

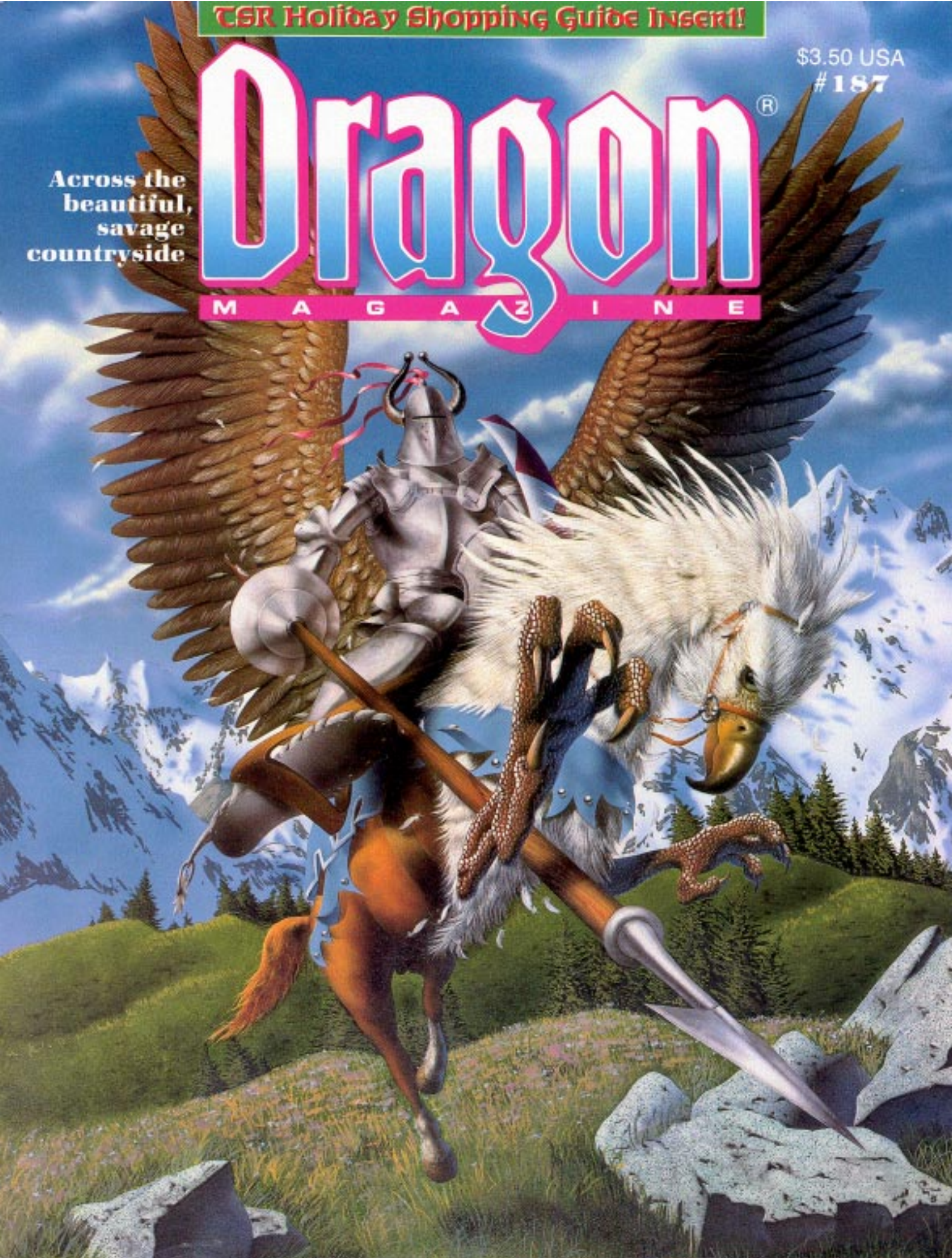
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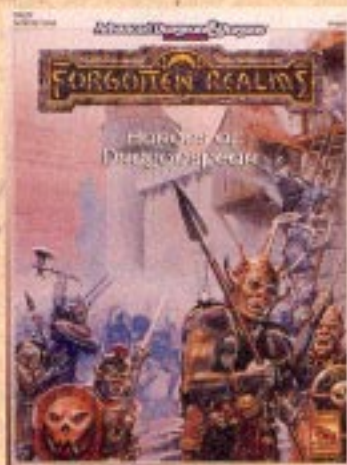
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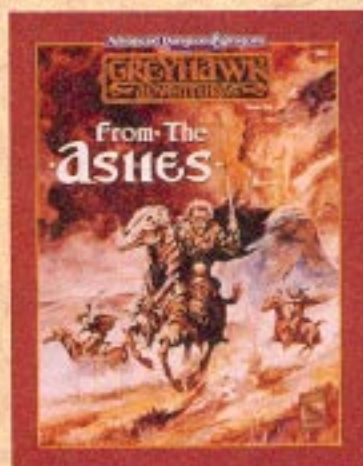
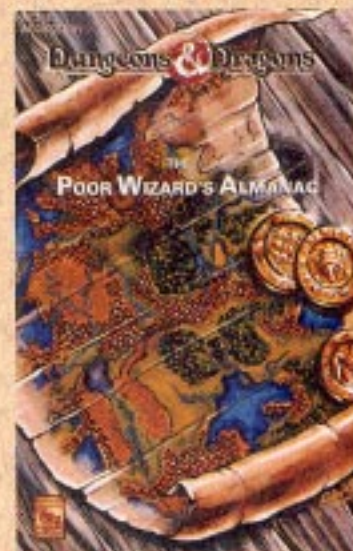
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COVER

Cover artist John C. Luck lived up to his name. His work appeared in our office only weeks ago, just as we were trying to find the right painting to grace our issue on the wilderness in fantasy games—perfect timing for the perfect piece.

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LETTERS



Gaye and Diesel—light-fingered barmaid and oblivious elf

Jack Nicholson —NOT!

Dear Dragon,

I am writing to offer some criticism for your magazine. The cover on issue #184 was appalling. It's not bad enough that the B&W painting was ugly, but it is blatantly an elfin characterization of Jack Nicholson. There is no way the art editors could have mistaken this, and I won't be surprised if some lawsuit were to be filed against DRAGON Magazine and the artist.

Scott Fuller
Lodi CA

Everyone else who wrote or commented on that cover actually liked it, but you were not the only one to think the elf shown losing his money pouch was actually a famous actor. Another writer (Rob Cooke, of Media, Pa.) asked if the characters were modelled on people from the TV show Cheers, with the elf being Frazier Crane, the barmaid Rebecca Howe, and the hooded figure probably Sam, Norm, or Cliff.

Alas! Alack! The models for the cover were actually TSR employees! We present a sample photo of "barmaid" Gaye O'Keefe, from Typesetting, and "elf" David "Diesel" LaForce, the graphics artist and cartographer who does most of the maps for DUNGEON® Adventures; they are shown in poses that were not used in the final painting by TSR artist Robh Ruppel.

This isn't the first time that TSR employees have doubled as artists' models. Gaye, for instance, portrayed the halfling "bard" Olive Ruskettle on the cover of a FORGOTTEN



REALMS® novel, Wyvern's Spur, and Diesel appears as Finder Wyvernsbur on the cover of Song of the Saurials, another FORGOTTEN REALMS novel (he was mistaken there for Sean Connery). Other employees have lent their images or names to TSR products of all kinds (because of a short haircut I once had, Jeff Grubb inserted "Roger Moore's Barber Shop" on the city map for a MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game). These in-jokes are everywhere, but they are hard to catch. Good luck finding more!

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom,

Cartoon kids!

Dear Dragon,

I have not been a very active gamer in the last few years, although I still enjoy TSR's books and this magazine. I recently found myself discussing cancelled cartoon shows with a friend and discovered that I am one of many individuals who miss the old Saturday morning DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® cartoon show. Are there any plans to revive this series or at least release it for home video?

Omar Vega
Tallahassee FL

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS cartoon show is now available for home video from Best Film & Video, 108 New South Road, Hicksville NY 11801 (phone: 516-931-6969). Write or call for more information and a catalog.

Wild dice, part III

Dear Dragon,

While reading "The Wild, Wild World of Dice" (issue #182), I found that a problem I thought only my groups ever had was actually a seemingly common problem. I also discovered that the author missed some dice problems that poor, abused DMs often have with their players,

For instance, both groups I have played with love to make irritating crystal pyramids and temples with their dice. My players especially like stacking the dice as high as they can go, and higher. Eventually, someone will breathe in the wrong direction, then the group is under the table searching for fallen dice. My best advice for this problem is to stop the towers before they start. As for the pyramids, they are relatively harmless as long as the builder doesn't get too attached to them and won't let you have your dice back!

I can live with these quirks, since every group has some strangeness in it, but I can't stand the way one of my players enjoys sucking on the dice! He prefers the red crystal d20s (he must think they taste better than the others), although he also likes the orange d12s. He puts one in his mouth, and when I need the particular die he is sucking on, he spits it up and puts it in my hand! It takes all of the fun out of the game when you have to roll slobber-soaked dice that leave trails of saliva as they roll. He even accidentally swallowed one of my dice once! (I

Continued on page 7

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EDITORIAL

A nation of heroes

The following letter was received at the DRAGON® Magazine offices at the beginning of September:

Dear sirs:

As you may already know, Florida has been hit by one of the most destructive hurricanes ever. Over 200,000 people are homeless. I am now also homeless; I lived in a trailer that was devastated, so for the time being I am staying

with my parents. All of my role-playing games are gone (TSR, Steve Jackson Games, Games Workshop, etc.), with my comics, my clothes, and everything I have been playing since I was 13 back in '83. I kid you not when I say I had a couple thousand dollars worth of games, supplements, and comics. D&D® materials were the bulk of my *huge* collection. Since I was introduced to role-playing through the D&D game, the books I lost had a sentimental value you

wouldn't believe. Nothing can replace them or the characters I lost (including a 22nd-level paladin I played for seven years!).

I ask that you please put an ad in DRAGON Magazine asking gamers to contribute to the Red Cross and any other hurricane relief charities they might hear about. Miami is in *bad* shape, and we need all the help we can get. Thanks for reading this letter I know that gamers are thoughtful individuals, a cut above the rest. Any help will be greatly appreciated.

Thanks again

Martin Fernandez

5505 NW 7th St, Apt. 411 W
Miami FL 33126

As this letter shows, some of the people who were hurt by Hurricane Andrew are gamers, like you and I, and they lost not only their games but homes, clothing, food, and jobs—and they are not alone. The typhoon that struck American Samoa last year and the hurricanes that ravaged Florida, Louisiana, Guam, and Hawaii this year—piled on with the numerous other calamities of recent times—have strained the Disaster Relief Fund of the American Red Cross to its limits. I spoke by phone with a representative of the Red Cross in Milwaukee, Jeff Seider, who asked everyone wishing to donate money by check to please note on the check that the money is to be used for the Disaster Relief Fund. The disasters in American Samoa and Guam each cost the Red Cross \$10 million, and Hurricane Andrew cost at least \$60 million. Contributions are desperately needed to cover these catastrophes—and Mother Nature, like some arbitrary cosmic game master, cannot be counted upon to give us a break before the next “adventure” is upon us.

The heroes in role-playing games never rest when danger is upon them—they fight on and triumph. We, the players, can fight back, too. If you want to make a donation to the American Red Cross by phone, you can call this number toll-free: 1-800-842-2200. You can pay by credit card or by receiving a pledge package in the mail. I urge you to do this today—I just did it myself.

Life is not a game. We are a nation of heroes, and together we will pull through any misfortune.

Roger S. Moore



Letters

Continued from page 4

didn't ask him to retrieve it for me, and I don't think he would have, anyway.) All the same, I've learned to just let him eat the dice, as long as there are plenty of spares.

John Drescher
Mechanicsburg PA

Thank you for sharing your letter with us, which I happened to be inputting into the computer about the time I was ready to go to lunch. I'm not hungry at all now.

For a similar tale of woe, see "Letters" in issue #184, page 30 ("Wild dice revisited").

Gaming Godzilla

Dear Dragon,

I just woke up Saturday afternoon and heard the sounds of a Japanese monster movie emanating from my roommate's room. I wandered in to check it out. Lo and behold, there was Gamara, spinning across the sky with flame jetting out of his shell. Then it struck me: Let's have the Godzilla monsters in the AD&D® game! So, here I am, furiously penning this to you in hopes that I'll see them in your next issue. How about it? These movies are cult classics, and it seems to me that a majority of players would get a humongous kick (no pun intended) out of running into one of these Oriental monstrosities. Imagine your PCs witnessing or being involved in a virtual Clash of the Radioactive Titans—Godzilla, Godzuki, King Kong, Gamara, Mothra, even Inframam! How about it?

Scott Starkey
Phoenix AZ

Look up "Gargantua" in the AD&D 1st Edition Oriental Adventures volume (page 120) or in the Kara-Tur appendix to the Monstrous Compendium, and see if these mega-monsters answer your prayers. (Personally, I'd make them a lot tougher, like giving the reptilian guys AC -10 with maximum hit points and immunity to electrical attacks, and I'd further detail their castle-stomping, city-smashing, and gargantua-wrestling abilities, but that's a matter of taste. The reptilian gargantua could also be given a fiery breath double the size of a red dragon's, and the humanoid gargantua should be able to climb any structure to fight off hordes of flying carpets, etc.). You can, of course, use the tarrasque, the roc, the kraken, and other "normal" monsters to terrify characters.

My only other suggestion regarding these monsters is to use the statistics for sprites (minus flying and all magical abilities but one) to generate the two miniature girls required to sing the summon insectoid gargantua spell.

"Pegasaur" found!

Dear Dragon,

We received your issue #185 today. On page 4 is a letter from John Cannon about a "pegasaur." I believe he is actually referring to a pegataur, the pegasus-centaur creature on card 722 in TSR's 1991 AD&D™ trading-cards set. There is also a full-page picture of a pegataur as a page divider in the Monstrous Compendium, volume 2. I do not believe it appears in other AD&D

products, but it is described in the D&D® game's AC9 Creature Catalogue (page 74) and in the D&D module M2 Vengeance of Alphaks (page 30). I hope this helps.

Linda Young
Eugene OR

Brandy Uhl, of Cheswick, Pa., and Adam M. Weisbaum, of West Hills, Calif., also suggested card #722 as the source of the "pegasaur" mentioned by John, as did Jon Pickens and Tim Beach of TSR, Inc. (Travis Mattera, of Richmond, R.I., found a pegataur picture in an RPGA™ Network ad in issue #179.) The pegataur of the D&D game seems to have made a crossover into the AD&D system during the creation of the 1991 cards. My suggestion that "pegasaurs" were pegasus-saurians was taken for a run by Brandy, who suggested crossbreeding the pegasus with many sorts of dinosaurs (Pegatyrannosaurus rex was mentioned specifically) to make a complete line of pegasaurs, so the original typo would be expanded. This wouldn't be the first time it has been done; I heard from inside sources at TSR that the thoul, the infamous crossbreed of ghoul, hobgoblin, and troll from the D&D game, was originally a typo that was quickly seized upon and expanded by game designers in this company's early days.

Abdominal error

Dear Dragon,

I have found a mistake in one article in issue #185, and I have a question about another. Under "Jalath'gak" (in "Mastered, Yet Untamed"), Timothy Brown says that the three sections of an insect's body are "head, body, and thorax." This should read "head, thorax, and abdomen" (or the equivalent names). The wings and legs of an insect are connected to the thorax, the middle section. The abdomen stores food. In the watroach, the hive chamber corresponds to the thorax. The legs are connected there, as the picture (but not the text) clearly shows. As with the jalath'gak, food is stored in the abdomen.

My other comment concerns Ed Greenwood's "Magic in the Evening." I can see the aspects of the two spelldream spells that involve invocation and illusion/phantasm, but don't these two spells primarily use abjuration magic for dispelling? This looks like someone repeated the schools for the dream spell rather than thinking about what school(s) spelldream should be.

The meeting of the real "Game Wizards" in "Magic in the Evening" was an intriguing idea. Will Ed Greenwood do more articles like this one? Elminster seems to expect him to do so.

Tim Emrick
Normal IL

Your editor was very embarrassed to have the "thorax-abdomen" error see print, since he once made straight As in high-school biology class, particularly in identifying animal and plant parts.

Simply add "abjuration" to the schools for the spelldream spells.

Finally, yes, you might very well see more meetings between the mages in the future, but we'll keep the secrets of those to ourselves for now.

Holy buckshot sprinkler

Dear Dragon,

In issue #184, in "Sage Advice," there seems to be a great deal of confusion as to what defines a "morning star" or a "flail." I, too, have seen these two incorrectly identified in print. What I am writing about, however, is the "holy water sprinkler," which is unlike either of these weapons.

The "holy water sprinkler" was a duo-purpose weapon. It resembled a shortened mace, although the bludgeoning end had five or seven holes drilled into it lengthwise. (The drilled holes actually made it look like a sprinkler.) The holes would be filled with powder and shot, basically making the weapon a kind of medieval sawed-off shotgun. Once the shot was fired, the weapon could be used as a mace.

Kelley Gillespie
Gautier MS

Making up the AD&D game statistics for this weapon would not be difficult. Imagine a small army armed with them, firing behind shields before charging with their "maces." I hope that lots of DUNGEON MASTERS™ use them! Ω



LOOKING FOR MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like boardgames, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

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THE WILD AND UNFORGIVING LANDS

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Artwork by Jeff Echevarria

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Lions and crocodiles have their own tactics in the AD&D® game





Artwork by
John Stanko

The Wild, Wild Wilderness

by David Howery

Artwork by Lissanne Lake

The AD&D® game includes statistics for many mundane animals: lions, elephants, etc. While a few of these creatures have special attacks, most are assumed to simply wade into combat with claws and teeth bared, fighting to the death. This is far from realistic and denies the beasts their best tactics. This article presents some of the tactical combat methods used by animals in the real world, expressed in AD&D 2nd Edition rules.

Before going into details about tactics, three general features of real-world animals must be discussed:

Strength: Not only are many real animals larger than humans, nearly all are stronger, pound for pound. For a number of biological reasons, humans have juvenile muscle characteristics, even in adulthood; animals do not. Thus, a lion that weighs around twice a man's weight has 10 times an average man's strength. The strength packed into a tiger, bull, or bear is immense. In terms of what they can carry, some animals are stronger than fantasy-game ogres and even some giants. This principle can even be seen in small animals like the house cat, which can leap comparatively great distances; in relative terms, humans cannot match the cat's strength.

Senses: While the sharpness of senses varies among species, many animals have one or more senses that far surpass those of men. Sight is not always their main

source of information. For many predators and prey, the sense of smell is supreme; deer and canines have a sense of smell so keen as to be unimaginable to humans. In addition to knowing what kind of animal left a scent trail, an animal can often determine the first animal's sex and size, and even know how long ago it passed by. The hearing of many animals, canines in particular, extends into ranges far greater than humans. Human vision is actually good compared to that of animals, but some creatures surpass us here, too. Eagles and other birds of prey have very keen sight, while cats are famed for their night vision. Mammals often have two or more of these keen senses; combined with their instincts, these mammals receive a great deal of information from their surroundings every second.

Because of these senses, I recommend that the surprise rules be adjusted. Wild animals should be surprised less often than humans and all their kin. In the AD&D 2nd Edition game, penalize characters approaching a beast with superior eyesight, hearing, or smell by -2 in their chances to surprise their prey for each uprated sense the prey possesses, to a maximum penalty of -4. In the AD&D 1st Edition game, animals and animal-like monsters (e.g., pegasi, unicorns, and blink dogs) are surprised on a roll of 1 on 1d10; those with two or more powerful senses are surprised on a 1 on 1d20. The special

surprise bonuses of the Underdark races (drow, duergar, svirfneblin, etc.) should *not* apply against animals, since the latter rely on more than just vision. Cut off from their sense of sight, humans and demihumans are extremely vulnerable in the dark; animals, which rely on several senses, would be less so.

Critical hits: This is similar to the "called shot" from the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*, which allows a strike against a specific body part. However, this is an instinctive attack for animals, not a learned one. A critical hit is any successful attack that occurs on an attack roll that is four or more higher than the number needed to hit, or on a natural 19-20 in any case. Critical hits have specific functions, as noted in the tactics section.

Tactics

These nine tactics are used only by animals with certain innate weaponry. As usual, the DM™ must determine if a particular animal can use a special attack, as circumstances dictate.

Biting bonus: Many animals have a claw/claw/bite attack routine. Roll the claw attacks first. If both are successful, the bite attack gains a +2 to hit. In real life, claw attacks serve to give a secure grip for the bite.

Bite and retreat: Two very different animals use this tactic: poisonous snakes and sabre-tooth tigers (*Smilodons*). Even

the giant versions of the poisonous snakes are too small to swallow humans whole, so there is no reason for them to fight to the death. A poisonous snake's usual tactic is to deliver one bite, then retreat to a dark hole or brush, where they wait to see if the venom works.

Sabre-tooth tigers have been featured in fantasy novels for years, and the AD&D game version is given hefty damage ranges. The reality is less exciting. Sabre-tooth cats probably ignored small, fast prey, concentrating on large, slow creatures. These cats did not leap on these animals and maul them to death. Instead, each used its swordlike fangs to inflict a single pair of deep wounds in an unreachable area, such as the rump. The cat then moved away and let the animal bleed to death. For game purposes, assume that a critical hit inflicts a bite attack too deep to heal on its own; the wound then bleeds for 1d6 hp damage every round until bound or magically healed.

Charge: Several large animals are capable of charging and ramming an opponent, as noted in their descriptions. This is devastating when used against humans, but it is rarely treated as more than a range of damage. On a successful charge attack, the victim will be thrown 1d6 +4 feet, requiring a save vs. paralyzation to avoid being stunned for 1-3 rounds. Some animals are capable of tossing an opponent on the charge (see following), but this occurs only on a critical hit on the charge.

Drowning: This is a tactic used by crocodiles. These reptiles seize prey from ambush, attempting to get a firm hold with its jaws. On a critical hit, the crocodile's jaws are firmly clamped on the victim. The croc then drags the victim underwater. Once there, the victim lasts only a few rounds before drowning (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 122; the character is assumed to be exerting himself). Others may attempt to pull the victim free, but this requires at least 10 points of strength for every hit die of the crocodile. If the croc feels the prey being dragged away, it shakes the victim vigorously, requiring each puller to make a dexterity check or lose his grip; the shaking inflicts double bite damage to the victim in that round. If the victim is successfully pulled for two consecutive rounds, the crocodile gives up and releases its prey.

Leaping/Dropping: Many predators attack their prey from ambush, closing the distance by dropping on the prey from above or leaping. What the rules ignore is the impact of a heavy animal on an upright human frame. If the animal hits with both claws or makes a critical hit, the victim is knocked prone and must save vs. paralyzation or be stunned for 1-3 rounds.

Snatch and run: This tactic is used by fast, stout predators. It can only be used against small and light prey, including gnomes and halflings. The maximum prey weight allowed for this attack is 25 lbs. per hit die of the predator. This attack is

done on the run, slowing briefly to make the attack, and the animal continues to run after the attack, successful or not. A critical hit (the animal may use only its bite attack) means that the animal has gotten a solid hold on its prey and inflicts automatic bite damage every round as the animal runs off with the victim in its mouth.

Strangling: Many predatory mammals do not kill by mauling their prey to death. Instead, they instinctively try to get a choking hold on the victim's neck, shutting down the air, blood, and nerve pathways. In game terms, a critical hit on a bite attack means that the animal has gotten a choke hold on the victim's neck, inflicting automatic *maximum* bite damage each round the choke hold is maintained. This tactic cannot be used against characters with full helms, plate mail, plate armor; or similar protections, as the neck is too well protected.

Tossing: Large animals with horns often have a charge attack. Some of these animals are capable of tossing characters into the air. If these animals make a critical hit on the charge, use these tossing rules instead of the charge rules given above. The victim is thrown 1d6 +4 feet into the air and must save vs. paralyzation at a -2 or be stunned for 2-5 rounds.

Trampling: Many creatures are capable of trampling humans, as noted in their descriptions. While this is a damaging attack, it is also a potentially immobilizing one, due to blows to the kidneys or lungs. In game terms, there is a 2% chance per hit die of the animal that the victim is stunned for 1-3 rounds with each successful trampling attack.

Who does what

The following gives the animals that are capable of using the tactics given herein. The AD&D game source for each animal is given: MC = volume of the *Monstrous Compendium*; MM = AD&D 1st Edition *Monster Manual*.

Biting bonus: MC1-3: bears (all); great cats (all), eagles (all), hawks (all), owls (all); MM: apes (gorillas)

Bite and retreat: MC1-3: sabre-tooth tigers (see *Cats, Great-Smilodon*), snakes (all poisonous), centipedes (all), spiders (all)

Charge: MC1-3: herd animals (all horned: antelope, buffalo, cattle, sheep), dinosaurs (all horned: *Monoclonus*, *Styracosaurus*, *Triceratops*), Pleistocene animals (woolly rhino, titanothere); MM: bulls, giant goats, Irish deer, rhinoceroses

Drowning: crocodiles (all)

Leaping/Dropping: MC1-3: great cats (all), dinosaurs (*Deinonychus*), dogs (all), hyenas (all), wolves (all)

Snatch and run: MC1-3: dogs (all), hyenas (all), wolves (all)

Strangling: MC1-3: bears (all), great cats (all but *Smilodon*), dogs (all), hyenas (all), wolves (all)

Tossing: MC1-3: herd animals (buffalo, cattle), dinosaurs (all horned); MM: bulls,

rhinoceroses

Trampling: MC1-3: herd animals (all), dinosaurs (all of size L or larger), elephants (all), horses (all), Pleistocene animals (*Baluchitherium*, titanothere, woolly rhino); MC4: stags (all); MM: bulls, giant goats, hippopotami, Irish deer, giant rams, rhinoceroses (all)

Conclusion

The use of these tactics can turn an ordinary animal into a much more dangerous opponent. For example, a lion can leap onto a player character (possibly stunning him), use its claws to gain a possible bonus on the bite, use its bite to possibly gain a strangling hold, and still use its normal raking rear-claws attack. A buffalo can charge, gore, toss, and trample. Hyenas are deadly to low-level halflings, thanks to the former's snatch-and-run tactic.

At the DM's option, animal-like monsters may use some of these tactics. For example, a hell hound is so much like a dog that it could use the strangling hold. The DM will have to judge each case. Even mundane animals cannot use these tactics all the time, depending on the circumstances (e.g., a halfling tied to a log cannot be taken on a snatch-and-run attack). However, these tactics make mundane animals a much greater hazard. These most common of monsters have spent eons learning instinctive attacks, and should be allowed full use of them.

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There are hundreds of books available on the lives of wild animals. The list below gives those books that are useful in describing how animals attack, and their interactions with man.

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In addition, Gregory Detwiler's article "By Tooth and Claw," from *DRAGON*® issue #116, gives a good discussion of the dangers of mundane animals and a history of famous real-world man-eaters. The article gives no real game rules, but it shows what mundane animals are capable of doing.



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Deadlier Dinosaurs

by David Howery

Artwork by Bob Walters

Horribly wonderful things to do to your Jurassic encounters

One of the cleverest science-fiction novels to come on the scene in recent years is *Jurassic Park*, by Michael Crichton. The novel tells the story of a wealthy eccentric who funds a genetic-research lab that succeeds in cloning dinosaurs from ancient DNA traces. The methods of obtaining the DNA are particularly clever. Of course, the recreated dinosaurs escape confinement, and the poor humans are forced to battle rampaging multiton behemoths for their lives.

The most outstanding features of Crichton's dinosaurs are that they are not the clumsy gallumphing beasts of common perception. They are as varied as modern creatures, having the aspects of birds, great cats, and vipers—and being believable, too.

This new look can be applied to the dinosaurs of AD&D® game worlds. This article gives some various options that can be applied to the AD&D game statistics for

dinosaurs, most of which appear in MC3, the FORGOTTEN REALMS® supplement to the *Monstrous Compendium*. This article is particularly appropriate to the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, which has the land of Chult, a “lost world” with thriving populations of dinosaurs.

The general descriptions of the dinosaurs in the *Monstrous Compendium* are somewhat flawed. First, not all dinosaurs are immensely stupid. Some took very good care of their young in communal nesting sites. Sauropods, such as *Brontosaurus*, did not live in swamps and lakes; they roamed dry ground near open forests, much like giraffes. The same is true of the duckbill dinosaurs.

The nature of the beasts

Officially, dinosaurs are classified as reptiles, but few paleontologists believe it

is that simple. There are too many differences between reptiles and dinosaurs for that neat theory. Some of these differences include:

Stance— Look at a picture of a lizard or alligator. Note that its legs project out horizontally from the body, giving it a squatting stance. Dinosaurs, however, had legs that projected vertically down from their bodies, so they stood more like birds and elephants, not lizards.

Body temperature— It is very likely that some dinosaurs were warm-blooded, not cold-blooded like reptiles. Several were built for achieving levels of speed and activity that are impossible for a cold-blooded reptile; carnosaurs like *Deinonychus* show this feature very well.

Body covering— Fossil evidence shows that dinosaurs had grainy skin with a pebblelike texture, rather than the scales of modern reptiles. A number of pterosaurs actually had hair, while a few coelur-

osaurs may have had feathers; these latter dinosaurs were probably the ancestors of the birds.

As a final note, it should be pointed out that some animals commonly thought to be dinosaurs were actually reptiles. Plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs were sea-dwelling reptiles, and pterodactyls were flying reptiles.

Intelligence

It is unclear as to why some creatures develop higher intelligence than others, and what features give this intelligence to these creatures. In general, the most intelligent creatures have a high ratio of brain weight in relation to total body weight. This is not a complete test, since some whales have a higher ratio than humans, even though humans are far more intelligent. It is also unknown why such dissimilar creatures as primates and dolphins develop high intelligence. Parrots are far more intelligent than other birds, for no obvious reason. Even the lowly octopus is fairly intelligent, compared to other invertebrates, but it has no obvious features that account for its brain power.

The DM can make his dinosaurs smarter than their brain size warrants, since no one knows exactly what it is that allows

high intelligence. While none are likely to be as smart as humans, they could approach the levels of the higher mammals. In *Jurassic Park*, a vicious carnivore called *Velociraptor* has the intelligence of a chimpanzee. This, combined with its long and dexterous claws, gave it the capacity to open doors and devise cunning ambushes (*Velociraptors* were the main villains in the novel).

This is close to what scientists believe was true for dinosaurs. *Velociraptor* was a member of the dromaeosaur family, a group of carnosaurs that included *Deinonychus* from M3. This and closely related groups had the largest brain-to-body ratio of the dinosaurs, and so are likely to have been the most intelligent. Most dromaeosaurs could have been at least as intelligent as lions or leopards, making canny hunters. Other dinosaurs may have had complex social behaviors similar to those of mammals; in particular, herd dinosaurs may have behaved like modern cattle or deer.

Speed

The modern cheetah is the fastest land animal, reaching speeds of up to 60 MPH. In *Jurassic Park*, *Velociraptor* was similarly speedy. This is not unreasonable for

small, light dinosaurs. Of course, as in the case of the cheetah, such speeds can be maintained for only 2-3 rounds. *Deinonychus* is much larger than *Velociraptor* and can sprint at MV 35 for only two rounds. Even larger carnosaurs such as *Allosaurus* and *Megalosaurus* can manage a one-round sprint at MV 25-30. Of course, the largest dinosaurs are too bulky to move at very high speeds, but it is likely that all could outrun humans for a short distance. Rhinos and elephants can do this, but only for a minute or two. Even squat and bulky crocodiles can move blindingly fast for a short time.

One note on movement: Dinosaurs did not waddle like crocodiles, but moved upright like birds or elephants. Many were probably graceful in movement. Their tails did not drag on the ground, but were held out level in the air behind them.

Coloring

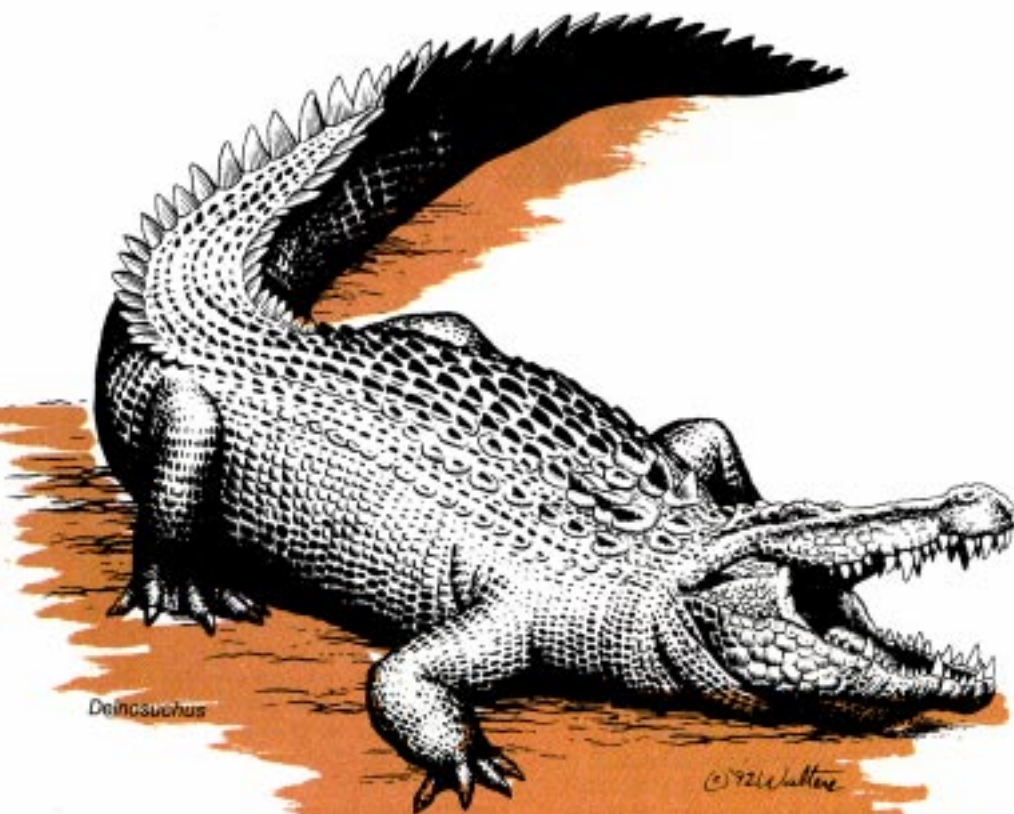
Modern animals have a wide range of colors, from iridescent snakes to striped cats; it is likely that dinosaurs had a similar range. The very largest of dinosaurs were probably dull gray and brown, like modern pachyderms and crocodiles. The smaller ones could have had any range of coloring. Some of the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* were spotted like cheetahs and striped like tigers, perfectly reasonable patterns for small carnivores. These color patterns are not for show; they help the animal blend into its surroundings. Herbivores that lived in herds may have been striped like zebras or spotted like giraffes. Other dinosaurs may have had the bright colors of modern lizards and snakes. While coloring is not a game statistic, it can be used by a DM to sow confusion among the PCs. Imagine a group of PCs who see a flash of orange hide with black stripes. They may think it is a tiger moving in the trees, when it is actually a *Deinonychus* closing in, with several of its pack nearby.

Poison

One of the ingenious characteristics of the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* was the poisonous bite of two species. Poisonous dinosaurs are not farfetched; dinosaurs are related to both reptiles and mammals. There are a number of poisonous reptiles, and a primitive mammal, the solenodon, also has a mildly poisonous bite. Large dinosaurs with powerful jaws are not likely to be poisonous; the most likely candidates are those with weak jaws or small size. Small coelurosaurs and weak-jawed dilophosaurs are the poisonous dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park*. The DM can include others with similar characteristics.

Senses

While reptiles generally have poor senses, there is no reason that dinosaurs must be the same. For all that is known, some may have had very keen senses. Carnivores are likely to have had good senses of



vision and smell in order to track prey. Large herbivores may have poor vision but an excellent sense of smell, like modern rhinos.

A unique sense among some poisonous snakes is that of sensing heat. Through special "pits" near their eyes, a variety of snakes called pit vipers are able to judge how close a warm-blooded animal is to it. Since they are closely related to reptiles, some small carnivorous dinosaurs may have had similar abilities.

New monsters

Several new dinosaurs and their relatives are presented here in AD&D game statistics. Included is *Velociraptor*, the main villain in *Jurassic Park*, and an update on *Dilophosaurus*.

Deinosuchus

This is a huge crocodile, nearly 50' long, that was a contemporary of the last dinosaurs. The skull of this beast was 6' long. Like modern species, *Deinosuchus* lived along lakes and rivers. It fed on small dinosaurs, possibly of up to duckbill size, attacking from ambush. It could make a tail swipe against up to four man-sized opponents to its rear for 3d10 hp damage. *Deinosuchus* can move at a sprint of 20, but for only one round; it does this out of ambush, giving it a -1 bonus on surprise rolls.

Dilophosaurus

(This is an addition to the information given on this dinosaur in the *Monstrous Compendium*). This carnivore was a carnosaur with a pair of semicircular bony crests on the top of its skull. Armed with tiny claws and weak jaws, *Dilophosaurus* seems to be a poor predator. However, this carnosaur has poison glands in its jaws; a bitten victim must save vs. poison or take 10 hp/round damage for 2-8 rounds (a successful save results in the loss of only 5 hp/round for 1-4 rounds). *Dilophosaurus* can also spit this poison up to 20', but this lessens its effectiveness. Failure to save against this spitting attack causes 5 hp/round damage for 2-8 rounds to the victim (2 hp/round for 1-4 rounds if the save is made) and blindness if a second save vs. breath weapons is failed. If the poison is washed off, the damage stops at once, but this must occur within two rounds. In any event, the blindness lasts for 2-5 hours. *Dilophosaurus* prefers to attack by first spitting poison, then mauling the blinded victim. It hunts in small groups of 1d6 +3 adults.

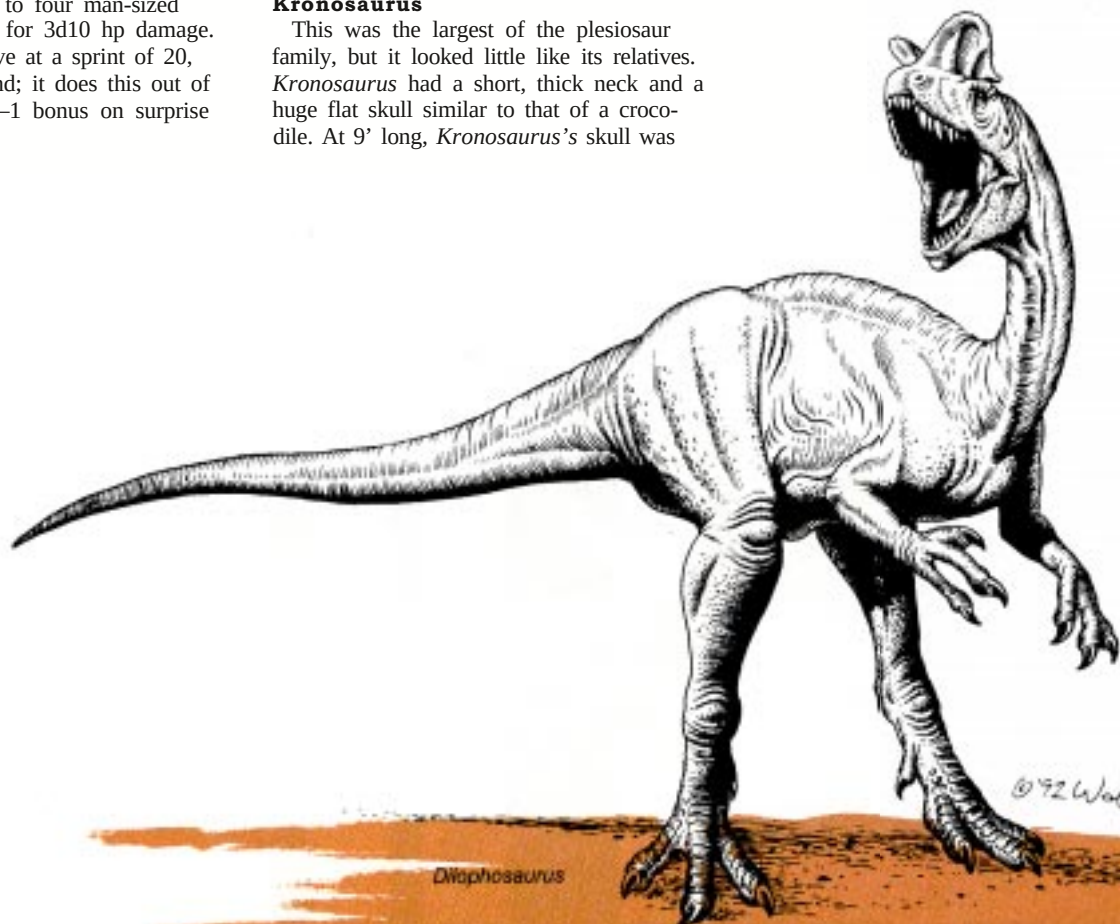
Kronosaurus

This was the largest of the plesiosaur family, but it looked little like its relatives. *Kronosaurus* had a short, thick neck and a huge flat skull similar to that of a crocodile. At 9' long, *Kronosaurus's* skull was

larger than that of *Tyrannosaurus rex*. The total length of *Kronosaurus* was 42', but the body was massive and thick, not elongated as in *Plesiosaurus*. This beast looked much like a crocodile with flippers. It fed on large fish and squid. Creatures up to man-size will be swallowed whole on a roll of four or more over what it needs to hit.

Shonisaurus

This was the giant of the ichthyosaur family, a group of marine reptiles that resembled long-snouted dolphins with vertical tail fins like a fish's. *Shonisaurus* had a huge guppy-shaped body with powerful elongated jaws; overall, *Shonisaurus* was 49' long. Oddly, the front and rear pairs of paddles were of equal length—an unusual feature in aquatic vertebrates. The jaws of *Shonisaurus* are too narrow to swallow man-sized prey whole, although smaller-than-man-size creatures will be swallowed whole on a roll of two or more over the number needed to hit. The bite does great damage.



Velociraptor

This vicious carnivore is deadly. A smaller relative of *Deinonychus*, *Velociraptor* also lives in packs and hunts with great cunning. They move with blinding speed; like a cheetah, *Velociraptor* can travel at

MV 45 for three rounds, then must rest at a maximum speed of 20. *Velociraptor* holds nothing back when it attacks. It uses its bite, both front paws, and a ripping sickle claw on each back leg. If both front paws hit the victim, the rear claws strike

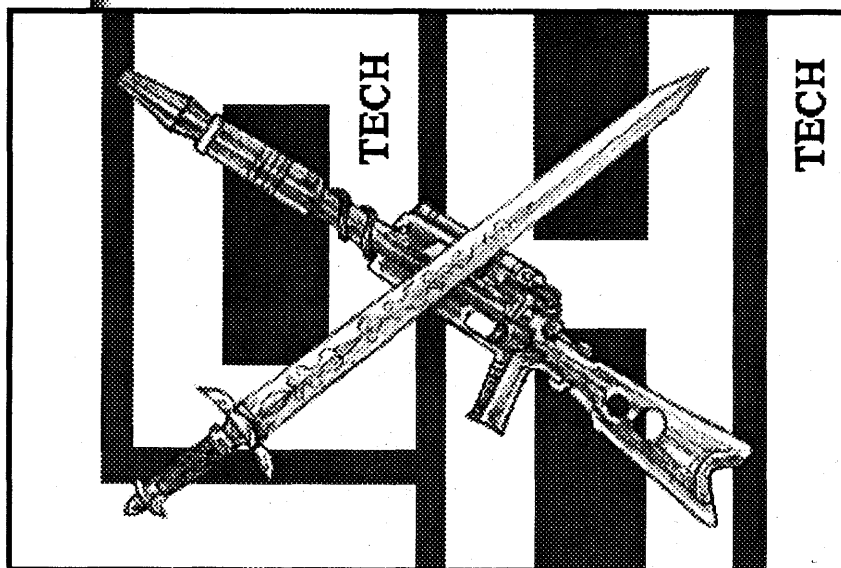
at +2 to hit. This dinosaur is as intelligent as an ape, and it uses this cunning in hunting to set up feints, lures, and surrounding tactics (it excels at ambushes, giving it a -2 modifier to surprise prey).

New Dinosaurs' Statistics Table

	Deinosuchus	Kronosaurus	Shonisaurus	Velociraptor
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subtropical/tropical, freshwater	Subtropical/tropical, any water	Subtropical/tropical, any water	Subtropical/tropical, any land
FREQUENCY	Rare	Rare	Rare	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day	Day	Day	Night
DIET:	Carnivore	Carnivore	Carnivore	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Animal (1)	Animal (1)	Low (6)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-3	1-2	1-2	1d6 +10
ARMOR CLASS:	4	7	7	6
MOVEMENT:	12, Sw 15 (20 sprint)	SW15	SW 15	20 (45 sprint)
HIT DICE:	17	17	18	3 + 3
THACO:	5	5	5	16
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1 bite or 1 tail swipe	1 bite	1 bite	2 foreclaws, 1 bite, 2 rear claws
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	6d8 or 3d10	7d8	5d8	1-2/1-2/1-6/2-8/2-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Ambush	Swallow whole	Swallow whole	Ambush
SPECIAL DEFENCE:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	G (49')	G (42')	G (49')	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Elite (14)	Champion (16)	Elite (13)	Fanatic (18)
XP VALUE:	10,000	11,000	12,000	270

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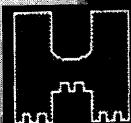
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Magic of earth and wood:
equipping the AD&D® 2nd Edition game druid



Sickle of the Harvest

by Matt Posner

Artwork by Karen L. Wann



BAZAAR OF the Bizarre

The AD&D® 2nd Edition *DUNGEON MASTER*™ Guide contains only two magical items specifically intended for druids. The *staff of slinging* and the *staff of the woodlands* function properly only in the hands of what one Dungeon Master I knew called a "dirt priest." Being the player of a druid myself, I eventually got a *staff of the woodlands* when my druid was 9th level, but I found myself dissatisfied. Everything it could do, my character could do himself, with the exception of animating a tree and making it fight to the death for him. That's not something my druid wants to do all the time, since he respects the natural sanctity of the woods. Why aren't there more magical items to enhance the power of druid characters?

There are, of course, plenty of magical items a druid can use. Besides magical spears and scimitars, magical leather armor, and the generic items anyone can use (like *rings of protection*), some magical items are particularly suited to the powers and character of the druid subclass. *Rings of elemental command*, which give a low-level druid a taste of hierophantic powers, are a prime example, but there are also lesser rings, such as those of *water breathing* and *water walking*; *staves of swarming insects* and *thunder and lightning* and *wands of earth and stone* and *flame extinguishing*. These are natural items for a druid to possess, but they aren't the same as magical plate mail and swords are to a fighter, a *staff of the magi* to a wizard, or *gauntlets of dexterity* to a thief.

I'd like to discount the *rings of animal*

friendship and *mammal control* as druidic items. My reason comes from the *Player's Handbook*, page 37. Speaking of druids, it says, "Their greatest concern is for the continuation of the orderly and proper cycles of nature—birth, growth, death, and rebirth. . . . Only when the cycle and balance are disrupted does the druid become concerned."

Suppose a druid uses one of these rings to acquire animal friends or servitors to follow and protect him. These animals are removed from their ordinary activities, often from their very habitats, and bent to the druids purpose. Their place in the cycle of nature has been left unfilled, and the cycle has been disrupted. This is not what a druid wants to do. The druids powers enable him to function in a natural setting and empower nature to defend itself more so that to wield nature as a weapon for his own ends. Remember that the druids own *animal friendship* spell (PHB, page 198) "functions only if the caster actually wishes to be the animals friend. If the caster has ulterior motives, the animal always senses them" and resists the spell. *Animal friendship* gains the companionship of animals, not their slavish obedience.

Described here are some magical tools and objects that suit and enhance druidic powers without disturbing the cycle of nature at all. All of these items are effective only in a druid's hands, except as noted. If they require command words, the words are in the secret language of the druids. Except where noted otherwise,

these items can be manufactured by druids of sufficient level using procedures like those detailed in the DMG.

Amulets of transformation

These amulets are carved from oak bark and are hung around the neck by cords of woven mistletoe. Each amulet enables the druid to transform into a specific animal, which might be a mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, or insect. This transformation is like the transformation ability druids acquire at 7th level, except that it does not heal hit-point damage and the druid using such an amulet radiates faint *alteration* magic when transformed. To activate an amulet, a druid must be wearing it and must speak a command word. Only one amulet may be worn at a time, and the druid must change back to human form before using the 7th-level transformation ability. A druid may use each amulet he possesses once per day.

Amulets of transformation are generally found in group of two to five. Mammal and bird forms are common; the other forms are rare, as are the forms of animals larger than a black bear or smaller than a toad. Note that two druids who use the same amulet on different occasions will look identical once transformed. The amulet allows transformation into a particular creature recognizable by druids, rangers, and members of the same creature species. When the transformation occurs, the animal form is visibly as healthy as the druids form was before the transformation. If the druid is killed in

animal form, he reverts to his original shape and the amulet crumbles into dust.

XP Value: 350 each

Claws of the bear

This minor magical item consists of a set of supple gauntlets which, upon mental command, extrude sharp, enchanted bear claws (the gauntlets save vs. attacks as soft metal). The druid wearing these gauntlets has two attacks per round in melee combat. The gloves are +1 weapons, and each inflicts 1d3 +2 hp damage per strike. Additionally, a druid using these claws may climb trees with no chance of falling and may climb irregular stone surfaces such as mountains and mortared walls as a thief with a base 75% success rate, modified by race and dexterity.

XP Value: 500

Mistletoe wand

This wand is created by druids who expect to spend extended periods of time away from their native grove. When manufactured, such a wand has exactly 80 charges (if found, it has 80 -2d20 charges). The wand transforms into a *shillelagh* (as the first-level spell) at no expenditure of charges. For one charge per round, the druid may use it to cast any one of these spells: *invisibility to animals*, *locate animals or plants*, *detect snares and pits*, and *pass without trace* (wielder only). The most important power of the wand, however, is its use as a substitute for greater mistletoe. Any spell that requires mistletoe as a material component may be cast with this wand as the component instead (one charge is expended if the wand is used this way). To do so, the druid grasps the wand and speaks a command word; these actions do not delay the casting of the spell (there is no initiative penalty to use this wand). The wand cannot be recharged. If the wand is buried in the grove where it was made after its charges have been depleted, the amount of mistletoe available for harvest from that grove during the next full moon will be twice the normal amount.

XP Value: 1,500

Rings of the hierophants

There are only four of these powerful rings known to exist, one of each type. Their creation requires the efforts of a hierophant druid capable of entering the elemental plane that corresponds to the powers of the ring. Each of these rings enable a druid to speak and understand the language of the corresponding elemental plane, and once a week the wearer may *polymorph* himself into the form of an elemental of the associated type. In elemental form, the druid retains his normal hit points, but in all other senses is a 12-HD elemental. This transformation otherwise functions as the druids 7th-level *shape change* ability, including the healing of lost hit points. This transformation lasts for a maximum of six turns and can be reversed

at any time. The druid radiates strong *alteration* magic while in elemental form.

Finally, each of these rings gives the wearer the power to cast a certain spell once per day. The *ring of the earth hierophant* enables the wearer to cast *stone shape* at the 17th level of ability; the *ring of the fire hierophant* enables the wearer to cast *flame walk* at 18th level; the *ring of the water hierophant* enables the wearer to cast *water walk* at 19th level; and the *ring of the air hierophant* enables the wearer to cast *air walk* at the 20th level.

XP Value: 4,000 each

Ring of the little people

This ring is usually made to seal a bond of friendship between a druidic circle and the faerie folk of the forest it protects. Its manufacture requires the cooperation of six representatives from at least two kinds of faerie creatures. The wearer is immune to the spells and innate powers of all sylvan and faerie creatures, including atomies, bookas, brownies, buckawn, dryads, korred, leprechauns, nixies, nymphs, pixies, pseudodragons, quicklings, satyrs, sprites, sylphs, and will-o-wisps. The wearer can also speak and understand two to five additional languages (to be determined by the DM™) of the creatures listed above. Once a day, the druid may cast on himself, in the same round, the spells *reduce* and *improved invisibility*. *Reduction* is to a height of 6" -24", which may be modified within that range after the spell's casting by a round of concentration. The combined spells last for a maximum of six turns; the druid may cancel them at any time.

XP Value: 4,000

Sickle of the harvest

This sickle is a +2 weapon and has a limited dancing ability, functioning as a *dancing sword* in the DMG, except that it dances for only two rounds and retains its +2 bonus for both. It is a +4 weapon against all plant creatures of nonneutral alignment.

The real power of this sickle is as a harvesting tool. When given a command word, it animates and flies through the air, harvesting edible plants in the area designated by the druids mental command. For example, it can harvest one-half acre of corn or wheat per turn, continuing to do so indefinitely unless it is willed to stop, completes its task, moves a mile away from the druid who commanded it, or is physically or magically attacked. In any of these cases, the sickle immediately returns to the druids hand, arriving within one round unless physically obstructed or destroyed. To obstruct it physically requires that it be completely enclosed in an object of stone or metal; it slips free of any living grasp and hacks its way through 3" of wood in one round.

The commands given to the sickle by its wielder can be general ("Cut down every stalk of grain and every piece of ripe fruit

within one-half mile of here"), or specific ("Cut only ripe blackberries the size of the ball of my thumb or larger, and always leave half the blackberries on every bush").

This item is usually created by high-level druids to reward beneficial services performed by lesser members of the circle. To possess one is a symbol of status among other druids.

XP Value: 1,300

Square-meal seeds

These magical seeds usually come in a packet of 10d10 seeds. When planted in at least 1" of dirt and commanded in the druids' language to grow, a seed grows in one turn into a 3'-tall tree with 1d4 +5 mango-sized fruits. Each fruit is sufficient to nourish one human, demihuman, or humanoid for one day. The stalk and leaves of the plant are sufficient to nourish as many horses or mules as there were fruits. There is a 5% chance that each fruit grown will cure either 6d4 hp damage or one magical or nonmagical disease (50% chance of either, if curative ability is indicated). The druid who grew the plant is able to recognize such fruits.

Square-meal seeds grow in any weather conditions. They must be planted one at a time, a process requiring one round, though a number can be invoked at once if simultaneously buried. If a plant growth spell is cast on one before it is invoked, the plant grows the maximum number of fruits, but is not otherwise affected. The plant, once grown, is not unusually hardy; adverse weather conditions that would kill other plants will destroy it. The tree dies (and its substance becomes decayed and useless) in 1d4 +2 days. Its fruit cannot be stored or preserved for more than one day. Neither the seeds nor the plants radiate magic, though any druid will recognize them for what they are. A *dispel magic* cast at a packet of seeds will destroy 10d10 of them. Neither the seeds nor the plants are sentient, and they are not affected by druidic spells other than *plant growth*.

XP Value: 10 per seed

Wooden armor of the east

This armor closely resembles banded mail, except that it is made from strips of highly flexible wood treated and enchanted to be no more cumbersome than leather armor. It offers protection equivalent to *chain mail* +1 (AC 4). In addition to its protective value, this armor is silent and can be concealed beneath normal clothing. For these reasons, it is highly prized. Unlike the other items here, this item may be worn by characters others than druids. Clerics and fighters may wear it to full effect; thieves may wear it, but may not perform thieving skills in it other than picking locks and listening at doors. The armor does not include a helm, but it is sometimes found along with a *wooden shield* +1 of medium size.

XP Value: 750

Jack wasn't nimble.
 Jack wasn't quick.
 So Jack became a candlestick.



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The Ecology of the

Dakon

by Nick Parenti

Remember the dakon? An old race made new for the AD&D[®] game

Many of the creatures cataloged in the AD&D[®] 1st Edition game's tomes are no longer utilized, their gaming potential now unnoticed. This is disappointing, since many of them diverge from the basic Tolkien-style races and monsters in both appearance and characteristics.

The following expanded description of the FIEND FOLIO[®] tome's dakon (a monster not found in the FIEND FOLIO appendix to the AD&D 2nd Edition Monstrous Compendium) is provided as an example of what can be accomplished with limited resources (its original description was only two paragraphs long). By choosing new behavioral, cultural, and regional themes, I constructed a more colorful and useful creature.

A brief synopsis of the creature's statistics follows, fleshed out for both editions of the AD&D game, with the two paragraphs that originally described it (edited slightly):

Dakon (1st Edition): FRQ uncommon; #APP 6-60; AC 5; MV 6"; HD 1 + 1; %LAIR 50%; TT E; #AT 2; Dmg 1-10/1-10; SA nil; SD nil; MR standard; INT average; SZ M; PSI nil; LVL/XP I/20 +2 per hp.

Dakon (2nd Edition): C/T Tropical/jungle; FRQ uncommon; ORG tribal; AC-TIVE day; DIET omnivore; INT average; TREAS E (community); AL LN; #APP 6-60 (village); AC 5; MV 6; HD 1 + 1; THAC0 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1-10/1-10; SA missile; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 11-12; XP 35 (more for multilevel warriors and spellcasters).

A shabby, intelligent ape with a reasonable grasp of the common tongue, a dakon never attacks except in self-defense or to recover treasure stolen from it. When it attacks, it does so with a +2 bonus to hit because of its strength and the sharpness of its claws, using each clawed hand to inflict 1-10 hit points of damage.

The dakon is usually a light brown color with green eyes and black hands. It is found in all locations except near large expanses of water. It is normally on good terms with lawful humans and demi-humans, though it has learned to distrust the motives of humanoids and so will not communicate with them.

The revised dakon

In the jungles of tropical continents live the gorilla-like dakons, who are seldom seen elsewhere. These advanced primates are powerful and proud, and they guard their culture with the same fierceness with which they guard their young.

Highly social beings, dakons can be found living in villages, towns, and even cities. They build their homes in the largest of trees but are equally able to construct their thatched houses on stilts. Climbing is no problem, as all dakon can climb trees and rough surfaces in calm, unhurried circumstances; even in tense, combative situations, they have a 99% chance to avoid falling. Unaccustomed to using stone for building, their communities are surrounded with wooden palisades for protection.

A dakon village has under 100 residents. Towns have populations ranging from 100 to 500, and cities rarely are home to more

than 1,000. Children and young adults make up 40% of any community; adult females constitute 35%, and the remaining 25% are adult males. Mated couples never have more than two children at one time and usually remain together for life. Dakons have character classes among their more powerful members; of the males, one in 10 is a warrior of level 1-6 (1st-level warriors start with maximum hit points).

Each dakon community has a dominant male leader called the *ghana*, or war chief. His duties include leading the adult males of his group in the defense of their community and carrying out the policies and commands of the region's *kaya maghan* ("king of the gold"). A ghana may choose his mate and gets first pick of any communal property, including food. The most powerful ghanas compete to become the *kaya maghan* when the latter position is vacant because of forced retirement or death. The ghana is always the highest-

level warrior in the community.

Competitions for the title of ghana are held in each community about every five years, or sooner as the result of an existing ghana's death, cowardice, or failure to carry out his duties. The competition, open only to males, includes a ritual show of strength and fierceness through a visual display that always includes bared teeth, war cries, chest-pounding, and excessive arm-flailing. In the end, the most impressive and persistent competitor is left standing as his former peers skulk nearby, submissively avoiding eye contact with their new leader. Occasionally, two individuals prove worthy; in this event, the community splits. The senior ghana remains in the old community while the junior ghana leads his followers to settle a new community. In the past, such incidents in the competition for *kaya maghan* have led to brief periods of civil war.

The *kaya maghan* is named so because his office gives him ownership of all gold mines worked by his people. He keeps whatever amount of gold he wishes and distributes the rest as gifts to his most loyal retainers, ghanas, and warriors. The dakon love gold and spare no expense in adorning themselves in gold jewelry. The mines are run by local ghana and worked by dakon criminals and slaves. Slaves are taken from the many other races found in the jungles near the dakon, such as gnolls, banderlog, kobolds, humans, elves, orcs, and tasloi.

Although dakons tend to dominate and look down upon the banderlog (the baboonlike folk from the 1st Edition *Monster Manual II*), the banderlog view the dakon as kin and have been known to fight alongside them against the brutal, evil, and often mad yuan-ti, qullan, tasloi, and gnolls. Part of this may be due to the dakons' possession of a form of beast-mastery over other primates; they are known to keep monkeys, gibbons, chimps, and gorillas as pets and guard animals. Although harder to train, carnivorous apes are also maintained in much the same way that other races keep war dogs. In fact, any nonhuman primates may be

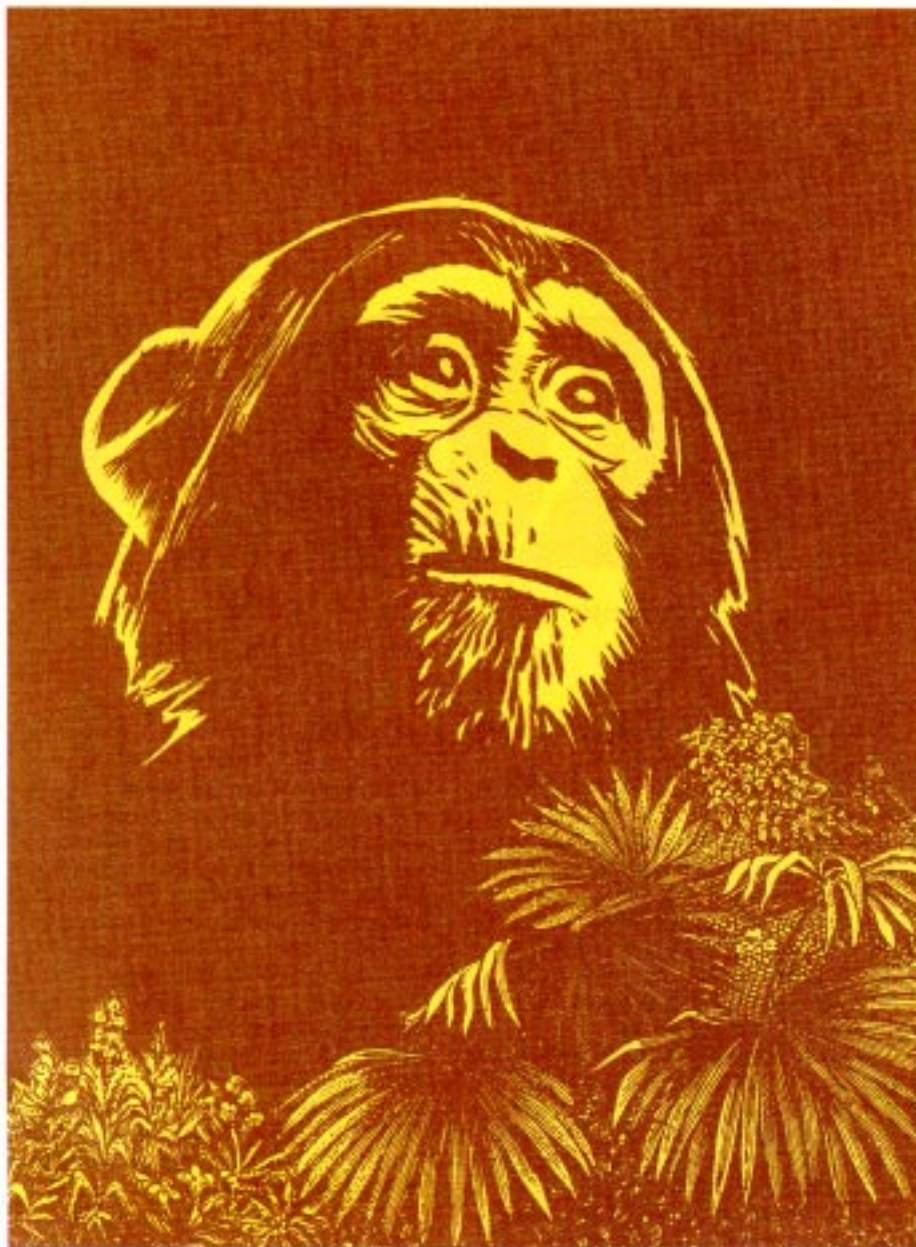


Table 1
Dakon Ability Scores

Ability	Min. *	Max. *
Strength	15 (12)	18/00 (18)
Intelligence	3	13
Wisdom	3	18
Dexterity	8	18
Constitution	12	18
Charisma	3	18**

* Scores in parentheses are for female dakon.

** This applies to dakons only; the maximum charisma score to a non-dakon is 12.

subject to a dakon's innate *animal friendship* ability, which functions like the cleric spell but without the use of a holy symbol. A dakon need only approach a primate with an intelligence of at least 1 (animal) and at most 7 (low), then spend one hour speaking to and physically touching the prospective follower. The primate has a 1% chance per hit point it possesses of resisting the dakon's wishes; only full, unwounded hit-point totals are considered here. If the primate resists the dakon's influence, it will leave peacefully. Otherwise, it follows the dakon and becomes its petlike associate, able to learn whatever tricks it can be taught. Dakon care well for their primate followers but, because of the problems in caring and feeding for them, usually avoid having many "helpers."

Dakon prefer the company of their own kind. They have good relations with other intelligent apes, such as the grommams from MC7, the first SPELLJAMMER® appendix to the *Monstrous Compendium*. They tolerate the presence of banderlog and other primateline or monkeylike beings, such as the hadozee from MC7. Humans, demihumans, and needlemen are regarded neutrally; humanoids and giants are greeted with antipathy (and threats of attack); gullan, tasloi, and yuan-ti are hated and attacked on sight.

Dakon are almost exclusively traders and hunter/gatherers. They practice agriculture on a small scale by cultivating plots for individual needs. The males hunt on foot or elephant-back using spears, javelins, blow guns, or clubs, gaining bonuses in melee for their 18/91 strengths (+2 to hit, +5 to damage; all other lifting and door-opening abilities apply). These weapons are the same ones they use in war; they use their sharp claws only when they have no other weapons handy. (Dakons have never learned wrestling.) One or two carnivorous apes are often used to track, flush, and retrieve game. Females and children are organized into foraging parties with armed male escorts. The escorts check and maintain the community's traps while the foragers comb the jungle in search of food and natural medicines.

All the food gathered, as with most other property except for gold, is community owned. The local ghana chooses what is his; the rest is divided equally among the populace. Occasionally an individual's bravery in battle or prowess in hunting earns him extra rewards, usually in the form of gold jewelry. Bracers, arm bands, anklets, and head pieces predominate

among males, while females prefer necklaces, nose rings, and earrings.

Possessing little skill as blacksmiths, their weapons and tools are made of wood, stone, ivory, and bone. A dakon war club is known as a *knobkerrie* and may be elaborately shaped and carved. Wooden shields covered with colorfully painted leather are common, as are helmets made from the skulls of past opponents (AC 3 to head at best). Dakons do not use armor, as they consider it cowardly. They sometimes ride trained elephants into battle; each elephant is ridden by a mahout armed with a club and a warrior armed with one or more missile weapons (including rocks). During wartime, a logical ghana leads most of the adult males of his community into battle. A few adult males are left behind with the old and adolescent to defend their homes. Females are expected to protect and care for the children and are ferocious if threatened. Females always attempt escape with their young before resorting to violence.

Drum towers in each dakon community are used to pass news, report disasters, coordinate relief, and make public announcements from ghana of the kaya maghan. During battles, the signal drums of the dakon can be heard directing the action and making reports. Dakons also imitate animal noises, howling to communicate over long distances. All dakon know at least a few drum signals and howl-calls. Aside from speaking their own language (which is based in large part on hoots, grunts, finger and hand gestures, and body postures), most dakons are capable of limited communication with apes and know other racial languages common in their area. Most dakon are at least able to understand the common tongue if the conversation is kept simple, but very few are fluent in it.

Dakon religion is based on the existence of a spirit world where fiends and their ancestors' spirits live. The spirits, which are lawful neutral and equal at most to demigods, influence the material world through magic and possession. Dakon shamans are known as *sakirs* and perform community service with the powers they receive from their ancestors. Each community has a 25% chance of having a sakir of level 2-7, who will have 1-3 initiates living with him and his family. Before an initiate can acquire the title and power of a sakir, he must survive a year as a hermit with no shelter but the jungle's trees. His task is to commune with the spirit world.

If he survives, he gains the knowledge to pen spells, which may be written on parchmentlike tree bark with berry inks. Scrolls may be manufactured only by 7th-level sakirs; they cannot make potions or other magical items.

Occasionally during these hermitages, initiates discover that tempting powers can be learned from fiends. Those who seek this arcane knowledge become zaras (witch doctors). Zaras remain hermits, and most maintain their alignments, though with great difficulty. A few zaras who seek power too quickly or in too great a quantity often become the servants of their demonic teachers. Eventually, their alignments change to chaotic evil; in extreme cases, they become possessed. Zaras may make scrolls at their highest level, too.

Dakons are active traders. Dakon merchants travel, often on elephants, in large, armed caravans. Merchandise is carried by the elephants or on the heads of caravan members. Trained gorillas and carnivorous apes are employed as guards and assist in foraging for food. These caravans bring the fruits of the dakons' mines (gold, silver, gems, and diamonds), as well as exporting ivory and slaves to other communities in exchange for metallic mining tools, finished jewelry, fabrics, rugs, and any other richly colorful items considered exotic by the dakons.

Dakon justice is quick and harsh. Although there is no death penalty, a ghana or sakir who tries a suspected criminal has several options as he is both judge and jury. Punishments include banishment, slavery, public service, mine labor, and corporal punishments. All punishments are accompanied by the permanent removal of a hand-wide strip of fur down the individual's back, the mark of a criminal. Due to the great shame this causes, crime is rare among dakons. Marked criminals often flee, sometimes becoming bandits to raid and steal for a living. Crimes in dakon society include theft, murder, adultery, cowardice in battle, destruction of community property, and failure to obey the kaya maghan. Local ghanas add to this list, often including the failure to obey the ghana or a sakir.

Dakons are offered for use as intriguing nonplayer characters for game campaigns in tropical areas. The tables with this article offer information on converting them into an NPC race with character classes; their use as player characters is left up to the players and DM™.

Table 2 Dakon Class Statistics						
Class	HD	Max. level	Weapons	Armor?	Shield?	Poison?
Warrior (fighter)	d10	10	spear, javelin, blow gun, dagger, knobkerrie (club)	helmet only	Yes	no
Sakir (priest)	d8	7	blow gun, knobkerrie (club)	helmet only	Yes	Yes
Zara (priest/wizard)	d8/d4	7/4	as per sakir	no	no	Yes



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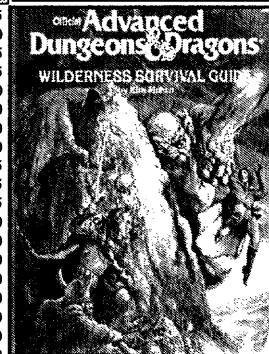
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by Skip Williams

SAGE advice

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

The sage ponders more psychic conundrums this month. Unless otherwise stated, all page references refer to the AD&D® *Complete Psionics Handbook*.

Can a *wish* be used to enhance a character's psionic abilities or to acquire psionic abilities? Or does the fact that a *wish* is magical and psionics is not prevent this?

Although the DM™ has final say on any *wish*, there is no game reason that a character cannot use one to gain or augment psionic abilities. A *wish* changes "reality" and can accomplish all manner of things that lesser magics cannot.

All this however, begs a whole raft of other questions, such as how much psionics can be gained, and what kind.

The "best" way to use a *wish* to increase a character's psionic powers is to improve the character's ability scores (DMG, page 11), which in turn can improve some or all the character's power scores. Increasing the character's wisdom score also will increase the character's inherent potential (CPH, page 13). Generous referees will make such an increase retroactive. A *wish* also might allow a character to increase his total PSPs, from two to 10 points. A *wish* certainly could allow a character to "forget" one discipline, science, devotion, or defense mode and replace it with a power more to the character's liking. If *wishes* are very rare in your campaign, it

also might allow a character to pick up an extra devotion either inside or outside the primary discipline, but I don't recommend that you allow characters to acquire extra sciences or disciplines this way. Likewise, it's probably okay to let characters *wish* for a wild talent, though stern referees will make such characters roll to test for wild talents when making the *wish*. DMs who do this should feel free to chuckle evilly if the percentile roll is low enough to have revealed a wild talent without *wishing* and should feel free to apply the normal consequences if the roll is 97 or higher. I do not recommend that you allow characters with wild talents to *wish* for additional powers, but it should be okay to let them *wish* for more PSPs.

Of course, characters can attempt to exceed these limits, but when they do so the DM should either declare that the *wish* does not work, or should impose some sort of penalty on the character. "Okay, Hurd the Magnificent, you can have the Mass Domination science. Of course, you are now a 5th-level human psionicist, not a 10th-level elven wizard!"

As always, game-logic and game balance reasons exist for these limitations. From the standpoint of game logic, the mortal brain can harbor only so many psychic powers before it turns to mush. High-level psionicists can command a wide variety of powers only by virtue of long experience and training. In terms of game balance, *wishes* should be introduced into a campaign only to let the players make minor adjustments to their characters' fates. If the DM allows characters to use *wishes* to get cheap power, the challenge and fun of adventuring quickly wear off.

At what level does a multiclassed character with psionics get his powers?

A multiclassed psionicist gains new psionic powers and PSPs each time he gains a level as a psionicist. The character's other class or classes do not affect his

psionic powers, except insofar as the character's experience points are divided equally among all the character's classes.

A multiclassed character with a wild talent gets four PSPs for every level gained in *each* class. Multiclassed characters do not divide new PSPs between classes as they do with hit points.

Can a psionicist using the Detonate science choose not to attack friendly creatures within 10' of the detonation so that they don't take damage? In other words, can a psionicist detonate an ogre's club, but choose not to damage a fighter in melee with the ogre?

The Detonate description on page 38 certainly seems to imply that the psionicist can decide which creatures within the 10' detonation radius will be attacked. It is possible that the detonation will damage nothing—except the object that is detonated—if the user declines to attack creatures that might be in the radius.

Can the Soften devotion be used against a character employing the Body Weaponry devotion? Are the effects of the Soften devotion permanent? How large an object can be Softened? Can a Softened object be repaired?

According to the Body Weaponry description on page 57, an arm converted into a weapon actually becomes wood or metal or both. The DM has the final say, but I suggest that the arm/weapon be subject to all effects that can alter or destroy the material including the Soften devotion, rust monsters, *warp wood* spells, and so on.

Since Soften has a maintenance cost, Softening lasts only while the power is maintained. Note that if the DM is willing to spend the time, you could stage a psychic contest between the two characters, with the Body Weaponry user striving to maintain the weapon while the attacker

tries to Soften it. This is playing fast and loose with the psychic contest rules (see pages 22-24), but it fits with the spirit of the game.

As the description says, Soften can affect objects that weigh 10 lbs. or less. The DM might allow characters to Soften small pieces of larger objects, but I don't recommend it.

What are the statistics for the animals listed for the Animal Affinity science?

Statistics can be found in the various *Monstrous Compendium* volumes, as follows, MC1: bull (cattle or buffalo subtypes in the herd animal entry), boar (any of the three subtypes will do, but I suggest the wild boar), elephant (I suggest the African elephant subtype), grizzly bear (brown bear subtype), lion (great cat entry), panther (leopard subtype in the great cat entry), rattlesnake (normal poisonous snake subtype in the snake entry), giant scorpion (scorpion entry), tiger (great cat entry), percheron (draft horse subtype in the horse entry), and wolf. MC2: ape, barracuda, crocodile (common crocodile subtype), giant eagle (eagle entry) falcon (small hawk subtype in the hawk entry), griffon, peregrine falcon (large hawk subtype in the hawk entry), and shark (any version of the common shark subtype). MC4: stag (wild stag subtype).

Can a character using the Metamorphosis science move at the new form's movement rate? Does the user have any senses when Metamorphosed into an inanimate object? If not, can the user change into an object that is equipped with sense organs? Can the user physically turn into a powerful creature such as a margoyle or hatchling dragon? Can the user turn into something fanciful such as an animated chair?

I suggest you treat Metamorphosis as a slightly altered version of the *polymorph self* spell (see PHB, page 161); unlike a *polymorphing* spellcaster, the Metamorphosis user is limited to forms that have the same mass as his own body, and he must make a system shock roll when he changes form. However, the Metamorphosis user is not limited to the forms of creatures, and can maintain an assumed form so long as he has PSPs to maintain the power. The Metamorphosis user gets the assumed form's movement rate and armor class, along with its physical attacks. He does not get special abilities such as gaze weapons, breath weapons, weapon immunities, and so on. On the other hand, the character does gain certain vulnerabilities and immunities that are intrinsic to the assumed form. Common sense must rule

here. For example, while a character Metamorphosed into a werewolf cannot shift shapes (and thus avoid further system shock rolls) and is not immune to normal weapons, a character Metamorphosed into a brick is immune to normal fire simply because bricks don't burn.

The power's description goes out of its way to say that the user can change into *anything*, so I'd be inclined to let PCs go wild when picking forms into which they can Metamorphose. Nevertheless, some limitations are in order, or PCs will abuse the power. I suggest that you assume that simple forms, such as bricks, have no senses except a faint sense of touch and pain. A character Metamorphosed into a brick cannot see, taste, hear, or smell. He can feel vibrations, however—even faint ones from a man-sized creature walking nearby—and he knows when somebody tries to break him. The DM could allow the character to turn into a brick with eyes, ears, and nose so the character could get more sensory input, but enemies will more easily spot the character. That character also will have some vulnerabilities a normal brick might not, such as susceptibility to *stinking cloud* spells and harpy songs. Likewise, a character Metamorphosed into a walking chair would have visible joints and muscles.

Ω

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ARCAINE



by Richard A. Hunt

Artwork by Tom Baxa



The *Tome of Magic* introduced the concept of a new specialist mage, the elemental, to the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. However, there are only one to three elemental spells of each level in each of the four elemental spell lists in Appendix 1 of the *Tome of Magic*, with fewer at the higher levels (seventh and above). The spells described here are meant to make the prospect of playing an elemental wizard more attractive. Such wizards are more versatile, both as PCs and as NPCs

Elemental air spells

Wings (Alteration)

Level: 7 Components: V, S
Range: 30 yds. +10 CT: 3
yds./lvl.

Duration: 3 trns./lvl. Save: Neg.

Area of Effect: One creature

This spell allows the caster to gift a creature otherwise unable to fly with a pair of usable wings. The wings always sprout from the creature's back, and the spell imparts the creature with the natural ability and know-how to use them. The target creature must have a clearly definable back for the spell to take effect. The wings are always comparable to the size of the creature. The creature cannot have wings already; only one casting of this spell is effective on a creature at any time, although wings from a spell previously cast may be replaced by a new wing type. The caster must choose the desired wing type from the following:

Butterfly: MV 24 (MC: C); flutter
Dragon: MV 30 (MC: C); wing buffet
Dragonfly: MV 36 (MC: B); hover, dart
Eagle: MV 48 (MC: D); dive
Hummingbird: MV 36 (MC: A); hover

Once the spell has been cast, the subject creature must pass a system-shock roll. Failure indicates that its body has rejected the wings, which fail to appear. However, the creature is otherwise unharmed. Unwilling creatures also receive a saving throw vs. spell as well as a system-shock roll. This spell has no effect on *polymorphed* creatures. Finally, those affected by a *wings* spell are subject to all the applicable rules of aerial combat (*DMG*, pages 77-78).

The above wing types all impart additional advantages other than flying movement and advanced maneuverability. The rules for these abilities are as follows:

Dart: The creature may, after spending one round hovering, completely change direction and move at one-and-a-half times its normal flying speed for the next round (round fractions up). This ability may not be used more frequently than every three rounds and may be used only from a hovering position. Obviously, the Hover ability is needed for this ability to work.

Dive: If the *winged* creature dives for more than 100', its speed is double its normal flying speed. At the end of the dive, the creature may use its natural abilities (claws, bite, sting, etc.) or weapon attacks at a +2 attack bonus and at double normal damage. Common sense should prevail in all cases where natural abilities may not be effective. The DM™ may also wish to modify the chances to hit further for different situations (cover, concealment, size, etc.).

Flutter: This ability is always active for this wing type. The creature moves in such an erratic fashion that opponents trying to strike receive a -2 penalty on attack rolls. Fortunately, the winged creature knows exactly what it's doing and is able to move and attack normally.

Hover: The creature may hover in place for one round and change direction completely in the next round. This also allows the creature some versatility in performing tasks such as retrieving or placing stationary objects, attacking slow-moving aerial targets, or surveying the ground below. The creature may attack normally while hovering as well.

Wing buffet: The creature may use its wings to buffet opponents with a short burst of air. No damage is ever done, although opponents within 5' are knocked prone upon failing a dexterity check with a +2 on the 1d20 roll. This ability has no effect on creatures of a size larger than that of the *winged* creature. The creature using this ability must be on the ground and cannot be flying, and it cannot otherwise attack.

The wings vanish at the end of the spell's duration. However, airborne creatures are affected for 1d2 rounds by a *feather fall*

Elementary, of course—additional spells for elemental wizards

spell. This is a small safeguard built into the spell that allows, in such cases where the caster is affected, for time to cast a new spell in order to maintain flight, select the best place for a landing, or make other preparations for the fall. Once the *feather fall* wears off, a nonflying creature then plummets to the ground, taking normal falling damage (DMG, page 72).

Airball (Evocation)

Level: 8 Components: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 3
Duration: Instant. Save: None
Area of Effect: 10'-diam. sphere

When this spell is cast, a boulder-sized sphere of air under incredible pressure is created within a 100' radius of the caster. If cast in the air, the ball (which weighs about 5 lbs.) immediately falls toward the ground. If it has fallen 20' or more, the ball breaks into eight separate blasts of wind upon striking the ground, each equal to a *gust of wind* spell in all respects (winds of 30 MPH) and each blowing in one of eight compass directions from the point of impact (N, NE, E, etc.). In addition, the winds stir up all local dust and dirt for 1d4 rounds, limiting all vision to 10' in their areas of effect (if the *airball* lands on water, the spray blast has the same effect).

The ball is a stormy blue in color and cannot be moved, if it fails to burst, once it touches the ground. The ball is stationary and permanent until broken. The sphere is AC 6; any damage will penetrate its sensitive surface and set it off, although touching or pushing on it won't do so.

The material component for this spell is an open area of air from which to draw the compressed air for the sphere. The minimum area of air necessary is one million cubic feet (an area 100' x 100' x 100'). Note that a vacuum is not created by the casting of this spell.

Windwar (Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 9 Components: V,S
Range: 0 CT: 9
Duration: 1 trn. +3 Save: Special
rnds./lvl.

Area of Effect: 1-mile-radius sphere

This spell brings forth a powerful tempest of thunder, lightning, wind, and rain that may damage multiple targets in aerial combat with the caster. The primary effect of the spell is its turbulent winds.

Winds continually buffet and whip all targets in the area of effect, tossing them through the air in various random directions. In order to simulate the swirling of wind in the area of effect, roll 1d8 for the compass direction (1 = N, 2 = NE, 3 = E, etc.) and 1d6 x 10 for the distance in yards that each target is flung through the air. However, the effects of the winds on all aerial targets are variable according to the victims' sizes.

Small targets of 2 HD or less take 2-16 hp damage per round and are hurled twice the usual distance; attacking, defending, and normal movement are impossible. Man-sized targets are buffeted as per normal rules, taking 1-8 hp damage per round, but otherwise move at half-speed and attack at -4 to hit. Larger-than-man-sized creatures have their movement reduced by one-third, but they aren't buffeted about and take no damage; larger beasts are unaffected. Creatures composed of air (air elementals, aerial servants, etc.) are also completely unaffected by the winds created by the spell. The DM may deem that other creatures with considerable power over the air are likewise totally unaffected. Spells that generate gaseous effects, such as *cloudkill*, are immediately disrupted by casting *windwar*.

Lightning also strikes out at selected living targets in the area of effect: 1d4 single *lightning bolts* affect randomly selected targets every 1d6 rounds as per the spell *lightning bolt*. The bolts do 3d6 hp damage to one target each, and a saving throw for half damage is applicable. Targets should be selected randomly by the DM.

In addition, thunderclaps sound every time the *lightning bolts* strike. All targets in the air must save vs. paralyzation or be stunned for one round by the deafening thunder. Those affected are stunned and unable to act for the round. Flying creatures with less than 8 HD also must make a second save vs. paralyzation to remain aloft, otherwise plummeting to earth.

The heavy, swirling rains in the area also reduce visibility to one-half but cause no damage, except to those creatures affected by water. (As a general rule, such creatures take 1d6 hp damage per round in the area of effect.)



The caster must be airborne for the spell to work, and it will cease to function if its area of effect ever contacts the ground. The caster himself is never affected by the spell, save for the reduction in visibility, and any mount he may be riding is likewise unaffected. The spell follows the caster wherever he flies and continues to affect all other targets in the area regardless of his wishes.



Elemental earth spells

Stone sleep (Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 2 Components: V,S,M
Range: 30 yds. CT: 2
Duration: 2d4 +1 Save: Neg.
rnds.

Area of Effect: One creature

When this spell is cast, the mage forces one creature made of earth and stone, as well as any from the elemental plane of Earth, into a state of dormancy. The caster uses a tuning fork to create a deep, resonating tone over which he speaks the verbal components. Once the spell has taken effect, the creature simply stops in its tracks, moving and attacking no further. The creature is still aware of everything around it, but has been momentarily soothed by the tone of the tuning fork. The caster may only move at half normal movement while concentrating and must keep the tuning fork pointed toward the affected creature. Attacks made against the creature break the spell, and it may then resume moving and attacking as normal if this happens.

This spell may affect such creatures as earth elementals, clay and stone golems, galeb duhr, mud men, sandlings, and xorn. The DM may rule that other creatures related to the earth or having power over it (such as basilisks, stone giants, medusae, and rust monsters) are affected as well.

The material components required for the spell are a platinum tuning fork of at least 500 gp value and of the finest craftsmanship, and a smooth stone on which to strike it. The tuning fork may be reused.

Stone drill (Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 5 Components: V,S,M
Range: 30 yds. CT: 4
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: 5'-diam. cylindrical tunnel

The *stone drill* spell is a directed form of the *dig* spell. This spell allows the caster to bore tunnels through both hard and soft rock, although it may not be used to move earth, sand, mud, or softer materials, which will collapse. The spell drills through stone at a rate of only 1' per round and removes about 20 cubic feet of material per round. The removed material is crushed into fine gravel as well. Tunnels may be drilled horizontally or vertically, but a pit, similar to one made by the *dig* spell, still has a 5% chance per 5' section of collapsing in on itself.

The spell does not drill fast enough to allow pits to be dug in front of creatures moving toward the caster. However, creatures within 10' of the drilling area will be pelted by gravel and stones cast out by the magical drill, causing 2d4 hp damage. A save vs. spells for half damage is applicable, however, and creatures of earth and rock are unaffected. As with *dig*, tunneling is possible with *stone drill* as long as there is enough space available for the removed material to pile up (other

spells or hired help are needed to clean up the debris). The chance for a collapse also increases to 10% per 5' section unless the area is supported or braced.

If used in combat, the spell is slightly more effective against creatures of earth and rock than *dig*, causing 5d6 hp damage. A successful save vs. spells also reduces the damage to half. The caster is required to attack with the spell for two consecutive rounds before any damage is done, due to the slow speed of the spells drilling effect.

The material components of this spell are a twisted bar of iron or steel and 500 gp worth of diamond chips. These are expended in the casting.

Elemental fire spells

Searing serpent

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 3 Components: V,S
Range: 30 yds. CT: 2
Duration: 2 rnds. +1
rd./lvl. Save: Special

Area of Effect: Special

Use of this spell conjures a serpent composed of writhing flame from the elemental plane of Fire. The serpent appears anywhere within the spells range and may be moved at a rate of 15 if concentration is maintained and as long as the serpent remains in the spell's range. The serpent may also strike targets using the caster's THAC0, causing 1d8 hp fire damage per successful strike. The serpent also sets fire to flammable items that its body contacts (wooden floor, bed, carpets, etc.), requiring a save vs. normal fire for every round of contact. For every additional round after the first that an item is fully exposed to the serpent's flame, a -1 penalty is applied to the save, to a maximum of -3. Items on a target, such as clothing, are also required to make an item saving throw. This spell may not be cast underwater and is easily extinguished by as little as a quart of water (a successful attack must be made against the serpent, using the mage's armor class, for the water to extinguish the serpent).

Flame chase (Evocation)

Level: 7 Components: V,S,M
Range: 30 yds. +10 CT: 3
yds./lvl.
Duration: 2 rnds. +1 Save: ½
rd./lvl.

Area of Effect: Special

Upon casting this spell, the wizard causes several paths of flame to form on the ground. The flame paths begin to pursue all opponents in the area in order to engulf each of them in a column of flames. The spell creates one 3'-wide path of flame for every two levels of experience attained by the caster, to a maximum of six paths. The paths begin 3' from the caster and travel straight toward any opponents



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on the ground that the mage is aware of and who are in range of the spell. The flame paths travel at a movement rate of 24 and can travel across any horizontal surfaces except water, snow, ice, and other wet surfaces. The fire does not require combustible material such as wood, grass, or weeds; it may travel over bare outdoor or indoor surfaces.

When the path catches its target, the victim will be engulfed in a column of



flames that causes 3d6 hp fire damage immediately and 1d6 hp damage per round for the remaining duration of the spell. The flame path and column continues to follow burning victims until the spell ends, is dispelled, or until victims cross any of the surfaces mentioned above. Items engulfed in the column as well as in the flame's path must also save vs. magical fire each round or be destroyed. Flame paths are able to climb vertical surfaces of less than 45 degrees, as long as the surface is wide enough to accommodate the flame path's width (a rope, for example, is not wide enough.) Flame paths never pursue inanimate objects, but they can pursue nonliving or undead ones.

Victims able to outdistance the pursuing flames or who manage to move across wet surfaces without being affected by a column of flames are in for a big surprise. If a victim is within 10' of the end-point of the path after the flames have moved for the round, and if the flames are unable to close the distance due to the victim's superior speed or an obstruction, the flames that normally form the column will leap to the victim instead. This flame blast causes double-normal flame-column damage (6d6 hp) in a single round. The path is considered to have expended all of its power and ceases to exist. Items and victims alike caught by the flame blast save vs. spells at a -2 penalty.

A player using this spell may roll separate initiatives for each flame path to determine when it will move during the round. The flame blast mentioned above (but not the paths movement) always occurs last in the round after all attacks and movements have been made. As noted above, the flame paths move straight toward victims. Unintended victims caught in flame's way are burned for 1d6 hp damage (save applicable) and only for as long as they remain in the path. Finally, any incidental fires caused by the spell are considered nonmagical for the purpose of saving throws and may not be dispelled. Croplands, dry forest, grasslands, and similar areas may burn uncontrollably.

The material components for this spell are a small pouch filled equally with sulphur and coal dust, a live caterpillar, and a live firefly. Material components are expended.

Elemental water spells

Liquid orb (Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 1 Components: V,S
Range: 0 CT: 2
Duration: 1 trn. +1 Save: None
rd./lvl.

Area of Effect: One pint/level

When the spell is cast, an orb of nonflammable liquid comes into existence in the caster's palm and is held by the mage through a magical increase in the sphere's surface tension. The liquid

maintains its spherical shape until released by the caster or until the end of the spell's duration.

The temperature of the sphere is always that of the surrounding air (temperatures must be above freezing and below boiling) and may not be altered except through normal means. The sphere may be thrown, but its accuracy is very poor (30' range, -2 to hit) and it does no damage to non-fiery creatures. The sphere may be used to put out fires covering up to four square feet per pint. The orb also does 1d4 hp damage per gallon (eight pints) to any fire-based creatures (fire elementals, salamanders, etc.). The caster may not make a called shot (DMG, page 58) with the sphere, and liquids may not be used to blind opponents.

This spell may be used to supply the caster with small amounts of fresh drinking water, ink (nonmagical), clothing dye, fruit juice, cider, soup, or any other known nonflammable liquid that causes no damage to normal creatures (thus excluding acids and poisons); the DM™ and player may be fairly creative here. The spell has an absolute limit of four gallons—a sphere the size of a small beach ball. A *liquid orb* of one gallon or more must be thrown with both hands.

Shark bolt (Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 2 Components: V,S,M
Range: 50 yds. +10 CT: 5
yds./lvl.

Duration: 2 rnds./lvl. Save: ½
Area of Effect: One target/bolt

Use of this spell creates one or more bolts of water, each the size and shape of a small shark (size S). Once the spell is cast, each shark bolt "swims" directly from the caster's hand through the air or water to bite the indicated target. The bolt moves at a rate of 24 and strikes targets as a 6 HD monster, doing 2d4 hp bite damage per bolt. Each bolt continues to pursue its designated target until striking or until traveling beyond the range of the spell. Concentration is unnecessary; the bolts pursue targets as long as the targets were visible to the caster at the spell's casting and do not go *invisible*, *teleport*, or similarly escape by mundane or magical means.

The bolt may be attacked and reduced in strength. The bolt is AC 4; if successfully struck by a physical weapon of any sort, it loses some of its volume, causing it to attack as a smaller shark. The bolt still pursues its target, but it strikes only as a 3-HD shark doing 1d4 hp damage if struck once. Each bolt dissipates if struck a second time. Normal initiative is checked, with a different initiative for each bolt.

The spell creates a number of bolts equal to half the level of the caster (rounded down), to a maximum of 10. The necessary material components for the spell are a pinch of salt, three whole sharks teeth, and a dram of water. The ink of a squid or octopus is also used to



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DRAGON 37

add coloration to each of the bolts. The ink component may be omitted for underwater casting, making each bolt effectively invisible (AC 0).

Steam blast (Evocation)

Level: 3 Components: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 3
Duration: 1 rd./2 lvls. Save: ½
Area of Effect: Special

The *steam blast* spell creates a billowing cloud of scalding water vapor. The blast forms a cone 40' long that is 10' wide at its terminus. The scalding vapors immediately cause 1d6 hp damage per level of the caster (to a maximum of 10d6). Besides this damage, the steam also causes heat and water damage to exposed items, requiring a saving throw vs. normal fire to determine if they are harmed. Items in the possession of those victims making a successful saving throw for half damage are unaffected.

All air-breathing creatures are blinded for as long as they remain in the vapor and for 1d2+1 rounds after leaving its area. Those inside the vapor area must save vs. breath weapon or pass out for 3d4 rounds from choking. Those who pass out continue to take 1 hp drowning damage every round until revived or removed from the area of the vapor.

The vapor surges forward from the open arms of the caster and fills the entire area of effect immediately. The spell causes half damage to elemental creatures composed of water or air such as water elementals, water weards, air elementals, and aerial servants. A successful save from such creatures reduces the damage to only one-quarter. No damage is caused against creatures composed of mists or fog, such as crystal mists, crimson deaths, and vampiric mists. Creatures not otherwise resistant or immune to heat or water take full damage.

Characters protected by spells and magical items that give some resistance to heat (*resist fire*, *ring of fire resistance*, etc.) receive a +2 bonus to any saving throw and reduce damage as detailed in each item or spell description. Spells that give protection from nonmagical weather conditions (such as *endure heat*) impart no added protection from this spell.

This spell functions in underwater conditions, although the steam dissipates immediately after the spell is cast. The material components of this spell are two tea leaves and a pinch of wet, powdered sulfur or a drop of mist dragon spittle.

Deep delve (Alteration)

Level: 8 Components: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 2 rnds.
Duration: 4d6 Save: None
hrs. +1 hr./lvl.

Area of Effect: 15'-radius sphere

Use of this spell causes major changes in the underwater environment around the caster and his companions. Through these changes, traveling and fighting conditions

underwater are improved for all in the area of effect. The spell first creates the same conditions provided by a *water breathing* spell, except that everyone in the spell's area is affected individually for the spell's duration. Additionally, underwater movement, vision, and combat abilities are all better than normal (see below).

The spell further empowers the caster to propel the sphere through the water at a movement rate of 24. Characters may continue to move within the sphere, but may not leave its confines while it is moving or they may risk being left behind to drown (see below). The sphere's movement never causes turbulence of any kind or any significant displacement of water outside the sphere. It otherwise leaves all free-floating creatures and objects undisturbed. The power to move the sphere may never be used to harm other creatures, and its area cannot contact any part of the ocean floor (including coral reefs or ship wrecks), or it will cease to move entirely until the caster levitates the sphere above such surfaces. The full concentration of the caster is required to move the sphere, but it will float if concentration is broken. Concentration for the purpose of movement may be broken and resumed as often as desired during the duration of the spell.

Vision inside the sphere is also improved according to available light and depth. The spell enhances available natural light and doubles normal visual range, as outlined in the rules for underwater vision (*DMG*, page 79). For instance, vision at a depth of 30' in a freshwater lake is normally reduced to only 30'; *deep delve* increases visual range to 60' in this case. Of course, the spell is ineffective at depths dominated by total darkness. The spell does, however, make the lighting of torches, lanterns, candles, and other standard light sources possible underwater. The normal effective range and burning time for fiery light sources are reduced by half. Each torch or lantern lit reduces the duration of available air in the sphere by 5% per light source (round down).

Lastly, the spell reduces the disadvantages of standard underwater combat by one-half (+2 to initiative, -2 attack penalties). Spells are still restricted by the normal rules of underwater combat.

Leaving the spells' area of effect immediately ends all benefits the spell provided.

The material components for this spell are a reed or piece of straw, a conch shell, a sliver of wood from a sunken ship, and two eyes from any sea creature. The components are mixed in the shell, and only it may be reused.

Power word, liquefy

Level: 9 Components: V
Range: 5 yds./2 lvls. CT: 1
Duration: Perm. Save: Neg.
Area of Effect: 10'-radius

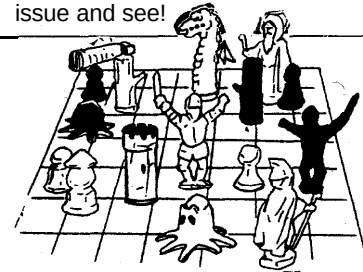
Upon casting this powerful spell, one or more creatures in the affected area are instantly turned to water if they fail saves vs. spells. The spell affects creatures of any type as per *power word, kill*, and it liquefies one creature with up to 60 hp, or two or more with 10 or fewer hp, up to a maximum of 120 hp. The option to liquefy one or more creatures, the spell range, and area of effect must all be stated before casting. The current hit points of all creatures are also used in calculations.

If the spell is cast underwater, the volume of all creatures liquefied causes no displacement and the liquid disperses in following rounds. The estimated volume of all creatures acts as normal fluid, possibly filling dungeon areas, soaking into the ground, running downhill, or filling empty containers nearby (fountains or pools). Creatures affected are forever slain and, unlike the *power word, kill* spell, cannot be restored except by a wish or an act of the gods.

Ω



What are the latest releases in miniature figures and scenery? What rules are best for tabletop war games? Turn to "Through the Looking Glass" in this issue and see!





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The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 34: The postal deluge continues

by Bruce A. Heard

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World collecting questions and queries on the D&D game and delivering them to our offices. Presented here are answers to some of your latest letters. Unless stated otherwise, page and chapter numbers refer to the D&D game's *Rules Cyclopedia*.

The monster description lists 0-level "Normal Humans." Where are the "Normal Demihumans?" Would a normal elf know any spells?

That goes back to the prehistory of the D&D game! The term "normal" was used from the point of view of the human majority, those wimpy, short-lived guys who constitute most of the population on Mystara. "Level-enhanced" adventurers are an exception among humans (or at least they should be). Demihumans are, after all, fantastic creatures. They simply don't qualify as "normal" in that context. So, there are no 0-level demihumans.

Is the *create food* table on page 125 of the *Rules Cyclopedia* wrong?

Yes—it is wrong. It seems the original material from the older Master Set rules was incorrect and the error was reproduced in the *Rules Cyclopedia*. The description for the *create food* spell indicates that a 10th-level cleric creates food for 36 people. For every extra level, add another 12 people (not 36 more). For everyone's convenience, see the revised table here

What is the base damage for Striking? The checklist on page 111 says it is 0 while the mastery chart on page 112 says 1 point.

Base damage for Striking should be 0 points.

For a game that is supposed to be simpler than the AD&D® game, the D&D game sure is getting complicated. The *Gazetteers* and the *Dawn of the Emperors* boxed set have a lot of great optional rules, yet they are divided among 17 different booklets. Are there any plans to take all these tidbits and put them into one sourcebook?

No. These are optional rules that often should be limited to the settings described in their campaign accessories. If we came

up with a rules supplement with all these neat "optional" rules, many of our customers would begin to incorporate them into their games as a matter of principle—without always knowing the circumstances of their creation. We meant these optional rules to remain optional.

Who are the two guys illustrated on page 148?

They are two fellows from the artist's campaign.

The cultures that you have introduced these past few months, detailing the Sind Desert and lands to the west, have opened new opportunities for expansion, both in unexplored regions and new character classes. However, I wish there was just one map of these regions instead of many different maps located throughout the various issues of *DRAGON*® Magazine.

At one point, TSR introduced Trail Maps of the Eastern and Western Countries of the "Known World," and it would be extremely convenient if you were to continue with this idea for the northern lands of Essuria, Denagoth, and Wendar (as introduced in *X11 Saga of the Shadow Lord*) and the Heldann Freeholds. A map of the far west, including Sind, Hule, and the others you've introduced also would be valuable.

However, I believe you wrote at one point that TSR had no future plans to make any more Trail Maps, but was contemplating putting out a boxed edition of the *Princess Ark*. If this should ever see print, will it include a large-scale map of these regions? Or might it simply have reproductions of the smaller maps printed in *DRAGON* Magazine?

We're still hoping to get the Princess Ark boxed set out by the summer of 1993. If our plans hold together, there should be two neat deck plans of the Princess Ark for use with 25 mm figures, and two geographic hex maps. The poster maps should cover Sind and the Serpent Peninsula, at the rate of 24 miles per hex. These are large regions, and two maps are barely enough to cover them.

Clerics and the Create Food Spell Table

Cleric level	Men/spell	Max. men	Cleric level	Men/spell	Max. men
10	36	36	23	192	960
11	48	96	24	204	1020
12	60	120	25	216	1080
13	72	144	26	228	1368
14	84	152	27	240	1440
15	96	288	28	252	1764
16	108	432	29	264	1848
17	120	480	30	276	1932
18	132	528	31	288	2304
19	144	576	32	300	2400
20	156	624	33	312	2496
21	168	840	34	324	2596
22	180	900	35	336	3024
			36	348	3132

The Savage Coast, from Slagovich to the tip of the Orc's Head Peninsula, would have to be covered in another product. There is too much information there to fit in the Princess Ark set. We also would need at least three poster-sized mapsheets to cover that region, including a big chunk of Hule, at the rate of 8 miles per hex.

Also remember that the Princess Ark material was written for the AC 1000 era. New material will have to stretch up to AC 1010 after Wrath of the Immortal's great war. Many things can happen between now and then, none of which was ever detailed in Wrath or in the Poor Wizard's Almanac (which should hit the shelves sometime this month). Rules or background material originally presented in DRAGON Magazine also could benefit from further development or redesign. Conveniently, that extra 10-year span gives us a lot of freedom to "fix problems." All that depends upon your suggestions and criticism about the material that I wrote originally. Don't be shy—if you feel strongly about something, now's the time to let us know! Critical letters don't end up in a dungeon. They do get our attention. Likewise, if you liked something in particular, please tell us so we don't drop it from the boxed set!

I do have a small complaint—the amount of text contained in the supplements seems to be decreasing dramatically. In GAZ14, HWR1, and HWR2, the margins, headers, and footers have been huge, effectively cutting about 15 lines off each page. Also, I find it hard to understand how a tiny 32-page module costs \$5.95 while DRAGON Magazine, which has 120 pages, only costs \$3.50. I realize DRAGON Magazine has a significantly larger circulation, but I would be willing to sacrifice the flimsy cardboard cover and better quality paper of the supplements for more information. I hope the forthcoming D&D™ novel will provide a solution to this problem, as it could present an entire module as an appendix to the overall story.

The decision to reduce the amount of text in our game products originally came from our upper management as a measure to help keep production costs at a reasonable level. Sorry—if you feel this is unacceptable, perhaps the best thing to do is to send a note to our VP of Marketing. Also, please bear in mind that products occasionally undergo unfortunate development problems affecting their final contents.

DRAGON Magazine is a different story. Besides wonderful distribution, it also benefits from lucrative advertising and convenient subscriptions ensuring a full year of sales. There's also one large print run for a magazine with few returns. That makes a big difference! Game products do not benefit from any of this. You also should realize the minimum cost to produce a supplement can be stiff (compare \$5.95 for a 32-page module to \$10.95 for a 96-page accessory, and \$20.00 for 224+

pages in the Wrath of the Immortals boxed set). Fortunately, the larger the game supplement, the better bang for the buck. Sales and cost demographics vary for different product types.

Where do the mystics fit in? I was intrigued to find their inclusion in the *Rules Cyclopedia*. As far as I can tell, there has been no mention of them in any of the Gazetteers. Perhaps you could include some more information about them in a future column or product.

These are rather arcane fellows who never did fit quite right in a medieval setting. This probably explains why most authors "omitted" them in their settings. It would not be too difficult to create a secret order of mystics spreading through the Known World. There could be several spots where they would originate—Ochalea would be my first guess. I remember a certain Tibetan-style setting in Glantri's Colossus Mounts, in the village of Lhamsa. Also, don't forget the infamous mystic turtles in the Free City of Dunwick. See "The Voyage of the Princess Ark" episode #26 in DRAGON issue #179.

What happened to the gnomes? There is a pocketful of them in Karameikos and few more on floating islands. Many have disappeared in the depths of the Soderfjord Jarldoms. They must be somewhere. Do they have a kingdom like the dwarves?

The reason gnomes aren't as important in the D&D game as they are in the AD&D game is that they never were offered as player characters in the standard rules. Otherwise, there is no reason they could not have a kingdom of their own (after all, we've seen kingdoms of lupins, rakastas, araneas, lizard-gator-chameleon-cay-men, and finally phanatons—so far). Rad knows what else will follow! I do remember, however, a certain Kingdom of Dorfin IV Episode #1 of this column, in issue #153, had something to do with this topic. Here's a reminder, straight from Haldemar's mouth:

"About this Dorfin Empire: It was a joke from a certain gnomish king, the inventor of wondrous but totally useless contraptions who went by the name of King Dorfin IV! His kingdom is nothing but the workshop of a few hundred gnomes in the hills of Karameikos. One of his favorite pastimes was to send loyal followers past the Sind Desert. There, they would pose as plenipotentiaries of the imaginary "Empire of Dorfin IV." They would then hire local people to return some sealed message back to the real King Dorfin. These strange messengers, obviously from a distant place, seemed to make quite an impression on local Karameikan Barons when bringing the gnomish king the phony but nevertheless pompous greetings from his "imperial cousin in the west." The messages hinted at the outrageous size of the bogus empire. Imagine something twice the size of Alphatia. What nonsense!

And they believed it, the fools."

I'm sorry, there are no Imperial gnomes yet, but someday somewhere, we'll have a true gnomish kingdom.

Can shadow-elf shamans wear armor, or are they restricted to wearing white robes?

Acolytes can wear only white clothes and nothing else. Beyond that, we could assume armor to be acceptable as long as it does not prevent the shaman from wearing robes over it. That would imply leather, scale, or chain mail armor to be acceptable. Other types of armor are just too bulky to qualify.

The D&D *Rules Cyclopedia* states that continual light spells may be cast at a creature's eyes to blind them. What if the creature has several eyes, some with special abilities like the beholder's?

Ooh—sneaky! In general, a light spell will blind a victim upon failing its saving throw vs. spells. Follow that rule to keep the game fast and simple—in theory.

The trick is to cast the spell at the eyes to be blinded. If the caster cannot see some of the eyes, then those eyes aren't blinded by the spell (roll at random to see how many of the beholder's eyes were turned toward the caster at the time the spell is cast). Fortunately, one saving throw is sufficient for all the eyestalks facing the caster. Blinded eyes talks are inoperative.

Unfortunately, the beholder has that annoying, antimagical central eye. It usually faces the first opponent to begin spellcasting. Tough luck there, since the caster has to see the eye to blind it. This implies he must be standing before the beholder and thus, is within its antimagical ray!

It's possible to blind a number of eyestalks pointed in a different direction than the beholder's antimagical eye. That eye simply cannot be blinded. Frankly, if the best you have to throw at a beholder is a mere light spell, perhaps your wisest course of action would be to run!

What if an invisible creature were to eat or drink? Is the spell broken, does the meal remain visible, or does it turn invisible?

Assume that any ingested or carried matter also becomes invisible. Eating or picking up objects does not break the spell. The moment a held object is let go (tossed, dropped, or laid down) it becomes visible again.

How are dominion holders supposed to stay out of debt? The cost of advisors, officials, tithes, and taxes far outweigh the income of dominions, as presented in Chapter 12.

You're absolutely correct. When dominion rules were originally written some seven years ago, the intent was that rulers—PC rulers, that is—must continue to go adventuring in order to stay solvent. It's not historical, it's not realistic, but it's

meant to keep the campaign going and encourage PCs to seek a high-stakes life of dangers and mysteries. There are some ways to modify the system to match the cost of necessary retainers.

Have a seat, this will take a while.

First, realize this: No peasant could possibly generate income for his ruler in monthly fistfuls of gold (not counting his own food and upkeep). At that rate, he wouldn't remain a peasant for very long! If you wanted to put together a system allowing your dominion to become financially independent, you'd have to examine what is a realistic monetary base for commoners: the population could generate monthly taxes at the rate of a few silver coins per "statistical" inhabitant. Here's a chart that could help you estimate how much taxes inhabitants can generate:

Territory type	Average tax income
Cities	5 sp a month per inhabitant
Large towns	4 sp a month per inhabitant
Towns/Suburban	3 sp a month per inhabitant
Villages/Rural	1 sp a month per inhabitant
Borderlands	5 cp a month per inhabitant
Wilderness	0 cp a month per inhabitant

These are abstract statistics, implying that a typical borderland family of five generates as an average 25 cp in taxes each month. That's okay since, essentially, we're dealing only with demographics.

Based upon that, let's assume it takes about 10 people to support one average, 1st-level light foot soldier. Further, assume that equivalent mercenaries are paid twice that amount. So, should you decide your typical peasant can get you 1 sp a month in taxes, then a native, human light footman would be paid 1 gp a month, and an equivalent mercenary would earn 2 gp per month.

Note that you have to provide native soldiers with all their equipment and train them. Mercenaries are already equipped and most are seasoned warriors. With the above, you should now realize two important facts:

1. Dominions in rich, settled areas are infinitely more attractive than those in inhospitable borderlands or in the wilderness. With the latter don't bother with taxes—go after the local dragon instead. It's quick, lucrative, and more entertaining!

2. As population increases, so does your overhead! Now that you have all those nice people to rule, you need many more retainers to help you run the nation and maintain a lifestyle that is appropriate to your status. Both are expensive. This has the effect of diverting a growing amount of tax income that you used to spend on troops, to be spent instead on a sheriff and

magistrates, a reeve and his provosts, wardens and spies, and a stronghold that befits your rank. This is realistic and historical. As the land grows more civilized, law and order become easier to enforce, so there will be a lesser need for military force.

Obviously, the salaries of other specialists would have to remain in line with that monetary system. A 500-gp-per-month animal trainer is impractical. In a minor dominion, he'd earn no more than 5 gp a month. All these figures should be adapted to local realities. Remember these numbers were used in the rules to handle PC rulers coming back from their epic adventures with gold and jewels by the cartful.

Here's a sample chart of "lesser salaries" (see the original chart in the Rules Cyclopedia, page 133). It assumes your native footman is paid 1 gp a month:

"Cheapened" retainer costs

Alchemist	50 gp per month (+ cost of potion work)
Armorer*	5 gp +1 gp per skill level above 9
Engineer**	25 gp +5 gp per skill level above 9
Mage & magist	(INT x 5) per level
Sage & seneschal	(INT + WIS + CHA) x 10 gp
Seaman:	
Rower	1 sp (or nil if convict)
Sailor	1 gp (if native; 2 gp if mercenary)
Navigator	25 gp + 5 gp per skill level above 9
Captain	(INT + WIS + CHA) x 10 gp
SPY	INT per level & per mission

* Includes animal trainer, artillery, bailiff, chamberlain, equerry, herald, lesser magistrate, marshal, provost, sheriff, and warden.

** Includes castellan, chaplain, guard captain, magistrate, reeve, and chief steward.

The salaries listed above are for Level-0 stronghold retainers. The military are a different story (refer to the Mercenary Table on page 133). Mercenaries are 1st-level troops. At 2nd level and higher, a mercenary's pay becomes: Base Pay x level x 5. For example, a 2nd-level elven mercenary archer would cost 10 x 2 x 5 = 100 gp (half that for a non-mercenary native). Level-0 military should get one-quarter the mercenary rates, and peasant levies no more than 2-3 sp a month (cheap maybe, but, look at the bright side—troops do not pay taxes!) Should stronghold retainers also have a character class with specific levels, use instead the following rates, whichever is more expensive:

Humanoid*:	INT per level (or HD)
Thief	(INT x 2) per level
Fighter**	(INT x 3) per level
Cleric	(INT x 4) per level

Wizard	(INT x 5) per level
Elf***	(INT x 6) per level

* Includes goblin types and lizardkin.

** Includes dwarves, halflings, lupins, rakastas, turtles.

*** Includes araneas.

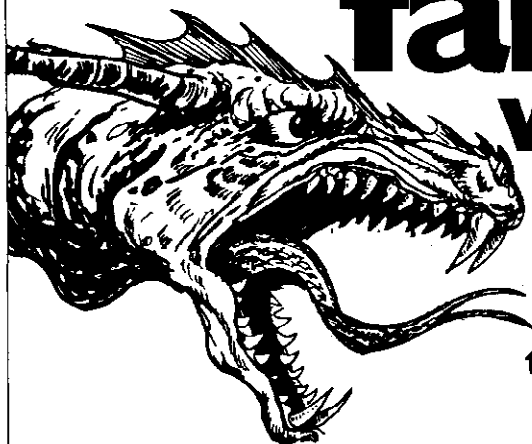
The salaries listed for stronghold retainers are those of a petty baron. To be thorough, remember that civilian salaries and the pay of high-ranking army officers might have to go up as the dominion ruler gains in rank, land, and wealth. Use the following formula: Viscount +10%, Count +20%, Marquis +40%, Duke +60%, Archduke x 2, minor King (or up to 500,000 subjects) x 4, greater King (or up to 3 million subjects) x 6, Emperor (or over 3 million subjects) x 10, etc.

Now the trick is to have enough population per hex in order to pay those hateful taxes. So your next job is to find out a realistic level of population based upon the terrain, vegetation, climate, and whether the land is suburban (near a town), rural, borderland, or wilderness. Check your local atlas for comparable population densities per square mile. For simplicity's sake, assume medieval population to be a tenth of modern-day populations (and I am being optimistic there!) Knowing that your standard 8-mile hex covers approximately 56 sq. miles, and a basic family includes about five people, you can now figure how many families there are to a hex.

Another important factor should be kept in mind when planning for urban development: Always try to keep a balance between urban and rural population. You need a minimum 80% rural population to support urban centers and other populations that do not produce food (like armies). Should you end up with more than 20% nonrural population, food prices will catapult sky-high, people will starve in your towns, riots and revolts might occur, and finally those people who are still around will eventually leave for better lands. So, if urban populations mushroom in your kingdom, you may need more fertile land very soon. That's probably a good sign that the time for conquests has come!

Finally, find out what other resources not linked to peasants and feudal service might produce cash (like bridge and gate tolls, merchant taxes on imports, port duties, salt taxes, taxes on money-lenders, fines charged by dutiful magistrates, returns on mineral and precious stone mines, war booty, taxes on adventurers' booty, etc.). To keep that simple, assume this adds another 30% to your total dominion income.

This is, of course, not a comprehensive system, but it should put you on the track to establishing mechanics that you find more suitable to your style of gaming. Ω



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I currently participate in a large AD&D® game group. Lately, a new topic of discussion has arisen among the players. There are those players who believe that a good role-player is one who gives no regard to the rules, only the role-playing aspects of the game. These players believe that their characters have no knowledge of anything that pertains to the rules; in other words, just because a creature is large, their characters would not pull out their long swords, but rather they would continue to fight with daggers.

On the other side at the battle map are the players who believe that the rules should be evenly interspersed with the role-playing. These people feel that the rules are the "facts of life" to their characters. These laws govern the way things are in the campaign; therefore, the players try to create role-playing explanations for the rules.

I would like some input on what the rest of the readers think. Are you a conservative (rules-oriented) or a liberal (role-playing oriented) gamer?

Dorian Loeffler
Longwood FL

After several years of GMing, I have come to the conclusion that the most difficult part of the GM's job comes before the players even start the game, and that is party background.

For example, in Iron Crown Enterprises's MERP* system are so many races that it is almost impossible to have a group of players choose races that will make up a logical party. How, for example, is the GM supposed to explain how a Sindar elf, a dwarf, a Dunedain, a half-orc, and a corsair managed to start adventuring together?

Limiting the races available to players is unfair and leads to poor campaigns, with some players annoyed with player characters incompatible to their personalities and their interests. Have you ever tried making an elf fanatic play a dwarf?

In all the GM guides I have read (admittedly not more than about five), I have not seen a single solution to this problem. If anyone has a good idea, I would be very glad to hear it, as poor party background planning can get a campaign off to a very bad start.

Laurence Davison
Twickenham, Middlesex, U.K.

After reading Jim Shamlin's article, "Keeping the Party Going," in DRAGON issue #177, I feel compelled to respond. Although the way the article dealt with giving PC parties a reason to adventure together was very interesting, it was ultimately misguided. The various rationales he gives are perhaps plausible in theory. However, in practice they would become too much of a straightjacket, interfering with a party's freedom of choice and channeling its activities into a predetermined path.

Part of the problem seems to be a lack of understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Any group that works together closely for a significant length of time will form certain bonds. This may be as simple as familiarity, becoming "used" to each other, so that when one of the group is absent he is missed—not because the person is well-liked, but because the group is accustomed to his presence. Regardless of what draws a party together in the first place, and how the PCs might initially feel about each other, continued close contact often allows them to get along better than might be expected, if only because they develop a tolerance for each other.

A good analogy for an adventuring party can be found in the world of professional sports. Consider the typical sports team (the sport doesn't matter), which consists of people from a wide variety of backgrounds, often with little in common other than their sport. Yet they can and do learn to work as a team, for each knows that the team's success is his success. The players may not like all their teammates, and they might not socialize together away from their sport, but once the game begins they all work for the same goal. A successful adventuring party emulates this kind of behavior.

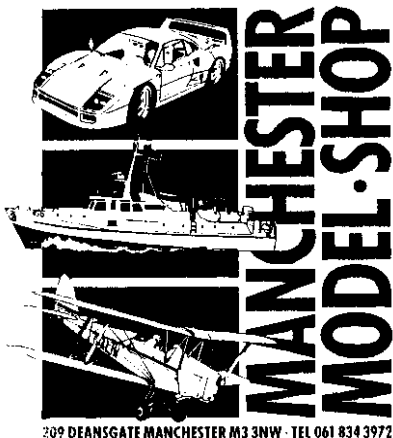
The key to binding a party together in a game is role-playing. I am not referring to what all too often passes for role-playing, which is the blind adoption of stereotypes as illustrated by the introduction to Mr. Shamlin's article. Each character there is portrayed as bland and locked into an archetypal pattern of thought. Granted, this is done for illustrative purposes, but the application of even a modicum of thought can unearth reasons for each of the hypothetical party to save the village from the bugbears. The most important reason can be found in the article's first line, in which the party is described as "adventure-seeking." As adventurers, their first thought should be for the danger and excitement of facing the unknown. They are not primarily in it for the money; if so, Hewitt the thief should indeed stay in town and rob the bank, not risk his life fighting monsters in the wild. They also are not in it primarily to further the cause of any deity, for if that were the case, the priest Merlor should be creating converts to the worship of Athena. Halfjammir should be seeking enemies of Thor to smite, and so on. Remember, they are *adventurers*. If they can amass huge profits and

promote the worship of their gods in the process, so much the better.

Given that, individual motivations for the characters are not hard to find. Seagin and Halfjammir might want to demonstrate by their bravery the "superiority" of their beliefs, while Hewitt might find it prudent to get out of town for a while before pulling that bank job (especially if he's been so successful at his profession that everyone is taking exceptional precautions). The wizard Demlar might want to try out some new spells or experiment with new uses for old spells; besides, even if they don't keep spell books, the bugbears might have collected a scroll or two. Thrack probably just wants to kill something. By going beyond the stereotypes, you not only create well-rounded and believable characters and open a world of new options for both the PCs and the DM™, you also can create parties for the long term.

An example from my own campaign might be helpful here. Back in my campaign's early days, 10-11 years ago, the party included an elf and several dwarves. Now, just because elves dislike dwarves as a race does not mean that all elves hate all dwarves. Each character is an individual and must be played as such. So it came about that Rain Mist (a lawful-neutral elfen fighter/mage/thief), although he never got along with two of the dwarven party members, grew to be great friends with Grumman (a chaotic-neutral dwarven fighter). It all happened during the game, not because the players were great friends (they weren't) but because of the actions of the characters as they were role-played. So strong was the bond of friendship between these two very disparate characters that Rain Mist risked the wrath of his father (a powerful elfen noble) by having Grumman as the "best man" at his wedding. Many of the elves were shocked and scandalized that a dwarf would be given such an honor. For Rain Mist, however, it was worth the ridicule to have his friend beside him at such an important moment in his life. Because of this, elves and dwarves in my world were a little friendlier than usual for some time.

The point of this letter is not to denigrate Jim Shamlin or his article, which was thought-provoking and well-written. What I am trying to say is that he took the wrong approach to explaining a part of a game system that has left some people puzzled. (I have seen more than one article—in other magazines, of course—heaping scorn upon the games because the writers find the typical party hard to swallow; as I hope I have demonstrated above, this is spurious criticism.) Rather than trying to force a party into one of the niches he has described, which limits the players' options and is too restrictive for the long term, it is better to let the actions of the PCs' form the rationale for party unity. If the players are role-playing well, portraying their characters as individuals and not stereotypes, the reasons for them to stick together will develop in the course of play. The



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PCs may not hang out together between adventures, and they may not even like each other all that much, but when the unknown beckons and adventure is in the offing, they will seek each other out and go forth together.

Michael A. Lavoie
Nashua NH

I am writing in response to recent letters concerning crossbow damage. Like Mr. Vernon in DRAGON issue #179, I too would like to see an upgrade in the damage caused by missile weapons. Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey's book, *The Crossbow*, states the pull of a heavy crossbow is said to have been 1,200 lbs., compared to the 50-100 lbs. pull of a longbow. It seems to me that the crossbow must have been a weapon of awesome power. Excavated burial pits of soldiers killed in the Battle of Wisby in 1361 show some skulls that crossbow bolts had entered, passed right through, and come out the other side. Under the present AD&D system, a zero-level soldier with an average of 6 hp can't be killed by a heavy quarrel (maximum damage 5 hp).

I have adopted the Revised Missile Table as suggested by Mr. Vernon in issue #179 in my own campaign, and I find it to be much more realistic and playable.

Russell Dewhurst
Blackburn, Lancaster, U.K.

Recently, TSR, Inc., published its sixth "complete" players reference supplement. It was the *Complete Book of Dwarves*. I awaited its publishing with anxious excitement, for I knew the decisions made in this supplement could change my attitude on the whole game. Instead, I found a topic that I feel is worth bringing to the attention of this magazine's readers.

Let me begin by explaining what it is that I'm talking about: multiclassed kits. What I enjoy more than anything about the AD&D 2nd Edition game is the sense of equality between classes. As a DM, I know that my players look for one thing in their characters: power. (Sure, they've got great character conceptions: "My character was born to become evil" or "He was meant to rule this side of the world.") So, I was greatly relieved to see that there was a degree of equality between the character classes in the AD&D 2nd Edition game. Now, my players can play the classes that appeal to them when we start a campaign, instead of the toughest classes available. Don't get me wrong—my players are excellent in combat and even role-playing (if they have to). It's that they know the rules well enough that they often will play the toughest character possible. In the original AD&D game, barbarians, bow specialization, and paladin-cavaliers were played on a regular basis. Who's going to play the cleric? Then came the revision, bringing with it a measure of equality—except in this case.

In my party now are two dwarves: a cleric of Moradin, and a fighter/cleric of Clangedin. Both are extraordinarily powerful for a normal game, but that's usual in my campaigns. Everything was as going pretty well when the player of the cleric suddenly exclaims how completely unfair the campaign was to him. I asked why, and he pointed out to me how the fighter/cleric had everything he had plus a ton more because of the latter's ability as a fighter. He was right! I was dismayed. I didn't know what to do until I realized that the cleric was eligible for a kit. Ah-ha! (The issue of the low power of the priest kits I will leave for another day.) Now the cleric could gain a few extra nonweapon proficiencies, maybe an extra ability or two, and even a couple of hindrances for me to play with as the

DM. This option was something unavailable to the fighter/cleric, so it would help balance things out. Again, the AD&D 2nd Edition game struck in the name of fairness and equality! Knowing that the book on dwarves was coming out soon, we waited—much to my unforeseen dismay.

When we got the book, we found out that not only did our fighter/cleric get a kit as well, but the obvious choice of the Champion kit would allow him to gain a specialization. Ouch! The cleric's player wasn't happy. This made me take a good look at single- vs. multiclassed options. The results took me by surprise: It is nearly pointless to play a single-classed character. The only thing lost is one level and level limits. How, might you ask? Take my own campaign's dwarven cleric and dwarven fighter/cleric. Assuming they are both single-classed clerics out of the *Player's Handbook*, each of them receives the same thing: turning, spells, THAC0, followers, etc. Add to the fighter/cleric all the abilities of a fighter, improved THAC0, followers, weapon proficiencies, and weapon-style choice from the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*. What about all the racial restrictions on multiclassed characters? They apply to the dwarven priest as well. The bonuses and disadvantages of choosing a particular race balance each other out very well. In most cases, this includes level limits as well, so not only is the single-classed cleric left behind in almost every aspect, but he's supposed to be limited like the fighter/cleric, too. Some DMs don't play this rule, however, so it could help the balance somewhat.

How do you solve this problem? A kit can solve the problem. Not one from the *Complete Book of Priests*, though—use a tough one, like one from the *Complete Fighter's* or *Thief's Handbook*. This system would work out wonderfully.

What about the specialty priests from FORGOTTEN REALMS® *Adventures* book? For every special power that a priest has, there is an equal weakness in almost every case. Some priests are weaker than the cleric out of the *Player's Handbook*. In the *Complete Priest's Handbook*, it states on page 94, "On the chart of the *Player's Handbook*, page 44, showing the possible multiclass combinations, substitute the word 'priest' wherever you see 'cleric.'" Therefore, any priest you can play, I can play better! On top of all this, now they want to give the fighter/cleric a kit and specialization!

What about other classes? The problem with the thief/fighter and single-classed thief is identical. All these abilities are gained by the fighter/thief; higher hit points, better THAC0 (very important to a thief), armor, weapon proficiencies, weapon choice, etc. The thief single-class is made totally pointless.

Then there's the fighter/mage, where the same thing happens. What about specialty wizards? Sure, they get some cool bonuses, but they lose spheres because of it, another even trade that could make the multiclassed mage more powerful in the long run!

What about all these classes in comparison with the fighter class? Here, I found another inconsistency. The fighter is allowed specialization, a bonus of great power given with absolutely no drawbacks but the price of one weapon proficiency. It can still be said that the powers given to a multiclassed character by his other class far outweigh the benefits of specialization. Even the single-classed fighters need a kit to put them on par with the powerful multiclassed characters.

Continued on page 57

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THE LONELY

Mintiper Moonsilver

Male half-elf

12th-level bard

ARMOR CLASS: -1 (*dexterity bonus and bracers of defense AC 3; armor rarely worn, but leather armor*)

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 69

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

ATTACK BONUSES: +1 for strength bonus; +3 with hurled missiles (*strength and dexterity bonuses*)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type (+1 for strength bonus)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Special saving throw (see text), hear noise 70%; climb walls 84%; pick pockets 70%; read languages 51%; standard bardic abilities, 60' infravision, chances of locating secret & concealed doors*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 30% resistant to sleep and charm, see possessions for immunities

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic neutral (*good tendencies*)

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Spells: 3-1st (*usually read magic, sleep, affect normal fires*), 3-2nd (*summon swarm, fog cloud, Melf's acid arrow*), 3-3rd (*dispel magic, fly, wind wall*), 2-4th (*charm monster, ice storm*)

PROFICIENCIES: Weapon: *long sword, dart, dagger, sling, bastard sword*; nonweapon: *direction sense, endurance, foraging, musical instrument (lute, harp, recorder), swimming, weather sense*

LANGUAGES KNOWN: *Common, elven, halfling, Runetongue (see text)*

S: 17	D: 18	C: 18
I: 15	W: 17	CH: 15

AGE: 47	SIZE: M
HT: 6'2"	WT: 182 lbs.
HAIR: Black	EYES: Blue

POSSESSIONS: *silver bastard sword +2, two long swords, leather armor; decanter of endless water, a throwing knife in either boot; nonmagical harp, lute, and recorder; 1-6 potions of healing, cloak of elvenkind, greenstone amulet (immune to chaos, forget, geas, hold, charm; detailed in FR4 The Magister)*

TREASURE: *1-10 cp, 1-20 sp, 1-10 ep, 5-50 gp, 1-6 pp + 10% possibility of gems; DM™ should determine types and sizes (is also said to have hidden The Gray Book of Mysteries, a spell book of some power)*



HARPIST AND THE LADY ROGUE

Many are the heroes and heroines who've wandered the lands of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting in search of adventure or glory. If your campaign's player characters roam the Sword Coast North, they may encounter the roguish duo detailed here. Your heroes should tread carefully, as these two can be as dangerous as they can be helpful.

**A duo that wanders the wilds of the
FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting**

by Ed Greenwood

Artwork by Kevin Ward



Mintiper Moonsilver is a famous traveler in the FORGOTTEN REALMS lands of the Sword Coast North. He is the only man to have stormed the ghoul-hold of Hellgate Keep and lived to tell the tale. His band, the Moonlight Men, once plundered the treasure vaults of Luskan, and their defense of Turnstone Pass against an orcish horde has become part of the legends of the North.

Little is known of Mintiper's heritage or early life. Mirt "the Moneylender" of Waterdeep believes that Mintiper's father was a Waterdhavian, and that his mother was a moon elf of Ardeepforest, but readily admits that this is unconfirmed and could well be wrong. It is known that Mintiper was on his own at an early age, making a living in the North by his wits and the skill of his sword and his songs.

Successful in treasure-hunting among the ruins of the North and astute in taking companions, Mintiper assembled one of the finest adventuring bands seen in the North since the days when Mirt of Waterdeep was "the Merciless." Mintiper's Moonlight Men roamed the North for eight splendid seasons before heroically defending Silverymoon and Everlund at Runestone Pass. Only six of Mintiper's band survived that bloody victory, but in Everlund they say that the patrols counted well over four hundred orc heads when they were building pyres to burn the fallen.

Mintiper plunged south into the High Forest and traversed its length (one of the few living men to do so). It is not known whether his fellow survivors perished during the journey or turned aside to leave the wood, but it is certain that Mintiper was alone when he met with and joined the Wood-Riders of Turlang. The Wood-Riders were a band of human adventurers who took only the name of the age-old treant leader and his woods, raiding merchant-caravans and other brigands in the rolling grasslands near Seomber, and using the fringes of the Forest to hide from pursuers.

On one occasion, the Wood-Riders encountered a small adventuring band. Its leader, a woman of unusual height and strange magic, tried to fight them all even after wounded by three sword blows. Her bravery and beauty caught Mintiper's eye, and he rescued her, deserting the Wood-Riders to do so.

So it was that Mintiper met the dying spellsinger, Alyniria. From her he learned the ancient Runetongue. From Alyniria he gained the mark by which he can now be identified: the silver mark of her lips, burned indelibly into his left shoulder, when she died in his arms. In doing this, she spent her fading life-force in a special bless magic, laid upon Mintiper. This special dweomer is permanent (perhaps even beyond Mintiper's death): Once every 99 turns, if Mintiper fails a saving throw, a second saving throw is instantly allowed. This "spellsinger's luck" has been be-

stowed on others, but very rarely; its creation may require the death of the spellsinger. Mintiper is not aware that he bears this magic, and he cannot confer it (even temporarily) upon another.

After he had laid Alyniria to rest in a secret place, Mintiper came to the cities of the Sword Coast. An embittered and despairing man, he took to thievery. His exploits soon won him fame; his fearless recklessness carried him on to feats others dared not try. While plundering the tower of Iniavr the Manyhanded, he was confronted by the great mage—and slew him. The cities of Amn and Tethyr came to know Mintiper well, and he rose rapidly in wealth and reputation. Briefly becoming the companion of the evil sorcerer Morlaug, he was forced to flee from increasing pressure (both fell magic and hired killers) sent by some of his victims, the wealthy satraps of Calimshan. Seizing a Calishite merchant ship in Port Kir, Mintiper sailed to the pirate isle of Skaug. There he took ship with the "Coast Wolf," Kesmer Red-Eyed. A storm soon wrecked Kesmer's ship, which broke up on the rocks. One pirate survived the wreck, thrown far from the rigging and clear of the rocks. He swears that a great flame rose on the deck about Mintiper, flaring up and consuming Kesmer and his crew—and when it died away, Mintiper was gone.

Questioned about this, Mintiper once said that he had escaped the wreck by means of a green gem given to him "long ago" by his mother, Maralen. It teleported him to the headlands of the Purple Hills, consuming itself and the pirates in doing so. The origin of the gem, if it did indeed exist, is unknown.

Mintiper moved south to Myratma, where he made a living for a time as a guide taking adventurers through the ruins and subterranean cities of the long-vanished Mourativi Teshu Mir, the "first kingdom." Growing weary of the trade, he later wandered north and east towards the High Forest. Joining a mercenary band along the way, Mintiper was swept into skirmishes between Amn-sponsored mercenaries and "dervish" tribes raiding caravan trade that passed near Anauroch. Along the edge of the Great Desert, the Company of the Striking Hawk (Mintiper's new-found comrades) and the Company of the Blue Broadaxe battled the nomads, until they found the camp of the desert chieftain Khytor Moramu near the Battle of Bones, fell upon it, and were attacked from all sides by desperate tribesmen. The battle was long and fast-moving, on horse and pony-back among the hills; it was almost a season before three wounded veterans brought word back to Amn that Moramu had been slain and his riders destroyed, but only they had survived to bring back the tale.

Mintiper and his sword-partner in the Company, Tassoram, escaped northward from the battle, both wounded, but with the only loot brought back by any man

from the Khytor's camp—three of his daughters, taken by Tassoram as hostages. Their journey through the wastes and ruins of the Fallen Lands along the Desert's Edge was long and hard; two of the girls and Tassoram died, one by one. One day Mintiper found himself staggering through the Far Forests trailing blood, having just wrestled with and slain an owlbear with his dagger, the last of the Khytor's daughters on his back.

They both survived somehow, and lived together for a time under the care and teachings of the druids of the Tall Trees. Mintiper sang to Noura, the last of the Khytor's daughters, the ballads the druids taught him, and made up songs describing his own adventures.

After "a handful of years" (in the North, this term means five seasons), Noura went insane, and no one Mintiper could find knew why or how to stop it. After her slow, quivering death, a heartbroken Mintiper took his lute and harp and went wandering again. Having lost all fear of death, Mintiper was often seen strolling casually through the depths of dungeons, or sitting and harping while blithely ignoring nearby ghosts or banshees.

It was Mintiper who destroyed the Ghost of Berun's Hill and gave a Calishite merchant six rubies the size of grapes in exchange for a slave girl. The slave girl, Asilther, is a sometime companion of his; he bought her, nursed her back to health, and freed her, but they became lovers and friends, and often travel together.

Mintiper has blue eyes that grow very dark when he is angry, or shine luminously when he is excited or delighted. An old burn scar runs diagonally across the back of his right hand. In the Sword Coast North, Mintiper is known as a seasoned adventurer who's "been around" — survived a surprisingly long time walking in danger, finding his way almost everywhere, and surviving tragedy after tragedy. He's known as "The Lonely Harpist," and accorded respect. Few elves, humans, or half-elves in the North would knowingly attack him; most fear that he has some sort of unrevealed magic that has saved him so far, and may use to strike down those who attack him.

Asilther Graelor **Female half -elf** **6th-level thief**

ARMOR CLASS: -2 (*dexterity bonus and bracers of defense AC 2; no armor rarely worn, but owns leather armor*)

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 36

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

ATTACK BONUSES: +2 *with hurled missiles (dexterity bonus)*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*

SPECIAL ABILITIES: 60' *infravision, chances of locating secret & concealed doors, pick pockets 66%; open locks 51%; find/remove traps 39%; move*

*silently 56%; hide in shadows 51%;
hear noise 41%; climb walls 95%; read
languages 26%*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 30% resistant to
sleep and charm, but see possessions
for immunities

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic neutral (good ten-
dencies)

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

PROFICIENCIES: weapon: long sword,
dart, dagger;

nonweapon: Blind-fighting, disguise, swim-
ming

LANGUAGES KNOWN: Common, elven,
dwarven, gnomish, halfling, goblin,
orcish

S: 14 D: 18 C: 17
I: 16 W: 16 CH: 17

AGE: 22 SIZE: M
HT: 5'6" WT: 100 lbs.
HAIR: Silver-blond EYES: Green

POSSESSIONS: *One pouch* dust of disap-
pearance, *two potions* of invisibility, *1-4*
potions of healing, *one* potion of flying,
greenstone amulet (confers Mind Blank
protection plus immunity to geas, hold,
charm, etc., *detailed in FB4 The Magis-*
ter), gauntlets of ogre power, carpet of
flying.

TREASURE: 1-6 cp, 1-20 sp, 1-10 ep, 10-100
gp, 1-20 pp, 1-20 gems (DM's choice of
types and sizes), black pearl necklace
(19 100-gp pearls)

Asilther was purchased from Calishite
slavery by Mintiper Moonsilver, tended
until she was healthy (she had been under-
fed and beaten), and then freed. Born in
the forests of Tethyr, she does not remem-
ber her kin and has no friends in the
world except Mintiper, with whom she
often travels. She delights in stealing from
Calishites and slavers of other nationali-
ties, and prefers woodlands to cities. Soft-
spoken and beautiful, Asilther is often
courted by men she meets, but she prefers
Mintiper's company, and has surprised
several overly amorous mercenaries with
her agility and fighting prowess. She will
usually be encountered walking in the
wilderness areas with Mintiper, whom she
will aid and fiercely defend (as she sees it,
she owes her life to him). If they are sore-
pressed, she will attempt to escape on her
carpet of flying with Mintiper. (She will
flee alone only if she believes she can
rescue Mintiper later; if necessary, will lay
down her life for him.)

Asilther customarily dresses in tight-
fitting black leather breeches and high
boots (each with a sheathed dagger hidden
inside it), a black half-cloak, and a black
half-mask. (She often wears black gowns—
set off with silver jewelry—to formal occa-
sions when visiting cities such as
Silvermoon, Everlund, Neverwinter, and
Waterdeep.) Her belt is a silken cord that
she can use as a garotte, and her lockpicks
and other thief tools are concealed in her

hair, boots, belt, and so on. On the trail,
her pack usually contains a crowbar, peas-
ant garb, 200' of black silken cord, and
first-aid supplies. Her belt weapons are a
long sword and four darts.

Asilther is said to have contacts with the
Lords of Waterdeep and to work with the
Harpers (or at least Alustriel, the High
Lady of Silvermoon). She rarely retains
what she steals, either giving it away or
using it for some cause (in truth, she
caches small amounts here and there—
temple rooftops in Waterdeep and Silvery-
moon, for instance, or beneath certain
trees in the forests of the North—for
emergency use, and gives the rest to the
Harpers).

Asilther is also known to undertake
quiet missions for the Harpers, such as
guiding or protecting certain persons,
shadowing or kidnapping others, and
slaying slaves or agents of Luskan or the
Zhentarim. She delights in setting slaves
free by raiding slave-caravans, and is
known to have a taste for good wine and
gaudy apparel, often making off with
Calishite slave-silks for later wear at par-
ties in Waterdeep.

Asilther is famous for her theft of almost
the entire hoard of the black dragon
Shammagar, who used to lair in the moun-
tains north of Waterdeep—and has since
moved every last coin of its treasure to

one of the islands offshore, somewhere off
the Sword Coast (exactly which one, sur-
viving inquirers have not seen fit to re-
veal). Shammagar has vowed revenge on
Asilther, but since one of the Lords of
Waterdeep (Mirt "the Moneylender")
learned Shammagar's truename from the
pre-eminent sage Elminster and gave it to
Asilther, she has been able to defy the
great dragon at their one direct confronta-
tion since her theft. It is said in the taverns
of the North that she made peace with the
dragon by promising to restore its hoard,
twofold, bit by bit, over the years.

This is the reason some say, why
Asilther recently seized a Luskan ship,
running home heavily-laden with treasure
looted from Ruathym, forcing its crew into
row-boats or early graves. She piloted the
ship alone, or so the tale goes, to the drag-
on's isle, and ran it onto a beach there,
alerting the dragon by singing to it after
dark on the night of her landfall and then
escaping on her *carpet of flying*.

Asilther and Mintiper have been known
to turn up unexpectedly to aid each other
if either is alone and in peril. They may
possess some magical or other (telepathic?)
means of communication, able to pass on
urgent need and present location. Certain-
ly, those who work against one of this pair
of companions can soon expect to face the
other. Ω

GREG STAFFORD

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St. George's Day had come round again, and the village of Hurdelburg put on its bravest colors. The people dressed in their Sunday best. A few actually bathed for the occasion, though the elders clucked and shook their heads. The villagers and their visitors (many arrived each spring, to make a pilgrimage or place a wager) lined the crooked streets, craning their necks impatiently, as vendors of wine and sweetmeats went to and fro.

At last the procession of knights came into view. Their armor shone like the sun, and scrubbed faces beamed from beneath lifted visors as they waved to the villagers. King's sons, every one of them, and none a day over twenty.

The crowd cheered as the knights rode past. A beautiful maiden offered a bouquet to the last in line, a seventh son of a seventh son. He lifted the flowers on the tip of his lance, ostentatiously inhaling their fragrance, and called back to her, "I'll see you tonight!"

The onlookers raised a last, ragged cheer as the procession vanished in a cloud of dust. Then they dispersed to their homes, leaving only the maiden, Amalinda, gazing longingly after the knights.

Later that afternoon, the dragon's hissing roar filled the whole valley. Soon after, it stilled. People exchanged hopeful glances. They gathered again in the main square. But soon, one of the knight's horses returned, riderless, smelling of singed hair. Then another.

Thirteen knights had set out. Thirteen horses came back.

Night fell. The villagers gathered at Hurdelburg's best tavern, the Tin Ear. They discussed the latest failure with a resigned air. The innkeeper, Johann, a fat man with a handlebar moustache, showed better cheer than his customers. He had insisted that the knights pay in advance.

In her cave in the foothills, several miles off, the dragon too felt melancholy. She arranged the empty suits of armor against a wall and studied them with lamplike eyes. No new ones in this batch. She buried them in the main cavern with the bones, kicking dirt over with her hind legs like a large dog. Then she withdrew to the smaller, inner cave that housed her collection.

She never tired of looking at the armor she'd saved from years past. Strange, she thought, that these creatures had both an internal skeleton and an exoskeleton. She knew of no others that did. And such variety in their outer shells! They didn't seem to evolve from year to year, exactly, but they did change. Some were smooth and silvery, others bumpy or covered with spikes. A few of the older ones were splotched with rust.

The creatures' behavior, too, filled her with wonder. Why, every spring, did a batch of them show up at her cave, just when she was beginning to feel hungry? She knew of lemmings, and suspected that humans suffered from a similar compulsion to periodically hurl themselves to certain doom. Overpopulation, perhaps. Dragons, she thought, handled the matter much more sensibly. Only one egg in a hundred hatched; and the adults spread

Dragon Scales

by Eric Tanafon

Illustrations by Bob Lessl

themselves far and wide—one to a mountain, at most.

A belch rose to her throat, interrupting her reverie. She had made a heavy meal that day. She crawled hastily to the entrance of the cavern and opened her mouth, igniting the sky.

"We've got to do something about this!" Rudolf Tonner, Hurdelburg's mayor, banged his stein down like a gavel.

Four men, the pillars of village society, were gathered around the hearth at the Tin Ear, a fire more cheerful than the dragon's to warm them. Spieler, chief of the constabulary, scowled. "It's a breakdown of law and order!"

"Hurdelburg's become a laughingstock," agreed Vergil Kampf, schoolmaster of the village's only school, which at present boasted seven pupils.

"Worst of all, gentlemen," pronounced the merchant Gelftager, "it's bad for business!" He emptied his tankard, wiped foam from his lips, and signalled for another.

"It's gotten so I can't go to guild meetings any more," he continued. "You should hear them. 'Hurdelburg—oh, yes. Very quaint. Charming medieval atmosphere. But really, a *dragon*? That's carrying period restoration a shade too far. No, no, I will put my money in Welstade, where they have just built a new clock tower.'"

"And we may be losing one of the only things that *does* attract business," observed Kampf. "To wit, our St. George's Day celebration."

"I knew we'd run out of kings' sons at some point," Mayor Tonner remarked gloomily.

"The knights are beginning to balk. No one ever coming back, and that sort of thing." The schoolmaster blinked apologetically behind his thick spectacles.

"They're saying that true knighthood may have more to do with clean living than flashy deeds of derring-do. Community service, carrying food baskets to elderly widows. They also point out that the dragon hasn't eaten any maidens yet—at least, as far as we can tell."

"Wasn't the disappearance of Kristina, the baker's daughter, linked to the dragon?" Spieler asked, frowning his brow.

"Dragon! More likely a dragoon," Tonner snorted.

"So the knights are off the hook," Kampf concluded glumly. "They say they won't be back next year."

"I'll be the first to go broke," predicted Tonner. "The rest of you will follow, soon enough. We'll all have to move to the capital, where there are no dragons—unless you count the Empress."

"And Hurdelburg will become a ghost town," Gelftager said mournfully.

A new voice interrupted the melancholy conversation. "Some of us aren't ghosts yet. What are the lot of you doing with such long faces? I won't have it, not in my tavern. God gave us drink to make us glad."

Hilda Broomfast, chief barmaid at the Tin Ear—and the fifth, most indispensable, pillar of Hurdelburg society—stood over them with arms akimbo. She was comfortably rounded and comfortably middle-aged. Though her hair was streaked with gray, her shrewd, honest face showed few lines.

She glanced from one man to the next. "Come, now. If

you really had any faith in the knights, you're worse off than I thought. In seven years, have they ever managed even to dent the dragon's scales?"

"No . . ."

"Well, there you are. Good riddance to 'em. If you ask me, it was the wrong approach. When you want a dragon to cooperate, you don't wave a sword at it. That gets their temper up, every time. What we need is someone who can *charm* the dragon."

The men looked up hopefully. "What are you suggesting?" Tonner asked.

"Not my own services, to be sure!" Hilda batted her eyelashes. "My mother knew a spell or two; *my* only secret potion is the one you're drinking. But remember that story that came out of Hamlin, in my grandmother's time—the one about a piper who rid the town of rats?"

"Of course!" Kampf exclaimed, smacking his forehead. "'Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast,' or something like that. And in the old myths, Orpheus made even trees dance to his lute."

"Gentlemen, it could work," pronounced Gelftager solemnly.

"I think I know a man who would do. A minstrel from the capital. I met him at a court function last spring," Tonner said briskly. He raised his stein to Hilda. "Hurdelburg is in your debt. How can we repay you?"

Hilda stroked her chin thoughtfully. "Why don't we wait and see what you have to pay me back with."

As an artist, Alain the minstrel was always willing to try new things, to experiment. It didn't particularly matter that he didn't believe in dragons. He didn't believe in noble kings or enchanted maidens, either, but he sang about them. They were his stock in trade. And for the payment that Hurdelburg had offered, he would have been willing to sing a duet with a mermaid or play a one-night stand in a fairy hill. Ropes woven of gold are strong enough to suspend almost any amount of disbelief.

Still, as he awakened in his room upstairs at the Tin Ear, he felt a twinge of unease. There were, after all, those knights who had never returned. They rose up in his mind's eye, awkward, clanking ghosts haloed with dragon's fire, their foretaste of Hell. But the morning was sunny, and warm, leaf-scented air drifted in through his window. He soon forgot his fears. His mind was busy with professional considerations.

What to play for the dragon-hunt? Something like "Greensleeves," to put the beast in a nostalgic and presumably gentle mood? A funeral dirge for the hundreds of knights that had vanished down the dragon's maw? Or a lively, cheerful march—Alain striding before, the beast following, until he led it into some mountain lake to quench its fire?

Alain grinned, shaking his head. He'd just have to decide on the spur of the moment. Luckily, he'd always been good at improvising.

He got up, stretching luxuriously. "Frederick!" he shouted.

His apprentice scrambled to his feet with a grunt, rubbing his eyes.

"The sun is up," the minstrel told him. "No time to

waste! I'm told dragons are sluggish in the early morning. Cold blood, you know."

"Master . . ." Frederick's face was anguished. "What about breakfast?"

Alain shook his head firmly. "Dragons, my lad, have this in common with life's other distasteful tasks: They are best faced on an empty stomach."

Alain dressed in leisurely fashion, having sent Frederick downstairs to inquire as to their way. When the youth returned, he bade him take up the great harp. Alain himself would carry the lute, having no wish to appear hunched, especially before the crowds of townspeople that would be seeing him off.

They clambered down the stairs, finding that the inn was waking up. Cheerful smells drifted in from the kitchen, and a few early drinkers were already deep into their morning mugs. Frederick halted, with a plaintive look at Alain, but the minstrel motioned him on.

"Master! Even a condemned man is not refused a last breakfast!"

"Ah, but you are not condemned, Frederick," Alain said lightly. "You are about to become famous, and rich as well. Wave to the crowds, now, and look cheerful!"

But no crowds awaited them. Alain looked up and down the street in disbelief. Sunlight against stained walls, a fly buzzing here and there, a dog nosing around the cobblestones. That was all, until Hilda appeared at the side door of the inn, waving a handkerchief. Alain waved back.

"So much for fame," he muttered. "Ah, well, Frederick, off we go like thieves in the morning."

At the outskirts of town, one person waited for them. Amalinda, eyes modestly downcast, stood there smiling shyly and offering a bunch of forget-me-nots. She wore a flowing white dress, looking like a bride who had been left behind by the rest of the wedding party.

Alain swaggered up to her. "For me, my pretty maiden?" he asked.

She nodded. "For luck, my lord. For your safe return."

He accepted the bouquet, handing the lute to Frederick. "They smell so sweet, my fair one, that almost they rival your own perfume. How came you to know when we would set out? The rest of the town seems . . . uninformed."

"I always know when someone is going to the dragon," she answered. Her voice was breathy as the lower notes of a flute. "I have the second sight. It runs in my family."

"Sir!" Frederick began to hop from one foot to another.

"Silence, lout!" Alain turned a withering glance on his servant. "What, in such a hurry now to be gone? Stand still so you don't put my harp out of tune with your St. Vitus' dance."

He turned back to Amalinda. "Your pardon, fairest. I will carry your favor with me, come what may. Here and now I swear eternal fealty to you, my love, my Muse."

He dropped to one knee, kissing her outstretched hand. Then he rose, dusting his breeches carefully, and took his leave of Amalinda with a last melting glance. Frederick followed in his wake, cursing softly and with a total lack of imagination.

Amalinda smiled as she walked back to town, the sort of smile possible only for a maiden who has heard scores of

knights swear eternal love, and is a maiden still.

"She's a carrion crow, I tell you!" said Frederick hotly, as they kicked up dust on the path winding up the mountain's lower slopes.

"I'd trade her for any caged parakeet in the capital," his master said dreamily.

"She smelled our death. That's why she came, with flowers to lay on our graves!"

"No more, Frederick. The subject is closed." Alain smelled the flowers once more, then handed them to his apprentice. He glanced around.

The sun had climbed halfway up the sky, but the forest around them was strangely silent. The minstrel frowned. When had the sounds of birdsong, the chatter of squirrels, ceased? The dragon no longer seemed so mythical. "We must be getting close," he murmured.

Frederick, too, fell silent, ceasing his curses as they entered the circle of stillness that surrounded the dragon's cavern. There was not so much a sense of desolation here, thought Alain, as one of hushed respect. Most of the trees remained intact, although some showed scorch marks on their trunks, or had a branch or two burned away. Even there, one didn't get the feeling of wanton destruction. This might be simply the way the dragon marked its territory.

"So," Alain said to himself, "this increasingly probable dragon is perhaps not wholly a ravening beast. It might, after all, respond to music. Though it can't be used to hearing much in that line, with all the songbirds staying away."

As if in answer to his thought, a flight of ravens settled down on a tree beside the path and began to croak. Frederick made the sign of the cross with a shaking hand.

"Death birds, sir!"

"Give me back that lute!" snapped the minstrel. "I'll need it soon. Steady yourself, man!"

A few hundred yards further on, and up, they emerged into a large clearing, and the cavern of the dragon was before them. Nothing grew near the entrance. Packed dirt showed the faint prints of monstrous claws. The rocks around the cavern's mouth had been worn smooth by the passage of the dragon's body. Alain gazed for a long time, trying to memorize every detail. This would make a ballad that would live long beyond his own time. If he survived.

He walked forward a few paces while Frederick hung back, casting desperate glances the sky and the forest behind. Alain cleared his throat, adjusted the tuning pegs, and began to play a song he'd learned in Spain. He sang in a sweet tenor about the sadness of the last of the Moors, leaving behind the beautiful Spanish countryside and the palaces they had built there.

To Frederick it seemed that the sun stood still, in rapt attention, as Alain played. A few songbirds flew into the clearing and perched, twittering, in nearby trees, wondering either at the song itself or the effrontery of the man who played it.

The dragon answered. A loud snort came from inside the cavern, as if the beast had been rudely awakened. Then came the grinding, clashing noise of a body covered with brazen scales dragging itself toward the entrance. Alain played on, dispatching a last hasty prayer, which

fluttered away into the sky with the departing songbirds.

The dragon's head appeared at the cavern's mouth, for all the world like a fair maiden showing herself on the balcony in response to a serenade. It blinked in the bright sunlight. Then it saw Alain, and its eyes—big as dinner plates—snapped wide open. It edged forward until its forelegs emerged, and lay resting its head on them, looking thoughtful.

The dragon was not particularly hungry, and she didn't think that the man looked very threatening. He was some sort of novel, de-shelled variety too. But what was that awful noise he was making?

Alain could not help but feel this was the finest hour of his career. Here he stood, flawlessly managing the complex chord changes Montellos had taught him in Granada, while a live dragon, wisps of smoke curling from its nostrils, lay enchanted before him.

A sound behind him made him turn his head, though his fingers didn't cease to weave their tapestry of sound. He was just in time to see the harp bobbing up and down on Frederick's back as the youth took to his heels. Alain shrugged inwardly. Better to die alone than in such company as that, if die he must. Amalinda's image drifted gently through his mind.

He finished the song with a flourish. The dragon gazed at him with an unfathomable expression in its yellow eyes. Alain, greatly daring, doffed his hat and bowed.

The dragon coughed. Flame filled the clearing. He had to jump backwards, feeling his face blister with heat. He beat at his smoldering doublet.

"All right, Master Dragon! You didn't like that, we'll try another!" he cried. Surprisingly, he felt no impulse to follow Frederick. Alain had always known himself to be a vain person, but it seemed that in certain circumstances, vanity might appear as, or even magically become, courage. He would re-enchant the dragon, or die trying and let someone else write the ballad.

He began a lively folk tune from the Black Forest. After a few bars, the dragon growled. A hot wind slammed into the minstrel's face. He stopped short in confusion. The dragon hauled its full length from the cavern, revealing a whiplike tail, thick as a man's thigh, sweeping restlessly back and forth.

The earth shook under Alain's feet. He considered flight—bravery had its limits—but knew it was useless. The dragon could incinerate him before he'd gone ten paces.

The ravens had followed him up, he saw now, and watched from the surrounding trees like a dark jury. *Waiting to finish what's left of my carcass*, he thought. The air filled with their croaking calls, wiping any memory of song from his mind.

The dragon raised its head momentarily, listening. Alain gasped as a wild idea came to him.

The dragon began to circle him, head lowered, gnashing its rows of knifelike teeth. Alain worked quickly, re-tuning the lute's strings. Some of them, loosened, flapped and buzzed in tones almost too low to hear. He tightened others until they emitted a continual high hum without even being touched. One string broke with a forlorn twang, stinging his cheek.

Then he played and, once again, the world held its breath to hear. The retuned lute sounded like a cat and a bullfrog fighting to the death. Alain's instrument sobbed, wrangled, croaked painfully, screamed in discordance like a choir of the damned.

And the dragon cocked her head to listen. Then the beast lay down, looked closely at the minstrel and, politely keeping her flames in check, answered.

Cracked bells, small animals being tortured, a grand piano being pushed down a flight of stairs. Alain listened carefully. He made some minor adjustments to the tuning pegs. Then he played again, a similar phrase, sounding like a small, nasal echo of the dragon's voice.

They stayed there throughout the whole afternoon. The ravens flew over them croaking gleefully in celebration of dissonance, while the songbirds huddled together, far away in a different part of the forest.

There was, in fact, a crowd waiting when Alain walked back into town, singed but victorious. Amalinda had seen to that; she had known of his return even before Frederick reappeared at the inn, babbling about dragon fire.

That night the village feasted. Tanner and Gelfager, who had kept the news of Alain's arrival quiet (not wanting to bear the blame for another failure), spared no expense now. The roasts, cakes, and wine were of the finest quality, and there was barrel after barrel of dark Hurdelburg beer.

Vergil Kampf and an unusually jovial Spieler propped each other up in a corner, shouting bawdy songs. Hilda Broomfast was more quietly elated. Tanner was feeling expansive, and her reward had been enough gold marks to set her up in business for herself. She sat smiling, thinking of putting her feet up while someone else fetched mugs out to the customers.

Frederick sulked upstairs. He had counted on cadging free drinks with tales of his narrow escape, but Alain's success had ruined his story.

The minstrel kept Amalinda close by his side. At one point he had Tonner call for silence, and stood up with her to announce their wedding. All congratulated him and the blushing Amalinda, and fell to even more furious merry-making. Having at the same time lost a dragon and gained a bard, a new age had dawned for the village.

"But how did you know how to talk to the monster?" Tonner asked, much later. The fire had sunk to glowing coals, and most of the villagers, unused to celebrations, had long since gone to bed.

Alain shrugged modestly. "It was easy, really. I noticed that the dragon tolerated ravens near her home, while the sweet singers fled from her. This led me to think that dragons have an aesthetic different from our own, which I strove to satisfy." He paused to pluck a few notes on his ruined lute, and the listeners winced.

"But I was surprised to find," the minstrel went on, "that dragons actually speak a language of pure tones, discordant as it might be to our ears. Incidentally, this supports those legends about their having come from out of the East. The language of Cathay, I'm told, uses tones in this fashion. I'm still working on the fine points, though the dragon and I have reached a basic understand-

ing. But then, there will be plenty of time to get to know dragon speech better."

"Plenty of . . . ?" Tonner started. "What do you mean? Our agreement was that you would charm the dragon away from Hurdelburg forever!"

Hilda gave the mayor a scandalized look. "And why would the beast leave her home? She's lived here longer than any of us!"

"True," Alain nodded. "And I've only learned how to speak with the dragon, not how to command her. But we did strike a bargain."

"What bargain?" asked Tonner, helplessly.

"She has agreed to waive the yearly tribute of knights—" A choking sound escaped Spieler. Alain smiled graciously. "Yes, it took some diplomacy. I can see why you wanted someone from the capital for this undertaking. She has agreed, as I say, to accept other sustenance, which the villagers will supply—a matter of two or three cows a month, no more. To make things easier on everyone, she will take up residence in the town square."

The mayor opened his mouth, but made no sound.

Alain nodded. "Exactly. Every merchant in town will profit. We'll have visitors from all over the Empire. And it will be good for the dragon, as well. They're solitary creatures, but she's grown lonely over the centuries. She wants to learn more about us—now that she knows we're not dumb beasts."

"Why don't you give us that ballad you've been composing?" suggested Amalinda, innocently. "The one with the refrain in the dragon's tongue?"

The mayor, a good politician, knew when to cut his losses. "Don't touch the lute!" he cried. "I decree that it will hang on the wall of the inn from now on, as a reminder of this historic day. And now raise your glasses once more, my friends. To the dragon—and to our good fortune!"

Away deep in the night, the dragon heard their merry-making and roared in answer, flame streaking the sky like a falling star. Then, content, she went back to the task of gathering her hundred eggs for the move into town. Ω

Forum

Continued from page 46

This leaves two arguments against multiclassed characters: splitting up the experience points (XPs) between two classes, and level limits. The XPs issue appears to be an equalizer to the untrained eye, but a little scrutiny shows us that, in AD&D 2nd Edition games, XP ranges double from level to level. Therefore, a character with half the XP of another will be only one level lower—a small price to pay for nearly double the power! Levels fall behind only when there is a constant rate given for XP, around name level in the old game. By name level, however, very few new abilities are gained by any class. It actually helps to serve as another equalizer, for about the time a single-classed character would reach 20th-level (recommended for ending a long-running campaign), the multiclassed character will have reached its level limit. Now I ask, what kind of limit is that?

Two other quick points I'd like to bring up on this topic are that: 1) XP bonuses can be given for both classes in a multiclassed combination, therefore effectively doubling the XP bonus for the multiclassed character; and 2) level limits are used to equate racial types, not multiclassed options.

The quick solution to this is to allow kits, on a par with those in the *Complete Fighter's Handbook* and perhaps a little less powerful for fighters, to single-class characters only. A brief view of the kits shows that three bonus nonweapon proficiencies and one small power should be given strictly as a bonus, and any other powers given would have equated hindrances to balance them. I hope to hear from many people on this issue, am I right or wrong? That's for you to decide.

Andy Shockney
Ashland OH

I write this letter in the hope that serious role-players can shed some light on the thing that has caused me the most trouble in the

AD&D game for the past six years: alignment. The alignments are all easily understood except for lawful good.

Recently, my gaming group started a new AD&D 2nd Edition campaign. I rolled up a paladin. Everything was fine and dandy until we did some adventuring in an evil temple. The trouble began when we were fighting some evil acolytes and assassins. My DM uses the "Death's Door" rule for NPCs and monsters. After combat, while the evil humans moaned as they bled to death, my DM asked, "What do you do?" My response was the one I thought most appropriate. With sword held high, I had my paladin recite, "Because of the blasphemy and evil you have done, in the name of my church and temple, I send you where you belong!" With these words of justice, he then quickly finished them off. My DM looked at me queerly and said (after my character had done this several times), "If you continue to do this, your paladin's powers will be revoked." What next followed was a somewhat heated discussion that led to him saying, "Your paladin should have bound their wounds and brought them back to a temple to convert them!" This I found to be ridiculous. Mind you, the party was in a dungeon, not part of an army. If an army were with us, we would have easily taken prisoners. Not only was what he asked impractical, I found it to be chaotic. By dragging around prisoners, the party would have to worry about feeding them, be at a disadvantage in combat, and very well risk the prisoners escaping and eventually attacking the party again. We were 1st-level characters in an evil temple. Had I played the way my DM wanted, my paladin surely would have died.

I justified my actions as being both lawful and good. They were lawful because my paladin was carrying out the justice of his church. In the Middle Ages, when someone was thought of as a witch, the church and royalty did not try to convert them—they burned them. When one considers the possibility of conversion, one will

realize the impracticality of this. To convert someone would be hard enough, but those that we fought in the temple were assassins and evil priests. Conversion is impossible, pure and simple. Justice must be carried out to be effective. When one breaks a law, one must pay the price. My character's actions were good because he was eradicating evil and making the world a better place.

From everything that I have been able to read on the subject, lawful good has been defined as the greatest good for the greatest number, while minimizing harm. This is taken from John Stuart Mill. I see this philosophy more as neutral good. If I followed this interpretation of lawful good, I would have surely been right.

I will never believe that to play a lawful-good character one must play stupidly. I hope someone who has a good grasp on alignment can help me understand how to play a lawful-good character. By creating some discussion on this topic, one can perhaps analyze people's enjoyment of role-playing and provide a greater insight into the AD&D game's complexities.

Nicholas Abruzzo
Glendale Heights IL
Ω

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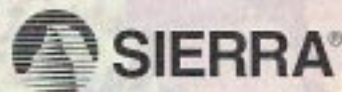
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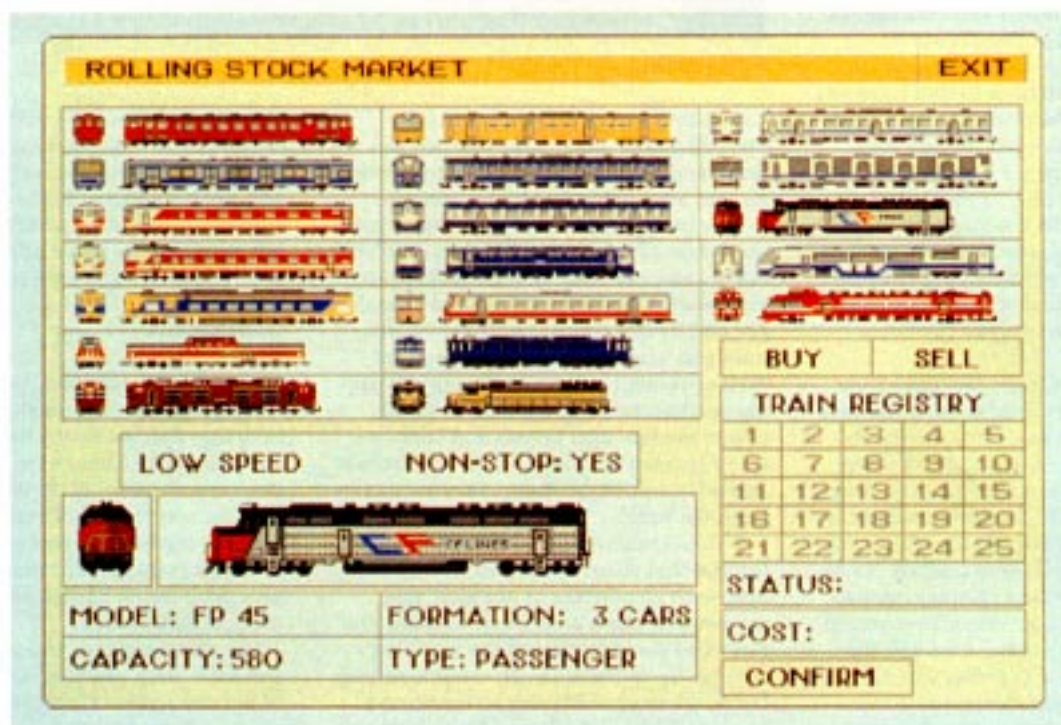
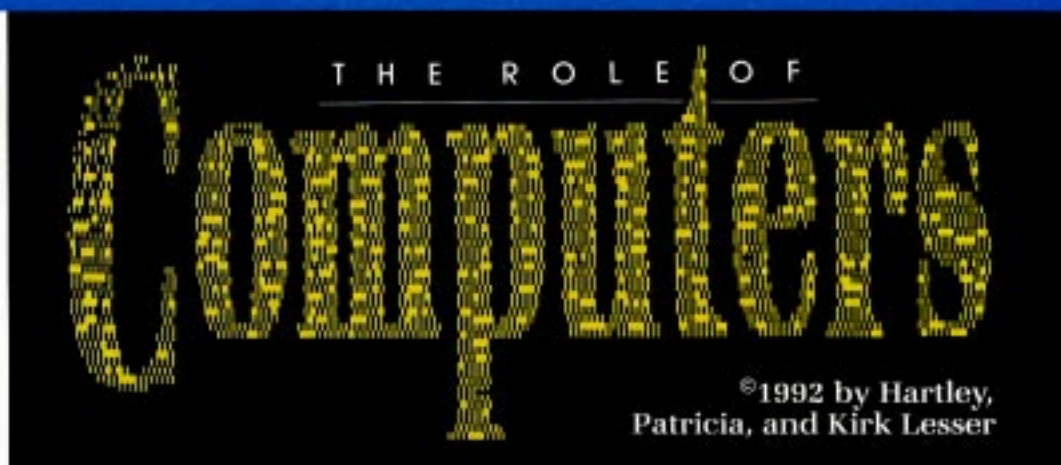
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A-Train (Maxis)

Drive the A-Train right into the Abyss

KnightLine

Taking two months away from the column has allowed us to catch up with many of the games we have received—well, sort of. There are far too many entertainments that we simply haven't had the time to study too closely. However, we've looked over many games and present our opinions on this crop of offerings.

We've had the opportunity to look over a pre-release version of Sir-Tech Software's *Wizardry: Crusaders of the Dark Savant*, and we are impressed. The game's interface has immensely improved, and the new creatures you will confront are quite impressive. In order to be successful, you're going to have to learn how best to increase your adventuring party's abilities right away. Ensure that you have at least a couple of Dracons in your group—they have a breath that is dangerous to your enemies! Other hints will be forthcoming

after we review the finished version of this exciting fantasy role-playing game (FRPG).

Turbo Technologies has reduced the price of their TurboGrafx-16 Entertainment System to \$69.99. If you want this unit packaged with both *Bonk's Revenge* and *Keith Courage*, the price is \$99.99. This is yet another sign that gaming is becoming more affordable! Also, Atari has announced that software for the Atari Lynx system will now range in price from

\$19.99 to \$49.99. Look for more than 30 new games to be added to the Lynx library within the next six months.

H.E.L.P.

Sam Carter of Montara, Calif., is requesting assistance with the following: "I desperately need help with *Dungeon Master* from FTL Games. I have attached the Power Gem to the Firestaff, and now I am trapped with the Dark Lord. What do I do now?"

Han Lim of St. Louis, Mo., needs some assistance with *Leather Goddesses of Phobos* from Infocom. "How do I keep the ion beam on the Martian canal from killing me? What does the message on the dead Martian say? Is there a way to get to the orphanage? What do I do in Cleveland?"

Do you recall the request for help from Kyle Erickson regarding *Beyond Zork*? Lynn Folsom of Fort Worth, Tex., has come

Computer games' ratings

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

to the rescue. "You don't need to use the bubble mirrors—yet! You might want to reflect upon their use, though, to see if you can shed some light on where and when they should be used. You must obtain the Crocodile's Tear in order to complete the game, but you can't get it by yourself. All the humans (?) stay in their respective places, though. The minx and the pterodactyl, though friendly and mobile, don't seem to be able to help in this situation. So if you can't get a friend to help, how about using an enemy? Look around the forest for a heavy (to balance your weight) and slow (to give you time to work) enemy. You might even have to *make* an enemy. You can't use the Fountain of Youth on the butterfly. The Fountain of Youth is only useful in preserving the current status or age of anything immersed in it. You will have to find another way to 'turn back the clock' on the butterfly. You don't have to open the treasure chest yourself. There are two creatures in the game who are eager to do so. Always ask the old woman in the Magick Shoppe about every magical item you pick up. Just because the Potion of Strength is clear in one game doesn't mean it won't be cloudy in the next." Thanks for your timely insights, Lynn.

And then we have Nasri Hajj of Urbana, Ill., who comes to the rescue of two people needing help. Their questions were published in DRAGON® issue #181 and were from John Swendsen and Bryan Schroeder regarding *Battletech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge*. "The keys are used to trigger the self-destruct system in Base Cochise. To do this, you must first use a plasma coupler on the Base's generator. This allows you to open the doors to go to the four key slots. After destroying Base Cochise, you can walk around until you run out of ammo and have to kill random encounters with melee weapons. Or, you can reset the game (using the 'setup' command you used when creating game disks) and start from the beginning. The Nightmare creature is practically impossible to destroy, so don't bother—just walk on by it. There are three ranks higher than Command Cadet. After winning the game three times, I managed to get to Lieutenant (one higher than Command Cadet). The Grazer Bat Fetish is (I believe) a joke. There is one paragraph about it in the book, but it is most likely a fake."

Reviews

A-Train

Maxis, PC/MS-DOS

Apparently, this railroad simulation is number one in Japan. Developed initially by Artoink, Maxis co-partnered and assisted in rewriting this game for the U.S. market. Both companies have done a fine job. However, we continue to prefer MicroProse's *Railroad Tycoon* because it has more of a personal feel to it.



A-Train (Maxis)

In *A-Train*, it's up to you to lay your railroad tracks, build your railroad stations, and manage the construction materials that start piling up at your stations. With a unique interface consisting of pop-up menus all over the screen, you control every aspect of your empire. Building your rail network and scheduling your passenger and freight trains is nothing—wait until you have to purchase the land to further cement your hold in your developing neighborhood. You'll have to decide where to place apartments and factories, when to lease buildings, when to purchase and sell stock, and when to borrow money from the bank!

A-Train's manual contains a complete tutorial that should have you up and running with 20 minutes of practice. The reference section is also well written. The overhead perspective and the resulting angular lay of the land can sometimes play havoc when you're trying to lay curved track to reach a new area of development. Thank heavens you can remove track mistakes—but at a cost!

If you don't manage your finances well, the game simply quits on you. We didn't particularly care for this ending. When you're running at full speed, managing several trains, trying to check your stock market reports and other income, and suddenly the game ends, you wonder what you did wrong so that you can prevent that from happening again. Unless you have been keeping a close eye on your balance sheet, you'll find yourself either returning to a saved game or starting over.

A-Train is quite a complex simulation and is well coded. If you enjoyed *Railroad*



A-Train (Maxis)

Tycoon, the odds are you'll enjoy this simulation as well. Although not quite as good as the MicroProse offering, it does add some additional features that present a different railroad-building simulation. We reviewed the game using VGA graphics and Roland MT-32 sound options.

BattleToads

TradeWest

Nintendo Entertainment System

We heard so much good press about this cartridge that we finally had to look at it ourselves. The commotion is well-deserved, because *BattleToads* is probably the best action game we've seen in a long time for the NES. By becoming Rash or Zitz, you embark on a rescue mission to save your fellow Battletoad, Pimple, from the evil Dark Queen.

The game requires you to jump, ride, and scale your way through several stages of intense action. The animation and sound are superb. The cartoonish methods employed by the Toads as they get rid of enemies (swinging a huge fist or tossing attackers into one another) are hilarious. In no way, however, does that mean *BattleToads* is easy. This game requires you to put in many hours to master it. Thankfully, you can enlist the aid of another human player to defeat the Evil Queen.

We usually are not fans of action games, but *BattleToads* is truly exceptional. If you like knocking heads, *BattleToads* is a game for your pad.

The Four Crystals of Trazere

Mindscape, PC/MS-DOS

This role-playing game from Mindscape is a decent effort. Evil has arisen in Trazere, and it's up to four stalwart adventurers to take on this scourge. You lead a band that consists of a barbarian, an assassin, a troubadour, and a runemaster. The character-creation system is somewhat limited. Statistics for strength, intelligence, speed, dexterity, constitution, and hit points are predetermined. You select an icon that represents the four elements that



Ultima Underworld (Origin)

determine the characters' scores. For instance, clicking on the fire icon raises dexterity, speed, and intelligence, but depletes armor class, hit points, strength, and constitution. You can select any combination of the four elements,

When starting the adventure, you have an overhead view of the land of Trazere. You simply click on the location you wish to travel to, and your party moves to that locale, represented as a banner. The cycle of day and night is shown as a sun and moon moving across the sky. Other banners show either friendly or evil forces moving around Trazere. Images on the banners either identify the keep the good forces came from, or the strength of the evil band represented by the banner. If you run into an "evil banner," you may hide—but sometimes you're forced to battle for your life. As time progresses, the keeps won't be able to hold out all the evil forces on their own and you're required to give them money to replenish their forces.

Entering a keep switches you to a graphic menu screen. You can visit the locals of the keep by pressing the appropriate key. Taverns may hold information—for a price, of course. Smithies contain weaponry and armor, while artificers sell you items with magical or useful properties. The apothecary allows a runemaster to stock up on magical ingredients. Guilds are places where you can train to move up to the next ability level. Finally, the temple is a place where one can be resurrected, healing potions purchased, or prayers and donations left.

In Trazere, the death system is unique. Each character has a set number of hit points. When that value reaches zero, the character doesn't die. Instead, a point of luck is deducted from an original allotment of six luck points. The character is given a new lease on life, but when all six

points of luck run out, the character is quite dead. Offering prayers gives points of luck back to that character.

Dungeons are where most of the action takes place. The screen switches to an isometric perspective of the dungeon, similar to the interface used by *Populous* and *Powermonger*. By using the mouse, you move the characters by clicking on floor tiles. Other actions that can be taken include opening or shutting chests or doors, taking items, pushing levers or buttons, and looking at specific items or places. Players also can access individual characters and equip them with new items by clicking on the equip icon and selecting the item to be equipped.

The best part of the game is the magic system. The player must mix runes and ingredients together to form spells. Complex spells also can be created by mixing more than one director rune and one effector rune. Unfortunately, the runemaster does not start off with all the runes, but must find the person who can give him these symbols of magical power.

Combat is in real time with the isometric perspective. When encountering the enemy, you only need to click on the character's readied weapon to have him attack. Characters also have special abilities that can help them in the heat of battle. The barbarian can go into a berserker rage that allows him to inflict amazing amounts of damage on the enemy. The troubadour can play songs that aid the party in various ways (a la *The Bard's Tale*). The assassin can hide and backstab an enemy. The runemaster can cast spells as above.

Damage inflicted on characters is shown in the bottom left hand corner of the screen. A portrait of each character is displayed, and whenever a person takes damage, that amount of damage is revealed on that character. Skulls show the

amount of hit points the character has left while the color of the skulls reflects the amount of remaining luck. Once combat is over, the characters are free to pick up any gold or other items left behind.

The Four Crystals of Trazere is not a bad game. The magic system is fun, and the game is quite simple to learn. We didn't enjoy the limited character creation or the isometric perspective for the dungeon. It is sometimes difficult to have the character move to the desired place or perform the required action, which led to frustration. Combat can get confusing. *The Four Crystals* is by no means an original game, but if you're looking for a role-playing game that doesn't take up too much space on your computer, or looking for that rare CGA-supported game, then this might be a good adventure to purchase.

King's Bounty

New World Computing, PC/MS-DOS

This strategy fantasy game has been out for some time in PC/MS-DOS format. It has been ported to the Macintosh, but some of the Macintosh user-interface design commandments have been overlooked. One such "rule" states that Command-S means Save your game. Not so in *King's Bounty*—you must access the File Menu and select the Save command in order for your game to save to its current game file name.

Also, when you try to "Save As," giving your current game a new name, you receive a dialog box that asks you to specify where you want your game to be saved. If you are playing as we do, from the *King's Bounty* game folder, this is a good place to save your game. Unfortunately, the program writes your "Save As" game to the first-level hierarchy of your storage media. The only reason we found our saved games was that the program crashed twice and we had to start over, causing us to look in the base directory in order to find our game folder. Lo and behold, there were our three "Save As" games!

The copy-protection method is a little frustrating. You must enter a word the program is looking for from your game manual. Miscoount by a word or a line, and you find yourself looking at your game icon from your game folder. There is no second or third chance for you to re-enter the password and play—you're booted out right away!

Despite these problems, we liked this game. It requires some strategy as you work your way across four continents looking for the Sceptre of Order before time runs out. Only one hex in one of the four continents has this game-winning item. Should you manage to have captured the villain Arch Dragonbreath, a Sceptre Search command takes one day—without his capture, each Sceptre Search takes 10 days, and there's no guarantee you're looking in the correct area!

With castles to capture and villains to locate, you're going to be extremely busy. You may decide to become a knight (best



Ultima Underworld (Origin)

starting troops, limited magic, slow advancement rate), a paladin (high starting gold, has magic abilities), or a sorceress (weakest in leadership but strongest in magic), a barbarian (the best leader, but weak magic skills). As you try to recruit troops wherever you go, you must decide what factors to spend money on—without a boat rental, for example, it's highly doubtful you'll get very far, but that costs 500 gold pieces a week.

Using a point-and-click interface, five panels on the right side of the screen show you which villain you are currently under contract to capture, whether you have the equipment necessary to manage a castle siege (where villains are captured), whether you have spell-casting ability, and the puzzle map. The latter is a small representation of 25 map pieces you need to win the game. Lastly, you can see how much gold you are carrying. You also can view your army at any time to learn its strength, efficiency in battle, morale, and weekly maintenance cost. Always be on the lookout for treasure chests—some contain money that you may keep or distribute to the peasants to increase your leadership; others contain magic scrolls or reasons for the king to increase your weekly wage.

You can find allies, cast spells, and fight battles. There is a lot of solid gaming in this offering that would have garnered it a higher rating had it not suffered from occasional crashing. This occurred when entering Command-P while viewing the map and the army icon. Up comes the miniature map puzzle. Click Cancel or Exit and the screen indicates that a resource error has occurred and the player is dumped out of the program.

With a variety of interesting creatures



Ultima Underworld (Origin)

and magics to use, *King's Bounty* holds promise for excitement and adventure. However, with commands that do not subscribe to Macintosh human-interface guidelines, we hesitate to recommend its purchase. The game's options are B&W, 16-, or 256-color mode; 1MB RAM for B&W, under System 7.0, 2MB of RAM.

Super Space Invaders

**

Domark/Accolade, PC/MS-DOS

It was *the* game that launched the video arcade, one of the classic shoot-'em-up games of all time. It has now received a facelift and is ready for your home computer. It is *Super Space Invaders*.

What's so special about shooting aliens that attack you in a scroll down the screen in neat rows? Well, this version has a few new tricks up its sleeve. First, the aliens got smart and don't travel down the screen in neat little rows anymore. They might rotate around the screen or move in other patterns. The invaders might not blow up from your fire but might expand, taking several more hits to destroy. The alien craft that flies across the top of the screen not only gives you points, but it might award you with a special weapon to help you eliminate these nasties. Forget about hiding behind a bunker—that's been eliminated and is replaced with shields that can protect your ship from certain doom, but just for a few seconds. There is even a bonus stage where you have to save cows from being taken captive by dairy-hungry space creatures.

Updated with VGA graphics and sound board support, *Super Space Invaders* is a greatly enhanced version of the original arcade game. Unfortunately, it's still outdated because there are so many faster and better shoot-'em-up games on the market. The idea of shooting aliens that attack in a specific pattern gets boring after a while. Although those special weapons add a little original spark to the game, they aren't enough to bring it out of the mediocre category. For those who still want to remember the good old days with an added taste of the new, *Super Space Invaders* is for you. We reviewed this game using VGA graphics and SoundBlaster options.

Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss

Origin, PC/MS-DOS

Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss (Abyss) is another entry into the world of computer entertainments. As is becoming quite evident, most FRPGs can now be classified as single-character adventures or as quests involving a party of characters. *Abyss* is one of the former, and it breaks new ground in graphics, animation, scrolling, and sound presentation. To put it mildly, *Abyss* will leave you quite dissatisfied with other adventure games. We gave this game six stars on our normal five-star system.

To say this is the best dungeon game

we've ever played is quite an understatement. Imagine a world of virtual reality, where you become one with the computer-generated world around you. No, *Abyss* doesn't embrace all your senses, but there are times you'll swear you're in the dungeon trying to find the villain who kidnapped Aerial, the daughter of Baron Almric. You've been accused of the crime—after all, you were in her room when the guards broke through the door—and have been tossed into the Great Stygian Abyss to locate the true abductor. You'll find yourself in an enormous adventure that will determine the fate of Britannia.

Abyss offers fantastic auto-mapping that allows you to make your own note entries on the map itself. The magic system revolves around the use of runestones that, when their letter combinations are combined in the correct sequence, enable you to cast many helpful spells. The combat system is real-time—you arm yourself by clicking on the Fight icon and draw back to strike your opponent. You can tilt your view down, up, or remain at eye level. The former is perfect for striking those nasty attackers who are smaller than yourself, while an upward view can alert you to the presence of flying beasts intent upon your destruction. By keeping an eye on the level of the vitality and mana flasks on-screen, you can see when you need to rest and regain those attributes. Should your vitality reach zero, you're dead. (By the way, find the Silver Sapling on the first level, plant its seed, and you'll find you'll recover a lost life!) Mana measures the amount of magical energy you possess.

You can save or recall a saved game any time you wish during your adventure. There are four saved-game slots. You can converse with most of the characters in the game. It is highly advisable that you do so, instead of automatically assuming they're evil. "Talk first, strike later" is a good strategy. There are also all manner of things to be found by looking around, like weapons and armor, runestones, potions, food, and secret doors. You must also learn the mantras that allow you to increase specific abilities at the Shrines located throughout the Abyss. Should you find yourself slowing down a bit, try using a room as an area to collect found booty. It makes no sense to bog yourself down with items you won't need.

All interaction with the game is point-and-click (if you have a mouse) or uses the keyboard. The icons are well designed, and you should have no problem running the adventure. With duration, targeted, and area spells at your command, you can find yourself rebalancing the scales of fairness throughout your adventure.

The release version has a bug that causes your inventory to disappear if you store more than seven items within a container (such as a bag, backpack, and the like). There is a patch available on such information services as CompuServe that fixes this bug for you. Just download

the patch, place it in the same subdirectory as the game, and run it. From that point on, you'll find your game behaves correctly.

What is truly amazing is the smooth, constant scrolling afforded you as you move throughout the three-dimensional dungeon. You'll run, walk, and turn, all in real time. The walls glide by as you run. You'll fall, learn how to jump, and look for oddities in the normal construction of walls. You'll feel as though you are inside the Great Stygian Abyss. This adventure will leave you wondering how other game entertainments can ever stack up against the new standards *Abyss* sets for single-character adventure games. This is an adventure that PC/MS-DOS gamers have to purchase right away for their systems, as long as they have the hardware and memory needed to run the program. This game requires a 386 or 486 system with at least 2MB of RAM plus an expanded memory manager, a hard drive, and a VGA graphics card. Music and sound effects require a combination of Roland, AdLib, Sound Blaster, or other compatible sound board.

Clue corner

Eye of the Beholder (SSI, all computers)

Here are the solutions for seven of the special quests:

Level 1: Place a dagger on the shelf after removing the Armor and Bless scrolls. Remove the dagger and notice that it has changed shape. Your new dagger destroys any monsters on the first level with a single hit.

Level 2: There are four dagger inscriptions on the walls in this level. Press a dagger into each and receive food and a potion of extra healing.

Level 3: First, place the four blue gems into the left eye of the face inscriptions in the alcoves. After the four gems are placed, the eye color changes and secret passages are revealed. Removing the left gem from all the faces completes the quest. Your party receives potions of giant strength and extra healing.

Level 4: Enter the level via the north ladder on level 3. After dealing with Taghor the wounded dwarf, "push" the "retreating" wall until the dwarven key is found. Exit the area to the north, then immediately travel east until you see a chain set in the wall. Pulling the chain completes this quest, and your party receives extra XP.

Level 5: In the dwarven hall, find the pantry. Place at least six food packages on the pantry shelf to complete the quest. Use the smaller food packages, because this special quest converts them into larger food packages.

Level 6: Place the kenku eggs in the "nest." There are 10 eggs. Throwing one of the eggs against the back wall reveals a secret room. In the room is a +5 halberd!

Level 7: Go to the room where there are many portal entrances. There are three

shelves along the southern wall. To solve the bonus: First, remove all items from the shelves. Second, place the stone medallion on the eastern shelf. Third, place the stone dagger on the center shelf. Finally, put the stone holy symbol on the western shelf. (Note: The items that need to be placed on the shelves activate the portals on the north wall.) Three scrolls appear, one on each shelf, and they provide additional game clues.

Level 9: On the wall of the gem-to-jewelled-key exchange room is the inscription: "It is written, the key lies on the other side." Throw a dagger or key at the wall to reveal a secret room. In the room are three orbs of power.

A general clue: Watch your characters' experience points closely. Save the game just before your characters are ready to advance. If they gain only a few hit points for advancing, load the game from the last save game, and try again.

Captain Alan T. Statham
Fort Benning GA

Eye of the Beholder II (SSI, all computers)

1. In order to open the door in the room with the nine pressure plates, form an X.

2. To please the six greedy mouths, be sure you have: rotten food, a cursed weapon, a mantis statue, a potion, a red gem, and five rocks.

3. The crystal green door can be shat-

tered by a crystal green hammer. Search the lower room on the map with all the illusory walls.

4. Save all the polished shields.

5. Unless they are original members of your party, don't divide the scrolls amongst the party.

6. Don't kill yourself at Khelben's request.

7. To advance a level of any member of your party, dispel the left face twice. Enter the room that will be revealed.

8. Use the sticky paper to keep the flying rings stationary.

9. The two coins you find must be made into one. Search the room where you find the shrunken giant.

10. Dispel the two magic triangles.

11. Before facing Dran, cast all preparatory spells, then give everyone weapons, even your mages. Magic is useless against him.

12. The key to defeating Dran is dodging, then striking.

Tim Bryant
Fremont CA

Frederik Pohl's Gateway (Legend, PC/MS-DOS)

1. In order to go on a mission, you must get a blue badge. To get this badge, make certain you attend a ship-handling class at 1500 hours (3:00 P.M.). It is held in Room T20 on Level Tanya. You must wait until 1500 hours. Then, read Hector's lecture



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and you'll get your badge. The next morning, this badge gets you past the agent and the sentry at the hangar entrance.

2. At the secretary's desk in the Corporation Offices is a magazine you need. To get this publication, you need the rose from the hydroponics tray at Central Park. Give the rose to the secretary!

3. Maintenance robots can be very helpful, especially if you want to take a gun from the armory. Don't forget, though, that these robots dump found trash two hours later.

Courtesy of Accolade

Might and Magic III (New World Computing, PC/MS-DOS)

1. Use the Mass Distortion spell to kill a Dragon Lord—it divides his hit points by two.

2. When you give an Ultimate Power Orb to a king, he awards you with one million experience points. It doesn't matter how many orbs you give him, he gives you only one million.

3. When you see the holographic face, type in the numbers of your destiny.

Sam Carter
Ontara CA

Ultima VII: The Black Gate (Origin, PC/MS-DOS)

1. At the start of the game, quickly complete your investigation in Trinsic. Then, head for Britain. On the way through Paws, you'll learn of a theft. Feridwyn's son Garitt is the culprit, but he will attempt to frame Tobias. Talk to Morfin a second time to find out why. In Britain, be sure to pick up both Shamino (at Amber's house) and Sentri (at his training hall). Both are good additions to the party. Consider joining the Fellowship, then run the errands for Miranda and Lord British (both of which take you to Cove). To play Chuckles' "game," speak one-syllable words. Also, "borrow" the Virtue Stones from the Royal Museum.

2. In Cove, visit Nastassia and pick up Jaana. Lord Heather will happily sign the bill from Miranda and Rudyom can lecture on blackrock. In Minoc, complete Batlin's orders by visiting Lady Elynor and ask Julia to join the group. You'll discover two more murders while in town, both at William's mill. You may wish to visit the Minoc Mines as well. There are many vials of snake venom there that may be stolen for several hundred gold pieces. Borrowing a scroll from Karl may be useful in deflating Owen's ego.

3. Your next journey should be to Jhelom, in the Valorian Isles. To help save Sprellic, offer to be his champion and then have Kliftn sew a new Honor Flag so as to avoid combat with the warriors of the Library of Scars. Dupre is in town and will join your group. Also, there is a cave that you may wish to investigate southwest of Jhelom.

4. To join the Fellowship, you need to journey to Destard and find a chest of

Fellowship funds. Be wary, as there are drakes and dragons in large number. Afterward, return with the chest to Batlin and you will be inducted.

5. In Moonglow, get the orrery from Nelson (you'll need Addom's crystal). In New Maginica, visit Alagner and talk to Boris and Magenta to retrieve the locket. In Empath Abbey, be careful—one of the monks is a fake.

6. To visit Skara Brae, go to the ferry dock and cast Seance (you can't talk to the Ferryman without it). Travel to Skara Brae and speak with all the ghosts. To save the town, you must first take the music box from the smithy and show it to Rowena. Then her husband can make the Soul Cage. Get a mandrak potion from Madame Mordra and take it, a red potion, and a black potion to Caine the alchemist. He'll give you instructions on how to mix them. At midnight, trap Horance the Liche in the Cage and use the potion on him. He'll revert to ghost form and tell you how to put the ghosts of the town to rest. Last, you may wish to collect the three magic axes from Skara Brae (two at the Dark Tower, one in a house).

7. To speak with the Time Lord, you must take the following steps: Get a smoke bomb from Taylor; use it to get honey from Bee Cave; visit the emps at 54N, 7E, and then go visit Ben the logger (who lives just SW of Iolo's Hut); get a whistle from the emps, and use it at Wisp Castle (46N, 13W); visit Alagner and ask for his notebook (you'll need to visit Caine at Skara Brae before Alagner gives you the key to the storeroom where he keeps the notebook); stack the crates in the storeroom to access the second floor and pick up the magic bow and arrows while you are there; return to Wisp Castle, speak with Xorinia, then teleport to the Time Lord using the wisp's instructions.

8. You may also include Tseramed of Yew or Katrina of New Maginica in your adventuring band. Ambrosia and the cadelite are at 74N, 187E; there is also a magical helm, sword, a ring of protection, and a ring of invisibility on the island. North of Cove is a cyclops' cave with magical leggings, a magical shield, a ring of regeneration, and a lightning wand. There is a magical carpet inside the dungeon Despire. Inside a dead cat next to Nastassia's house in Cove is a dead rat, and inside the rat is a ring of regeneration. There is a talking horse in the Deep Forest, a talking mouse in the castle of Lord British, and a talking unicorn in Destard. Take the moongates to the Sphere Generator in Despire in the following order: red, blue, blue, red. Lastly, if you are in search of weapons for your characters, you may talk to farmer Mack about aliens and learn of his hoe of destruction, and search the caves south of Serpent's hold for the key to Sir Richter's army of magic.

Don Isakk
Seattle WA

Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss (Origin, PC/MS-DOS)

1. Offer the insane one on level three some food for the Taper of Sacrifice.

2. Continuously flatter the green goblin king, Vernix.

3. Don't throw out worn weapons, as they can be used to batter down doors for which you don't have a key. Either that, or attain fifth level and cast Ex Ylem.

4. "Click" is no, and "sseth" is yes. Try "bica" when greeting a lizardman.

5. On the fourth level, there is a knight known as Meredith who can improve your bowmanship.

6. Also on the fourth level, a troll who guards a small treasure chamber might be interested in one of the red gems you found.

7. The Talisman on level six is the Book of Honesty, located in the northeast section in a key-shaped room near flowing water. Look high for this one.

The Lessers

Battletech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception (Infocom, PC/MS-DOS)

1. The correct code to activate the Hyperpulse is as follows: Achnar, Kathil, Ryerson, Summer, Skye, Benjamin, Pesht.

2. If you would like a powerful 'Mech that doesn't have a heat problem, try this. Salvage a Locust from a battle and modify it twice. This gives you a 'Mech with a movement rate of 7/11, a new engine to repair any engine hits, three medium lasers, and two small lasers. This 'Mech has never generated enough heat to cause a problem, even while running and firing all five lasers.

3. Modify your Commando only once. This gives you three medium lasers and a missile launcher. If you modify it again, you replace the missiles with small lasers and start generating enough heat to cause a shutdown.

Wayne Brown
Memphis TN

That's all for this month. For the next two or three columns, we'll publish more short reviews to cover the huge number of games now available. Don't forget—those letters helping all the other gamers with their quests are important, so please mail them to us at: The Clue Corner, c/o The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376. When you help others, you help yourself as others will respond when you are in need of game advice. Until next month, game on!



What's your opinion?

What is the future direction of role-playing games? What problems do you have with your role-playing campaign? Turn to this issue's "Forum" and see what others think—then tell us what you think!

DARK • SUN
W O R L D S

The Amber Enchantress

BECKONS

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NEW YORK TIMES
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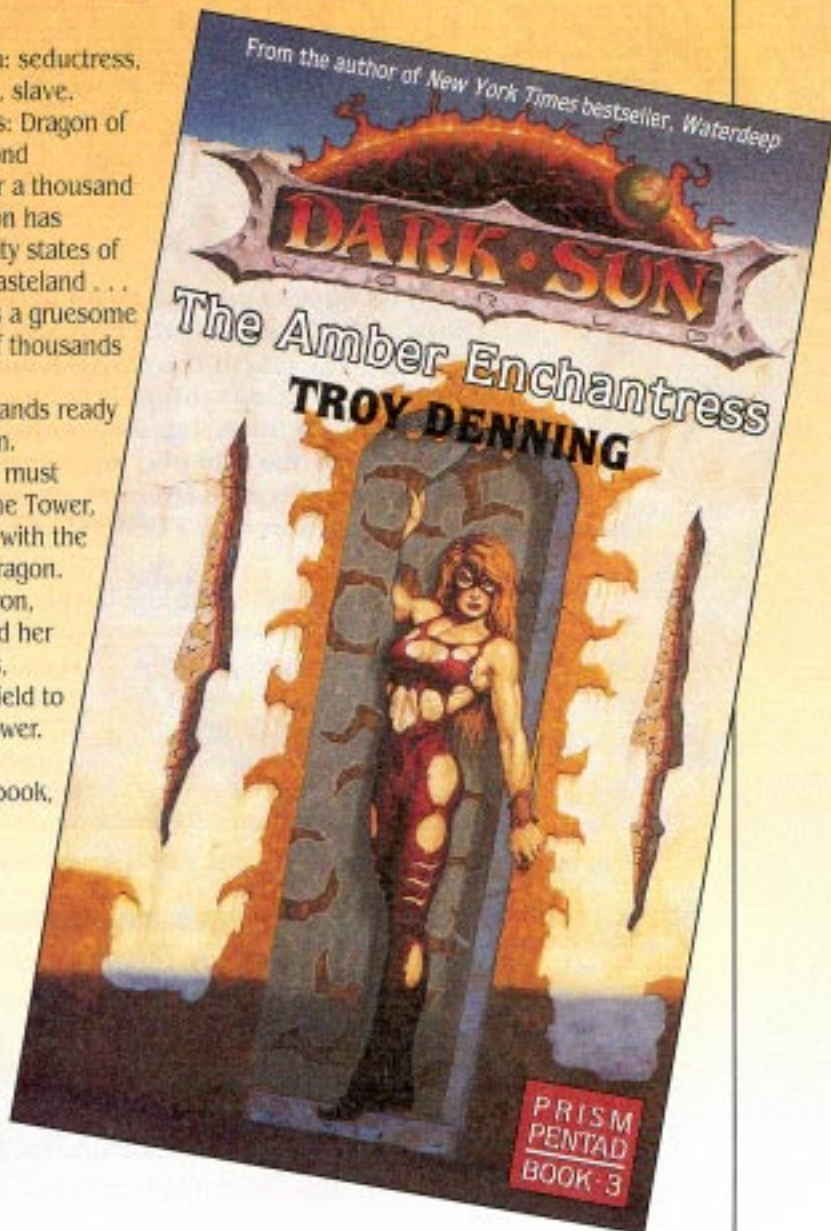
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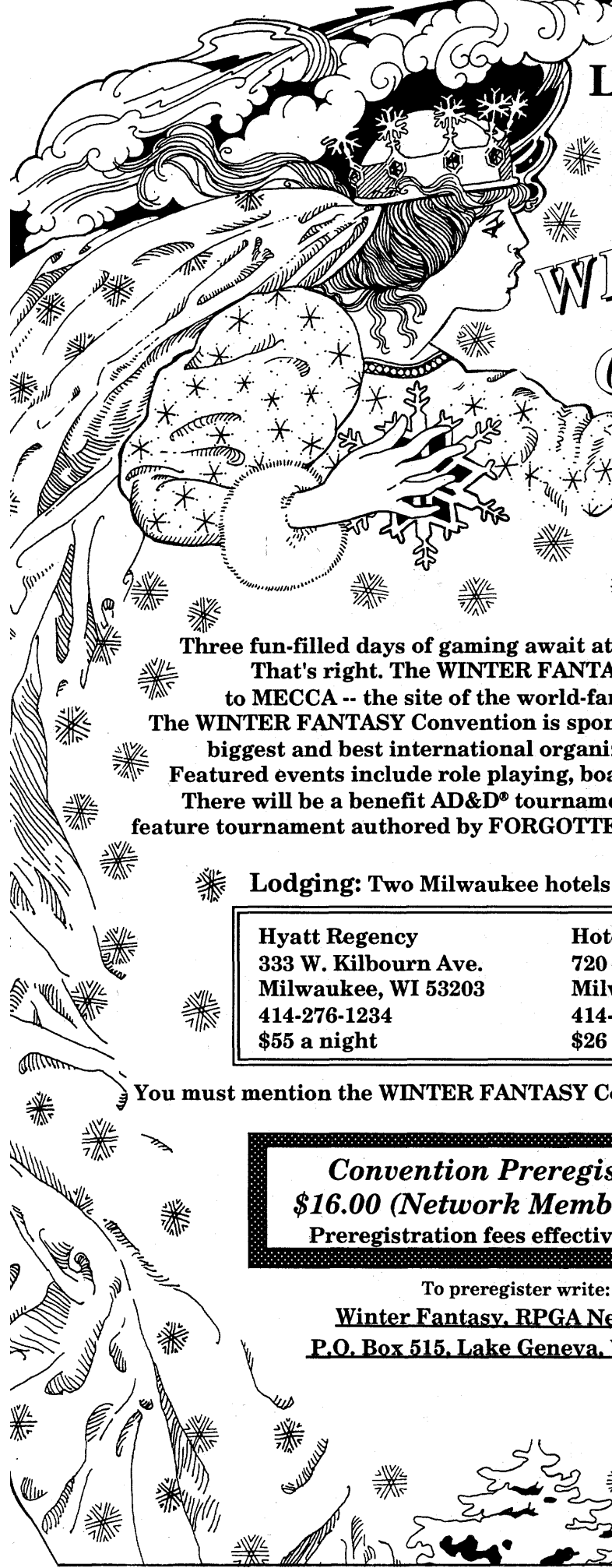


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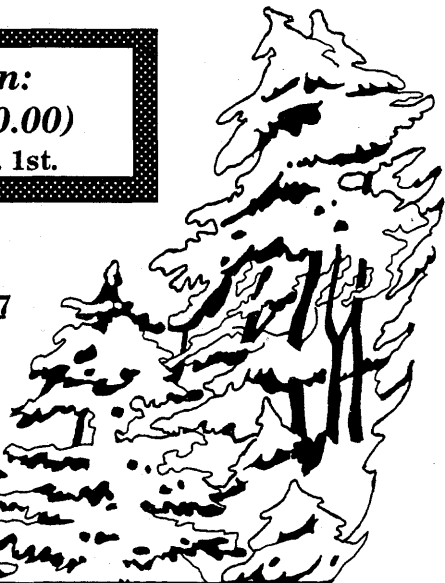
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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GAME FAIR XV, Nov. 13-15

IL

This convention will be held at the Illinois Central College main campus in East Peoria, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with dealers, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$5/weekend; \$3/day. Write to: GAME FAIR XV, P.O. Box 308, Groveland IL 61535; or call (evenings): (309) 387-6233.

HEROES CON II, Nov. 13-15

NC

This convention will be held at the Charlotte Apparel Center in Charlotte, N.C. Guests include Clyde Caldwell, Joe Jusko, and Susie "Flaxen" Owens. Activities include a costume contest, an art auction and contest, panels, seminars, and gaming. Registration: \$7/day. Write to: HEROES CON, P.O. Box 9181, Charlotte NC 28299; or call: (704) 376-5766.

BATTLECON '92, Nov. 14-15

CA

This convention will be held at the Fabulous Inn on Hotel Circle in San Diego, Calif. Events include games and tournaments based on World War II. Registration: \$10/weekend preregistered or \$6/day; \$15/weekend or \$8/day at the door. Dealers are welcome. Write to: Dan Huffman, c/o Trags Distributing, 3023 Hancock St., Suite C, San Diego CA 92110; or call: (619) 688-1156.

FALL TOURNEY '92, Nov. 14

NY

This convention will be held at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Amherst campus. Events include two rounds of the AD&D® 2nd Edition game, with prizes. Registration: \$3. All registration money goes toward the tournament prizes. Write to: SARPA, 350 Student Union, SUNY at Buffalo, Buffalo NY 14260.

PENTACON VIII, Nov. 14-15

IN

This convention will be held at the Grand Wayne Center in Fort Wayne, Ind. Events include role-playing, computer, board, and miniatures games, with miniatures-painting and costume contests, door prizes, and a flea market. Registration: \$10 preregistered. Write to: Steve & Linda Smith, 835 Himes, Huntington IN 46750; or call: (219) 356-4209.

PROVOCATION '92, Nov. 14-15

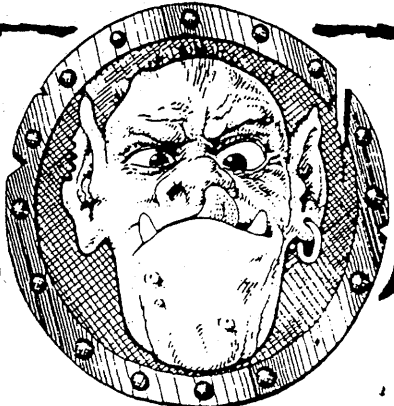
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This convention has been canceled.

DALLASCON '92, Nov. 20-22

TX

This convention will be held at the Le Baron Hotel in Dallas, Tex. Events include over 200 role-playing, board, and miniatures events, with dealers' room, movies, seminars, and an auction. Write to: DALLASCON, P.O. Box 867623, Plano TX 75086.



ORCS NEST

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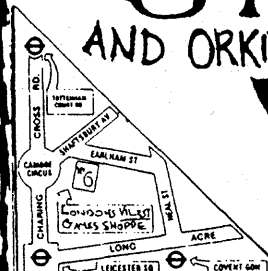
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SAGA I, Nov. 20-22**LA**

This convention will be held at the Airport Sheraton Inn in Metairie, La. Events include gaming, a scavenger hunt, costume and miniatures contests, videos, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$15 at the door. Call Wargames & Fantasy at: (504) 734-1953; or Richard Wilson: (504) 835-6505.

GROUND ZERO, Nov. 21-22**MD**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Chesapeake House in Aberdeen, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with dealers and a game auction. Registration: \$12 at the door. Write to: GROUND ZERO, c/o The Strategic Castle, 114 N. Toll Gate Rd., Bel Air MD 21014; or call: (410) 638-2400.

WARPCON '92, Nov. 21-22**MI**

This convention will be held in Sangren Hall on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Mich. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with a miniatures contest and a movie room. Dealers and GMs are welcome. Registration: \$5/weekend or \$3/day. Write to: Western Area Role-players, Fuance 2040, Mailbox #47, W. Michigan Univ., Kalamazoo MI 49008; or call Jeff: (616) 387-9783.

COCOACON '92, Nov. 27-29**PA**

This convention will be held at the Harrisburg Marriott in Harrisburg, Pa. Events include RPGA™ Network events, with role-playing and miniatures games, a miniatures-painting contest, a dealers' area, and open gaming. Registration: \$13/weekend at the door. Single-day rates vary. Write to: COCOACON, 210 S. Grant St., Palmyra PA 17078; or call evenings: (717) 838-9502.

GOBBLECON '92, Nov. 28**PA**

This convention will be held at the Wind Gap Fire Hall in Wind Gap, Pa. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, demos, and RPGA™ Network games. Other activities include prizes for top players and a dealers' area. Food will be available on-site. Registration: \$7 before Nov. 16; \$10 thereafter. Event tickets are \$1 each. Send a long SASE to: GOBBLECON, c/o 118 S. Broadway, Wind Gap PA 18091; or call Mike: (215) 863-5178. No collect calls, please.

CONCOCTION '92, Dec. 4-6**NJ**

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn in Atlantic City, NJ. Events include RPGA™ Network events, with other role-playing, board, and miniatures games; a game auction; and dealers. Registration: \$17/weekend preregistered; \$20/weekend at the door. Write to: CONCOCTION '92, P.O. Box 222, Oceanville NJ 08231; or call: (609) 272-1157.

GAMEFEST '92 PART III, Dec. 4-6**IL**

This convention will be held at Friends Hobby Shop in Waukegan, Ill. Events include miniatures, role-playing, and board games. Write to: Friends Hobby, 1411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790.

PALACON '92, Dec. 28-30**KY**

This convention will be held at the Laser Chase in Louisville, Ky. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with prizes, vendors, and open gaming. Registration: \$20. Write to: The Paladin Group, 721 N. Hite Ave. #3, Louisville KY 40206; or call: (502) 893-8953.

CONSTITUTION '93, Jan. 29-31**VA**

This convention will be held at the Quality Hotel in Arlington, Va. Guests include Jay Tummelson. Activities include RPGA™ Network events and role-playing games. Registration: \$10/preregistered or \$15/at the door. Preregistration is strongly recommended. Write to: CONSTITUTION, 1737 Seaton St. NW, Washington DC 20009; or call James at: (202) 986-7904.

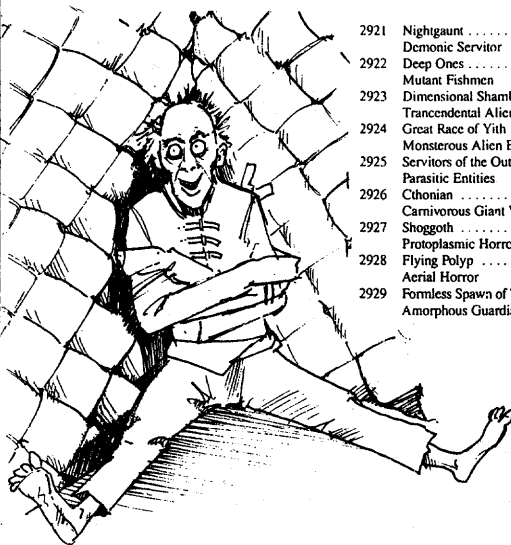
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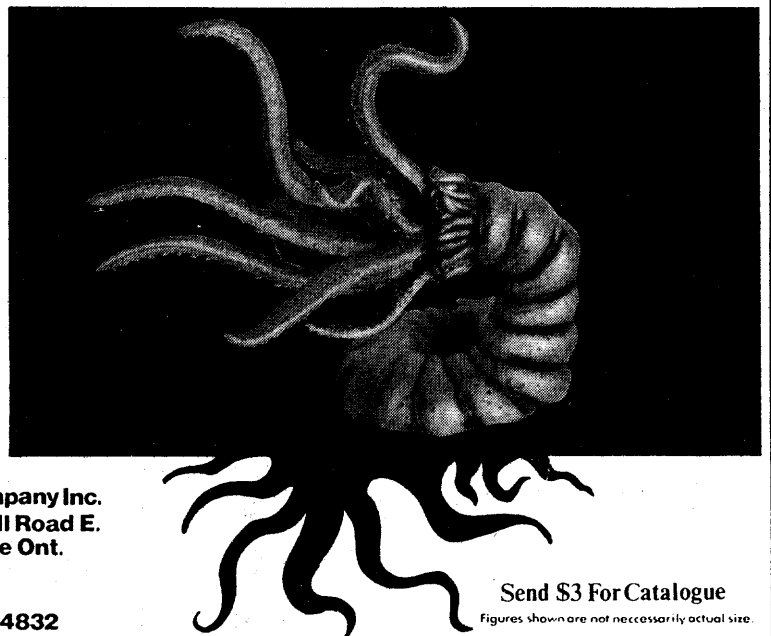


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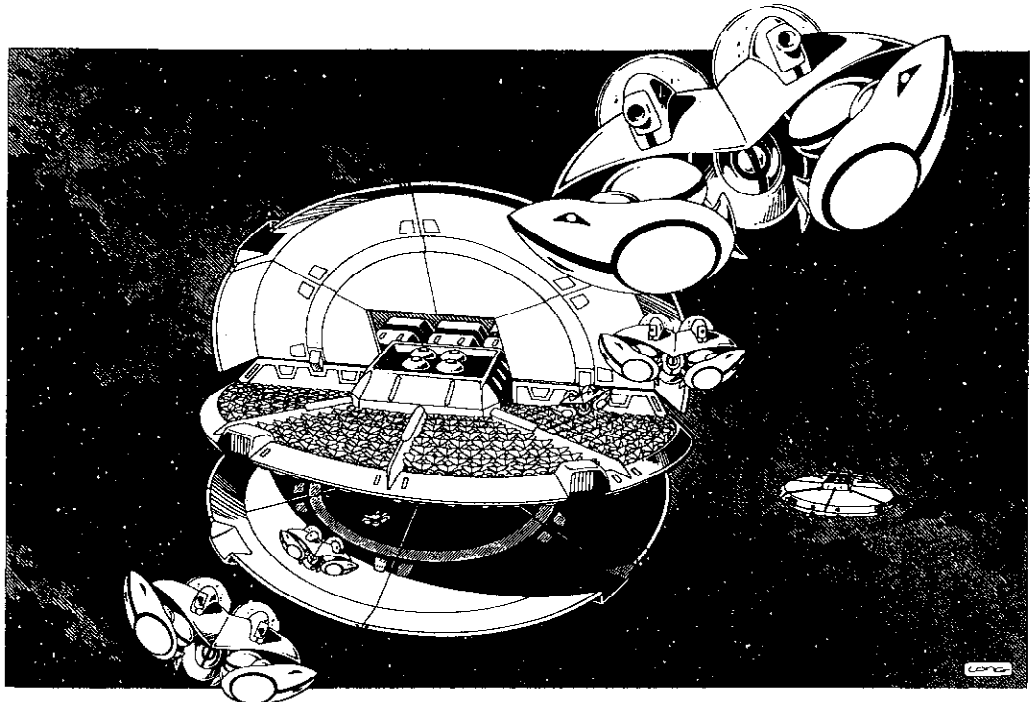
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by Stephen E. Schend

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Along came the spiders

The Avengers West Coast have not had a moment's rest since returning from Operation: Galactic Storm, due to this nasty bunch—Deathweb! Despite their previously unknown status, this trio managed to stalemate eight Avengers (yes, everyone's favorite arachnid, Spider-Man, was also on hand for this case). This should give you the idea that Deathweb's not a group to be ignored or taken lightly.

ANTROTM

F	EX(20)	Health: 120
A	RM(30)	
S	IN(40)	Karma: 22
E	RM(30)	
R	TY(6)	Resources: EX (20)
I	TY(6)	
P	GD(10)	Popularity: -10

KNOWN POWERS:

Arachnid Armor: All evidence seems to suggest that Antro's powers are derived from his armor. Though all its abilities may not have been exhibited, the armor is equipped with these known abilities:

—**Acid jets:** With a range of three areas, Antro can "spit" Remarkable (30) strength acid from the mandibles on his helmet.

—**Body armor:** Antro's armor provides him with Remarkable (30) protection from physical and Force attacks and gives Excellent (20) protection from energy attacks.

—**Teleportation "Trapdoor effect":** Antro is able to generate Amazing (50) rank teleportation fields with his armor that can cover up to one entire area, teleporting everything within that area to a mentally chosen location within 20 areas. He also can choose to isolate his "trapdoors" around himself or a single target, teleporting the target to desired locations.

—**Wall-crawling:** Antro's armor contains micro suction pads on the hands and feet, allowing him to stick to vertical surfaces with Excellent (20) ability.

—**Web-shooting:** Antro's wrist cannons shoot webbing to a range of three areas;



Color by Stephen Sullivan

the webbing has Excellent (20) material strength and sticks to targets and surfaces with an Excellent (20) strength adhesive.

TALENTS: None revealed.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:

Given the amazing abilities of his armor, Antro is rather arrogant and overconfident in combat. However, he loses control of a situation (and his temper) quickly if bested and is quick to blame others for his mistakes. He's the perfect bully—tough and brave when he has the upper hand, but quick to lose his nerve when the battle starts to turn. This Chinese-American supervillain and the rest of Deathweb seem to operate on a freelance basis, and as such are available for hire by the arch-nemesis of any given MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ (MSH) game heroes.

ARACHNE™

F	RM(30)	Health: 80
A	EX(20)	
S	GD(10)	Karma: 26
E	EX(20)	
R	TY(6)	Resources: EX (20)
I	GD(10)	
P	GD(10)	Popularity: -10

KNOWN POWERS:

None; Arachne's abilities seem to be equipment-oriented or derived from talents such as martial arts.

EQUIPMENT:

Arm spikes: Arachne wears an Excellent (20) material-strength arm spike on each arm that is connected to supplemental cartridges to provide the following effects:

Venom injections: Arachne's spikes can deliver direct injections of poisonous venom into a victim's body. Her venom injections are of Incredible (40) intensity and can kill anyone in three to six (1d4 +2) rounds who fails an Endurance FEAT roll. Those victims with Amazing or greater Endurance need a green Endurance FEAT roll; those with Endurance ranks of Incredible need a Yellow result; and those with Endurance ranks below Incredible need a Red result to take only 10 points of damage. Failure indicates death in the time noted unless other measures are taken (healing powers, antidote, etc.). The venom causes severe swelling of the tissues at the injection point.

Venom webs: Arachne also can shoot venom-coated webbing up to two areas away. The web venom is a paralytic agent of Remarkable (30) rank that can kill by paralyzing all the victim's muscles if the victim fails an Endurance FEAT roll (heart and respiratory failure are the causes of death). Those victims with Endurance ranks of Incredible or greater need a Green result; those with Remarkable En-

durance ranks need a Yellow result; and those with Endurance ranks below Remarkable require a Red result to avoid paralysis and death in 1d4 +2 rounds.

TALENTS: Martial Arts A and B, Leadership.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:

Arachne is a woman with an attitude. She is focused on her targets, shows no remorse in killing, and enjoys taunting her enemies and prolonging their suffering. Cool but vicious, she's the unofficial field leader of Deathweb.

THERAK™

F	EX(20)	Health: 176
A	TY(6)	
S	MN(75)	Karma: 18
E	MN(75)	
R	TY(6)	Resources: EX(20)
I	TY(6)	
P	TY(6)	Popularity: -10

KNOWN POWERS:

Hybrid form: Of all the members of Deathweb, Therak is the most spiderlike. His body is covered in a chitinous carapace that resembles the shell-like skin of some spiders; his eight limbs (two legs, six arms) have also changed to less human proportions, with the arms ending in four-digit grasping claws and his feet growing two toe claws for grip and stability. Therak's head has also become spiderlike, and his eyes glow an opaque red that hints at his powers being ionic in nature. Therak's powerful body provides him with the following powers:

—**Additional limbs (arms):** Therak has six arms capable of attacking opponents, though he cannot attack more than two targets at once. Separate attacks (and separate damage) are not rolled, but Therak's Fighting score increases by +1CS for each arm beyond one for an attack on a character (to a maximum of Incredible). Therak's altered body structure only allows a maximum of four arms to be used against one target. If two targets are attacked at once, Therak's Fighting score has a maximum of Excellent for either attack.

—**Body armor:** Therak's chitinous covering provides Amazing (50) protection from physical or Force attacks and Incredible (40) protection from energy attacks.

TALENTS: None revealed.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES

Therak only whispers when he speaks: due to the radical changes in his body structure, it may be too difficult or too painful for him to speak in a normal voice. What little he has said indicates he is a very bitter, angry person who takes out his pain on others. He is not one to take

the initiative, but is content to wait for orders and directions from his allies and employers. He has a brutal fighting style, more like a barroom brawler than a trained fighter.

As with the others, Therak is employable as a part of Deathweb, but he can be altered slightly within game campaigns. Given his similarities to Wonder Man's powers (ionic energy), Therak could be set up as a henchman for Baron Zemo II, having been changed along with Vermin to become one of the newest Masters of Evil or something similar. (There's no proof, but the Baron could have easily designed the rest of Deathweb's equipment, given his penchant for technology and mayhem. Besides, both Barons Zemo liked nothing more than to frustrate the Avengers, no matter what coast they were on!)

HISTORY:

Soon after the announcement by New York's *Globe-Recorder* newspaper that they would expose one of the presidential candidates as having ties with organized crime, people began to show up dead. Henry Drummond, the lawyer for the *Globe*, was murdered in his west coast office; his neck was broken, and he was stuck to the wall with what appeared to be a spider's web. The next day, just as a press conference to reveal the candidate's name was starting, Walt Weston, the paper's source of the information, died from an injection of poisonous spider-venom into his neck. Peter Parker was present at the conference, having been flown out to the west coast to follow up on the story.

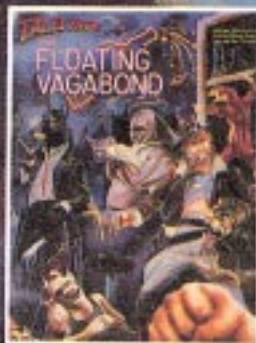
The Liberty Party's presidential nomination convention was heavily attended due to the furor over the murders, and the Avengers West Coast were on hand for added protection for the candidate, one Michael Galvan. As Galvan took the podium, the lights went out. After a minor fracas with Spider-Man, the Avengers came into conflict with Deathweb. Despite being outnumbered two-to-one, Deathweb fought ferociously and managed to injure both the U.S. Agent and Hawkeye seriously. With the impromptu appearance of Rachel, Spider-Woman's daughter, Deathweb kidnapped her as a hostage and made good their escape.

In order to find her daughter, Spider-Woman got in touch with Mike Clemson, her government contact. Clemson working in secret with a mysterious power group known as the Conclave, was secretly in league with the Manipulator and Deathweb. When Spider-Woman found Clemson, she also found Deathweb and the Manipulator. Spider-Man followed her to this location, but found himself in a fight for his life—Spider-Woman was forced to attack him to save Rachel as the girl was Arachne's hostage.

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Deathweb fled the warehouse where the two arachnid-based heroes were fighting as the place was about to explode. Mike Clemson also escaped, vowing vengeance on Spider-Woman before disappearing into the night. Spider-Man and Spider-Woman escaped from the rubble of the warehouse and freed Rachel, who was left locked up in a trailer park. They arrived at the Liberty Party's convention that night in time to turn Rachel over to her father, Larry Carpenter, and to see Deathweb teleport onto the stage and murder Galvan. The disguised Avengers, not showing themselves until Rachel was safe, quickly dispatched Deathweb. While the Manipulator made his getaway, he encountered Rachel and Carpenter; seeking to prevent the girl's kidnapping, Larry resisted the Manipulator and was killed by the villain. Spider-Woman stopped the Manipulator from taking Rachel, but he escaped.

Inside the Hollywood Bowl at the convention, Galvan's running mate, the unassuming and unknown Wilson Lambert, took the podium and began to talk to the crowd of "law and order," using Galvan's minutes-old murder to accentuate his points. With Deathweb still tied up on

stage and under guard by the Avengers, he called for an end to the "fear and lawless terror we witnessed here tonight: then called for the immediate execution of Deathweb. Lambert even went so far as to order the Avengers to "be the Avengers you are in name and let swift justice be done to these butchers!" Despite his claim that he wasn't afraid of Deathweb, Lambert faltered when Arachne told the crowd that their orders were to kill Galvan and anyone else in the way but they were strictly told not to hurt Lambert. Lambert's nervous, cagey response provided all the answers the crowd needed. Despite his denial, Lambert's appearance of guilt buried him politically.

Deathweb's current status is unknown, but it is assumed they are currently being held for trial on at least three counts of murder. Therak should be held in the Vault, and Arachne's and Antro's equipment most likely has been confiscated by the authorities. The Manipulator is currently at large, as are the Conclave and Mike Clemson. Whether they will be seen anytime soon depends on Marvel Comics or your MSH campaign Judge!

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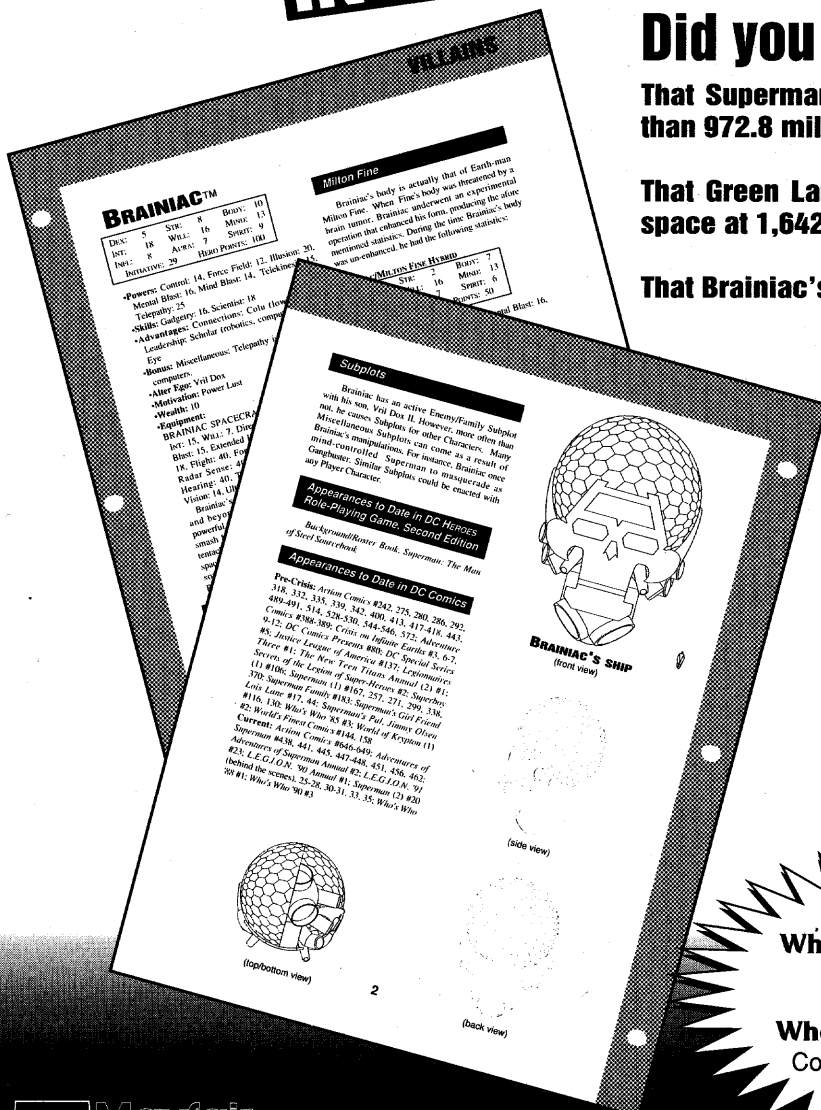
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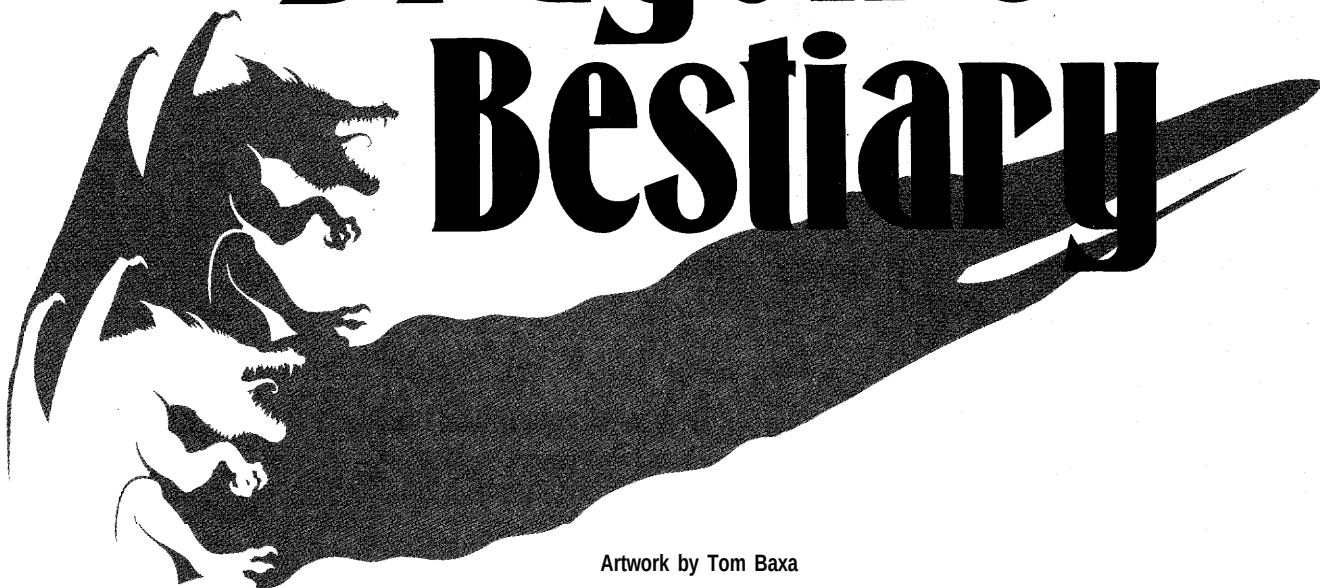
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The Dragon's Bestiary



Artwork by Tom Baxa

The wilderness isn't as nice as it used to be

In this issue, we present two monsters that we hope will make every campaign a less safe place to be. The kruels, a race of unpleasant little fellows with distressing senses of humor, were created by Malcolm Bowers of New Zealand. The pardal, one

of the laziest and deadliest of carnivores, is a creation of Spike Y. Jones, once from Canada and now from the country immediately south of the Great White North. Enjoy!



Kruel

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate/Forests, hills, rural
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Group
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very
TREASURE:	W x ½
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil (neutral)
NO. APPEARING:	2-5
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	1+8
THACO:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4 +4/1d4 (see text)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Missiles, set fires
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Resist fire, evade blows, minor spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	10%
SIZE:	M (5' tall)
MORALE:	Steady (11)
XP VALUE:	270

These creatures were once good sylvan folk, but some great evil blighted their race and gained them their new name. They reportedly still have dealings with pixies and some wood elves, and it is known that they do not wantonly destroy woodlands with their powers, so perhaps some traces of their original nature remain. Even so, kruels are now undoubtedly evil and spiteful monsters in most respects, and they cause much suffering in rural communities. They speak Common and a smattering of woodland tongues.

Kruels appear as sharp-featured elves from the waist up, with long bony fingers, large cowlike ears, and eyes that are (except for the pupil) startlingly blood-red. Their legs are birdlike and green scaled. They prefer bright green, lilac, and scarlet garb, also wearing tall hats, each set off with a red feather.

Combat: Kruels fight only the apparently weak, preferring to harass more powerful opponents from a distance. Any pebble they hurl becomes magically empowered for that round, burning like a red-hot coal. They can throw two pebbles a round at +2 to hit, at a range of 40 yards (no range penalties apply). The stones cause 1-4 hp damage if they hit. The stones will ignite combustibles (item saving throws vs. normal fire are required) but cease burning themselves after one round.

Kruels can use the spell flame blade at will, and they enter melee with this spell and a dagger, striking once per round with each with no penalty. They are quick, agile, and unpredictable in combat; if they win initiative, they have a 30% chance that round to evade each blow struck at them that would have otherwise hit, regardless of the attacker's roll.

Kruels can cast both *cantrip* and *alter self* twice per day at the 1st level of magic use, but since their eyes retain their distinctive coloration in any form, the latter power is commonly used for escape (flying or swimming) rather than disguise. They naturally *resist fire* as the spell, and they are intelligent enough to take advantage of this in combat if the situation permits.

Habitat/Society: Kruels usually dwell on the fringes of civilization, where they prey on farmers and their cattle, occasionally firing a hayrick or barn. Kruels would never destroy a whole year's crops or burn down an entire village—the fun would be



over much too quickly. They often use their magical abilities to frighten or attack passing travelers, especially the seemingly helpless. A captive is sometimes taken for torture; victims are not always killed, but few recover completely from the experience. Kruels roam far from their lairs in search of an evening's "entertainment." Like most faerie-kin, they are unpredictable and may consistently raid a distant farm, ignoring one close at hand.

Their preferred lairs are woodland caves, always difficult to find, where they keep their treasure in individual caches. They live in small groups that split up or change members with other groups of kruels on a random basis. Mating is infrequent and results in a clutch of eggs that take a few weeks (and a fair amount of heat) to hatch, whereupon the young kruels grow to adulthood within a year or two. There is a 20% chance that a group will have a pyrolisk as a pet, as they get along well with such creatures. This and their form may indicate some distant kinship between the two species.

Ecology: Kruels prey on others. They steal produce and livestock from farms and goods from travelers when they can, otherwise hunting small animals and gathering nuts and berries in the forest. It is thought they trade with unscrupulous creatures for the things they cannot plunder. They enjoy finery but produce nothing of worth themselves.

Farmers and villagers in regions frequented by these creatures would be overjoyed if adventurers sought out and slew kruels for body parts that were vital components in some spell or potion, but so far no use has been found for them.

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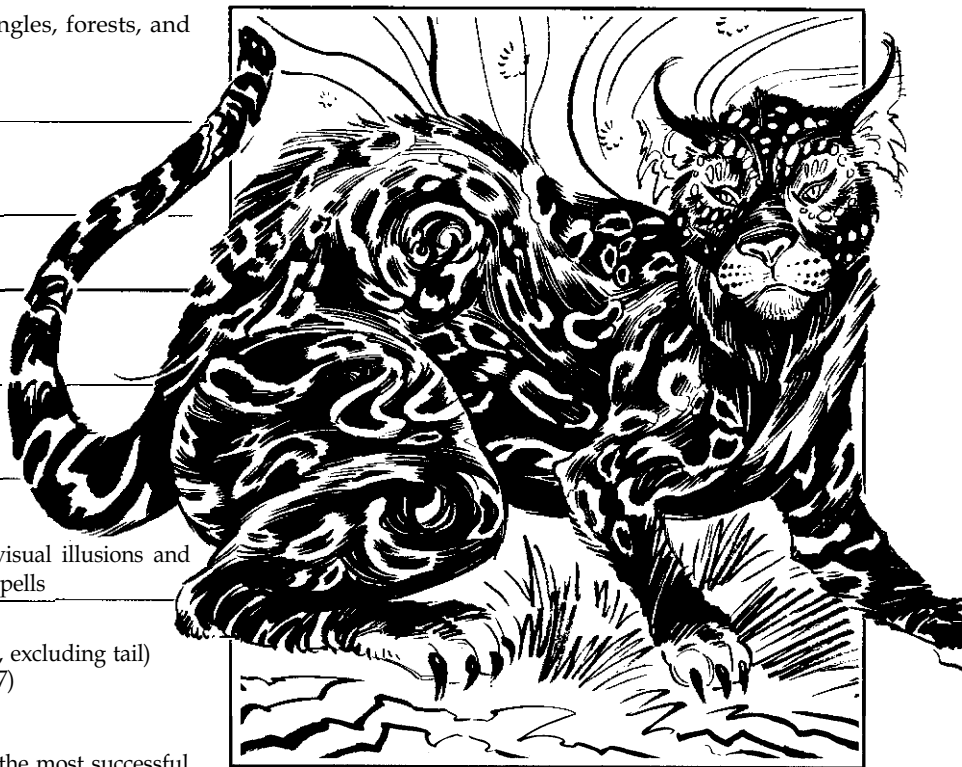
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Pardal

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Tropical/Jungles, forests, and grasslands
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (4)
TREASURE TYPE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVE:	12
HIT DICE:	4 + 2
THACO:	16
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-4/1-4/1-6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Hypnotism
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to visual illusions and controlling spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5'-6' long, excluding tail)
MORALE:	Irregular (6-7)
XP VALUE:	650



The laziest of the great cats, and also one of the most successful because of its magical method of attack, is the pardal. Of about the same size and build as a jaguar, its claws and teeth are smaller and less prominent, and its coloration is exactly the opposite of that animal; smoothly black all over with a rich speckling of tan or orange spots.

Combat: The pardal is neither an accomplished stalker, nor a powerful fighter able to take down prey by the strength of its limbs. On the hunt, it behaves as if success were a foregone conclusion—as if it had no fear that the prey would flee, fight back, or in any way make the life of the pardal difficult.

When it is hungry, it merely wanders about looking for any suitable game; a group of monkeys or pigs will do, but sometimes so will other predators like wild dogs or wolves. Then, without any pretense of stealth, it ambles towards the prey in a nonthreatening manner that the victims are likely to interpret as disinterest. As the pardal's muscles needn't be as finely tuned as those of a normal predator, it tends to look less threatening than most; with its belly hanging loosely beneath it, it may even appear to have fed recently when it is actually at its hungriest, especially when viewed by the more stupid herbivores.

If it can get within 30' of its prey, any creatures within that range who look at the pardal, even at a glance, notice that the spots on the pardal's fur are not fixed—they flow over the black background in such a way as to produce a hypnotic pattern spell effect on all who fail a save vs. spells. This effect lasts for 2-5 rounds or until something drastically changes the situation within the group of hypnotized creatures.

Once a suitable group stands fascinated by the spell, the pardal selects a single target, usually the best eating of the lot, then advances to stare it straight in the face. To one already affected by the first spell, the pardal's golden eyes seem to spin crazily in their black sockets, an effect that causes the prey to be transfixed as by a *hold monster* spell, unless the victim makes a save vs. spells (no penalties or bonuses apply). The *holding* power of its eyes is stronger than the hypnotic effect of its fur, and causes a victim to stay rooted to the spot even as the pardal kills and devours it. As with the wizardly versions of this spell, the par-

dal's chosen victim cannot be freed from this spell without the intervention of *dispel magic* or stronger spells.

Conversely, the violence of the pardal's attack on its victim releases all other nearby creatures from its *hypnotic pattern*. Other effects, such as loud sounds or flashes of light, the appearance of a larger predator, or the wounding of animals besides the one chosen as prey (all of which could occur naturally or at the intervention of adventurers) will also break the hypnotic effect of the pardal's spots. While creatures with an Intelligence of 2 or higher are likely to learn to avoid an approaching pardal no matter how inoffensive it appears, the memory of a pardal attack rapidly fades in the minds of creatures with animal Intelligence (INT 1), so that it can usually prey on the same herd within a few weeks of a previous attack.

As a result of the ease with which it gets its meals, the pardal is found to be exceptionally weak for its size if forced into combat. It is physically weaker than other great cats and cannot employ its hind claws to rake prey. Given a choice, the pardal flees from persistent attackers, not being used to resistance from those it hunts. Moreover, its hypnotic powers operate only when it is hungry, so attacking a sated pardal is an even easier proposition.

Not only does the pardal employ hypnotic effects offensively, but it is also immune to outside illusions and charms. *Hold, charm, and hypnotism*-based spells have no effect whatsoever on pardals, and it is totally immune to visual illusions such as *phantasmal force*. Spells that target illusions at other senses have better effects. Instead of being immune to *improved phantasmal force* spells, a pardal saves against them at +6; it saves at +4 against *spectral force* spells, and it has no defenses against any illusions having no visual component at all, suffering a -2 penalty on its saves against these spells.

Habitat/Society: Just as the jaguar does, the pardal spends much of its time among the branches of trees; unlike its cousin, most of this time is spent napping, with relaxation only occasionally interrupted by the need to hunt for prey (and that requires little effort itself). A pardal is not territorial and will let

other predators, including others of its own kind, share its range unless there is not game enough for two (in which case it will either kill the interloper when next it gets hungry, or simply leave to find more suitable accommodations).

Pardals are solitary animals, seeking the company of their kind only to mate. The lair of a female (50% of the population) sometimes has a single cub resident, but as they mate only rarely the lair will be solely inhabited 75% of the time. A young pardal takes two years to mature, and during that time it can only use the hypnotic tricks of an adult inexpertly (all victims' saves are made at +4), but as a single adult pardal can hunt as easily for two as for one, this is not a major drawback for the cub.

Ecology: Pardals are at the top of the food chain in the areas they inhabit, as even other predators fall prey to their special powers. Unlike other great cats, the population of pardals does not increase and decrease along with that of game around it; only a marked drop in all game in a region would threaten their food supply, so the pressure to exploit times of bounty is not strong in them.

Unfortunately for those trying to make a profit from selling pardal parts, the *holding* powers of its eyes are lost immediately upon its death, nor can the mere wearing of a pardal hide robe confer magical benefits on the wearer. The hide is still quite valuable to mages, who are likely to pay up to 2,000 gp for one in perfect condition as the primary component of a *robe of scintillating colors*, or of other magical items endowed with hypnotizing powers.

A live pardal might be worth up to 4,000 gp, as a creature immune to most of the standard ways of capturing live animals (such as *charm monster* or *hold monster* spells) is rarely seen in zoos or menageries. Because of their laziness, adults can also be tamed rather easily, to the same extent as a house cat (assuming that the trainer is immune to their magical powers). However, they cannot be fully domesticated or trained to attack on command; they can become an interesting ornament in a wizard's lair, but they would serve little purpose carried along with a group of adventurers. Ω

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TROUBLESHOOTING YOUR GAME

by Tanith Tyrr

Artwork by Scott Rosema

Constructive ways to deal with disruptive role-players

"Dungeon Master, may I play my 30th-level berserker-necromancer-assassin-high priest? His scores are all 20s except for his charisma, which is only 19, and his strength, which is 25. He gets nine attacks every three rounds because he's ambidextrous. He wields Stormbringer in his right hand, Mjolnir in his left hand, and he has two *wands of Orcus*. . ."

If you have run AD&D® or other fantasy role-playing games (FRPGs) for any length of time, this litany probably sounds familiar. Almost every DUNGEON MASTER™ has encountered the player whose characters all belong in the *Legends & Lore* tome rather than in the campaign.

Even otherwise reasonable players can eventually succumb to the Monty Haul Syndrome and end up with less-than-balanced characters. Most FRPGs are structured in such a way that one of a character's primary goals in the game is to gain treasure and magical items. Even if you keep these rewards to a minimum, they eventually pile up, since it is easier for a DM™ to bestow treasure than it is to take it away. After enough of these profitable ventures, your players' characters may have a lot more firepower than you are comfortable with.

Another problem that a DM often faces is the player whose character disrupts a party. This player may put the rest of the party at risk through carelessness. His character might periodically decide to wander off alone down a dark hall without checking adequately for traps or other hazards, and may end up triggering a device that floods the entire dungeon. He may frequently argue with the rest of the group, slowing down play. Worst of all, your problem player may have a penchant for starting fights within the party or for killing off other PCs.

How does a good DM deal with these problems without spoiling the fun for the rest of the group? This article examines why these situations occur and what can be done to alleviate them.

Problem players

Players who want to run characters with higher ability scores and more firepower than the average dragon are a fairly common nuisance. Rather than attempting to deal with them during the game itself and creating unwelcome interruptions for your other players, take a good look at a player's character sheets *before* you accept them. It is more constructive to be firm with your players at

the outset about what you will not tolerate in your game.

Setting your limits

No matter how much a player nags, do not allow yourself to be cajoled, persuaded, or bullied into allowing an unbalanced character into your game. Put a ceiling on character score totals. This will vary in different games, but for the AD&D and D&D® games' six-characteristic system, I recommend that you allow a character's combined scores to be no more than 85 in a beginning game and 100 in a more advanced game. Count additional strength from 18/01 to 18/00 at 1 point per additional /20 or fraction thereof. Thus, an 18/01 strength counts for 19 points, not 18, and 18/00 strength counts for 23 points towards the total.

Don't be afraid to take powerful magical items away from your PCs. Items that are primarily used as crutches rather than as creative role-playing aids should definitely be excised. If your players can always blast their way out of any challenge with sheer firepower rather than having to save themselves with their problem-solving skills, no one, least of all the DM, is going to have any fun. However, minor magicks and one-shot items like potions and scrolls that must be

applied intelligently to be effective can definitely enhance a game. Leave your PCs enough of these to help them survive in your campaign, but not enough for them to use carelessly or casually.

If players absolutely insist on coming into your game with more magical items than you really want them to have, there are many things you can do to make the possession of these items a lot more trouble than they're worth. I can't possibly list them all in a short article, but here are a few ideas.

Does one of your PCs have a magical item that originally belonged to a god, demigod, or fiend? Perhaps he, she, or it wants the item back and will stop at nothing to get it. Alternatively, send your PCs through a trapped corridor that triggers a magnitude of nastiness in direct proportion to the amount of magic it detects on the party.

If there is a sentient or semi-sentient item around, a DM can have no end of fun with it. That sword, staff, or amulet may have its own secret agenda that it is not sharing with the party, and it may go to any lengths to accomplish these goals. This particular scenario is limited only by your creativity, and if it is handled correctly, it can give your PCs perpetual nightmares and a permanent phobia of magical items.

Don't forget to demand saving throws for each and every magical item carried when a character survives a conflagration, a fall from any height, or even a bout of hand-to-hand combat. PCs will eventually lose at least a few items that way, and this process can be made tedious enough that your players may eventually get the hint.

Keeping players happy

Once you have gotten the PCs pared down to a reasonable level, you are left with the task of keeping them happy with what they have. The desire to play super-powerful characters frequently stems from the player's power fantasies. After all, what player does not want a character who is looked up to by the common folk as a mighty warrior, mage, or priest? There are few vicarious thrills in playing a character who is merely Joe or Jane Average. What many gamers are looking for is the thrill of role-playing an important, powerful person—a hero. Unfortunately, many players' idea of a powerful hero can be somewhat unrealistic at best.

Characters of low level in a world where the typical encounter is an adult dragon are obviously out of place. Your players will feel powerless and ineffective in this campaign, and they will derive very little enjoyment from the game before their characters are killed. Likewise, characters of high level who storm small farming villages by raining *fireballs* down from their flying citadels are not going to enjoy themselves for very long, either.

The obvious solution would seem to be to set high-level challenges for high-level characters. Some DMs are creative enough

to keep pace with their players, at least for awhile. The problem with this is that unless you are very strict about doling out treasure, your games eventually begin to resemble a nuclear escalation scenario. As your PCs gain more firepower, so does the opposition. This can get pretty ridiculous after awhile, with gods and major fiends showing up regularly on your common encounters table.

A large part of my enjoyment of an FRPG is the ability to suspend disbelief and enter whole-heartedly into the fantasy world, behaving for awhile as if elves and goblins actually existed and could cast spells and wield swords. A super-high-powered game, with PCs battling gods and fiends at every turn, definitely challenges my ability to suspend disbelief and removes much of my enjoyment of the game.

Where's the happy medium? I have found that the best solution is effective role-playing—on the part of the DM. Your players must feel that their characters are important people, at least in comparison with the majority of the NPCs and creatures that they encounter. In fact, the majority of the people and creatures that they encounter should actually be less powerful than the party. The average innkeeper should treat the adventurers deferentially, the average beggar should grovel, and the average woodlands creature should run like a spooked bunny from a bunch of people stomping noisily around in armor. Even most larger creatures, whether natural or magical, know that there is easier dinner to be had than a group of armed adventurers. Chances are, many more of them will turn tail and run rather than stay to fight.

Unfortunately, most DMs prefer to gloss over such amusing and ego-feeding encounters in favor of more "exciting" ones. The player's reaction to this is to perceive the entire campaign world as one in which his character is not particularly heroic or significant, if every single person or creature that is encountered is a serious challenge. Your players will feel much better about their characters if you occasionally let them interact realistically with normal, zero-level humans who will treat the party like the heroes and adventurers that they are.

Infighting

Conflict within the party is another common headache for game referees. Several situations can lead to party conflict. One of the most common is a conflict between characters, which is often fairly easy to resolve and can actually be used to add more of a role-playing flavor to the game, as in the following example:

Dael stubbornly shook his shaggy-maned head, his huge arms crossed in front of his stocky, fur-clad body. "I trust no magic," he growled. "I will smash through the tomb's door."

"You're an idiot," Natic the Clever groaned. "You don't know what's on the other side. Let the mage deal with it!"

Dael bristled ominously at the thief's words, hefting his warhammer in his thick, meaty hands.

"Peace, Kerathai the elf-mage said calmly. "Friend Dael, your great strength would be honorable used if you would climb that tree yonder to give us a better view of what lies about. Perhaps you might spy a mightier foe for you to smash with you hammer, and I will give the matter of the door more thought."

Grumpy but appeased, the giant barbarian wandered off to scout, while Natic breathed a sigh of relief and Kerathai turned his full concentration to the runes caved into the stone.

It takes some exemplary role-players to solve a conflict this neatly, but most groups of characters eventually reach some accommodation. Encourage your players to negotiate among themselves in character to add to the role-playing atmosphere.

If there are characters in the party who are likely to be diametrically opposed to one another, such as the magic-using elf and the magic-hating barbarian, you may want to gently suggest that players choose different, more compatible characters to adventure together.

If the reason for the conflict lies with your players rather than their characters, there is no simple solution. A fair number of players delight in plots, secret intrigues, backstabbing, and party infighting, no matter which characters they are playing. In a party where the rest of the players prefer to run an "up-front" trusting game, a player who likes to backstab is an obvious problem. However, if your entire player group enjoys intrigue and deception within the party as part of their role-playing enjoyment, there is no reason for a DM to limit their fun.

Other conflicts between players can be harder to resolve, especially if personal feeling are involved. When two players, as opposed to two characters, get into an argument, the DM cannot always step in. What I have found to be the best course of action in these cases is to ask both players to leave the room temporarily so that they can discuss the issue between themselves. They are encouraged to return when they have solved their problem. In the meantime, the players who have not been making trouble can have a larger share of your attention.

If a player consistently wants his character to go in a different direction than the rest of the party, or to perform an action that the rest of the party does not agree on, this can also be a problem. In some cases, this player's independent action may actually be a beneficial one. Other times,

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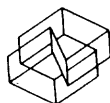
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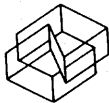
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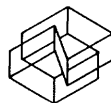
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his judgment may be dead wrong, and the results may endanger the entire party.

Although this particular problem may cause you an inordinate number of headaches, it is one that you must let your players solve on their own. Unless you have an unusual group, one or possibly two players who have shown their skill at problem-solving should eventually be recognized and listened to by the group. The players who have been around when these more experienced or intuitive gamers have proved their good judgment will tend to agree with them. Newer players may still argue, but eventually the majority of your players will know who is usually right about something and who is usually wrong. In time, most of your players will be willing to go along with the majority, who in turn are going along with the players whose judgment they trust. If a single player persists in arguing, he will eventually be dealt with by the group.

Keeping it going

The most important part of troubleshooting your games is making sure that everything is running at a smooth and comfortable pace. Ideally, each player should go home with the feeling that he received an equal share of the action and of your attention. This isn't always possible, but you should at least take pains to insure that no player goes home feeling as

if he was ignored or that he didn't have a chance to fully participate.

Character death is one of the most common of problems that slow down a game. In an adventure that you know will have a high mortality rate, each player can be requested to submit three characters that they would enjoy running. Two of these characters are held in reserve, to be introduced to the party should the first one meet an untimely end. This way, the death of a character does not necessarily mean the end of that player's participation in the game.

The drawback to this solution is that it encourages carelessness, because players are not penalized no matter what they have their characters do. The best way to offset this is to insist that the new character be introduced in a logical fashion, which might well take a few days of game time and perhaps an hour or so of real time. The real time delay is frustrating enough to discourage suicidal strategies and is also reasonable enough that a player whose character has died a "legitimate" death should not complain. Since players should not be allowed to benefit in any way from the deaths of their characters, encourage the party to distribute the belongings of the first character before that player's next character enters the scene. In addition, a player's second and third characters should be made much

less powerful and well-equipped than the original one, as a further incentive to the player to keep his starting character alive in the first place. Experience points, like treasure, are naturally not transferrable between a player's characters.

Another problem is that some of your players will be louder or more assertive than others; if you allow it, they may turn your campaign into a solo adventure. Encourage quieter players to speak up, and set up a system that requires input from each player in turn rather than allowing the players with the loudest voices and most outgoing personalities to take more actions than anyone else.

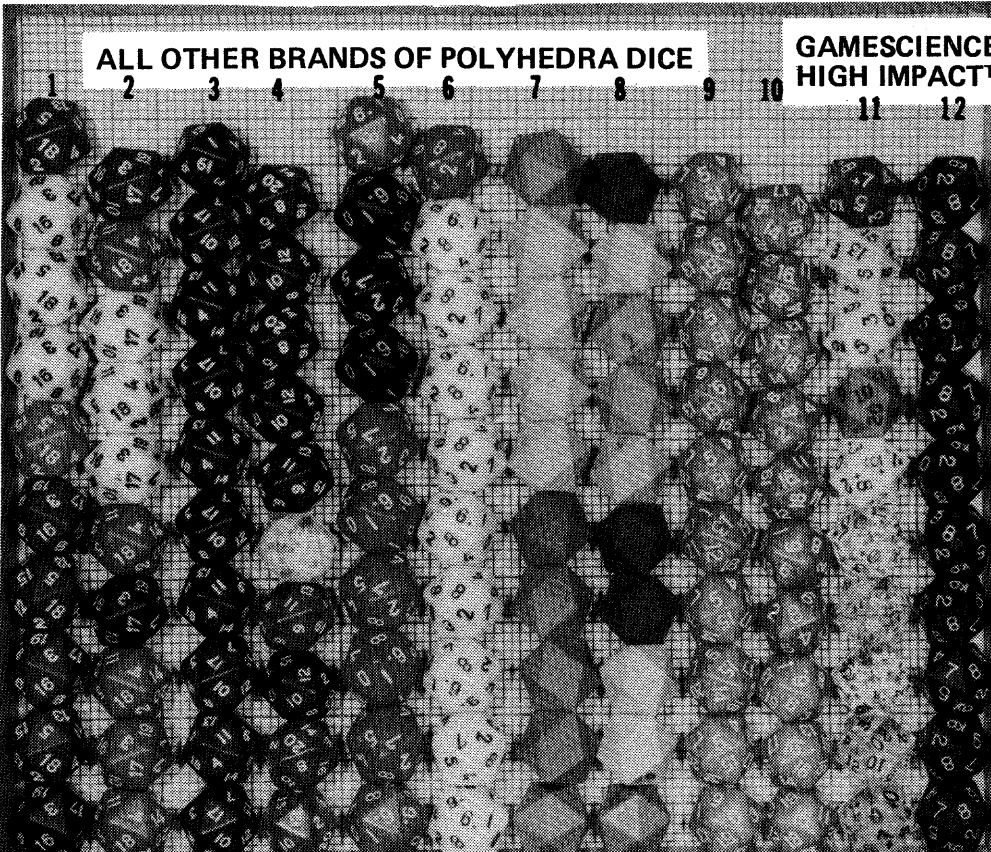
So that everyone concerned can derive maximum enjoyment from your game, deal with your "problem players" as quickly as possible. The point is to get on with the game and to devote as little of your precious time as possible to troubleshooting. Try to anticipate and deal with any potential problems during the set-up of your game, before the session begins.

When your game is running smoothly, with time for input from each player, it is always an enjoyable one. If problems and conflicts during the game are limited to the ones that were written into your adventure, you can consider yourself a truly successful game master. Ω

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Role-playing reviews

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Cybergaming in review (with trolls and elves), part 2

The next “cyberpunk” game had been [the SHADOWRUN* game] by FASA Corporation. The mechanics of this game were fine, but the scenario was rendered moronic by lame fantasy elements like orcs, dwarves, trolls, magicians, and dragons—all highly ideologically incorrect, according to the hard-edge, high-tech standards of cyberpunk science fiction. No true cyberpunk fan could play this game without vomiting.

—Bruce Sterling, “The Cyberpunk Bust”

I’m sure we all thank Bruce Sterling for sharing that with us. As one of the founders of “the Movement” of cyberpunk science fiction, Sterling has judged, with insight and sardonic humor, the doctrinal purity of many works. I count myself among his devotees. But, so far as I recall, I never once threw up during a SHADOWRUN game.

Does this confession put me beyond Sterling’s pale? After long thought, I believe not. Thought, in fact, is the key. Movement writing began with fresh thinking, and its best writers (in contrast to many “sci-fiberpunk” imitators) are big thinkers. They think hard—some say dangerous—thoughts about techno-culture shock, the global village, chaotic processes, mind-machine interfaces, malleable definitions of humanity and ethics, and (I nearly forgot) sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll. Naturally, Sterling would hope that works based on Movement ideas show the same thoughtfulness.

But good role-playing adventures, in my view, have nothing to do with this kind of thinking. They have different priorities: social interaction, clear goals for player characters, conflict, and a colorful and well-developed setting where players can feel at home (if not at ease). Movement-style big thinking doesn’t help an adventure run faster or smoother, and it may leave slow players struggling with info burn.

If you want to think, read the authentic works of the Movement or of the larger “apocalypse culture” that subsumed it—that trendy samizdat world of *Mondo 2000* and *boING-boING* magazines, Mark Pauline videos, the Well, RE/Search Publications, the Loompanics and Amok catalogues, the *Beyond Cyberpunk* hypertext stack, and the rest.

If you want to play, however, forget all that and go for FASA’s SHADOWRUN game.

SHADOWRUN* second-edition game

296-page hardcover book

FASA \$30

Design: Tom Dowd; first-edition design by Bob Charrette, Paul Hume, and Tom Dowd

Cover: Larry Elmore

Illustrators: Jeff Laubenstein, Joel Biske, Jim Nelson, Janet Aulizio, Dana Knutson, Tim Bradstreet, Mike Nielsen, Earl Geier, Dan Smith, Steve Venters, and Duane Loose

“Friday morning, we stacked 200 copies on the table just before the dealers’ room opened,” said FASA executive Sam Lewis at the 1992 GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ Game Fair. “The doors opened at 10, and this wall of people raced down our aisle toward our table. They were running, shouting. Twenty seconds after the room opened, they were three deep around our table, shouting, waving money, taking four and five copies at a time from the stack, which we quickly pulled back behind the table. We sold all 200 copies in 12 minutes.”

The new, second edition of the SHADOWRUN game sold all 500 hand-bound copies that FASA was able to bring, and could easily have sold triple that. I didn’t get one; I barely got to flip the pages of the sole display copy. I have read only draft text posted on Scorpius’s Gaming Roundtable on the GENIE computer network. My fellow reviewer Rick Swan will try to discuss the game at length in a later column; for now, here’s a brief preview.

Once over lightly: The original 1989 design has undergone less revision than the second (or later) editions of other games. The central premise, “Where Man Meets Magic and Machine,” of course remains unchanged: In A.D. 2011, a long natural cycle ends, as predicted by the ancient Mayan calendar, and magic returns to a world beset by social collapse and transformed by high technology. Now, in 2053 (three years later than the first edition’s campaign time), an epidemic has wiped out the Orient, India, and other areas that FASA’s designers evidently didn’t want to worry about. North America has been balkanized into several smaller nations, a common feature of many near-future games. Computer hackers, or “deckers,” mentally travel the Matrix, a unified world information network.

The returning magic works in both a Native American shamanic tradition and in a more wizardly “hermetic” fashion. It has transformed one-tenth of humanity into elves, dwarves, orks, and trolls. (Let’s see: Amerind totem magic, working by a Mayan calendar, creates western European mythical races—okay, got it.) With all its marketing hooks, like gun-toting wizards and corporate dragons and elven deckers, it’s no wonder the SHADOWRUN game phenomenon inspires gamers to frenzy.

The new edition’s principal changes come in the combat rules, which sets all weapons’ staging to 2 and revises firing rates, initiative, ballistic armor values, and dice pool rules. Now the game master can set the game’s lethality level either to the current mode, where characters in armored jackets can shrug off submachine-gun blasts, or to a deadlier style where even heavily armored characters must exercise prudence.

I applaud this flexibility and wish more game systems endorsed the idea. (My own SHADOWRUN GM should like this, too. I remember the plaintive way he said, “It’s too hard to kill people!”)

The second edition also tinkers with magic and integrates the rules from the *Grimoire* supplement. Dowd made many smaller changes and streamlined the rules organization. And the second edition at last introduces an index! When I told my fellow players this, they gasped in relief, as though burdens had been lifted from their shoulders.

Influence: The SHADOWRUN game interests me not only for its rules and well-elaborated game background, but for its effect on the role-playing field. For instance, the first edition’s stylish, art-heavy graphic approach raised the bar for every other company that wants its products to look sharp. More importantly, the SHADOWRUN game assured the ascendancy of campaign background over rules, a trend that shows continued growth.

From the hobby’s earliest days, most RPGs have emphasized either *rules* or *world*. As early as 1975, you could buy either the original D&D® game rules (no detailed world background at that time) or the old EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE* game, a forgettable rules system (at least, I’ve forgotten it) based on M. A. R. Barker’s fascinating and immensely detailed world of Tekumel. In the late 1970s and early ‘80s we had, on one hand, dozens or hundreds of rules systems with absent or incidental settings; on the other, we had a lot of bad games based on media licenses, as well as “generic” worlds or background supplements like Columbia Games’ HARN* line and the excellent Flying Buffalo *City-book* series. To my mind, only the RUNE-QUEST* game, in its first couple of Chaosium editions, handled both rules and world superbly.

In the last six or eight years, the two extremes have gradually met. In that time, with the market apparently near saturation for new rules designs (at least those unaccompanied by a major advertising push), a neat world background has become the chief ornament of most new games, even those with respectable mechanics. Then, too, publishers’ newfound cross-marketing savvy has led them to create games with “high-concept” backgrounds suitable for licensing. TSR made the beachheads here, but FASA—and in particular, the SHADOWRUN game—showed that smaller companies could win big at it. I wonder what the second edition will show?

SHADOWRUN sourcebooks

What a stack! More than a lot of RPGs, but like any game that capitalizes on its campaign background, the SHADOWRUN game leans hard on its supplements. These achieve uniformly high quality through terrific covers and packaging, dense and meaty text, and style—lots of style.

Most game lines have style they haven't even used yet, and that's no compliment. SHADOWRUN supplements use every style trick there is, and they occasionally go overboard. For instance, take the early *Street Samurai Catalog* equipment supplement (116 pages, \$12). The book is nominally a pirated on-line copy of the Ares Arms/Wiremasters 2050 catalog of weapons, armor, accessories, cyberware, a couple of motorcycles, and the essential Firepower ammunition (page 35) that instantly became the default ammo in my playing group.

Author Tom Dowd pioneered a creative conceit for the *Catalog*: The deckers who read the pirated text annotate it with the real skinny, rumors, or anecdotes that serve as adventure ideas. This lovely notion combined atmosphere, campaign depth, and readability, and it quickly became a SHADOWRUN game standard. But the recent *ShadowTech* equipment book (120 pages, \$15), written as straight rules addressed to the player, also includes this "on-line" kibitzing. In a word: Huh? Real-life game and campaign world threaten to become indistinguishable in the SHADOWRUN game style. Careful, gang.

The essentials: Those two equipment books, *Street Samurai Catalog* and *ShadowTech*, belong in any SHADOWRUN game player's library. The *Catalog's* goods figure prominently in many of the published adventures, and its extensive illustrations, samurai archetypes, and cyberware rules enhance every campaign.

Though it lists fewer of the weapons players crave, *ShadowTech* gives better value for the money. It offers many advanced gadgets: bioware like the supratyroid gland and tailored pheromones; bone lacing, cranial cyberdecks (price: up to five million nuyen), and other cyberware; genetech like monoclonal antibodies and aging reversal; a Chemistry section with ACTH, DMSO, cyanide, atropine, blood substitute, and ruthenium polymers for camouflage suits; complicated new rules for bioware and nasty rules for drug addiction; and an important reference section on the SHADOWRUN worlds legal system.

Many games publish "must-have" equipment books. Again, the SHADOWRUN game surpasses the others with style. *ShadowTech* author Karl Wu impressively rationalizes all these gadgets with plausible science—human biology, chemistry, genetics, materials science, and computer engineering. He's a real polymath. His imagination lifts this book out of the ordinary ranks.

For all the quality and breadth of the nonmagical supplements, many players would call magic the essential feature of the SHADOWRUN game. I suspect you can run a fine SHADOWRUN campaign without much magic, though I have never heard of one. The campaign material claims everyday magic is rare, but shadowrunners encounter it routinely in the

published adventures. For this reason, if no other, first-edition players need Paul Hume's *The Grimoire*, subtitled "The Manual of Practical Thaumaturgy, 14th Edition, 2050" (128 pages, \$12).

The books scope amazes me. On every page, you find neat new ideas, always presented with a shrewd sense of playability in the campaign. Physical adepts, metamagic, artificing rules (creation of spell foci), elemental spell effects, sewer alligator totem spirits, provocative "Ordeal" rules for initiation into magic, metaplanar geography (a classier, more Jungian approach than conventional AD&D® game planes), "watcher" spirits you can summon to follow and insult a victim, free spirits with True Names, toxic and insect shamans (ick!), magical groups like the Sisterhood of Ariadne and Mitsuham Research Unit 12—all of these should provoke ideas for mage PCs and GMs alike.

I admire *The Grimoire's* magic rules a lot for their flavor, range, and integrity. However, their learning curve strikes me as steep, their upper reaches open mainly to power gamers who study the subject as closely as real mages would. Still, few works treat game magic with such authenticity, such awareness of the roles magic has played in society from ancient times to the present—and the future.

Character books: These offer new rules and detailed explorations of one or more character types, such as *The Grimoire* for mages. "Rigger" PCs, the ones equipped with jacks to drive vehicles mentally, also get a supplement, *The Rigger Black Book*, as do PC journalists (*Shadowbeat*); I have not seen these. One that I do have at hand is the decker book, *Virtual Realities* (157 pages, \$15).

William Gibson created cyberspace in his 1984 novel *Neuromancer*. In other hands, and especially in role-playing games, it has become both a defining element and a travesty of the sub-genre. As a decker, you mentally enter the computer network called the Matrix. Here, you infiltrate computer systems, depicted in cyberspace as pyramids, monoliths, and the like. Confronting another hacker or the dreaded IC (Intrusion Countermeasures), you see a vivid attacking image, created either in your own software or by the network. You and your opponent fight using various software tricks, dramatized by software as blows, dodges, flame clouds, etc. It's like the movies *Tron* and *Lawnmower Man*.

I like the cyberspace combat in the SHADOWRUN game (and in R. Talsorian's CYBERPUNK® game), but a nagging conscience reminds me that it makes no sense. If a Black IC program wants to kill you, neither of you would waste processor time animating the image of a black-clad samurai or chrome dragon. You would sacrifice pretty visuals so you could act faster.

On the other hand, pretty visuals make for good gaming, as *Virtual Realities* recognizes. Its Fuchi Incorporated Matrix Tour, with pages of glossy color computer

graphics, represents this hobby's state of the art. Christopher Kubasik's title novella (or, as FASA's back-cover copy carefully explains for the hard-of-thinking, his "novella-length fiction piece") artfully conveys the visionary landscapes of cyberspace in a tense and surprising story set entirely in the Matrix. And, in his "Hacker House" catalog, author Tom Dowd offers dozens of visual motifs for programs that are basically identical in game terms; these eight pages win me over. For example, page 75: "Friendly Puppy is a particularly annoying reveal program. . . it creates a small, horribly cute puppy that follows the target [decker] around, yapping wildly for attention. Gives you the shivers just thinking about it."

Yes, the visuals make the game—but the concept breaks it. How many players have ruefully told me that SHADOWRUN game play halts when the decker comes online? For the next 15 minutes, everyone else watches dully as the GM runs the decker through the Matrix. Dowd says the decker problem is no different from any other character going one-on-one with the GM to (for instance) contact an informant. I disagree. As a decker, your entire conception, your reason for existence, inherently divorces you from the party. You're a solo act, supreme in one inaccessible environment and worthless elsewhere. It's a bad character conception for social role-playing. The dry, complicated rules in *Virtual Realities* don't help, either; few of them provoke adventure ideas as *The Grimoire* does. Friendly Puppies aside, this book glorifies and enlarges the game's greatest weakness.

Location books: Any GM interested in more than a couple of one-shot SHADOWRUN adventures inevitably needs one or more supplements describing its unique campaign world. I have heard of many campaigns that use the game's world background without its rules, but never the other way around. The backgrounds sheer scope makes GM improvisation without supplements difficult; fortunately, the support line's quality also renders it unnecessary.

The early *Seattle Sourcebook* (178 pages with fold-out map, \$15) expands spectacularly on the skimpy material included in the SHADOWRUN rulebook. Author Boy F. Peterson takes a global view of its city, unlike the superb *Night City Sourcebook* for R. Talsorian's CYBERPUNK® game (reviewed in DRAGON® issue #185). Where the R. Talsorian book concentrates on great numbers of individual places and their immediate game purposes, the Seattle book describes a suburb at a time, its individual details merging into an overall cyberpunk attitude. The two books complement each other nicely, and both describe their cities in detail unprecedented outside of fantasy RPGs.

The *Night City Sourcebook* also tries to cover some of the territory FASA traverses in *Sprawl Sites*, an unusually useful Swiss

army knife of a supplement: maps, generic encounter charts, NPCs, campaign background—they're all here in compressed instant form. Need a magic-related encounter for local color in Seattle's Barrens? Here's half a dozen. Suppose your PCs, wanting to infiltrate an enemy stronghold, do what my group once did: steal a fire truck, get the decker to set off a fire alarm inside the stronghold, and roll in with sirens blaring. You'll need a fire-station map in a hurry, and behold, here it is. (The group later pulled the same stunt a second time. Then the fire-station commissioner put out a contract on them.)

I am no fan of either random-encounter tables or maps, but when you need them, *Sprawl Sites* presents them with imagination and without pretension.

FASA also offers location books for other areas—the *London Sourcebook* and *The Neo-Anarchist's Guide to North America*. I have not yet seen these.

Evaluation: If you're just starting to play the SHADOWRUN game, you need not only the basic rules but also, practically speaking, the two excellent equipment books, *Street Samurai Catalog* and *ShadowTech*. Deckers can use the *Virtual Realities* sourcebook, though I would hardly call it essential. Those running mages, either PCs or NPCs, definitely need *The Grimoire* (but wait for the upcoming second edition, compatible with the new rules; this is the only first-edition supplement FASA plans to revise).

The game backgrounds intricacy rewards those who undertake a full campaign. For this I strongly recommend *Sprawl Sites* and the *Seattle Sourcebook*.

SHADOWRUN adventures

There's this one SHADOWRUN scenario—can't recall the name—well, here's the plot. An anonymous "Mr. Johnson" recruits the shadowrunner PCs for a brief, "strictly routine" mission. The PCs take the mission, calamity strikes, there's a firefight, and they barely escape the routine mission in time to collect their check. However, the mission offended a major criminal bigwig, who hires one incredibly competent super-assassin to dispatch the PCs. Though this human tank has a lengthy resume and is presumably smarter than a lump of mud, he nonetheless charges straight at the PCs through the front door of their home base. They drill him and search the body, which holds clues pointing to Mr. Bigwig.

Somewhere in here, the PC decker decides to infiltrate Bigwig's computer system, finding clues galore while the other players take a pizza break and watch a ball game.

Then the PCs go to Puyallup. Many of the world's criminal masterminds seem to live in Puyallup, an otherwise unremarkable Seattle suburb of 2050—zoning, maybe? The PCs infiltrate Bigwig's stronghold, stop a major ritual before it destroys Seattle, and kill everybody. End of adventure.

The name, the name—ah, I remember, it was *Total Eclipse*. No, wait, sorry, it was *Bottled Demon*. Hold it, I'm wrong, it was *Queen Euphoria* . . . I think.

Boy, I must be really forgetful. It couldn't possibly be that many of the SHADOWRUN game adventures to date have been formulaic and dull.

Two adventures that I do remember vividly are *The Universal Brotherhood* and *Harlequin*. *The Universal Brotherhood* (90-page sourcebook and 55-page adventure, \$12), by Nigel Findley and Christopher Kubasik, starts with a mission to recover a necklace. It leads to the national self-help organization called the Universal Brotherhood. Then the adventure gets weird and spooky. Again, as with the sourcebooks, style makes the difference here. Findley contributes a huge, brilliantly written novella (excuse me, "novella-length fiction piece"), an epistolary account of a reporter's investigation of the Brotherhood. The PCs find this clue-filled printout during the adventure.

Here, once again, style overcomes common sense. You're running the game for your players, their characters find this thing, then you have to stop for a week while everybody reads it. And you thought decker runs slowed things down! In certain respects, *The Universal Brotherhood* is the best-presented adventure I've ever seen, but it pushes too far beyond the envelope for practical purposes. (Note also that the cover gives away the big surprise of the adventure. If you do run this, keep it under wraps—literally.)

Harlequin (151 pages, \$12) is by Tom Dowd, Ken St. Andre, John Faughnan, W. G. Armintrout, Jerry Epperson, Paul R. Hume, Lester W. Smith, and James L. Long. This campaign, designed as episodic installments interspersed among other adventures, casts the PCs as pawns in a vendetta between two ancient nemeses. The shadowrunners travel to Bavaria, to Amazonia (i.e., Brazil), and even to exotic Columbia, Missouri, always taking something and leaving something else and never understanding why.

The killer here is that the GM doesn't understand why either! "The GM knows only enough of the story line to interweave a number of adventures," Tom Dowd writes on page 146. "Future game products will be based on hidden elements of *Harlequin*. . . . GMs are not the only ones who might read an adventure book like *Harlequin*, so we don't want to give away any surprises." Gee, thanks. Dowd tells me audience reaction to this has been positive, or at least understanding. Not here! I want to know *everything*. Apparently the SHADOWRUN novels will clear up the mystery about the time you read this; we all just sit on our hands until then.

That quibble aside, *Harlequin* achieves striking effects through its component sections' cumulative power. The first moment that the team realizes the connection between disparate scenarios is magical.

The adventures strike various tones, from tongue-in-cheek humor at Baron Munchausen's Bavarian castle to jungle adventure in Amazonia (including a stupid encounter with Jivaro headhunters—here's one reason why Bruce Sterling sneers at this stuff!). The treat of the book, Paul Hume's "Counterstroke," transcends the rest by its memorable characters: the jovial torturer Doctor What and the lisping troll, Iggy. *Harlequin's* ending may mystify players and GM alike, but all should recognize that they've been through a heck of an adventure.

Evaluations: Of the published SHADOWRUN adventures I've seen, *Universal Brotherhood* and *Harlequin* largely achieve ambitious goals. Both present logistical challenges to even an experienced GM. The other adventures—ehh! File and forget.

Short & sweet

Lands of Dr. Doom boxed set, by Scott Davis, Steven Schend, and Anthony Herring (TSR, \$20). I can't remember the last MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ supplement I could find much to say about, either pro or con. This latest big box, all about Marvel's noble but villainous genius, Dr. Doom, continues that generic tradition with 40 pages of summaries of comic stories about Doom, 50 pages of gadgets he's used in these stories, and a rundown of his homeland of Latveria that ranges from dishwater-dull to weird. (Do you believe that every student at Latveria's university gets an android roommate who rats on him to the staff supervisor?) In 192 pages, no one ever gets around to talking about how to use Dr. Doom in game adventures. Oddly, the 32-page scenario book hardly includes Doom at all; his Doomsman robots steal the show. The set also describes other Balkan lands of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™: Symkaria (home of the mercenaries of Silver Sable International) and Transia (home of the High Evolutionary and the Cthulhoid cult of the Darkhold). I'm glad to see role-playing notes for the major characters, and the maps of Dr. Doom's castle and Doomstadt look nice. If you want 40 pages of summaries of Dr. Doom's adventures, you'll probably like those 40 pages. Boy, I wish I knew what to say about these things. . . .

Blood Brothers 2, by various authors (Chaosium, \$18.95). WHAT is the dread secret of Count Karlenstein in his (dum-da-DUM!) Chateau of Blood? WHY are repulsive aliens French-kissing Gidget and Moon Dog at the beach? WHO is the mysterious Drifter in the Eastwood Saloon in 1870s Yellow Flats? Fifteen designers answer two of these and other pressing questions in this second collection of B-movie scenarios for Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU* game. This sequel offers one-evening features in nine different genres like Splat-ter, Post-Holocaust Cannibal Zombie, Killer Clown, and, of course, Detached Body

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Parts. Major points for originality go to Geoff Gillan's *Nightmare in Silence* (a valiant attempt at a completely silent role-playing scenario) and to Marcus Rowland's tribute to Mexican wrestling films, *El Tigre, y la Piramede de Destruccon*. Ticket stubs, insightful sidebars, and hilarious coming attractions help set the tone of camp horror, as do the complete lyrics to "An Alien Kicked Sand in My Face." Cue the theremin!

Famous Game Designer Trading Cards: Pack #1: Members of the GAMA Hall of Fame (Flying Buffalo, \$.75). For this year's GEN CON/ORIGINS game fair, Rick Loomis of Flying Buffalo assembled this fun ziplock bag of low-budget 2½" x 3½" cards with photos, bibliodata, and quotations from seven industry greats: Frank Chadwick, James Dunnigan (the Johann Sebastian Bach of war games), Steve Jackson, Loomis himself, Marc Miller, Redmond Simonsen, and Greg Stafford. "We don't expect to make any money on these cards; we're doing it mostly so we can show our parents that we really are 'famous,'" Loomis writes. "This first batch was selected by taking the first seven who sent me a photo!" Here is one more honor to which the rest of us can aspire. Ω

In memoriam: Curtis M. Scott

On his way to the 1992 GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ game fair, game designer Curtis M. Scott died in a car accident. Curtis, a talented and conscientious designer, wrote TSR's *Complete Spacefarer's Manual* and FR12 *Horde Campaign*, wrote the *Conan* and *Humanx* sourcebooks for Steve Jackson Games' GURPS* game, and co-wrote the new *Cyber Hero* for Hero Games. For several years, he and his wife, Mary, organized the splendid annual Coastcon gaming and science-fiction convention in Biloxi, Miss.

I admired Curtis's unusual wit, decency, and enormous drive. He had recently been accepted to a prestigious computer-science program at Carnegie-Mellon University, and he had taken on a major project for TSR's DARK SUN™ campaign world.

Those who enjoyed Curtis Scott's work may make contributions to the trust fund set up by Mary for their son. Contributions should be sent to:

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Pittsburg PA 15213

Please make your check payable to
Phillip Scott.

— Allen Varney

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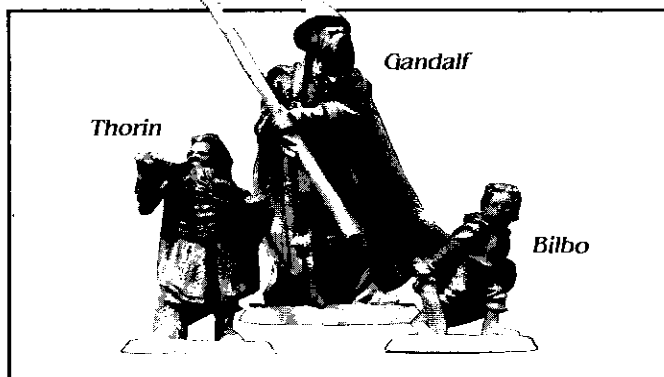
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Through the eyes of a first-timer

The Game Wizards

by Thomas M. Reid

I finally made it to my first GEN CON[®]/ORIGINS[™] game fair. I've been gaming for more than a decade and I always wanted to go to one, but I never seemed to have the time (or money). This year, I got there. I made it to the granddaddy of all gaming conventions.

I've been working at TSR since right after last year's game fair, so I've had a whole year to listen to everybody else here tell me all about what the GEN CON game fair was going to be like. (You've never been to the game fair?! Oooh! This is going to be great! Hey, guys, Thomas has never been to a GEN CON game fair!) Plus, I got to sit in on a whole bunch of meetings to decide exactly what my responsibilities were going to be. Imagine the entire Product Research and Development Department (that's all the game designers and editors) crammed into one conference room, trying to decide who is going to run the XXVc[™] game demo. Scary.

Even with all this buildup, I still had my socks knocked off when Thursday morning finally rolled around. If you read Roger Moore's editorial in DRAGON[®] Magazine issue #186, then you already know about THE CASTLE. I stood and stared at it with a huge grin on my face for ten minutes. It was that awesome. I ended up



running AL-QADIM[™] game demos, and within 30 seconds of the doors opening to the public, our table was surrounded by gamers. I have never seen so many people in one place wanting *me* to run an AD&D[®] game for them. Actually, my partner Jeff Grubb ran the first two demos, while I grabbed miniatures, passed out character sheets, and tried to keep Jim Ward from beating our gong to a pulp on the first day. Jeff was a hard act to follow, but I did all right for my first time. It's really lost in a blur of dice-rolling and miniature-moving. I heard toward the end of the convention that the running joke at the sales booth was that as soon as the gong sounded, they all knew that in half an hour there would be a rush on AL-QADIM products.

Checking into the hotel Thursday afternoon was an adventure itself. I found out that I was going to be sharing a king-sized bed with my roommate, Rich Baker, instead of getting a double bed to myself as I had expected. This also happened to quite a few of my coworkers and reminded us of a great line from the film *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*. ("Those aren't pillows!") As everyone at TSR had warned me, the elevator was chock full most of the time with tired, sweaty people who *really* wanted to get to their rooms. ("If you knew you had to get off on the third floor, why did you get in *first*? Better yet, why didn't you take the stairs?!")

On Thursday evening, Steve Winter invited me to go eat some "really great Mexican food" with him and some other TSR folks. Being from Texas and loving Mexican food, I jumped at the chance. Along with Dori "The Barbarian" Watry and Andria Hayday, we took off walking.

(It's only ten or fifteen minutes away, guys. Honest.) Half an hour later, we were in the industrial section of town. (Steve, are you sure you remember where this place is?) Ten minutes after that, we were asking for directions. We finally got there and the food was great. During dinner, we talked about why Andria spent part of the day hooting like an owl (demos again), more great movie lines, whether anybody felt like going to the Safe House after dinner, and whether we should take a cab back to the hotel. (We did.)

After dinner, a couple of us went back over to the convention hall to check out the open gaming. There were people everywhere, with a lot of them looking like they'd been there for 12 hours or more (which they probably had) and appearing badly in need of propping up (several were sprawled face down in their dice, asleep). There was one group of people who had taken over a corner of a hallway, an area about the size of a three-



car garage, and had miniature World War II ships arrayed across the floor, Inverted foam-rubber pyramids made great smoke plumes. It looked like one turn took about an hour to complete, which is probably why everyone had their shoes off. I don't think I've ever seen so many people as dedicated to gaming before, but I guess the 25th GEN CON/ORIGINS game fair was the place for it.

Friday was much the same. The woman who walked around the TSR castle with her belly-dancer's costume was very inter-



esting (do you think that's going to stay on her hips?). I got sick of overpriced hot dogs and pizza slices quickly, but there is something compelling about buying the stuff anyway (maybe my boss's threats about being late for my next demo). My wife Teresa and Rich's wife Kim drove up to Milwaukee that afternoon after they got off work, and we all decided to go somewhere for dinner where we could relax and get away from gaming for awhile. The group at the next table talked about their game tournament for an hour and a half while we ate and tried to ignore them.

The TSR party on Friday night was a lot of fun, although the food ran out before most of us even got there. (Who was that licking dip up off the carpet?) As more and more people came in, the conversations got louder and louder, until at one point I stopped and realized that we were all shouting at the top of our lungs. I did get in on one conversation with Steve Winter and John Nephew, who told us a story about how his car got broken into while he had left it for 15 minutes in front of some condos in Baltimore.

Saturday was a rough day for me and demos. All the old hands around here were smart enough to get me to run AL-QADIM demos *all day long*. (Thanks, Jeff and Andria. If I never hear another story about a magical bowl, it will be too soon.) Some guy in an orc mask traded me a GEN CON game fair 25th Anniversary collector card for a handful of colored stones, and then looked at me like I was supposed to be excited by this. The clincher though, was when I almost walked out of the place with the red fez that we all wore for the demos still on my head.

Saturday night, some friends from Indianapolis finally caught up with me, and we decided that we'd all go out to dinner with



a bunch of my coworkers. We headed to the Sezchuan place across the street from the hotel, where I ended up at one end of the table and Jerry and David (my Indianapolis friends) were at the other. I spent the evening talking to Troy Denning about why he takes martial arts classes and the finer points of game editing while Jerry kept the rest of the group in stitches with his tale of how a moose once stole a neighbor's wooden swingset. (It's true.) David Wise (of TSR, not the David from Indianapolis) ordered something from the menu called "Chicken with Lava Sauce," which, when it finally arrived about an hour later, consisted of one whole chicken neatly impaled on a stake and smothered in some sort of reddish sauce that was burning mightily. I had no idea there was volcanic activity in Sezchuan China.

Sunday finally rolled around, and I was dragging my feet a bit. Fortunately, I had to do only some seminars, and then I would graduate from my first GEN CON game fair. This was by no means a cinch, however. My final seminar was "Stump the Game Lizards," with Jeff "House Name" Grubb, Steve "Old Man" Winter, David "Zeb" Cook, Rich Baker, and Julia Martin. My favorite question was the one about the fighter and the gnome who are trapped in a dungeon with no equipment, and the fighter is forced to pick up the gnome and use him like a club. The question was, "How much damage would that cause?" In response, Zeb wanted to know, "To whom?" Jeff Grubb replied, "Is he using the gnome one-handed or two-handed?" After four days of conventioning, this was quite funny. After the seminar, I saw a lot of people to whom I had to say goodbye. My good friend Sam won first place in some CALL OF CTHULHU* tournament, and was proudly toting around his lucite-encased "brain" trophy. Way to go, Sam.

At last, however, it was over. On my way home (my wife drove), I considered all I had experienced at my first GEN CON game fair. I decided that the game fair is not something that you can remember as an event, but rather as a series of spectacles. It's not just about gaming, although that's certainly the foundation. No, the GEN CON game fair is about getting together with people that you like and having a good time, and then sharing a lot of

great memories with them afterward. I've got plenty of great memories of this GEN CON game fair, and I'm glad to have such great friends and coworkers with which to share them. Thanks. I also want to thank all of you out there who came to the 25th GEN CON/ORIGINS game fair, because it was all of us packed together in one convention hall that made this party what it was. Perhaps the best way to sum it up is to quote the sign posted near the end of the weekend. It said something like, "Slot 14B: Storm the TSR castle. Acetone provided, other equipment optional."



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Knights,
from chivalric to Jedi

THE FOREVER KING

Molly Cochran and Warren
Murphy

Tor 0-312-85227-4 \$21.95

The Arthurian legends have been so well mined by fantasy novelists that finding a fresh approach to the material counts for a great deal in any new attempt. Unfortunately, that's the only virtue *The Forever King* can claim for itself. The novel's striking premise is badly overbalanced by a cast of characters who are all marching to different drummers, and whose assorted magical powers are neither consistent nor convincing.

First there's Hal Wocznia, ex-FBI agent, who wins a trip to London that leads him into more danger than he ever faced during his former career. Then there's his benefactor, who proves to be none other than Merlin of legend, who is keeping an eye on both Hal and 10-year-old Arthur Blessing. Arthur, though he doesn't know it, is the reincarnation of King Arthur himself. That wouldn't ordinarily be dangerous, but an accident has brought the Holy Grail itself into Arthur's hands, and its prior possessor, Saladin, will go to any length to get the cup back. Saladin has been made effectively immortal through the Grails power, and he is not inclined to share the privilege.

Part of the problem with *The Forever King* is that authors Molly Cochran and Warren Murphy can't decide which of these four characters is the real protagonist. Though Arthur is catalyst and key-stone to the plot, he's also mostly a bystander and pawn. Hal takes the lead in

the present-day action, but when the novel makes one of its frequent forays back in time, he's left behind in favor of Merlin and Saladin. Merlin, meanwhile, refuses to take the firm hand in modern events that he does in the past, and Saladin's role is too narrowly defined to give him any chance to steal center stage.

The Forever King lacks a coherent vision of the Arthurian legend. All the pieces are there, but it's as if Cochran and Murphy have assembled them from a dozen different jigsaw puzzles. Merlin's magical powers wax and wane in no discernible pattern, and both Merlin and Saladin are quite reasonably mystified at the abilities of witch-girl Nimue. Arthur's reincarnation is never explained, and the late appearance of Excalibur is barely an afterthought. There's no sense of internal consistency in the authors' choices, and the novel represents neither a historically minded nor a wholly magical view of matters Arthurian.

If Cochran and Murphy had stuck to writing a modern-day sequel to the original King Arthur tales, *The Forever King* might have been an appealing novel. Instead, it's an illustration of what can go wrong when a world, whether literary or game-based, doesn't have a well-defined set of ground rules behind it.

KNIGHT'S WYRD

Debra Doyle and James D.

Macdonald

HBJ/Jane Yolen Books

0-15-200764-4

\$16.95

Knight's Wyrd has most of the ingredients of a solid tale of chivalric adventure: a well-drawn hero, a varied corps of human and magical adversaries, and a plot laced with well-crafted riddles. Yet it's a book that is frustratingly hard to enjoy despite its strengths. Authors Debra Doyle and James Macdonald succeed too well in infusing their narrative with the black mood with which Will Odosson greets the news that he's scheduled to meet death within a year of his knighting.

Will's first reaction is to seek out the young woman he's been pledged to marry, so that he can release her from a vow to a doomed man. The task proves more complex than expected when it turns out that Isobel's father has promised her to three different men, and that both he and Isobel are pawns in a deadly political game in which honor is a vanishingly rare commodity. Will must not only dodge death from treacherous nobility, but also from a strangely unkillable ogre and the carnivorous mermaids who guard its secret.

When they're focusing on the magical elements of the story, Doyle and Macdonald do very well. Their versions of the standard creatures of myth are vibrant and distinctive, especially the aforementioned mermaids, the ogre, and an unusual dragon with a fondness for riddles. There are also a wealth of ghosts, a dangerous bridge troll, and an elusive wizard-woman,

all portrayed with care and skill.

The overall tone of the story, though, is another matter. Will is a likeable enough protagonist, despite his preoccupation with the death-prophecy. The trouble is that he's an honorable young knight without a living role model. Few if any of the novel's adult characters are remotely trustworthy—and those with some shred of honor are either killed in action, under the thumbs of less scrupulous masters, or otherwise out of the picture by the end of the book. The reality of the world Doyle and Macdonald have created simply doesn't match Will's chivalric ideals, to the extent that Will doesn't fit into it.

As a result, it's hard to be entirely happy with the novel's conclusion, for while Will does manage to defeat the ogre and come to terms with his destiny, his political problems are far less convincingly solved. There's no assurance that his new masters won't prove just as duplicitous as those who branded him a traitor, and there's every reason to greet their offers with wary caution. The ending calls desperately for a sequel, yet the book otherwise gives every indication of standing alone.

Make no mistake: *Knight's Wyrd* is a generally well-crafted adventure that treats its fantasy with a great deal of common sense. It's well worth reading despite its contradictory worldview—or even because of it. A look at what sets Will Odosson apart from the world around him may help gamers do a better job of fitting their own characters into someone else's campaign setting.

CATWOMAN: TIGER HUNT

Lynn Abbey and Robert Asprin

Warner

0-446-36043-0

\$4.99

DARK FORCE RISING

Timothy Zahn

Bantam Spectra 0-553-08574-3 \$18.50

You can hardly turn around in a bookstore's SF section these days without running into a new novel or series spun off from a movie or television property. As this kind of book grows more and more common, it's correspondingly harder to generalize about the category—but at the same time, it's getting easier to establish standards by which to measure the success of particular licensed-universe projects.

Dark Force Rising, second in Timothy Zahn's trilogy of *Star Wars* novels, is one of the standard-setters. Zahn has thoroughly absorbed the ambience and character of the *Star Wars* universe, and it's reflected in his on-target characterizations and confident use of detail. (According to one interview, Zahn received and read much of the material published by West End Games for its STAR WARS: The RPG* before beginning work on the books.)

As the book opens, there are problems on three fronts. Leia and Chewbacca are in the middle of a delicate undercover diplomatic mission, attempting to turn one

of the Empire's most dangerous assets into an ally of the Republic. Luke Skywalker is being pursued by Imperial forces—and driven to an obscure world where a mysterious Jedi master plans to convert him to the dark side of the Force. Meanwhile, political intrigues from within the New Republic's government threaten to tear it apart just as the remnants of the Empire launch a devastating military offensive.

Zahn balances his plots and subplots with smooth efficiency and a style that echoes the crisp, larger-than-life quality of the films. He also successfully captures the movies' mix of high-powered spacefaring technology and wild, untamed planet-scapes, so that his new characters and cultures mesh seamlessly with the familiar figures of Luke, Leia, Han, and their surroundings.

By contrast, the Catwoman we meet in Lynn Abbey's and Robert Asprin's novel is unlike any we've seen before in comics, film, or television. Abbey and Asprin have made their Catwoman a scruffy, domestic-minded burglar who's utterly at odds both with Michelle Pfeiffer's explosive cinematic villainess and the supremely dangerous huntress usually seen in the comics. Only the name and costume are the same; this is the Catwoman turned into Mary Tyler Moore, and she's not the better for it.

What's more startling is that Catwoman isn't even the focus of the novel's plot. That honor goes to a peculiar street criminal called the Tiger, who's the connecting link between schemes involving a major drug transaction and a stolen icon. The Tiger's mysterious employer is Batman's latest target, and only when Catwoman discovers a cache of feline trophies in Tiger's living quarters does she become involved in the unfolding confrontation.

The book is a fairly credible, moderately intricate thriller. It just isn't Catwoman's book, despite the title and packaging.

To be fair, the blame really doesn't belong to Abbey and Asprin. Rather, it can be traced back to DC Comics, which has done a spectacularly inept job of coordinating the literary appearances of its various Bat-characters. The cover design of this novel utterly fails to connect it with the previous series of Batman novels published by Warner over the last year or two. Then there are the "Further Adventures" Bat-anthologies published by Bantam, which have done a better job of being consistent with each other—but which likewise don't share a common editorial vision with the assorted Warner novels. This is no way to manage a super hero's (or supervillain's) career.

Again, *Catwoman: Tiger Hunt* isn't really a bad book, though it's really a Batman story and it's not the equal of Timothy Zahn's efforts. It's merely the victim of inept management, and the chief distinction between the two novels is that *Dark Force Rising* should be a great deal easier to find.

THE CROWN OF COLUMBUS

Louise Erdrich & Michael Dorris
HarperPaperbacks
0-06-109957-0 \$5.99

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN:

ALTERNATE AMERICAS

edited by Gregory Benford and
Martin H. Greenberg
Bantam Spectra 0-553-29007-X \$4.99

YESTERDAY WE SAW MERMAIDS

Esther M. Friesner
Tor 0-312-85352-1 \$16.95

The five-hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of America has prompted a startling amount of fiction that commemorates the event in one fashion or another. What's even more remarkable is the diversity of approaches to the subject. Esther Friesner contributes an exotic, unusual fantasy. Editors Gregory Benford and Martin Greenberg have compiled a collection of stories whose authors have radically rewritten the history books. Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris have taken some of the genuine history and extended it to create a modern novel of intrigue and rediscovery.

At least that's what *The Crown of Columbus* tries to be. It's not billed as any sort of genre fiction (unless you count "bestseller" as a genre), and the authors' credentials are largely in academic fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. While there are elements of romance, suspense, and high adventure in the book, along with a dose of literary seriousness, Erdrich and Dorris are strikingly unsuccessful in blending them into a coherent whole.

The books premise is that Columbus, on one of his voyages to the Indies, left behind a mysterious and presumably valuable crown—and if found, the crown could help legitimize Native American claims to sovereignty over large chunks of the New World. Erdrich and Dorris do a skillful, seamless job of integrating their speculations with authentic history, but the story they build on this foundation is remarkable for its dullness.

One problem is that neither anthropologist Vivian Twostar or poet Roger Williams are remotely believable characters. Vivian is portrayed as a skilled anthropologist and careful researcher, and Roger as an intelligent, careful writer. Yet neither gives the other credit for their abilities, and both are absurdly naive when it comes to dealing with the unsavory owner of a key document in the search. A second difficulty is that Erdrich and Dorris try too hard to make the novel all things to all readers. The plot is too thinly stretched to maintain a decent level of suspense, Vivian and Roger's romance is drawn out too long (and rehearsed too much, when the book switches viewpoints), and the authors insist on including long contemplations of Roger's poetry that stop the story dead in its tracks.

Alternate Americas, by contrast, cheer-

fully rewrites history for the sake of several very good stories. We start on a wickedly satiric note, with Harry Turtle-dove's version of an environmental impact statement by a committee advising Queen Isabella against bankrolling the Columbus expedition. In some tales, the native Americans resist European influence (most notably Sheila Finch's "If There Be Cause"), while in others, they've been influenced long before Columbus's day, as in L. Sprague de Camp's tale of a Chinese ambassador's adventures in the New World.

There's humor, in Esther Friesner's colorful tale of Aztec ambassadors brought back to Europe, Robert Silverberg's chronicle of a hunt for the Fountain of Youth, and Brad Linaweaver's recasting of Columbus' voyage as a Saturday-afternoon serial.

Some of the history-rewriting is more weird than successful; James Morrow's "Isabel of Castile Answers Her Mail" imagines Columbus sailing through a time-warp into modern New York Harbor, and "Let Time Shape" from George Zebrowski is an experiment that just doesn't quite work. By and large though, the anthology is a solid, diverse collection that prospective world-builders should find both enjoyable and inspirational.

Then there's *Yesterday We Saw Mermaids*, which is a very odd novel indeed. It's been a long time since Esther Friesner stretched her stylistic muscles this far, and this book is a major departure from her recent series of funny modern-day fantasies. The title is a phrase taken from Columbus' own journals, but the ship whose voyage Friesner chronicles is not one of his three. Rather, it is a small vessel whose passengers include a genie, a gypsy, a monk, and a group of nuns whose voyage will take them to a New World stranger and more magical than any of them expect.

Friesner writes the tale in a simple yet oblique style that aptly conveys both its historical character and its immediacy. At the same time, she gives her story a rich atmosphere and a pace that is both deliberate and breathless. Though it's a short book, it's not one to be read too quickly; rather, the novel should be savored like a fine wine, with a flavor that reveals more of itself with every sip. *Yesterday We Saw Mermaids* is a strange and lyrical voyage on a course set 10 degrees to the left of reality that somehow manages to arrive at the heart of the human imagination.

Recurring roles

Terry Pratchett's latest Discworld novel brings back Death, possibly his most intriguing character, for a tale of two kinds of harvests. *Reaper Man* (Roc, \$4.99) isn't quite the equal of the earlier *Mort*, but it's easily one of the best of the Discworld yarns. As usual, Pratchett's wit emphasizes cleverness as well as slapstick, and also as usual, he's one of the few humorists in fantasy whose tales have a layer of substance underneath the comedy.

Elsewhere in the Department of Continuing Series, Doris Egan adds mystery to the mix of romance, magic, and SF in the world of *Guilt Edged Ivory* (DAW, \$4.99). This time, Theodora and Ran are drawn into a high-society murder investigation that involves a family fortune, a loan-sharking business, and a cursed ring. Egan continues to weave clever plots into a striking background, and if her characters are a bit on the stubborn side, they're also notable for their decidedly believable quirks.

Mind Games (Archway, \$2.99) is easily one of the current Tom Swift's strangest adventures to date, featuring a virtual-reality device and a role-playing game with some clever design touches. The plotting this time out is sharp and intelligent, even if it is mostly an excuse to write Tom into a space-opera adventure complete with ray guns. Though the moral is a touch heavy-handed, this is a solid addition to the series, and one that gamers should find of particular interest.

Quality is also uniformly high in *The Grafters: Blessings and Curses* (Ace, \$4.50), second in the series of early American fantasy anthologies edited by Christopher Stasheff and Bill Fawcett. There are fewer formula romances in this volume, and a greater variety of settings. Especially notable are Ru Emerson's "Ironsides and Cottonseed Oil," set largely aboard a U.S. Navy ship in 1812, and Jody Lynn Nye's "Miss Crafter's School for Girls," concerning a rebellious young woman and the results of her meddling in her father's affairs. Other solid contributions come from Robert Sheckley, Morris G. McGee, and Morgan Llywelyn, and there are no real misfires in the collection at all.

Witchcraft is the theme of L. J. Smith's new series, and *The Initiation* (Harper-Paperbacks, \$3.99) begins the Secret Circle trilogy on a brisk, ambitious note. The setting is the small town of New Salem, Massachusetts, and Smith retains her knack for presenting believable young people confronting highly improbable magical events. The cast is a little crowded, but no doubt the ranks will be thinned as the series progresses.

For a more rigorous look at the Salem witch trials, consider *A Break with Chariety* (HBJ/Gulliver, \$16.95), a brand-new novel from Ann Rinaldi that features real historical characters and solid research in a quiet, memorable narrative that gives a decidedly nonmystical explanation for what happened in 1692.)

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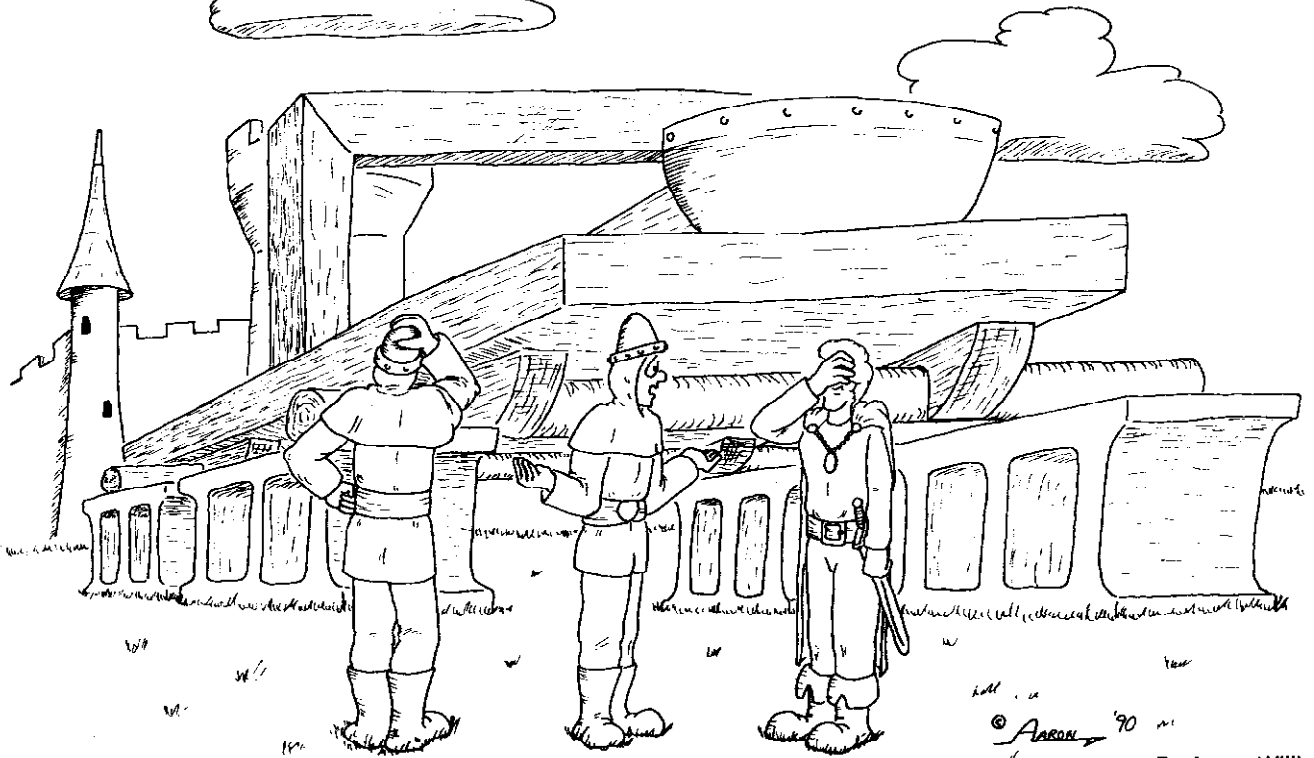
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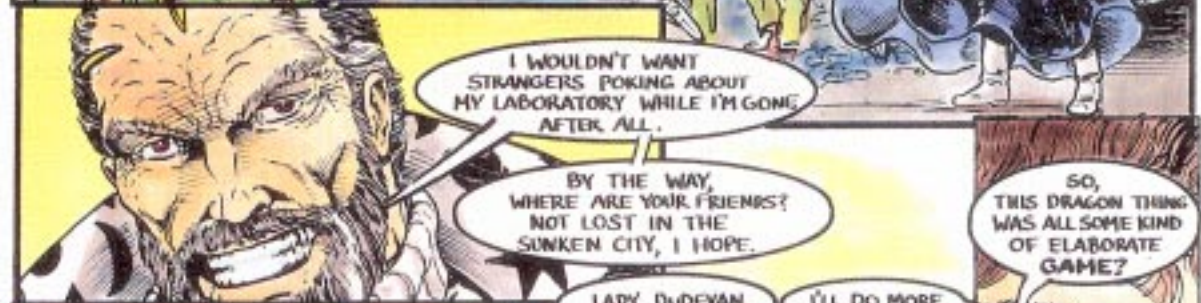
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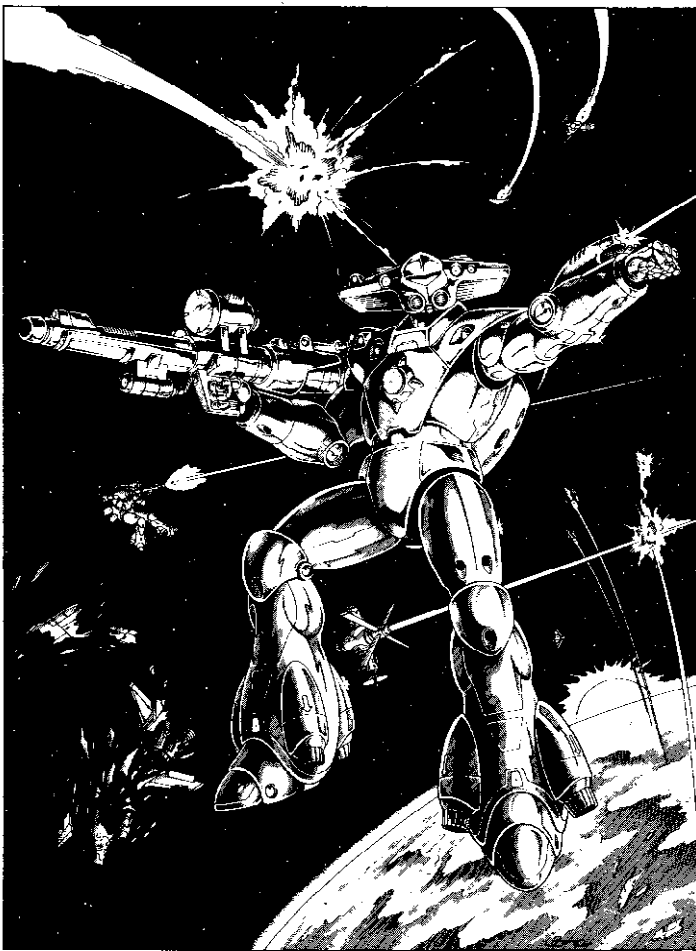
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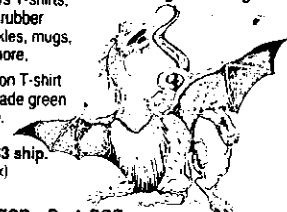
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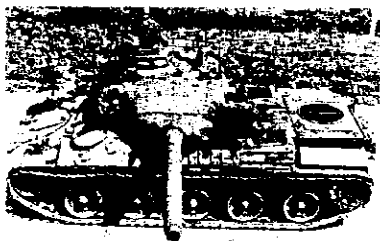
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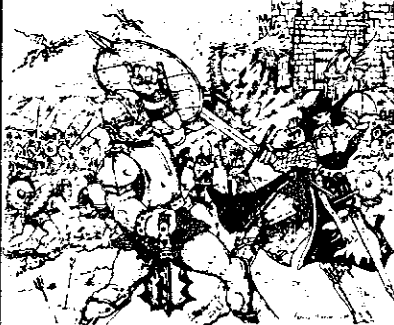
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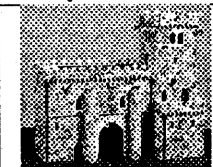
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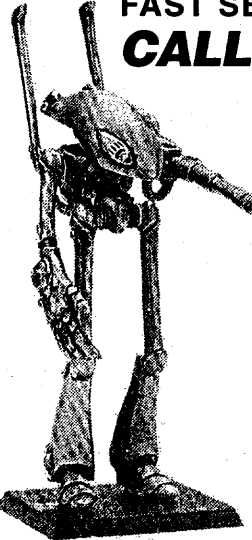


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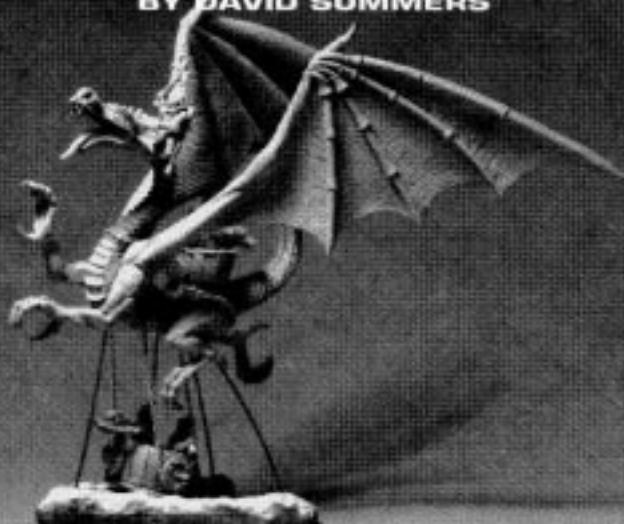
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Termite Crawler (Epicast)

Attack of the holiday buying guides!

(part 1)

This is the first of three holiday shopping columns for miniatures' buyers, and as there are so many figures to review, we're going to move right to them after thanking the following people for their assistance in painting figures: Fred Hicks Jr.—Dream Dragon Immortal Combat, Man-at-Arms, Swordmaster, Wood Elf Marksman; Chris Osburn—Medium Omni 'Mechs; Ron Walton—Termite Crawler, Elf Mage, Chaos Doomguard, Mounted Lord of Chaos, Barbarian.

Reviews

Epicast USA

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Termite Crawler

The epic scale for Games Workshop's

WARHAMMER 40,000* game has long had an advantage over large-scale WARHAMMER 40,000 scenarios in terms of the number of miniature vehicles available for the game. This imbalance has added to the appeal of the smaller scale and restricted the use of some tactics outlined in *White Dwarf* magazine. The Termite crawler is the first in a new line designed for use by fans of 25-mm scale.

Epicast USA has forged an agreement with Games Workshop UK to produce a

line of 25-mm vehicles based on epic-scale models now available to the public. These models are made of polyurethane resin, cast in hand-made molds. Each model is hand-poured, and all masters are sculpted from the Epic vehicle in production and are approved by Games Workshop before production.

This miniature is cast on an oval base measuring $5\frac{3}{4}$ " long by $3\frac{5}{8}$ " wide, and it shows a Termite subterranean military vehicle emerging from the ground. The exposed hull is $5\frac{1}{2}$ " long by $2\frac{1}{2}$ " wide at the widest point. The drill tip has slightly bent fins for digging, cylindrical rotating flanges for carrying the dirt back, and cogs for smashing the dirt to the side and behind the vehicle. The main body has an iris-type hatch with a steel frame and engraved plate detail. There are ports for exhaust and a brass framing just under the digging assembly. The base is covered with piles of material that represents dug-up earth.

The figure is of good quality, with pits visible only under the bottom of the digging assembly. These pits occur because of air bubbles that frequently appear in resin castings. The only other obvious flaws are three spaces where the ground holes are filled in.

This model is a valuable addition to a WARHAMMER 40,000 game, even if only half the vehicle is visible. Note that Epicast USA is presently a one-family operation, so there may be some delay in receiving your orders. The Termite's cost is \$20 each plus postage, which is high but not unreasonable for a hand-poured piece. I recommend this piece, which can be used with other game systems. This kit also includes WARHAMMER 40,000 rules statistics for the vehicle.

Viking Forge

1727 Theresa Ln.
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FM86 Mounted Lord of Chaos *** $\frac{1}{2}$

Viking Forge's submissions for this month include a Mounted Lord of Chaos and a Chaos Doomguard. Both figures are 25-mm scale and made of flexible lead. Each has a

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

rough-edged oval base with some detailing and ground cover visible at the base of the steed. The bases are barely large enough to support the figures.

The Lord of Chaos is a four-piece kit consisting of the steed, the knight, a skull-shaped shield, and a banner. The banner is attached to a lance and has a chaos symbol embossed on the surface, a rope tassel, and a ball at the end. The shield and lance have no flash and no visible mold lines.

The steed is rearing up in an attack pose. It is fully barded, with a cloth over chain mail covering all parts of the horse except its legs, mane, tail, and mouth. The open mouth shows teeth and tongue; the eyes are exposed through slits in the mail, and a gargoyle faceplate covers the forehead. Flash at the horse's nostrils required work to remove and make the nostrils match. The bit and reins are clearly seen. The saddle appears to be almost Asian, with a high front, a higher padded back, and tassels around the base. No cinch strap is visible, but that could be under the chain mail. The cloth covering billows as if the horse were moving into a breeze; a straggly flat tail streams out behind.

The rear legs have flash and lead deposits between them that require care to remove. Our review model's front legs were also held to the body by an unexplained lead mass that was probably a channel for lead when it was molded. The horse is fine, though it appears to be head-heavy because of the chain, and the body is not thick enough for this sort of heavy war horse.

The knight wears a basic set of chain mail covered in different areas with add-ons. He has floppy boots with tassels, and the stirrups and spurs are clearly visible. His legs are covered by splinted mail with skull-faced plates protecting the knees. His hands are protected by gauntlets set to hold the shield and lance (the horse must be guided by telepathy). The upper body is protected by a breastplate and back-plate, with a chaos symbol embossed on the rear. The sword on the left had flash and is molded at the bottom of the scabbard in such a way that it is slightly curved. The front of the armor has lightning bolts on each side, rivets in the center area, and skull-shaped shoulder protectors. The helmet has small holes in the front, in addition to the vision and nasal slots, and it is topped by scimitar-like horns and a headless imp-like creature. I had to clear away some metal to get the horns away from the head. This figure is oversized at 30 mm.

This figure will require work and careful painting; it is not recommended for beginners. The figure has possibilities as a large-scale cavalry leader, but at \$5 per kit, it is overpriced.

FM90 Chaos Doomguard

The Doomguard figure scales out at 31 mm to the eyes, which in 25-mm scale makes him either an ogre in disguise or a



Mounted Lord of Chaos and Chaos Doomguard (Viking Forge)

very tall human. His boots go over the knees, and a chain coat drops to the top of the boots. His breastplate is molded to resemble a demon's head, complete with nose ring and shoulder boards as horns. His arms are covered with scale mail, and he wears padded gloves. The shield is meant to be an agonized face, but it did not fill when it was molded and is cut off at the mouth. His right hand clutches a sword. The helmet looks like a skull with a horn and a mane. Both legs are spindly and have mold lines that are difficult to remove. A number of mold lines are present on the body.

This figure is not a good value at \$2.40 each. I've seen both this figure and the mounted lord at conventions, and those specimens were of higher quality than my samples. Remember that these figures fit the larger miniature scales.

Black Dragon Pewter

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H6516 Death Rider Hologram *****

There have been reports from readers about receiving late mail (or no mail) to queries sent to Black Dragon Pewter. The crew from Black Dragon is on the road at medieval fairs throughout the U.S. They have the personnel to screen mail, but there are lapses when everyone is on the road. They promise to do the best they can to respond to queries and improve the quality of their service. They ask you to please bear with them. Note the change of address above; this is the home of a member of the company.

The Death Rider Hologram appears to have Marvel Comics' Ghost Rider as its inspiration. The figure is a skeletal biker dressed in ragged clothes with a high collar. His rib cage is visible, with well-done spacing on the bones and a clear view of his lower spine. His head is a bare skull; individual teeth are noticeable, but the nostrils and ear holes are solid. His eyes are two small glass gems.

The bike is a large-motor trail bike. The engine detail is well defined and includes a gas tank and a chain that stretches to a rear sprocket. This bike has a handlebar assembly made of bone. The crossbar and wheel assembly is a skull with deep-set eyes and teeth; the lower jaw forms the front-wheel forks. The tires have treads, and all shocks are shown complete with springs, even though they are simplified.

The base is an oval with a rough road surface. The background for the bike consists of a rock pile, long grass, and a picket fence protecting a tombstone that says "Rest In Peace 1956," suggesting a biking death.

The hologram is supported by an ancient oak tree, complete with eyes and a mouth. The tree is flat with deep bark detail. Its upper limbs form a support for the metal-framed hologram and three bats. The hologram is a well-done, deep-set picture of a human skull. We had a little trouble keeping the hologram in focus, but when it was slightly tilted it came in sharp. This piece should have a dark background to highlight it.

This is an excellent figure and would make a great gift for either a biker or Ghost Rider fan. It is recommended even with its \$80 price tag.



Death Rider Hologram (Black Dragon Pewter)



The Winner (Black Dragon Pewter)



Elf, Drunkard, and Man-at-arms (Soldiers and Swords)

1035 The Winner **** ½

"The Winner" is a small piece that should lighten the hearts of dragon lovers everywhere. It shows a dragon roughly 50 mm from head to tail. The young dragon has a small, clearly defined spinal ridge and relatively smooth skin. His left foreleg is bandaged heavily and in a sling. His right paw clutches a long sword with runes on the blade. His mouth is open as if bragging, and his right eye is swollen shut.

His wings are spread 50 mm wide, with leathery folds and a crossed set bandage on the right wing. Muscle detail is simple.

The circular base is 28 mm across with a slightly contoured, raised area in the center that supports a multifaceted circular crystal. The dragon's left foot rests on an empty helmet sitting on the ground.

There are no mold lines or unsightly marks from the buffing and cleaning. This is a well-done figure and a good stocking stuffer that's highly recommended at only \$15.

Soldiers and Swords

25 Fayette St.
Binghamton NY 13901

We welcome a new company to our ranks: Soldier and Swords, a relatively new figure company with a wide variety of 25-mm figures. The figures are made of soft lead and are blister-packed without foam. They feature a full range of fantasy and historical pieces, including several crossover figures. Everything considered, all these figures are a great bargain at \$1.25 each and are highly recommended.

T006 Drunkard

**** ½

The Drunkard is one of these crossover pieces. The figure is of a man of undetermined age. His face is slack with staring eyes, his mouth open to propose another

toast. A high hairline and a ponytail denote either a fantasy or a late 18th-century style figure. He wears a long open coat with long sleeves and no buttons; his shirt strains to stay closed across a stomach that hangs over his belt. His right hand clutches a jug, and the left swings a mug high overhead. The pants are baggy, with a large tear in the left knee. His shoes have large buckles, another trademark of the 18th century.

This figure has only a couple of drawbacks. The base is not as finished as figures now on the market, and the bottom has two large stubs from pouring. You must remove these stubs while being careful not to bend the soft base (this same feature is noticeable on the other figures from this company). There is also "thread flash" from breather holes in the mold, but this is easily fixed.

Elf with Scorpion

This elf figure stands at 26 mm, slightly tall for an elf in most 25-mm fantasy game systems. He is armed with what is referred to as a scorpion-type polearm in the title. The weapon measures 55 mm in length and has a head with a variety of cutting edges and barbs. The pole ends in a small ball-like object with a hook firmly in place; you must take care or you will break it when you remove the flash from pole to base. The figure wears studded leather armor with a wide studded belt. His legs are covered by high open boots and tights. Studded bracers stretch down his arms. The figure is unarmed except for the polearm, and he wears no helmet.

The face is high cheeked and angular with plain features and slightly slanted eyes. Eyebrows and a good nose complement the pointed ears. His hair is pulled back and bound behind his head. The posture is that of one starting to set

against a charge or carefully walking. Mold lines are minimal and need little cleaning. This elf could easily pass as a dark elf to go with TSR's *Menzoberranzan* boxed set.

R005 Man-at-Arms (2)

This soldier is armed with a simple glaive, which appeared in Europe after the 12th century and existed for many years in a variety of forms. This glaive is edged on one side and is just over 48 mm long. The man's chain mail stretches from neck to knee and is covered by a jerkin, his legs protected by metal-jointed leggings. Judging from the spurs on his boots, he's probably part of a dismounted cavalry group. He has a kite-shaped shield strapped to his belt, with the belt crossing over his chest. Another belt supports a long sword on his left hip. His hands are protected by gauntlets, and his head by chain mail covered with a bullet helmet. His face has a serious look to it. This figure is itching to get into a fight.

This figure had a sprue running from the weapon's end to its base. There was also a small mold line on the inside of the leg that was difficult to remove.

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 East McMillan
Cincinnati OH 43206-1991

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

70 Harcourt St.
Newark, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG 241 R4

1026 Immortal Combat

**** 1/2

The first thing you need to do with this kit is to ignore the illustration on the back of the box. There is no tower piece in this kit, and this is the first small kit that I have seen with a different view of its contents. The second step is to sit back and enjoy the simplicity of this kit.

The kit consists of seven different parts made of soft lead. The base is a 52-mm circle that needs to have the flash taken off the sides. The top surface is flat except for a rocky precipice; this base should probably have the surface covered in a thin layer of cotton, to represent clouds, after the rocks are painted. Another part is the upper point of the mountain and has a demon molded to its side. Take the time to let the glue dry completely on the summit before going on.

The demon has ankle and knee guards, scale mail, a breastplate, a shield, gauntlets, and a helmet with nasal and cheek guards. The breastplate is a series of pieces joined together by some sort of twine and includes a pennant fastener. His face is pinched and angular, and he seems to have fangs. He has a look of concentrated hate at his attacker, and you can almost see a sheen on his bare flesh. Even the



Immortal Combat (Thunderbolt Mountain)

leathery wings (a separate part) are angled for attack. A barbed spear is in his right hand, and his shield is solidly on his left arm. This shield also acts as the base for the attacking angel.

The angel strikes down on the demon with a long spear and protects himself with a circular shield. He also wears shin and knee protectors, except that his have a peg on one knee that fits into the hole on the demon's shield. A toga-type outfit is covered by a hinged breastplate with a sun symbol. Well-done feathery wings are joined at the middle, but are easily separated and curved. Feather detail is excellent with individual veins visible. Muscle detail on arms and legs is excellent.

This is highly recommended to anyone who wants an inexpensive, easy-to-assemble kit that will make a nice piece. Listed at \$11.95, it is a fairly good buy.

1028 Death's Door

Deaths Door is to complexity what Immortal Combat is to simplicity. This is a complete diorama piece scaled to 25 mm that not only has a load of nice figures but is full of sight gags as well. The finished piece consists of 10 individual castings. The largest of these pieces is the base, a 62-mm circle with a large block floor intersected by a wall. One side of the circle is plain while the other side has the remains of several bones, a couple of broken weapons, and a large treasure chest filled with coins, jewels, and other items. The wall section is a two-sided stone wall with torch holders and a doorway with hinges on one side and a plain wall on the treasure side. Set into the floor are four sets of peg holes to anchor the figures.

On the side of the wall with the torch holders is a small adventuring party, all of whom have obviously seen the treasure.

There is a female fighter with high boots, long scale-mail armor cinched at the waist by a chain belt, a bracelet on her left wrist, and a bracer on her right forearm. She holds a long sword in her right hand. Her face has an expression of surprise as she sees the treasure; her hair falls to her shoulders from under her crested helmet. She is advancing through the door, which she must duck under.

Backing her up is a male fighter armed with a long sword in his right hand and a dagger in his left. High boots, cloth pants bracers, and chain mail covered by light plate make up his dress. He carries a water jug on his left side and has a knife scabbard on his right. His head is covered by a basinet with chain.

Last but not least is a bald mage who has his hands in the air, preparing a spell. He wears a long robe with wide bell sleeves and high soft boots. His waist is encircled by a rope belt that also supports a wand case and a packet with spell components on each side. Dropping from under his wide turtleneck shirt is a chain and pendant. He also wears a long cape with a hood that no fashion-conscious mage can be without. Wrinkles are evident as he furrows his brow. No mold lines or flash detract from these figures.

What awaits them on the other side of the wall is a very smart ogre. This ogre stands just under 7' in scale and is over 15 mm wide at the shoulders. His arms and legs are bare, except for a spiked bracelet, and armpit hair is visible. Muscle detail is slightly exaggerated. He wears fur under scale mail and light plate on his chest; his back is bare except for two studded straps and an over-the-shoulder strap that supports a load of booty. A shaggy mane of hair falls from the top of his flat head to mid-back. His left arm can hold any one of



the three ogre-sized weapons included with this set.

The ogre's features are extremely distorted, but how normal can a tusked jaw look when it is trying to hold back a laugh? His head is cocked with a wide smile as he slowly opens the door with his right hand and prepares to batter anyone entering with the weapon in his left hand.

This kit is recommended for anyone whose characters have ever been battered in a dungeon. You may have to do some bending to get the figures to fit just right. I intend to make my figures removable and make bases so I can use them elsewhere as needed. This is highly recommended at \$11.95 per set.

Lance and Laser Model, Inc.

P.O.Box 14491
Columbus OH 43214

P-008 Mounted Knight

The Pendragon series of figures continues to provide us with figures that can be used in a "gentle" or adventurous setting. This mounted knight comes as a three-piece assembly: a base, a steed, and a valiant knight. All are made of lead and scaled for 25 mm. The base is a simple oval with three holes for the pegs in the steed's hooves. Little flash was noted on this miniature.

The steed is a simple light war horse with a minimum of tack, but the tack present is slightly ornate. Equine features are well done, and the bit is visible. The reins and saddle straps have a small design embossed on them. The saddle is a simple English design, complete with fringed blankets dropping below the horses' belly (this is the one area that I have any problem with, as it could have been done as two separate blanket ends rather than a block to make the model look better). The horse's position is almost a canter.

The knight is a mounted version of the knight shown in this column in DRAGON® issue #185. Differences include riding

gloves and a cape held by two clasps and a small length of chain.

This set is highly recommended for anyone who runs role-playing adventures in fantasy cities. The price is \$3 each.

TORG-015 Elf Mage

This elf mage for West End Games' TORG® system is supposed to be scaled at 25 mm but stands 28 mm to the eyes. The figure is made of lead and stands on a thick oval base. It wears a long ornate robe with elaborate hems embroidered with circles. He also wears a jerkin that laces together in front over the robe and appears to be almost quilted in texture. High shoulder ridges allow the billowing sleeves easy movement and a high collar surrounds his neck. A scabbard with runes and sword, centered in the front, hangs from a knit belt. No spell-component pouches are visible. Both hands are gloved; the right is raised in the



Death's Door (Thunderbolt Mountain)



Elf Mage and Mounted Knight (Lance and Laser)

air as if to throw a spell, and the left hand holds an ornate staff made of twisted wood. Braids and tassels abound. An object that looks like a gem tops the staff. The elf mage's angular face shows his anger as he casts a spell.

The only reason this figure got only four stars is due to the amount of shallow detail that can easily disappear when the figure is primed and painted. This highly recommended character could be a cleric as easily as a mage. It's a good value at \$1.85 each.

RAFM Co.

20 Parkhill Rd. East
Cambridge, Ontario
CANADA N1R 1P2

2007 Dream Dragon

The miniature is a four-piece lead kit that requires some work. The creature is 255 mm long, nose to tail, and each wing is 140 mm long, making this a huge dragon in 25-mm scale. The dragon's bases are molded onto the body and are supposed to support the body, to keep it standing from only two points. The dragon is purposefully not totally formed in the miniature, and is a creature of pebbly skin and mist. The skull is totally fleshed out, with upper and lower jaws full of sharp teeth. A row of sharp spines cover most of the length of the creature, and four rows of ridges extend along the body. There are frequent holes where the dragon was not fully formed, and the long serpentine shape looks strange.

The Dream Dragon has no analog in AD&D® game realms, except through the use of illusion spells by mages. The box back for the dragon explains how these dragons occupy the land of sleep and nightmares, but may be harnessed by those strong enough to overcome them. It brings up some interesting ideas for dream-attacks, yes?

This dragon has a few problems. You must spend some time cleaning off small trails from the molds breather holes. It takes time to assemble this miniature, as it is extremely wobbly and you must glue the pieces so they will rock the least amount. My solution was to bend the right front leg out slightly, after cutting it from the body, to form a tripod—making the miniature slightly more steady. You may also have to do some filling.

This is highly recommended even with the work needed, and it is usable with any fantasy game. The boxed set is \$18.

Mithril Miniatures Ltd.

Macroon, Co. Cork
IRELAND

Ed Wimble/Prince August Miniatures USA

The Byrne Building, Lincoln & Morgan
Streets
Phoenixville PA 19460



Mewlip, Lesser Barrow Lord, and Pukel Men (Mithril Miniatures)

The game references for figures seen here can be found in the sourcebooks *Bree and the Barrow Downs* and *Mouths of the Entwash*, for ICE's MIDDLE-EARTH ROLE PLAYING* game.

There are a number of similarities in these figures. All come finished to some degree, with primer on the main figure but no primer on any glue-on parts. All figures have rectangular stands with textured tops and beveled sides. All figures are scaled at 25 mm and made of soft lead. All are recommended either as playing pieces for those who play ICE's MIDDLE-EARTH ROLE PLAYING game or as collectibles for those who enjoy Tolkien's Middle-earth novels.

M255 Lesser Barrow Lord

****½

This figure represents the body of a long-dead noble now controlled by a wight. The miniature comes in two pieces: the main body, and the left hand clutching a sword. The figure is 45 mm high and combines the twists of a formless snake with the solidity of the dead. A long, voluminous robe covers the figure, and strings of pearls or beads cinch the waist and encircle its throat. The face is a skull; the head is wrapped in a hood topped by a crown. This figure is close to being paint-ready after you glue and prime the sword arm. There are no visible mold lines or flash on this model. This figure has potential for being used in a variety of games as a lich figure rising up to strike. The only soft spot on this figure is the \$2.95 price tag.

M254 Mewlip

****½

The mewlip inhabits the swamps of the Marsh of Tode. These creatures are ferocious meat-eaters who attack travelers and other beings unfortunate enough to have business in the swamp. The figure comes in



Dream Dragon (RAFM Company)

three parts: the main body and two arms. These arms must be primed after they are glued to the body. The figure is over 40 mm high even in a slightly hunched position. The skin is warty and stringy on the back, being mostly smooth but peeling in the front. The head appears to have an elongated skull with skin stretched tightly over it. There is a slight mold line on the left shoulder where the skin is rolled up like



Adventurer and Swordmaster (Wargames Inc.)



Goblin, Barbarian, and Wood Elf (Grenadier Models)

the sleeve on a T-shirt. This figure looks like a cross between an undead giant zombie and a walking blob, and it could be used as a variety of undead or weird swamp troll. Again, the major hang-up is the price: \$4.25.

M252 Pukel Men

****½

The pukel men are guardian statues on certain Middle-earth highways. While these statues are usually seen sitting, it is rumored that some may walk if needed.

The figures come two per pack, one walking and the other in its normal guard position—sitting cross-legged in a state of meditation. The figures are not terribly impressive at only 23 mm high, no larger than the average adventurer. The figures are clearly humanoid but are very simply and almost stylishly done, with muscle groups being separated and hair being blocked and carved. Their hands are crude but would make effective blunt weapons. These figures could be used as stone golems or as a wizards guardians in

other game systems. They are slightly overpriced at \$3.49 per pack of two.

Wargames Inc.

Box 278
Triadelphia WV 26059

Both of these pieces are from the Metal Magic fantasy line and share some similarities. Both are scaled for 25 mm and are made of lead. They are mounted on circular bases that fit neatly into square plastic bases that are included. These square bases make the figures more stable.

C1045f Adventurer

****½

The adventurer is either very successful or is just starting out. He stands 25 mm to the eyes and is at the ready with a long sword in his right hand and his left clenched into a fist. The figure wears shoes, a pair of pants held up by a narrow belt and buckle, a shirt with long sleeves and plain cuffs, and a stitched thigh-length

vest. His head is bare. The figure is definitely obese with a pudgy face. His ears stand out slightly from his head, and his features are too bloated for wrinkles. He has a short crewcut and no other visible hair. This character is recommended as a bouncer for a local tavern or as a character in FASA's SHADOWRUN* game or other dark-future setting, as his look is definitely modern. The cost is \$1.69 each.

C1043d Swordmaster

The Swordmaster looks like he is ready to get away from teaching and go adventuring. His boots reach to mid-thigh, the fronts protected by small shields and protectors mounted on leather and strapped over the boots. His thighs, back, and arms are all bare except for a studded bracer on his right arm. His chest is covered in some parts by an elaborate breastplate that exposes as much chest as it protects. In his right hand is a long sword with a kind of hook, while in his left he holds a wicked short sword with the equivalent of two blades.

His face includes a small moustache. His features are those of a person in his late 30s who is confident that he can best all comers. Eye and mouth detail are very good, as are the wrinkles. His helmet is strangely shaped and has small shields on it that match the shin and knee guards. He also has cheek protectors.

The figure is well recommended in a town setting as a weapons master for fighters to learn from, and in a campaign needing heavy-duty fighters. It sells for \$1.69 each.

Grenadier Models Inc.

P.O. Box 305
Springfield PA 19064

Grenadier Models UK Ltd

25 Babage Rd.
Deeside, Clwyd, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

5618 Goblin Leader

This goblin is scaled for the larger not-quite-25-mm scale of about 28-30 mm, and it stands 21 mm straight up. The lead miniature is mounted on a thick oval base with no texture.

The miniature wears tights and flexible pointed slippers. His left leg has a long, narrow gash along the mold line where it looks like it didn't quite fill. His upper body is clothed in chain mail with a tattered, sleeveless shirt over that. This shirt is cinched by a thin rope belt that also supports a knife or short sword in its scabbard. His left arm supports a wooden shield that had to be cleaned, and his right hand holds a polearm almost exactly like our earlier Man-at-Arms, except this polearm has tassels. Both fists are gloved. The face is typically goblinish, with a pointed chin and an expression that looks like he's just bitten into a lemon. His hair is straggly, and he has a topknot.

This is definitely a leader figure and is highly recommended for larger-scale games, although it is too big for 25-mm scale. It is recommended even at its \$1.75 price.

5616 Barbarian Bodyguard *****½

The Barbarian Bodyguard is 28 mm to the eyes and not proportioned in 25 mm. The figure is mounted on a thick oval base that is nontextured. The figure is typically barbarian except for his chain-mail shirt. His high boots are covered with fur. His arms and legs are bare and have well-done muscle detail, with easily cleaned mold lines on the legs. Both wrists have bracers. A large shield with a single studded spike is strapped onto his back. He wears a thin studded belt with a sheathed short sword on the left side. Both hands grip the handle of a huge, double-bladed axe. A snarl is captured on his face. His head is covered by a spiked helmet, and his hair falls to his shoulders. This is highly recommended as the commander of a unit of two-handed weapon users or in the bodyguard function, even at \$1.75 each.

5614 Wood Elf Marksman *****

This elf is nice in its simplicity. The figure is 25 mm tall, very close for elves in the larger gaming scale, and mounted on a thick oval base. The figure is made of lead.

The elf wears tights and low, comfortable boots. A simple cloth surcoat with no fringes is cinched by a thin belt that anchors a shield, a short sword and sheath, and a pouch. A quiver of arrows is strapped to his back. Bracelets adorn both arms. His left hand holds a bow, and his right is held as if he just released an arrow. Around his neck is a bone necklace.

His face is very elvish with the hair straight back and block-cut, starting from a widow's peak. His eyes are slightly slanted and both pointed ears show; the left ear has an earring. The facial expression is one of concentration.

This figure is highly recommended for use as a wood-elf leader for a bow unit despite its \$1.75 price.

Fortress Figures

P.O. Box 66
Jonesboro IN 46938

XL-13 Pack Rat *****

Everyone knows a pack rat, and here is the perfect stocking-stuffer for the one you know. This giant rat measures just over 60 mm from nose to hairless tail. The figure sits on a thin, rectangular lead base with no texture. The figure is a giant in 25-mm scale, looking like a cross between a Norwegian and a brown. Short, stubby hair covers its body, and a pair of sharp teeth show in the mouth. Each of the legs has a small flaw that comes from the lead not getting into that part of the mold or from developing an air bubble. The tail is segmented and has a weak spot at the



Pack Rat and Bogey Officer (Fortress Figures)

bend (don't drop it!) The rat wears saddlebags and has a wide belt slung under its stomach. Piled on top of the saddlebags are a number of other bags and pouches hanging from strings, ropes, and straps, spread evenly on all sides just like on a pack mule. This figure is recommended for anyone running skaven armies (in GW's fantasy WARHAMMER* game) or wererats (in TSR's AD&D game). It is highly recommended at \$2 each.

WW4 Bogey Officer *****

This is definitely part of a caricature line. These Bogeys are an early space-faring group that leans heavily toward fascism; any resemblance to another well-known SF miniatures race must be purely coincidental. These figures are proportioned to the larger gaming scale, even though they are only 23 mm to the eyes. The figure's facial features, including the large ears, appear to be a cross between a movie Gremlin and an orc. His legs are covered by pants and jackboots, and he wears a large double-breasted coat complete with wide lapels and long sleeves. In his right hand is a revolver, and his left hand bears the badge of his leadership: an iron gauntlet. His belt supports a round disk, and he has a jet pack or oxygen tank and shoulder pads strapped on his back.

This piece comes with two heads: one uncovered and laughing hysterically, and one with a cigar stub and officer's cap. The cap has an eagle and goggles and almost brings to mind a comparison with Rommel's hat. Both heads have big, wide-spread, pointed ears, with bugged eyes and tusks in the lower jaw. The heads are interchangeable and could lead to some interesting scenery around an Imperial campfire in a WARHAMMER 40,000 game. This is well recommended at \$1.50 each.

That's all for this month. If you want to contact me, you can do so at: Friend's Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington St., Waukegan IL 60085, U.S.A., or by phone at: (708) 336-0790, 2 P.M.-10 P.M. MWThF and 10 A.M.-5 P.M. S&S.



MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

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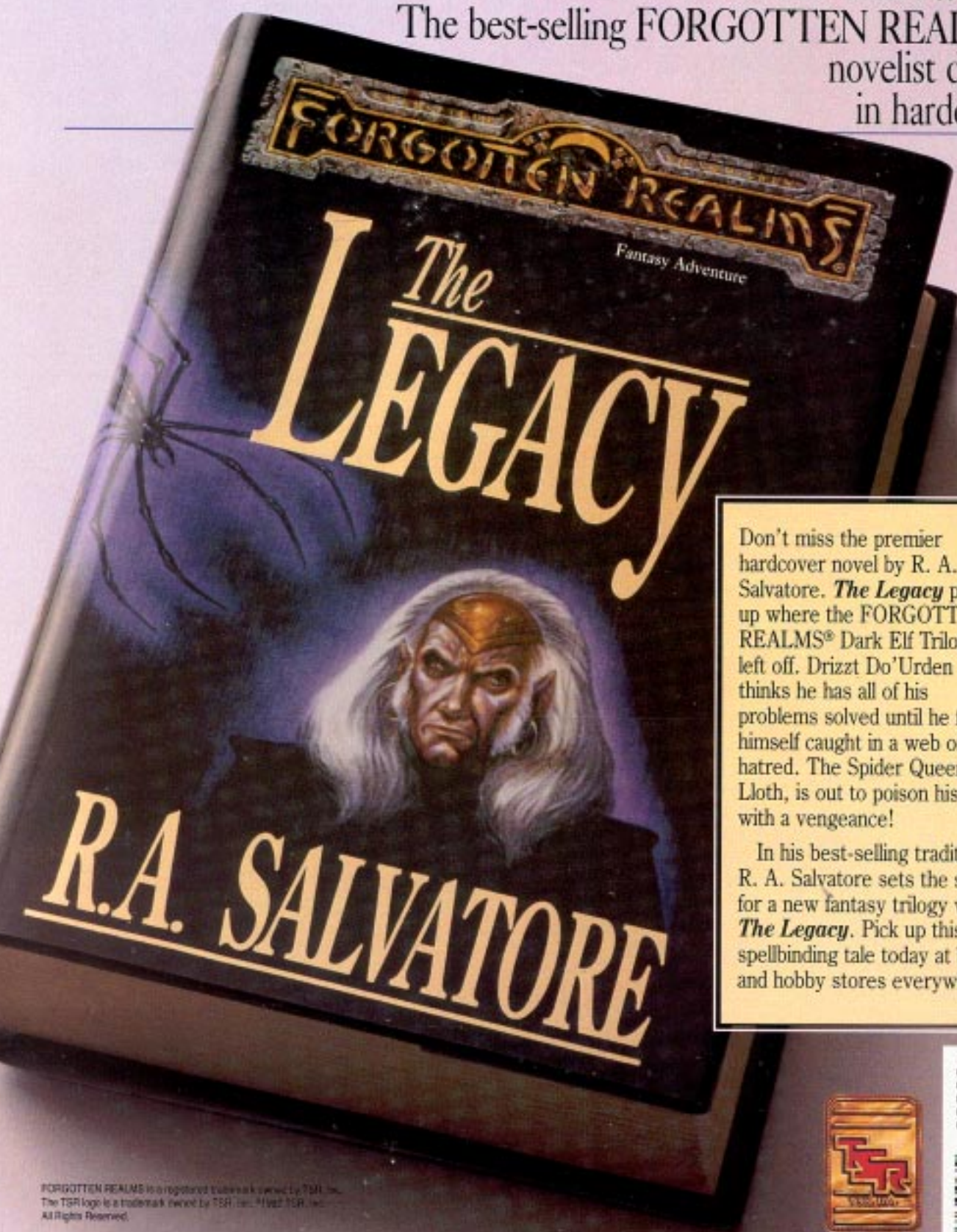
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