ISSUE 28

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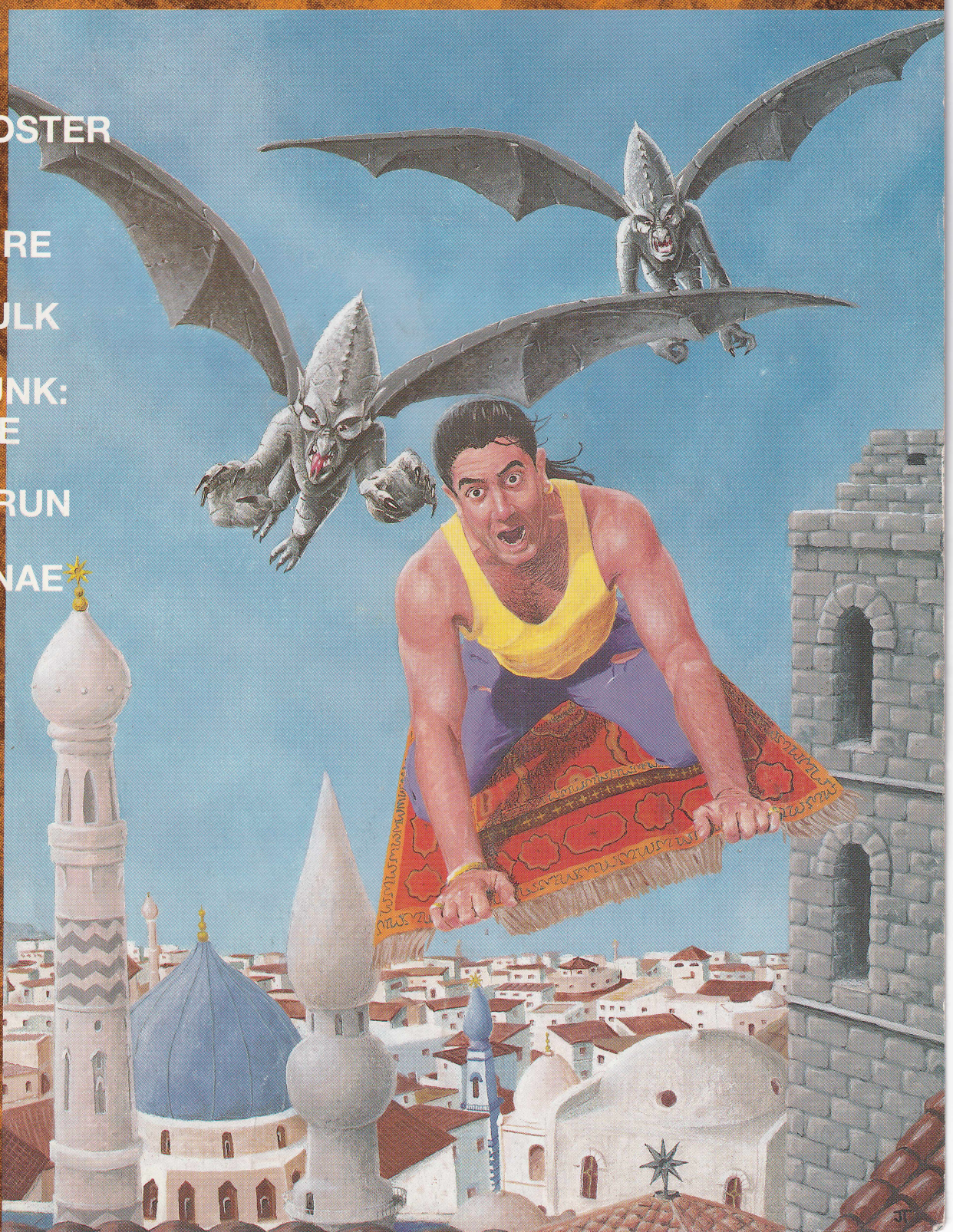

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Australian Realms

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and apologies that we were unable to include this last issue as advertised.

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Editorial

I know, I know, we're late again. All I can say is "sorry" and if you really need to vent your anger on someone I've provided a photo of myself on this page that you can use as a target for your darts and/or D4's.

The good news is that we're late because we've been busily working on some exciting projects. The first Unae sourcebook is nearing completion and will be ready for release before the winter rains stop. And Cyberpunk SolSpace is getting closer and closer to being its very own product line. We plan to have the first SolSpace book out in time for Virtual Santa to slip it into your Christmas stockings.

My Aunt came over from England recently and has been telling us some wonderful stories about my Grandad (he died suddenly with me in his arms when I was a baby) and his family; some of the hardships they endured, the good and bad times they lived through.

Grandad served in the Eighth Army as a signaller for the Royal Artillery. One of the few war experiences he passed on comes from his time in France after the Normandy invasion when he was forward spotting and espied a German soldier across the valley hanging out his washing. A tragi-comedic moment as Grandad wrestled with his conscience before calling in a barrage on the German position; one of war's horrific "It's him or me" dilemmas made poignant by the domestic circumstance.

This story just confirmed my belief that not only is truth stranger than fiction, it is often much more inspiring. So, if you are a referee or storyteller struggling for your next plotline, look up your elder relatives and ask them to tell you some of the family history. You will discover real life events and traditions that go far deeper than your RPG imaginings.

Nick Leaning

Letters

Phil Hartwich
Hamilton VIC

Dear Realms,

First, on kudos: Excellent mag etc... I recently played the Retrieve scenario for BattleTech, from AR 17, and it was among the best war-gaming sessions I've had.

Secondly, on Roleplaying vs Ruleplaying: I am sick of hearing games categorised between these two poles. I am a fanatical *Rolemaster* GM, and I resent being told that I am playing a game which emphasises "monster bashing" and rules over roleplaying.

I ran a session not that long ago where there was NO combat and only a few die rolls when a player was trying to disguise himself, a few others for a bluff attempt (dice were required because the player was talking about a land which he would have known about, but which I had not yet developed detail), and a few here and there to move silently and pick locks. The rest of the session involved large amounts of research, bluff and interaction with NPCs.

Any game of even mediocre standards stresses that the rules are in fact only guidelines, and should be ignored, modified or used as written as appropriate. All that's required is a bit of common sense. Games with rules and dice to provide these guidelines appeal to me for one simple reason - consistency. To me, it is far easier to determine a general degree of difficulty, make a roll and add a skill level to determine success or failure, than to weigh up every possible factor and then make a totally arbitrary decision for every action. No worrying about how often to allow the characters to succeed at a really difficult task, or occasionally fail an easy one.

This allows me to run a session with only general guidelines written beforehand (a recent 10 hour *Heavy Gear* session which was one of the most enjoyable FRP sessions I've been involved in had four written lines of plot). This prevents the urge to make the characters do what you want to avoid the destruction of your carefully planned plot, and opens the way for the players to do exactly what they desire. Encounters (of all kinds, not just combats) can then be determined randomly or by subjective or objective GM decision. A random encounter, if handled by a skilled GM (ie. one who can *roleplay*) will be an original interpretation of the situation which has the ability to throw something completely different into the session.

I would like to go on to do my utmost to tear Adam Whitt's review of Arms Law in AR21 to pieces, but I'm running out of space, so I'll draw to a close.

I have no problem with any particular style of game. If I don't like a rules-system I won't GM, but I will play a PC in almost any FRP game, because, ultimately it is the ability of the individual participants which also makes the game - the rules, whatever they are, are as good as the players' use of them (with the exception of the Aliens Adventure Game, which contains an incredible number of massive flaws).

Phil, thanks for the compliments and the criticisms (it was about time someone shook Adam out of his tree). Now, a submission from you on how to get ten hours of play from four lines of preparation - I'd like to see that!

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The Editor As A Very Young Man
"Deadline! What deadline?"

YESTERDAY

The elves took Serhaem

TODAY

They stormed Ossard

TOMORROW

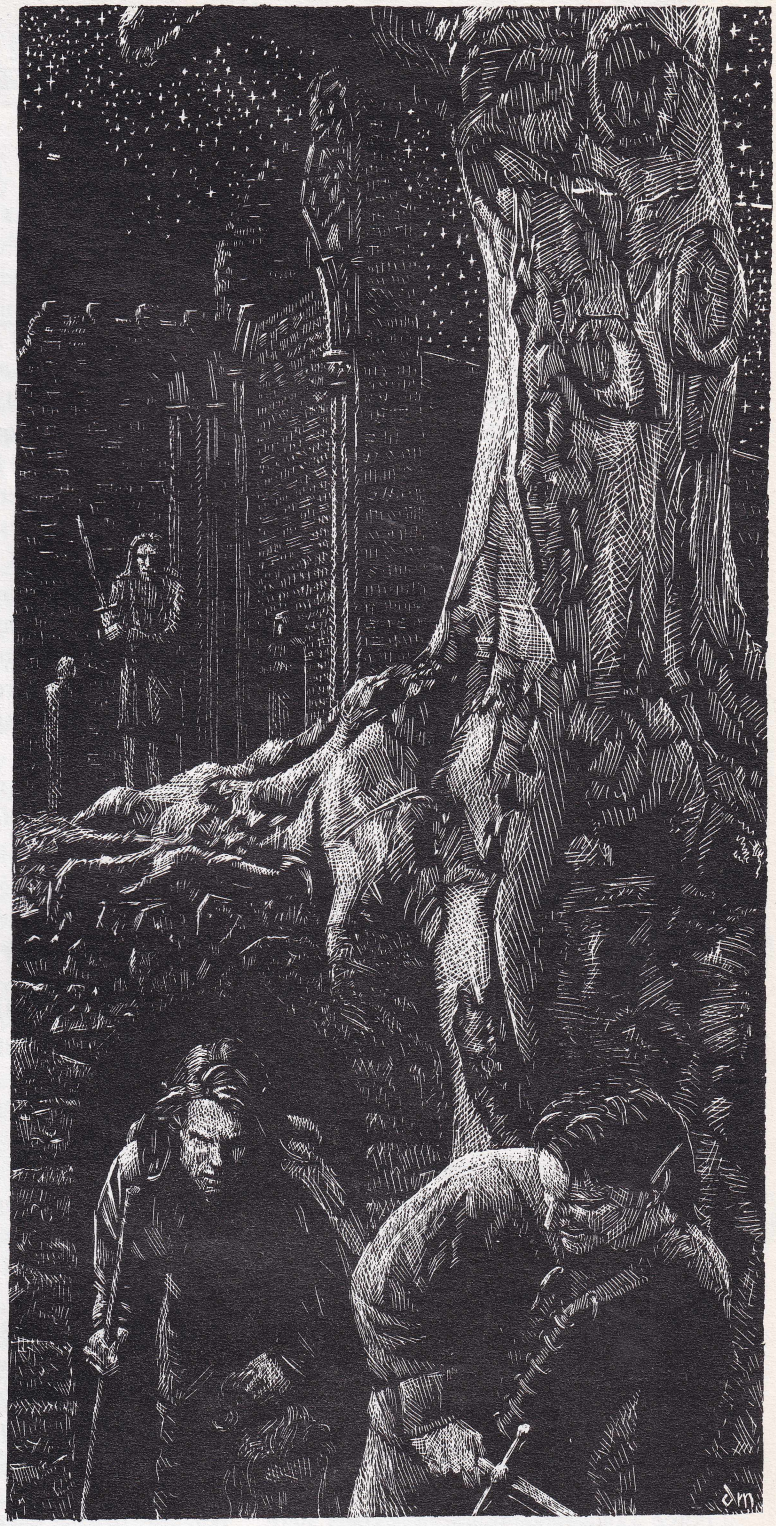
They attack the Heletian League...

FORWAO'S CHRONICLE OF

Wair-Rae

UNAE BOOK 1

...will nothing stop this madness!



One day soon all the world's little wars will join hands and Unae will be flooded by a sea of blood.

Sixty-four pages of truth and images covering the past, present and eternal future of the elven dominion of Wair-Rae. Written by Colin Taber and illustrated by Danny May this book also reveals the Elven Cabal, Sisterhood, Faiths and the elves' darkest secrets.

Wair-Rae is the first **Unae Sourcebook** and is carefully presented so as to be suitable for use with *every* major Fantasy Role Playing Game. It is packed with colour, adventure and mystery from over ten thousand years of elven history. From the wonders of mythical Velsana to the hidden beauty of forbidden Kaid-Onor

From Australian Realms. Available Mid-Winter 1996.

RE VIEWS

WARZONE

Techno-Fantasy Miniatures Battle Game
Heartbreaker Hobbies
Reviewed by Paul Mitting

Move over Warhammer 40K, there's a new kid on the block and he's plenty tough! This is Warzone, a miniatures wargame in the Mutant Chronicles setting. The style is very reminiscent of the Games Workshop product, but I found the rules better written and the production values are excellent.

You get 144 pages of lavish, full colour art and photos (of painted miniatures) mixed with stylish text. This is one slick package, with some very evocative illustrations and some great looking troop types. The Mutant Chronicles mileu is brilliantly visualised, and this book is no exception.

What about the rules themselves? They cover all the basics of skirmish level wargaming, with each figure representing one trooper or vehicle. It is definitely geared at the small unit action, which means you get a rollicking good game with a limited number of figures. One of the special rules that caught my eye was the "Sweep Attack", which is possible with certain long and powerful close combat weapons. This means your lone maniac swordsman can possibly hit every model in base to base contact with him in one action. Get in close, boys!

An important part of any wargame is Force Lists, and Warzone excels here. Every major faction (and there are a few!) have a listing and points cost for different troopers, officers and heroes. An added bonus is a specialised armoury that is unique to each force, although they can also draw from a common list of weaponry. For the gun nuts out there, check out the illustrated armoury. More big guns than an NRA picnic.

No techno-fantasy game would be complete without dark-spawned minions from hell. In Warzone, they are the hordes of the Dark Legion who draw their evil power from the Dark Symmetry. Again, there are comprehensive lists of servants of the Dark Apostles, each with access to specialised weapons and Dark Gifts (deadly abilities or magical type affects). Some of these mothers are quite awesome, and I wonder whether the humans really have a chance against them. Better get some more guns, you guys.

At the back of the book are some roster sheets for your units and some full colour cut out templates for flamers, grenades and the like. At the front of the book is a comprehensive Table of Contents, making specific sections and rules easy to find.

All in all, this is a slick and easily played product. It offers a large range of units to play with, and a well described environment to set your battles in. I can heartily recommend it to anyone looking for a fun high fantasy techno-war.

DARK STRYDER

Star Wars RPG Campaign Set
West End Games
Reviewed by Lee Sheppard

The plot: Evil Moff Sarne has fled the Rebel Forces, taking his Imperial fleet with him. A small team of rebel officers is sent in pursuit of the "fleeing" Moff and learn the secret of his new weapon, the mysterious DarkStryder technology.

This first release in **The DarkStryder Campaign** series provides the introductory scenarios with the final encounter with Moff Sarne apparently held for release later this year. The boxed set contains two 96 page books (a campaign book and an adventure book with 6 interrelated scenarios); a colour poster showing the floor plans of the *Far Star*, the New Republic space vessel that the campaign revolves around; and a number of character cards (with plastic stands) with colour pictures and basic stats for players and referees to use during play.

This product marks a new approach for the Star Wars RPG (Luke Skywalker doesn't even crack a mention!). While firmly "space opera", DarkStryder presents a much more realistic and gritty version of the Star Wars universe. The campaign material plays up the claustrophobic conditions of 120 or so human and alien crew being confined in a small combat vessel (which should provide for some good role-playing), but still allows for many acts of cinematic heroism.

I have one concern though. Given the size of the Far Star's crew complement, players are encouraged to take on a number of different character roles, playing each as the situation demands. Unfortunately, many of the characters that the players might elect to play have predetermined actions that are essential to the achievement of the storyline. This forces referees into leading their players by the nose too often, removing the spontaneity that adds value to role-playing sessions. There are many ways around this problem though, and it does remain the product's *only* flaw.

With a number of follow up products already planned, the DarkStryder Campaign looks like it will provide many hours of enjoyment. For fans of the Star Wars RPG or those who have been thinking about getting into the game, the DarkStryder Campaign makes for an excellent starting point.

"May the Force be with you..."

HINTS UNLIMITED 1, 2, 3

Computer Game Cheat Compilation
Beyond Technology
Reviewed by Nick Leaning

Do you get frustrated at the way so many computer games contain puzzles that can only be solved when you shell out for the inevitable clue book ("Hold the kipper in your teeth, turn clockwise three times to open the secret door that takes you to the lavatory!"). Do you wish there was an in built cheat mode on your favourite shoot-em-up so that you can get past that unassailable end of level guardian? If you answered *Yea!* to either of these questions then Hints Unlimited is for you. Local lads (Western Australia), Beyond Technology, have scanned the Internet and beyond to gather together a huge array of walk-throughs, solutions, hints, tips, trainers, character editors and cheat codes for hundreds of the current computer games and compiled them onto three disks. Each **Hints Unlimited** disk provides data without the guff for loads of current games for around the price you'd pay for one game's official clue book.

In each package (there are 3 instalments to date) you receive a 31/2" HD disk packed with hints for all the very latest games (too numerous to mention

here) that when installed (under Windows 3.x or Win '95) take up about 5 meg of hard disk space and can be invoked via an icon in Windows. In addition, you get a generous A4 scratch pad to make notes on while playing your favourite game. The information in the hints files is good; Karen was able to complete *Phantasmagoria* and *Kings Quest VII* only after consulting Hints Unlimited. As far as we were able to test the codes also work fine.

A very user friendly product which will solve all your late night computer game frustrations at a fraction of the cost of the clue books. Excellent value.

MISSION CRITICAL

Sci-Fi Adventure CD-Rom Game
Legend Entertainment
Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

You've just joined up with the crew of this shiny new space battlecruiser to do your bit in the war that's been raging for the past fifteen years. Next thing you know your ship is attacked and crippled, your crew mates have all made the ultimate sacrifice for the good of the Alliance, and you've been left behind to complete the top secret mission. And as the ship's store man you are just the man for the job, aren't you?

Mission Critical!, Legend Entertainment's state of the art space adventure looks quite impressive. It opens with an intro sequence starring Michael (didn't recognise you without yer makeup on) Dorn of ST:TNG fame and Patricia (did anyone actually watch this film?) Charbonneau of Robocop 2 fame. Sadly, this action-packed full motion video sequence doesn't accurately set the scene for the game ahead which is essentially a slow-paced explore and puzzle solver.

The main game runs in a first person perspective with excellent static graphics and neat video sequences mixed in. Confused as to what has happened, your character has to explore and repair the ship, making it ready to complete the critical mission. First quibble; the dated command system. When I click on a door with my mouse I want to open it, and the reason is I wanna go through it. Same with the lift. I don't want to double click to open, double click to walk in, double click to close, double click to get the floor buttons. I want to click on it, be in it and offered the numeric pad. I'd like to see that in the next adventure game, please.

The packaging claims this game is one for Trekkers, and indeed it is similar in feel to "ST:TNG The Final Unity". Where it falls short, however, is in the characterisation and familiarity the supporting cast of that game gave you. The first thing you notice as you wander the deserted corridors of the USS Lexington looking for answers on how to complete the mission is that you're the only person left alive; I began to feel positively lonely after a while. But persevere because the game does heat up when you finally get off the ship and onto the beautifully rendered alien world.

Mission Critical is a dazzling and absorbing virtual world, but for me the adventure moved just a little too slowly. If you like your games slow and thoughtful: "Beam it up, Scottie".

STAR WARS MINIATURE BATTLES - Starter Set

Tabletop Sci-fi War Game
West End Games
Reviewed by Paul Mitting

This is not so much a new product but a revision of the 1991 Origins winner. It has apparently been altered to bring it in line with the Star Wars Roleplaying game. Major changes are the availability of the expanded skills and a revised movement rate.

I had seen the earlier edition as a book. Eagerly I tore the boxed set from Nick's hands and looked inside to find a softback rulebook, 12 Star Wars miniatures and 5 six-sided dice. Didn't look like a lot I must admit. I had expected some floor plans, templates and counters - you know, colourful box filler.

As a miniatures game, it covers all the basics of troop and hero creation, combat, morale and so forth. It has an excellent section on the Force and the skills needed to use it on the battlefield. Also covered are things such as Droids and Creatures. Fancy having a Rancor interrupt the Stormtroopers as they rout the Rebel scum? Go for it.

The rules hang together quite well, and are detailed enough that you could actually use this (with a little tweaking) as the combat system for your roleplaying games of Star Wars. My biggest gripe was that there are no vehicle stats or rules for using them. Come on, WEG, vehicles abound in nearly every combat scene I recall from the Star Wars movies. Where are they? Are they going to be in the Advanced Rules perhaps?

Looking at the other box contents, I found the miniatures selection a bit strange. You get 3 Stormtroopers, 3 Rebels, 3 Bounty Hunters, Luke, Leia and Darth Vader. For a battle game, I would have thought 6 Stormies and 6 Rebel wimps would have been the better choice. The listing of figures available in the rulebook certainly shows there are enough of them to have chosen from.

If you really want to play the Star Wars universe on a tabletop, buy it. Even then, I would wait for the rulebook to be released separately and just use that.

ASSASSINS

Illuminati: NWO Expansion Set
Steve Jackson Games
Reviewed by Glenn Barnett

Assassins is better than I expected, but perhaps not as good as it might have been. There are 125 cards; 50 Commons, 32 Uncommons, 30 Rares, 10 Ultra-rares, 1 Illuminati group, and two special cards (via magazines). Included are 3 Australia-related cards: Australia, The Big Prawn and No Beer!, which were the winning cards in the Design-An-Australian-Card competition, run by *Australian Realms* (Thanks!). Most of the Assassins cards I have were part of my prize for designing No Beer. Australia was distributed with Australian Realms 25. Another Assassins card referencing Australia: "Australian Rules", turns out to have nothing to do with the football code we know.

The expansion overcomes a few minor problems with the Unlimited INWO, but introduces some other problems of its own. For example, there are now two cards that interfere with degenerate decks; but one of them is open to abuse (which I'll leave you to discover for yourself), probably causing more imbalance than it solves. Most cards are average-to-weak in power. The feel of the expansion is different to the original INWO; it seems a little less "real", possibly due to the new card types like Zap and Paralyze cards, but all work fine in play. Communists, Greens and Science have been beefed up. The Society of Assassins Illuminati is suited to Secret or Fanatic decks.

A good non-degenerate INWO deck still wins nearly as often as it did before, though you may want to put in a few more Hoaxes and Secrets. Most decks will work better with a few Assassins cards, though. My initial reaction was that the Ultra-Rares would make it too expensive

to get into, but they aren't "must-have" cards. Sure, they're nice, but you don't need 'em. Also the Commons are all plots, so it's less of a nuisance to have a few spare Commons.

You'd expect with the long delay, that they'd have caught all the errors on the cards, but no such luck. Here, courtesy of Steve Jackson Games, are the card errata so far: Global Warming should read: "...makes all non-space places coastal." The Green Party's special ability should explicitly give +4 to any attempt to control any other Green group. The Swingers get +1 Power for every other Liberal group in your Power Structure.

If you play INWO buy six or seven boosters, and trade a bit if you can. I wouldn't buy more than that until you've played with them for a while, to get a feel for what effect it has on the game. Overall, a good expansion.

FRANKENSTEIN: Through The Eyes of the Monster

Cinematic Adventure on CD-Rom
Interplay
Reviewed by Adam Whitt

Interplay continue to output excellent entertainment on CD-Rom with this retelling of the classic Mary Shelley tale from the monster's perspective. The game opens with you, a wrongly accused and hanged criminal, awakening to life after death in Dr Frankenstein's laboratory. After taking a bewildered look at your new patchwork body you begin to explore Frankenstein's castle trying to discover the dark secrets behind the mad doctor's research and hoping to clear your name.

This is a beautifully crafted game with delightful 3D rendered backdrops, sinister music, unnerving sound effects and some truly fiendish puzzles. The icing on the cake are the video sequences featuring Tim Curry as Dr Frankenstein. This is horror in the brilliant style of Hammer studios; low on gore and high on atmos*fear*.

With multimedia products like this one the CD-Rom entertainment platform is coming of age. I really enjoyed exploring Frankenstein's virtual world for its own sake, but the added challenge of puzzles to solve and character interaction made the experience all the more satisfying. I reckon Boris Karloff had a lot of fun playing the monster, in this game I'm sure you will too.

MONSTERS & AMAZONS

Dragon Dice Kicker Pack 1
TSR, Inc
Reviewed by Chris Johnson

The first thing I noticed was how hard it was to get the dice out of that little plastic bag, it was like trying to open one of those small packs of peanuts. But seriously, these new dice are quite interesting. As I was struggling with my pack a friend was sorting through his own purchases of some four boxes. He had already seen the packs that someone else had bought, and was hoping for a particular dice, which unfortunately neither he nor I managed to pull. You get one monster in the pack, and I was rather happy to get a Death Naga, with Naga being the name of my main computer.

Thankfully, TSR have decided to release a complete list of all dice with each set, so from one purchase I can see what the whole set has in store. A new dice type - the ten sided Monster, and a new race - Amazon. Also, each monster has new abilities. These complement the original release quite well.

Even with the first expansion, I still haven't enough dice to specialise down to one race, but I'm down to two (I think, I still have to play the new collection). As the title suggests, this kicker pack deals mainly with the Amazons and Monsters. But while these two do do very well, the other races are not forgotten and dice from the first set can be found in the pack. So long as the expansions continue in this way, I should be able to slowly specialise in one of the first four races.

The main letdown is the Amazon dice, a dreadful off-white dice with purple icons. I really liked the original dice and, although they are still there, I really hope the next new race is a little more kind to the eyes. The monsters are all aligned to one of the, now five, races, so they are coloured appropriately.

TSR obviously decided that their first release wasn't perfect. Unfortunately they seem to have left some changes a little late. Included with the kicker pack is a small, poorly printed card with some 17 rule updates and clarifications, some of which directly contradict the Monsters and Amazons reference leaflet. Black magic has been fixed a little, but still needs some work, otherwise they've done quite well to address the balance. There is however a problem with Dragons. "Each player must also bring one dragon die to the table, plus another for every 25 points in his forces... For each dragon a player fails to bring, his starting forces are reduced by three points." Dragons are only available (at the moment) in starter packs so if you intend to throw the kicker packs in to make a larger army you start at a disadvantage unless you manage to score an extra dragon or two.

Summing up, this is a good addition to a good product. With continued expansions, the style of Dragon Dice might help it work it's way up to Magic status, with people having one card game and one dice game that they play.

BLANK CARDS

INWO CCG Expansion (?) set.
Steve Jackson Games
Reviewed by Paul Mitting

What a neat product! Design your own INWO cards and inflict them on your enemies. Bend the rules. Have that card you always wanted but just couldn't make a trade for! Collect the whole set!

Seriously though, this is a pack of 10 Blank Group cards and 10 Blank Plot cards. On one side is the appropriately coloured cover, and the other is, well, blank. You can really customise your deck now. Also included is a handy hint for using the cards. On my review copy, No. 8 was "Hold 2 up to your mouth and make whistling noises". Who says card gaming doesn't encourage roleplaying.

CELTIC MYTH

GURPS Supplement
Steve Jackson Games
Reviewed by Paul Mitting

With the plethora of Celtic movies and books around at the moment, Celticism is undergoing a bit of a revival. Therefore it comes as no surprise to see a sourcebook arrive for the Celts.

Like all the SJG products I have seen, this is well presented and is an entertaining and informative read. The bulk of the information presented is in a generic format, with few game-specific references. This makes the product readily usable by anyone hankering to portray Celts in their gaming. In fact this book could serve as a useful introduction to anyone looking into Celtic lifestyle and history as it is very well researched.

A clever touch was to provide short versions of a number of Celtic myths. These are often referred to in the text as

examples of particular attitudes or lifestyle, showing players how the Celts thought and behaved. The aim is to try and get players to roleplay their characters in a similar vein. The weird and whimsical nature of Celtic myth evokes a wonderful atmosphere to game in.

To round out the package there are extensive notes and rules for creating both mortal Celts and the powerful Sidhe. Although the Sidhe are recommended as NPCs, they are available as player characters. Extreme caution is warned for the referee though, as some of these beings are quite potent.

The book itself is 128 pages, with a beautifully rendered colour cover and black and white interior illustrations. That interior art is fair quality, with most of it stylised. Wonder of wonders, it even has an index. A good, well rounded product suitable for any fantasy RPG system.

RIFTS JAPAN

Rifts World Book Eight
Palladium Books, Inc
Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

If ever there was a culture, with its mingling of ancient tradition and futuristic technology, which was crying out for the Rifts treatment, then Japan is it. Following Siembieda's usual pat on the back for himself and his buddies for thinking of the idea, we launch into the background of Rifts Japan; history, society, law, and the technology of the major powers of Japan.

I was a little disappointed as they have taken the easy way out and simply taken the many elements which make Japan such a different society and placed them in separate areas. The New Empire is traditional feudal Japan; emperors, shoguns and samurai all based in a fiercely agrarian society that hates anything technologically advanced. Over the border is the Republic of Japan, which embraces technology. Instant conflict. Further down the island we find the high tech Ichto Province complete with a stand alone industrial province run by the H-Brand Corporation etc. etc. Just as you're about to yawn, however, Siembieda manages to pull one back by throwing in four cities which, due to the inevitable scientific experiments, had disappeared into a time vortex only to reappear 300 years later in post Cataclysm Rifts Earth! Wouldn't that make your day? One minute you're out shopping for sushi, next minute there's huge spiky critters everywhere! An excellent idea which I'd liked to have seen developed further.

Rifts Japan also presents a new collection of O.C.C.'s. This is an area where Rifts really stands out for adventure potential. The character classes are always varied and there's plenty of them. On offer are Tech Ninjas, Samurai Pilots and Police Officers. Personally the idea of playing a Techno-Samurai following the "way of the sword and bow" with a vibro blade and explosive warhead has endless appeal. Cyborgs make their entrance, the Dragon Borgs being especially good. There's also a mass of new weapons - vibro blades, grenades , missiles, particle beam rifles, rail guns etc. In Japan, the Glitterboys also make their welcome return alongside a variety of power armour and robots.

And no book on Japan would be complete without mystic martial arts. Well who'd want to play in Japan if you can't refight Mortal Kombat 3? Finally we come to a (surprisingly short) section on monsters. In this case the demon "onis"; traditional Japanese monsters who happily fill the role of terrors of the night. These are generally small goblinish creatures who haunt Japan's wastelands.

In short another excellent Rifts world book, buy it!

EMPIRE II

Universal Computer War Game
New World Computing
Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

While many games are touted, there really are few games that deserve the accolade "classic"; New World's original Empire is one of them. Its simple and elegant system of play gave it an addictiveness that has outlasted many more exalted games. It was then with some degree of excitement that I tore into the packaging of Empire II. Designed by the original creators of Empire Marco Baldwin and Bob Rakosky, (who have since also produced another excellent game in Perfect General), Empire II has moved from the large scale strategic to a smaller tactical scope. E2 deals largely with individual battles. There are a number of prepared scenario's or you can choose to build your own with the scenario editor. The scope of the game is amazing. The scenarios range from Ragnarok through Austerlitz to Guadal Canal. Any time period, any tech level can be fought. The scenario editor also allows you to adapt the battle to recreate those "what if's?" that haunt all true wargamers.

The game kicks off with a rather quick intro screen. A bit cheap and nasty after the grandiose efforts that are becoming the norm, still, we're not here to look at pretty pictures. You're then presented with your scenario options, (Waterloo here we come!) then in to it. First up is an intelligence briefing screen where you're told the current state of play, weather, any due reinforcements etc., then you're into the game proper.

This main game screen presents a traditional hex map. A jump map gets you around the battlefield quickly and you can also create and tile or cascade secondary windows so the bits you want to keep an eye on are always on screen. The usual zoom in/out options are there, although the icons aren't really much to zoom in on, but they are "alive", as is the terrain, so that simply hovering your mouse pointer over them automatically pops up the relevant information.

Battles are fought by clicking upon the unit you require and then clicking on the option icons. Next thing you know, your artillery are making cute little cannonball noises as they wizz through the air carrying destruction to those English pig dogs over the hill. Sound effects are definitely not up to much, but add their own charm to the game. Music is there, but who needs it when there's cavalry to charge. Although the computer opponents present a reasonable challenge, E2 really comes into its own with modem and network play - human opponents are always tougher. And parallel play mode allows you to move and fight as your opponent does, great fun.

Funny game this. Like its predecessor, when you sit down to think about it there's not much that's state of the art in it. No fluid motion graphics. No booming bass track to get the heart pumping. Just little icons making funny noises as they move over a map. But I just can't quit out of it! Three hours later, cavalry screaming across the field, artillery pounding as my infantry forms into line and Hougomont and Mont St. Jean are mine! Wellington's reduced to little more than a gibbering has-been. Now that's entertainment! Empire II is destined to become another classic.

NECROSCOPE

MasterBook Sourcebook
West End Games
Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

Based on the sagas of horror master Brian Lumley, **Necroscope** plunges us into a world where things are not all as they seem. Beneath the thin veil of normality lurks yet another bunch of nasties intent on having us mere mortals for breakfast. Necroscope is not a game in itself. It is designed to be played with West End's MasterBook system, (a point which is not mentioned on either cover, you have to read the bit mysteriously entitled "About this Book" to find that out), so if you haven't got the MasterBook, you haven't got any rules! So having hurried off to grab a set of rules, we prepare once again to lift the dusty pages of our previously misunderstood history to find yet another set of revelations: Vampires! Wamphyri! "...ravenous shape shifting abominations with an uncanny instinct for survival at all costs." These symbiotic creatures latch onto humans, (or occasionally other life forms), to use as hosts; the Wamphyri gains the host's intelligence and gets to move about a lot (in their original form they're squishy leech-like things), and the host acquires the Vampire's insatiable appetite and amazing regenerative powers. Excellent idea really.

But not all the news is bad. Enter the good guys. Individuals with special talents are hired by the government to track down and deal with evil beasts; ESPionage! Sort of like the X-Files, only you get to be the "something out there" as well. Amongst the usual characteristics and skills your character has one special talent, such as telepath or seer. Simple enough and for once in a horror game, there is a good framework to hang adventures on.

So what separates this from the ever increasing pack of contemporary horror games. Well nothing other than the gore; it is over the top. The horror is real. The dead are basically the living minus motor functions. Their brains still tick over mulling over thoughts in eternal isolation. Pleasant thought. So if you have the skill to contact them, you can. While the Necroscope does this in a relatively gentlemanly fashion, the Necromancer basically tortures the dead into giving up their information. A process which may involve much rending of corpses and smearing of blood. Nice.

Necroscope really is gross. In the introductory scenario an illustration shows a naked female, standing in a mortuary ecstatically smearing herself with entrails. We then go on to an "adventure" in which you get to bust a villain who is transporting little kids in locked freezers for, well, it doesn't take much imagination really does it? This sort of dross gets right up me. Graphic depiction of violence does not equal adult. Rather the opposite in fact. Despite West End's Parental Advisory warning on the cover, it is patently obvious who is the target for this stuff, and in a hobby which struggles hard enough to gain acceptance this does us no good whatsoever.

If you like your entertainment dripping with blood, and can ESPionage with out sniggering, this one's for you!!

GETTYSBURG BATTLEGROUND: VOL. II

Computer War Game
Talon Soft
Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

Finally! In a field so stifled by tradition, Talon Soft have created a wargame which attempts to utilise something of the full potential of the computer revolution. Wargaming is a genre ready made for the computer. How many hours have been lost squabbling over the interpretation of some obscure rule, or games ended because your partner decides it's about time you ate off the dining room table? The computer solves all these problems as it directs the rules, and you can happily save your game away for whenever the mood takes you. It also solves the greatest of all problems, finding someone to play with. The computer is never too busy or obnoxious to play with you! A boon indeed.

Gettysburg plays like a boardgame but the units appear on screen as table top figures. Place this upon a beautifully hand drawn map of the original battlefield and you have a game that looks absolutely brilliant. You really get that tabletop feel as you see your troops line up and march around the battlefield. The battle takes on real character rather than the usual bloodless square icon with a coloured cross upon it.

Gettysburg's pictorial approach not only looks great it works in game play also. Features such as hill contours houses, orchards etc. are all clearly visible. On top of this you can overlay a hex map for planning movement and firing ranges. A jump map lets you hop quickly around the field and two levels of zoom give you the ability to concentrate on either the units at hand or the wider battlefield. You can also convert to a traditional 2D hex-map board view to give a clear view of the tactical situation.

Each unit has an information screen giving name, status, etc., and a little picture of its uniform and leader. (Here is one of my few quibbles. The unit information icons are really tiny and often hard to read). Historical data can be gained by looking up the help screen, and each unit, commander, and background for all the scenario's is also listed. Information can be searched for and printed off as required, and the amount of storage space available on a CD has enabled Talon Soft to pack a huge amount of historical data onto the disc.

Gameplay follows a traditional pattern. Each side has a movement phase, followed by a fire phase and then melee. The computer keeps track of all the boring details like how much ammo you have left or movement points you have to spend, and all the usual points of disruption, fatigue, supply etc. are there. These are all driven from a small icon bar which can be dragged easily around the screen. The game flows nicely without becoming overly complicated. You can play either the full three day slugfest or a series of smaller scenarios such as Pickett's charge. Surprisingly there is no scenario editor, so if you've a hankering to find out what would have happened if Mead had set up on the bottom of the hill, this one's not for you.

Talon Soft, in an effort to take advantage of multimedia technology and attract those players who require that little bit extra with their wargame, have also included a number of short video sequences which appear each time a unit fires and between phases. While the sight and sound of your cannons firing or your infantry charging down the hill is stirring fun the first few times, this feature soon got turned off on my Pentium. Too long to load, too irritating to watch. But a minor quibble indeed.

Gettysburg treads a fine line between the need for a serious historical recreation, and the more frivolous demands of today's graphic crazy computer user and does so successfully. A top quality wargame with attractive graphics and smooth gameplay; **Gettysburg** is highly recommended.

POCKET REVIEWS

With so many good releases coming to our attention we thought we'd give you some pocket reviews to catch up with the inevitable backlog.

Allied General and **Fantasy General** (SSI) are a pair of computer wargames that share a simple game interface and enormous addictive appeal. Allied General enables you to refight three major campaigns of World War Two as either an American, British or Soviet general against a tough German adversary whilst Fantasy General has you recruiting armies of unicorns, sorcerors, elven archers etc. in a righteous campaign to overthrow the evil Shadowlord. Both games have been competing for the editor's attention recently and both are highly recommended.

Battletech Record Sheets: 3025 & 3026, 3050 and **3055 & 3058** (FASA Corp) are three pre-punched books of filled-out record sheets for all the battlemechs, tanks, hovercraft and VTOLs described in the respective Technical Readout volumes. The books include some of the major variants and feature game information for weapons and equipment on each sheet. Very useful for Battletech commanders everywhere.

Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets (FASA Corp) is a 144pp sourcebook for Earthdawn. This game continues to supply one of the most convincing and adventure rich magic systems of any fantasy RPG currently in print. This adjunct expands on the magic section in the core rulebook offering a spell design system, new uses for thread magic and blood magic, rules for enchanting and creating magic items plus a new magician discipline, the shaman.

Super Tuesday (FASA Corp) is a set of five adventures for Shadowrun where we see fiction echoing reality as the folk at FASA gear up for the election of a new UCAS president. This book introduces the main candidates and even supplies an Absentee Voting slip so that fans can exercise their right to vote. The adventures look interesting and there will be plenty of support material in the form of novels and sourcebooks to make this election one of the biggest events in gaming in 1996. Shame we can't make it to Gencon for the inauguration ceremony!

GURPS Blood Types (Steve Jackson Games) is a vampiric bestiary that draws on the many vampire myths from around the world. In true GURPS fashion this treatment is one of the better looks at these dreaded bloodsuckers and makes an excellent sourcebook for just about any game featuring vampires be it horror, fantasy, or gothic punk. There's even a generous helping of humour; Varney the Vampire, indeed!

Speaking of humour, **GURPS IOU** (Steve Jackson Games) details Illuminati University and takes a lot of really funny snipes at the Ivy League and other sacred cows. And if you are wondering how to fit this weird and wacky institution into your campaign, don't worry, the IOU is EVERYWHERE! (It's all part of the conspiracy, don't you know). Illustrated by Phil and Kaja Foglio, the art in this book is a treat.

We didn't get this book sent for review, but Adam insisted we mention it anyway. **Uncaged: Faces of Sigil** (TSR, Inc) is a book of adventure hooks and plotlines for the Planescape setting disguised as a roll call of non-player characters. But don't worry - the boring AD&D™ stats occupy small side bars, the majority of this 128 book is made up of superb art, brilliant text and some wonderfully quirky personalities and stories that will adorn any fantasy campaign. Now that's a sourcebook - no more of the Complete PC Kits of the Upper Zambezi books please! ■



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WAIR-RAE

THE FIFTH ELVEN DOMINION

by Colin Taber

To His Exalted Excellency
Lord of Medina
Kaleel Qadir
Most Powerful of Evora

Dearest Kaleel,

In this, the most secret and important document that has ever spilled from my pen, I demand your attention.

I, Forwao, feel duty bound to break the ultimate trust placed in me by High King Caemarou of Wair-Rae. All my life I have been his servant, his follower, his confidante... entirely his. But now I must betray him. A brain fever that has plagued His Majesty for decades has finally won the battle for his mind. I cannot sit idly by and watch my diseased Lord unleash such an unjust and untimely armageddon upon Unae. This blasphemy, that my blinded elven brothers and sisters have accepted as divine truth, must not come to pass.

Here, for those not of Wair-Rae, I record the history of my proud nation and people so that it can be better understood, and so that the horrific events to happen over the coming years can be better prepared for.

My dearest friend, distribute this knowledge as widely as you can, but please destroy this personal note I have included. In so doing you save my life, in reading the following you save your own. In distributing this work you may yet save Unae from the armageddon that may see the birth of the Fifth and Final Dominion... or the death of us all!

Sincerely Yours,

Forwao, The Chronicler of Wair-Rae

For far too long now Unae, the **Australian Realms** fantasy campaign world (suitable for use with all major fantasy RPG's such as the **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** and **Warhammer Fantasy Role Play** games) has been constrained to a life within the pages of the magazine. With the printing of this issue we see a new era open for the most popular fantasy campaign world in Australia. By the end of June 1996 the first Unae book will be in print.

Forwao, renowned elven charlatan and courtier of the High King of the elven nation of Wair-Rae has penned a series of essays detailing his people's cultural roots, their history and their grand plans for the future; a future welded with the fire and blood of worldwide war.

The essays come folded in a sealed package and accompanied by a covering letter from Forwao, in which he beseeches humanity to halt the mad High King's crusade to instigate the Fifth and Final Elven Dominion, an era that the elves have prophetised will encompass all of Unae and will bleed Unae's non-elven races, enslaving them or sending them into the netherworlds. Here is Forwao's letter and following is a sampling of some of the background information and elven secrets that will change the way you game in Unae forever.

Unae's day of judgment is coming soon. The telling of this story of genocide and war, of tidal magic and of divine incarnations begins with "Forwao's Chronicle of Wair-Rae".

YESTERDAY

Eight thousand years ago the *First Dominion* rose, the mighty elven nation of Quo Ungria. After a thousand years of expansion it collapsed, a million died.

From the ruins of the First Dominion rose the Second, Kalraith. While it was civil war that tore apart and killed Quo Ungria, it was corruption and decadence that despoiled the once honest elves of Kalraith, leading to the fall of the Second Dominion, a magnificent tree toppled by a rotten heart within. Tragically, their *Naskae* (Soul Pearls) the raw escenco (magic) within each elf, were forever tainted, and the elves of the Second Dominion were damned. Those who could, fled the cataclysm and were scattered across Unae.

With over a million corrupted Naskae (and their raw escenco) lost to the elven Faiths, Cabal and Sisterhood it would take a thousand years for the Third Dominion, that of Jhae Dalin Cor to rise. This, the longest surviving dominion, advanced the elves greatly seeing them take control of many of Unae's races, putting them into slavery or to the sword. Lore tells of elves flying, of great magics of ruthless power, of bringing the dead back to life, of daily miracles unimaginable today. For all its wondrous power, this dominion was doomed to die. Struck by greed and vanity the Third Dominion was consumed by an unholy fire, a catastrophe that wreaked havoc across Unae in a ferocious war that lasted only days yet (in a way that is still not understood) caused the sea levels to begin their deadly rise and Unae's weather to change. As the Third Dominion passed into memory, Unae's seas slowly inundated

vast areas of coast land, forcing mass migrations and a long period of strife and war as the races competed for living space.

One thousand years ago, the nation we know as Wair-Rae, the Fourth Dominion, clawed its rise to greatness along the newly formed coastlines of Wairanir.

Elven faith holds a divine prophecy which speaks of the Fifth and Final Elven Dominion, one that will encompass all Unae (Our World) and forever secure elven supremacy in this mortal domain and over the next world. Many Wair-Rae elves, led by High King Caemarou, believe that the Fifth Dominion was born eighty-four years ago when the decline of Wair-Rae was halted with the establishment of The Colonies in western Kalraith. Others, a mere handful, are not so convinced.

TODAY

Following the creation of The Colonies, the new Fifth Dominion has continued to expand in the past few years with the taking of the Southern Colonies in south-west Dormetia and the conquest of the Heletian League city-state of Ossard. Further expansion is planned, more armies are being raised and many more innocents will be slain.

High King Caemarou's madness is complete, his manic endeavours hidden by his advisors and family; to them the King's insanity is divine inspiration. Insane or no matters not if the people believe in High Caemarou's call to bring about the Fifth and Final Dominion, His Dominion; and they do.

TOMORROW

The High King and his followers will attack the Heletian League, taking it in a swift and bloody war of conquest, and then the world, as prophetised in the *Ansilsae* by the messengers of the elven gods.

HOW IT WILL COME TO PASS

How will the elves power such expansion and conquest? Traditionally the elves of Unae have endured a problem that has repeatedly delivered catastrophic results - overpopulation. Due to the length of the average elven lifespan (225 years) and the childbearing age being reached relatively early (25 years) it is not unusual for elven families to be big, very big by human standards. Often up to twenty children will be born to a family, a fact that drives elven society, once securely established, to forever expand, hungry for land, resources and food. Elven society has no natural state of peace; unless in decline, any prosperous elven nation must expand to survive.

Physically, beneath the skin, within the blood washed flesh there is one major difference between human and elf; the *Naskae*. Elves, unlike humans, have a physical manifestation of their souls. While the soul pearl has a celestial double in the next world it is also readily existent in this one. The mysterious organ is found in the centre of the body, above the genitalia. It is a small misty-blue coloured sphere about an inch across that is not obviously connected to any other part of the body. It rests in the owner's body and is a very direct source of magical power, a reason why the elves have a good deal more Cabalists, Priests and members of the Sisterhood per head of population than any other race.

The naskae contains an elf's spirit on Unae, it is also pure escenco, or raw magic. When an elf dies the body is ritually prepared for burial and the naskae removed and given into the care of the deceased's family. Some say the ritual enables the elf's essence to safely reunite with its counterpart in the spirit world, leaving behind only the escenco within the soul pearl. If the ritual is not performed, the spirit is forever trapped in this world, a prisoner within the soul pearl. This is a fate greatly feared by elves, a fate that the fall of a dominion makes inevitable as the dead outnumber the living.

The most powerful houses in elven society are those with the longest family lines, lines that have been able to harvest many Naskae of departed ancestors. The most powerful use the soul pearls as decoration on their pillar-towers within the pillar-cities of Wair-Rae. Towers encrusted with magic!

Five thousand years ago the Fall of the Second Dominion Kalraith, due to the corruption of the nation's most powerful by the *Terura Kala* (Sixth Faith), saw many Naskae forever lost to the elves. Those that were harvested were thrown into the insane ruins of the fallen dominion as they took on a black as coal hue.

With the coming of the Fifth and Final Dominion the elves will use their Naskae to power castings that will sweep all before them. Their physical might will be great in the final days, they will field armies of hundreds of thousands, but they will also command a celestial army of many, many thousands more.

An age of terror will be upon us all. None are safe.



Karl Breugul, Flet Surgeon & Cabalist, Harvesting Elven Escenco

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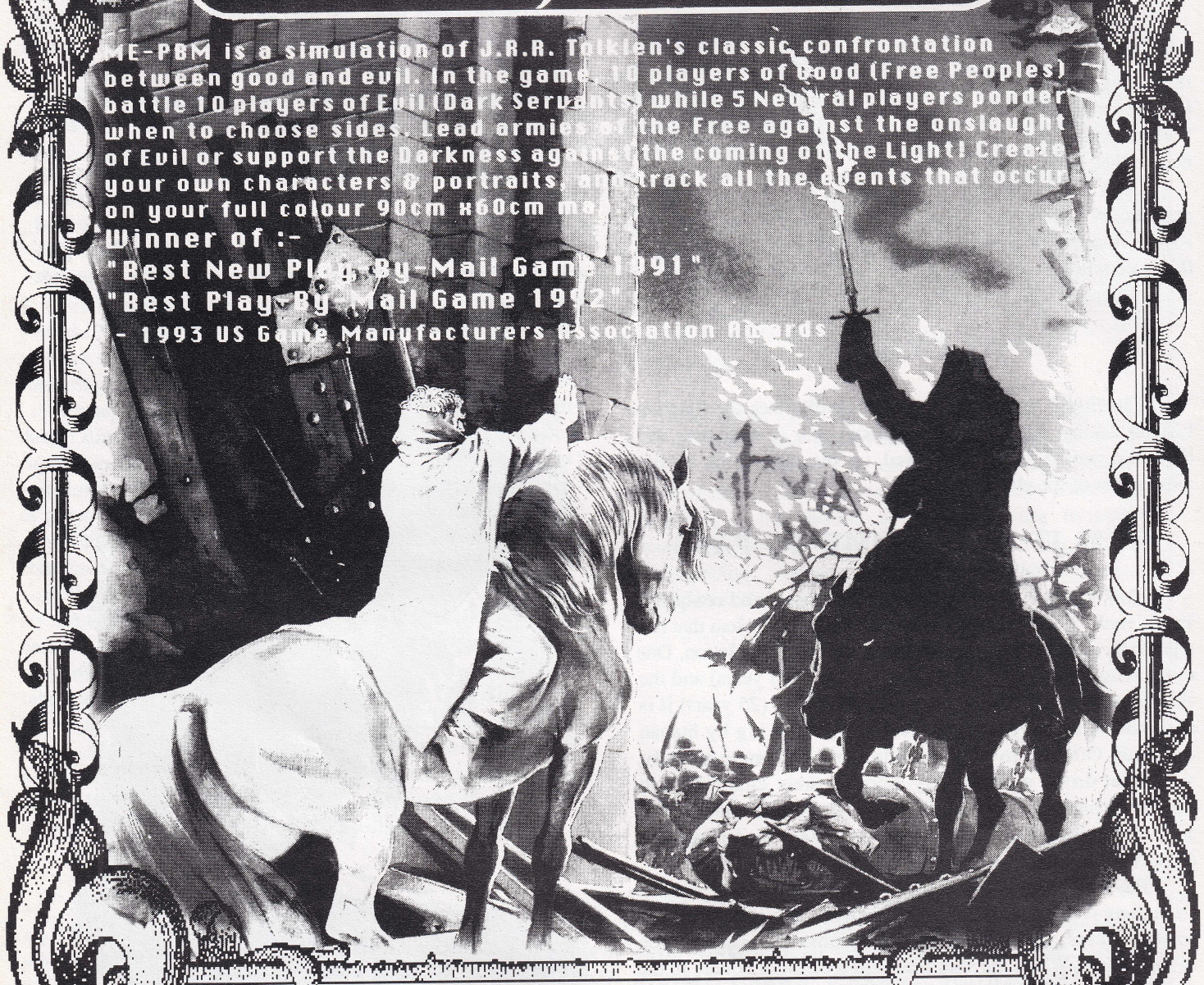

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ON THIS DAY...

A SINGLE DAY IN THE LIFE OF UNAE

Since it was launched way back in issue 7 of Australian Realms we have provided over 128 pages of background and adventure material detailing Unae, our gritty fantasy campaign world. Unae has grown into a rich and complex dark fantasy campaign setting that amazes even its creators with its vibrancy. Unae has captured the imagination of many of our readers and become the most popular campaign world in use in Australia.

For those readers who have come in late and may be wondering what Unae is all about what follows is a brief description of what happens on a typical day in Unae. As Lee suggests, with this much adventure happening in only one day, just imagine what players can expect to encounter in a week or a month or a year of campaigning in Unae.

DAWN

Belmez, Evora

The clear-voiced cries of the priest announcing dawn prayers are heard throughout the city for the minarets of the mosque are tall, and the dawn air is still. Most of the population of Belmez make their way to one of the many mosques found throughout the city for prayers, this the first of three trips that will be made throughout the day. Those that cannot make the journey to a mosque pray where they are. Any foreigners who are found within the city use this time for their own means, for no business will be done with any Evoran during prayers.

The Holy City of Baimiopia, Greater Baimiopia

Despairing King Giovanni watches with concern as his son and heir sits in the depths of depression contemplating the news of that his beloved betrothed, Anna Adrienne of Lixus, tragically drowned at sea, en route to the nuptial cermemony.

In sheltered corners of the court, already some Church men whisper of Prince Mathius' lone curses, his blue moods and his growing instability.

Ledene, Saldae

With the rising of the sun the halfling Saldaens finish their prayers along the pristine shores of the sacred Lake of Sadness. The city of Ledene prepares for a new day in the life of the Green Way, nearby the cry of a newborn babe brings tears of joy to her resting mother. The childs cries are slowly drowned out by the throaty rumble that rolls across the plains from the growing Mountains of Fury.

Cartagena, Lixus

Inquisitor Giacamo closes the heavy cell door behind him and greets today's subject. The prisoner is a strong-willed individual, yesterday's initial questioning had shown that. Even so the Inquisitor knows that by day's end he will have his confession or else another soul to offer up to Krienta. Giacamo feels doubly blessed, to be doing Krienta's good work and to be satisfying his own dark need to give pain.

MID-MORNING

Belvoir Castle, Burvoy

A wagon completes its long journey from Vierzon, entering the boundaries of Chalon-Sur-Fleuve. In the back, a young man turns to his father's call and looks at the ominous presence of Belvoir Castle. He offers a silent oath to Rosemaigne and pledges to complete his training and be accepted into the ranks of the Mounted Spearmen. He is quickly distracted by the cry of a travelling merchant, extolling the virtues of his brand of jousting lance.

Yamere, Wair Rae

Finally, the gang of young elves leaves him. Heinrich lies broken, bloodied and bruised as the roar of the crowd makes his head spin. The pain is bad, but so much worse when he tries to move. He waits for the healer who will nurse him to health only for this all to happen again. Regardless of the shame, Heinrich vows to escape Yamere and the Arena, whatever the cost. This Flet will not be a part of the elves sick games anymore.

Vangre, Kramer Confederation

Well beyond the city walls, Pietro Heletiano demonstrates one of the many exotic discoveries he has brought back with him from his Eastern journeys. The young adventurer swings his arms wildly as he excitedly orders a subordinate to light the fuse on the monstrous metal tube. A thunderous explosion smashes the morning air. With boyish glee Pietro watches as the distant cowshed disintegrates and the startled herd runs squealing across the open pasture.

As the acrid smoke clears Vincenzo Heletiano coughs into his embroidered cuffs before turning to his expectant, soot-blackened son. "Very good, Pietro. Soon we shall be Reganto again."

NOON

Caspas Forest, Burvoy

Duke Jean Pierre Falchon's horse stamps the ground nervously as it waits for its master to return. The Forest makes the animal uneasy and it longs to be away from this place. The delegation of orcs that came to meet with its master made it even more nervous, and it was only the friendly way in which its master greeted the orcs that stopped it attacking, as it had been trained to do.

Roddis, Fletland

The two Kavist warriors break bread as they talk about the good old days. Dieter brings more dark ale to his two best customers who's growing girths could only dream about the armour that once protected their vitals. Both men laugh

heartily, until a hand bell is heard to be ringing frantically in the street outside. Within moments the bells of the churches and temples join the rising noises of panic and hurry. It is the warning of a raid.

Jens and Mattias both grab their swords, long tarnished with time and run into the streets. The sky is dark with a fast approaching swarm.

The gargoyles are coming!

Jens curses and looks to his belly and his dearly clutched tankard of ale. The first gargoyle dives into the town.

Midullus, Kramer Confederation

A sweat-soaked peasant stands shading his eyes as a troop of soldiers marches across his small plot of land. What will it be this time, another pig to pay the tax or will it be his turn to serve in the militia. The Captain of the troop tosses a chinking purse at his feet and orders him to fall in. At the cottage door the peasant's wife clutches her squalling baby and weeps. Who harvest their crop? What will become of her children?

Belmez, Evora

Valdo, flying at speed to make good his escape, glances over his shoulder and cries out in surprise. The gargoyles chasing him are shadow beasts; not exactly like the real thing but those claws look cruelly sharp all the same. Valdo cursed his luck. Some vendors in the Bazaar just didn't know when to accept defeat. A trade is a trade after all.

Lavarina, Greater Baimiopia

The bitter tasting Biamese cheese counterpoints the sweet juice of the apple as Vini Coltore munches his packed lunch. Overhead the sun stares unblinkingly at the war-ravaged slopes north of Larvarina. Coltore's vines are a sorry-looking mess; trampled and crushed by the invading ogres. Now that the ogres have retreated in defeat, Vini labours under the hot sun to rebuild his vineyard and its reputation as a supplier of fine wines to the capital.

Vini is not upset, however, for he enjoys this new challenge. With the Rapoli root stocks he has nurtured he hopes to graft a better strain of grapes. Krienta willing, maybe one day the Holy Benefice Verrochio's holy lips will taste the new Lavarina Rosso vintage and bless the distant vineyard that produces it.

Vini smiles grimly as he remembers the Holy Father's sermon last Dimanco. This latest invasion *had* brought another Ogre Gift to Baimiopia. Pruning Heletian stock makes it grow back even stronger.

Vini Coltore washes down the last of his cheese with a cooling draft of watered wine, then stands to call his workers to order for the afternoon's toil.

AFTERNOON

Somewhere in the Heletian Spine

An arbohalae scout lies in his hidden position looking down the steep slopes of the mountain, counting the last of the ogres that move through the pass below him. He waits for half an hour before leaving his hiding place, scrambling down the cliff face until he hits the floor of the valley. He moves in the opposite direction to that of the ogres, jogging quickly but carefully over the stones. As he passes a large boulder he hears a scraping noise behind him. He reaches for his sword as he turns, but is struck before he can draw his weapon. His dying screams echo through the valley as he is torn apart by tooth and claw.

West of Savilla, Saldae

The troop moves quietly through the sick oak grove, the browning leaves and abundance of fungus showing the ill health of the occupied wood. Sounds ahead give away the enemy's position, they move with stealth towards the cursed Heletian road. Clasping swords and raising bows the little people of the Green Way prepare for another battle.

Abruzzi, Kano

In a wharfside tavern two men occupy a dark and quiet booth. Their voices are kept low, and their eyes scan any new arrivals. A scroll is quickly handed over, the document sealed with the mark of the House of Leptis. A few final words are exchanged and both men depart. Their drinks have not been touched.

St Silva, Greater Baiomiopia

Guiseppe Coltello works at his bench-top, his apprentices watching on with quiet awe as the master craftsman carefully pares away the unwanted ivory to birth the design that currently lives only in his head. This will be the best piece he has carved in years, perhaps since his masterpiece. The client, Orlando Carvalli, Knight Commander of the St Silva Des Sanktos Glavos is a proud warrior, and this carved ivory saddle cantle showing him victorious in battle against an ogre kurger should please him mightily.

Guiseppe is doubly pleased that Carvalli will never appreciate the irony of this commission, for the master craftsman is a devotee of Tergaia, a kult outlawed by the Church, and the leaves that decorate the cantle will contain kultist magic so that the Commander might be *influenced*.

Maroklara Sea, West of Serhaem

Floating, clinging desperately to a shattered remnant of his ship, Francois Herget thanks Rosemaigne for his good fortune and his father for teaching him to swim. His crewmates were not so lucky; he'd watched as one by one they'd been taken to the rail by the pirates, their throats cut and the blood drained into the sea to appease some dark god. Then they'd all been spiked to the deck of the *Sea Wind* before the blackguards scuttled her.

South of Belmez, Evora

Nasir Alwat, an Evoran cabalist of some fair ability, spends another few fruitful hours with Tlach Tulth, a Varng from a tribe of ogres that live in the Deipraesidio Mountains in the south of the island nation of Evora. They meet once every turn of the moon, in a ruined building at the base of the mountain range. Both have achieved much from their many meetings. Nasir learns of the intricacies of necromantic magic, and Tlach learns of the power of the elements.

West of Tyon, Burvoy

Pierre Anjours, a Burvois farmer working his fields in the fertile river valley between Tyon and the Caspas forest cuts his hand as he resharpens his plow. He will leave a wife and four children in poverty when he dies of blood poisoning some three months later.

DUSK

The Forum, City of Baimiopia

Jezza pulls her rags closer as the cooling evening breeze whips across the Forum. She looks about nervously, checking that the coast is clear of the Night Watch. Ever since her brother died from Morsan's Rot she'd been coming here around dusk to scrounge what discarded scraps she could from the shuttered market stalls. On rickety legs she makes her stumbling run for a



browned cabbage head lying on the Turasoan marble paving. Scooping it into her tattered aprons she turns to scuttle back to the safe shadows of a nearby portico when someone steps from behind the stall and yanks her backwards by her hair. The cabbage flies from Jezza's hands as she hits the stone paving with a sickening blow that dizzies her. A helmed face leers down at her.

"What have we here," she hears the voice receding in a blackening sea of pain, "Someone to cheer up our barrack-room tonight, I'd reckon."

Tessa, Kramer Confederation

Father Penzanna is on his way to evening prayer when he sees a raven fly overhead. He quickly signs a warding against the Horned God, and looks to the small harbour to count off the boats of the fishing fleet. Have all returned home?

Somewhere in Evora

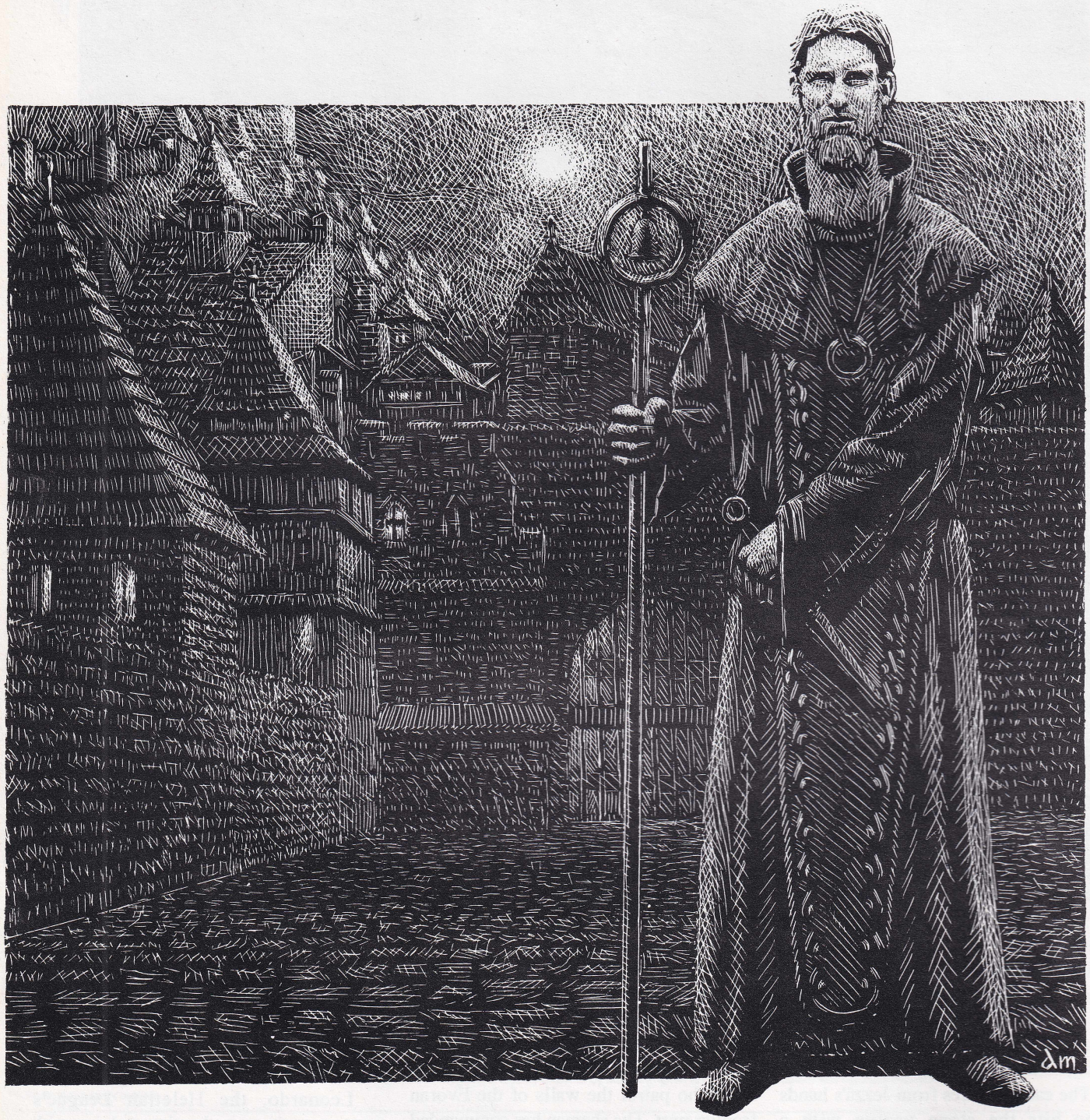
It has taken them the better part of the afternoon to travel less than 300 metres, but the Gesai Goblin war-party are satisfied that they have moved into position without being detected by the men who patrol the walls of the Evoran frontier post. The shaman has commanded that they wait until an hour after sundown before commencing their attack.

Western Wair-Rae

As the sun sets in the west the elves of Wair-Rae look out to sea. One, the fair lady Shilrisis looks longingly on the sparkling waves, waiting as her eyes glitter golden in the light of the dying sun for the return of her much loved husband. He has been gone now for two months. None have ever returned from the sea voyage west, but he had been so sure that it would lead to the fabled Orient. She fondly recalls his promises of wealth and advances that would give their Merchant House an edge over even the royal household.

Albuscaut, Greater Baimiopia

Leonardo, the Heletian League's greatest engineer and artist explains with swift and bold sweeps of his hands the beautifully drawn diagrams to his unlikely patron. Naldin Three Fingers rubs at his greying beard with his maimed hand and nods approvingly: "With your inventions and my money we may yet raise the great treasures that lie beneath the Maroklara."



EVENING

Tyon, Burvoy

A Baimiopian Church missionary tears a pamphlet from the outer wall of the Foreigner's Quarter. It is the latest vitriolic diatribe from Le Coq, the anonymous political activist whose pamphlets constantly espouse the removal of all foreigners from Burvoy. The missionary sneers contemptuously as he screws up the paper, dropping it to the street as he moves on.

A wretched-looking beggar crosses the street and picks up the crumpled pamphlet when the missionary turns the corner. There is a quick glint of steel as the "beggar" places the paper in a pocket under his rags. He pulls the rags tight about his shoulders before continuing to follow his assigned target.

Wurstrich, Fletland

He was drunk, he should have known better to challenge an Evoran to a duel. Now he was slumped against the wall of a dark, damp alley, his lifeblood running into the open drain from a knife wound that felt to be very bad indeed. Not a soul was around, the Evoran victor had won and was now gone. He was alone. A chill sent shudders down his spine as the remaining dusk light faltered and the deepening gloom of evening settled in. Still he bled.

A sound?

Looking up the alley, peering into the darkness he hears the sound of the wind, a footstep and the flapping of a robe.

"Hello? Please help me. I am hurt."

A darkly robed figure appears from the

depths of the alley and stops in front of him. "Please good lady, please help me."

The figure kneels in front of him, putting a robe swathed hand to his wounded chest. He gasps as her hood falls away to reveal the face of Death. The blood drains from his face and the soul from his body. Stillness again takes the alley as the Maiden Death spreads her carrion-like wings and jumps into the sky.

Thapssus, Greater Baimiopia

A grate is carefuly lifted and moved aside in a deserted backstreet down by the docks. Yellow eyes peer into the gloom. Stinking slaver drips from a panting maw. The dank creature, glistening as the halflight of dusk reflects off the patina of sewer refuse that clings to its nakedness, lifts its long snout to the damp night air and searches for the scent of its favoured prey. It had had its fill of filthy and diseased rats, and yesterday's meal of stray dog had made it bilious. No tonight it would take a real meal, tonight it would drink from the heart of a man.

Portre, Kramer Confederation

In the *Bent Elbow* tavern close by the University an apprentice Cabalist retires to a private drinking booth to examine the compact ebony box that he stole from his master's workroom. Its articulated faces shift in convoluted patterns as he struggles to divine the method of its opening. Finally its top yields with a satisfying click. Looking inside his eager face gels into a look of abject horror. An hour later a potboy discovers his stiffening corpse.

Before calling on the tavern's owner, Tully quickly stuffs the valuable looking sealed box under his apron.

MIDNIGHT

Nerva, Evora

In a Qat den in a quiet back street of Nerva, a Heletian merchant from Thapsuss, while in a narcotic-induced trance, has his throat quietly and professionally cut by an assassin's razor-sharp blade. At least the Qat ensures that he feels no pain as his life blood fountains onto the floor. The assassin hands over five Evoran Dinars to the proprietor of the Qat house as she leaves. The merchant's body will be found floating in the harbour in the morning.

The Outer Circle, City of Biamiopia

Awakened by the terrible pyschic screams, Gianna sits startled in her bed and calls out to her Matriarch: "Do you hear her, Madre? She is one of us but doesn't yet know it." Gianna's eyes wells with tears as she empathises with the beggar girl's anguish.

"We must help her then, Gianna. Calm yourself and focus with me."

Soothing warmth flows from the Matriarch and sends calming reassurance into Gianna's fevered brain.

"Our strength will ease her pain and punish her barrackroom captors."

Karlemar, Burvoy

A Dark Paladin is quickly and efficiently disposed of, his body then silently lowered over the wall of the cursed city of Karlamar and concealed in a sucking bog pit. While this is being done, Arch Duke Angrine takes his small force of soldiers and moves out into the city he once ruled. They use the shadows well, having infiltrated the city many times before. Within the hour, they will have kidnapped the man they want, and returned to the covering darkness of the swamps.

Wair-Rae/Kalraith

With a silent shiver, a cold lonely shudder, a black robed figure stumbles down the dark alleys of the ruins of Kalraith. The elf trips, falling to his bloodied knees. With a gust of air two winged beasts land. The gargoyles aid the follower of the Terura Kala to the hive, and to his audience with the Spirit Queen.

Gasping, weak of breath, he urges them to hurry, his news is of such great importance. The Fourth Dominion? The Fifth Dominion? The Final Dominion? What truth the future holds is known to this divinely blessed seer, and he has come to reveal his secrets to the Spirit Queen, prophesising High King Caemarou's future and his plans for war.

Within and Beyond, Unae

The Horned God looks upon the works of his many disciples and is pleased.

It is 516EK and it is high summer ✪

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8	The Forest -*scenario*	Burvoy	4-8	18	Burvoy	Burvoy	26-29
8	Pure at Heart	Burvoy	23-25	18	Home of Dark Malice	Ossard	30
9	Death in Thvatta -*scen.*	Burvoy	5-10	19	The Abbey -*scenario*	Grt. Baim	8-12
10	Tessa I -*mini camp*	Kramer	5-9	19	Den of Corruption	Ossard	22-23
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15	So You Wanna Be...	Dormetia	29-31	25	The Sisterhood	Dormetia	12-14
16	Fletland	Kalraith	22-25	25	Aftermath	Kramer	33-34
17	Greater Good -*fiction*	Kramer	8-11	26	Dark Night - *fiction*	Grt. Baim	16-18
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17	Gargoyle Hives	Kalraith	14-15				

THE BELT

DEATH AWAITS THE UNWARY IN THE SOLSPACE FRONTIER

BY PAUL MITTING

"Mayday, Mayday. Can anyone hear me? This is Personal Mining Vessel Gwynevere. I am located at Belt Grid Reference 235-764-193. I am under attack. I repeat, I am under attack. They've disabled my main engine and fragged my automatic mining unit.

Oh god, someone please help me. They're cutting through the airlock bulkhead. I can't hold them off by myself. Anyone within range, please assist..."

Last recorded message from PMV Gwynevere.

THE BELT

Tumbling through the void between Mars and Jupiter is the main Asteroid Belt, composed of thousands of "known" asteroids and a vast number of others which have never been catalogued. It is estimated there are over half a million asteroids with diameters larger than 1.6 kilometres (1 mile) and untold numbers of smaller rocks.

The largest asteroid is Ceres, a spherical world with a radius of 930 km. It orbits the solar system every 4.61 years and has a rotation period of 9.08 hours. Its size is approximately one quarter that of Luna and contains one third of the entire mass of the Belt. Other notable asteroids include Pallas (diam. 523 km) and Vesta (diam. 501km).

High speed collisions between asteroids are gradually resulting in their break up, causing an occasional hazard to travellers in the Belt. The asteroids themselves tend to be dusty, cratered objects similar to the moons of Mars.

HISTORY

The first manned base was set up on Ceres in 2023. This was Kirkwood station, originally designed to provide accommodation for any prospectors or scientists in the Belt. Over the intervening years the rise in the Belt population has seen Kirkwood expand to house a community of 5000, with accommodation for a further 2000 transients.

As Kirkwood was established mining bases (remote and manned) were being set up on nearby asteroids. These were the start of the wholesale development and mining of the Belt which is today taken for granted. Mass drivers and refineries sprang up around Ceres which has become the nexus of all Belt activity. Prospectors, Highrider families and Corp mining expeditions alike use Ceres as their main refuelling and resupply point.

In 2026 Algernon base was established on the far side of Ceres opposite to Kirkwood. This base housed 1000 miners in simple comfort and in recent years has expanded to nearly three times that size, now boasting the largest casino in the Belt as well as a number of bars and the excellent Tumbling Rock restaurant.

Rover clans were first formed in 2030 after a split with Highrider factions. They gained in strength and became responsible for many raids, piracy and acts of terror in the Belt. The infamous K471 massacre in 2033 prompted direct RUK and UN intervention in the region. Once the conflict between Rovers and military forces commenced it escalated to the nine month Belt War of 2035. The final battle of the war at Lilith Base, the original pirate haven, saw some of the bloodiest space combat seen to date. It was in the lead up to that climactic engagement that the RUK flagship, the*Victory*, was lost without trace.

THE BELT TODAY

Life in the asteroids of 2037 is dangerous and dirty, with the lure of instant wealth offset by the better chances of a very unpleasant death. Many have opted to take this risk, flocking to the Belt to live the dream of striking it rich in an environment of lax laws and personal freedom. The SolSpace Belt is a wild frontier in the tradition of the gold rush eras of the Yukon, California and Ballarat.

The Belters are a mixed bag of people. Highriders and the infamous Rover clans make up the largest population groups. Mixed amongst them are Earthers, Martians and Jovians. Cyborgs of any type are feared, particularly after the rumours of Mercury-funded pirate ships.

Most Belters live in the asteroid bases, such as on Ceres. Smaller bases are scattered across thousands of other rocks. Some are miners' survival shacks, barely large enough to support one or two people for a few months. Others are rogue bases, heavily armed and well concealed, supplying the ellusive Pirates and Rovers.

Floating between the rock bases are the two O'Neill colonies of Longway and Golden Tree. Both are privately owned constructions, Longway belonging to a European consortium and Golden Tree to a Chinese consortium. They encourage trade in the common sectors of the habitats, but access to the living areas is strictly controlled. Both are rumoured to house over 5,000 people each.

The nexus of all Belt life lies at Ceres and the scattered asteroids around it. Here are the largest concentrations of people, industry and entertainment. Algernon base is famed for the quality of its Strip and the range of diversions offered. A rival Strip has been developed at Farhome base and both can boast a regular crowd of nearly 2000 off duty personnel and civilians.

Ceres: Shaped like a small moon, Ceres has the typical cratered surface of most space bodies. On the surface can be found the very thin layer of ice and frost which gives Ceres its minimal atmosphere. The asteroid itself is of the carbonaceous chondrite type, meaning it is made up of a matrix of carbon rich minerals imbedded with chondrules (small spheres of silicate minerals). There is also a high percentage of water mixed in, sometimes as much as 20%. This has meant that Ceres was able to supply much of its own needs for water, oxygen and organic products early in its colonisation. The main element that is shipped regularly to the asteroid is nitrogen, essential for the Ceres agri-farms.

The two biggest bases built on Ceres are Kirkwood and Algernon. There are some smaller research bases and private estates but these are not open to the average traveller.

Kirkwood: The largest settlement on Ceres, Kirkwood has grown substantially in recent years. Based here are the UN Marshall's Office, Interpol Court and the RUK Military Base, Yorkshire. Other facilities include cargo and passenger terminals, ship repair and building facilities and a Belt Bus terminal.

Algernon: Algernon base was built on the far side of Ceres to provide alternative accommodation and facilities for the huge numbers of people and trade moving through the Belt. There are smaller but more modern cargo and passenger terminals here, as well as the ubiquitous Belt Bus.

The Algernon Strip bustles with many bars, hotels and the Ceres Casino. It is also home to the renowned Tumbling Rock restaurant, which has begun to develop a unique Belt cuisine mixing locally grown produce with imported Martian and Earth foodstuffs.

Yorkshire: Although the RUK base is located alongside Kirkwood it is definitely a separate facility. Access to non-Commonwealth personnel is limited to the public viewing gallery near the main landing pads. The Belt fleet, and any visiting Commonwealth or UN ships use the docks for repairs, re-fits and of course R&R. Ceres Casino profitability relies on the regular influx of well-paid Marines and Pilots. Although the base can build small OTVs and shuttles at need, its regular duty is to keep the fleet repaired and equipped. A high security BSC facility within the base provides repairs and upgrades to Theodorsen Gateway units.

The Belt Gateway: Located in a matching orbit with Ceres around the Sun floats the Gateway Station Lyonnesse. Fully completed in 2034, the station is protected by the RUK naval forces situated at Yorkshire base. Lyonnesse Station is quite large, being equipped mainly for the handling of inbound and outbound cargo shipping. Passengers can locate good accommodation there at either the Belt Ritz or the Lyonnesse Hilton. Both are small hotels however, as Lyonnesse is only a stopover point for nearby Ceres. Travelling to and from Lyonnesse takes about two hours (from Ceres), with passenger shuttles leaving every 8 hours.

Government

There is no government in the Belt. The UN and RUK fleets maintain order where possible and uphold international space law. In the main, however, it is not possible for their jurisdictions to extend to the myriad individual bases. There, locals are responsible for setting and maintaining law and order. Some of the 'laws" in these mini-bases reflect the personality of their owners and can be a trap for the unwary: "What d'ya mean our shuttle isn't painted in regulation colours?".

Private firms run the security of many larger bases. Only Kirkwood and Yorkshire have actual UN and RUK police forces. Interpol has jurisdiction there as well, which means any trials for piracy are conducted there.

Kirkwood is managed by a Mayor, with a Council of five elected positions, and one UN nominated position. The elections are scrupulously monitored by the UN, but invariably the Mayor and her stooges are corp backed (they can afford to buy the popular vote). The UN rep spends most of his time vetting their plans and decisions to ensure they are to the benefit of Kirkwood's inhabitants. Local security at Kirkwood is provided by Interpol officers and Council-funded private Police.

Algernon has a Council of ten elected officials, of which one is nominated as Chief Executive Officer. There is no RUK or UN presence within the Council, although any decisions which may affect them are run past them first. Local



Personalities of the Belt

Alan Devries, Owner/Operator of the Ceres Casino: Devries originally came to the Belt as a technician with the early NASA missions. He established the first Casino in a rented pressure dome, providing entertainment and gambling for the prospectors who began to flood the Belt. Now he owns the most profitable venue on Ceres, and also manages a lot of the illicit drug and weapons trade. He is friendly and personable, and has been known to be generous to many miners who experienced financial difficulties. Cross him though, and he will be as ruthless as a Yakuza hitman.
Fixer (INT 8, COOL 8)
Resources 6, Streetdeal 7

Jacques Treloar, Interpol Police Commissioner: is considered too old at sixty five to be responsible for running Ceres Interpol. Based at Kirkwood, his 3 years has seen him personally involved in 2 firefights, a ship to ship battle with a Rover scavenger and a number of fist fights with recalcitrant miners. This has earned him considerable respect among the Belt community and the officers who serve with him.
Cop (INT 7, EMP 7)
Authority 10, Handgun 4

Toshiro Sameda, Head of JAB (Belt Division): Sameda is a no nonsense operator. If you work for him, he expects reliability and obedience. His leadership of the JAB enterprises in the Belt has sustained the corp through it's hardest times since the Crash. According to a leaked dossier, he was once head of a JAB Black Ops team. Now in his late forties, he is still personally intimidating, though he can be charming and urbane when needed.
Corporate (INT 7, COOL 8)
Resources 9, Martial Arts 7

security at Algernon is provided by Ceres Security Forces, a subsidiary of Arasaka.

FACTIONS IN THE BELT

RUK: Not surprisingly, the RUK maintains a sizeable presence in the Belt to protect their Gateway and bases. What many people don't realise is how much mining is conducted by RUK citizens and corps, and as a consequence the RUK government wishes them to be well defended against Pirate actions. The actual political power of the RUK is minor in the Belt, but with control of the Gateway they exert considerable financial influence over other political and corporate factions.

The aim of the RUK is to ensure fair trade, a good return on their investments, and the eradication of the Pirate menace.

JAB: Always a powerful corp, even the crash of 2027 didn't stop them exploiting the Belt for all its worth. They were among the first to utilise robot mining ships to strip the wealth from the asteroids and fire them home.

JAB maintains a large presence around Ceres, with a fleet of cargo freighters and security ships. They also have their own repair stations (two so far, with a third nearing completion) amongst the better mining zones. JAB robot miners are hated by most freelance prospectors as they can scan and lock onto valuable asteroids quicker than a human crew. By the same token, the freelancers are not averse to following them down to a likely site and then working it simultaneously.

JAB are very protective of their equipment, mining claims and personnel. Few people willingly cross the corp, as they have a reputation for having trouble makers vanish.

Ceres Miners Association: The Association is a loose agreement between the freelance miners and prospectors who inhabit the Belt. They try to ensure fair treatment of its members by corps and local government. Although individual members may be aggressive in their approach, the Association has so far been outspoken but refused direct conflict with its opponents.

Main activities of the group are the abolition of the prison mines, disputing member's mining claims with corps (and other freelancers - claim jumping is rife in the Belt) and playing Zee-Ball. It is worth noting that the two Solar Roamers who live in the Belt (Johann Zwiedorf and Patricia Ling) both support the Association with their considerable resources of wealth and influence.

Belt Bus: An offshoot of the Mars Bus line, Belt Bus tries to provide a regular shuttle service between major population centres in the Belt. Like its parent, Belt Bus has always encouraged trade and (recently) tourism. Naturally they make a healthy profit from both so their interest is not always unselfish.

For reasons that are widely speculated upon, no Belt Bus vessel or crew has ever been attacked by Rover clans. UN investigations, both covert and official, have not been able to link the company to any obvious Rover connections.

NASA: The American space program suffered badly with the Crash of 2027. One of the few government enterprises to survive largely intact was NASA. Their developments of Mars and the Belt were profitable and self-sustaining. NASA was one of the first to begin mining the Belt (Kirkwood was once a NASA base) and they have expanded successfully ever since. A standing joke among Belters is more Americans live in the Belt than in the Incorporated States. Certainly a recent census of Ceres showed at least 3 in 10 inhabitants were ISA citizens. A good proportion of them were NASA employees or freelancers.

Rumours abound that NASA has obtained some of the old USAF gunships, deltas and crews to help defend its interests in the Belt. A number of miners have reported seeing large unidentified vessels, probably some type of warship, on their sensors. It is interesting to note that the RUK considers these reports serious enough to warrant reinforcing the 17th Strike Force only two months ago.

SRC: The Soviet Rocket Corp's interest in the Belt has begun only recently with their plans to actually propel the more valuable asteroids directly into Earth/Luna orbit and mine them there. With their expertise in heavy lift vehicles their initial results have been very promising. They have a small presence on Ceres for supporting their Belt operations, and three research crews searching for suitable asteroids. Once located, they attach large nuclear drive units which use powdered rock and mineral as a propellant.

This project has caused an angry backlash from local miners, who see it as a threat to their livelihoods. No actual conflict has occurred to date but tempers are rising with each success of the SRC.

Rovers: No one knows exactly how many Rovers there are in the Belt, their fierce independance and free lifestyle resists an accurate census, but there are twelve known Clans. Clan Libertas is the largest clan followed next by the Belt Bandicoots and the Claws. Such clans are recent developments, the first being formed in 2030 under Nozumo Takohoto.

The Pirate War of 2035 occurred in the height of the Rover activity. Clans had formed together based on religion, family ties or mercenary greed. The War hurt them badly yet they survived and have since striven to regrow. Most Pirate activity in the Belt, and even around Mars and the Jovian system, has been attributed to the Rover Clans.

The truth is that some Clans will raid when they think they can get away with it, but just as many mine, trade and ship cargo as legitimate businesses. The major difference between Clans and their earthly Nomad equivalents is the environment they live in.

Rovers are accepted on Ceres and most major bases, although they are always under the gaze of security forces or even military soldiers. On the smaller bases, they are often refused entry or must surrender hostages before trade can occur. The attitude of most Belters is wary acceptance of them, which can turn to hate or friendship in an instant.

Military Forces

Yorkshire Base currently has two RUK Strike Forces operating in the Belt region. They are the 12th under Admiral Janice Evans and the 17th under Admiral Randolf Tasker. Each Strike Force is comprised of two Gunships, a Marine Carrier, a Fighter Carrier and a Support Freighter. The 17th has been reinforced with two Frigates from Luna.

In support are a combined Commonwealth Strike Force comprised of an Australian Republic Gunship, two New Zealand Frigates and the Indian Carrier *Ghandi*. UN forces are represented by the USAF Gunship *Lincoln* and the Carrier *Washington*. Note that the two USAF ships are also available for deployment to defend NASA interests if required.

JAB and NASA are both known to have their own military style vessels to defend their interests. It is suspected that each have access to at least one Gunship of the old 2025 pattern, and possibly a number of Deltas or even dedicated space Fighters such as used by the RUK.

Speculation is rife that a corp has obtained an automated plant for building spacecraft components. This theory was supported by the discovery of a cache of space craft weapon systems and targeting sensor packages in the Belt. It was a lucky find by a UN Marshall who was actually looking for a suspected Rover base.

Rumours

Next issue we plan to bring you an adventure set in the Asteroid Belt plus more background material. Until then here are a few rumours that your 'punks might like to explore the veracity of.

* There is an automated factory making spaceships. Someone is building a fleet, hidden in the Belt.

* Cyborgs have been attacking ships to strip them of their cargo and vital components. Crew and passengers are being taken to Mercury for use in their CyberWarrior games.

* Rovers are in league with the Asteroid Prison Mines to supply them with workers. When an inspection team is due the Rovers ship them off to another mine or hold them in special bases.

* JAB robot miners have been programmed to defend their mining sites. They use their mining lasers and explosives to destroy other vessels if they approach the asteroid they are working.

* The *Victory* has been discovered by a NASA mining team and is being refitted for use by the ISA.

* A small escape pod has been found by an RUK Gunship from a ship supposedly lost during a Gate transfer. They are holding the survivors at a remote station because they claim an alien ship rescued them from the hyperspatial realm. This is why the Belt fleet was re-inforced.

* Highriders at Farhome claim they can prove the existence of telepathy between children born there recently. A team of scientists who went there have sent their findings to the UN in a classified report.

See you next issue, Earthers. ■

Johann Zwiedorf, Solar Roamer: Johann made it rich back on Earth. At one point he was rumoured to be head researcher for a major corp, but managed to successfully leave and create his own company. In 2032 he was diagnosed as having terminal bone cancer. Due to some unique medical problems, his only solution was a Gemini style full body conversion. Having taken that step, his love for space travel compelled him to buy a second hand USAF support ship and have himself installed within it. He still keeps his Gemini body, run by remote control, for more personal interactions.
Netrunner (INT 9) Interface 7, Systm Knowledge 9

Leroy Jackson, Belt Bus Pilot and Fixer: If you ever caught a bus in the Belt, you probably had Leroy for your driver. He turns up in more places than unwanted body hair, and is less popular. Despite this, he is one of the best Information Brokers around Ceres. Leroy has contacts in every Corp, military base and habitat, even a friendly UN Marshall. From his varied sources he can piece together pretty reliable data, and can even give you predictions on activity in the Belt. Just be prepared to listen to him harp on his favourite subject - Zee-Ball.
Nomad (COOL 4, REF 5) Pilot (OTV) 7, Tech 5

Simon Nevarre, UN Marshall: Nevarre was first trained as a USAF Marine, and saw some limited action in the O'Neill War. He was recruited by the UN in 2033 and has spent his last 2 years on duty in the Belt. He has few friends, but they are firm ones, including the disreputable Leroy Jackson. Off duty, Nevarre likes to haunt the bars at Algernon or Farhome and see what he can chase up.
Cop (INT 6, EMP 6) Melee 8, Zero-G Combat 7

ARMED & DANGEROUS

Discrete Yet Deadly Weapons for Your Adventuring Band

by Bill McConnell

During the 16th century the sword in Western Europe went through an interesting evolution. More and more non-military persons began to carry swords as a sign of rank and social status. The nobility and the increasingly powerful merchant class began to regard the sword as an important accessory to every gentleman's wardrobe and not just a means of protecting one's person. To the disgust of many military minded men, all over Europe and Britain the sword became an item of fashion and at once subject to the whims of "polite society". At the same time a number of fencing schools began to appear and sword fighting began to be studied carefully and seriously; after all there was money in it now.

With this growing interest (and rich patronage) the use of the sword and other weapons soon became codified. Training manuals were produced and young gentlemen would attend academies where they would learn the intricate science of swordplay as part of their normal education (like horse riding, hunting and dancing). Serious swordsmen, military personnel and travellers tended to regard the new swords and fencing dogma with open contempt and in 1599 an Englishman called George Silver wrote *Paradoxes of Defence*; a very arrogant and insightful condemnation of the imperfection of the rapier fight. The 'Paradoxes' are a series of contradictions where Silver points out the flaws in rapier design and its use in combat situations. Mr Silver is very convincing in his championing of the more military style weapons but reason has little chance of success when competing with the dictates of fashion.

This evolution, of course, did not happen overnight. It began with civilians carrying merely lighter, more decorated forms of current military issue broadswords. As the new breed of swordsmen began to experiment with new weapon designs, hilts became more elaborate and the blades longer and lighter. The adoption of different hand grips caused even more changes in hilt design. Some of these changes found their way into military counterparts although martial swords were still robust enough to sever a limb. The thrust became the dominant attack and soon swords became designed entirely for this blow. The small buckler shields that were still popular in the late 15th century began to be discarded (since it was considered socially inept) and the dagger was adopted to fill the left hand in several fencing styles. During this evolution the civilian sword became less and less dangerous and though a lucky thrust could dispatch an enemy quickly, a thrust to body or limb was not likely to incapacitate, let alone kill (although eventually death from bleeding or infection may come later). In some documented duels dozens of wounds were needed to finally polish off the opponent. It is easy to imagine a murderous assailant taking a thrust full in the belly and then (knowing the wound would eventually be fatal), attempt to take his opponent with him at all costs. George Silver was quick to point out that severing the limb of your opponent with a good blow usually rendered them innocuous.

The popularity of the civilian swords may not have been practical, from the serious swordsman's point of view, but the contribution to the study and development of sword technology and swordsmanship cannot be denied.

Roleplaying Applications

It is not always appropriate for the adventurer to wander through a city armed to the teeth and ready for instant combat. In fact many lawful cities regard such adventurers as ruffians looking for trouble (true), threatening the peace and making it difficult for the city watch or constabulary to maintain order. In short, some cities will not allow the routine wearing of military style armour or the carrying of military weapons. Players may be able to carry (packed away) their weapons and armour when arriving in a city, and when getting repairs or making a purchase. Military weapons and armour may be commissioned and purchased, after all travelling adventurers prefer to use such hardware. But players who wish to tempt fate by openly wearing such weapons and armour will find themselves in prison with the offending articles confiscated.

Citizens are still expected to able to defend themselves from bandits and such like and so the practical fashion of civilian weapons and armour comes to the fore. Essentially civilian weaponry is lighter, more fashionable and designed to wound

rather than kill outright. Civilian weaponry is nearly always heavily decorated and very expensive. Most people from noble or merchant backgrounds will have had instruction in the use of these weapons. Note that these weapons are used in a very different style to military counterparts and so in order to wield them effectively a character needs proper instruction.

The referee must realise that professional government soldiers, official body guards, constabulary, night watch etc. may have military style weapons and armour where appropriate. Tavern keepers, coachmen etc. will prefer to use bludgeoning weapons where necessary.

Basic Civilian Weapons

Heavy Rapier: This should be the largest weapon lawfully allowed to be worn openly in public and only just short of socially unacceptable. Generally about a meter long and weighing about 1.2 to 1.5 kg this is the only civilian style weapon designed to parry heavier military weapons without taking damage. It can slash and should be considered about as dangerous as your average shortsword.

Light Rapier: This is a lightweight sword about one meter long with a single or double edged blade and can be used to thrust or slash. Only weighs about 1 kg. Damage rating should be about the same as a longknife or dagger.

Smallsword: Very popular in the 17th century this very light weapon is only about 80 cm long with a thin single edged blade suitable only for thrusting. Probably the most common and the least dangerous of all civilian weapons, a smallsword would be as damaging as your average kitchen knife.

Sword Cane: As the name suggests this is a walking stick with a concealed blade. Some societies would consider this weapon at the least unsporting, and most probably unlawful. The blade type will vary in length and cross-section depending on the intended combat style (thrust, slash etc.) Most sword canes have blades 60 to 80 cm long which can be used to cut or thrust (single or double edged). Generally this weapon should do about the same damage as a dagger.

Scorpion: A large steel needle-shaped blade, designed only to thrust, is concealed inside a walking stick. The body of the walking stick is designed to break away leaving the needle blade exposed (60 to 80cm long) In the opening round of combat the scorpions casing is broken away by striking the weapon on a convenient hard surface (the head of your assailant serves pretty well). Does dagger-like damage.

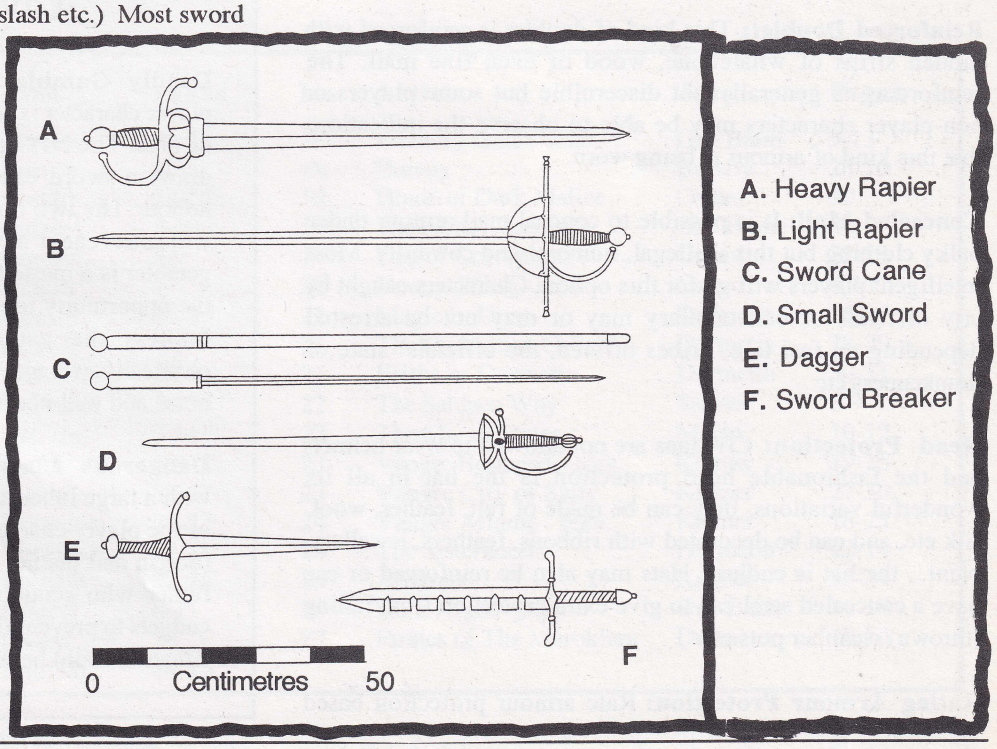
Walking Stick: Used as a light cudgel, even the humble walking stick can be used to crack the skulls of unarmoured foes. It can also be used to parry rapiers etc.

Dagger: The dagger is an acceptable civilian weapon in all its wonderful variations. Long pointed daggers are most common and some are often designed to be used as off-hand parrying implements since the carrying of shields is a definite social gaff. Some parrying daggers with specially designed quillons may entangle an enemy's blade if a critical parry is achieved. This prevents the opponent from using that weapon to attack or parry until successfully disengaged. To disengage an entangled blade the fighter must dodge out of combat or make a successful skill roll with that weapon.

Swordbreakers: Some rapiers and parrying daggers have protrusions or notches designed to catch an opponent's sword allowing the wielder a chance to break its blade. Possibly a critical success is needed to catch a blade (the opponent's weapon will be entangled as mentioned above). A successful roll of the fighter's strength versus the entangled weapon's hit points may be needed to break the blade. A broken weapon may still be usable at the referee's discretion but at a reduced effectiveness (half skill chance) and doing half normal damage. Please note that swordbreakers are useless against most military style weapons.

Cloaks: Specially designed cloaks may be used in a similar fashion to a fighting net provided the referee believes the wielder has trained in such a skill. The cloak may also be wound around the arm and used to "parry" a civilian style blade. Trying this trick against a military rated blade will quite probably render the player character innocuous!

Missile Weapons: It is not legal to wear or carry missile weapons openly in the streets and characters attempting to do so should be arrested as possible assassins.



Civilian Armour

Civilians are able to wear lighter style armours but they still must conform to the city laws and current fashion. Below is a list of possibilities.

Clothing: Even humble clothing is better than nothing against a blade, especially silk which resists cutting. In official duels this is the only protection allowed.

Padded Clothing: Layered cloth, possibly with leather or similar tough material concealed inside.

Reinforced Padding: Concealed beneath the layers of padding are plates of whalebone, lacquered wood, fine mail or similar.

Leather Clothing: Complete outfits of buff or polished leather are acceptable for merchant or working class but snobs would not be caught dead wearing this.

Leather Armour: Standard leather armour may be worn in civilised areas but this is definitely for lower class persons.

Hunting Leathers: Slightly better than standard leather armour and favoured by snobs everywhere as their choice in leather gear. This armour is cut to the current fashion and has various reinforced patches for extra protection.

Doublet: Heavy cloth coat that covers the body and sometimes arms. This armour is the favourite street wear of nobility and is usually highly decorated with gold thread, silver buttons and lots of lace.

Heavy Doublet: This doublet has very tasteful padded shoulders, brocade epaulets and brocade rope decoration that looks simply smashing (and protects better too).

Reinforced Doublet: This kind of doublet is reinforced with hidden strips of whalebone, wood or even fine mail. The reinforcing is generally not discernible but some players or non-player characters may be able to observe the indications that this kind of armour is being worn.

Concealed Mail: It is possible to conceal mail armour under bulky clothing but this is illegal, immoral and cowardly. Most intelligent players will go for this option. Characters caught by city officials or constabulary may or may not be arrested depending on fast talk, bribes offered, the officials' state of drunkenness etc.

Head Protection: Civilians are not allowed to wear helmets and the fashionable head protection is the hat in all its wonderful variations. they can be made of felt, leather, wool, silk etc, and can be decorated with ribbons, feathers, jewellery, paint... the list is endless. Hats may also be reinforced or can have a concealed steel cap to give extra protection from falling (thrown) chamber pots etc.

Rating Armour Protection: Rate armour protection based on the ensemble chosen by a player compared to say standard leather armour. Get the player to detail the streetware they have chosen and consider the relative protection provided. Obviously concealed mail or similar should be rated using normal game rules but clothing should always be better that nothing. The important thing here is to use the same rules when constructing your non-player characters.

Atmosphere For Adventure

A game run in a city can be just as exciting (dangerous) as a dungeon crawl and even more rewarding. Warring noble families, corrupt priesthoods, bent government officials, competing merchant houses not above espionage or murder, assassins, thieves, moneylenders, roistering rabble can all add new dimensions to your campaign. Remember; money talks long and loud in this kind of scenario, and those in power do not often enjoy the destabilising influence of adventurers.

In running a city adventure draw from classic stories like *The Three Musketeers*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Last Valley* etc. and then darken them with the magic and mythology of your particular game world and you won't go far wrong. Rapier fights can be made just as breathlessly bloody and lethal as monster bashing and are much more stylish. Use military armed personnel sparingly to maintain game balance or the player characters will rebel and try to find ways of using their normal weapons.

Anyone interested in learning more about civilian weapons should try to view a copy of *Masters of Defence* a video production available from the Tower Armouries in London. Reprints of George Silver's *Paradoxes of Defence* printed by Edwards Blount in 1599 can be found at some reference libraries although my copy came off the Internet.

Adventure Hooks

Deadly Gamble: In a dark, cheap, backstreet tavern a player character is accused of cheating at a game of cards or dice. The NPC gambler involved is most upset and draws a sword cane, calling on the PC to defend his honour. His two thuggish bodyguards draw knives and will intervene if anyone else tries to stop the fight. The gambler is a masterful swordsman who will not pass up the opportunity to cut his opponent to pieces slowly to impress the gathering audience. The gambler is physically average, carries enough money to buy a good horse and will not bargain; he is spoiling for a fight.

Dangerous Liaisons: A young nobleman or woman with a large inheritance has become infatuated with one of the player characters. He/she is attractive, young and foolish and his/her feelings are soon discovered by the father who sends a group of 2-4 thugs armed with cudgels to prevent the relationship from developing. The situation could be further complicated by a rival suitor.

Duel: A young noble, fresh from his days at the fencing academy, has been insulted by one of the players. In the interests of publicly gaining face, he has challenged the player to a duel in the plaza (a highly public place) where they will fight with smallswords until bad blood is delivered. This is not a duel to the death and should this occur the survivor is up for a heavy fine or worse.

Bodyguard: A rich merchant is seeing a lady of dubious character in the noble quarter of the city. The player character has been hired as a discreet body guard who will ensure that this evening's contractual obligations will not be disturbed by a jealous wife or business rival. While the merchant is upstairs undertaking a friendly merger the player will be waiting below in the parlour when an enraged ex-girlfriend of the merchant's bursts through the door. She is dressed like young man, carrying a smallsword. She is a superb fencer and enraged by the current situation.

Romeo and Juliet: Two powerful families in the city are constantly at war with each other. Amongst the intrigue and against all odds a young man and woman from each of the families fall in love and need the help of our adventurous and most noble player characters (money can be very character building) to help them arrange a secret marriage. Read William Shakespeare's play for full effect, or simply build the adventure from your own understanding of this plot. Remember, both families are rich and can hire experienced duelists to dispatch troublesome players. Some quick thinking and good role-playing will be needed to avoid disaster.

The Last Valley: A bedraggled group of a dozen or so foraging mercenaries stumbles into a small fertile valley that has somehow managed to survive the plague and war ravaging the countryside. The mercenaries are poorly armed, some are wounded, but they are all veterans. The commander has only tenuous control over the men, most who wish to rape, pillage and return to the war. At the same time a small group of adventurers also stumble upon the valley. The players are also poorly provisioned and armed only with civilian weapons. A rather complicated scenario should ensue with interactions between players, villagers and mercenaries. It should be critical for the players to gain the trust of the commander and remove several outspoken and hostile members of the mercenary band.

Footnote

The masters of fencing had a penchant for giving grand names to sword manoeuvres like Stocatas, Imbrocatas, Punta Reversals etc. George Silver mentions an interesting manoeuvre used by a notorious braggart and dueller called Cob. The manoeuvre, Cob's Traverse, is simple and elegant and many players will find it very instructive. When faced with an obviously superior opponent - turn and run away. ■

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DRAGON TSR's popular monthly magazine. The emphasis is on AD&D with a veritable treasure chest of articles, adventures & ads(!) for Forgotten Realms, Dark Sun etc. Features on Top Secret SI & Marvel Supers are tolerated, albeit with less proliferation. Every issue includes such things as new spells, magic items, strange monsters, NPC classes, short stories, comics, game reviews, and a broad selection of essays on gaming techniques & campaigns. Publication regularity is excellent.
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GENERAL Avalon Hill's great publication that deals exclusively with Avalon Hill simulations (what a surprise!). Each issue highlights a specific (usually new) product, with extensive feature articles. However a selection of popular games (such as ASL, Third Reich, Diplomacy etc) are also regularly covered in detail. Article definition includes series replays scenarios, designer's notes, strategy & tactics, optional rules, coming attractions & (infrequently) variant counters. Good publication regularity.
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PROTOCULTURE ADDICTS We've been looking for a top quality magazine on Japanese anime and manga ever since *Animag* disappeared forever. We have found one! *Protoculture Addicts* is brought out bimonthly - there have already been 29 issues. It is produced by *Janus Publications*, the people who have given us *Heavy Gear Fighter*. This magazine reviews all things to do with anime: games, CDs, cartoons, books, manga, and videos. It has full features covering anime movies & videos, with episode by episode descriptions; anime stories, etc. Profusely illustrated with shots from videos, etc.
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$105.00 for 6 issues ❑

PYRAMID Steve Jackson's new bimonthly role playing magazine. It is 72 pages in length, and features reports on overseas cons, reviews hot selling games, such as Earthdawn, contains scenarios and designer's notes on things such as GURPS, Car Wars, Toon, etc. It also has many regular features such as Steve Jackson's games news and release schedule, industry news, AADA news, etc. It also contains some rather tongue in cheek rip offs of other games. For example, they are running a series of Toon supplements, such as: Hampire: The Masked Ace Raid, and coming is Werecow: Ah, Pork Lips. Gee, which games are they ripping off?
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SCRYE : The Collectible Trading Card Game Guide A high quality 68 page magazine by ILM International, that specifically covers Collectible Trading card Games. The first two issues have been a huge success and sold out the world over. I'm looking at issue # 2 while I write this review, and it contains many goodies: the complete rules for the *Star Trek Next Generation Collectible Trading Card Game,* a preview of *Galactic Empires*, some teasers on the *Illuminati Collectible Trading Card Game*, a complete price guide for: Magic: The Gathering Alpha, Beta, Unlimited, Arabian Nights, Antiquities, Legends, Spellfire; a checklist for The Dark; interviews, designer notes for *Jyhad*, the rules for *Galactic Empires* - need I go on?
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THE DUELIST By Wizards of the Coast, this is a brand new full colour quarterly magazine that supports Magic the Gathering and future Deckmaster products in the collectible trading card game genre. Every issue features the latest trading card products, articles on game variants, previews of up and coming Deckmaster products, interviews with artists and designers, news from the tournament circuit, and tips on play.
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$30.00 for 4 issues ❑

WHITE DWARF A glossy, monthly English magazine solely dedicated to Games Workshop products. Enthusiasts of Warhammer RPG, Warhammer Fantasy Battles, Warhammer 40K, Space Hulk, Space Marine, and all the rest, will find this invaluable. Articles cover adventures, scenarios, new rules, variant counters, backgrounds, and the like. Every issue contains photographs & specifications for new Citadel releases, plus colour pages highlighting superb miniatures painting! Publication regularity is very good.
$36.00 for 6 issues ❑
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WHITE WOLF

This magazine has been cancelled by White Wolf. They are no longer printing it.

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++ Squad Caligula advancing to secure perimeter. No resistance apparent. Squad Hadrian in deployment. The Emperor is our guardian.
++ Squad Hadrian beginning sweep. Squad Caligula holding secured positions.
++ Lifeforms detected. Possible hostiles. What the... AAAAAAARRRGGHHHH!!!
++ Squad Hadrian! Return to perimeter! Maintain fire-arcs and retreat to Squad Caligula's strong points!
++ DAKKA DAKKA DAKKA BOOM! WHOOSH! BOOM! DAKKA DAKKA! RRRRIIIIIPPPP! AAARGGGHHH! DAKKA DAKKA! WHOOSH! SCHREEECH! BOOM! DAKKA DAKKA!
++ By the Emperor! What's going on in there? Squad Caligula, report!
++ Caligula here. No signs of Squad Hadrian, Brother Captain. The enemy seem to be massing for another attack. They are doomed. We are the Deathwing and shall not fail! DAKKA DAKKA DAKKA!
++ Maintain position Squad Caligula. Squad Nero is advancing to reinforce you. Damn these abominations! They shall feel the wrath of the Dark Angels!

"I LOVE THE SMELL OF NAPALM IN A SPACE HULK!!!"

VITAL ADVICE FOR PLAYERS OF GAMES WORKSHOP'S SPACE HULK GAME, FROM CAPTAIN STRIKING-FALCON AND MAGNUS SPLEENRIPPER.

A.K.A. JONATHAN A. SPEAR

NICK: *We've had Jonathan's amusing how to for Space Hulk on file for a long time. With Games Workshop re-releasing this excellent miniatures board game we figured now would be a great time to print it. If you enjoy the article but haven't yet played the game we suggest you get along to your local Games Workshop stockist and check it out. It is an easy game learn, plays very fast and is heaps of fun. Now over to Jonathan...*

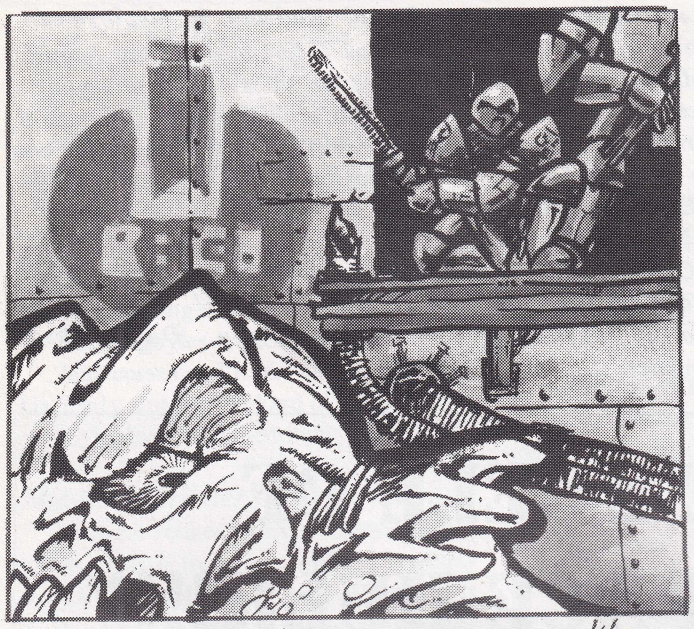
Are your squads of the Emperor's finest warriors being constantly torn limb from limb by ravening hordes of Genestealers? Does the predicament of poor Squad Hadrian seem horrifyingly familiar? Fear not, for we are the warriors of the Emperor and shall not be defeated! I, Brother Captain Striking-Falcon of the Dark Angels' Deathwing, with a kill-ratio of 97 to 1 and the veteran of numerous Space Hulk encounters, shall see to it that your training is complete. I shall guide you, from the initial selection of your troops to the final completion of your mission, in order that you may bring greater glory to the Emperor and your chapter...

+++TRANSMISSION INTERFERENCE DETECTED +++
[Hearken, Brood Brothers, for you have not been forsaken! I am Coven Magus Spleenripper, and I shall instruct you in the manner in which our Genestealer brood may emerge victorious from the flame and steel of the puny humans and their pathetic Imperial master!]

Planning Ahead

A mistake made by many novice Marine commanders is that they simply set up their squads in the deployment zone, then make a mad rush to their objective without first considering the overall situation. As a veteran commander, I must stress that a mission may be won or lost before it has begun, according to the general strategy taken. Before the mission begins, take a careful look at the layout of the hulk. Then ask yourself some pertinent questions. What is the most direct route to the achievement of the mission objective? What is the safest route to the objective? What vital strategic points will need to be held? Where will my forces be most vulnerable? Where are the Genestealers most likely to enter the hulk from? Will it be possible to seal these entrances? At what points will the Genestealers attack? Which assets, often flamers or chain fists, are vital to the completion the mission? Will there be a high presence of psionic activity in the Space Hulk? These are some of the most vital factors that must be taken into account when an overall strategy is formed by the Marine commander, prior to the mission. Without such a strategy a commander may soon find that his squads are serving as 'Stealer-chow!

[Note these elements that are deemed vital by the humans, my Brood Brothers, and exploit any weaknesses you find in the enemy's strategy. If you can second-guess the Marine commander, you may be able to deploy your hordes in order to prepare against any breakthrough that is attempted by the humans! In addition, you must consider which areas you believe would be preferable for use as staging areas for attacks against the Marines. If you plan ahead and are especially lucky or skilful, you may be able to lure the Marines into an area where you can isolate and ambush them! Heh, heh, heh!]



Marine Captains and Librarians

If the mission is such that the commander is able to select which forces shall be used, then it will be possible to tailor your Marines according to the grand strategy that you have developed for the entire mission. If possible, always take a Marine Captain and a Librarian. The Captain will provide a vital command bonus, as well as being well armed with a grenade-launcher and deadly in hand-to-hand combat. A word of warning, however! Do not be tempted to use your Captain as you would a Marine armed with a Thunder Hammer or Lightning Claws, as the Captain is far too important an asset to lose to the Genestealers. Librarians, with their deadly psychic powers and formidable psychic protection, are even more deadly than most Marines armed with heavy weapons and have a habit of surviving massive attacks that would overwhelm an ordinary Marine.

[Beware of these Librarians, Brood Brothers, as they are capable of destroying hordes of Purestrain 'Stealers with a single Lightning Arc! Only a concerted effort from Hybrids, Psykers and Purestrains will be effective in eliminating these powerful opponents! Marine Captains, on the other hand, are easier to kill, but tend to be well protected by the Marine commander. If possible, seek to remove the Captain at the first opportunity, as this blow shall greatly weaken the entire force.]

Storm Bolters

Storm Bolters, the standard armament of most Terminators, are excellent general purpose weapons. If you intend to move along long, straight corridors and rooms in the mission, then Storm Bolters are ideal weapons to select. Their ability to gain in accuracy with sustained fire makes persistence of aim at a target a vital tactic. Keep shooting at a target as it will gradually become easier to destroy! Overwatch fire is also an excellent, if somewhat unreliable, manner in which vital areas and the activities of other Marines may be covered. Beware, however, of the tendency of Storm Bolters to jam during Overwatch. If you are concerned that a Marine will face a massive attack whilst set on Overwatch, simply position him far enough away from the enemy that if his weapon does jam, the Genestealers will still be unable to reach him!

[Note this tendency of Storm Bolters to jam whilst on Overwatch, Brood Brothers, and exploit it. By attacking with huge waves of Purestrain 'Stealers, you may be able to deliberately jam the weapon of an Overwatching Marine, or simply get lucky and run through his gunfire to attack him, or present the Marine with so many targets that he cannot possibly destroy them all!]

Heavy Flamers

Heavy Flamers are one of the most useful and devastating anti-'Stealer weapons available. Not only are Flamers capable of destroying the enemy when they are concealed around corners, but they are vital in cutting off access to crucial areas that the Genestealers may wish to enter. Therefore, Flamers are extremely useful in twisting Space Hulks that have plenty of alcoves and intersections for the 'Stealers to lurk in. The only limitations of this wonderful, deadly weapon are its short range, which isn't often a problem in the confines of a Space Hulk, and its low ammunition capacity. This ammunition problem may be rapidly solved by purchasing a Flamer Reload, but if this is not possible, use your Flamer shots wisely. As a side-note, whilst the self-destruction of Flamers may be a worthy tactic, this option should only be a last alternative when the Marine is low on ammunition and it is vital that he takes as many of the creepy-crawlies with him as possible!

[Damn these Flamers, they are the bane of our extra-terrestrial existence! As the leader of the ravening 'Stealer hordes you must be prepared to sacrifice a few of your brethren in order to exhaust the ammunition of the Flamer Marines. Try to do this early in the mission so that the Marines will be unable to use these deadly weapons as they near their objective. As an alternative, you may be able to move your Purestrains so close to a Flamer Marine that he cannot shoot without hitting himself! This cunning tactic, if performed successfully, will usually result in the self-destruction of the Marine, or his rending at the claws of the Brood!]

Assault Cannons

Aaah! Now we come to my favourite heavy weapon. Many times has Squad Striking-Eagle smote its enemies asunder under the mighty hail of its Assault Cannons! These weapons are perfect for slaughtering massed hordes of Genestealers with Full Automatic fire. Simply find a room full of the critters and let them feel the wrath of the Emperor! Assault Cannons are the perfect Overwatch weapon, with an extremely high kill-reliability. If you wish to perform Overwatch on an area but are afraid that a Storm Bolter will not prove reliable enough, then the Assault Cannon is your weapon. This awesome weapon is also well suited for those daring situations in which a Marine must quickly leap around a corner and eliminate a handful of lurking 'Stealers. The high kill-ratio of this weapon makes it almost as effective as a Heavy Flamer in such situations. Like the Storm Bolter, if the mission that is to be undertaken includes many long corridors or open rooms, the Assault Cannon is an excellent support weapon with which to arm your

Marines. Be careful not to run out of ammunition, however, as you will find this weapon to be even more thirsty than a Flamer! Be sure to equip your Marines with extra ammunition reloads if at all possible. Rock n' roll!!!

[In several ways, the Assault Cannon can prove to be even more troublesome to the chitinous hordes than the Heavy Flamer is. This weapon can sweep areas clean of 'Stealers almost as rapidly as a Flamer, as well as being able to destroy fire-arc limiting objects such as doors, and can perform an extremely deadly variety of Overwatch. Notice, Brood Brothers, that we are not entirely helpless against this devastating weapon. If the Genestealers are able to catch an Assault Cannon Marine when he is low on ammunition and about to reload, it may be possible to overwhelm him before he can reload and destroy his foes. Another, rather too costly tactic, is to simply keep running Purestrains at an Assault Cannon until it runs out of ammunition or is unlucky enough to malfunction. This manoeuvre is usually too costly in 'Stealer lives, however, and will allow the Marines numerous easy kills. Waste not our precious brood unless no other option presents itself!]

Close Assault Weapons

Finally, we come to the various close assault weapons such as Power Gloves, Chain Fists, Power Swords, Force Axes, Lightning Claws, Thunder Hammers and Storm Shields. Basically, when it comes to Marines and Close Assault, simply follow the advice I give to members of Squad Striking-Falcon: DON'T! Close Assault is exactly where Genestealers want you, especially if your Marines are only armed with Power Gloves, Chain Fists or Power Swords. Even though Power Swords will marginally improve your survivability, don't rely on them to let you win against the Close Assault excellence of Purestrain Genestealers. That goes for Marine Sergeants and Captains too! Librarians equipped with Force Axes may be able to slaughter a few 'Stealers in Close Assault, but shouldn't make a habit of this as their luck and psychic powers will eventually begin to run out. As for those maniacal Marines who choose to specialise in the use of Lightning Claws or Thunder Hammers and Storm Shields, you only have to look at their mission survival ratio to see what their average life-expectancy is! Whilst useful for specific tactical situations in specific missions, the fact is that these Close Assault specialists will rapidly run out of luck (and life) in the face of hordes of vicious Genestealers. Whilst useful for holding vital areas for a few moments, or clearing out the labyrinths in which 'Stealers love to lurk, these specialists should only be deployed if the mission strategy dictates that they will be necessary. Shooting Purestrains from a distance is a much safer option than meeting them claw-to-fist in Close Assault.

[Rip the humans, rend them, tear them apart! Mass vast hordes and batter the Marines into submission! Use your superior numbers to outflank them! Attack in overwhelming waves! Keep attacking those who show particular resistance, for eventually they shall falter! Close Assault is where the 'Stealers are in their element! Kill, in the name of the Brood, kill the humans!]

Manoeuvring In The Space Hulk

The manner in which a commander directs his Marines to move through a Space Hulk in order to achieve an objective is extremely important if they are to have any hope of success. It may be possible to gather a squad into a loose group and charge across a standard terrestrial battlefield, but this will simply not do in the confines of a Space Hulk! Your Marines must be deployed so that they are able to cover all areas of possible attack. By working as a team and covering the group as a whole, often by means of Overwatch, your Marines should be able to cut off all avenues of attack as they progress through the Space Hulk. Do not be tempted to leave any possible direction of attack on the squad unguarded, unless you are forced to, because the 'Stealers will exploit this weakness mercilessly. When advancing, lead with the weapon most appropriate for the situation, as discussed previously.

In addition, the actual spacing of your squad members is vital. If the Marines are spread too far apart, they will be too far stretched to cover all angles of attack, and will not be able to make a tactical thrust or respond to an attack, cohesively or rapidly enough. On the other hand, if your Marines are deployed too close together, they will not be given enough time to react to any breakthrough that the 'Stealers make in the Marine defensive perimeter. Thus, an entire squad may be lost in seconds as the result of a single Genestealer breakthrough, if the squad members are not spaced apart! A happy medium must therefore be struck by the Marine commander between these



two extremes of spacing. Because the Genestealers will virtually always have superior numbers, be more flexible and have the ability to move much faster, each squad must work as a team if they are to survive. A lone Marine is usually no match for a Genestealer; each Marine must support and co-operate with his fellows, in order that they may be successful and bring glory to the Emperor's name!

[As leader of the Brood, you must ensure that you make full use of your advantage in speed and numbers. Lurk in cover, massing forces, then strike quickly! Always threaten the Marines from every possible angle, as this will distract them and waste their valuable time. Ruthlessly eliminate any Marine who is foolish enough to leave the protection of his comrades. Constantly probe the humans, looking for weaknesses, wasting their ammunition and time, and finding the best time and place to attack. When you have found this optimal attack period, attack decisively, with overwhelming force and numbers, in order to swamp the Marines with a problem too big even for their mighty weapons to handle. Once you have attacked, and hopefully succeeded in eliminating your target, follow up on your victory by threatening the remaining Marines further. Never let up the pressure on the Marines for even a second!]

Psychic Activity

This is when things begin to get nasty for normal non-psychic Marines, even veteran Captains like myself! The presence of strong psychic activity usually heralds a struggle of epic proportions between Genestealer Hybrids and Marine Librarians. It is important that you lead your advance with these Librarians, in order that they may bear the brunt of this psychic assault and return it to the enemy. Mere non-psykers will simply be swept aside and destroyed without the protection of a squad Librarian. If a strong psychic enemy presence is expected in the mission, it is important that the force commander selects as many Librarians to accompany the normal Marines as possible. In addition, be wary of Genestealer Hybrids who may teleport through or otherwise breach your defensive perimeter by means of psychic powers, and of Hybrids armed with heavy weapons who may be tempted to take pot-shots at your advancing troops. Finally, it is important not to get so caught up in the psychic conflict that the presence of ordinary Purestrain Genestealers is forgotten. Whilst seemingly less dangerous in the face of Lightning Arcs and Hellfires, many Librarians have dismissed the threat of Purestrains to their (rather terminal) detriment!

[Yes, my Brood Brothers, Hybrids with psionics and heavy weapons! Truly a formidable combination. Be careful, however, because once the presence of these forces has been exposed, the Marines will make their elimination a top priority. Use this distraction to aid in the advance of your other forces who are not being concentrated upon. Also be aware that whilst your Purestrains are extremely vulnerable to psychic attack, so too are those non-psychic Marines on board the Space Hulk. Eliminate them! Heh, heh, heh!]

Coordinating Campaigns

When fighting a series of engagements aboard a Space Hulk, slightly different tactics must be used by the Marine commander. When putting together a total assault force, thought must be given to the types of missions that your Marines are likely to be faced with, and what troops that will be needed to complete these missions. As many different missions will need to be undertaken, this usually means that your squads may need to be more flexible than they are in a usual one-off mission. In addition, every single casualty begins to add up during a campaign. Therefore, the commander must be even more careful not to send his Marines on suicide missions, especially valuable troops such as heavy weapons, Captains and Librarians. Finally, you must be prepared to make an ordered tactical withdrawal, "cutting your losses", if the situation begins to look hopeless. Whilst Marines always loath to retreat from any fight, this may be necessary in order to save valuable troops from needless sacrifice, and to ensure the final glorious victory for the Emperor!

[As the leader of the Brood during a long campaign, you too must not waste your hordes needlessly if they are in limited supply! After all, there is no use slaughtering a few Marines at a cost of dozens of 'Stealers during the early phases of the campaign, if this means you will provide virtually no resistance in the later stages of the conflict! Do not be afraid to make sacrifices, however, simply make sure that they are well-planned ones that strike telling blows on the Marines.]

++ Squad Caligula approaching objective. Kill ratio 53:1 and rising. Heavy resistance encountered.
++ Screeching Owl's down! Containing the breach. BUUURRRP! Breach contained. Perimeter secured.
++ Outside target room. Fire corridors established. Kill ratio stabilised at 58:1. Entering target room.
++ DAKKA DAKKA DAKKA! BOOM! SCHREECH! BOOM! DAKKA DAKKA! SCHREECH! BOOM! RIIIIIIPPPP! CRUNCH! DAKKA DAKKA! BOOM!
++ Target terminated. Minimal casualties sustained. Squad Caligula teleporting back to base.
++ Striking-Falcon here. Well done Squad Caligula! You really kicked some carapace! Praise be to the Emperor!
++++Damn you Marines! Magus Spleenripper shall have his revenge! Come back, we'll be waiting for you all. Your puny Emperor won't aid you next time! Oh yes, come back, we'll be waiting! Heh, heh, heh...

TRANSMISSION ENDS ++++

KNIGHTS OF THE CHURCH:

THE TEMPLARS

UNOFFICIAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR SHADOWRUN®

By John Pope

"The time for killing and the time for healing."
-Ecclesiastes 3.3

>>>>>(Ever since the Crusades there have been conflicting tales of the Knightly Orders of the Church. I have dug up what dirt I could on them with the help of a few others. And I have posted here what dirt that I could find. Much of what I put up has been deleted by someone else. Comment freely, though. That way some of my research may make it back in.)<<<<<
- Judge Theo (16:54:12/10-Mar-55)

THE TEMPLARS

>>>>>(These were the first of the Orders reformed by His Holiness. At the time they were ostensibly reformed to protect the Church's interests during the Euro-Wars; all of those holy sites that are dotted throughout the Balkans.)<<<<<
- Judge Theo (16:55:50/10-Mar-55)

The Order of the Temple was first founded way back in 1187 by a small handful of people to provide protection for pilgrims on the road from Jerusalem to the sea at Jaffa.

>>>>>(Hey, Judge, what is this drek?)<<<<<
- Impatient (09:16:49/01-Jun-55)
>>>>>(This is that precious background research you runner slots should be doing for yourselves.)<<<<<
- Rook (03:34:32/02-Jun-55)

They chose their name on the mistaken belief that the Mosque that they'd adopted as their headquarters was the biblical Temple of Solomon; hence they became the Knights of the Temple, colloquially, Templars. In time their success in protecting pilgrims and their fanaticism to their cause would result in them becoming popular among the Christians and hated passionately by the Muslims. As the Templars success continued they grew in wealth and power, eventually becoming a powerful merchant banking organisation.

>>>>>(Gold Templex?)<<<<<
- Iamexed (00:13:50/11-Mar-55)

In fact they became such a powerful organisation that in later Crusades, nobles and even Kings would borrow from them to finance their armies. This also led to the ultimate downfall of the Templars. Fearing their growing power, and lacking any authority over them, Philip the Fair, King of France,

>>>>>(To the victor the spoils, including your opportunity to write the history books.)<<<<<
- HistoryBuff (02:37:52/15-Mar-55)

would move to seize the wealth of the Templars. He accused the Order of many crimes against the Church including heresy, black magic, and other perversions. Under torture the chief officers of the Order were forced to give signed confessions.

>>>>>(Philip also bought several Cardinals and had a French Pope installed after assassinating the previous Pope who would not aid him because he saw the King was trying to relieve his debts to the Templars and increase his own power.)<<<<<
- Malachy (01:28:17/16-May-55)
>>>>>(Who says crime doesn't pay?)<<<<<
- MadVlad (01:32:45/02-Arp-55)

After being released from torture the Templar chief officers retracted their confessions but to no avail. The Order of the Temple was extinguished after 200 years of service.

>>>>>(Not quite. The Order was extinguished in most of Europe, but no one got around to it in England or Scotland. And in Germany the Grand Master saved the Order there by challenging the various Clergy at his trial to Trial by Combat as was his right. Declining this challenge they pronounced him innocent. Being of high rank in the Church he then took his seat at the table in full battle-gear and went on to have the charges dropped against his brethren. These men became known as the Knights of Johann from that time onward.)<<<<<
- Raphael (01:01:01/01-Apr-55)
>>>>>(What about the Masons?)<<<<<
- Curious (09:25:30/01-Jun-55)
>>>>>(The Masons did adopt and use a lot of the Templar traditions but they are not actually Templars.)<<<<<
- Rook (04:01:54/02-Jun-55)

NEW ORDER OF THE TEMPLE

On November 3rd, 2032, His Holiness Pope Peter II decreed the foundation of the New Order of the Temple, or the Neo-Templars as they are more commonly known. The Order was founded to provide protection for the interests of the Church in areas of conflict, whether this be the protection of the Faithful or the protection of Places of Faith. The Neo-Templars were soon put into action in the Balkans as the second stage of the Euro-Wars got under way. Here they swiftly developed a reputation as superior warriors.

>>>>>(Not just superior, they were fanatical loonies.)<<<<<
- Scorpion (04:50:10/02-Jun-55)
>>>>>(Be careful whom you describe as a fanatical loony. Or someone might just demo how small a bug you are.)<<<<<
- Hermes (15:01:53/02-Jun-55)
>>>>>(Now, now, people let's keep the threats and hostility out of here shall we. Jesus died for us all, remember.)<<<<<
- Judge Theo (23:06:37/02-Jun-55)

Very few sites were damaged, and even less were lost during the entire conflict. Following their successes in the Balkans the Neo-Templars expanded and began protecting churches and holy sites all around the world. They have been involved in several incidents since then most notably in Aztlan, when the Aztlan government tried to evict the Church from Guadalupe. Here the Templars were able to hold off a massive assault and keep safe the Holy Site.

>>>>>(If this is the case why is it that the Church doesn't control this holy site any more?)<<<<<
- Monami (21:23:56/01-Apr-55)
>>>>>(Just because the Azzies have a great stinkin' wall around it and a small army with way too many magicians in it outside the wall doesn't mean they control the site.)<<<<<
- Raphael (01:01:01/01-Apr-55)
>>>>>(Indeed, Raphael, but the Church doesn't have what you would call free access to it, do they?)<<<<<
- Damien (00:13:32?02-???-??)

THE NEO-KNIGHT

The Order of the Neo-Templars is divided similarly to the structure of their historical counterparts. The commanders are all commissioned officers and are referred to collectively as Knights, and the noncoms are all called Sergeants, as they were during the Crusades. And, as in the historic order, there are the clergy, priests who provide spiritual guidance to the soldiers.

The commissioned officers are all experienced veterans who were asked to join the Order at its refounding. Becoming a Knight is exclusively by invitation only. This invitation is only ever extended to quality, experienced soldiers.

>>>>>(So who are the people at the top?)<<<<<
- Still Curious (0\10;02:56/01-Jun-55)
>>>>>(My take on the picture is the absolute head honcho (other than God) is His Holiness Peter II. Below him is the Supreme Grand Master, and serving him there are several other Grand Masters, effectively one for each country the Church operates in. The Supreme Grand Master is, as far as I can



prove, a female Elf who left Ireland late in 2031. Her name is Elise O'Toole, and she is one seriously nasty lady.)<<<<<
- Wombat (01-04:34/23-Jun-55)
>>>>>(What's with all this use of the funny titles?)<<<<<
- Monolith (03:44:32/23-Jun-55)
>>>>>(Traditional titles of monastic knighthoods.)<<<<<
- HistoryBuff (21:21:35/23-Jun-55)
>>>>>(Can you not see a Pattern? Haha.)<<<<<
- H (01:37:44/26-Jun-55)
>>>>>(I wouldn't describe Elise as seriously nasty. She is very competent, and a particularly good field commander. She has apparently spent time in Tir Tairngire as well.)<<<<<
- Kaed (02:22:41/26-Jun-55)
>>>>>(Her time was spent on Royal Hill, and on the Cal Free border. She's also a diplomat, and fair to look upon.)<<<<<
- Aegis (04:33:45/15-Jul-55)
>>>>>(Can we get on with this and leave the Elise O'Toole admiration society alone?)<<<<
- Spike (11:20:34/17-Jul-55)

Traditionally the Templar Sergeants were also experienced soldiers. Nowadays, however, anyone can apply to become a Sergeant. And of course we all now how you become a priest.

The Neo-Knight is generally skilled in most forms of modern combat, and receives training equivalent to that of special forces units. They are always equipped with the best gear and the majority of their weapons have IBS System (see *Corporate Security*) protection. While the average warrior tends to be well trained, they lack any further enhancements, at least for the first year or so, unless magically active. Once the Church has decided to bankroll the upgrades for Johnny Knight, they tend to provide alpha grade cyberware and certain types of bioware, all of which is inobtrusive and not directly offensive.

>>>>>(Yeah, this means that these guys are running around with Ortho-skin, Wired Reflexes, Enhanced Articulation, Cerebral Boosts, Encephalons, Synaptic Accelerators, Smartlink II's and other nifty gear. Great. No problems.)<<<<
- Scorpion (05:50:45/02-Jun-55)

The Neo-Templars also harbour a great many adepts. These are mainly physical adepts but they are are also augmented by a good number of sorcerous adepts, as well as a few full magicians (of both traditions).

>>>>>(Right, and those physads just love all those nifty little powers like; Improved Ability Stealth, Traceless Walk, Missile Mastery, Improved Ability-anything-combat-related, Killing Hands, Delay Damage, Freefall, Iron Will, Magic Resistance, Spell Shroud, Counterstrike, Blind Fighting, and Nerve Strike. All of which goes to make them particularly hard to spot and really good at acing the opposition.)<<<<<

- Adept Annie (13:24:55/20-Mar-55)

And this is were the Knighthood starts getting all mystical. Joining the Order is the same as joining a magical group regardless of whether you are a mundane or magically active. If you are magically active you have to join a further initiatory order as well. The conditions of joining are swearing an oath and the provision of a tissue sample.

>>>>>(I know you're all thinking ritual magic here and you're absolutely right. But some very interesting things have been done using this, including setting up a ritual team for each member of a strike force and preparing a heal spell. So that when the guy at the other end gets toasted the mages zap him with the heal spell and he springs back into action none the worse. Does wonders for the morale of their enemies.)<<<<<

- Hermes (17:01:58/02-Jun-55)

The shamanic adepts of the order generally follow the Archangel Michael or Saint George as their totems, though some follow other warrior-like totems. In terms of spells, surprisingly the Templars mainly opt for illusion spells against their enemies, particularly Chaos, and Chaotic World. Though manipulation spells like Mob Mind followed up with spells like Influence are also much in evidence. All prefered spell types either remove the enemy from the battle or inhibit his/her performance in the battle and are non-lethal options. Not that you shouldn't expect the Neo-Knights to throw combat spells around, they just prefer non-lethal solutions.

>>>>>(Well that preference comes unstuck in a big way when faced with Insect Spirits or those Wraith things, plus Ghouls and other similar critters. Though the Church does not seem to be fanatically pursuing HMHVV cases.)<<<<

- Hern (23:34:32/29-Mar-55). ■

THE NEO-TEMPLARS & ORDER OF SAINT MICHAEL

The Neo-Templars are an organisation formed and controlled by the Church for the purpose of protecting the Churches interests. They are also used to investigate or recover information on subjects of interest to the Church.

NAME: Order of the Temple. **MEMBERS:** Aprox 10,000 world wide. Includes all members.
TYPE: Dedicated (Religion: Christian) **PATRON:** United Catholic Church.
LIMITATIONS: Members must first be a Confirmed (in the religious sense) member of the Church.
STRICTURES: Attendance (mass once/week min), Fraternity, Obedience, Belief (Christian), Oath, Material Link (cell sample)
RESOURCES/DUES:: Luxury Resources. Members pay no dues as the Church provides for them. (See below).
CUSTOMS: The Order of promotes Christian beliefs and ideals in addition to providing practical (military) protection of the Church's interests. They practice various Christian traditions, particularly in regards the celebration of religious events. Also, as in the past, the Templar's oath includes a vow of poverty, hence any earnings that a Templar may make outside his duties as a Templar become the property of the Church. However the Church provides Middle life style for all members and their family.

NAME: Brotherhood of Saint Michael. **MEMBERS:** 1000 (Includes adepts and magicians).
TYPE: Initiatory. **PATRON:** Archangel Michael.
LIMITATIONS: Belief (Christian), Magically active.
STRICTURES: As per the Order of the Temple plus Secrecy (about the Magical practices) and they swear an additional Oath.
NOTES: Resources/Dues and Customs are the same as the Order. The Brotherhood prefers Ordeals and Astral Quests for Initiation. Physical adepts are encouraged to learn Astral Perception to allow them to combat Astral enemies. Among the Brotherhood of Saint Michael (or the Archangel Michael) there is a roughly equal division of Shamanic and Hermetic magicians, with a few Religious magicians (See *Awakenings*). Due to the number of Physical adepts there is perhaps a slight lean towards Hermetic practices though about a third of the Physical Adepts are Shamanic in nature.
TOTEMS: Their Totems are Saint Michael (most common), the German idols Dragonslayer (followed as Saint George), and Horned God (the next most common), Wolf, Bear, Firebringer, and other aggressive totems that defend man.

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL: Is the angel of repentance, righteousness, mercy, sanctification, of final reckoning and the weigher of souls. He's the warrior of God and slayer of the Beast. Saint Michael is a serious, judgmental guardian of the Faithful. When not in Heaven weighing the souls of the departed he is on Earth fighting the enemies of the Lord. As a Totem Saint Michael is the Stern Warrior. Bound by his duties to protect and aid those in need, Michael has little time for those he judges unworthy, or for frivolities. He is a serious and forthright Totem, honorable and honest as deception is a tool of his enemies.
FAVOURED ENVIRONMENT: Everywhere.
ADVANTAGES: +2 dice for combat spells, +1 dice for banishing, +2 dice for combat pool when fighting insect spirits and The Enemy (see *Harlequin's Back*).
DISADVANTAGES: -2 dice for resisting illusion spells, - 1 dice for conjuring spirits. If a follower of Michael gives his word he will keep it (Willpower(4) needs three success to break his word).

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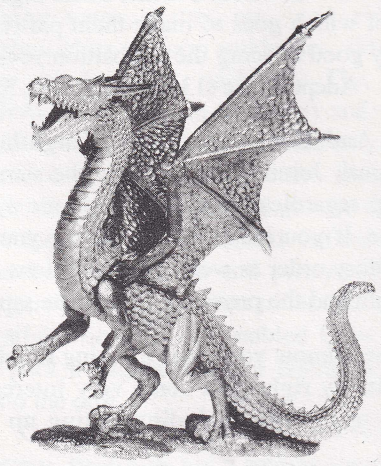

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Written by Alan Ogden

Those who rob graves are cursed to die. I know this for I am such a thief and now I wait for death. Yet before I die I would tell my tale ...

It starts well enough in the Dragon's Claw - a drinking house in the city of Dubhlehn. I was drinking Red Orm under the table in good time when a whey faced servant appeared at my shoulder. My first thought was to spit him on my sword for even then he minded me of a weasel - but then all these Ehreni do. Instead I read the parchment he pressed into my hand.

The weasel led me out of town and into a small clearing in the forests about. Waiting there was a hooded man. Despite myself I felt my hand go to my sword. Who was I to fear some hedge mage? Yet this man made cold fear walk my spine. Everything about him bespoke power. I felt as a gnat before a god.

"You are Grinulf, Captain of the 'Sea Hawk'. You may call me Covell."

His voice was deep and melodious, every word pitched to deliver the most weight. I could feel my mouth dry and my back slick with sweat. Only one group of people spoke like that. Druids.

We struck a deal, he and I. With it I sealed my fate and that of my crew. Bring him the skull of Louarn, son of Enan and I could keep what else I found.

I cannot speak of the horrors we faced when we dared disturb Louarn's Rest. I could not take louarn's head and now I sit alone with my ship, watching the accursed Hunt ride the skies. Waiting for them to take me.

I should have spitted the weasel.

WHERE IT HAPPENS

Yswidrin is a desolate, windswept island to the north of the lands of Ehren and Varengar, in the region known as Caelynn. For centuries it has been the final resting place for the greatest warriors and Druids of Ehrenil, and the souls who rest here are powerful indeed. Their tombs dot the island, surrounded by standing stones and low stone walls. Few living things populate this grim, lonely isle - not even sea-birds.

Night brings its own special terrors as the Huntsman, Gwynnud, issues forth to hunt the skies for the souls of the dead. In his hunt ride the shadows of fallen heroes, summoned from the Halls of Awnn, and their ghostly hounds.

The Hunt is not the only danger of Yswidrin at night. Ghouls and other undead roam widely, tearing down any living creature that stands in their way. Few men are bold enough to spend the night on Yswidrin. Fewer still return.

ABOUT THE DRUIDS

The druids of Ehrenil are a powerful religious organisation worshipping a pantheon of (Celtic) gods they have a strong belief in life after death, reincarnation and the cyclic nature of life. The average Ehreni regards the Druids with great awe, reverence and some fear.

Highly educated, the Druids guard their knowledge jealously and most ceremonies are held in secret groves. The druids hold that the seat of a being's power and soul is the skull - giving rise to the taking of heads in battle.

Primarily interested in the advancement of the Ehreni people, little concern is given to the "cosmic balance" if things are going well for their people. At present life does not fo well for the Ehreni.

The Varengs walk their islands as conquerors and their coffers groan under the weight of the Varengeld. With the cream of Ehreni warriors dead, the Druids seek to restore the Ehreni people by restoring the heroes of the past. To this end they are seeking out the skulls of fallen heroes so thst they may reincarnate them and drive the Varengs from their shores.

CONCERNING LOUARN

Louarn was a warrior lord of great stature amongst the Ehreni nobility. His prowess in battle and numerous victories made his life (and death) the subject of many bardic tales. These tell of Louarn's courageous defence of Caer Nevon from ogrish assault with only a handful of men. They tell of how he and his warriors died to the last man in their defence of the city, and how they fought on even after death - never allowing their standards to fall. Louarn and his men were buried on Yswidrin.



PLOTLINES

BY ROBBERY: The PC's are approached by Covell to retrieve the skull of Louarn. They will be offered the same deal as Grinulf.

Covell will provide a map and detailed instructions on how to find Louarn's tomb. He will not provide details of its interior.

As their vessel approaches Yswidrin, foreboding storm clouds are gathering. Any vessel they can hire will not spend a night on Yswidrin, preferring the open sea. Several NPC sailors of hardy and avaricious nature will volunteer to assist in the robbing of the tomb.

The storm will break soon after the PC's are dropped ashore. Whether the ship will return the following morning or not is left entirely to the referee's discretion.

If your players are squeamish about robbing graves, then...

BY TRICK OF FATE: The player characters are taking an ocean voyage when an early winter storm arises. The storm rages for days, driving the stricken vessel before it (shredding sails, sweeping sailors to their doom). The vessel is finally driven onto rocks near a stony beach. The players (and several NPC sailors) make it to the beach. The waters are near freezing and rough, but are protected from the full force of the storm by the same rocks that wrecked the vessel. Players should be able to salvage a their equipment using wreckage and rigging for rafts or floats.

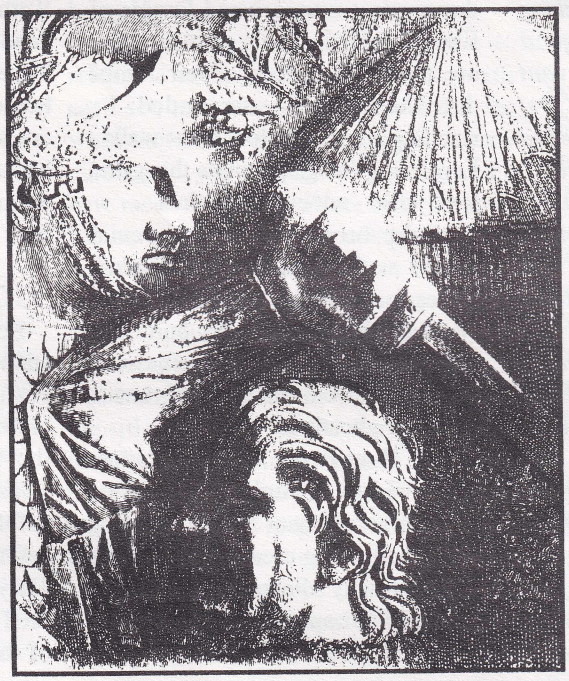
Once on the beach the players will be exposed to the full force of the storm. No dry fuel is available. Night is approaching and they are unlikely to survive unless they find shelter quickly.

The only available shelter that presents itself is a barrow tomb - Louarn's. Extensive searches for somewhere better should be discouraged by having lone sailors disappear with horrible shrieks, the mutilated corpses appearing elsewhere. Dire mention of dropping temperatures and wind chill factors should encourage PCs to enter.

Once within the tomb, the PCs must still obtain dry clothes or some means of avoiding the effects of hypothermia.

THE BARROW

A circle of standing stones on a gentle slope marks the entrance to Louarn's tomb. Little more than a gap in a low stone wall set flush into the hillside, the entrance has a heavy stone lintel. The lintel is badly eroded, but faint geometric patterns



can be made out, as can a single word - Louarn. Beyond the entrance is a narrow passage.

NARROW PASSAGE

The walls of the passage are of flat stone stacked to a height of six feet. The floor is of lightly packed earth, the ceiling of stone. Every ten feet or so are upright stone pillars. These pillars are intricately carved with (Celtic) triple spirals signifying death and rebirth.

The passage is apparently a dead-end. This is an illusion. However no shadow can be cast against the walls, a factor that can be used to sow the seeds of doubt and mistrust especially if the person whose shadow is first noted as "missing" has been separated at some time.

Beneath the floor of the passage are buried the warriors who died with Louarn in the defence of Caer Nevon. These warriors are now undead defenders of Louarn and his tomb. If Louarn's shade is attacked or the standard in his tomb is disturbed the *gruffyd ddu* (see Monster Gallery) will rise and attack the defilers

There are 10 *gruffyd ddu* in the main passage and one in each of the side passages. As the players pass over the graves, there is a 10% chance (per grave) that the burie warrior will attack.

LADY'S CHAMBER

Maire was one of Louarn's lieutenants. She has been laid to rest an a bier of stacked stones approximately three feet high. Her corpse is very decomposed and partially mummified leaving her far less beautiful in death than she was in life. At her feet is a silver bowl filled with partially congealed blood. The lip of the bowl is decorated with a stylized cup motif. Around her neck is a silver torc set with sapphires.

Within the burial chamber are various grave goods, including furs (dusty and moth eaten), spears, iron swords (rusted but still useful), bows (strings rotted to dust) and quivers of arrows. Four chests rest on the floor. One is half filled with silver coins, the other contains the rotted and crumbling remains of fine clothing embroidered and brocaded as befits a noblewoman.

Maire, like all Louarn's followers, lives on after death. She has become a *dyfryg ddu* (see Monster Gallery) and will rise if her burial chamber (or Louarn's) is disturbed.

HERE LIES BRENNAN

Brennan was Louarn's other lieutenant. In death Brennan has become a *dyfryg ddu* also, guarding both his own and Louarn's rest eternally. Brennan rests on a bier of stone similar to Maire's. The torc about his neck is of silver and ruby. At his feet, a silver bowl filled with semi-congealed blood. The shields of his defeated enemies ring the base of the bier and ancient weapons line the walls. Most of these have decayed beyond usefulness - damaged by the seepage of water through the barrow.

Arranged on stone shelves are piles of leather and fur, a small chest of silver coins and a case containing a hunting horn. If sounded the horn will immediately awaken all the undead in the tomb, including Louarn. This is the same horn used by Louarn's company to sound their battle signals.

LOURN'S REST

On either side of the entry to Louarn's burial chamber are four cavities. In each cavity is a gold plated human skull. Believed to possess the power of their original "owners", the skulls ward the entrance to the chamber. A thick mist swirls above the floor.

Within, the burial chamber is richly furnished with wall-hangings, piles of furs, chests of ornately embroidered clothing, caskets of coins, gems and fine jewellery. Weapons of steel (a rare commodity in Louarn's time) hang on the walls. Pride of place is given to a tattered banner trimmed in fox fur and featuring the stylized head of a fox.

The centre of the room is dominated by a stone bier some four feet high. The bier is empty save for a large silver bowl, a sheathed sword and matching dagger. The bowl rests in the centre of the bier and is filled with a mixture of fine grey ash and small white (bone) fragments. Atop of this mixture rests a human skull.

The ashes and such are the last physical remains of the great warrior Louarn. The skulls about the entry have been used to invoke a spell that prevents the effects of time (ageing, decay etc) within Louarn's burial chamber, preserving its contents for as long as the skull remains in place.

As the room becomes occupied by living creatures, the spirit of Louran will begin to manifest itself - beginning with the ashes spinning into the air, raising the skull at the same time. As Louarn manifests the dagger and sword disappear (even if held by a PC). If the characters remain peaceful (and his grave goods remain undisturbed) then Louarn will manifest as a ghost-like (ethereal) warrior. If they wish to, the player characters will be able to petition Louarn to achieve their goals (either allowing the removal of his remains or the use of the furs and clothing in the chamber). If there are any Ehreni in the group then Louarn will accede to this request in return for music, singing, poetry and information. If no Ehreni are present then Louarn will require a tribute of some sort as well. In any event Louarn will not permit the removal of any of the grave goods.

If the PCs attack, or disturb Louarn's goods, then he will manifest in solid form and attack. Such an attack will also arouse his followers (if they still exist).

LOURN

Louarn is a tall man with thick black hair and pale piercing green eyes. Naked to the waist, his solidly muscled torso is heavily tattooed with woad designs (*Woad For Warriors* in Realms issue 9). About his neck is a heavy golden torc set with emeralds. Thick leather bracers are strapped about his brawny wrists. Strong, intelligent and endowed with a keen wit, Louarn was a great warrior and battle leader in life and is a very tough opponent in death. We suggest that you generate statistics for him as a mid to high level warrior with undead abilities using the game system of your choice, remembering to temper his abilities so that they do not completely overwhelm your players. At Lourn's waist are two enchanted weapons, *Purity* and *Nightshade*.

Purity is a +4/+20% magical longsword. Crafted by the Druids of Ehrenil it is of fine steel engraved with runic inscriptions and ornate scrollwork. The hilt and pommel are set with emeralds (seven in total). The weapon was designed for use against non-humans and crafted specifically for Louarn. A non-human opponent struck by *Purity* they must save versus magic or die.

Nightshade is a +3/+30% magical weapon and *Purity's* mate - a matching steel dagger set with emeralds and runework. Crafted for Louarn's exclusive use *Nightshade* causes those struck to save versus magic or be slowed.

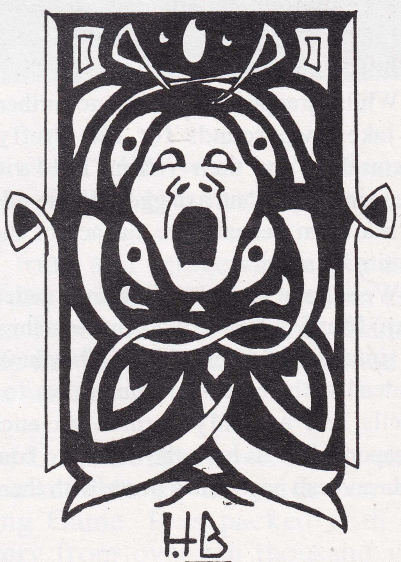
In the hands of any except Louarn thes weapons retain their to hit/ damage bonuses but the special functions do not operate.

Louran will fight in death much as he did in life. He is fully cognisant of his undead status and will readily utilise the advantages it confers. If anything, death has made Louarn even more formidable.

If defeated, Louarn's skull and weapons will fall to the floor where they can be claimed by survivors.

LEAVING YSWIDRIN

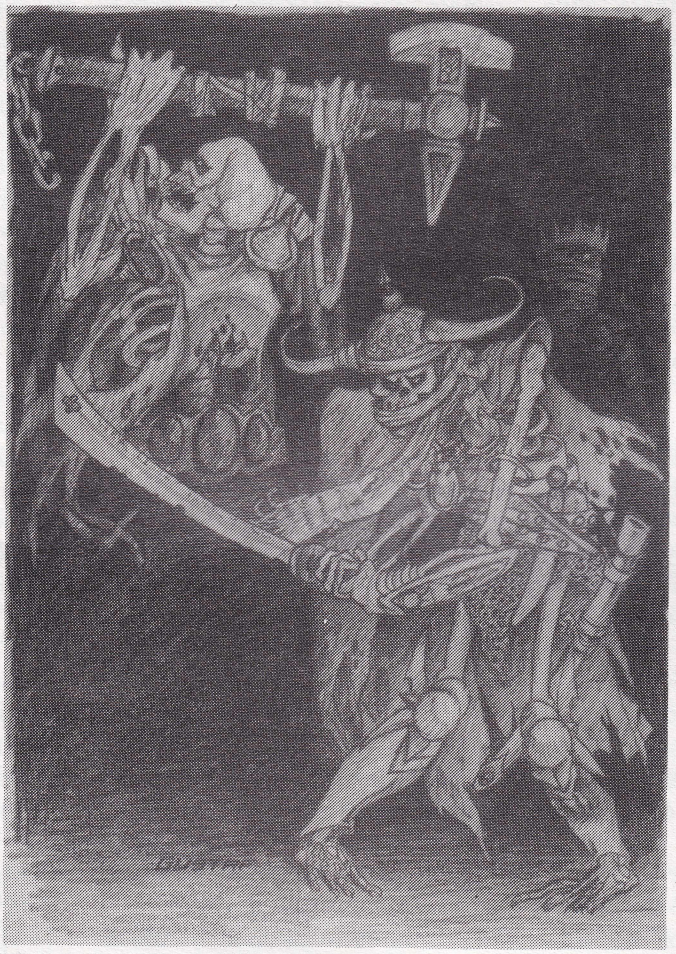
Presuming the PCs' last the night the storm will have broken by morning. They will be able to use the beached "Sea Hawk" to sail to either the nearby island of Wellynby or to Fennlend. But that is another adventure entirely.



MONSTER GALLERY

After far too long an absence the Monster Gallery returns to describe Alan's two Celtic Undead.

GRUFFYD DDU



The Gruffyd Ddu are the undead remains of faithful warriors who died fulfilling an oath. Such is the power of their oath that it binds them even after death. They appear much like zombies but retain a semblance of intelligence. Never found far from their graves, Gruffyd Ddu are only active in the fulfilment of their oath, and once destroyed may rest in peace.

In combat Gruffyd Ddu attack by grappling with an opponent and dragging them back into the earth. Once dragged beneath the earth a victim will quickly suffocate in the cold embrace of the Gruffyd Ddu. If the Gruffyd Ddu has successfully grabbed their opponent its immense strength (greater than the strongest man) means that the death hold may only be broken by a critical success on a strength check (but multiple attempts are permitted), or on the utter destruction of the Gruffyd Ddu.

Whilst grappling its victim no further damage is inflicted and it takes two rounds for the Gruffyd Ddu to fully bury themselves and their victim. Held victims may not use any weapon longer than a dagger. Where possible, Gruffyd Ddu will attack from beneath the surface of their graves, taking their victim by surprise.

We suggest you adapt low level undead (eg. zombies, cadaver men) from your preferred game system and add its special attack to simulate the Gruffyd Ddu. They have usual benefits of being undead with respect to immunities to certain mind-affecting spells and are only harmed by enchanted, iron or silver weapons. Druids have the ability to communicate with Gruffyd Ddu and can negotiate a peace with them.

DYFRYG DDU

Dyfryg Ddu are normally inactive, resembling a decomposed and partially mummified corpse. In reality they are a type of vampiric undead created through magical means from the bodies great warriors. Limited strictly to their tombs, they often guard or watch over a lord they served in life, stirring to activity in the event of defilement or desecration of their tombs. In all cases there will be a silver bowl of semi-congealed blood somewhere near the Dyfryg Ddu. This blood is drained in the creation of the creature and while it still exists the creature cannot be permanently destroyed.

The Dyfryg Ddu will attempt to seize an opponent and drain their blood from a major artery - killing the victim in 4 combat rounds. The victim will lose a quarter of their hit/health points each round. More horribly, the Dyfryg Ddu will gain strength from these drained life points drawing them into itself and applying them to whichever characteristic or ability it considers most likely to aid it at the time of drinking. This vampiric absorbing of energy presents a horrid vision to any witnesses as the Dyfryg Ddu's body regenerates into a tragic parody of a healthy living creature. Lessor characters see this abomination and run in fear.

A preternaturally strong undead creature, the grip of the Dyfryg Ddu can only be broken on a successful strength check. Multiple attempts are permitted. Even if reduced to zero hit points, the Dyfryg Ddu is not destroyed unless either its body is totally destroyed or the silver blood bowl is emptied and cleaned with holy water. If this is not done then the Dyfryg Ddu will be able to rise again after 24 hours. We suggest you adapt a high level undead (eg. vampire or spectral dancer) from your preferred game to represent the Dyfryg Ddu adding its special abilities.

BOOK REVIEWS

by Paul Mitting & Adam Whitt

Black Madonna (ROC, $10.95) is a Shadowrun novel written by Carl Sargent & Marc Gascoigne. The basic premise of the story is that someone has managed to effortlessly infiltrate every major corp's databases and left a calling card. Unless he gets 20 billion nuyen he will bring down the Matrix, and thereby destroy the world economy. Naturally, the corps, and in particular Renraku, are disturbed by this and set a top-notch decker after him. A team of characters is acquired to unmask the perpetrator, and the action moves around the world following their efforts to catch him.

Sounds pretty pacy and action filled, and there are certainly enough gunfights and intrigue. Unfortunately, Black Madonna is very ordinary. I had high hopes for it, and read it all the way through to the end. Very disappointing.

The biggest failure of the novel is that there are too many principal characters, and none of them are developed enough to make them engaging. I really could not have cared whether one or all were killed in the story, as they were just ciphers. Besides, there was a whole horde of them, and one or two less would have made it easier to keep track of who was doing what. To be honest, the writers spent more time describing what they were eating than who the characters were.

There are some interesting revelations, both about Leonardo Da Vinci and Christianity, as well as the link between Shadowrun and Earthdawn. But these are not enough to make the novel worth reading. Get someone who is gullible to read it for you and give a summary.

A much better Shadowrun novel is **Just Compensation** (ROC, $10.95) by Robert N Charrette. It's not great literature, but it is a good cyberpunk novel set within the Shadowrun milieu.

The story revolves around two central characters, Major Tom Rocquette and his much younger half-brother Andy Walker. Tom is in the UCAS army, while Andy is a Telestrian citizen. They have little in common except their father, and each follows their own storyline, meeting and interacting at certain critical junctions only. The basic story involves a plot to cause riots in downtown Washington which are due to various factions trying to take a big slice of the state away from UCAS control.

All the elements of a good story are here - heaps of action, military and corp factions with hidden agendas, magic wielding baddies and, of course, Shadowrunners. The main characters are given believable backgrounds and developed personalities so that you care if they survive. Charrette also gives a good account of how the UCAS conduct their operations in the Awakened world. Just reading this stuff makes me want to roleplay a Shadowrun military action, mages and combat drones aplenty.

To sum up, a good read. If Mr Charrette can keep writing at this level of skill or better, he has gained a fan.

The Ship Who Won (Penguin, $13.95) is Anne McCaffrey's third sequel to *The Ship Who Sang* and is written in partnership with Jody Lyn Nye. McCaffrey's romantic science fiction is not everyone's cup of tea, and some of the premises behind this tale of "first contact" with an alien species are dodgy to say the least, but the craftswomanship of the authors make this an entertaining read.

The central characters are an exploration team of two; the brain-ship Carielle (deformed at birth, she became a shellperson and chose to spend her life as a spaceship) and her brawn, Keff, a fitness fanatic and fantasy roleplayer (Now there's an inspired juxtaposition!). Carrielle and Keff travel through the vast expanses of space searching for intelligent lifeforms. One day they hope to make their fortune by finding a race worthy of introduction to the Central Worlds empire, but in the meantime they fill the long periods of inactivity between planetfalls playing an RPG game - Myths & Legends. Their personal realm of fantasy intrudes on reality, however, when they discover Ozran, a planet with a complex society of humanlike beings with a large docile (drugged and mutilated) underclass of farmhands and servants ruled over by a small group of fantastically powerful and arrogant magicians. Keff and Carielle's initial excitement at their find quickly gives way to anxiety and fear as the magicians show behaviours very reminiscent of those dissolute and debauched dabblers in power featured in Michael Moorcock's superb *Dancers At The End of Time* series. In fact the plot is really a straight lift from Moorcock as Ozran's enchanters are swiftly using up all available power in their petty feuding and threatening to end all life on Ozran. The Ship Who Won follows the adventures of Keff and Carielle as they work to convince the Ozrans to work together and halt the decay of their planet. There is also a cute twist featuring the bubble-encased frogs that appear on the book's cover.

Entertaining but not enthralling.

The Last Human (Penguin, $13.95) is a Red Dwarf novel by the hilariously ingenious Doug Naylor. Lister is in deep shit (again) and this novel follows his adventures (and that of his very unpleasant parallel universe alter ego) as he fights to avoid the tragic fate of the novel's title. This book is hugely funny although it does tend to bog down towards the end as Naylor begins to take a serious interest in resolving the various plotlines. Highlights include Kryten's short dabble with being a live human (discovering that human optics don't have a zoom function and the nipples don't seem to work) and Rimmer trying to live up to the hero worship of his space corp marine son, Lt-Col McGruder. Overall a shining addition to the Red Dwarf galaxy of entertainment.

Tales From Jabba's Palace (Transworld, $10.95) is a collection of short stories centred on the characters that appeared in Jabba's Palace in those memorable scenes from the Star Wars movies. This is a very good collection. The tone and themes of the stories are varied enough to please most tastes and all share an enthusiasm for Lucas' creations. There are some fine standout moments, including M. Shayne Bell's *Of The Day's Annoyances* a tale with a very macabre ending for Bib Fortuna. Another favourite is *A Bad Feeling: The Tale of EV-9D9* by Judith & Garfield Reeves-Stevens telling us why this droid enjoys dismembering other robots; another good story with a wicked twist in its tail. Good gear.

In line with their reprinting the greats (Moorcock, Leiber) **White Wolf Publishing** have just launched a twenty volume series of the collected works (fiction, essays, teleplays and columns) of renowned fantasist - Harlan Ellison under the title **Edgeworks**. Cowabunga! ■

New Releases

"The time has come" the walrus said "to talk of many things."

"Well, bugger that" the Editor said "tell our readers about the new releases first instead for a change."

TSR Inc: *Bleak House*, the *Ravenloft* boxed set should be in stores now, as is the *Faces of Sigil*, a *Planescape* accessory. Explore the organisations of thieves guilds in the *Den of Thieves* and hand over your hard earned cash for the *Players Option: Spells & Magic* handbook.

Wizards of the Coast: We can hear the piggy banks shattering already. The month of May sees the release of the next M:TG expansion set - *Alliances*. This supplement is both an expansion for the stand-alone *Ice Age* setting, as well as an expansion for the regular M:TG setting. Just try not to drool so much on the page please.

FASA Corp: *ShadowRun* begins its major new storyline - the Election of 2057 - with the release of *Super Tuesday*, an adventure pack containing five related adventures dealing with the candidates for the Presidency. Also for ShadowRun is the *Threats* sourcebook - said to be a view of the big picture - for those who can handle it. *Earthdawn* has *Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets*, and the *Serpent River* sourcebook.

Palladium Books Inc: The re-release of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG* is confirmed for the end of March. *Rifts* fans will be satisfied with the imminent release of *World Book 10: The Juicer Uprisings* (and not an orange in sight!) and *World Book 11: The Coalition War Machine*. Expect enough BFGs to bring on an orgasmic frenzy.

R.Talsorian Games: The big rumour doing the rounds at the moment is that Mike Pondsmith is working on a 3rd Edition of *Cyberpunk*. We're still waiting for confirmation of that fact, but we're sure that if Mike gives it the sort of treatment that he gives to all of his work - it'll be brilliant. In the meantime, *Cyberpunk*, *Cybergeneration*, *Mekton Z* and *Castle Falkenstein* are all well supported with a number of new releases.

Media Shifts

White Wolf have announced that the *Vampire: The Masquerade* weekly television series will kick off on US TV screens with a two-hour movie this April. Produced by Spelling Entertainment (Beverley Hills 90210, Melrose Place), *Kindred: The Embraced* focuses on the Machiavellian aspects of the vampire underworld. Vampire fans can be assured that the series will maintain the feel of the RPG - Mark Rein•Hagen, *Vampire: The Masquerade's* creator is a producer and writer for the series.

In other media-related news, **Chameleon Eclectic**, creators of the *Millenium's End* and *Psychosis* RPGs have announced plans to produce the *Babylon 5 Role-playing Game*. Given the strong following this sci-fi program has generated, and combined with a healthy proposed release schedule (4 products before the end of 1996), we think Chameleon Eclectic could be on to a winner.

ShadowRun Australia

All good things come to those who wait. Long time *Realms* readers would know that our own Assistant Editor Colin Taber was commissioned by FASA to produce the ShadowRun Australia sourcebook. Well it now appears that his work will finally see print. A recent message from FASA announced that they hope to release this sourcebook in the first quarter of 1997. We'll keep you posted.

A New Home

Following on from last issue's news page, **Wizards of the Coast** have announced that new homes have been found for its role-playing products *Everway* and *Ars Magica*. **Pagan Publishing**, producers of a number of licensed products for **Chaosium's** *Call of Cthulhu* RPG have picked up *Everway* and have plans to release *Spherewalker Source Cards* quite soon. *Ars Magica* has been bought by **Atlas Games**, the company responsible for the *Over the Edge* RPG and the *On the Edge* collectible trading card game. Atlas have plans to release a fourth edition of *Ars Magica*, and a number of follow-up products.

BattleTech 4th Edition

Bigger, better and more colourful than before, *BattleTech 4th Edition* will give players a wider choice of game options while allowing **FASA** to keep the game at an entry-level price. The proposed set will include a full-colour rulebook, a second book containing advanced rules and scenarios, pre-generated record sheets and two new full-colour maps. In addition, FASA will be replacing the 14 plastic 'Mechs currently offered with 2 each of 24 die-cut, full-colour 'Mech counters. *BattleTech 4th Edition* will also advance the fiction of the game to the year 3049 - just before the Clan invasion of the Inner Sphere. Sounds cool, can't wait to see it.

World Wide Web

Strange as it may seem, there are some people out there who still haven't heard of *Australian Realms* (Let's admit it, some people don't even know that *Australia* exists...) and we thought, rampant techno-junkies that we are (OK, one of us once owned a Commodore 64), "let's get hooked up to the communication revolution of the '90s".

Thus we have launched the Australian Realms World Wide Web Page. This contains such useful and entertaining features as a back-issue index, profiles (and pictures!!) of the editorial team, information on current and upcoming issues and projects, reprints of some of the most popular articles from past issues, a forum where we can hopefully get stuck into some controversial topics and perhaps even some links to other Australian web pages of interest to all you net surfers out there. So come and take a butcher's hook:

http://www.iinet.net.au/~expo/realms.html

See you 'round like a D100...

THAT WAS THE NEWS



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Herbert West: "He ended most of his experiments with a revolver." Illustration by Roger Raupp.

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