitioners of magic, currently the Technomancers are winning.

This is a game of modern magic and a game that works well with it's brothers in the *Storyteller* line.

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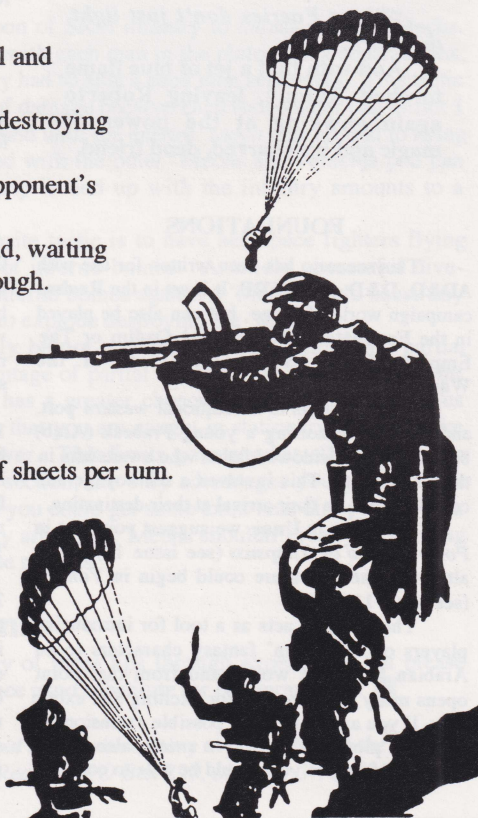
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Lonely Child

A Low Experience Fantasy Adventure By Colin Taber

The two men stood still, transfixed by the ball of light that floated above them. The third man stood impatiently, the globe illuminating the town house's dark loft with amber tinted energies.

"Alaman's father has been kidnapped, and all you two can do is stare, mesmerised by my petty magics. What is wrong with you man? This is not your Heletian League, this is Evora."

"How does it work? Is it safe?"

"You damn fool. It is as common as dirt here, and you better get used to it. If you stop to gawk at every faerie light you see conjured you shall surely die before you realise that not all magics were made to entertain children."

The two men made signs of warding and averted their eyes from the Prabesk militia man. Moving through the loft one of them turned toward a sound from a dark alcove. In Heletian, heavily accented by its Prabesk speaker, words were muttered that froze him.

"These Faeries don't just light, they burn."

And with that a jet of blue flame torched Antony, leaving Roberto again gawking at the power of magic and his charred, dead friend.

FOUNDATIONS

This scenario has been written for use with AD&D, D&D and WFRP. It is set in the *Realms* campaign world of *Unae*, but can also be played in the *Forgotten Realms* (Al Qadim or The Empire of the Sands {FR3}), or in the *Warhammer World*.

The plot starts in a traditional western port, and involves escorting a young Prabesk (Arab) boy back to his widowed father who awaits him in their home city. This involves a sea voyage and complications on their arrival at their destination.

If playing in *Unae* we suggest you start in *Porto Baimio* or *Thapsuss* (see issue 13). With alteration the adventure could begin in *Vangre* (see issues 11 & 12).

The scenario acts as a tool for introducing players of 'European' fantasy characters to an Arabian flavoured world, and from that point opens many new avenues for exciting and exotic play. If you are looking for possible extensions of the basic plot read the *Evora* article, also in this issue. By doing so you should be able to come up

with several of your own plots suiting the spirit of variety and realistic atmosphere of the *Unae* campaign world.

THE PLOT LINE

1. The party starts in Vangre, a large Heletian port and see a group of men chasing after a young boy. The boy is not Heletian, his 'foreign' dress giving him away as being of Prabesk origins.
2. If asked what the problem is one of the men will yell that the boy is a devil.
3. Eventually the boy escapes, running around a corner, into a lane and just disappears.
4. When appropriate a woman (also of Prabesk origins) approaches the party. She asks them if they are willing to escort her ward safely to Evora.
5. If the party accepts she will introduce them to Alaman, the only son of her widowed employer.
6. The players have to watch out for the boy for one day, then they set sail for Evora.
7. After arriving in the port of Nerva the players will not be greeted by Alaman's father or his servants (as had been expected).
8. The PC's will have to find Alaman's father. His home is empty, not even the servants are present.
9. The players can go about locating the father in many ways, their reward in doing so will be their original 'escort' fee plus a possible bonus.
10. Once the father is located and freed (after an investigation and finally a confrontation with his abductors) he will reward the players for his rescue and also pay them the original wage.

NERVA

For complete details on this port city see the article detailing Evora in this issue on page 38 but feel free to add what you want where you want to.

DETAILS

The sections below are numbered to match the plot line summary for easy reference. They have been further detailed with information to help promote the *atmosphere* and *feel* of the various situations and locations. Any NPC's mentioned here are summarised at the end of the scenario in the *NPC Gallery* section.

1. The Devil Boy: The party see a group of young Heletian men chasing a young boy. The boy is of Prabesk origins, his tailored clothes show that his family is not short of coin. He easily evades them, moving quickly across the street and into an alley. The men follow, yelling that the boy is 'evil'.

2. Devils in the Streets. If asked what the problem is the Heletian men will say that the boy is a devil. An old zealous priest, one of dubious mind has riled the men and sent them out to hunt the boy. Father Marco accuses the boy of thievery, unholiness and cabalism. If the boy is caught the slightly paranoid, and wholly crazed Father Marco is planning to lock him up for a purification ritual.

The priest has a barred cell in the basement of his church, here he plans to cleanse the Prabesk boy with holy water, salt and molten silver. Seeking to claim his *soiled* soul for Kreinta.

3. Gone! Eventually the boy escapes, running around a corner, into a lane he evades the men and just disappears. At this point the players notice a concerned Prabesk woman watching them from across the street. She has seen the look on the players faces, and, from their appearance also sees their potential. The young men return to the street and cry of bedevilment, foul magics and the evils of the Cabal.

4. An Offer. When appropriate the Prabesk woman (Alessa) approaches the party. She asks them if they are willing to escort her ward, the boy (Alaman Nagar) safely back to his father (Sebaran Nagar) in Evora.

She has been instructed by Sebaran to arrange for his return, while she is to stay in port, and conclude her duties for the Nagar house hold. A fee will be paid of *60 Evoran Dinars* (see the note in point 7 below, 1 Dinar = 2 Florins), of which she will pay a small deposit now. Passage must be arranged quickly as the boy is to attend his grandfather's funeral.

5. Babysitters. If the party accepts she will introduce them to Alaman, her ward. The only details she gives, deeming other questions as 'rude prying' is that the boy's grandfather has passed away, and that the boy is required to attend the funeral. It is possible that they will arrive too late for the funeral, in which case the boy will be required to observe the traditional mourning period before continuing his own affairs. This formal showing of bereavement is common to all Prabesk families.

6. The Maroklara. The players have to watch out for the boy for the rest of the day, then they will set sail for Evora. Alessa will recommend a (Heletian) captain she can trust and will point the players in the right direction to find him (the docks, in particular a tavern called *The Chancel*). Captain Romero Castice will agree to take the players to Evora for a reasonable fee (a four day sea voyage will set them back 10 gold Florins each, including basic meals) from Porto Baimio via the treacherous channel short-cut known as *Benjio's Fury* (after Benjio Descartus, reputed traitor to Baimio, see issue 11 page 7).

Romero needs to leave early the following day, so the players will have only the remaining day and a morning to kill. It is possible that in this time Alaman will evade the players for *fun*s sake, or that his original pursuers will find out where he is and come looking for him...

The voyage to the port city of Nerva in Evora will not be straight forward. Firstly the ship, *the Trankvila* is cramped and uncomfortable, and the crew seem less than trustworthy.

Secondly, the ship will be navigating

Benjio's Fury, the dangerous strait between Corium and Nusia. The current flows quickly here, driven by the tide. The strait is funnelled by the steep cliffs that face both sides of the mile wide channel for most of its length and are occasionally shrouded at their base with stone rubble and wrecks. Many have died here, tales of *spectral ships* and *serpents* that live beneath the waves make most sailors avoid this area

Thirdly, once the ship is into the Maroklaran Sea proper it will also be prey to pirates and (more) serpents. While most serpents are terrifying to behold they usually satisfy themselves with plucking an unlucky fellow from a boat, thus avoiding a drawn out fight and potential harm. Serpents will not sink a ship for anything other than revenge, once a meal is got the creature will dive back below.

The pirates are of course another matter, and how you handle this plot device is up to you. The vast majority of pirate ships have cabalists aboard, and these individual actively take part in any attacks on other shipping, their magic a powerful advantage. If you choose to have a pirate raid as part of the adventure note that the pirates of the Maroklara are not stupid bloodthirsty rabble, they are intelligent, cunning and blood thirsty! Pirates will not necessarily make players walk the plank, they may be quite happy to leave them for dead on a wrecked, mastless ship. What they are after is wealth and supplies. This is their top priority, then usually women and then blood. More details are given on the average Maroklara pirate outfit in the *Location* section near the end of this scenario.

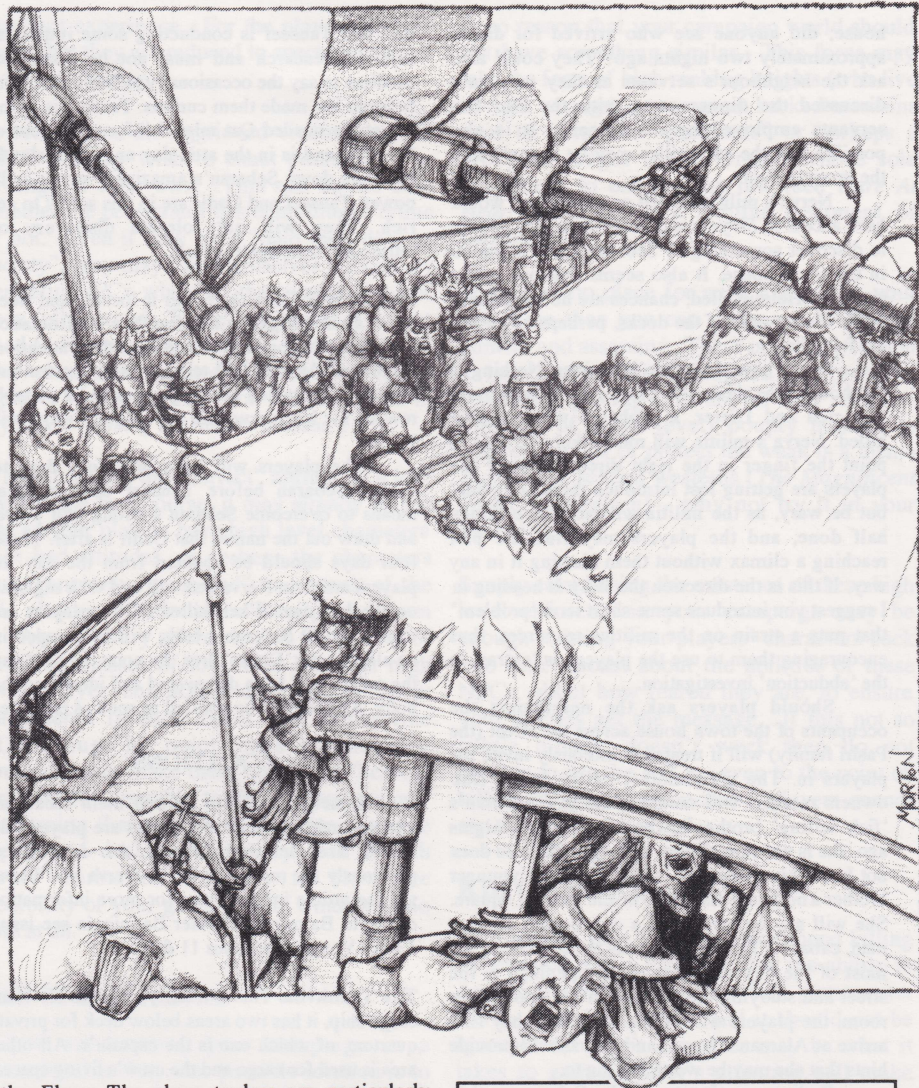
7. Nerva Ho! After arriving in Nerva the players will not be greeted by Alaman's father. The boy will not know why and if pestered with questions will just say he wants to go home. He will direct the players to his family's household. On the way you should try and make it clear to the players the differences of Prabesk society to that of Heletians. The temples, dress, language, society and many other things are different. Use the Evora article in this issue to high light these things. The four most important differences are listed below:

Money: The Prabesk use the *Evoran Dinar*, which comes in gold, silver and copper denominations. The coins are larger than Heletian Florins and are exchanged at the rate of one Dinar for two Florins. Many merchants will not accept Florins, they will have to be exchanged at a money-lender or some larger establishments that will deal in currency.

Language: The official and everyday language is *Prabesk*, the same as that which is spoken in the Prabesk home land of Prabeq. Over nine tenths of the city population speaks Heletian (Sidian dialect - *what is spoken in Greater Baimiopia*) and in the countryside this falls to around a half. Most Heletians will get by with little trouble if they have some patience.

Magic: The mystical arts are practised freely in Evora, they are an integral part of Prabesk culture, religion and society. Many Heletians will be surprised, some even terrified of its common use, but it is something they will have to get used to. From the *Messengers* of the temple to even the occasional street bunko artists, magic is alive and well in Evora.

Cosmopolitan: Nerva is a 'mixed' city. Of its total population over half is of Prabesk stock, a quarter Heletian, 15% from Fletland and 5% from Burvoy. The remainder are people of mixed descent, note that all these ethnic groups are human. There are usually non-humans in the city also, but they are few and clannish. The two groups represented here are the Saldaens (Halfings - numbering less than one hundred) and



the Elves. The elven traders are particularly careful in Nerva, travelling together and sharing company as they find the high number of Flets in the city a threat to their personal safety (and for good reason). Most of the the non-Prabesk live in the poorer dockside areas of the city.

8. No One Home. The players will have to find Alaman's father. His home is empty, not even the Fletlander servants are present. It is a well built and large town house. Within the well appointed dining room are signs that a struggle has taken place. The Heletian style table, adopted by the Prabesk of Evora is bedecked in food that is now bad. The table had been set for four, a chair is over turned, some food spilled and several drops of blood can be seen staining the thick floor rug. It would appear that the meal (from its completeness, an evening dinner) was interrupted. Another trail of blood can be found leading into the kitchen, and then the cellar. The stairs that lead down into the store hold the decomposing body of one of the Flet servants. Alaman will recognise him as Dieter, an inn keeper's son from Bayner, Fletland. At this point, some players may contemplate dumping the kid and looting the house. If this is the action taken or is being discussed Alaman is not a pushover. He has had some training in Cabalism and is capable.

9. Brotherly Love. Players can go about locating the father in many ways, their reward in doing so will be their original 'escort' fee plus a possible bonus. Before I suggest avenues for your players enquiries I will outline the actual order of events leading up to the disappearance of Sebaran Nagar:

Two days ago the funeral was held for Alaman's grandfather. That night a special meal was prepared at Sebaran's townhouse, to be attended by his younger brother Qadir and his wife. Qadir came, but brought a business associate, Sebaran was forced by politeness to accept the guest into his house, even on this mournful day. Unknown to Sebaran, Qadir was aware of the merchant's 'other' (see below) trading activities.

The three men, Sebaran, Qadir and Tauseef sit down to their meal. Of the two servants, Dieter was serving and Helmut was resting upstairs. A fourth spot was set at the table for the recently deceased as Prabesk custom demands. When Dieter leaves the men to their meal Qadir confronts Sebaran about his 'black' trade, getting no honest answers he and Tauseef struggle with Sebaran and incapacitate him with a paralysing poison administered with a short knife. Dieter hearing the struggle runs to his master's aid, Qadir leaves his prone brother and attacks Dieter with the same knife. He repeatedly stabs Dieter leaving him for dead.

Tauseef and Qadir take Sebaran's body out of the house and take it by coach to Qadir's home. Here Sebaran is imprisoned, while his captors try and drag out the information they want. Once given Sebaran will be killed, leaving Qadir to inherit both his brother's possessions and his father's.

The easiest way for the players to discover what exactly happened would be to question the neighbours about the comings and goings from the

house; did anyone see who arrived for dinner approximately two nights ago? They could also ask the neighbour's servants as they may have discussed the dinner party with the two Flet servants employed by the Nagar's. It is also possible that the authorities may be brought into the investigation.

Nerva's militia is well organised and would have access to *Skryers* and *Seers* who may be able to discover something of Sebaran's last moments in the town house. It also seems that one of the servants (Helmut) fled, chances are he is skulking in the Flet quarter of the docks, perhaps he knows the full story?

In any case the crime is curious. Nothing in the house was damaged or stolen, Sebaran was abducted and Dieter, a probable witness, was killed. Nerva's militia will most likely be able to point the finger in the right direction, so if the players are getting lost introduce them as 'guide' but be wary, as the militia will not leave things half done, and the players may find the plot reaching a climax without them shaping it in any way. If this is the direction the story is heading in I suggest you introduce some short term 'problem' that puts a strain on the militias resources, thus encouraging them to use the players as 'extras' in the 'abduction' investigation.

Should players ask the neighbours the occupants of the town house across the street (the Pasiri family) will if treated courteously invite the players in. The grandmother of the house (the owners mother) will mention she saw Sebaran's 'fish selling' brother in the house a few nights ago, she is not sure of how long ago. She also does not know his name, but is sure he is the younger brother and has a fish stall at the market square. She will say he arrived in a coach with another man, cabalist (Tauseef). She sits at her window for most of the day watching the happenings in the street and studying the view from her upper floor room, the players will notice her when they first arrive at Alaman's home, and you should provide hints that she may be worth talking to.

Qadir was going to murder Sebaran so that he would be the rightful inheritor (by passing Alaman as he has not come of age) of his brothers and fathers possessions. Sebaran was spared from a simple murder when he unwittingly mentioned his most successful and secretive commercial operation. Qadir has discovered that his only brother is a *Qat* (pronounced *caught*) dealer. He buys it from growers in the Deipraesidio Mountains and sells it to taverns and smoking houses at the docks. This illegal drug is smoked in ornate pipes and has a hallucinogenic effect, its price is high and sales are good, very good.

Since Sebaran mentioned the *Qat* Qadir has not been willing to kill his brother, not until he finds out who his buyers and growers are. Qadir has been doing some research himself in various Prabesk smoking houses that he thinks might be buyers, but is yet to make any definite contacts. Three smoking houses have private rooms that many Prabesk men 'buy' for an hour or so while they go and consume their *Qat*, these are the *Andar Neer*, the *Evoran Palace* and the *Yemena House*.

At the moment Sebaran is tied up, gagged and blindfolded in the attic of Qadir's home. Every night, after his business duties (as a fish monger and his enquiries regarding *Qat*) he returns home, eats the evening meal with his wife and daughter, then he goes up stairs and tries to drag the information out of Sebaran that will cost the older brother his life.

Qadir is not alone in the scheme, he was put up to it by his partner, *Tauseef* a cabalist. Qadir has forbidden his wife *Benna* and his daughter *Semona* from going into the attic. They have been

told that Tauseef is conducting some important mystical research and must not be disturbed, needless to say the occasionally stifled moan from Sebaran has made them curious. Tauseef is trying to get the needed *Qat* related information out of Sebaran, and is in the attic day and night slowly breaking down Sebaran's amazingly strong will-power. Tauseef and Qadir are in this solely to get rich. They will not tolerate discovery or intrusions, both fighting well.

10. Rescued. Once the father is located and freed (after an investigation and finally a confrontation with his abductors) he will need medical attention. Once well Alaman will tell his father the truth of how he was treated by the players and a suitable reward for his rescue and the original wage will be paid.

The players will have only four days to rescue Sebaran before Tauseef uses magical means to overcome Sebaran's strong will power and draw out the names that Qadir is after. These four days should be counted from the day the players arrive in Nerva and will end with nightfall on the last day. When killed (if the players are unsuccessful) Sebaran's body will be dumped in an alley in the 'Docks' area, by noon the next day the militia will have discovered and identified the body. Alaman will be notified as soon as possible.

LOCATIONS

Lonely Child has several main locations where particular parts of the plot are played out. These are detailed below. As mentioned previously for more details on Nerva and Evora see the article in this issue, for more information on Porto Baimio of Greater Baimiopia see issue 13, for Vangre see issues 11 & 12.

The Trankvila: This is a fairly standard Heletian cargo ship, it has two areas below deck for private quarters, of which one is the captain's. All other area is used for cargo and the crew's living space.

The Town House: This is a simple but extravagant looking affair. It is two levels and also with a cellar and attic. The 'living' rooms are on the ground floor (five in total) and there are four bedrooms on the second level. The attic contains four sacks full of *Qat* leaves.

Qadir's home: This home is a simple two story affair with four small rooms on the ground floor, a coal cellar underneath (accessible from a back alley) and with three rooms on the second floor (an office, and two bedrooms), access to the attic is through the office. The attic is crammed with boxes and junk, and thus is full of hiding spaces. This area has two windows, one facing the street the other the alley, at night the windows glow with a soft but noticeable blue light, Tauseef's magic.

The Prabesk Smoking Houses: The layout of this follows the standard for a tavern, but the seating is lower and it has many private rooms in which customers may hold meetings.

The Flet's Refuge: This is a standard tavern and will be found in the Flet Quarter. Flets will not attack an elf who walks in here straight away, but if they're doing anything hostile (particularly if they are alone) they will be in for a rough time. Suggestion: elf players walk in and buy a round of drinks, then don't say anything.

The Pirate Ship: A typical Maroklaran pirate ship is crewed by one to two dozen pirates with normally one Cabalist. Often the Cabalist will be

the captain, in this case he will usually also have an apprentice. Some Cabalists will be Necromancers, or even Sango Drajo (blood drinkers) these types have favourite ambush channels near reefs or rocks that have claimed and wrecked ships in the past. The most powerful Necromancer captains will summon a sunken ship and its dead crew to their aid.

The most feared pirate in the Maroklara is Kara Barras, a female Necromancer who has three other Cabalists on her ship and travels the Maroklara with at least two other ships. She is captain of *the Reaver* and has a pirate base near the islands north east of Aurelia on the east coast of Evora.

THE NPC GALLERY

The NPC's below are briefly described in regards to their abilities, personalities, goals and appearance. Remember all these people have their own lives, and are not always at the players beck and call. Make the players appreciate them as fellows, not tools.

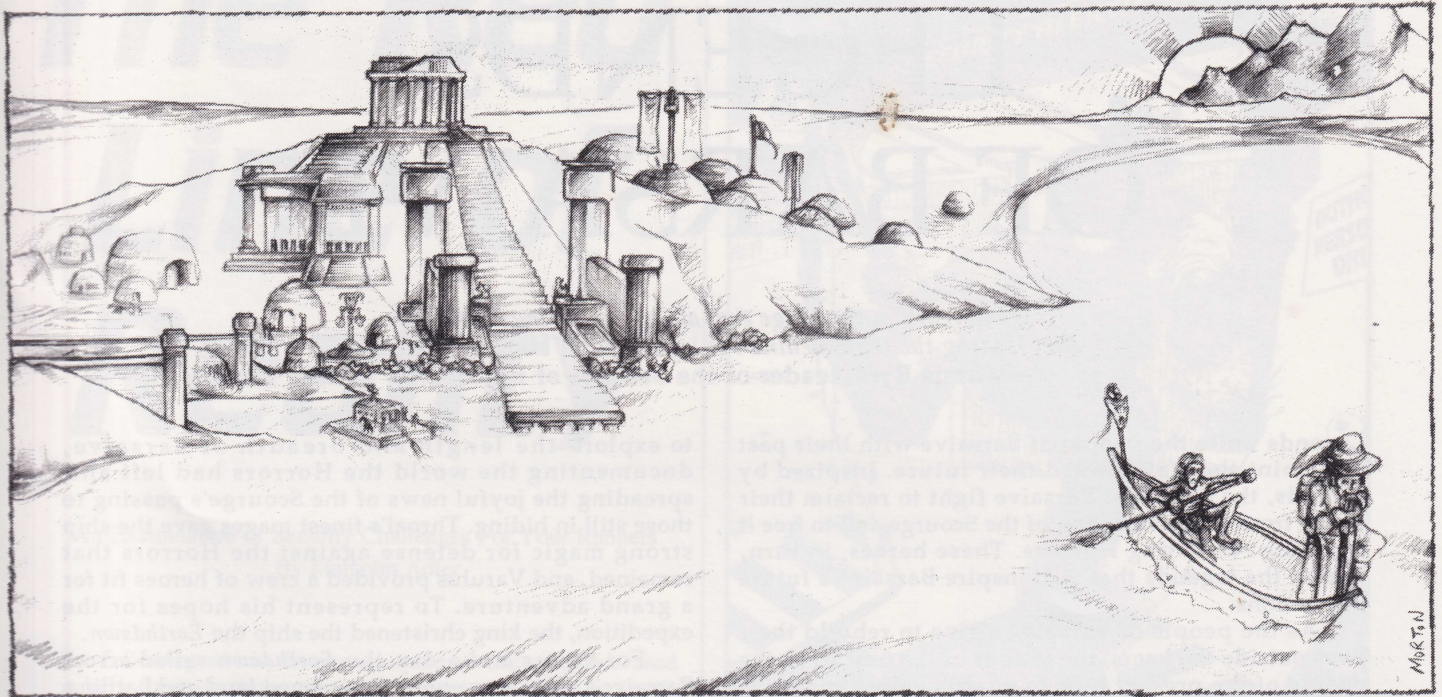
Alaman: Will in a few years be a man. Until then he must please his widowed father. He thinks highly of his father, but not a great deal of his Uncle Qadir, who seems to be too distant and disinterested in his part of the family. If need be he will spill his own blood to add power to his magic (treat as {AD&D} increasing level or {WFRP} Magic Points & level). He knows where his father hides his coin, so if the players are looking to be paid to continue the adventure and find Sebaran, he will employ them himself.

Alaman's own interest in magic is in Fire, so arm him appropriately when his magic is needed. To use blood magic he has to spill blood, for the best results his own, he has a silver *Blood Knife* for this purpose. Remember he is only just finishing his apprenticeship, so normally he can do only this and that, but when blood magic is invoked he can be effectively up to (AD&D) level three or (WFRP) level one & 30 magic points, all depending on how much blood he spills.

Alessa: Is a twenty nine year old woman who is employed by Sebaran Nagar to handle Alaman's tuition and upbringing and has been employed by him since the death of his wife several years ago. Her dark hair and eyes frame a face that is friendly and self assured. She also makes arrangements for various goods that Sebaran imports from the Heletian League, it is on such business that she finds herself in Porto Baimio. Alaman was merely here for the experience.

Sebaran: The father of Alaman is plump from good living and approaching his fortieth birthday. His hair is greying and his beard is streaked. He is of generally a good nature, but has a good eye for business and has made more wealth than he displays. Much via the illegal traffic of narcotics such as *Qat*, Black Leaf and Lobel Roots. While he realises such a trade carries a death penalty he believes the coin is worth the risk. He is devoted to Alaman, and will be at a complete loss if Alaman discovers that he is dealing with such contraband. If Alaman does discover this Sebaran will wait for his son's opinion, hoping that he will forgive him and see the benefits of the profits (such as Alaman's Cabalist education).

Qadir: The players will probably deduce Qadir is the culprit. He has several defences ready for such an accusation. If the players confront him he will ask them to sit, or go to a more private place such as a smoking house so that they can talk about it more civilly. If the players have talked to



Helmut, the surviving Flet servant Qadir will try and turn around the players evidence and Helmut's testimony. He will admit that he was at Sebaran's home for dinner, but that they had an argument and that he then left. He will (seemingly) grudgingly tell them that the argument was over Qat. Claiming that he had discovered that day that his brother was bringing it in to the city. He will say that he was trying to get his brother to abandon such an illegal trade because of the shame it would bring the family if he was caught (not to mention the death sentence). He will say anything he needs to to convince the players that he is in the right. If the players are a little speechless, puzzling over who is telling the truth, Helmut or Qadir, he will then come in for the final round.

"Who told you this? Helmut? He is a thief, he was demanding a pay increase from my brother!" Choking back tears, realisation comes to his eyes, "Helmut knew of the Qat, Sebaran told me so! Perhaps he tried to blackmail him!" Claspng his hands together he pleads "You must find that Flet thief and bring him to justice, and find my brother. I'll pay you well if you find him!"

Qadir is a typical Prabesk man, dark olive skin, dark hair and brown eyes. He is very charismatic and should always be presented in a neutral way to the players. His skills are only fishing and trading. He will be *unaware* of Sebaran's abduction when the players go to speak to him, he will act surprised and ask if the militia has been informed. He will also offer to take in Alaman (but the boy will insist on staying with the players until his father is found).

Tauseef: This old Cabalist is always robed in the colours of fire, reds, oranges and yellows. He is a cunning old man of ninety, and completely bald. He is working with Qadir, and does even value his friendship to a degree, but magic (like all cabalists) is the centre of his life; his one true love.

Tauseef is in this for the money. he is aware Qadir has a grudge against his older, successful brother, and is using such a passion to his advantage. Tauseef is getting old, and consequently is now looking into the magics that

extend life. Such research costs dearly in coin and blood, it is for this reason he is willing to help Qadir and take a portion of the profits.

Captain Romeo Castice: This man is a well built Heletian of thirty five years. He receives great respect from his crew and all others who know of him, it is said that their is no better captain on the Karano Sea.

He has an uncanny sixth sense for things supernatural, so should a ghost ship approach his own craft while at sea he will be aware of its presence before it becomes visible. In this situation he will do what he has done on the only other occasion he dealt with such a host; he will cover the lamps and silence his crew, hoping the ship will just pass them by. He will also forbid the crew to pray at such a time, saying it will only draw the attention of the dead.

Helmut: This Flet Servant has been working at the Nagar household for three years. He has fled the household and is hiding in the Flet quarter, spending most of his time at *The Flets Refuge*. He was at the home when Sebaran was abducted, he heard raised voices and went down stairs to see what the argument was over. He was greeted with the sight of his master being prone on the floor with Tauseef standing over him while Qadir stabbed Dieter to death. Seeing all this, and remaining undetected by Sebaran's assailants he fled. If Alaman questions him he will tell him the truth. He will not join the party, claiming he needs time to be alone. He will say that he didn't understand their argument as it was in the Prabesk language. After speaking with the players he will leave Nerva, fearing for his own safety.

Helmut is a wiry man who stands to be six feet high, with blonde hair and blue eyes. Aged at about twenty he is skilled as a cook and thief.

Father Marco: This seventy year old priest has spent the last ten years relegated to a run down church in a sleazy part of the Heletian port city. His mind is old and wanders. While intelligent, he is *crazed* and it is for this reason the church has sent him to his current harmless posting.

The small, round man has a head of grey hair and always wears black robes. He has

recently taken to wearing a purple sash, the mark of a priest who follows the more radical factions within the Church of Baimiopia. He is a weak man, and will most likely be dead within a year or two. As he has had no missionary training he is not capable of casting magic.

His pet project for the past two years has been providing *salvation* for lost souls. He does this by getting some of his followers (largely poor young men originally from the rural areas of Greater Baimiopia) and sends them out to fetch him *infidels*. His definition of such is foreigners, Cabalists and the like. Obviously only foreigners are ever visible. Once an infidel has been taken back to the priest he sends his followers away and sets about *saving* them. So far all who have been buckled into the chair in the cellar have died.

Father Marco is convinced that Kreinta wills it so, the truth is that he has been possessed by a spirit summoned to the city by the followers of *Sordida*. This kult of the Horned God zealously fulfils its obligations to its god, which are decadence, pleasure and pain. To the local kult the successful corruption of Father Marco is a marvellous joke, and every life he ends by pouring molten silver down the poor victims throat brings them yet another step closer to the paradise of the *Beyond*.

SUMMARY

Lonely Child is largely a roleplaying scenario with limited opportunity for combat. (if your players can't live without combat have the voyage from Vangre to Nerva plagued by pirates and sea serpents). In their investigation of the disappearance of Sebaran the players must be encouraged by the referee to ask questions and explore their surroundings. With the text herein and the *Evora* source article on pages 38 to 41, plus all the previously published *Unae* material there is more than enough information to get your players started in an *Unae* campaign using AD&D or WHFRP rules, or to adapt it to *Forgotten Realms* or the *Warhammer World*. From here your players can start a new life in Evora, one in which magic is not feared.

It is late Winter, 514EK.



LEGENDS OF BARSAIVE

*There is truth in the adage that all legend springs from fact.
And finding the truth behind the legend is the true juice of life.*
—Monus Byre, leader of the Seekers of the Heart

Legends unite the people of Barsaive with their past and point the way toward their future. Inspired by legends, the heroes of Barsaive fight to reclaim their world from the devastation of the Scourge and to free it from the remaining Horrors. These heroes, in turn, spawn the legends that will inspire Barsaive's future generations.

As the people of Barsaive strive to rebuild their lives outside the kaers, the lessons of the past teach the people of the present how to guard against and even overcome the hardships and dangers of their task. Many Barsaivian legends speak of dangers that still threaten the living; by uncovering the facts behind those legends, adventurers can learn not only what happened as the Horrors grew to engulf the world, but also how to root out these abominations and rid Barsaive of their dreadful legacy.

Using Legends

The gamemaster can present the legend to the players characters in various ways. For example, they may hear the legend from a troubadour during a stay in a small town or find it in the journal of another adventuring group as they investigate an abandoned kaer or citadel. Use whatever means fits your style of play. Some of the legends work better as background than as a central element in a campaign and are so noted.

The gamemaster decides the "truth" of each legend. Though the adventure ideas provided in the following pages assume that the legends are literally true, the gamemaster may decide otherwise. But even if he determines that some are complete fabrications or contain certain elements that are false, he can still use these legends to lead characters toward other adventures.

The Earthdawn

In the first days after the end of the dark times known as the Scourge, King Varulus of Throal decreed that the bravest and boldest among his people should go forth and explore the land of Barsaive. After centuries of living in underground kaers and sealed citadels, the people hungered for the sight of the sun and the scent of the wind and many answered his call. Of the hundreds who ventured out into the Horror-ravaged countryside, however, not a single soul returned, until the day the troll sky raider Vaare Longfang came back to tell His Majesty that the Horrors were retreating to the hellish place that had spawned them. Longfang's courage and strength so impressed Varulus that he immediately ordered a troll airship made ready for her and commanded the raider

to explore the length and breadth of Barsaive, documenting the world the Horrors had left and spreading the joyful news of the Scourge's passing to those still in hiding. Throal's finest mages gave the ship strong magic for defense against the Horrors that remained, and Varulus provided a crew of heroes fit for a grand adventure. To represent his hopes for the expedition, the king christened the ship the *Earthdawn*.

For a year and a day the *Earthdawn* sailed across Barsaive's skies, surveying the ravaged land and battling many perils. Though some Horrors lingered in places still thick with magic, Longfang and her crew found most of Barsaive free of the abominations. But these glad tidings fell on deaf ears, for though the *Earthdawn* landed at every kaer and citadel it encountered, all but two rejected their words. Fearful and unbelieving, the people refused to come out.

When Longfang returned to Throal and told Varulus of the people's fears, he commanded her to set off once more, this time for the larger kingdoms of Barsaive. Varulus hopes that if Longfang could persuade the great kingdoms to open their doors, the example of the mighty would banish fear among all of Barsaive's people. And so the *Earthdawn* set sail once more, this time toward the human kingdom of Landis. The airship was never seen again. Though many believe Longfang and her valiant crew fell prey to the Horrors, the true fate of the *Earthdawn* remains a mystery to this day.

Occasionally, travellers in remote areas report seeing the airship slowly sailing through the Barsaivian sky. According to another tale, the "ghost ship" still carries invaluable maps of Barsaive drawn by Longfang's own hand.

Adventure Ideas

The abandoned *Earthdawn* may indeed still drift through the skies of Barsaive, appearing every so often near the Throal Mountains or the area once known as the kingdom of Landis. Her original crew, however, is likely long dead or perhaps trapped in another plane of existence.

Some unknown force, Horrors, questors of a Mad Passion, or even Theran spies may be guiding the *Earthdawn* now. And if Longfang's maps truly exist, such artifacts would be invaluable. Of course, any attempt to recover such artifacts would undoubtedly attract the attentions of any number of gamemaster characters—Therans, Horrors, elves, and the like.

The Invae Burnings

Chorrolis is the Passion of wealth and trade, much venerated along the great trading routes and wealthy cities of the kingdoms of Landis and Cara Fahd. Long



ago, when the Scourge was but a dark rumor, one cult of his followers worshipped Chorrolis with greater fervor than any other in those lands. As they grew in number, their rivals in trade began to disappear. The dead bodies of some were found, others never appeared again. When the leaders of Landis and Cara Fahd at last began searching for the killers, they discovered the cult of Chorrolis had come under the sway of an evil, loathsome insect race called the Invae.

The Invae knew no mercy toward the people of Barsaive; they took captives and used them in bizarre, arcane rituals that transformed their captives into insects or summoned more of their cursed race from the black depths of astral space. No one knew how long the Invae had worked their evil will in Barsaive, nor how far their presence had spread. Panic swept through Landis at the news of the Invae and soon spilled over to other kingdoms. Soldiers and terrified citizens swept through the temples of Chorrolis, slaying all within and burning the buildings. Unable to tell friend from foe in their frenzy, the people also razed temples of Astendar and Floranus and killed many of their innocent worshippers. These first attacks killed hundreds of Invae; the rest fought fiercely to protect their brood, and the streets ran red with blood. The terrible battles of sword and magic destroyed the once-proud city of Emmerlich and left the very earth on which it stood lifeless.

The burning of the Invae continued across Barsaive long after the creatures had died or gone into hiding, and thousands of innocents lost their lives. In memory of their dead, followers of Chorrolis hold a bitter feast once a year. As for the Invae—some believe the loathsome creatures survived the burnings and the Scourge, and even now work their evil among the races of Barsaive through corrupted followers of Chorrolis.

Adventure Ideas

Though few in number, the Invae still exist. Most live in hivelike societies located near Barsaive's large population centres, including the cities of Travar, Urupa, and possibly even the kingdom of Throal. Though many regard them as another form of Horror, the Invae act quite differently. Rather than feeding off the pain of their victims, the Invae subject their victims to loathsome rituals that induce metamorphosis, transforming the victim into a Namegiver/Invae hybrid. These creatures, in turn, breed new Invae to increase the size and power of the hive. Once the hive reaches a certain strength, it then may summon an Invae queen from astral space.

Game statistics for the Invae appear below. Though a myriad of Invae varieties exist, these statistics apply to all types.

Invae

DEX: 7	STR: 9	TOU: 19
PER: 6	WIL: 8	CHA: 9
Initiative: 8	Physical Defense: 8	
Number of Attacks: 2	Spell Defense: 9	
Attack: 9	Social Defense: 9	
Damage: 11	Armour: 5	
Number of Spells: NA	Mystic Armour: 5	
Spellcasting: 8	Knockdown: 11	
Effect: 11	Recovery Tests: 4	
Death Rating: 60	Combat Movement: 150	
Wound Threshold: 15	Full Movement: 300	
Unconsciousness Threshold: Immune		

Karma Points: 10	Karma Steps: 8
Legend Points: 160	
Equipment: None	
Loot: None	

Commentary

The Invae are human-sized creatures that most often resemble wasps or ants, though they have also been known to appear in termite or mantis forms. Hybrid forms combining these insect features and characteristics of the Name-giver races are also fairly common. Most people believe that other forms of Invae exist, as yet unseen in Barsaive.

All Invae attack by striking their victims with chitinous claws, then rending the victim's flesh with both claws and mandibles. In addition to normal damage, a biting attack exposes the victim to a paralyzing venom. When an Invae bites an opponent, make a Spellcasting Test, using the Invae's Spellcasting rating, against the victim's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the victim must make a Poison Resistance Test against the Spell Defense of the poison (see **Poison Resistance Tests**, p. 208, ED). If the resistance test is unsuccessful, the character gradually suffers the effect of the venom. Unlike many paralytic poisons, Invae venom reduces the victim's Dexterity until he or she can no longer move, making him an easy meal for the creature. Make an Effect Test, using the Invae's Effect rating, against the victim's Spell Defense; if Invae prevails, the victim's Dexterity step decreases by 1 per round until it reaches zero, at which point the victim is completely paralysed.

This article on Earthdawn Legends is an excerpt from the upcoming Barsaive Campaign boxed set written by Greg Gordon and Lou Prospero. Due to be released in December.

TROLL QUEST II

Play-By-Mail Strategy Game



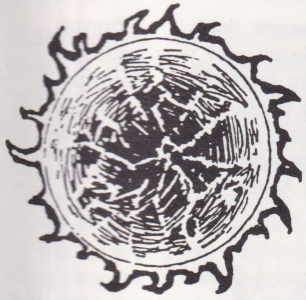
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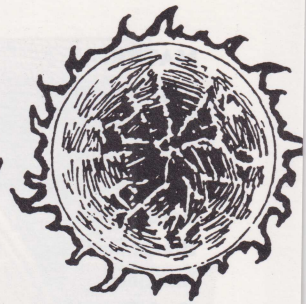
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PIECEMEAL



Piecemeal Armour Rules for AD&D 2nd Edition's Dark Sun Setting
by Seng A. Mah

Athas is a world that has evolved beyond traditional mediaeval fantasy and the armours available to its inhabitants have also changed. This article presents a new set of rules for piecemeal armour, conceived to reflect the many and varied types of armour worn by Athasians. With it, Dark Sun players can custom design their character's armour. While written with the Dark Sun campaign in mind, these rules can be easily adapted to any non-traditional AD&D milieu by imaginative referees - simply substitute the forms and materials endemic to Athas with those in your campaign world.

All piecemeal armour has an Armour Factor (AF) and an encumbrance Factor (EF). The Armour Factor represents its protective value; the Encumbrance Factor represents the general weight and bulk of the item and will affect the movement rate of the wearer. The AF and EF of piecemeal armour is determined by the armour material (for body armour) and the form of armour (breastplate, greaves etc.). To calculate a character's final Armour Class, add all Armour Factors due to armour type and material, round all fractions down, and deduct this total from the character's base AC. All costs of piecemeal armour are cumulative.

Table 1. (page 14) lists the AF and EF of various materials used in the manufacture of Athasian armour for the body.

Notes On Armour Material

Regular leather: Possesses no inherent AF unless crafted into cuirass or breastplate (see Table 2. on page 14).

Chitin: Chitin is hard and somewhat brittle and will shatter when hit on a natural 20 by a bludgeoning weapon unless it succeeds in a saving throw vs. crushing blow.

Metal Armour: the price of metal armour on Athas matches its gold piece price in the equipment list in the AD&D 2nd Edition Players Handbook.

Studs: Bone or chitin studs are usually fixed onto cuirass and arm guards to give additional protection.

Table 2. lists the AF and EF of the types of piecemeal armour commonly worn by Athasians.

Armour Descriptions

Breastplate: made of leather, hide or shell and offers good protection from frontal attacks only. Usual protective wear for arena combat. A breastplate can be worn over a cuirass for additional protection if the cuirass is made of regular or inix leather, but the reduces the cuirass AF by half (round down).

Cuirass: combines a leather breastplate and another piece covering the back. The leather is moulded to fit the body and then hardened. Cuirasses are made of supple or fine leather and offer light protection; those of mekillot or braxat hide are heavier and more bulky. Another cruder version of the cuirass is made of padded cloth or giant hair. This offers the same protection but has an EF of 1 as it is heavier and less well-fitted to the shape of the body.

Shoulder guards: heavy padding, plated hide or chitin flanges on shoulders, protects shoulders and upper arms (-2 to called shots attacks to these areas).

Arm Guards: covering for the entire arm, usually made of bone-studded lightweight leather and worn only on one arm. Used by gladiators in the arena.

Mail Shirt: Like all things metal, the mail shirt is very expensive and costs its gp equivalent in the Players Handbook. The AF listed is for chain mail, scale and ring mail each have an AF of 2.

Groin piece: chitin or hardened leather protection for the area most sensitive in males to concussive blows.

War Belt: this is a broad band of tough leather worn as protective cover over the hips and lower abdomen.

Shield: medium and body shields have a respective EF of 1 and 2.



Table 1. Armour Materials

MATERIAL	AF	EF	ARMOUR TYPE	COST
Regular Leather	0	0	Cuirass, Breastplate	2cp
Inix Leather	1	0	Cuirass, Breastplate	3cp
Erdlu Leather	2	1	Cuirass, Breastplate	5cp
Mekillot Leather	2	2	Cuirass, Breastplate	2sp
Braxat Hide	3	3	Cuirass, Breastplate	4sp
Braxat Shell	3	3	Breastplate	3sp
Inix Shell	2	3	Breastplate	6cp
Kank Chitin	2	2	Breastplate	3cp
Metal (iron)	3	3	Breastplate	Var.
Metal (bronze)	2	3	Breastplate	Var.
Studs (bone or Chitin)	1	1	see below	1cp

Table 2. Armour Types

ARMOUR TYPE	AF	EF	SPECIAL FEATURES	COST
Arm guards/Bracers	1/2	0	+1 to AC when parrying	5bt each
Breastplate	1	0	-	2cp
Cuirass	2	1	see below	4cp
Groin-piece	1/2	0	has AF of 2 vs. called shots to the crotch; +1 bonus to AC in unarmed combat.	5bt
Helmet	1/2	1	AF if 2 vs. called shots to head	8cp
Leg Greaves	1	1	-	5bt each
Mail shirt	3	2	Only available as an artifact	na
Shield	1	0	-	Var.
Shoulder guards	1	1	see below	1cp
War Belt/Girdle	1	0	Can't be worn with Cuirass	2cp

An example: using the information from the above tables, a warrior (with average DEX) wearing a cuirass of mekillot (AF 2 + AF 2) with inix shell shoulder guards (AF1), a helmet (AF 1/2) and an armguard (AF 1/2) will be AC 4.

Movement in Piecemeal

To find a characters movement rate when armoured, add together all Encumbrance Factors due to armour type and material, round all fractions down, and consult the following table, multiplying the characters base movement by the figure listed:

EF	Movement Rate Multiplier
0-2	1
3-4	x 3/4
5+	x 1/2

The warrior from the example would have an EF of 5, hence a movement rate of 12" (6" in a regular AD+D world).

Class Restrictions

Warriors and Bards: use all types of armour

Thieves: any armour as long as total EF does not exceed 4.

Clerics and Templars: all armour types.

Druids: bracers and the war belt only.

Wizards: cannot use any armour.

Psionists: can use light armour (no more than EF 2) with studs, and buckler or small shield.

Heat Effects in Piecemeal

The Dark Sun's infernal heat discourages the donning of much armour. As a rule of thumb, a character with an EF of 5 or more exposed to the daytime heat will require double the amount of water per day. Moreover, if fighting during the day, the character can suffer heat exhaustion (see p52 of the Dark Sun Rules Book). The example above would be severely disadvantaged if exposed to daytime heat.

Thieving Skills Adjustments

A thief with an EF of 3 or more suffers penalties as listed for wearing studded or padded leather armour on table 29 in the Players Handbook. Thieves can wear bracers or arm guards and still operate as if unarmoured when using thieving skills.

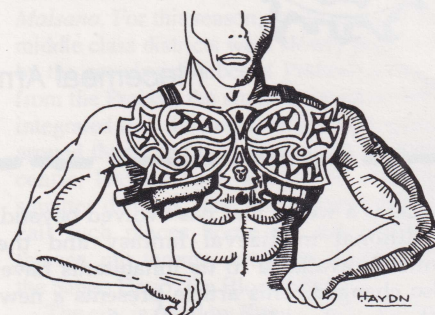
Piecemeal and Woad

If Woad (see Woad for Warriors by Paul Mitting in Realms #9) is used in your Dark Sun campaign, cumulative piecemeal AF cannot exceed 4 or the effects of woad will be negated. Remember that any clothing or armour worn must not obscure the designs or the magic of woad will fail.

Piecemeal Magic

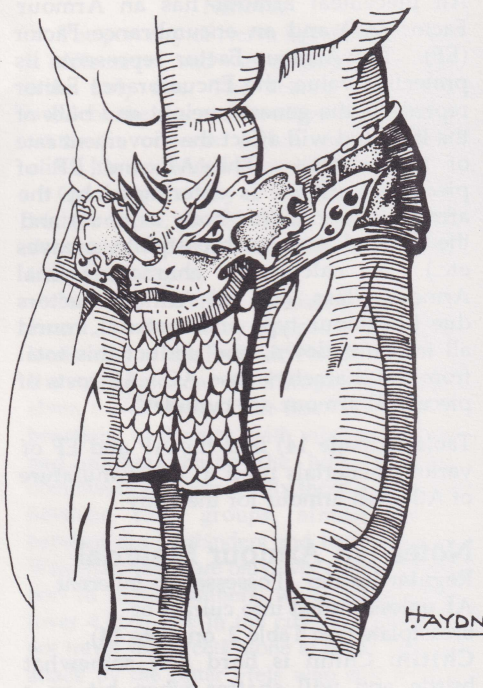
Non-metal piecemeal; armour is not easily enchanted. Magical piecemeal armour tend to be made of high quality material, especially the skin or hide of rare and exotic beasts. Generally, no non-metal

armour can have more than a +2 bonus. Cuirasses, breastplates and war belts are the most commonly enchanted piecemeal armour. Exceptions to the rule are detailed below. These magical armour are unique creations and unless specified, only one of each kind exists on Athas.



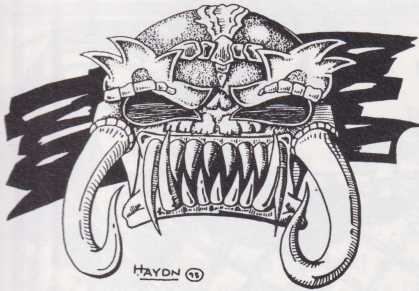
Slarratha's Breastplate

This is a breastplate of super-strengthened kank shell shaped to fit an elf or half-elf (or a tall wiry human). It has a +2 bonus and the following special properties; will never shatter; deflects non-magical missiles (frontal attacks). The breastplate was fashioned as a gift for the elven ranger/druid Slarratha and was lost (as was Slarratha) in the Sea of Silt. XP 1000.



The Groin-price of Ghaurr

Created by unknown sorcerers at the behest of the Templar Jorviannas of Tyr for his prized gladiator Ghaurr, the groin-piece is a combination of a leather breechclout and a frontal guard made of a hard, scaly hide, shaped into the head of a braxat. It offers complete immunity to called shots to that particular area and grants a +2 bonus to the wearer's usual AC in unarmed combat. After the death of Ghaurr (ignominiously by assassin's poison), it was lost. Some speculate that it was stolen by a collector. XP 1000.



Helm of the Beast

This cursed helm, also known as Dronos' Bane, was created by the defiler Armak and presented to his rival's prized gladiators, the mul Dronos. It resembles a smaller version of the skull of a nightmare beast complete with tusked protrusions which enables the wearer an additional head butt/gore attack (2-5 damage). When worn, the "eye sockets" glow a dull red perceivable only in dim light or in darkness. In battle, it turns the wearer into a raging berserker, giving one additional attack per round and a +2 bonus to hit. The wearer will continue to fight until -12 hit points and then drop dead. When berserk, the wearer cannot differentiate friend from foe and will always engage the closest person until he alone remains standing. Dronos the mul slew all his

opponents in the arena, and then the two dozen guards who were called to stop his mad rampage before a lightening bolt blew a hole in him. The helm, of course, was undamaged. XP 3000.

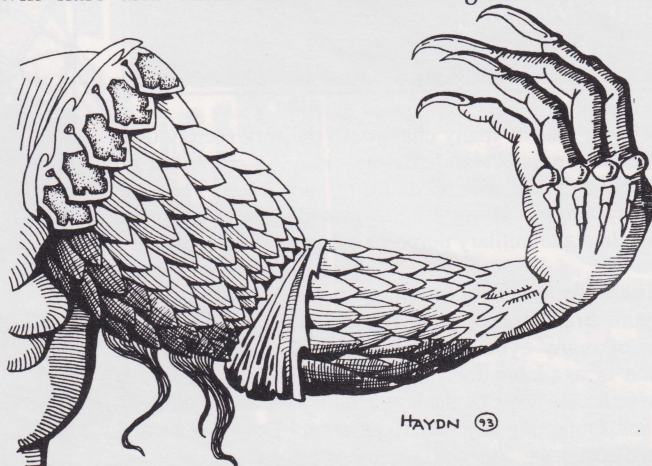
The Golden Cuirasses of Swarzhaz

There are five of these in existence, created by the sun-priests of Raam for the honour guard of the sorceror-queen. Each is a stylised cuirass of fine golden leather which bestows a +2 to the wearer's AC. On the chest-piece is a stylised representation of the sun. Once a day, upon utterance of a command word, the sun design will flare and blind those

staring at it for 2d4 rounds (save vs. petrification to avoid). XP 1000.

Armpiece of the Claw

An armguard fashioned entirely of glistening red scales, the armpiece covers the wearer's arm down to the fingers. It has +1 defensive value, but more importantly, at the wearers command, it transforms the wearers hand into a huge reptilian claw which attacks as a +1 weapon and does 2-12 damage. The armpiece originates from Nibenay where it is believed to have been created by the Shadow King himself. XP 2000.



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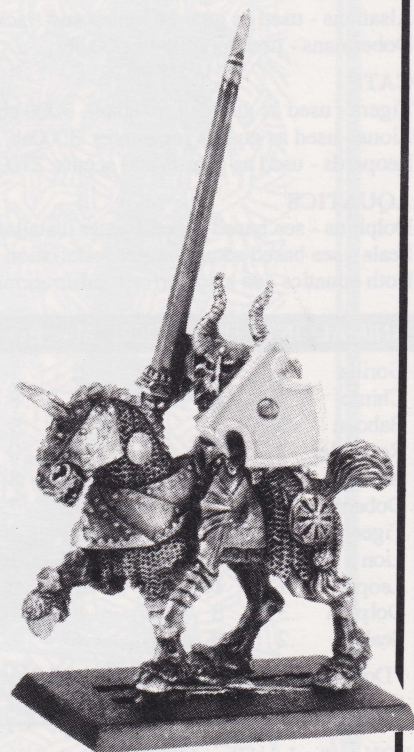
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CYBER-PETS

Rules for Chromed Animals
by Paul Mitting

In the future there will be many changes to the way society uses animals. by contemporary standards they may be cruel, but no worse than what humans will be doing to each other. The year 2020 sees many animals being used to provide guards and even soldiers for civilian and military purposes.

Cyberware is readily available for fitting to the animals, most of which are tank bred from stored genetic material. The early development of many cybernetics was carried out on animals; much of what is available for human use is also available for animals. The purchase costs of the listed animals is based on tank-bred specimens. Obtaining any other type except Dogs will be at 3 times the listed cost.

BASIC TYPES

APES

Gorillas - used mainly as guards for estates. 2000 eb.
Chimpanzees - military scouts, also for infiltrations. 1000 eb.
Baboons - used as guards and also as scouts. 1500 eb.

DOGS

Rotweilers - used as guards. 500 eb.
Alsations - used as guards, scouts and trackers. 500 eb.
Dobermans - used as guards. 500 eb.

CATS

Tigers - used as guards for estates. 3000 eb.
Lions - used as guards for estates. 3000eb.
Leopards - used as guards and scouts. 2700 eb.

AQUATICS

Dolphins - sea based scouts, water installation guards. 3000 eb.
Seals - sea based scouts, water installation guards. 2000 eb.
Both aquatics can also perform infiltrations.

ANIMAL	INT	REF	COOL	MA	BODY	LOY	SP	ATTK
Gorilla	2	6	8	6	10	6	1	5
Chimp	3	7	5	7	8	8	0	3
Baboon	2	7	6	7	9	6	0	4
Rotweiler	1	7	9	10	9	8	0	6
Alsatian	1	7	9	12	8	8	0	5
Doberman	1	7	9	12	7	8	0	6
Tiger	1	8	10	13	10	6	1	8
Lion	1	8	10	13	10	6	1	8
Leopard	1	10	8	15	8	6	0	8
Dolphin	3	8	8	8*	10	8	1	4
Seal	2	6	6	6*	8	8	1	3

*Dolphins and seals have high mobility in the water. On land their MA is 1 and 3 respectively.

LOY is the Loyalty of the animal to the trainer, handler or owner. This assumes a period of extensive obedience training and bonding with the owner. Where the animal is placed in a situation where it must either act for the trainer but endanger itself, or act against the wishes of its master, a save must be made using the following:



1. Determine level of difficulty of the decision facing the animal.
2. Roll LOY + Animal Handling skill of owner + D10.
3. If this throw fails, the animal acts does not obey the command.

SP - This is the stopping power of the animal's natural hide or fur. Most creatures have little or no natural armouring, but this can be fixed with cybernetics.

ATTK - This is the skill the animal has after basic training in using its natural weapons. The skill will apply to any modified versions of the animal's natural weapons as well, provided adequate training time is allowed. Note that weapons not naturally used by the animal will require specific training.

ANIMAL SKILLS

Once initial training has been completed, the animal can be considered as having the following basic skills.

Animal	Awareness	Athletics	Stealth	Stalking
Gorilla	5	8	5	2
Chimp	5	10	5	1
Baboon	5	9	5	1
Rotweiler	6	5	5	2
Alsatian	6	5	5	2
Doberman	6	5	5	2
Tiger	7	6	8	7
Lion	7	6	8	7
Leopard	7	7	9	7
Dolphin	6	7	5	2
Seal	6	6	5	2

Stalking is similar to the human skill Shadowing, but when used successfully it allows the animal to ambush their target with complete surprise. Note that the Stalking skill can never be higher than the Stealth skill of the animal.

New Skill - Animal Handling

This is the skill of training and instilling obedience into an animal. The skill must be specific to a class of animal ie. Ape, Dog, Cat or Aquatic. The training will take 2d3 months less than the INT rating of the animal (minimum 1 month). Training will usually cost 500 eb per month. At the end of the training period, the trainer must a roll a Difficult success chance against the skill as follows: INT + Training SKill + D10. Any one animal may be trained in one set of duties.

ANIMAL DUTIES

Estate Guard - the animal can patrol grounds, warn off, hold or attack intruders, report incursions.

Building/Yard Guard - the animal can patrol premises, warn off, hold or attack intruders, report incursions.

Scout - the animal can use stealth to enter areas or premises and scout for specific targets, report locations of targets and numbers, evade capture and attack when cornered.

Tracker - the animal can use natural and enhanced abilities where appropriate to track down targets, use stealth when commanded and can hold, attack or report positions of targets.

Infiltrations - the animal can use stealth to enter areas or premises and scout for specific targets, report locations of targets, attack targets or deploy specified equipment in the vicinity (bombs, sensors, incriminating evidence), evade capture and attack when unable to escape.

These different duties that are trained into the animal will add additional skills to those that the basic aspects of training gave. These extra skills are selected from a list for each type of duties. The animal can therefore be specialised in certain tasks required.

NEW ANIMAL SKILLS

Use Human Weapons - this ability lets the animal use human sized and shaped weapons, such as melee weapons or firearms. This skill can only be used by Apes. REF based.

Use Built-In Weapons - this lets the animal use weaponry that has been either grafted into the body or has been fitted to its exterior on a specialised harness; either melee weapons or firearms. REF based.

Ferocity - boosts the natural ferocity of the animal when using its natural or fitted melee weapons only (and then only if it has the relevant training). Each level of skill will add +1 to the Attack Roll, and each two levels of skill adds +1 point of damage. REF based.

Stalking - is similar to the human skill Shadowing, but when used successfully it allows the animal to ambush their target with complete surprise, disallowing a defence against the first hit. A successful Awareness roll, however, will enable the target to use their Defense skill. Note that the Stalking skill can never be higher than the Stealth skill of the animal. INT based.

Hold/Capture - this ability allows the animal to use its speed, natural athleticism and innate menace to hold or prevent the escape of any intruders. It may also be used to capture and bring back nominated targets. Where required, the animal will use physical force to ensure capture, but will not attack to kill. COOL based.

Track - this skill reinforces the animal's innate tracing ability. Targets are nominated by either sight or smell. For most animals tracking is done by smell with a final visual check. INT based.

Infiltrate - this is similar to the human Stealth and Thief skills. The animal is trained to use whatever means present themselves to enter a specified area. This can involve crawling through ventilation shafts, swimming through drains, digging under fences. Apes are taught operation of doors, lifts, windows etc. to enable entry to premises. INT based.

Report - the animal can accurately report back to its base numbers and dispositions of enemy forces. At a skill of 1 to 3 the animal can only report numbers of humans and detected guard animals. At levels 4 and better the animal can also report presence of armoured vehicles and aircraft. A failed skill roll means the animal gives a



S. SCHOLZ 93

false report. Either the animal failed to observe properly, has forgotten exact numbers or could not adequately communicate its findings to the handler. Guard animals can only report that there are intruders and their numbers. INT based.

Each animal may be trained in specialised duties. This training enables the trainer to select certain skills that he wishes enhanced in the animal. The number of skill points available are based on D4 plus the animal's INT rating. Each skill may be selected more than once to a stacking limit of +3.

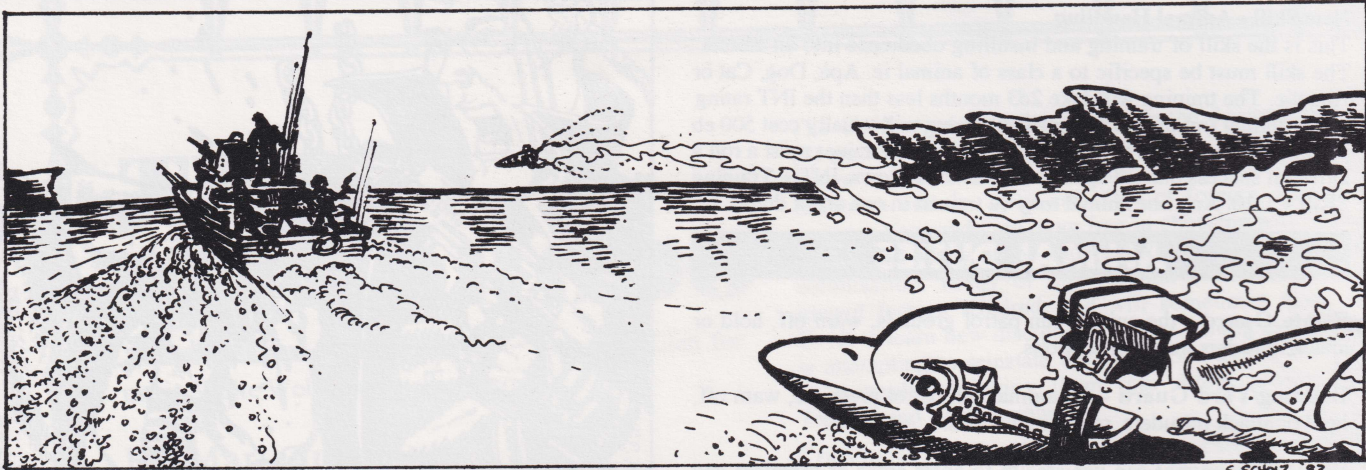
Duties	Skills
Guard	Awareness, Athletics, Stealth, Stalking, Ferocity, Use Human Wpns, Use Built-In Wpns, Track, Report.
Tracker/Scout	Awareness, Athletics, Stealth, Stalking, Use Human Weapons, Use Built-In Weapons, Track, Report, Hold/Capture.
Infiltrations	Awareness, Athletics, Stealth, Stalking, Infiltration, Use Human Wpns, Use Built-In Wpns, Ferocity.

Combat Abilities

All animals have some ability to attack enemies and defend themselves from attack. Kill or be killed is the law of the jungle. The ATTK rating for each animal given previously is their "melee weapons" skill rating for those natural weapons and forms of attack they were born with. This skill cannot be increased artificially except by use of Ferocity training. Chipware can also boost the Ferocity skill to a limited extent.

Animal	Type of Attack	Damage Done
Gorilla	Punch	d6 B
	Grapple/Hug	d8 B
	Bite	d6 K
Chimpanzee/ Baboon	Punch	d4 B
	Grapple/Hug	d6 B
	Bite	d6 K
All Dogs	Bite	d6 K
	Claw	d4 K
All Cats	Bite	2d6 K
	Claw Swipe	2d4 K
	Rake	2d6 K
Dolphin	Butt	2d6 B
	Tail Swipe	2d4 B
Seal	Butt	2d4 B
	Bite	d6 K

Damage Type - K = Killing; B = Bludgeoning Remember these damages are modified by Body Type and Ferocity.



CYBERWARE FOR ANIMALS

As for humans, implanting cyberware can cause cyberpsychosis in animals. The animal goes glassy eyed, froths at the mouth and becomes actively hostile to everything including their owner or trainer [a bit like Karl Langdon on Grand final day!]. If possible they will escape any confinement and will remain dangerous and uncontrollable until destroyed. While under cyberpsychosis the animal has +2 added to Ferocity.

To determine when cyberpsychosis kicks in, the LOY of the animal is compared to the Loyalty Cost (LC) of the cyberware. Each 10 points of LC will reduce LOY by 1. Once LOY reaches 2 or lower the animal is difficult to handle and especially savage to all but its owner. At 0 LOY or lower cyberpsychosis has set in and cannot be reversed.

Reflex Chipware

\$200	Processor Installation (LC = 2D6)
\$400	Use Built-In Weapons +1
\$600	Use Built-In Weapons +2
\$400	Use Human Weapons +1
\$600	Use Human Weapons +2
\$300	Ferocity +1
\$500	Ferocity +2
\$700	Ferocity +3

Intelligence Chipware

\$200	Report +1
\$400	Report +2
\$300	Track +1
\$400	Infiltrate +1
\$300	Stealth +1
\$400	Awareness +1

Interface Plugs

\$200	Basic 2 Plug Set (LC = 1D6 +3)
-------	--------------------------------

Combatware

\$300	Razor claws. +D6 K Claw/Rake Damage (LC = 2D6)
\$200	Power Bite. +D6 K Bite Damage (LC = 2D6)
\$500	Big Knucks. +D6 B Punch Damage (LC = 2D6)
\$600	Reinforced Snout. +D6 B Butt Damage (LC = 2D6)
\$300	Razor Tail. +D6 K Tail Swipe Damage (LC = 2D6)
\$400	9mm Pistol. (LC = 2D6 +2)
\$800	9mm Mini-Uzi SMG (LC = 2D6 +2)
\$1000	10mm Micro-Missil Launcher. Underwater only, treat each missile as equivalent to 5.56 NATO, with SMG ranges. Standard model has 4 shots. ACC +1, ROF 2, Reliability VR. (LC = 3D6).
\$400	4 Shot Extra Capacity for M-M Launcher. (LC = 1D6).
\$200	External Weapon Harness. Any combatware can be externally carried by the animal in the appropriate location, Interface plugs are needed to make the wps operational for the animal. One harness per weapon type. (LC = 0 for harness only).

Cyberoptics

\$400	Per eye. Includes colour of choice, glitter effects, logos, swirling colours etc. Each eye can mount 3 options. (LC = 1D6 per eye, plus 2 points per option).
\$200	Infrared
\$300	Micro/telescopic
\$300	Microcamera
\$400	Targeting scope
\$200	Anti-Dazzle protection
\$200	Low-Lite enhancement
\$300	Image enhancement
\$200	Thermograph Sensor
\$200	Dartgun

Cyberaudio

\$300	Both ears. No visible change to ear unless mechanical pickups are selected. No limit on options. (LC = 2D6, plus 1 point per option).
\$100	Radio Splice
\$100	Scrambler
\$200	Bug Detector
\$200	Micro-recorder

Cyberlimbs

\$600	Per limb. Standard limbs have an aluminium alloy frame with plastic cover. For \$100 per limb extra they can be made to look natural for the animal. Each limb will carry 1 option. Combatware can be fitted to a limb where appropriate, counting as one option per installation. (LC = 2D6 per limb).
\$50	2" by 4" secret space (LC = 0)
\$100	Tape recorder (LC = 0)
\$300	20 SP Kevlar Armour (LC = 1 point).

Cyberlimbs increase combat performance of the animal in the form of augmented damage. Claw attacks will add +D6 K damage to the natural attack with an extra +D6 if Razor Claws are fitted. Rake attacks require that two rear limbs be fitted with the same equipment; again +D6 K damage is added to the natural damage. Punch damage is augmented with a +D6 B if an appropriate cyberlimb is fitted, and Grapple/Hug attacks gain a +2D6 K damage if both arms are replaced with cyberlimbs.

Body Plating

\$4000	Torso and Head plating only. Limbs must be purchased separately. 20 SP armour is automatically supplied as part of the process, as well as replacing major organs with machinery (LC = 5D6).
--------	--

Boosterware

\$500	Reflex Booster. +2 Initiative. (LC = 2D6)
\$400	Sensory Booster. +2 Awareness. (LC = 2D6).

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with a Vat Cat -
Turn intruders to kitty
litter."**

- Futura Fauna Ltd Ad Slogan

Dice Are Dead

SPECIAL EDITION

The 1993 Guide To Australian Play-By-Mail Games

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**DYNAMIC •
GAMES**

POST-IT GAMES •

**AUSTRALIAN •
WIZARD**

**• THE BARON'S
AUSTRALIAN
MIDGARD**

**• MERCURY
GAMES**

**• THE SYDNEY
PBM CLUB**

Battle Master

is a very popular space warfare game. Unlike most other space PBM games, **Battle Master** is devoted entirely to warfare. In other space games planet management means balancing many different figures to make the optimum amount of income so you build space ships before you can attack another player. **Battle Master** overcomes this by having automatic income generation. Each planet's income starts off low and increase to maximum within 8 turns. Not all planets produce the same income; the closer you are to the centre of the galaxy, the more income they produce, so naturally, players try to gain control of the centre planets.

Features

Battle Master has many other features in the game to add to your enjoyment. You design your own space ships. This is not a complex job since the formulae are provided and there are sample ship designs to give you a start. You only have to worry about shield strength, fire power, fuel tank and speed. If you have an IBM computer there is a **Battle Master** help program available at no extra cost.

You can do research and development. No! It's not complex. All you do is guess a number between 1 and 100. you are told if it is too high or too low and you have another guess next turn. This can increase the planet income and add to the efficiency of your ships.

You can have one ally. A friend to assist you in the conquest of the galaxy. One friend you can trust. If you don't have a friend playing in the game, you will soon meet someone and a great friendship could develop. I have made many friends through Play By Mail. You have a choice of Battle Tactics to use. Once again, not too many choices, but enough to cover most situations. There are no complex tables and charts to look up, just 5 numbers to remember. BT (battle tactic) 1 attacks the biggest ship. BT 2 attacks the smallest ship. BT 3 means 'run like hell'. BT 4 attacks all ships and BT 5 captures the planets. See, you know how to play already.

You are also able to name all your possessions, fire missiles, spy on the enemy, transfer money, send messages, alter alliances and ask for distance calculations.

When it comes to the final conclusion, **Battle Master** is the ideal game for the new PBM player.

The Bottom Line

The cost for **Battle Master** is \$10 for the setup and \$5 per turn. If you are new to PBM and mention the Realms 1993 Guide to Australian PBM you will also receive 5 free turns (worth \$25) in the next game of **Battle Master**.

Battle Master is a great introduction to the hobby of Play By Mail, and yet holds enough interest for the older hands to still find a challenge.



Balance of Power

is a 20 player game based on World War I and II technology. It has nothing to do with the computer game of the same

name. **Balance of Power** will last approximately 30 turns if you are good enough.

Making War

You start off with pre WWI weapons and through investment in Technology, increase your weapons and abilities. You can purchase over 100 different types of battalions. From these, you form units to control and seize territory. Can you imagine a horde of 100 conscripts charging across the ground at a 100 strong tank formation?

It can very complex deciding on the composition of your forces since they can never be sure of what the enemy have in their forces. Anti tank weapons are not too good against infantry and strangely enough, cavalry have little effect on aircraft. Don't even think about using observation balloons against machine guns. naturally, the composition of your forces will be continually reviewed throughout the game as you meet up with different enemies and their tactics and also improve your equipment through research.

In BOP, your country consists of about 75 hexes with a variety of terrain, each with a different attack/defence rating and restrictions. Your production may be increased by careful investment of Resource points.

Alliances are CRITICAL. It is impossible to play the game without co-operating with other players. You are able to trade resource and technology with your allies to help develop your country to keep it running.

Balance of Power is pure warfare; there is no need to develop your country to keep it running. You can invest in technology and resource to help by buying INVESTMENT units.

There are over 20 different mission types to select for the various actions you will take throughout the game. Its quite a challenge to determine the best mission to use against the enemy. Paratroopers are very powerful and very vulnerable. A lot of planning is required to use them and defend against them. They can penetrate into the middle of a country easily, but can have no supply so are very vulnerable. You must protect against them!

It is inevitable that most players will be knocked out of BOP; that's the aim of the game.

How Much?

The turn cost varies between \$5 and about \$10 which can be expensive when you only have few units. In an endeavour to keep you in the game and give the enemy a fight to remember, I will reduce your turn fee by 50% if you have been severely attacked. If you win your first game of **Balance of Power**, you are indeed a champion.

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If you love trains and you want to run a railroad then **Iron & Steam** is for you. Just send your name and address and we'll tell you about it.

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Briefly, it is just like playing chess by mail. You play a game with lots of people but you never meet them. You mail your moves (turn sheet) to the Games Master (GM) who processes it and sends it back to you. The results depend on the decisions you make and the moves made by the other players in the game. Thousands of people play. Why don't you?

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No!

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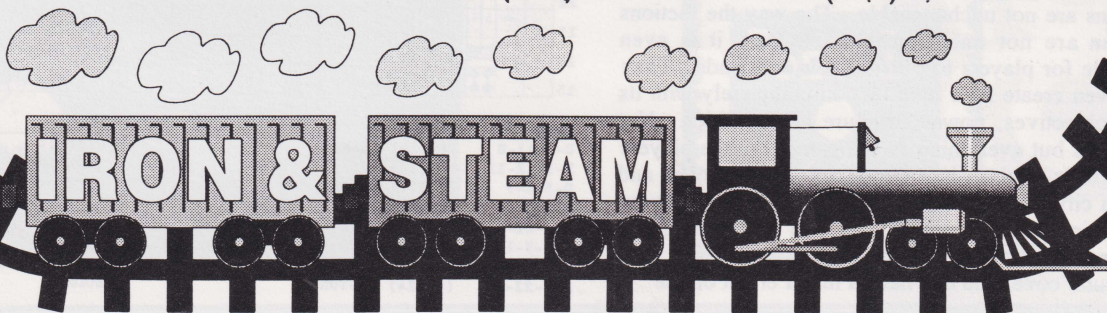
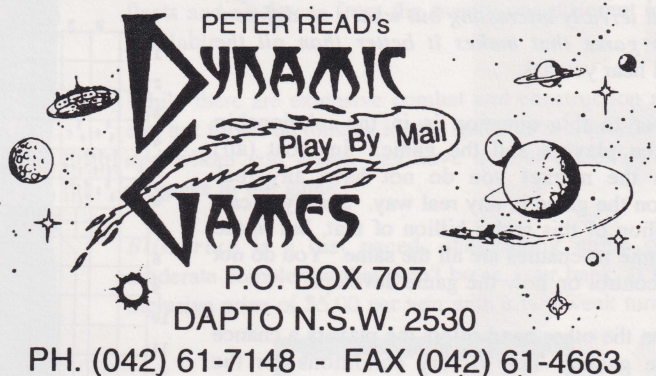
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Are you still here? I thought you would have been at the Post Office with your letter requesting more information

MIDGARD

The Play-By-Mail Game of Medieval Warfare and Role Play

How many games offer you the chance to not only play the game but to control the game?

Midgard is a role playing/war game in a medieval setting with both human and computer input into the turn sheets. Set in a world of political turmoil and factional rivalry, Midgard provides a depth of play that allows the players to explore the world in many different areas.

Midgard is controlled by a number of ancient families, secret societies and religions. The factions include the mighty Imperials, the warlike Boda family, the merchants of Getham, the mystical Ring religion, the peaceful Gift religion, and the not so peaceful religion of Blood and Fire. Added to this is a Mercenaries Guild, a Thieves Guild, and about fifteen other factions that do not make themselves publicly known. All that goes to show how the many available options in the game are designed to suit anybody needs.

The cost of Midgard is a flat \$7 per turn. This price does not get any higher how large your position gets. There is no fixed turn around so you can put in turns whenever you want, though you have a minimum of ten days. If you do not send turns in you will not be charged. Additional bonuses for bulk payments include \$65 credit for \$50 and \$150 credit for \$100 which means you could be paying as low as \$4.66 per turn.

But Best of All...

"This is all terribly interesting but what's so different about this game that makes it better than all the others?" I hear you ask.

The answer to this question is in the relationship between the players and the game. In most (all) games on the market you do not have any real influence on the game in any real way. Sure, you can have a billion of this and a billion of that, but in the end, the game mechanics are all the same. You do not have any control on how the game develops.

Midgard on the other hand offers the players a chance to run the game. The victory conditions for the factions are not unchangeable. The way the factions are run are not unchangeable. Indeed, it is even possible for players to pursue their own ends. They can even create their own faction completely with its own objectives, power structure and abilities. Not only this but everything in the game that the players relate to is affected by the players. If you attack and take a city that would affect the game on a later turn, then things start to change. If you find out from a spy report that a barbarian fleet will land at a particular cove, you can have a major effect on the

history of Midgard by following actions. Do you join? Do you attack? Do you do something else? The options are limitless. With the Midgard system, the actual victory conditions for a faction are changed by the actions of the players. If you do not like how victory is achieved then you change it.

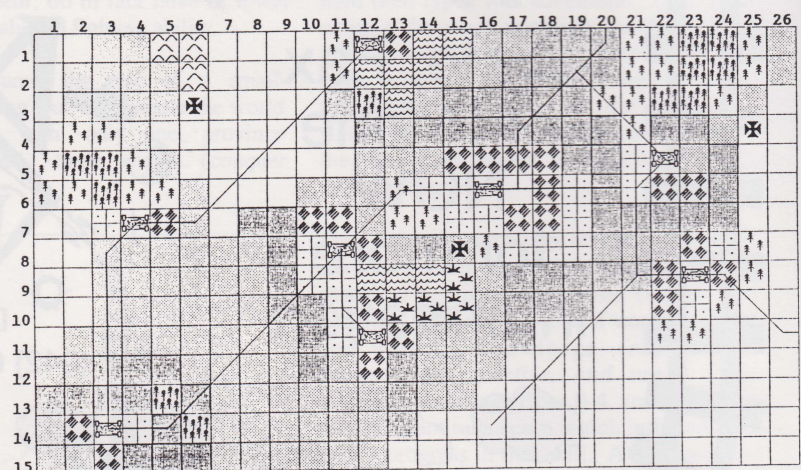
How many games offer you the chance to not only win the game but to rule the game?

The Lay of the Land

Midgard is a world made up of 352 maps all of the same dimension as that show below. These maps range from A to P on the X-axis and 0 to 21 on the Y-axis. Thus the map shown, D-5, is 4 maps across and 5 maps down. The map is then further divided into continents with all the players starting on the continent of Midgard; which is maps A to F and 1 to 12. The continents are also subdivided into provinces that are a 2 by 2 map area. Each province has its own history, needs, prejudices, factional alignments and everything else that a growing society needs. The map adjacent is in the Korlant province and would probably be aligned towards both the Gift religion and the Boda family. All turn sheets in Midgard are double sided laser printed to ensure the highest quality. Turns are set at \$7 per turn with not hidden extras.

Map of Region D-5 in KORLANT Province

Generated 10/08/93



Location	City Name	Faction
D-5-11-8	(#1120) BESMIT	GIFT
D-5-12-11	(#1122) COY	IMPERIAL
D-5-4-7	(#1127) DALQ	GIFT
D-5-16-6	(#1123) HORTON-HALE	BODA
D-5-12-1	(#1121) KRALDAN	RING
D-5-3-14	(#1126) LAUD	BODA
D-5-23-9	(#1125) OLD MAIN	GIFT
D-5-22-5	(#1124) WESTUN	BODA

Game News

Game One of Midgard is currently in its 8th cycle. It has about 70 players active with new ones being added all the time. Currently, new start up positions are given an advanced set up with increases to influence, retainers, and treasury in order to decrease the disadvantages involved in starting late. Factional preferences so far suggest that the Banner religion, the Getham family and the Merc Verk mercenaries are the most popular choice, though all factions have at least one member. The following table is the overall rankings of the players in the game. Hopefully a player rank tale will be published in subsequent editions of Australian Realms in order to give the good players a chance to see their names in lights.

Rank	Clan Name	Faction
1	Gormless Geeks	Banner Religion
2	XXXXXX	Ring Religion
3	Ogres of Ptui	Banner Religion
4	Silverswords	Merc Verk
5	Leopard	Gift Religion
6	Hordes of Chaos	Getham Family

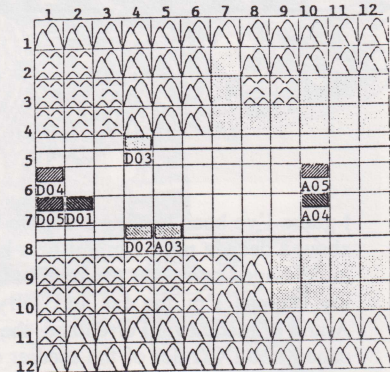
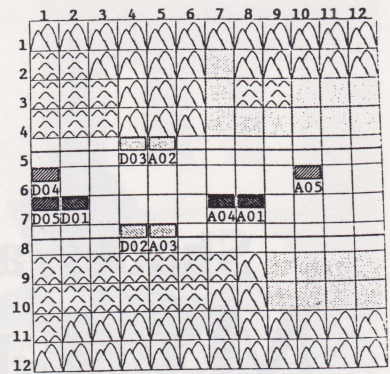
From the table you can see that the religions are doing the early moving in Midgard. The monthly in-house magazine gives a more complete rundown on who is doing best in what areas.

Combat in Midgard

The combat system in Midgard is based on miniature war games with a graphical 4+ page battle report for all conflicts. The combat system allows battle plans on grid paper to be submitted by players or just give your troops one of the 77

Round 1
A03 charges D02 !! A02 charges D03 !! A04 screens A01. A05 fires at D03 at extreme range and kills 13 men !! D04 fires at A02 and kills 27 men !! A02 attacks D03 and kills 33 men and wounds a follower !! D03 attacks A02 and kills 7 men !! A03 attacks D03 and kills 34 men !! D02 attacks A03 and kills 6 men !! A02 fails Morale and attempts to flee. D05 attacks A04 with Flaming Light Siege Weapons and kills 4. The Elephants, scared by the fire, fail morale and flee.

Round 2
A02 attempts to flee and is successful. D03 did not give chase. A04 tries to flee and is successful. A04 charges A01 and kills 93 men and kills a follower !! A04 charges A05 and kills 27 men and wounds a follower !! A03 attacks D02 and kills 13 men !! D02 attacks A03 and kills 2 men !! D04 attacks A03 and kills 23 men !! D05 attacks A04 and kills 4 men. A01 has been routed. A05 tries to flee. D02 has been wiped out !! The attackers fail their force morale and attempt to flee !! Victory goes to the defenders !!

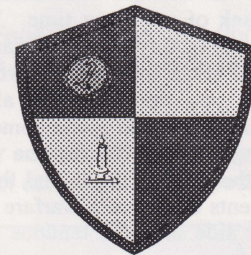


standing orders. Multiple player combats have also been seen in Game One. Two players were ambushed on a road leading to a town. They recognised each other from another game, then joined forces to go back and beat the stuffing out of the bandit on the road. Above is a small section of a battle report that involved two players in Game One. The attacker (a Bandit) was using unit of Elephants to screen his main force of Heavy Infantry. However the defender had readied some light flaming siege weapons that targeted the elephants, who don't like fire at all. They turned round and ran over the troops they were trying to screen.



MIDGARD

The Game of Medieval Intrigue



Midgard - A complex game of rival clans in a world

honeycombed with rival alliances, secret societies and religions. The player is destined to either be a footnote in the annals of history or the corner stone for all thinking for a thousand generations.

** Mixed moderation allows the flexibility of a human moderator with the consistency of a computer.

** A sufficient depth to allow players endless choices in determining the fate of their clan.

** 4 page graphical battle reports giving a detail straight out of a table top war game.

Rule Book, Set Up and two free turns \$15 dollars

Turn fees are \$7 a turn with no other hidden charges. The game is not dirt cheap but the quality is guaranteed to be superior. Quality turn sheets that are not just churned out by a computer are worth it.

For More Information write to:
The Barons Australian Midgard
PO Box 542
Lindfield NSW 2070.

Mention **Australian Realms**
and receive 1 additional free
turn with any new Start Up

The Australian Wizard

Shades, a beeg cigar and an assault rifle: My Life in El Mythico.

Peter Mackay

I guess I've been leading a double life for about a decade now. I might be a balding, middle-aged computer programmer, but in my dreams I'm the fat and jolly King Araric of mediaeval Perrenland, the black-caped Leo IX (ruler of the seedier quarter of the galaxy) or military strongman El Rick of wartime Morocco. I'm talking about my PBM alter-egos, of course. Once a fortnight I'm plunged into a different world, and my spare time is filled with plots, schemes and tactics; furtive diplomacy and boastful propaganda.

But of all my characters, the moustachioed Capitan Jackal of Central America is the one I remember with most affection. He came to life in an early game of *The Australian Wizard's El Mythico*, and for the next two years the exploits of he, his allies and his enemies dominated a very large chunk of my spare time. There's some special quality about this game, one that gives it an authentic flavour and immerses you deep into an alternate world. Somehow the game comes alive and the tangled politics, the steamy jungles, the dusty villages and the sharp engagements of guerrilla warfare are just the other side of some tenuous sensory barrier.

El Mythico is a gem of a game, one of those happy instances where all of the elements fit together and balance each other. It's not overly complex nor difficult to master, but there's always a zillion things to do and never enough to do them with. From start to finish you'll always be kept involved and interested. A word of warning, though - it is a fairly vicious game and players can be knocked out of contention very early on. Though it's a lot of fun to lurk in the hills and blow bridges, plant spies and assassinate leaders, many players will drop out once they realise they can't win.

There would be few Australian PBMs who haven't tried *El Mythico*. It took out the most recent "Best Game" award at Cancon against stiff competition, and has been exported overseas.

El Mythico is a modern day Central American republic, bounded by Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. It is divided into six provinces and a large central city. The terrain can best be described as mixed. There's a lot of jungle, swamp, rivers, mountains and hills. On the other hand, there are a few good plains, a road and rail net, and under certain circumstances the rivers can be used for transport. On the gripping hand, there's an awful lot of tunnels, bridges and passes that may be sabotaged. The multicoloured map is divided up by a hexgrid and will be familiar to wargamers.

Each of the six provinces contains a town (divided into Workers, Middle and Rich population groups), twelve villages and a couple of installations (Copper Mine, Sugar Plantation, Power Station, to name a few). The city contains seven hexes (each containing a single population) and four installations. The city is completely surrounded by mountains pierced in three places by the highway system which links it to the towns, some of the villages and the surrounding countries.

That's the physical setting. The political layout gives the game much of its flavour. Each province has one governor and two guerrillas. The governor starts in the town and gets two infantry companies and a squadron of armoured personnel carriers. The guerrillas begin in two random villages within the province, each leading three infantry companies. Each player must select a political alignment: Left-wing, Right-wing or Centrist. This determines what sort of equipment is available to arm your troops, and effects

how popular you are with various population groups. For example, a right wing player will find American equipment cheaper than equivalent weaponry from the USSR, and will find it a lot easier to influence rich population groups.

Each player must select a vocation, choosing from Clergy, Military, Politician or Underworld. Each vocation has a number of special abilities, such as an Underworld figure being able to extort money from population groups, or as Military leader giving his troops a battle bonus. As play progresses and players accumulate victory points, promotions are awarded. With higher rank comes greater ability - a Local Hood might only be able to extort a small amount at anyone time, and as his rank carries a substantial victory point bonus at game end, assassination attempts tend to become more frequent in the closing stages of the game.

Alliances are possible, and carry substantial benefits. Each player is limited in the number of possible allies, having five alliance points where it costs one point to ally to another player of the same type and political outlook, but up to four points for somebody radically different. This is one of the neatest alliance schemes that I have ever seen, forcing players to choose their allies very carefully, balancing a number of factors in their selection. You are either allied or hostile. Alliances can be dropped, taking effect at the end of the turn.

Economics is pretty simple. You earn Activity Points (AP) from population groups and installations that you control. APs can also be gained through a limited variety of special actions, such as investment or extortion. You have a very wide range of things on which to spend APs: buying weapons, recruiting spies,

sabotaging installations, assassinations... The bread and butter of your economy revolves around two things, influencing population centres and buying weapons for your troops.

Influencing population groups is an important way to spend your money. This can yield at immediate benefit as you get income if you control a group. You'll need to spend 3 AP to control a village, for example, for example, but you then get 4 AP income each turn. Control goes to the player with the highest influence, so another player could topple an initial 3 AP influence with (say) 5 AP, and would then reap the income. At game end, it is not unusual to find several players with over a hundred AP influence each in a single population group. You can also gain influence by using a unit to garrison and search, or by getting a clergy leader to Congregate in that hex. Spies may be used to Subvert another player's influence.

The rule book lists three pages of bang boxes to buy, ranging from ammunition at half an AP per crate to Mirage III's at 44

AP a plane. Apart from a few goodies like Stinger Surface to Air Missiles, most equipment is vintage Cold War stuff. Infantry companies are equipped with basic rifles and then you load them with additional gear like heavy machine guns, mortars and anti-armour weapons. Armour, artillery, airforce and naval units are built around the appropriate equipment.

The combat system is very detailed and realistic, taking a host of factors into account such as training, experience, weaponry, strength, aggression factor, ammo supply, terrain, and opponent type. This is applied against a generous random factor, so you'll get the odd upset in small combats, but larger battles will favour the bigger and better battalions. Supporting arms, such as artillery, air support and naval gunfire, add flavour (and lots of damage) to crucial battles.

The game flow constantly changes over the year and a bit of play. At game start, players scramble to gain territory and set up alliances. Inevitably a few players fall by the wayside in the first five turns. A period of consolidation follows the initial

frenzy as players build up their forces and ponder the next target. The mid-game is usually a test of strength for alliances and typically three or four alliances will end up owning most of the map. About turn 25 players will assess their positions and begin trying to influence the eventually victory lineup. Backstabs, surprises and windfalls can occur at each stage of the game, and unless one alliance gains a whopping great early advantage, the result of the game will be in doubt right up to the end.

I've played in a couple of games where I ended up with the short end of the stick, and in both instances I stayed right to the end, even though I had not the remotest chance of winning. The game is well suited to "the war of the flea" and you don't have to have a huge empire to have a good time. Assassinations, sabotages, subversions and ambushes are all good fun. In one game I got comprehensively invaded, but by building lots of spies I was able to deny control to the invader - my chances of winning sank to zero, but I was able to stop the aggressor from gaining enough victory points to win.

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SPIRAL ARM II

* CanCon Players Awards 1987-91.

PBM EXPRESS
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ER.....ME?, NEVER

BACKSTAB ME
 WOULD YOU?!

Perhaps one of the most attractive features of *El Mythico* is that it is a game that rewards real-life strategies and tactics. Study up on the methods of the great commanders and you are almost guaranteed success. This is a game where Fidel Castro or Mao would feel at home. The lack of unrealistic factors help to give the game its unique atmosphere. Combine this with the colourful map, the political overtones and the believable combat and economic systems, and you have a game to fuel your fantasies.

I've been playing *El Mythico* for a few years now, and I hope to always be involved in a game or two, so you might say that I enjoy the game. But it's not perfect, and I find one or two aspects irritating. The orders system is the worst. Each order is a two digit number, followed by several more numbers indicating such things as hex locations, weapon types, pursuit options, retreat directions and aggression levels. Heaven help the poor player who gets muddled and orders 5,714 boxes of weapon type 39 in hex 2! I guess the answer is to study the order formats carefully, and, to be fair, the relevant section in the rules booklet is well laid out with examples.

There are still some "funnies" where the game differs from what is stated (implied in the rules). The Naratito-Gorda ferry is a case in point, where apparently the ferry is moored out in the middle of the river until one player controls both landing. If you hold one side and your ally the other, the ferryman will stubbornly refuse to operate.*

We've been hearing tantalising rumours about a new version of *El Mythico* to be set in Central Europe and called Balkania. Given recent events in the region, such a game would timely, if not in the best of taste.

To sum up, *El Mythico* is a wargame set in Central America with strong political, economic and combat systems. Eighteen players start up, about half finish, and only one player can win. Play is lively and entertaining throughout and the eventual winner will usually be an all-rounder with a strong streak of cunning.

There are 30+ fortnightly turns in a game, each turn costing \$7 (various discounts available). Setup charge is \$10.00 plus \$10.00 for rules and map and new games are every few weeks.

Highly recommended.

*GM's note: This is going to be fixed very shortly.

POSTAL AMERICAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE



Postal American Football League, from the Australian Wizard is a play by mail version of American Football, or Gridiron. Each league has room for 28 players, each being the head coach of a gridiron team. The league is based on the American NFL with twenty-eight teams structured into two conferences, the American Football Conference and the National Football Conference, and teams have the names of real NFL teams, so players can coach teams such as the San Francisco 49ers, Buffalo Bills or Chicago Bears.

Each player's aim is to successfully coach his or her team to the ultimate prize: winning the SUPERBOWL. To reach the Superbowl you first have to win enough games during the sixteen game regular season to make it to the playoffs. Once you make the playoffs you still have to beat the other playoff teams in your Conference. If you can do this your team is the Conference champion, which entitles you to play in the Superbowl against the other Conference's champion.

To coach a team you need to acquire good players, train them to be better players, and come up with the right strategy on both offence and defence to beat your opponents. Acquiring players is done through the draft and through trades with other coaches, and as there is only so much talent to go around it is important to get players to match your team's approach eg. don't give too much away for a star wide receiver if you intend to run the ball all the time. Coaching is done during the season with four hundred hours available to train the players in the skills they need. Each turn is a full game against one of the other teams, you go head to head with a different opponent and have to come up with a strategy to beat them. How much you change each week is up to you, and deciding what and how much to change is part of your challenge as coach. Play choices include running or passing and the type of run or pass to use, eg. do you try for the long bomb to score quickly or keep running and short passing to steadily churn out the yardage.

PAFL has recently completed its 1992-93

regular season and the twelve playoff teams have been determined. The playoff teams in the AFC are the Buffalo Bills, the Miami Dolphins, the Cincinnati Bengals, the Seattle Seahawks, the Denver Broncos and the Kansas City Chiefs. In the NFC the playoff teams are the Philadelphia Eagles, the Washington Redskins, the Minnesota Vikings, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Atlanta Falcons and the LA Rams. Following is a brief description of how they got there.

Weeks One to Four

By the end of week four only the Minnesota Vikings remained undefeated while three teams had yet to get a win on the board, Houston, San Diego and Phoenix - each of which I had tipped as likely playoff teams. At this stage as well as Minnesota division leaders were Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Kansas City, Philadelphia, and Atlanta with only one loss each. Of these the biggest surprise was Indianapolis which had shown no form at all in preseason games.

Weeks Five to Eight

Wins in weeks five and six had Minnesota still undefeated and already two games clear of nearest rivals Green Bay and starting to look unbeatable, it had also won all of its preseason games. Finally in week seven it suffered its first loss at the hands of Detroit. By week eight every team had finally scored at least one win. Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Minnesota and Atlanta still led their divisions while Kansas City had losses in weeks five, six and eight to slip behind both Seattle and Denver. Indianapolis had the worst turnaround with four straight losses to drop to the bottom of its division which was now led by the Miami Dolphins. The latest surprise was the performance of Seattle which had lost its star running back John L. Williams in week three only to start playing better.

Weeks Nine to Twelve

By this stage of the season things were a bit more stable with Cincinnati, Seattle, Philadelphia, Minnesota and Atlanta all still leading their divisions. Losses in weeks eleven and twelve by Miami saw it slip behind Buffalo who had never been

more than a game behind. Indianapolis' slump had continued with four more losses and it was by now well and truly out of the race. While most divisions were down to only one or two teams vying for the divisional titles the wildcard races were still wide open. In the AFC Miami and Denver were still in the divisional races and likely to at least get wildcards, while New England, San Diego, Kansas City and New York (Jets) battled for the third wildcard. In the NFC the Rams were in line for one wildcard if they failed to catch Atlanta while the other two wildcards would be fought out between Washington, New York (Giants), Green Bay and Tampa Bay who with only four wins after week ten had appeared to be out of the race but had come back strongly.

Weeks Thirteen to Sixteen

At this stage Atlanta was only one game ahead of L.A. (Rams) and facing a trip to Minnesota in week thirteen, which it won to stay ahead of the Rams. New England and San Diego lost big games against Buffalo and Denver respectively to seriously hurt their playoff hopes as Kansas and Miami both won games. In the NFC Washington lost to Philadelphia to see L.A., New York, Tampa and Green Bay all gain on it with solid wins. Week fourteen saw Atlanta with another tough game, this time losing to Miami while a Rams win had it slip ahead of

Atlanta due to better divisional record. Losses by Washington (to San Diego) and New York (only the fourth team to lose to the Cowboys) and wins to Green Bay and Tampa Bay left these four teams with equal records fighting for two playoff spots. With Tampa Bay having games against Green Bay and New York to go this was clearly going to be close. In the AFC, San Diego's win over Washington and Miami's win over Atlanta saw both teams position improve as Buffalo, Seattle, Denver, Kansas City and New England all lost. Buffalo's must have been the most worrying for its coach as although losing 21-63 to the Jets was not a record it was pretty bad for a team with Superbowl hopes.

In week fifteen Miami and Buffalo both lost meaning their divisional battle would not be decided until the last week of the season. Cincinnati, who beat Buffalo, ensured home field advantage throughout the playoffs and by doing so confirmed their favouritism in to be the AFC representative in the Superbowl. Seattle defeated San Diego to clinch the divisional title while Denver beat Washington to guarantee itself a playoff spot. Kansas also won to put it a game ahead of San Diego and New York (Jets) who has clawed back into an outside playoff chance with two good wins in a row. In the NFC Philadelphia won against the Rams to stretch its winning streak to

11 games, the same as Indianapolis' losing streak. This loss by the Rams put it a game behind Atlanta but clear of the other wildcard teams. In the battle of the Bays, Tampa defeated Green Bay which, with Washington's loss and New York losing to Phoenix, put Tampa a game ahead. However, Tampa Bay still had to make a trip to New York in week sixteen to play the Giants, while Washington and Green Bay were to have games against the under performing Dallas and New Orleans teams. This meant the Conference was going to be down to the wire with the four teams battling for the two wildcard positions.

In week sixteen Green Bay lost to New Orleans which put it out of the contest but the other results meant it was not as clear cut for the others in the NFC and a count back decided the wildcard teams and order (important for determining home team for the playoff games) with New York missing out narrowly. In the AFC Kansas secured the third wildcard with a win over Denver. In the battles for divisional titles Miami just got ahead of Buffalo while Atlanta stayed ahead of LA to win their respective divisions, with Buffalo and LA getting wildcard positions as some consolation. So with twelve teams in the playoffs coaches of the other teams are now just planning their drafts to improve their teams for next season.

REALMS OF FANTASY

Is a multiplayer fantasy wargame where a number of players via to take control of the game world.

Each player is a single immortal wizard. He cannot be killed and thus you can never be removed from the game.

Powerful spells and over 20 unique fantasy races allow you to raise mighty armies that will allow you to conquer the lands.

This is not a game for beginners!

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TROLL QUEST II

The Clans Go to War

Troll What?

Troll Quest was the first game to be offered by Mercury Games, and has attracted an enthusiastic group of players since it was released in November 1992. It was based on an original idea, and incorporates some features that few other games have used, including a three-dimensional playing space, and a level of computer-based support facilities not seen before.

The original idea was a departure from the games where knocking other players out of the game was the main objective. The game was a race to find a Gem of Life before other players. This has been welcomed by some players, but others have regarded this as a limitation. **Troll Quest II** is our solution to the problem! It retains the original mechanics of the game which have proven to be well balanced, but with a different objective and extra features more suited to the more aggressive style of player.

Clear As Mud So Far?

Warning: This is the boring bit for the number crunchers out there. Skip to the next section if you are easily distracted.

The game is based in a 20x20x10 section of rock, called blocks. Most blocks contain rock, and to move you must mine through the rock (creating caves and tunnels). Some blocks will also contain minerals, which get converted to money when mined. Some blocks also contain special features, which have been introduced in **Troll Quest II**.

The first decision you must make is a race for your clan. This choice will greatly affect the strategy that will be most effective, since they have greatly varying capabilities. This can make each game you play a new challenge, since each race has its advantages and limitations.

Men are classed as Miners, Fighters, Sages and Workers. Each race produces men of all classes, in different proportions. Miners increase the rate at which you mine through rock. This affects the money you get from minerals, and the strategic mobility of your units. Fighters are only useful for combat. Other classes will also fight, but fighters are much more effective. Sages are used to gather information on minerals and the location of enemy forces. Workers are used

to build colonies, which will in turn, produce more men. Men are organised into units. Units can be given a single order per turn, or act on a standing order.

The size of your units is limited by your development, and since only one unit can occupy a block, this directly affects the combat effectiveness of your units. The development levels can be increased with money or certain magic items.

Magic items can be obtained by mining or from monsters, and can be used only once each. The decision of when to use them can be critical to combat tactics.

Combat occurs when one unit moves into another unit. Combat is rarely resolved completely in a single turn, and units can be reinforced each turn, so a single unit cannot usually break through. Instead, to defeat another clan, it is necessary to make contact

at several points, stretching the defender beyond the limit of his clan's capacity to produce men. A surprise attack against undefended colonies can also be effective.

The turn sheet provides detailed reports on all actions and combats during the turn, including detailed reports on any errors that occurred. We check all error messages each turn, to ensure that they are not caused by an error on our part. There is also a map of all of your caves.

Advice From Beneath

Here is some helpful advice from our most difficult player. You wouldn't believe what I go through to keep this guy happy!

- Choice of race is critical to the strategy you want to use. Mining is the major source of income. Dwarves are unequalled at mining. Gnomes and Dark



Elves are by far the best surveyors which makes their mining efforts more efficient. However, all three of these races breed slow. Kobolds, Orcs and Goblins are prolific breeders, but Kobolds can't fight their way out of a wet gelatinous cube, Orcs couldn't mine their way into one, and nobody takes Goblins seriously anyway! Hobgoblins are tougher but also aren't good miners. My personal opinion is that there are two kinds of races: Trolls & food! (Should I tell you what 61 Trolls and a magic sword do to food races?)

- Regardless of race the early turns are a mad scramble for precious metals. A new colony early on is important, but too many too soon can stifle development and hold you back. High development levels aren't much use unless you have the production to fill your units. One exception to this is that a unit with 40 sages is going to give better survey results than eight units with 5 each. Always try to build specialised units for mining, combat, surveying and colonising.

- Given my preference for Trolls, conflicts with other players is rarely a problem (for me anyway). Magic items make combat even more interesting 'cos you just never know when the other guy is going to pull a Sword of Power or a Staff of Stonewall. Orb of Combat Tactics is recommended. Use it early. Use it often! Wandering monsters are profitable too. Instead of bribing them to go away like other races, I prefer to beat them to a pulp & take their money. Skilled Adventurers seem to be the richest.

- Contact your neighbours early. Most players feel a little vulnerable in the first few turns and will tell you where there are minerals so you will leave them alone. This gives you the time to get a few specialised sage units into play.

Dear Dinner...

(Diary of A Troll)

Turn 1: Oh well! So I'm not in the middle everything, at least I'm not stuck in a corner either. Start a new colony & mine in random directions in the hope of stumbling over some minerals. Trolls aren't real bright. Start to concentrate sages into one unit.

Turn 2: Copper? huh! It's better than nothing. Buy miners up to 16. Get workers into colonies where they belong! Continue to concentrate sages.

Turn 3: Mine deep. Maybe the monsters down there are richer. Got enough sages in one place to try a Survey.

Turn 4: Ah! Silver! Survey the deeper levels for minerals.

Turn 5: Border skirmish with the Elves over a pile silver. No prizes for guessing who won.

Turn 6: Spotted gold on level five, now all I gotta do is get there first. A Lost Kobold wandered into my territory. Hmm, gold or Kobold? Difficult decision for a Troll.

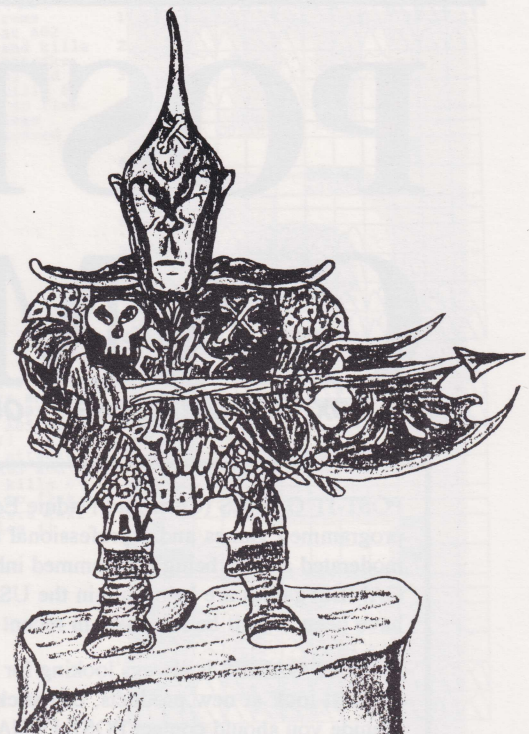
Turn 7: Kill 6 Bugbears for a miserable 12 bars! Oh well, it was fun anyway. Buy miners up and look for richer monsters.

Turn 8: Oops, I'm producing too many fighters. Buy fighter development up to allocate them and make a new unit or two for next turn. Colonies are coming along nicely.

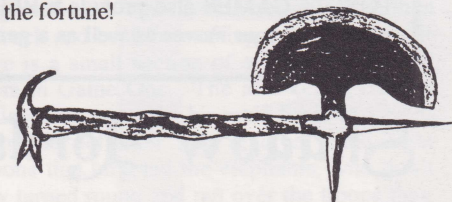
Turn 9: A magic item! Tome of Farming? What do I want with that? Oh well, give it to the workers to read. Buy sage development up.

Turn 10: Killed a Minor Demon without losing a single troll! Bastard was broke! Never mind, the new sages are working well.

Turn 11: Buy miner and sage development up. Start a couple of new colonies. Damaged some Dwarves while rummaging through a pile of copper. They promise not to call me Snow White again...



What's that? Publish my diary? What's in it for me? You can keep the fame, just gimme the fortune!



TROLL QUEST II

Play-By-Mail Strategy Game

Turn Fees: \$3.00 per turn (for 10+);
Software \$5 (optional); 20% discount by
BBS.

See our advertisement on page 12 for
details of our introductory special offer.

Who Are These Guys?

Mercury Games is a partnership between three computer boffins suffering from PBM burn-out, who foolishly thought it would be a good idea to make and run their own games. "Hey, anything the others can do, we can do better...", they said. First there was the game: **Troll Quest I**. "Brilliant!", they said, "Now we'll be rich and get lots of appreciation." Then they started a PBM business, instead!

They hit the convention trail, peddling their wares far and wide, from the nation's pearly-white capital to the back streets of Newtown. The electronic bulletin board came on-line, and startups came from everywhere. Things were looking good! Then they found that most of the BBS startups were just browsing, never to be heard from again. Still, the face-to-face games at the Cons were fun, and brought in more players than any amount of advertising.

Then the players said "What are you going to do next?". Good question, that. With ideas for at least five new PBMs, they had to decide. First, several major improvements to **Troll Quest**, to answer a year of accumulated suggestions. Then, something big! As big as space itself (and you know how unbelievably, mind-bogglingly big space really is...), but you will have to wait a while for that.

For more info, write to Mercury Games, PO Box N600 Sydney NSW 2000 or call (02)868-1272, or the BBS on (02)948-7388 (9600bps).

===== **MERCURY** =====
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POST-IT GAMES

PO BOX 90, LUTWYCHE, QUEENSLAND, 4030

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POST-IT GAMES (Chris and Nadine Edwards) has been in operation for over four years providing Australian designed and programmed games and a professional service to the PBM public. All games run by POST-IT GAMES are fully computer moderated and by being programmed inhouse can be promptly updated and improved as a result of player feedback. POST-IT GAMES' games are being run in the USA, UK, Netherlands, Germany & France, with more countries to follow. Their games have been or will be reviewed in recent or upcoming issues of the international PBM magazine "Flagship".

POST-IT GAMES is always looking for dedicated PLAYTESTERS to test their new games, so if you are interested in getting the first look at new products, can stick to it through the teething problems all new games experience and have a flexible attitude you should contact POST-IT GAMES as soon as possible. POST-IT GAMES charge a nominal \$2 per turn charge for playtest positions but this is refunded if you sign up for the first commercial game of the new game.

POST-IT GAMES also provide a REPLY PAID service for their customers so that POST-IT GAMES pays for the return postage of your moves as well as a generous Discount system to further cut players' costs.

Shadow Lords II

This is the Fantasy PBM game for those players who like to think big. You play the position of a GOD and a whole new world is available for your amusement. The only problem is the up to 62 other Gods also out for their piece of the action! Can you be the one to end at the top of the heap?

You interact directly with the world through your minions but that does not stop the odd bit of divine intervention or the occasional lightning bolt or plague to help out your forces in time of need.

You start out only knowing the details of 9 areas of the giant 3500 area map, the rest is open for you to discover.

Just some of the features of *Shadow Lords II* includes:

- * 10 types of terrain, 7 city types & 14 feature types.
- * Full graphic printout of all newly discovered areas.
- * You design your God using the 10 different abilities.
- * 14 different types of Leaders to control your forces.
- * 70 different types of troops and creatures to command.

Shadow Lords II is run to a two week turnaround and has a basic \$6.00 turn fee.

**Voted "BEST NEW GAME" in the 1992
Australian Flagship PBM Awards.**

STAR QUEST II

Star Quest II is the ultimate evolution of a classic PBM SF system tracing its history back over 10 years from its origins in "MAGIC", through "COSMOS" and "STAR QUEST". Using the experience from these predecessors and many comments and suggestions from players over the years has resulted in creation this final highly polished product.

If you wish to complete as Explorer, Pirate Lord, Technocrat, Merchant Prince, Imperial Warlord, Politician, Information Broker, Diplomat or (as is usually the case) a combination of all of the above, you will find the game will cater for your requirements.

Star Quest II has been designed to give players the maximum possible freedom in running their empires as they want to run them and not force players into playing stereotypes.

Just some of the features of *Star Quest I* included:

- * A fast, friendly, helpful and RELIABLE service.
- * Computerised Help system available to ease the workload.
- * Up to 100 players per game.
- * A comprehensive but straight forward technology system.
- * Detailed ship and unit design and construction rules.
- * A huge untapped Universe to explore.

All this for a basic turn fee of only \$6.00 per turn.

BLOOD, GORE & GUTS ACROSS THE GALAXY

BGGATG is a Science Fiction PBM game for up to 50 players, who are the rulers in a new Universe where all causes are new and worth fighting for, especially the cause of DOMINATION OF THE GALAXY!

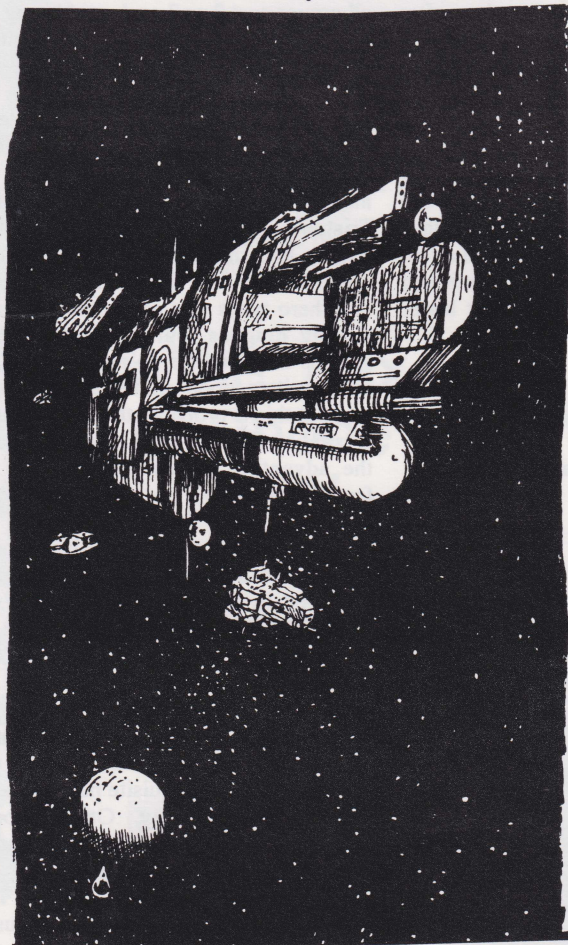
BGGATG is a fast placed game of exponential exploitation on a Galactic scale, where you direct the growing resources of your expanding Empire on your quest for Galactic domination.

Explore a Galaxy of over 400 stars spread over an area of 100 x 100 light years. Build fleets using the 16 available types to crush your enemies and defend your conquests. Or send your NOVA Ships to destroy enemy star systems (if you can't have it make sure no one else can have it!).

BGGATG is chock full of many unique features and if you liked "Spiral Arm" you will just love *BGGATG*!

All this for only \$5.00 per turn.

"Blood, Gore and Guts Across the Galaxy!" -
The name says it all!



BLITZKRIEG

This is the latest game from POST-IT GAMES' ever expanding range, and is a strategic level WWI I style PBM game of world conquest for twenty-five players.

Each player takes the role of the Commander-In-Chief of one of these Great Powers. All powers start with pre-World War II technology and equipment that can be improved through research.

You deploy your forces and direct your Empires resources in your attempt to gain supreme world power. Build your armies, fleets and air forces from the twenty-one different Unit types available.

While there are extensive combat and construction rules, you can not forget diplomacy in this game as whom you ally with and whom you attack can have a vital effect of how you progress in the game.

Blitzkrieg is a fast paced, challenging game of low to moderate complexity that won't break your bank. It has an all inclusive price of \$5.00 per turn with a two week turnaround.



Let's start with a sample turn extract, typical quality of it's text:

Here's what happened to Your Majesty this turn:

De Fuego's forces initiated a campaign of conquest in Oaxaca, a plains province owing allegiance to Brunhilda. De Fuego commanded the attacking armies. Brunhilda was there to lead the defenders. The armies were drawn up into lines of battle as shown here:

ATTACKING ARMY	
191st Elf Bowmen 	192nd Elf Bowmen
23rd Elf Bowmen 	27th Elf Bowmen
<hr/>	
80th Human Axemen 	79th Human Axemen
DEFENDING ARMY	

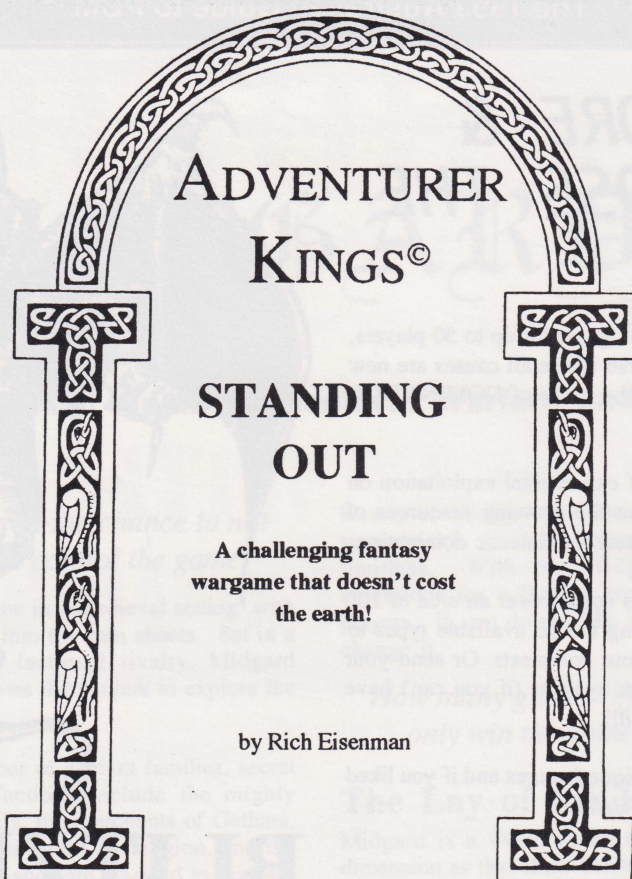
De Fuego led a host of loyal soldiers. Standing at the ready was Brunhilda. The 191st Bowmen outflanked the enemy and charged in with full force. The 23rd Bowmen fought with the 80th Axemen, who were infused with a spirit of righteous, fanatical élan by their good Queen, and batted them to a standstill. The 192nd Bowmen outflanked the enemy and attacked with full strength. The 27th Bowmen fought with the 79th Axemen, who were infused with a fanatical fury by their good Queen, and gradually shoved them back.

The battle ended victoriously for the soldiers of Del Fuego as they broke through the lines at a crucial moment. The 27th Bowmen destroyed the 79th Axemen. The 191st Bowmen chased after the enemy and panicked the 80th Axemen with their ferocious attack and demolished the 80th Axemen.

Oaxaca was overrun by De Fuego in this bloody campaign. The battle affected the quality of our forces: we could not have been better satisfied with the fighting spirit of the 27th Bowmen, and we have elevated its ranking to Veteran.

Results of other campaigns, a detail colour map, plus piles of information on my holdings follows.

Thus began my experience with Adventurer Kings. What will probably surprise you from looking at the turn excerpts is that the game is 100% computer-moderated. All the text and graphics are



provinces), two loyal heroes (lead armies / explore / adventure), and ten gold (pay heroes and armies). All of the above can be added to as time goes on. Quite soon, you and yours will expand into interaction with the other players, and have to deal with the consequences.

Thus far, *Adventurer Kings* probably looks like standard fantasy wargame fare: armies are recruited and marched around, provinces conquered and taxed to make more armies... experienced PBMers will know there is plenty of competition in this department. Will it IS a fantasy wargame, but, like other recent designs, it has tried to go further.

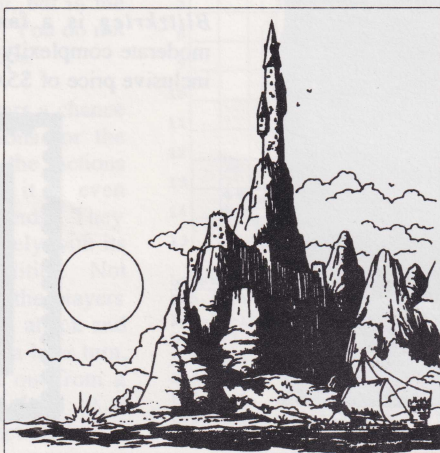
To broaden their appeal, many PBM wargames have expended their focus into the realm of economics. You delve deeply into your medieval economy. counting your cattle, knights and peasants, you try to keep them all humming along. Now this can be loads of fun, but if that's what you want, this is the wrong game for you.

generated by the very sophisticated programme of its creator, David Snell. Although you may see a pattern to them after a few turns, the description and language is different each time, and can be quite amusing. Stray gryphons confuse enemy lines, omens appear, battle standards are stolen, and much more. My personal favourite is when a superior unit "...crunches their enemies' heads as if they were eggplants." What should also be noted is that all that is written actually does have an affect on the battle. So those before-mentioned omens that appear, do in fact raise or lower your unit's morale and fighting ability.

The player assumes the role of a small-time King setting out to conquer the world from scratch with only one province (generates taxes), three armies (conquer

Economics in *Adventurer Kings* is very simple: provinces produce 0-10 gold per turn, all armies cost 2 or 3 each, and hiring leaders run you 1-5 a turn. Nothing too involved there.

So why play *Adventurer Kings*? Well, what has made the classic Arthurian legends so very readable down the centuries? What makes us remember Lancelot, Percival, Tristram and the rest? Think back to what Arthur had in mind when he founded the Table Round: that the natural distraction for bold hero types was adventure! You know, slaying dragons, pursuing quests, bashing villains and the like. Now plenty of people have written good games along these lines too, but this is probably the first game on the Australian Play By Mail scene to incorporate the adventure aspect convincingly into a fantasy wargame.



Thus *Adventurer Kings* revolves around the players' leader characters. Each leader is specified by fifteen requisites (skills), five each for different aspects of combat, magic and general knowledge (espionage, exploration expertise, and ore). The requisites can range from 0-4, and each has a matching aptitude score which influences the hero's progress in that skill. A King persona begins with seven requisite points, and a total aptitude of about forty. Other heroes start with 1-3 skills, and much lower aptitudes (15-20 total is common).

Requisites can increase when used or practised, but poor aptitude can hinder progress, so characters tend to specialise. One hero may lead your armies, another may

explore or do research, while another seeks out 'intense situations'. But the really interesting thing about these requisites is the way they overlap and influence each other. Witness the battle below:

"Midsummer's night came and went and a hot late summer arrived. I downed a nervous gulp from my flask of old scotch and entered the Pyramid. I encountered the Renegade Priest. The Renegade Priest raised his hands and gestured mightily, intending to cast a Mirror-Image Phantasm spell, but it backfired and a rabbit popped out of his hat instead.

Gesturing with my arms, I orchestrated otherworldly forces of magic, casting a Spiritwrack spell, and the Priest began to quake and shiver with spiritual convulsions. I could not cast a Holy Symbol spell because I had already cast my allowed number of White Magic spells.

I closed to melee range, seething with blood-lust. The Priest then swung at me with maximum strength but his staff whiffed harmlessly through the air. I manoeuvred to a good defensive vantage. Then I thrust at the Renegade and scored, inflicting 5 points of damage. I energetically swung at the Priest and inflicted 2 damage points. The Renegade Priest pretended to panic, then pivoted and thrust at me and damaged me, scoring 1 damage point. I acrobatically flipped over the Renegade Priest and swung at the Priest and missed. The Renegade Priest fainted in one direction, then switched over and thrust at me but his aim was just off the mark. I thrust at my nemesis and inflicted 3 damage points. The Renegade swung at me but I evaded the blow. Showing no fear, I moved closer and thrust at the Renegade Priest and scored on the Priest, doing 2 damage. The Renegade Priest staggered, stunned by the force of the deadly blow. I shifted attention to the treasure of the Renegade Priest. I bagged the Large Hoard of Gold. I looted 17 gold from the treasure of the Renegade Priest."



There are five schools of magic (*white, psychic, illusory, elemental and necromancy*), each counting as a separate 'requisite' to be learned, and each allowing a mix of five action and personal combat spells. Action spells are cast on a macro level, and include great strategic manoeuvres like flooding provinces. Personal combat spells like the 'Mirror Image Phantasm' and 'Spiritwrack' are useful for defeating monsters or other heroes. Exploration skill finds new monsters to conquer, and also helps a would-be conqueror find favourable terrain in battle. This interweaving between personal combat and army conquest is the heart of **A K**.

Typical orders will be a mix of military operations and personal activities by your brave leaders. This game cannot be won by merely conquering terrain. In fact, being World Emperor (*sovereign of half the world's tax base*) is only good for 20% of the end game scoring. Although the declaration of an Emperor determines when the game will end, there are seven other offices which each count for 10% of the total victory. A prize fund of 10% of turn fees is distributed in proportion to the value of the offices won. Grand Marshal is given to the individual commander

hero who has defeated the most enemy units; Arch-Mage is the most powerful magician; and so on, with rewards for each type of activity (*the last 10% go to artifact holders*). The would-be Napoleon who ignores these other aspects of his realm may be in for a nasty surprise at the finish line.

There is a small extra luxury for computer owners; if you have access to an IBM-compatible PC, Amiga or Atari ST, there is a free programme available to help write orders! This nifty creation looks at a special machine readable version of your turn, and will guide you through writing orders.

At \$6.00 per turn, **Adventurer Kings** is one of the cheapest games on the market, and you are unlikely to hear of anyone who felt that he/she wasn't getting fair value for their money. To summarise: **Adventurer Kings** offers smooth computer-moderation coupled with vivid reports, and challenging fantasy wargame coupled with heroic adventuring.

It is a unique combination!

This article first published by Flagship and appears here by their kind permission.

Adventurer Kings

The Play-by-Mail Game of
Epic Adventure and
Imperial Conquest

In (2) independent magazines, recent polls of PBM players (world wide), revealed Adventurer Kings to be the highest rated fantasy wargame.

Heroic adventure on a grand scale. Conquest, fulfilment of quests, duels and much more are all set in a medieval fantasy land.



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Issue 14 Feedback Form

In an effort to deliver the best we invite you to fill in this issue's feedback form and return it with your comments. Please feel free to attach a letter.

Tick to indicate.	Good	Bad	Rate 0-10 (10=excellent, 0=bad)
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AUSTRALIAN FLAGSHIP PBM AWARDS

This year we are doing something a little different for the Australian PBM Awards. You are invited to send in your RATINGS for Australian-run Play By Mail Games you have played in the last year. We would like you to rate the games you have played in the following categories:

- ANTICIPATION:** 1 = Who cares, 10 = My world revolves around each turn
GM QUALITY: 1 = Pathetic & Abusive, 10 = Deserves the Nobel prize
DEPTH: 1 = Easier than breathing, 10 = Needs many years to crack
INTERACTION: 1 = No diplomacy allowed, 10 = Dozens of messages each turn
VALUE FOR MONEY: 1 = Total rip off, 10 = Grossly underpriced!

GAME	COMPANY	ANTI	GM Q	DEPTH	INT	VALUE

NAME: _____

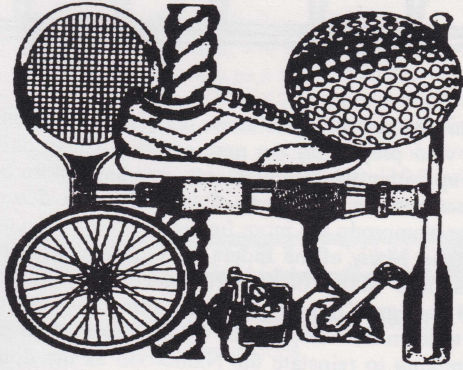
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Reviewed in Issue 13 of Australian Realms.

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Gameplan Superbowl: Rulebook and sample game turn - \$2. Turnfee - \$4. Startup and first 5 turns - \$10.

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Gameplan Advanced: Rulebook and sample game turn - \$2. Turnfee - \$6. Startup and first 5 turns - \$15.

THE NAMORODO

Australian Vampires - A native Clan for use in White Wolf's storytelling series.

By Marianne Payne

"Remember the panic in it's delectable face,
And it was like talking to a stranger."
Talking to a Stranger - Hunters and Collectors

Unknown to the majority of Kindred, is the fact that travellers from south east Asia brought to the great southern land a predator. While the major clans were consolidating their hold on Europe, the travellers to the south were quickly adapting to a new land, with vast open spaces, and small groups of nomadic people. This caused them to evolve specialised unnatural powers. Originally few in number, and with no competition these kindred preyed on the native people. The various tribes gave them different names, but they prefer to be called Namarodo.

Arrival of and subsequent colonisation by Europeans, has given a significant boost to the number of young Namarodo, but it has also resulted in the introduction of the foreign clans, who like most introduced predators to Australasia have largely taken over the niche occupied by the natives. The Lupine too have entered the land, and the elder Namarodo are finding that their domination of the bush is being challenged by an old foe with new ideas, knowledge and tools.

The Namarodo usually appear with a terrifying visage. In this form, their bones are disjointed, an their skin stretched and torn, so that the flesh seems only held together by sinews. Their thick hair stands on end, as if charged, and rows of sharp interlocking teeth fill elongated jaws. The ends of their fingers become sharp claws, that can be launched at any victim within 10 metres, causing an aggravated wound.

Their native existence in the bush has given them the powers of celerity and fortitude similar to their European counterparts. They have also developed some unique powers of their own, and fall somewhere in between the Gangrel shape shifting and Tremere Magic.

There are two distinct types within the Namarodo. The elders, who were born and created before European colonisation, and those who are children of the new culture. The elders wandered the land for many centuries. These long years of solitary existence, as well as the painful birth of becoming has caused many of them to become deranged. Nevertheless, they are very powerful, and many of them are veterans of the genocidal war against the lupine tribe of the Bunyip.

These elders are very powerful, and have learnt magics that allow them control of the Dreaming. They have little to do with foreign clans, and will often show open hostility when contact occurs. The clanless Catiff are held in higher regard, just. The elders dislike cities, and usually wander the outback, preying on stations, mines and small towns.

The Children on the other hand, are the descendants of a few Elders who preyed on the new settlers. These children have grown up within white settlements, and have more contact with European culture. They are often of foreign descent, as the younger Namarodo are more free in choosing who to bring into their ranks. Many of the Elders have created no Kindred since colonisation. Many of the younger Namarodo are neutral toward foreign Kindred, and will sometimes even ally with Catiff to learn new disciplines. Others belong to a group which is attempting to reinstate the Namarodo as the dominant clan in Australia, bringing them into direct conflict with the Tremere and Ventrué powers.

Traditionally, new Namarodo were chosen from solitary wanderers who showed little respect for tribes whose lands they passed through. A prospective childe would be tracked, often for many years, and given unlife if they showed a sustained selfish nature. In modern times the Namarodo will make kindred of any who show wanderlust.

The transformation to a Namarodo is a particularly painful one, and tears the mind as much as the body. As a result, many are unstable, a trait that endears them to Malkavians.

1) Shift Form

Since the normal form is so shocking, they have developed the ability to change their appearance, and their native form. At the expenditure of a blood point, they can take on the appearance of a normal, if somewhat thinner human - usually mimicking Aboriginal stock. The human form is the same each time it is returned to.

2) Becoming the Shadow

This allows a vampire to blend into any shadow, matching it in size and shape. They become the shadow, and are protected from sunlight and all form of physical damage. This power requires the expenditure of one blood point, and must be done at dawn, or soon after. While in this form the vampire is unaware of any external events. At dusk, he awakes, and must reform in 10 minutes or forever remain the shadow of the chosen object. Only shadows cast by sunlight will allow this power to work, and heavily clouded or overcast days may leave no shadows. If the object to which the shadow is attached moves during the day, the caster will move with it, reforming in the new location, with possibly disastrous results.

3) Meld Into The Earth

Similar to the Protean discipline of the same name, this power allows the Namarodo to move into the ground to gain shelter.

4) Transformation

Often the Namarodo may wish to move among and around mortals unnoticed. By taking the form of a dingo, or bat, this can often be achieved. A blood point is used in the transformation. These forms have proved useful in the past amongst the Aboriginal population, and are now being adapted to the urban environments of the major population centres.

5) Stepping The Crack

This allows the vampire to make its body extremely thin and pliable, allowing them to enter cracks in any surface. The crack need only be a few centimetres deep, but must be at least two metres long. Being hidden thus will make them very difficult to detect, but will provide little physical protection, and no protection from fire or sunlight. They can remain hidden this way for up to four hours before having to return to the normal form. This power originally was used to ambush prey from crevices in rocks or tree bark, but is now used just as well in cracked brickwork to surprise city victims.

6) Ride The Wind

The vast size of the southern land required that the Namorodo be able to travel long distances. To do this, they mastered the spirits of the air, and charmed them into whipping the air into willy willys. The vampire could then travel with ease across country. Any Namorodo using this power can create a vortex of air that will lift and carry him overland at speeds of up to 60 kph and to a height of 15 metres. For every blood point spent, the vampire can carry one other person. The whirlwind will last as long as required, up until just before dawn.

7) Call The Land

By bringing the Dreaming spirits of animals forth, the Namorodo can question them to find out information about the current location.

8) Bidding the Spirits

Using secret magics, the Namorodo can call up the powerful spirits of the land, and force them to perform services. These can be as simple as delivering a message, or as complex and large as causing a rainbow serpent spirit to thrash the ground beneath a homestead. The difficulty of the task will determine the cost to the caster in willpower and blood points.

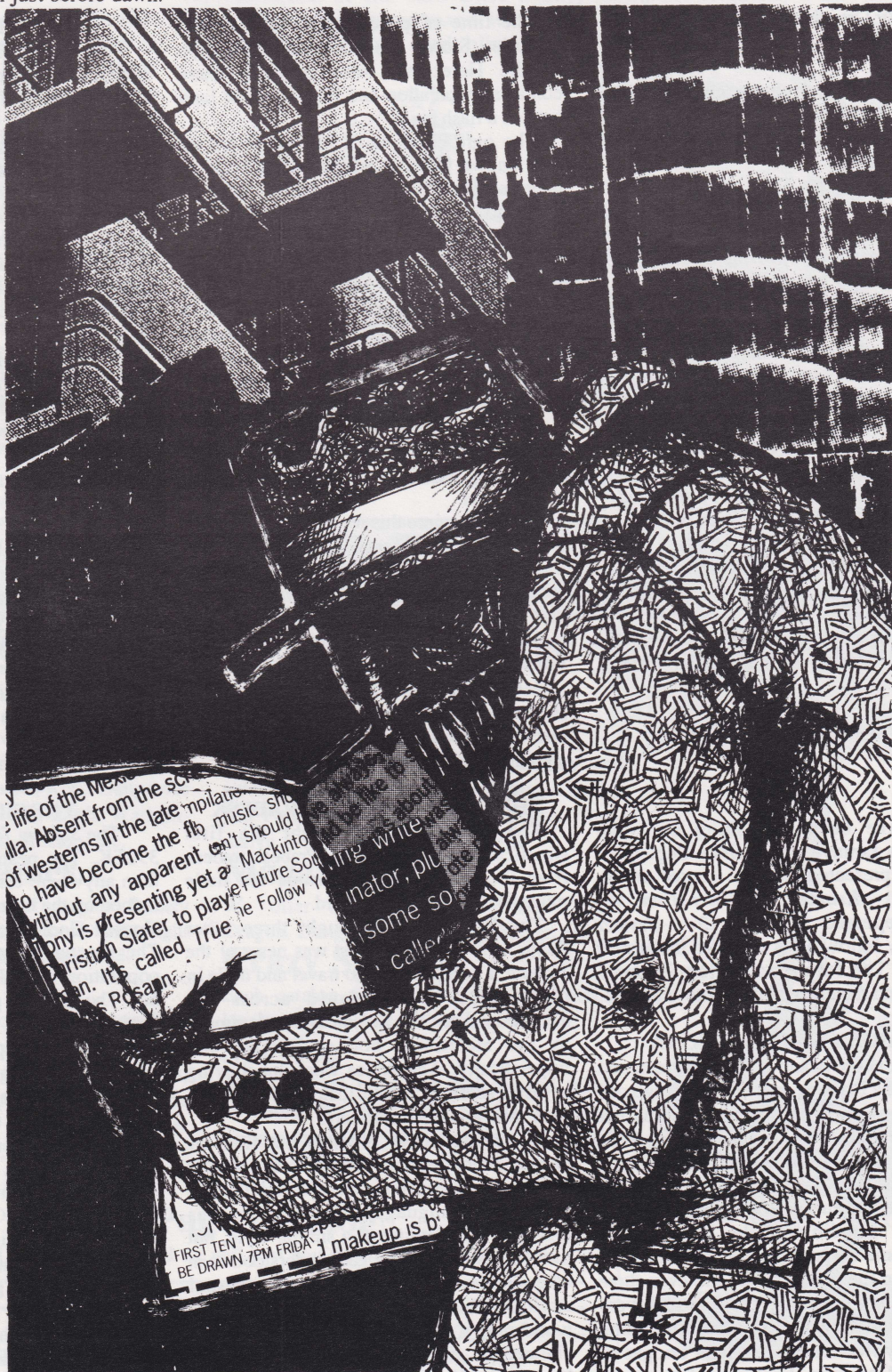
9) Speak To The Sky

By using this power the vampire can manipulate the weather to enhance current patterns, or if used forcefully ie. many blood and willpower points, to create unseasonal events such as sudden downpours, or strong winds.

10) Change Dreaming

This allows the Elder to enter into the dreaming minds of others. There he can manipulate the paths of the dreams, causing them to become surreal nightmares disturbing the person, and causing them to lose concentration and become unable to focus their energies on important tasks, resulting in bad decisions and missing the obvious. As well, their constantly disturbed sleep will badly influence their general health. No form of drug therapy will negate these effects.

The dreams can also become prophetic visions of how things should be, driving the person to attempt to fulfil the vision to the full extent of their abilities, no matter how absurd, dangerous or contrary to the nature of the person concerned the vision is. Others will usually not be told of the dreams, with the affected victim simply believing that the course of action they are following is right. To have effect, the Elder needs to manipulate the dreaming for at least a week, and regularly reinforce it as the effects will fade over time.



FROM THE REALMS CAMPAIGN OF UNAE

EVORA

By Daniels, Whitt & Taber.

Of all the human cultures in Dormetia the Prabesk of Evora are surely the most welcoming, civilised and cunning.

Even us, the elves of Wair-Rae watch them. The people that took one quarter of Greater Baimiopia's realm without spilling a drop of blood. Truly a worthy opponent.

The Prabesk have lived in their adopted land of Evora now for a century, leaving behind the Prabeq homeland far to the east. They have turned Evora's old dull Heletian towns into spire and dome crested trading cities. An energetic people, the middlemen of the world.

As they say; "All trade routes lead through the Prabeq. And all are owned by the Prabesk."

But roads carry traffic, such traffic hides strangers, danger and accidents, even death.

Beware fat merchants, for you cannot know all who ride your roads!

-Forwao, Elven Charlatan

UNAE

We have been publishing our own systemless fantasy world since September 1992. We presented the first 'source' article in issue 11 - *Kramer Confederation*, the second appeared in issue 13 - *Greater Baimiopia*, following is the third instalment of *Evora*. The future will bring *Fletland*, *Kalraith* and the elven nation *Wair-Rae*.

PRABESK MEDINA-EVORA

To look at the island of Medina, renamed *Evora* by the Prabesk over a century ago one must first examine its history. Medina has been home to members of the far flung *Sidio* tribe (the same tribe whose descendants dominate Greater Baimiopia and thus are the most numerous sub-group of the Heletians) since the founding of the Kingdom of Karano, some twelve centuries ago. It is also the home to the goblin tribes and even three ogre clans (see issue 12). These groups were able to coexist on the island as the rising seas finally flooded the last land bridges to mainland Dormetia. Each race favoured a different habitat, but this was to change.

The time of peace lasted only a few centuries. Slowly the advancing knowledge of the Heletians, their growing trade contacts, population and thus need for land created a flash point.

The ogre cabalists of the island are as well known for their white cropped hair as they are for their magical ability. When it came to conflict between Heletian and Clansman blood flowed deeply. Within a century, what had once been a prosperous, fertile and thickly populated place of three cultures became a wild land of defensive people with closed and some say *warped* minds. The great cities the Heletians had built had been blasted and razed, the ogre fortress towns destroyed, the goblin warrens flooded. The bitter survivors gathered in their few remaining centres and rebuilt, with their only contact now being with blood crusted steel.

It was long into this regressive period that Saint Baimio (see issue 12 & 13) came to Medina during the seventeenth year of his incarnation (17EK). Medina was declared part of the Kingdom of Karano, to be renamed upon the passing of Baimio three years hence *Greater Baimiopia*.

Medina, as part of Greater Baimiopia showcased a bland history of steady but uneventful rebuilding and recovery, until the coming of the Prabesk.

THE COMING OF THE PRABESK

The year 301EK brought the first significant contacts with the Prabesk traders from the east, with them came the trade routes and a whole new world.

The Prabesk also brought three other things with them; the first was news of the *Sidenic*, a rare people who travel and trade in other parts of the world across the Tempestus Sea. The Sidenic are very similar to the Heletians, both culturally and linguistically. Academics were unbelieving at first, scoffing at the idea, and ignoring such *theories* as pure fantasy.

In 473EK Mario Sidenzo put foot on Greater Baimiopian soil for the first time and commenced a conversation with Heletians in *their* own language. His accent was different, his clothing of a similar style, but they followed the same god, understood each other and looked to be of the same ancestral stock. All this and he was from a part of the world only a handful of Heletians had ever claimed to visit. It could be disputed no longer, the Heletians numbered more than the eight ancient tribes. They had brothers.

THE LOST TRIBES

This caused the discussion of *the Lost Tribes*, an idea now popular amongst the academics at Baimiopia's universities. The simple summary of the theory is that when the sea levels rose one thousand years ago other, *forgotten* tribes survived and still do in various other regions of Unae. While this theory is believed by many in scholarly circles it is only now being passed on to the unlearned populace. These lost tribes have become mostly landless travellers, likened to gypsies in their new lands.

THE DEATH

The second thing the Prabesk brought with them was *the Death* a plague that killed around 1 in 20 Heletians but also 1 in 4 ogre clansmen which is why the Prabesk were never penalised in any way for unwittingly introducing the pestilence.

MERCHANT PRINCES

The third thing they arrived with was a dream to extend the Prabesk trade colonies they had already established across the world. While having no plans to annex land forcibly, they were on the look out for a suitable opportunity to establish themselves in the region on their own terms. This opportunity arrived in 392EK, a century after their first contact with the Heletians.

THE SIDIAN PLAGUE

The *Sidian Plague* struck Dormetia in 392EK. The pestilence hit Medina harder than anywhere else in the Heletian League, fanned by the crazed fanatical prayers of the Horned God cult; *the Callers of Malsano*. The plague decimated the local Heletian population and all but wiped the nobility out. The island's proud cities stood empty, again as ghost towns. The survivors, weakened and desperate headed south, to the cities of Aurelia and Tharrus who had miraculously been spared the scale of death that had swept the north.

Back in Greater Baimiopia's capital, the city of Baimiopia, the royal family had also fallen ill. Left for dead by the scheming hierarchy of the Church of Baimiopia the king called for aid from any source. One such place was the 'Embassy of Prabeq', a Prabesk merchant guild.

Hassan Qadir was an intelligent and capable man and hurried to the royal House of Turamora's side. After his ministrations the plague finally loosened its grip on many members of the royal family. The king

survived, but was faced with new problems, one of which was the twelve provinces of Medina which was now, according to all reports largely ungoverned and unpopulated.

As part of a campaign in strengthening his position and 'just' irritating the Holy Benefice of the church King Giovanni named Hassan Qadir as Lord of Medina, even granting the Prabesk man religious freedoms in *his* land (see issue 13).

This was over one hundred and twenty years ago, and it set many wheels in motion.

THE BIRTH OF EVORA

From this point the Prabesk renamed Medina *Evora*, and set about rebuilding and exploiting the land. The title was to all of the island with the exception of the south east corner and from the time of possession until now the Prabesk have encouraged colonists from the Prabeq, their ancestral homeland. These people bring the culture of the old country and mix it with that of *old* Medina, creating the *new* Evora.

Evora today is populated by a four fifths Prabesk majority, the remainder being Heletian, with small number of Fletlanders.

Before we discuss the Evora of today we will look at the Prabesk, their culture and their past so we can better understand the outlook of these people.

THE PRABESK

Born of the desert sands of Northern Prabeq, the Prabesk nation began as a number of warring bands. The desert wastes made agriculture almost unknown and life consisted of an endless cycle of nomadic wanderings. The few settlements which existed were organised around trade and to a lesser degree, religion. Each settlement operated as a neutral trading post where the local tribes brought goods for trading and gathered for company, water and shelter.

The tribes earliest devotions were to those things around them. The harshness of their surroundings made life an endless struggle merely to survive and so the tribes looked to these things to worship. *Marlik*, the Sun God, who beat mercilessly upon them; *Hannon*, the Desert Wind, cruel and never ending; *Shir'al*, the Rare One, bringer of precious rain; and others.

The pantheon was large and dominated by stoic figures who stood aloof from the pleasures and pains of mortal man. Each tribe had it's Shaman, who guarded the tribes *Spirit*, a token of great power which was said to embody the essence of the Tribe.

Over sixteen centuries ago this structure came to an end. Much of what happened has been lost to legend. What is known is that fifteen hundred and ninety eight years ago Hafar Al-Mador was banished for preaching heresy before *The Guardian*, a huge monolith in Kuthra which was said to guard the spirits of all the tribes. What he preached is unknown, but he and his few followers were chased into the desert.

After ten years of exile he returned at the head of a column of *disciples*. They carried *The Coor'Ve*, The Book of Tomorrow. He



and his followers entered Kuthra and travelled to the Guardian. When standing before it Hafar started to preach of *The True Way*, his followers and the gathering crowd listening intently, converts came in dozens and within minutes hundreds. Hafar spoke as if he spouted the true word of the gods. Finally, when he mesmerised all but the priests of the old ways he turned to face the Guardian and spoke one word "Truth" the huge monolith cracked wide open and still stands today as testament to Hafar's power at the centre of the holy city of Kuthra.

Hafar's message was simple, it was that the priests had perverted the worship of the gods, that things weren't as they were meant to be. He demonstrated his control over the spirits of the land, summoning fiery avatars, chilled winds and water spouts from the desert. He could not be disputed, the old priests *dropped dead*. There would be no denial, the *Truth* had come to Unae.

Declaring Kuthra his capital Hafar set about securing his position. He raised armies and trained *Messengers*. Within a decade all of the Prabeq was ruled in his name, the next century saw the Prabesk expand their lands, finally discovering the legendary *seas*.

THE TRUE WAY

This should be considered as more than a simple tome of religious beliefs. The knowledge contained within enabled Hafar to galvanise the tribes into what has over time become one of the most powerful nations on Unae. What Hafar did was lock the tribes root worship of the elements into a

powerful new magic, a form of *elementalism* not seen before. Now all the tribes energies were channelled towards one central focus, *The Truth*. Where before they had lived in chaos, now all was orderly. The old priesthood was replaced with powerful *messengers*, (or, as we know them in Dormetia *Cabalists*) who dispensed justice and carried the word of *The True Way*.

To the enlightened Heletian mind (of which their are none but in the Cabal), what all this means is that the Prabesk are dominated by *their* Cabalists, the devout folk worship them, they are both *priest and mage*. This also means that the Prabeq trading empire is the Cabal's most powerful tool.

So, with the Prabesk, a new, darker element arrived in Dormetia. The Prabesk brought with them a great love of magic. Not the gentle healing ways of the Church of Baimiopia, but a darker magic fired by blood and greed. Soon the countryside of the Heletian League rang with the rumours of dark-skinned magicians wandering the lands in search of new victims for their sorcerous practices. The royal court of Baimiopia itself quickly became caught up in the romance of the Prabesk Messengers and their other Cabalists, taking in a number of them as court wizards. In 412EK *The Expulsion* (see issue 13) was carried out in which over a thousand Cabalists were killed as punishment for plotting against the king. Many mages who escaped the slaughter of the Expulsion fled to Evora where they quickly settled back amongst the magic liking Prabesk.

THE MESSENGER

Hafar Al-Mador only ruled for twelve years before handing on the reins of power to his only son. Then he simply disappeared, probably saving the remainder of Unae from falling under his charismatic spell. The Caliphs who followed proved to be less adept than *the* Messenger at ruling, but the Prabesk continued to expand and prosper.

The Prabesk don't expand usually by force of arms, they use trade as a tried and true weapon. Where they are most successful they establish their own cities, this being encouraged by the local rulers due to the wealth it creates. Evora is not the first Prabesk colony, and will not be the last.

SOCIETY

Regardless of where the Prabesk are, their cultural system remains in place. Portions of other values and cultures are occasionally assimilated, but are never dominant.

Their society is based on extended family groups, dominated by a patriarch whose authority is absolute. Below him come his sons in order of birth. The Eldest will inherit all property. This ensures that Prabesk land is not continually broken down into ever smaller parcels (a trait originally necessitated by the shortage of arable land). Younger sons generally enter the military or commerce while skilled daughters are often trained for the *Sisterhood*.

Prabesk view themselves as one long extended family and will treat all visiting Prabesk as long lost cousins. Those not of the faith are welcomed but will meet with a politeness that can never be mistaken for its feigned sincerity.

Trade seems a natural talent to the Prabesk, but it is really their geographical position that has given them great strength in dealings; its either a question of deal with them, or not at all, and so a great deal of wealth has drifted into Prabesk coffers. The Prabesk are the gatekeepers to the East.

The Prabesk live something of an idealised lifestyle. Their religion protects their cultural integrity and their trade opens them up to outside influences and makes them wealthy. Prabesk love ostentatious displays of wealth. Their cities are ornate, spired and gilded. The bas relief and carved monoliths overwhelm new visitors, often causing them to believe the Prabesk are wealthy beyond imagining, a delusion the Prabesk are happy to foster with the rich tapestries, carvings and paintings that adorn their homes in gaudy displays.

THE PRABESK IN EVORA

The Prabesk walked into a largely intact series of cities, towns, ports and farms when they acquired what was then known as Medina. Apart from a few incidents the much reduced Heletian population (due to the Sidian Plague) was accommodated and treated with respect. Some groups of Heletians moved to the cities, others gathered in several villages, yet others stayed in their homes and waited anxiously to meet their new *foreign* neighbours.

Over time suspicions were watered down. While justice was not always served, the Evora built by the Prabesk is generally a 'fair' society, and has assimilated much of the existing Heletian culture into its structures. Consequently most Heletians do not find it an *uncomfortable* or *strange* place to live or deal in.

MODERN HISTORY

After the granting of Medina to the Prabesk, Hassan named the island Evora. He spent the next decade co-ordinating the passage of colonists from Prabeq, bringing in thousands of artisans, traders, messengers and labourers.

The first crisis to grip the new nation was the attempt by Queen Maria to take it back into her realm when Hassan Qadir declared its independence upon her coronation (after the death of her father King Giovanni - 403EK). Enraged that any would dare defy her she mobilised an army and fleet and set sail for Evora. The port of Nerva was sealed, and she could not land, bitterly she chose to head south and land in the loyal Heletian port of Aurelia. After sending her armies through the mountains and incurring embarrassing losses she called off the debacle. Conceding that Evora was too strong to take. Maria spent the next two weeks in Baimiopia, then was declared ill by her younger brother, Lucia. After several days the physician to the House of Turamora declared her deathly ill with a brain fever "*...caught from her travels to foreign lands*". She was declared insane, locked away and Lucia crowned (see issue 12).

The second major incident of Evora's history after its birth was the Expulsion of the Cabalists from Greater Baimiopia in 412EK. Many of the mages who escaped fled to Evora, cementing the image of the island being the enemy in the eyes of the Cabal's foes - the Church of Baimiopia.

RELATIONS WITH THE LEAGUE

Relations with the Heletian League are good, as is trade. Some specific nations (usually the more conservative) share the view that Evora is controlled behind the scenes by Kultists and Cabalists. The island state of Lixus to Evora's south and various, more radical factions of the Church of Baimiopia are of this school of thought.

As a general rule a Prabesk merchant will not let anything get in the way of trade, the same goes for most Heletian merchants.

THE MAJOR CITIES

Evora claims only two major cities, but does hold several smaller citadels, and many towns and villages. A great number of abandoned villages still exist, these date back to the Sidian Plague (392EK). The two largest cities, the capital Belmez and the major port of Nerva are detailed below. This issue's scenario *Lonely Child* is set in Nerva.

BELMEZ

The capital of Evora has stood for nine hundred years and now houses 52,000, of

which the vast majority are Prabesk. The city is a sprawling metropolis, capped by domes and spires. When the Prabesk took possession of Medina they quickly settled into the plague emptied city, at first using only the well built areas. This left the middle class districts and slums abandoned, and rumoured to be haunts of the *Callers of Malsano*. For this reason, while many of the middle class districts were slowly populated by the growing number of Prabesk arriving from the Prabeq, the slums have never been integrated into the new city. Belmez spread around them, and then further out from the centre, leaving such ghettos to stand as squatter districts. The only people now to call such places home are the beggars, thieves, cut throats, squatters, kultists and the Sango Drajo (the Blood Mages).

The city is ruled by Kaleel Qadir, a direct descendant of Hassan Qadir, the man who was awarded the title of Medina by King Giovanni of Greater Baimiopia. It has one of the greatest markets in Dormetia for farming produce.

The city is well known for its education institutions, both the University of Evora, Al-Haran Tor College and several private colleges, all run by and teaching the art of the Cabalists among other academic studies.

NERVA

The port city of Nerva has stood for over a millennium, and was originally a goblin tribe holy site. The nearby cliffs that overlook the city and the abundance of fresh water (in cisterns within the limestone cliffs) have provided a natural defence.

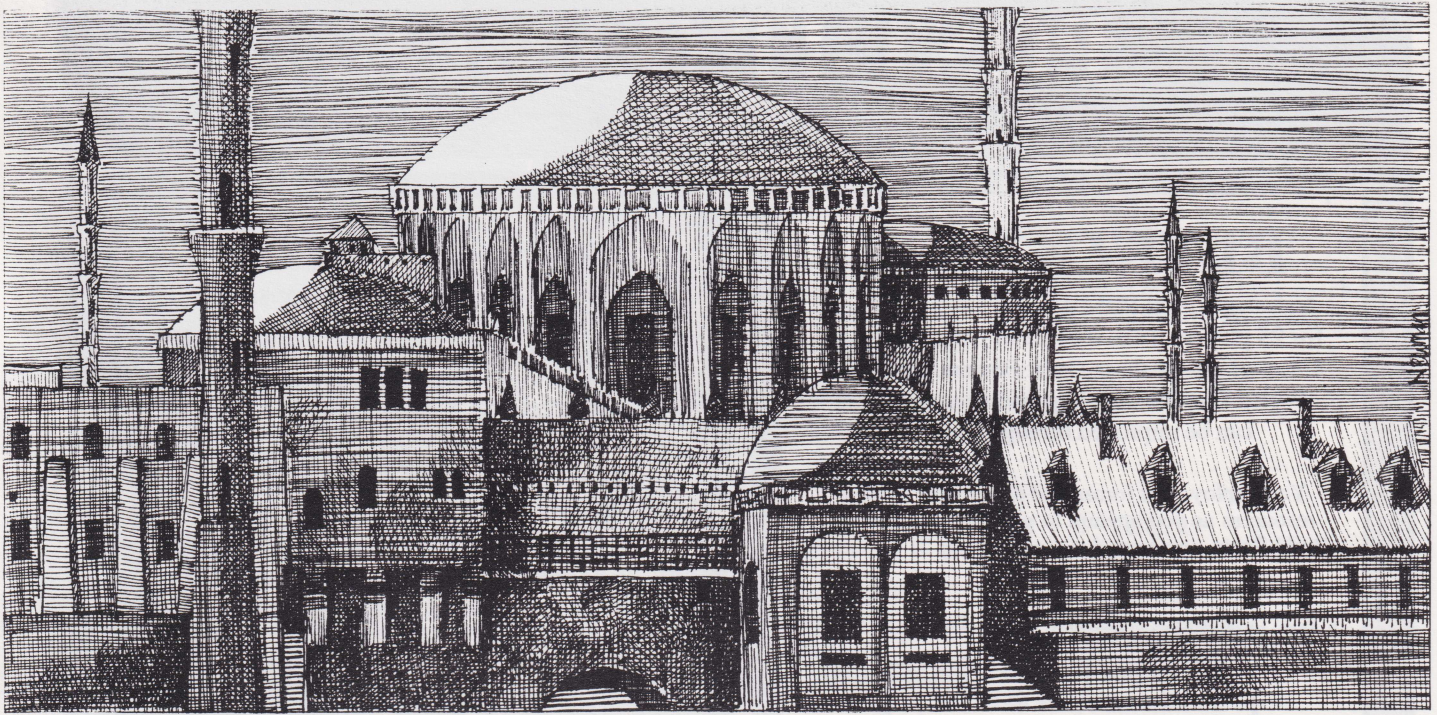
Currently the city of 27,000 is ruled by Mahrib Emor, an old trader whose family dominates the city and much of Prabesk trade in the region.

Nerva is the most cosmopolitan city in Evora, having many people from many lands such as the Prabesk, Heletians, Flets, Burvois, Saldaens (Halflings) and often elven traders from Wair-Rae. This mix is beneficial to the city, with vibrant quarters and markets being the hub of these communities. Occasionally there is violence between such groups, almost always between the Fletlanders and the traders of Wair-Rae. Elves are only ever present in the port in small numbers, while many Flets (over 4,000) live in the city. The elves do not travel the streets alone at night, fearing attack by the bitter Flets who still hold a grudge against the elves for the genocidal campaign that race waged against them.

Nerva is a well patrolled and orderly city, yet despite this it is home to a powerful narcotics network that stretches from Eamastou to Porto Baimio and Qebelle in Burvoy. The numerous smoking houses provide clearance points. Much of these drugs such as Qat and Black Leaf come from the farming districts south of Belmez.

TERRORS IN EVORA

Evora is home to three Ogre Clans (see issue 12) two of which live in the Deipraesidio Mountains to the south, and



the third in the easterly range of hills. While they generally mind their own business raids are not unknown in the later stages of a harsh winter. Goblin tribes are also known to plague the deep forests, with several other maleficent creatures being sighted.

Gargoyles are a minor problem. Every year between one to six raids occur on farms and villages by swarms from the Kalraith Hives. Such creatures attack on mass, the only effective defence is to sit out the attacks in a secure cellar (for more details on Unae Gargoyles see issue 13's Monster Gallery).

The surrounding seas are also said to be plagued by serpents, ghost ships and other, more horrible things from the deep.

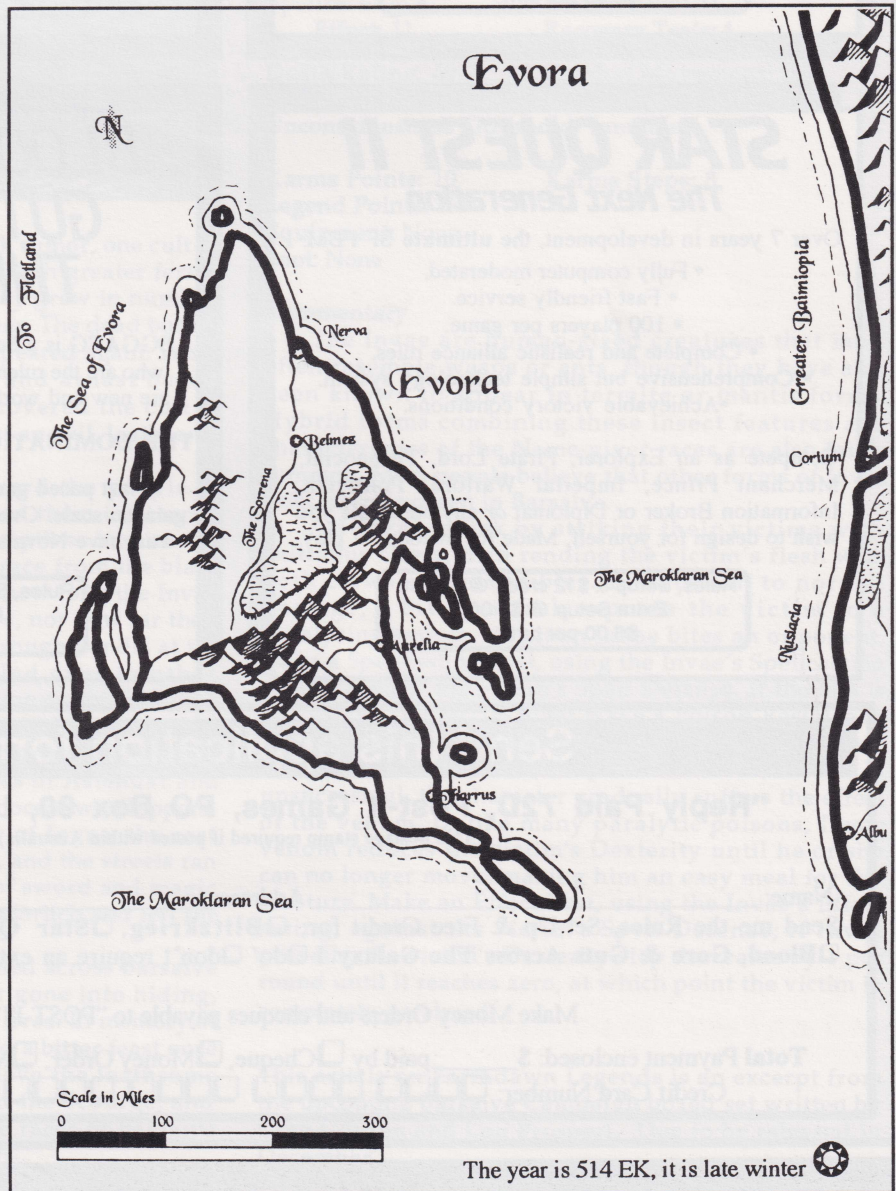
THE CABAL

The Cabal, under the guise of *the Messengers* controls the Prabesk, doing little with the power but staying atop the heap and making vast amounts of coin. The Prabesk Cabal corresponds frequently with the Heletian branch of the organisation, but is careful to keep an upper hand in all dealings. It is the Prabesk who are providing the support needed to rebuild the Heletian Cabal after its decimation during the Expulsion.

RUMOURS

Evora is a land of dark mysteries, an entire population was mostly wiped out by the Sidian Plague, consequently there is much folk lore to be rediscovered about what parts of the woods, moors and hills are best not ventured into. There are also many deserted towns, some of which are said to be inhabited by the ghosts of the past.

Power plays are never evident on the surface of Evoran society, but the plots that are run between Prabesk families, within families and between the few well to do Heletian families are twisted, bitter and deadly things.



The year is 514 EK, it is late winter

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The Red Line of Reality

An Examination of Security Challenges For Your Runners
By Malcolm Adler

The following article discusses simple security methods used to help frustrate those who would overcome them, ie. your players. While most are very simple, and indeed many in use even today they are often ignored in Shadowrun due to the referee not being aware of them, or just not being confident about the method of operation. Ways of using several 'simple alarms' more effectively are detailed below, many of the devices mentioned are covered in the *Neo-Anarchists Guide to Real Life*.

SILENT ALARMS

Few referees seem to appreciate the beauty of a silent alarm. Look at the adjacent illustration and you will see an example of security which 'tells' the trespasser that they are detected. Great, this is entirely to the runners benefit, not the person or organisation that is having its security breached. The only benefit in a visible or audible alarm is that it might scare away the perpetrator (yes, it can also alert security staff, but so can communicators). Sure, in this case I don't think Mr Cute is going to care if he's set off the alarms or not. Chances are, with an attitude like his he is just going to proceed regardless of how many sirens sound, bells ring and lights flash.

So, what are the benefits of a silent alarm? Well, Mr Cute could potentially have one hell of a surprise when he continues on his way eventually stumbling into an organised security force ambush. This is the advantage of a silent alarm, it gives the defender the potential to wrestle back the element of surprise. When you are talking about gun fights this is an advantage that can be helpful, when speaking of "releasing the hell hounds" it can be invaluable.

VISUAL LOCKS

Another stumper can be an old fashioned lock. Great, have a magnetic lock, a card reader and key pad as part of a doors security routine. That'll be just fine until a decker comes along. A nice *manual* lock, or even bar to physically disable the door will stop a decker using telling the electronic system to disengage. While not all doors would have such 'basic' fail-safe, last-resort type physical locks, doors that lead to the outside might. If the door was worth spending thousand of ¥ on in the first place to strengthen and jig up



with mag locks, why wouldn't a corp spend an extra 50¥ to fit a brace, chain lock, or dead lock. Something which may at least slow the unauthorised entrance to a facility by *foreign* personnel.

CYCLES & ROUTINES

All security (at least while a {meta}human element is involved) runs in cycles. Even a "Random Routine System" will still have a pattern within it (it will be just harder to find). Such cycles are the weakest part of any security system, you don't have to wait for the changing of the shift, there are other weak spots in a cycle. Perhaps at ten each night John Citizen, Security goon goes to the bathroom, the tea room to get a soyakaf, flicks through the paper, the fire escape stairwell to have a smoke. Any number of simple things that any (meta)human may do because nature, laziness or wants call. For example John and Jack's routine patrol takes them through the mall at nine each night. They report in, and on the way out have their regular competition on 'Mario VIII', then pick up a juice at the deli before heading to the tube station. Here is a window of between five and ten minutes that runners can capitalise on.

To map a routine all your players need to do is watch. People are creatures of habit, if your players don't want to watch someone for a week or so, chances are someone else already has like the mall punks or a street drunk. Perhaps the information is for sale.

(META)HUMANITY

Above all the biggest bonus on the players side when they are trying to beat security is that (meta)humanity makes mistakes. We can't help it. The counter side of this is that the players are up against (mentally) at least their equal. A security captain is a cunning man, and if he knows your coming you can bet he is not going to sit still and wait.

Next issue a scenario for Shadowrun, set in Colin Taber's *official* Australian setting: The **Stranglehold** awaits.

Facing the Consequences

Useful Roleplaying Tips for Referees with Wayward Characters

by Alan Ogden

Caladin saw stars as the dwarf's fist connected with his head. After the stars came a blinding red haze as anger surged through him. What gave this stinking sub-human the right to touch Caladin, let alone strike him? Caladin's dagger swept from its sheath and into the unprotected belly of his opponent.

The dwarf's eyes went wide with shock as he grasped at his split abdomen. In vain he tried to catch his intestines as they cascaded to the ground before him. Caladin laughed in triumph as the dwarf collapsed to his knees and then to the bloodied floor.

His laughter sounded harsh in the sudden silence that filled the room.

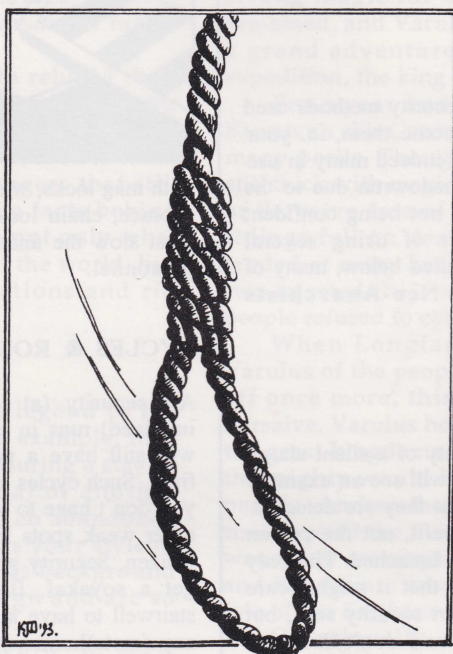
Bloody Murder

What I've just described is something similar to an event that occurred in a campaign I ran a while back and is probably similar to something that has happened in almost every campaign in existence. What I have just described is murder. A particularly messy one in front of a lot of witnesses.

Bar room brawls are a fairly cliched event used by referees to precipitate some sort of action - either the meeting of characters, the rescue of a "helpful" NPC or to kick-start an adventure. They're rowdy affairs that can often end with more than one character unconscious or bleeding. Frequently they end up with someone dead - usually a non player character.

What happens after this will vary on the campaign and referee. Most of the time, unless the gamemaster had something specific in mind right from the start, nothing will come of it. It will be conveniently forgotten by all and sundry. From my point of view this is very poor gaming.

For one thing, it means you, the referee, are asking for trouble at a later date. Allowing your players to get away with (or develop) a



lawless attitude means that it will eventually impact on your campaign in a negative way. Initially it may only be insignificant NPC's that are killed off, but before long it will snowball and you will find that major campaign non-player characters, or non-player character's essential to an adventure will begin to suffer and you will find yourself expending effort trying to correct the effects of your player's (characters) murderous inclinations.

Breaking the Law

The problem, as I see it, is a fundamental fact of human nature. Few people will refrain from breaking the law if they think they can get away with it. It is only the fear of the consequences (public disgrace, jail, fines etc.) that stops them in reality. In a role playing situation many players find that their characters can get away with breaking the law and so they do. Admittedly many campaigns and characters function quite well with a degree of lawlessness but only as long as this is controlled and directed. Even in these cases, players and their

characters should not be permitted to get away with things automatically.

As a general rule it is easier to instil a law abiding attitude in a player when their character is at a lower level as you can bring a greater force to bear against them without straining the 'reality' of the campaign world. By training players in this way you can avoid problems at a later date. If you allow the characters in your campaign to get away with breaking the law then you only have yourself to blame when they begin to wreak havoc in your game world.

Each and every action a player takes in the game world will have consequences. Some of these may be minor, some may take a long time to come to realisation, but there will be consequences. The most important factor is consistency. Only allow your characters to get away with something if the situation genuinely allows them to do so. This may be because of careful planning or a lawless situation.

Law Enforcement

When determining the consequences of a player character's actions you need to take into account the specifics of the game world and the character's location. Different locations mean different consequences. To use the example above, if the murder occurred in a bar in the dwarven quarter of town, Caladin could find himself wearing a hemp necktie and swinging from the rafters. If it occurred in an area where dwarves are a slave race, Caladin may seek out the owner to demand compensation for the dry cleaning bill.

If the character performs an illegal action then they should be faced with the results of their crimes. If your game is set in a structured society then in most cases these would be the same as in the real world - investigation and pursuit by local authorities, capture and jail or perhaps a hefty fine. If the character commits too many crimes in one town they may be forced to move on as the investigation steps up and more pressure is brought to bear by the local constabulary.

Moving on may solve the character's immediate problems but does little to curb the "anti-social" nature of the character since this is a "soft" result, ie. it has no real impact on the *player* and ultimately it is the player's attitude we are trying to modify. As a supposedly reasonable human being, one way for you to do this is to speak to your players and explain that you don't appreciate their wilful (and unnecessary) extermination of your NPCs. As supposedly reasonable human beings your players will probably listen to you carefully, nod in the right places and then ignore you. A better way is to encourage (or force) a change of attitude.

Players With Bad Attitudes

To change a player's attitude, the consequences of their character's actions must effect the character in a way that the player feels. This may mean some permanent loss for the character or some long term effect such as the player character becoming the object of a manhunt or chase. As bounty hunters and informers pursue the character it becomes impossible for them to settle down in one place without constant fear of attack.

If a player character is brought to justice for their crimes - an event the existence of scrying spells and devices will almost certainly ensure - it may mean their death, imprisonment or mutilation (eg. removal of a thief's hands, tattooing, notching ears etc.). These consequences are fairly drastic but if they are enforced your players will either avoid law breaking or come to experience a real thrill in planning and executing "perfect" crimes knowing that they have much to lose if they fail. The results of death and mutilation are self-evident. Imprisonment will mean that a character will miss out on adventuring and the

resultant experience. For the player this will mean that they are reduced to spectating rather than participating.

In some cases the aggrieved victim (or their relatives) may wish to exact punishment or revenge of their own. This can be the case whether the perpetrator has committed a crime or not. Even if they have "paid their debt to society", they may find themselves pursued by vengeful NPCs who feel that justice has not been fully served. These consequences do not need to be immediate but can come out of the blue when least expected. I touched briefly on a player's past coming back to haunt them in my article *Raising the Stones* in issue 11.

While instilling the "correct" attitude at a low level is the best course, it may already be too late as your players have high level characters with bad attitudes, or perhaps the characters have genuinely "gone bad" as a result of the role playing situations you have placed them in. Almost every referee knows the futility of throwing masses of low level NPCs at high level player characters only to see them slaughtered in short order. In games like AD&D huge hit point totals and negative armour classes make these high level "heroes" virtually invulnerable to the average copper, yet turning the average copper into someone capable of dealing effectively with a 12th level+ barbarian is likely to blow the credibility of your game out the window in no time at all.

Call in the Heavies

If you are running your campaign in a hierarchical society, one possible solution is to set up an elite police force to deal with these problem characters. The USA have police forces at local, state and federal level and there

is no reason that your campaign world should not have something similar. This force may take the form of high ranking knights (who live to right wrongs), government backed assassins paid to eliminate "problems" or perhaps a group of judges (as in *Dredd*) whose sole purpose is to enforce the law (see *Pure At Heart* issue 8 for a similar treatment of paladins).

If there is no place for such a group in your campaign then you can make use of bounty hunters and assassins. There is nothing to stop a local community, plagued by problem characters, posting a reward for their removal. The use of (high level) bounty hunters to enforce the law or protect the weak is a theme explored in several westerns (*The Magnificent Seven*, *Unforgiven*) - why not try it in your campaign.

Simply establishing the existence of these high level enforcers in your campaign may be enough to bring your players' characters back into line. Boast about the abilities of these NPCs, about how feared they are, to ensure your players get the message. If this not so subtle hinting doesn't work then do not hesitate to use the NPCs - even to the point of killing off player characters - players cannot say they weren't warned.

Kill Or Be Killed

As a general rule, I do not recommend killing off characters in a campaign but the ability to do so is the most potent weapon a gamemaster has to discipline players and it should not be ignored. Losing a character may be what it takes to gain a player's attention and make them realise that what their character does has "real" consequences. If you do chose this course of action then you must be fair. This doesn't mean you can't employ overkill tactics but don't break the game rules to kill the character. If your enforcer loses you can always create another to take their place - remember as a gamemaster you have unlimited resources and can afford a little patience.

Caladin was whistling a jaunty tune as he entered the alley. In front of him stood a dwarf - brother to the scum he had killed in the tavern a week before. The creature stood alone, a sword in hand. Caladin continued whistling as he drew his own weapon. This would be too easy. The tune died on his lips as he felt the bite of cold steel sliding into his back.

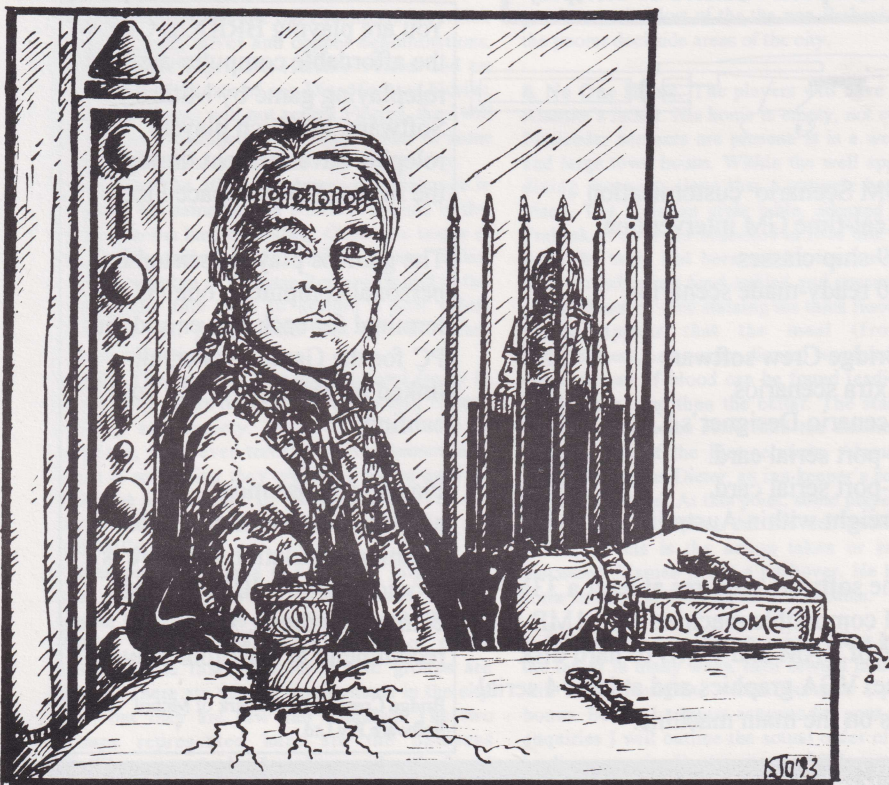
The last thing he felt was the assassin's blade twisting in his heart. The last thing he saw was the dwarf's triumphant grin. The last thing he heard was the dwarf's harsh laughter in the sudden silence of the alley.

Next Issue

"Hell Hath No Fury..."

A Women's Scorn Part II

by Karen Ogden



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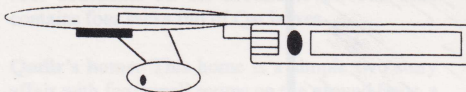
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MECHWARRIOR BREWER

THE WINNING WAY

by Adrian Toman

Even without the return of Kerensky, Battletech was a game where a few little tricks could swing the battle to your favour. The new equipment has just opened up more possibilities. Here are some of my learnings on how win by using a few of the new tricks and tips.

Keep Moving

A well known but little explored tactic is keep moving. If your 'Mech just moves at least 3 hexes in a turn, you can cut down the chance of that 'Mech being hit. Too many people make the mistake of getting a 'Mech into a good position and slogging it out with the other 'Mechs, this just doesn't work. The 'Mech with the highest amount of firepower is most likely going to win a slogging match.

One useful tactic is to have a fast moving 'Mech to outflank an enemy 'Mech so that it can have a shot at the rear torsos. This can be deadly for your foe if you can have another 'Mech opposite to make the target the meat in a sandwich; no matter where he turns there is a weapon aimed at his rear.

Good Design

The design of a 'Mech is important for its success in battle and determining its role. Anybody constructing a 'Mech should think about placing a 250 Magna (XL or normal) or larger engine in it. Why? This engine can hold all initial heat sinks saving critical hit slots, perfect for double heat sinks. 20 points of heat can be dissipated for no space or weight costs until the 'Mech is destroyed.

The arms, legs, left torso and right torso have the same chance of being hit as each other. The centre torso comes next and the head has the least chance of being hit. Keeping this in mind, armour for a 'Mech should be spread evenly over the locations, this will make the armour more effective.

XL engines, ferro-fibrous armour and endo steel IS should be considered when designing a light 'Mech. These items are ideal for 'Mechs which don't have the weight allowance for large equipment so have many critical slots left. Any weight gained by these should go towards more armour or a larger engine to make the 'Mech tougher.

Useful Weapons

AC20s are nasty pieces of work. They are the only weapon which can take any untouched 'Mech with one shot by destroying its head. Also any hit scored on a 'Mech by a AC20 requires the Mechwarrior to make a piloting skill roll. When used in a game with the rule changes of Australian Realms issue 7 - namely the initiative changes, and the biased targeting computer - and the sudden death rules in issue 10, a AC20 becomes very deadly, very quickly.

Large amounts of machine guns in vehicles can also be a worry. MGs are light and only need a 1/2 ton of ammo which can last the whole game and they are attractive to kamikaze attacks by fast moving vehicles with 10 machine guns mounted in it. successful attacks can strip armour off a 'Mech and draw fire from other targets to dispatch of this annoyance.

Clan 'Mechs should always work to the rule of 1 ton of ammo per machine gun. This allows all machine guns to keep firing when a location containing MG ammo has been hit (no damage is done, each ammo location automatically has CASE) two machine guns can draw from the same ton.

New Equipment

Anything that improves accuracy of weapons is worth the investment. Items like Artemis IV Fire-Control System, NARC, Targeting Computer and C3 Computer. Better still, weapons which target more accurately and hit more things like Pulse Lasers, Streak SRM and Swarm SRM. It isn't worth having a AC20 if you can't hit the side of a 'Mech warehouse with it. Make sure of the hit and accept the lower damage ratio. Always choose accuracy over damage.

If you are using Clan technology and are thinking of putting in a Autocannon, chose an Ultra over the LB-X. While you may save one heat point having a LB-X with an Ultra you have the opportunity of firing two shots at once. Though they may produce twice as much heat, if both shots land on the target it is a good compromise, especially if the shots came from a AC10 or 20 where it can cause many problems for the target, damage wise. Using Inner Sphere technology forget the other types and stay with the normal autocannon unless you are installing a AC10 when it really should be the LB-X type. cluster munitions are a waste, spreading damage all over a 'Mech when you can punch holes in the armour of the 'Mech with more concentrated shots.

Miscellaneous

Once I used a platoon of SRM infantry to harass several 'Mechs. This was easy to do with each man in the platoon in a separate hex; this meant the enemy had to attack each man separately. This tactic can do a great deal of damage because each foot soldier can inflict 1 damage point per round until the enemy 'Mech gets around to firing at it. This combined with the other 'Mechs and vehicles you can field while the enemy is tied up with the infantry amounts to a winning edge.

Another favourite tactic is to have aerospace fighters flying with large cargoes of inferno bombs. A mildly successful dive-bombing raid with inferno bombs against a 'Mech should cause any ammo on the target to explode destroying the 'Mech.

Think carefully before you set a 'Mech behind any partial cover. The disadvantage of partial cover is that any successful hit against that 'Mech has a greater chance of hitting the head, plus there is the problem that you are caught in stationary mode to take advantage of the cover. This limits your combat effectiveness as detailed in the first section; the only advantages you gain are you are harder to hit and you could get some extra heat dissipated if you are in water. Lightly armoured 'Mechs shouldn't really be seeking partial cover for these reasons.

Common Sense

I have learned many of these tips through experience, but please remember - experience is no substitute for common sense. ■

Any Mechwarriors out there with a story to tell - contact the Brewer now c/- Australian Realms, PO Box 220, Morley, WA, 6062.

"Jurassic Park". Before you all jump on my back and beat me to death with fossilised Sauropod Femurs, I am not just jumping on the dino-bandwagon, I think some things need saying. Michael Crichton wrote the original novel a couple of years ago and legend has it that Spielberg practically tore his arms off to get the rights. The movie is great fun, if you haven't seen it yet I recommend it highly, DON'T wait for the video, you'll be cheating yourself of a real cinema experience. There are some lovely moments of humour in the movie, I particularly enjoyed the moment in the park control room when, with velociraptors just outside the door, the human prey clamber into the false ceiling in a nice inversion of a similar scene in "Aliens". I only wish the ending hadn't been so lame.

That said the movie only skims the surface as far as the issues raised in the novel are concerned. The book is a diatribe against BIG science, old fashioned reductionist science, as opposed to trendy, holistic, rock'n and rollin', environmentally safe science like Chaos mathematics. Crichton even rails against paleontologists for not returning their digs to pristine condition when they're done digging up bones. We are given an irritating chaos mathematician to trot out the anti-science line; to warn us simple folk of those evil money grubbing bio-scientists. I'm raising this with you now because the book has of course been re-issued with a spiffy new cover (Arrow prpbk, \$11.95) to time with the Australian release of this blockbuster movie. The great Aussie film critic and writer John Baxter characterised movies of this kind as Anti-Science Fiction, they are best summed up by the well known howler, "There are some things Man was not meant to know!"

Crichton had made a career out of scare-mongering: "The Terminal Man" (don't put things inside peoples brains, it makes them into mindless kill crazy zombies), "Andromeda Strain" (all the military want to do is make evil bio-weapons and accidentally kill the whole planet) and his latest offering, which I have no intention of reading, is "Rising Sun" where the monster is Japanese business. "Jurassic Park" is an easy read. Its a great little thriller, I enjoyed it despite the anti-science rhetoric. One thing got on my nerves though. The girl, who in the movie is actually a good young female role model, in the novel is a whining, shrieking, troublemaking pain in the ass and I wanted the nearest Tyrannosaurus to munch her pronto. Mr. Crichton wins an award for creating the most irritating literary child since Tiny Tim. What I'm trying to say is, this is no shoddy film tie-in, the book is a very good read based on some clever researching and I recommend it.

The Analytical Engine

BOOK REVIEWS

by Peter Crank

What do Jurassic Park, John Varley & C.J. Cherrah have in common? No prizes for the correct answer!

Chaos and fractals figure in another new release; Tim Powers fantasy "Last Call" (Avon prpbk, \$14.95). It's his usual; everything (including the kitchen sink) thrown in to the plot, shaken and stirred. This man always amazes with his ability to generate these intricately detailed, amazingly researched and yet awesomely chaotic stories. And I mean CHAOTIC, there's an anti-structure to his books, they just seem to happen. I don't know anybody in fantasy and SF to compare to Powers. His first novel "Forsake the Sky" was nothing to write home about, readable, derivative space opera. But he followed that up with "The Anubis Gates" (time travel and Egyptian sorcery), "The Drawing of the Dark" (magical beer, with the brewing essential to saving western civilisation from the ravaging hordes of Asia), "Dinner at Deviants Palace" (a not very nice ET with some very bad habits), "On Stranger Tides" (pirates, and voodoo in a Caribbean you wouldn't want to holiday in), "The Stress of her Regard" (a race of mind vampires, they love you to death, but inspire you with greatness - the poets Keats, Byron and Shelley figure in this fantastic novel of love, loss and self destruction).

"Last Call" gives us Scott Crane, a professional gambler who enters a poker game on Nevada's Lake Mead, a game where the stakes, unknown to Scott, are the possession of his own body. This is story telling at it's best. Scott is the son of a King, the embodiment of ancient gods, archetypes who manipulate the fates of lesser mortals and who communicate via the cards; Tarot cards and playing cards. Scott's father had himself deposed the previous King, the

man who "made" Los Vegas, Benjamin Siegel the Fisher King, better known as Bugsy Siegel the gangster. This is Powers mixing real history and fiction in his special way.

The poker game on Lake Mead, repeated every twenty years so that the King can replace his aging vehicles of flesh and blood, pitches Scott against his father in the ultimate high stakes game for possession of body, soul and crown. Los Vegas provides a perfect setting for the action; as bizarre characters, and even stranger events, go largely unnoticed by the populace - they've seen it all. The rampant commercialism of Vegas, its sleazy trappings, even the vivid neon of its casinos are brilliantly rendered. Cliched portrayals of magic abound in fantasy novels, its rarely handled in a convincing way. Powers makes magic, divining, fortune telling and ghosts a natural part of his world, and his character's ability to perform these feats unfolds in a natural, believable way. Some might be tempted to class this book as horror, but really it shares conceptual space with Zelazny's Amber series, though it does have a goodly dose of horrific elements and Powers writes rings around Zelazny. Ten out of Ten to Tim Powers for originality, maturity and entertainment value. Pure class, buy it.

Remember John Varley? Varley has ended a decade of drought to release a new novel; "Steel Beach". It takes place in the same universe as his other Eight Worlds stories, though as the author is quick to point out in an afterword, maintaining a consistent future history is not his aim and, "...the thought of going back, rereading all those old stories, and putting them in coherent order filled me with ennui." So don't expect Steel Beach to mesh perfectly with his short stories "The Phantom of Kansas" (which features a weather artist Fox who also appears in "Steel Beach") and "Overdrawn at The Memory Bank", both of which can be found in the collection "In the Hall of The Martian Kings".

Varley writes with imagination; too much some times, there's nothing wrong with enthusiasm but Varley has a tendency to overdo it. That aside his hard SF trilogy "Titan", "Wizard", and "Demon" set standards for big-scale SF. His short novel "Millennium", (an expansion of his short story "Air Raid") was turned into a reasonable film of the same name (starring Kris Kristofferson!, Cheryl Ladd, Daniell J Travanti, available on video). "Millennium" was my favourite Varley story (until the arrival of Steel Beach); the idea of time travellers from the future rescuing passengers from planes just as they are about to crash, substituting synthetic bodies to fool the crash investigators, blew me away. The future folk have adapted to an atmosphere rich in hydrocarbons and other poisons, so

when in the past they chain-smoke these vile cigarettes. **"Steel Beach"** is a good book, starts a bit slow but builds interest beautifully along the way. Hildy is a great character, I like him/her a lot (Hildy changes sex as often as you or I change cars). Varley is revisiting ground he covered in his earlier stories, but doing a better job of it this time. In many ways this book reads like a homage to Heinlein, try it and see if you agree.

C.J. Cherryh is a BIG name. She got that name through a fine body of work in fantasy and science fiction. She puts a hard edged reality to space travel and makes aliens you can believe in. Her fantasy is tough in a way that most American fantasy isn't. I've always been a big fan. The last couple of years, for one reason or another, I haven't read much of her recent work. With the publication of **"Chanur's Legacy"** I thought it was high time I caught up. I also picked up **"Heavy Time"** and **"Hellburner"**.

C.J. made her reputation with a unique style; a clipped prose that practically reeks of methane and whiffs of lifestem oxy and rings with the sound of big freighters docking at station. The Chanur stories, **"Serpents Reach"** and **"Downbelow Station"** are exciting books, they reignited my passion for science fiction at a time when I was bored with her contemporaries. Her books are believable visions of a distant future, where spacers battle empty bank accounts as well as meddling bureaucracies, and hostile or just plain incomprehensible

aliens (like the Kif) make life interesting for everybody. So I sat down with **"Heavy Time"**, and prepared to enjoy myself. Maximum bummer, dude. I plodded, I waded, I struggled to finish Heavy Time. When she picked that title she wasn't kidding.

Picture this scenario: Bird and Ben are two asteroid miners and they are out in their company specified sector tagging lumps of rock for later retrieval and firing back in system by large 'driver ships with magnetic induction drivers. They rescue this other guy, Dekker, from his smashed up ship. He's thousands of Ks away from where he should be, his oxy's all but gone, he's lucky to be alive. He's also raving about a partner that was outside when their ship was rammed by a 'driver that was where it shouldn't have been, his partner is gone. Bird and Ben have a long few weeks back to station with the raving Dekker on board. Bird is a nice patient guy, Ben isn't, not by a long shot. Dekker keeps screaming and asking, "...what time is it?", Ben keeps punching him out, Ben and Bird yell at each other a lot. For pages and pages, and some more pages. I was ready to eject Dekker and Ben out the nearest airlock without benefit of a p-suit. This is entertainment? Okay, stay with it I think, building atmosphere, setting the scene, that's all. Ben and Bird have two female friends Meg and Sal, with shady pasts and suspicious natures. Everybody hates the Company. When Ben, Bird and Dekker get back Dekker gets sent to hospital where he yells at everybody,

then he gets out and Meg and Ben and Bird and Sal and Dekker all talk and yell at each other. Nothing seems to happen, except what we knew all along was going to happen. Forget it. By the time I finish I'm wishing I hadn't bothered.

Right, I think, maybe I got it wrong, lets try **"Hellburner"**. Scenario two: Its years later and Ben Pollard (the same Ben) is in the military being trained as a computer expert and looking forward to good money and easy duty. Just before his big job interview he gets an urgent message; a friend is sick, his presence urgently required. Off rushes Ben, not willingly, to a secret base where his friend is involved in new space weapon testing. Guess who the friend is? Dekker, and he's had an accident and doesn't remember what happened to make the ship blow up with his crew. More bloody bureaucratic meddling and anti-authoritarian paranoia. Dekker keeps yelling at the doctors, Ben yells at Dekker. Meg and Sal turn up, Dekker's mum gets into the act. I wish Dekker had been on the ship when it blew, Ben too. I hurl **"Hellburner"** into the corner behind a pot plant.

I'm scared to even open **"Chanur's Legacy"**. That's a damn shame because the Chanur sequence is great stuff. What happened? Did dialogue suddenly become so fashionable that we prefer it to action? Sorry C.J but I don't buy it, and neither should you.

Until next time, the Engine grinds on.



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THE ADVENTURES OF THE

THE FIRESTORM DIED, AND SO TOO HAD AT LEAST ONE MEMBER OF THE MIGHTY A-TEAM. BUT WITH ALL THE ORCS DESTROYED AND MANGO RETURNED, QUEST'S END IS IN SIGHT...



WELL.

THAT SORTED THEM OUT...

WHOOSH...

WHAT? BALD'S IN, ISN'T IT? LOOKS NICE!



LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO MY LOVELY GOLDEN HAIR, YOU BASTARD!

WELL, HE DID SAY FIRE!

FIRE SLINGS, FIRE ARROWS, FIRE ANYTHING, BUT NOT BLOODY FIRE!



OH... EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO ONE LITTLE MISTAKE, AREN'T THEY?

MISTAKE!?!?



MUST ADMIT, THOUGH, I SORTED THE ORC PROBLEM OUT...

I'LL SORT YOU OUT- HUH?



THINK THIS BELONGS TO HIM?



WHAT? WHO?

DO YOU THINK THIS IS A BIT OF HIM? LOOKS FAMILIAR, DON'T YOU THINK?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, YOU BLITHERING FOOL?

SPUD.

SPUD? WHERE IS HE?



YEAH... FUNNY, REALLY, ISN'T IT, THAT SPUD SHOULD GO LIKE THAT...

ROASTED.



GIMME HEALING!!



CERTAINLY, MY PRODIGAL SON. BUT FIRST RE-AFFIRM YOUR FAITH IN THE BOUNTIFUL SHANNAFRIA... REPEAT AFTER ME:

SHANNAFRIA IS THE NICEST, SHANNAF-

AARGH!

FINE.

OBVIOUSLY A TRUE BELIEVER. THERE YOU GO, ALL HEALED.

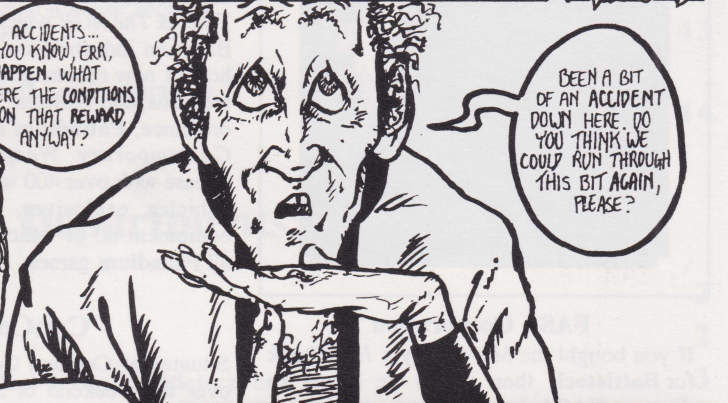


THAT ALL? I'M ONLY HALF FULL.

SORRY, THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY. A MAN CAN ONLY PRAY SO MANY HOURS A DAY, YOU KNOW. ASK VIRGIL.



YOUR HEALING SESSION IS CUT SHORT AS MORE ORCS POUR INTO THE ROOM, THIS TIME LED BY A REALLY BIG ORC. NOT JUST ANY ORC. AN IMPRESSIVE ORC. AN ORC WITH BULGING MUSCLES, GAUDY ROBES, SKULLS AND NASTY PARAPHERNALIA DANGLING FROM ROPES OF TWINED HUMAN HAIR. AN ORC WITH ATTITUDE.



CRASH



END

NEWS

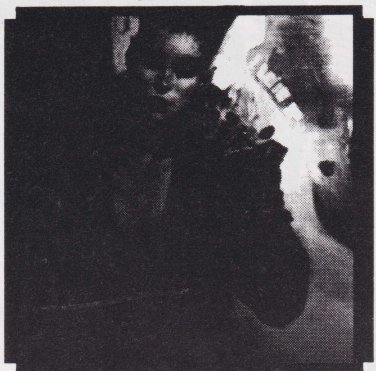
New Releases

With Christmas around the corner, there is plenty of new goodies for your stocking;

TSR

More AD&D 2nd Edition for the legion of fans of this most popular of gaming systems. These include the latest in the *Player's Handbook* supplement series - *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*. For the rejuvenated *Forgotten Realms* campaign setting there is the *Player's Guide to Forgotten Realms*, and for Krynn referees there's the imminent release of the *Dragonlance Book of Lairs*. Finally, *The Elves of Athas* is set to make a very welcome appearance for the most interesting of the AD&D settings - *Dark Sun*.

TIR NA NÓG



FASA Corporation

If you bought the *Mercenary's Handbook* for *Battletech* then you'll be happy to discover FASA have printed some errata sheets to fix the wrong Combat Values in the back of the book. Also out soon for the Clans is *Luthien*, a scenario pack which details an entire campaign for the capital planet of the Draconis Combine. For 'advanced' *Shadowrun* players there's an adventure to accompany the *Tir na nÓg* source book. *Celtic Double Cross* has Irish elves delving into American politics.

More details to hand for the *Barsaive Campaign Set* for *Earthdawn*. This boxed set includes cards depicting many of the treasures and creatures found in Barsaive, a poster sized map of the land, a comprehensive guide to the setting, and a book for the GM so he can flesh out his *Earthdawn* campaign.

R.Talsorian

Castle Falkenstein will be out before Christmas. From Lisa's description it sounds like a real beauty - innovative design, heaps of colour art (see our cover this issue for an example of what you can expect from Bill Eaken), and text that focuses on background instead of the rules, all packaged in a format that would not look out of place on a coffee table. For *Cyberpunk* players the new release, *Cybergeneration* is now available.

Chaosium

Pendragon enters its fourth edition with the inclusion of a new Celtic magic system (to be reviewed in issue 15) and is supported by a new supplement, *Pagan Shores* detailing the mysterious realms of Arthuric Ireland. Collectors of gaming merchandise will be on the look out for the latest *Cthulhu* T-shirt with *Miskatonic University* logo.

Palladium

Rifts moves into new dimensions with the release of *Rifts Dimensions Book One: Wormwood*. Sounds like a fun place to adventure - "filthy, decadent, violent and deadly environment ruled by maniacal dictators...". Also for *Rifts*, closer to Christmas, look out for *World Book Five: Triax & The NGR* which looks set to unleash Bavarian industrialism on the world with a host of new robots, power armour, cyborgs, weapons, and vehicles. Talking about heavy ordnance, *Palladium's Compendium of Contemporary Weapons* is also due for release with over 400 weapons, 20 armoured vehicles, explosives, armour and special equipment all of which is compatible with all *Palladium* games.

CanCon 94

Situated at Copland College, Melba, ACT over the weekend of Jan 21 to 23, 1994, CanCon is acknowledged as *the* national wargaming, boardgaming and roleplaying event on the Australian Convention calendar. There is a heavy roleplaying focus at the Con these days with the RPGA, and some of the country's leading roleplay scenario writers involved. For miniatures and war game players there's the annual Ancients and Boardgames Championships. Add to this several freeforms, demonstration games, a traders hall and a dinner and you have to ask yourself "Why won't I be there?".

Well if you need any further excuse, *Australian Realms* will also be there!

We'll be extending our special on issues 1 to 12 for \$32.00, have issue 15 on sale, plus some other exciting stuff, so come along and have a chat with us - oh, and if anyone knows of a decent Indian takeaway

close to the College, please drop us a line!

For CanCon 94 information contact Noel Bugeia (06) 251 4076 or Wes Nicholson (06) 259 1914 between 7pm and 10pm Monday to Friday.



A-Team Book

The A-Team book is currently under construction. Scheduled for release in the first half of 1994 it will include previously unreleased material from Andrew and Scott. If you want to be ahead of the pack, to have the book delivered to your door weeks before it is available in the shops, with a discount, send a stamped self-addressed envelope. When the book is ready to print we will send an order form straight out to you so you can reserve your copy as there will be a limited production run.



Where All Good Orcs Go Shopping...

There are a number of specialist games shops around the nation who support *Australian Realms*. We'd like to return the favour by asking our readers to think carefully next time they make a gaming purchase. If you can manage it, consider making that purchase at a shop that stocks *Australian Realms*; that shop is supporting local products... please support them.

... See ya 'round like a d100!

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