


SORCERER'S APPRENTICE



U.S. \$2.50
AUS. \$3.00

**SUMMER '82
ISSUE 15**

FICTION

The Opal Egg
by Robert E. Vardeman

Pharaoh's Revenge
by C. Bruce Hunter

ARTICLES

We Who Are About To Die
by Glenn Rahman

When in Rome
by Matthew Shaw

GAMING

First Command: T&T mini-solo
by Ken. St. Andre

Skills in Tunnels & Trolls
by Michael Stackpole

PLUS OUR REGULAR FEATURES

TROLL TALK

On page 41 a Canadian enterprise, Oracle Games, advertises a recent release, *Alma Mater*. Briefly we considered not accepting the ad; however, that is a form of censorship that I will not put up with. The ad is not obscene as it stands, and to my knowledge the company is completely legitimate. The ad does not misrepresent the product. These are proper reasons to refuse ads, in keeping with the unwritten contract between reader and magazine that we'll provide you with good material. Magazines do owe their readership news and information: this can be in the form of advertisements, or sometimes it's a soapbox editorial. I've read the rulebook of *Alma Mater*, and feel that a dose of my opinions belongs in the same issue as the advertisement.

Alma Mater bothers the hell out of me. It's a role-playing game about getting through four years of high school, but the schooldays depicted in *Alma Mater* are, as a whole, vicious, intimidating, manic. In part, the game bothers me because it really isn't something "distant" enough to fantasize about: we've all been there, or still are. While the situations in *Alma Mater* certainly do occur in high school (gang fights, drug-deals, 14-year old pregnancies complicated by VD, extortion, etc.) but as the *focus* of a game about high school, it stinks. In

order to make AM “realistic,” the rules are thorough, covering such “scholarly” subjects as dope-dealing, seduction, murder, sexist and racist stereotyping, militarism in the classroom and chem lab, and various psychosexual aberrations, sometimes at considerable length. The game does reward players for doing socially “acceptable” things: getting good grades, being popular, giving good parties, being on the winning teams. But the scales are set so that a “good” party probably means free drugs and alcohol in quantities; being popular means getting good dates who lay out (and making sure everyone knows — no social standing accrues unless you kiss and tell).

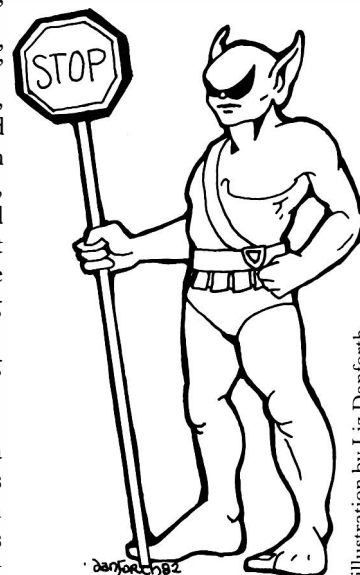


Illustration by Tia Dausbath

To play by the letter of the rules, you could probably have an acceptable game, assuming a level of maturity among the players and the SchoolMaster higher than the game-setting itself. But lest you go astray and try to play something vaguely straight, the illustrations will surely set you right. Funny thing about illustrations . . . they set the tone of the words you print with them. Illustrations accentuate some things, bypass others. Ignoring the basically neutral “yearbook pictures,” by

continued on page 20

a mini-solo adventure for Tunnels & Trolls

FIRST COMMAND

by **Ken St. Andre**

Avast, mate! Lerotra'h'h needs sailors ... she especially needs a captain to sail her tribute ship from Khazil down to Kayala. Sometime in your unsavory career you've sailed, and now you've ... won/bought/been shanghai'd into your first command in the Royal Navy of Khazan. You are put in charge of an aging galleon of 40 oars and 2 sails. For the purposes of the game, assume this ship has a "CON" of 1000. There are 120 filthy, ragged slaves chained to the sweeps, and a crew of 40 of the surliest rogues man the ship. Each of the sailors (but not the slaves) can fight, and should be considered to have a Monster Rating of 30. Your mission is to sail south to Kayala, and pick up a load of tribute that is waiting there. Once you have it, you must go back up the coast to Khizil and deliver the tribute to the Empress' treasurer.

This adventure is for 2nd to 10th level characters with no more than 100 combat adds. You will need pencil, paper, dice, and the T&T rules.* You are limited to

humanoid characters, and cannot use Elves, Fairies, Shadowjacks, Hobbits, or Vampires. You may bring a magic-user if you wish, but spell choices are mostly limited to combat spells (specifically: *Take That You Fiend*, *Blasting Power*, *Medusa*, *Deathspell #9*, and *Hellbomb Burst* as well as *Fly Me* is allowed). Paragraphs that allow you to cast magic are marked with an asterisk (*). If you require it, as ship commander you can receive any one suit of ordinary non-magical armor and two weapons of your choice from the rulebook.

You are assigned a first mate for the voyage. This burly fellow keeps the sailors in line, and knows the ways of these ships. To attribute him, roll 4d6 and double it for each attribute. Give him a saber and a dirk, and set sail! Go to 32A.

*You may also need these solitaire adventures: *Naked Doom*, or *Arena of Khazan*.

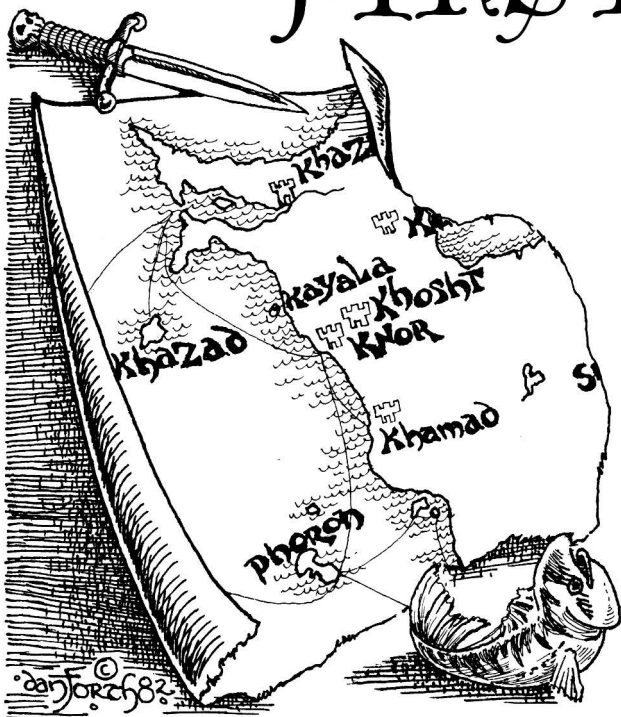


Illustration by Liz Danforth



SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

Issue 15 Summer 1982

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SORCERER'S APPRENTICE (ISSN 0276-3575) is published quarterly by Flying Buffalo, PO Box 1467, Scottsdale, Arizona 85252. Regular issue price \$2.50; a six-issue subscription is \$12 (overseas airmail, \$23).

Advertising rates, trade inquiries, and dealer/distributor discount lists available upon request. Our exclusive UK and European agent is Chris Harvey, FB, P.O. Box 100, Bath St., Walsall, West Midlands, UK. Our sole Australian agent is Military Simulations Pty. Ltd., 18 Fonceca St., Mordialloc, Vic. 3195, Australia.

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All material submitted for publication should be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope and sufficient return postage. Please send all submissions to: *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, c/o Flying Buffalo Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252-1467. We assume no responsibility for unsolicited material. All material accepted for publication in *Sorcerer's Apprentice* becomes the property of Flying Buffalo Inc. unless prior arrangements are made to the contrary.



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WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE THE GLADIATORS OF ANCIENT ROME

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At the heart of most games is a competitive combat, whether the clash of armies or individuals. At its most formalized, there are the planned combats in the arena. Many times and cultures have staged such contests, but the best known is certainly the gladiatorial shows of ancient Rome.

The most celebrated entertainers of the ancient world were men trained to kill and be killed in the arena. Such a man was called a "gladiator", a Latin term for "swordsman". To see him perform, crowds packed amphitheaters with seating space for tens of thousands. Millions of humans and animals must have perished for the sake of sport; their destruction was a sign of the senility that was overtaking Classical civilization. Yet gladiatorial competition began moderately enough, having been demonstrations of skill comparable to the jousts of the Middle Ages (or some of the violent sports of modern times).

GLENN RAHMAN

illustrations by Brad W. Foster



6A As you leave the inn you are accosted by what appears to be a peddler. If you listen to his pitch, go to 11A. If you ignore him, go to 26A. If you reach for your weapon go to 32A.

6B You awaken tied to a tree to which a sign is nailed. If you can read it, go to 39A. If not, go to 11C.

6C A passing Tibetan Lama resurrects you and takes you to 39A to discover the meaning of this adventure.

6A Several merry days after passing Knor, the skies begin to darken and the clouds take on the stern visage of the Death Goddess herself. And she sure looks mad! Lightning flashes from one of the cloudy eyes and sets the main mast afire. Space itself seems to rip open, and you lose consciousness.

You will find yourself sailing into the harbor of Khazan itself under heavy guard. The fate of traitors is never pleasant. If you know no magic, you will be sent into *Naked Doom*. If you have any sorcerous knowledge at all, you will be sold as a slave to the *Arena of Khazan*, and your first fight will be at paragraph 12A.

If you don't own any of these solitaire adventures, your character will be stripped of everything he or she may own and enslaved for 10 years as payment for various crimes. After that, you may play the character again, but the life of a slave is a rough one: your Strength and Constitution have been permanently reduced by half.

6B Many sharks are waiting; each one with a MR of 100, and you are defenseless helpless because your arms are bound. If you can use a *Fly Me* spell and were sailing along the coast, you will be able to waft yourself ashore. Go to 11B. If you were in mid-ocean heading for Khazad or returning from Khazad, you will end up in the drink, and then it will be *splash, GOODBYE!*

We can trace the origin of the Roman gladiator to the Etruscans, a people of northern Italy. The paintings in their tombs depict a race passionately devoted to the daily pleasures of living but haunted by an intense fear of death. Deeply superstitious, they believed that the unquiet spirits of the slain needed continual propitiation. The Etruscans sacrificed prisoners of war (especially Romans) to these powers of the afterworld. Occasionally their captives were ordered to fight amongst themselves until the last man was slain.

Rome showed no interest in gladiatorial fights until 264 B.C., when the sons of Brutus Pera exhibited three sets of duelists at their father's funeral. Others imitated the exhibition, and finally, in 105 B.C., two Roman consuls gave gladiatorial shows, making the entertainment official.

Even so, the undercurrent was still religious in nature. The Romans called the games the *munera*, indicating a human sacrifice. As late as Imperial days, the attendant who ran up to a stricken gladiator (to confirm the fact of his death by striking him upon the forehead with a hammer) was dressed either as Charon, the Etruscan god of fate — his hammer being Charon's emblem — or as Hermes Psychopompos, the Greek god who led the ghosts of the slain down into the infernal regions. Both the Emperor (the Pontifex Maximus) and the Roman nuns (the Vestal Virgins) attended to sanctify the proceedings.

About seventy arenas of Roman vintage are known to archaeologists; no one believes that this was the sum total. Simple legionnaires in newly-conquered areas would throw up a makeshift arena — just as a group of GI's would today rough out a football field. It is not true, as earlier scholars supposed, that the *munera* were unpopular in the Empire's eastern provinces. Egyptians, Syrians, and Greeks all patronized the games. Athens, the seat of philosophy, actually held gladiatorial contests in the Theater of Dionysus, where the great playwrights of the Periclean Age had once watched their plays performed.

In the early days, gladiator duels were held wherever a town could accommodate the action and the crowds — a marketplace, or a cattle yard. Later, temporary arenas were erected for the shows and then taken down. The oldest known permanent amphitheater is the one preserved in the Roman town of Pompeii. The early Roman amphitheaters were built of wood, the city's first being erected in 53 B.C. Later, both stone and wood were used in their construction. It was not until 80 A.D. that the famous Colosseum (then called the Flavian Amphitheater) was opened.

A huge four-story stone ellipse over 150 feet in height, the Colosseum measured 513' by 620'. The oval arena itself was 287'

long by 180' wide. Underneath the arena was a maze of passages for keeping wild animals, storerooms and the hoists that provided the stage effects and scenery for dressing up the shows.

A spacious marble terrace ringed the arena, protected by a high wall. Here, close to the action, presided the august Emperor and the Vestal Virgins. Above this tier soared rows of marble benches, the occupation of which was determined by social rank. In the first zone sat Rome's most exalted private citizens. The second zone was intended for the men of property and business. Beyond this were the rows for slaves and foreigners. The final section was allocated to women and the poor, who sat in wooden seats in a flat-roofed gallery. On the roof of this colonnade was stationed a detachment of Imperial sailors. It was their job to handle the huge *velarium* — a canvas shade which could be spread across the top of the Colosseum with ropes to shield the spectators from rain and glaring sun.

Some historians estimate that the Flavian Amphitheater held as many as 50,000 people. The figure that is more usually accepted by contemporary archaeologists is about 45,000. To accommodate this crowd without bottleneck and jostling, no less than eighty entrances were provided. Of these, seventy-six were numbered; fans entered by the passage bearing the same number as that on their tickets. Of the remaining four entries, two were reserved for the Imperial party and led directly to the ringside seat of honor, called the *podium*. The other two were meant for the gladiators themselves, who always entered the amphitheater in parade. One of these two was a small, grim entryway named after the Roman goddess of death, Libitina — the Porta Libitina. Through this door the victims of the carnage were hustled — toward an anonymous grave.

The games were expensive and required a wealthy patron to make them possible. In Italy the paramount patron of the *munera* was the Emperor. Here they served a useful political function. A large percentage of the Roman crowd was unemployed welfare cases whose idleness bred crime and discontent. Frequent games and spectacles redirected the mob's passions into sports and away from politics and social reform. The Romans favored an emperor who gave lavish shows; in fact, law forbade higher-ranking officials to organize spectacles lest they become popular enough to rival the Emperor in the esteem of the masses. During most of the Empire's existence, it was the quaestors (a type of state treasurer) who were the highest-ranking officers allowed the right to initiate the *munera*.

Under Augustus (27 B.C. — 14 A.D.) sixty-six days per year were holidays

celebrated with games. By the fourth century, the number of days devoted to gladiatorial contests had risen to 175 annually — and none of these figures include the many games given by officials subordinate to the Emperor, or those organized for special occasions.

The studious Emperor Claudius (41 — 54 A.D.) was an ambitious giver of shows. In 44 A.D. he staged the realistic capture of an entire town in the Campus Martius. In 52 A.D., to commemorate the opening of a waterway from the Fucine Lake, Claudius manned warships with nineteen thousand gladiators and staged a full-scale sea battle.

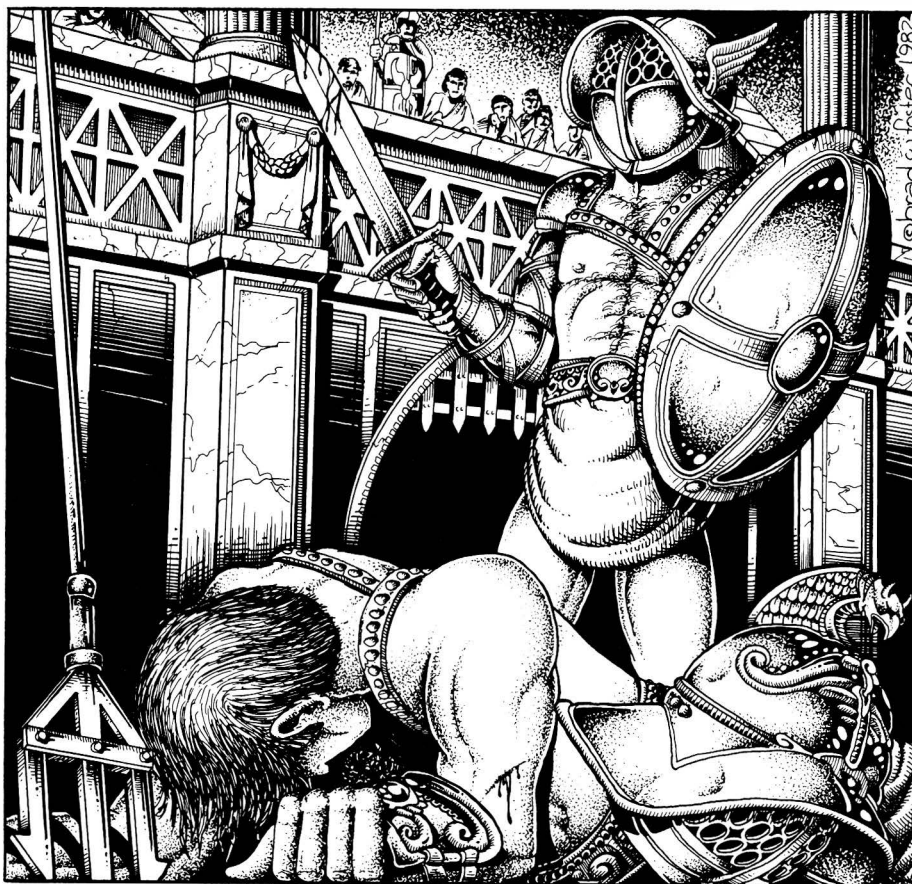
In 107 A.D., Trajan (98 — 117 A.D.) celebrated his Dacian conquests with a series of shows lasting four months — wherein about ten thousand men and a similar number of animals perished. Emperors did not stint on the *munera* even in times of political turmoil — as when the usurper Philip the Arab (244 — 249 A.D.) celebrated Rome's thousandth year (248 A.D.) with thousands of gladiatorial duels.

Looking back, it seems characteristic enough that such villains as Caligula, Nero, Domitian, and Commodus loved the games. Alas for stereotypes, it is equally true of most of Rome's greatest leaders, including Cicero, Caesar, Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, and Antoninus Pius. The fact is that by Roman lights, holding and enjoying the *munera* betokened piety, generosity, responsibility, and sportsmanship. One of the most sinister figures to sit upon the Imperial throne was Tiberius (14 — 37 A.D.). He was disliked by the Roman masses not so much for his murderous reprisals against imagined traitors, but because he was too stingy to hold many spectacles and too surly to attend them. Marcus Aurelius (161 — 180 A.D.), one of the few emperors who did not care for the *munera*, gave and attended them regularly — thus avoiding unpopularity and discontent.

While at the spectacle, the Emperor was on display to his subjects. All eyes were on him, watching his attitude — good fellowship, sadism, or inattentiveness. Any

overheard snatch of conversation was carried to every gossip in Rome. Emperors in the midst of an excited mob were abnormally vulnerable and hence liable to be influenced by the public will. While the mob made a poor deliberative body and sometimes was carried away by wrong-headed passions, the shows allowed at least a token input into an otherwise arbitrary governmental system.

Away from Rome, removed from the Emperor's jealousy, numerous local officials gave shows to their countrymen. Usually these personages were priests or municipal candidates currying the favor of the crowd.



Naturally not all of these men were expert in organizing anything so huge and complex as a Roman circus. Nor did they have to be. The actual staging was contracted to a professional show-organizer called a *lanista*.

Although the *lanistae* shared the low status of panderers or procurers, their service was equally in demand. Most owned their own gladiators, but could contract for the services of additional troops from other owners. In Rome itself, the Emperor had no need for these freelancers. There, the duties of the *lanistae* were assumed by officers called the *procuratores*. They were also in charge of acquiring the wild and exotic animals that figured so prominently in the arena sports.

The entertainers themselves, the gladiators, had various origins. Many of

them were criminals condemned to a gladiatorial school; many others were slaves who had committed no offense. Under Roman law, a slave was obligated to learn the trade that his master chose for him, including that of probable death in the arena. Another source of unwilling gladiators was foreign conquest. Custom permitted the enslaving of foreign or rebel populations and many of these were channeled into the carnage of the *munera*.

In addition to the majority of gladiators who were forced into the trade, there were always a few men who entered their ranks by choice. These were by and large social

outcasts, violent men, or adventurers who craved excitement in the pacific (but opportunity-poor) world of the Pax Romana. Some gladiators who were forced into their trade, and subsequently won their freedom, chose to return to the arena. Such volunteers were considered the best and most dedicated fighters, and hence were very popular. The Emperor Tiberius is said to have offered 1000 gold pieces to any veteran who would return to the arena for a single show.

Although gladiators represented the scum of Roman society, a few individuals of rank entered the lists. There were enough of these prodigals to compel the Emperor Vitellius (69 A.D.) to issue an edict forbidding

Roman gentlemen to disgrace themselves in gladiatorial performances. At still other times, vindictive emperors forced members of the nobility into the arena against their will, to punish or eliminate them.

Attracting as much notoriety as the well-born gladiators were the women who ventured to enter that strange calling. Of the year 63 A.D. Tacitus writes: "Many ladies of distinction, however, and senators, disgraced themselves by appearing in the amphitheatre". (*Annals* 15.32). In the year 200 A.D., an edict of Emperor Septimus Severus (193 — 211 A.D.) forbade the employment of female gladiators — probably with as little success as Vitellius's decree had seen.

But male or female, a person took a

fateful step when he contracted to become a gladiator. The oath he swore as a gladiator deprived him of most of his rights as a free citizen. Even if he changed his mind before his contract was fulfilled, he could be forced to fight by means of hot irons, punitive chaining, whippings — he might even be slain if he proved unyielding.

The institution which turned willing or unwilling fighters into gladiators was the *ludus gladiatorus* — the gladiatorial school. By imperial times most of these were state-owned. The largest was the Ludus Magnus ("Great School"), located near Rome and founded, perhaps, by Emperor Claudius, who so loved a high-quality match.

A gladiatorial school had its own small arena for practice. The fighters were lodged in its halls according to their experience and status. The typical living cell was small, dark, and dank — and perhaps only three or four meters square.

Each school possessed a large specialized staff. The instructors were called *doctores*. We can imagine how they must have drilled theory and technique into their pupils' unwilling heads. The disciplines they taught were highly sophisticated and they demanded from their charges an expertise which would satisfy even the most discriminating fan in the amphitheater. Over the years a large corpus of gladiatorial theory was compiled, each branch being taught by a different specialist.

Tyros practiced with wooden blades against a straw man or man-sized post. Advanced practice called for the use of extra-heavy weapons — probably to build muscle and skill. Their form of swordplay was an intricate science, as sophisticated as any in the court of Louis of France.

Training standards were extremely high; discipline was severe and the punishments savage. No weapons were allowed in the hands of the pupils during their private hours, lest they inspire an uprising or suicide. Notwithstanding the harshness of their instruction, the gladiators' health was of great concern to their masters and the schools employed high-quality physicians. The diet of the gladiators was good and wholesome — including a generous ration of barley, noted for its muscle-building properties.

The tools of the gladiator's trade were his armor and weapons. If the man's master was wealthy, his arms were often extravagantly gilded and bejeweled. The helmet worn by certain classes of gladiators was a magnificent piece of craftsmanship, with its grated faceguard, arched crest (often crowned with ostrich plumes or peacock feathers) and broad, elegantly angled brim.

The training, like the equipment, was not the same for different classes of gladiators. Some of these gladiatorial types were patterned after the enemies which the

Romans had fought in earlier years. Captured soldiers from many different nations were brought to Rome and sent into the arena to fight to the death using their own native arms and tactics. Some of these caught the Romans' imagination.

The "Samnite" gladiator wore heavy, ornate armor and the elaborate style of helmet described above. A large oblong shield, an armored sleeve on his right arm,



and one metal or leather greave on his left leg rounded out his costume. His traditional weapon was the sword or lance.

A "Thracian" wore two greaves and bands of leather on his legs. He used a scimitar while protecting himself with a small round or square shield.

The "Gauls", also called *myrmillones* ("sea fish" — after the fish insignia on their helmets) carried a sword and shield. For armor they wore a breastplate, a right-arm sleeve, and a left-leg greave.

The "secutor" (chaser) was the most

common type. He usually went into combat with his right leg and torso bare. His helmet was either high-visored or round; his shield was large — either egg-shaped or rectangular. A wide belt extended down to his thighs, while leather bands protected his fighting arm, the one holding the short sword or dagger.

The principal opponent of the *secutor* was the *retarius*, the net-fighter. Unlike most gladiators, the *retarius* fought bare-headed. Mobility took the place of armor for the net-fighter; he wore little else but leg and ankle bands, a wide belt and a left-shoulder piece. Instead of a sword, he wielded a trident, a dagger, and a net with which to ensnare his prey. To one end of this net was fixed a cord, permitting it to be drawn back to him if his cast missed its mark.

An exotic type of gladiator was called the *andabata*, who was a mailed horseman. Wearing a helmet that blocked off his sight, he was supposed to charge blindly at other *andabatae*. The *eques* was another kind of mounted gladiator that wore a tunic and carried a round shield.

The ancient Romans favored the different types of gladiators as passionately as moderns favor one sports team over another. Fights sometimes broke out in the stands between gladiator partisans, while emperors occasionally took vengeance on fans who scorned their favorites. Emperor Domitian, who supported the *myrmillones*, threw an outspoken Thracian fan to the wild dogs of the arena.

Despite the popularity of gladiators, they were regarded as the lowest grade of humanity — on a level with actors and prostitutes. The blood they shed was considered worthless. The children of a gladiator were stigmatized.

Though scorned, the gladiators were also idolized, much like our modern sports champions. Highborn ladies scandalously consorted with gladiators; gossip held that the brutish Commodus was not the son of Marcus Aurelius, but of an anonymous gladiator. Men envied the gladiator's skill and daring — sometimes impulsively leaping into the arena to match themselves against a champion. Commodus (180 — 192 A.D.) proudly performed as a gladiator, both before and after he became emperor. Caligula, Hadrian, Caracalla, and other emperors often sparred with gladiators to prove their mettle and learn their tricks.

Not only was the gladiator simultaneously despised and admired — he was also feared. Laws were passed to prevent gladiators from revolting (as Spartacus had in 74 B.C.) or from ambitious men recruiting them into private armies. When gladiators performed, troops of guards were posted to keep them in hand.

Interestingly enough, for all this care

the gladiators never did very well when expected to fight as soldiers. There are several recorded instances where gladiators were drafted into combat units, but usually their performance was disappointing. They tended to break and run as soon or sooner than did ordinary soldiers. For all the impact the gladiators seem to have had on Roman military history, they might just as well never have existed.

No gladiator's memoirs have come down to us, so it is hard to reconstruct their own attitudes about their way of life. Many gladiatorial pupils hated their condition so much they committed suicide. Yet others apparently liked to fight and grew restless and troublesome if circumstances kept them away from the arena too long.

A successful gladiator would be acclaimed by the fans and the host of the games would hand him his wooden sword — the symbol of his retirement. Most must have been eager to accept it, but not all of them. One Syrian duelist, Flamma, is known to have received the wooden sword four different times and each time returned to his calling. The good food, fame, and rich gifts his skill bought must have sweetened the life of a man who otherwise might have been a vagabond or a slave at hard labor.

Gladiators seem to have had intense professional pride. Once, for instance, they all but mutinied against Emperor Claudius when he made an offensive joke to their faces. Survivors were known to give rich and honorable funerals to comrades who had fallen in the *munera*. Epitaphs on gladiator graves indicate what their friends and loved ones thought of them. Many were credited with mercy and friendliness, as well as strength, courage, and skill.

These then were the men whose lives were consumed for public spectacle.

Long before a show was held, it was widely advertised. The names of the combatants were published and posted. The night before the show began, the gladiators attended a sumptuous feast held by the giver of the games. The public was admitted to these suppers to admire their heroes and to marvel at the generosity of the patron.

Admission depended upon buying or being given a ticket. Having entered with a minimum of crowding through one of the seventy-six public doors of the Colosseum, the spectator could settle down comfortably and enjoy a long, thrilling day of competition and pageantry which commenced at sunup and went on far into the dark hours.

The patron of the games and the gladiators initiated the show with a public parade, riding chariots and wearing dress of purple and gold. At length they left the chariots and proceeded around the arena, trailed by slaves bearing their weapons and armor.

When the duelists reached the Emperor's presence, they held out their right arms and shouted: "Hail, Emperor; we who are about to die salute you!"

The first fights were bloodless warmups by mock-gladiators called the *paegniarii*, whose weapons were sticks and whips. Other clowns, the *lusorii*, dueled with wooden weapons. Sometimes these mock fights went on for more than a single day.

When it came time for the real gladiators to enter the lists, their matches were determined by drawn lots. The war trumpet signaled the beginning of the serious competition.

While the men dueled, their trainers stayed by them, shouting advice and encouragement — or prodded them into a better performance with whips or hot irons.

When a man knew himself beaten, he lifted a finger of his left hand as a request for mercy from the patron of the game. Romans had no use for a coward, but if the fallen contestant was a popular fighter there might be a clamor to spare his life.

The winner of the match received a prize of silver coins in a silver bowl. A victor's crown on his head, or a palm in his fist, the winner would race away through the Porta Sanivivaria, the crowd's cheers following him. The winner of many bouts became a recognized champion. Private citizens might shower gifts and properties upon him, and eventually he would be offered the wooden sword.

At the conclusion of a day's performance, a summary of the outcome would be published. The letter "P" written beside a gladiator's name meant that he had perished; a "V" indicated victory; an "M" (*missus*) meant that he had been beaten, but his life had been spared.

Not everyone liked the games; there had always been a few voices raised against them. The Christians liked them least of all, perhaps because so many of their co-religionists had been executed in the arena. Yet even Christians had mixed feelings. Although the first Christian emperor, Constantine (311 — 337 A.D.) passed some laws to the detriment of the games, they still went on.

A story told by St. Augustine (354 — 430 A.D.) shows that Christians were as susceptible as anyone else to the seductive excitement of the arena. A young friend of his, Alypius, went to Rome to study law. He had long disliked the games as much as Augustine did, but at last his Roman friends persuaded him to attend a spectacle. The performance utterly enthralled him. After that he not only frequently returned to the games with his friends, but was even known to go alone or drag other unwilling persons with him.

It was less the Christians than the German conquerers who put an end to gladiatorial displays. Foreigners who were

not brought up in the Greco-Roman tradition had never liked the *munera*. Besides, by the time the Germans came the Western Empire was bankrupt, its cities depopulated. The German kings had no unruly mob to pacify with pageants, hence did not need to continue giving Roman circusses. The sport hung on in the surviving eastern half of the Empire until it was officially abolished in 681 A.D.

Rather than read a moral awakening into the ending of the games, we recognize that by the middle of the first millennium A.D. the Hellenistic civilization which had spawned them was no more. It had given way to either a Dark Age or a Byzantine culture. Tastes in public entertainment had simply changed with the times. ■

***9A** If you cast a spell that kills the mate outright, your supporters will restore you to command of your ship. You stalk the ship, murder in your eye but a plan in your head. You gather the mutineers and offer them a choice. They pledge fealty to you or swim with the sharks. All of them decide you are nicer than the sharks and rejoin your crew. The rest of the voyage will be tame by comparison. If you are sailing down the coast go to 32C; if you are sailing to Khazad go to 26B.

If, for whatever reason, your spell does not kill the mate instantly, he will hit you with his saber and do full damage. In addition to hurting you, this will knock you into the sea, go to 6B.

If you used a *Hellbomb Burst*, you will slay the mate. Unfortunately, that part of the ship also disintegrates and you drop into the ocean with the sharks. The other mutineers will not let you come back aboard, should you escape the sharks. Go to 6B.

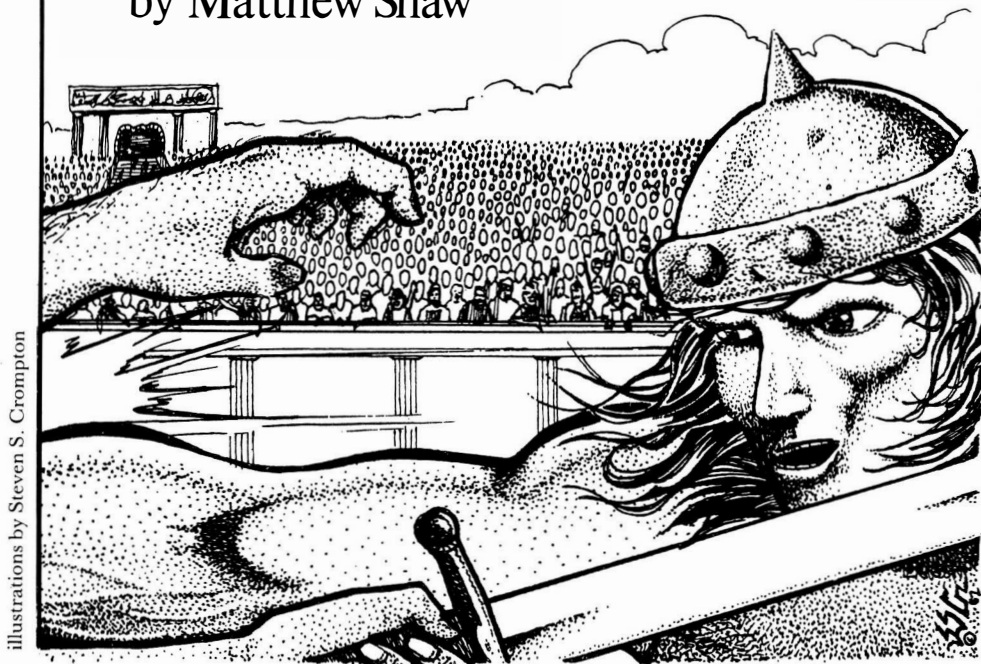
9B As you sail out of the harbor, your first mate suggests that you set course for the free cities south of Khamad. He tells you that he has kin down there who will protect you for a share of the treasure. He spins tales of drunken days and debauched nights. He mentions that in the Free cities, monsters are to be hunted, not obeyed. "There," he says, "we can live like Kings on the tribute we've collected." If you agree to his suggestion, go to 6A. If you tell him not to provoke the wrath of the Death Goddess, and set sail north for Khizil, go to 19A.

9C The Orcs of Khazad are very displeased with your attitude. They gather together a small force and attack. More orcs are seen running towards your ship to cut you off as the dragon keepers work feverishly at unbinding the dragon so it may attack. As you fight desperately with them, you see their dragon taking to the air. If you wish to stay and fight, go to 35C. If you want to try and make a run for it, go to 19B.

When in Rome ...

a T&T Variant for Gladiatorial Combat

by Matthew Shaw



illustrations by Steven S. Crompton

Glenn Rahman's description of gladiatorial galas and combats can enhance any campaign game played in an empire as decadent as that of old Rome. In the following article, Matt Shaw provides a simple system for the adaptation of T&T to simulate the gory spectacles of the Roman games — and perhaps gives us a system to reduce general T&T combat to a blow-by-blow system.

In the glorious days of Imperial Rome the people came to see men fight and die. If the show was to be worth seeing at all, fights had to be fast and bloody.

I have worked up a system to modify *Tunnels & Trolls* combat to simulate the blow-by-blow duels on the sands of imperial arenas, and to spice up instances where players want to know what they hit and what the result is.

This "Gladiator" system works fairly easily, and requires only minor changes to the T&T combat system.

• • •

First, in this variant each combat round takes only 10 seconds. (I assume that the Gladiators run out and kill; the posturing and tactical maneuvering that goes on in dungeon combat just does not take place.)

Second, each player must choose an "attack tactic" for each combat round he fights. Such tactics will target the damage done on an opponent's body; certain gladiators are restricted to one type of blow. There are four types of tactics available.

The **Lunge** tactic indicates a move where the attack comes towards the opponent with the intent of stabbing instead of slashing or chopping. A trident may only execute Lunge attacks, while a net cannot perform Lunge attacks at all.

The **Draw** tactic indicates a slashing/chopping attack that runs across the body of the opponent. It is meant to disembowel the foe.

The **Quarter** tactic is an attack that runs from the head of a foe to his feet.

The **Slash** tactic attacks indicate a blow that runs diagonally across the body of the foe.

Combat is conducted in the normal T&T fashion; dice are rolled for each weapon used and then combat totals are compared. However, after this is done, the winner of a combat round will then roll 2d6 and consult the Hit Location Chart below to see where his blow lands. This chart is

vital — gladiators wear armor in the strangest places, and an attack to an armored location will not do as much damage as one might like.

It is very important to indicate the "handedness" of each participating gladiator. Generally, a right-handed fighter will hit his foe on the foe's left side. Wherever the chart notes "Arm, same" that means a right-handed fighter has hit the right arm of his foe (the attack that is usually most difficult). If a side is not specified on the chart, all attacks will hit the body location on the side opposite the handedness of the gladiator delivering the blow. (If you look into a mirror for a while, you will see the logic of this.) Torso hits where a shield would be able to absorb some damage are also noted on the chart. If the chart does not indicate a shield, the shield is not in play.

NOTE: If a Lunge result indicates an arm or thigh hit, roll 1d6. An odd result indicates a hit on the right limb, an even result means a hit on the left limb.

Damage to different limbs and body parts will have specific results. If a foe does damage to a character's limb equal to 50% of that character's CON, the limb is useless from that point on.

If the useless limb is an arm, the shield can no longer be used to take damage; any weapon held must be shifted to the other hand to continue using it. (This can be done easily, and the weapon will be ready for the next round.)

A useless leg will result in a 50% reduction in the character's DEX. Both legs gone results in immobility (and probably death).

A head wound caused by more than 50% of the character's CON in damage will result in unconsciousness if the character cannot make a CON saving roll against the total amount of damage he has taken in the fight. (For example, Flavius started the fight with a Constitution of 15. He takes a head wound for 8 points of damage. He will fall unconscious if he cannot make a saving roll against those 8 points of damage with his new CON of 7. (8 minus his new CON gives him what he must roll on 2d6 to make the SR, i.e. 1. Though the difference is 1, he must make at least a 5 as per normal saving roll rules.)

Torso wounds will not cause problems. Gladiators are tough.

As mentioned above, the different types of gladiators were armed with different weapons and armor. I have reduced all of their weapons and armor to the nearest T&T equivalents. Bracers (leather bands that will absorb one point of damage from the body part they cover) have been introduced to account for the leather belts and such that some of the gladiators used. The tower shield, given its size, will protect not only the arm using it, but the thigh on

that side and the torso on that side, *regardless of the chart result.*

These are the various types of Gladiators:

SAMNITE. Their oblong shield is a Knight's shield, while the armored sleeve is a piece of mail that will protect the sword arm alone. They get one greave to protect the left shin and the helmet should be a full helm. Arm them with a Gladius or Pilum.

THRACIAN. Greaves protect both shins while bracers cover their thighs. They get a Target shield and should be armed with a scimitar. Their helmet should be a Greek helm.

GAUL. They get a full helm and Back and breast for upper body armor. The sword arm would have bracers and the shin on the shield side should have a greave. A gladius and target shield, with appropriate fish designs, will complete the armament.

SECUTOR. A tower shield, full helm and bracers for thighs and sword arm are all the protection this fighter wears. A gladius or poniard would provide the offensive punch for this gladiator.

RETARIUS. Bracers protect the legs, torso and net arm of this fighter. He wears no helmet. A trident, dirk and net are his weapons.

A retarius may attack with either his net or another of his weapons in any one round. A net may not execute a Lunge attack. The net gets 3d6 when used for an attack. If the retarius wins the round, he does no damage; instead, he rolls to see which part of his foe he entangles. Entanglement has specific results for each body part, as follows.

A head hit by a net: the foe must reduce his combat roll in half until the net is thrown off.

An arm hit by a net: the foe cannot use his weapon or shield until the net is thrown off.

A torso hit by a net: the foe's arm is pinned to his torso and rendered useless until he can throw the net off. The arm trapped is the arm opposite the net arm of the retarius.

A thigh/shin hit by a net: the foe is tripped. His DEX is halved until he can throw the net off. While fighting from the ground,

any head hit result by the foe may be ignored by the retarius; regardless of the damage done, it is considered a miss.

For a gladiator to throw off the net of a retarius, he must make a Dexterity saving roll on the combat roll of the net when it got him. This will reflect how well he is entangled, and the halving of DEX from a wound or being tripped will be in effect for making the saving roll to throw the net off. If the roll is made, the net is thrown off. The saving roll never gets tougher and all fighters are encouraged to try to throw a net off before they die.

Armor will only protect the part of the body that it covers. No gladiator will get the doubled effect for armor; after all, they were trained to kill, not ward off blows.

If a Gladiator's CON is reduced to 1, or he is otherwise rendered unconscious, his fate will be decided by the "crowd". Any unconscious fighter must attempt to make a L1-SR, using the number of rounds he lasted in the fight as the attribute for making the saving roll. If he makes it, he will be allowed to win. If he misses it, he gets one last chance to make a Charisma (reputation) saving roll on his level. If he makes that, he lives. If he fails, death.

Experience points for these professional fighters should be awarded on the basis of how well the fight went and how difficult a fight it was. Players may also wish to add to the Charisma of a character.

Another way to reflect the growth of a gladiator's fame is to create another attribute called Reputation. REP begins at zero, and increases as a result of the character's victories in the arena. 2 REP points should be awarded for a win, *per opponent faced in a fight*; 1 REP point should be awarded for losing a fight but surviving. Reputation could be treated as a Skill (as outlined in another article this issue) to modify Charisma for survival saving rolls. It also could be used to decide who should fight whom, if your city keeps a going series of Gladiatorial combats going.

This T&T variant fights fast and bloody. Whether you use it to modify normal T&T combat or just to fight in arenas, I hope you have fun with it. ■

HIT LOCATION CHART

Die roll	Lunge	Draw	Quarter	Slash
12	Head	Head	Head	Head
11	Torso	Torso	Arm, same	Arm, same
10	Torso	Torso	Arm	Arm
9	Torso	Arm, same	Arm	Arm
8	Thigh	Arm	Arm	Torso
7	Arm	Arm	Torso	Torso, shield
6	Thigh	Thigh	Thigh	Torso
5	Torso	Thigh, same	Thigh	Shin
4	Torso	Torso	Thigh	Shin
3	Torso	Torso, shield	Thigh, same	Shin, same
2	Head	Head	Head	Head

ADVERTISEMENT



11A He shows you a small box and says it contains a fun game for three to eleven players. If you buy it on the spot, go to 26B. If you keep listening, see 32B. To walk away, go to 26A.

11B He blows your head off and says, "Aw, horsefeathers, I sure hate to lose a customer" then walks away. Go to 6A.

11C Unfortunately, you seem to be dying of thirst! Go to 6C.

11A The first day passes uneventfully and the mate tells you many tales as you work together. One thing he says is that many of the Khazan tribute ships never come back — there are rumors of pirates, sea serpents, and captains who have just sailed away with the collected tribute. He gives you a sly wink and asks what you think of the idea. If you tell him that you're determined to bring the tribute back to Khizil, go to 35B. If you hint that you might take the tribute under the right circumstances, go to 25B.

11B You are alone on a savage coast, and you have lost your first command. It may be better to let everyone believe you perished with your ship. If you can make a L2-SR on Intelligence (25 — IQ), you will be able to survive in the wilderness and return to "civilization". If you miss the roll, you will die in the wilderness. In either case, it is the end of this adventure.

11C You have arrived at Kayala. Your ship is repaired and your mate replaces any crew you have lost. Kayala gives you more than 50,000 gold pieces worth of tribute (in jewels, furs, metals from the mountains of the Escarpment, etc.) to carry to Khazan. If you wish to consider the adventure finished now, make a L3-SR on Charisma (30 — CHR). If you make it, you will be able to control your crew and sail back to Khizil with the loot. If you miss the saving roll, go to 9B.

11D Roll 1d6. If you rolled 1-2, go to 25A, 3-4, go to 32B; 5-6 go to 16A.

Letters



illustration by Rob Carver

Michael Stackpole's article "Devil Games? Nonsense!" in SA #14 drew more mail than any other single article ever run in SA. Two replies are offered below — and then you'll be returned to the regularly scheduled letter column.

SA #14 provided a number of ideas, both with regards to the poisonous critter article and the GM dungeon.

I would also like to concur with Mike Stackpole's thoughts on FRP and morals. I would like to point out the following points that Mike neglected:

D&D is the grand-daddy of all these games; in the AD&D Monster Manual, there are three monsters deserving mention: Larva, Manes, and Lemures. These are the forms taken by the souls of the evil in the world (planes) after death; they are quite repugnant to behold, and I, for one, would take great steps to avoid spending eternity as any one of the trio.

Secondly, I feel (speaking as a fundamentalist) that the objection many fundamentalists have is that these games take place in/on worlds clearly different from the one described in the Bible; RuneQuest is the most explicit in this regard, T&T the least. Of course, this objection could be raised to all "speculative fiction", including *The Chronicles of Narnia* . . .

It is undeniable that FRP can have a negative effect on some personalities. [However] these games can also have the very positive effect of causing people to think about their beliefs; while GM'ing D&D, I was forced to develop an explicit statement of what I meant by "good" and "evil" so I could justify zapping characters for acting "outside alignment".

Dean Simmons
Sunnyvale, CA

[SA #14] was by far the best in a long time. For once I enjoyed each and every feature, and was particularly pleased with Michael's response to those groups

that seem to think that the mere playing of a game can turn this nation's creative sector into a horde of blood-thirsty, lust-crazed devil-worshippers. After all, I was a blood-thirsty, lust-crazed devil-worshipper long before I ever got involved in FRP. It seems all those years of playing *Monopoly* and *Life* have warped my outlook on the business world. I can hardly wait to foreclose mortgages on little old ladies on Social Security, and charge excessive interest rates on loans. Remember games like *Risk* and *Battle-ship*? I just can't seem to get rid of the desire to start warfare on a global scale, ridding this planet of the human race once and for all. I won't even go into the harm that can be done to a young and impressionable mind by that pornographic devil's tool, *Twister*. Too bad I didn't have these groups around when I was growing up, telling me how to think, when to think, and what to think.

The point is, you can build a case against anything if you take concepts out of context and to the extreme. This kind of thinking the world can do without. We have enough problems to deal with without the threat of censorship and the suppression of personal choice and freedom lurking in the wing.

Jim Cairns
Newark, CA

Thanks to all who wrote about the article, most of whom were echoing Jim Cairns' comments.

I hate to deflate John Sapienza (SA #14), but the sail-powered airships he describes won't work for fairly simple physical reasons. A sail only works at the interface between two fluids. The air moving over the ocean moves at a different speed than the water. A ship, drifting in the water, is already moving at the speed of the current. But the air is moving faster. So the sails are filled, and the air tries to drag the ship along.

However, a lighter-than-air craft is

already moving with the air. Nothing drags. A flag flown from a balloon in a hurricane will hang *limp* because it and the balloon have already matched speed and direction with the wind. A sail won't work any better for an airship than it will for a submerged submarine.

Darrell Schweitzer
Strafford, PA

I appreciate the physics lesson, but somehow I feel the sense of wonder is missing from your heart, Darrell . . . obviously it's magic, right?

Just had to write to compliment you folks on SA #14. I enjoyed every article. The fiction (especially "From the Tree of Time") was quite good. I know I can always count on SA to get quality authors for the fiction. As long as you keep on getting stuff from people like Roger Zelazny, C. J. Cherryh, Tanith Lee, and Fred Saberhagen, I am definitely in favor of fiction in SA.

The best thing about this issue was definitely "The Emerald Dome". The thing melded very well into my DragonQuest-based campaign. If Citybook will be like this, you can bet I'll lay down my hard-earned shekels for it.

Mike Stackpole's "Devil Games? Nonsense!" was a very good article, and it brought up a very important issue in RPG. Mike made good sense to me. Then again, he usually does.

Colin Wheeler's article was also very interesting. FRP should be more than just a "hack 'em up" excursion, and the GM *should* concentrate on telling a story. In my opinion, FRP serves as a vehicle to live, rather than just read, a fantasy tale, no matter what system you use.

Jim Robinson
Pueblo, CO

On "Pulling Punches: the Full Defensive". Anyone who has sparred berserk 6-year olds (or angry girl-friends) understands how to pull a punch without letting your defenses down . . . At times I'll use this "full defensive posture" in T&T to measure an opponent I wish to subdue without killing, but giving me protection should he prove tougher than expected. Think of it as series of parries — answering the opponent's moves without going for the kill yourself, and (hopefully) get in a lucky blow, and it is difficult to be totally on the ball when holding back: in a game situation I'll exact a penalty for attempting the move, as well as a saving roll. Someday I'll probably kill one of my characters who could have won an all-out attack, but is a useful tactic at times.

The _____(adj.) mini-solo is _____(adj.). Bizarre.

Dave Hill
Rutland, VT

Thoroughly enjoyed the fiction [in issue 13]: "The Last Tower" by C. J. Cherryh, and "Magician" by C. Bruce Hunter. "Magician" appears to be a chapter from a novel that may be forthcoming. I sure hope so.

"Secret Societies in FRP Gaming" by Lewis Pulsipher — of interest, but how useful? I've been working on my fantasy world for 5 years and do not have room for Secret Societies yet! And I have myself and four other GMs that game at least 3 times a month.

B. W. Lane

Well, response to the _____ (adj.) mini-solo was a bit . . . varied, shall we say. But then, it was only meant to be for fun.

As for Secret Societies: those who had anything to say about it didn't have much to say that was very positive. Maybe the letter below has something to do with it?

So . . . you people at *Sorcerer's Apprentice* have chosen to let the proverbial cat out of the bag by printing Lewis Pulsipher's article, "Secret Societies in Fantasy Role Playing" (SA #13 — a significant number, that).

Yea, truly the beans have been spilled. Nevertheless, you fail to grasp how far the tentacles of a secret society can reach. Ours are long and subtle indeed! Our nuclear whoopee cushions sank Atlantis; the Pyramids are but one of our little jokes; Plato, Louis XV, and Karl Marx were robots controlled by us; and you never noticed when we removed from the alphabet three letters that formerly resided between M and N.

We know what DIDDY WA DIDDY means . . .

Lastly, we have inserted a message to you and your readership in the very article that reveals so much about us:

Page 40, 1st column, line 4, 3rd word (don't forget to punctuate).

Page 38, 3rd column, 11th word, 1st letter.

Page 38, 3rd column, 11th word, 3rd and 4th letters.

Page 38, 3rd column, 13th word, 3rd letter.

Page 38, 3rd column, 15th word, 2nd letter.

Page 38, 3rd column, 21st word, 5th, 6th, and 7th letters.

Page 40, 3rd column, last word.

Page 40, 3rd column, 2nd word, delete the "k".

P.S. Do not confuse us with that thoroughly inferior cult, Wotan's Order of the Oriental Druidic Conclave of Hellishly Unspeakable Cosmic Knowledge.

Frater Gorgonzolas

Heirophant, Supreme Magic,
and Grand Flaming Druid

Magical Army of Rascals for the
Muddling of Obvious Truths

(M.A.R.M.O.T.)

Who, us? Would we dream of making a mistake like that? You managed to keep your name out of Steve Jackson's Illuminati game; we know better than to trifle with anybody THAT powerful!

The Fill-in-the-Blanks Solo was hilarious. I am still wondering how the Nameless One came to be wearing a steam locomotive! (Probably very carefully). I've never worked out just how much space a solo adventure takes up in SA, but they're worth it. There was good fiction again, especially that by C. J. Cherryh.

The cover of SA 12 has aroused comments from friends, most notably "It must have been drawn by a man." I could imagine some problems from carrying a sword as in the drawing. Have you ever considered an article on the ways weapons can be carried? As I recall, composite bows are kept in special cases — while English archers kept spare bowstrings dry under their caps.

David Bell
Lincoln, United Kingdom

It was painted by a man, Stephan Peregrine. However, assuming you're referring to the cross-chest harness/sword sheath worn by the female . . . being myself female, I believe such a carrier could be worn comfortably unless one were a) very overweight, or b) built like a Playboy centerfold. The greater problem I could foresee would affect males and females alike: to what, who has arms long enough to pull a sword worn so?

I just got SA 14 yesterday, and already I've read the whole thing from cover to cover, including ads. (That normally takes me about a week). The thing is awesome! Even things that didn't normally interest me kept my interest. Most useful of all (from my viewpoint) was "The Emerald Dome", which is going to get some use in the FRP system I have devised. Before I saw that, I was only considering buying the Citybook; now I am going to definitely get it.

Mike's article ("Devil Games? Nonsense!") has been photo-copied and is going to be carried in my jacket pocket. I would like to see it reprinted in *Campus Life* or something similar.

Bob Greenwade
Monmouth, OR

The Fill-in-the-Blank Solo was excellent! The idea could be expanded to conventional T&Ting, with the GM soliciting ideas before play.

SA 14 was worth waiting for, though! The interior color was used well, and the articles and stories were very useful. The poison creatures article was excellent, the first authoritative piece on the subject (I'm glad the only poison on Long Island is in the water . . .).

Good luck with Citybook. I notice Traps only took 8th place in *The Space Gamer* survey; sheer silliness, if you ask me. I still take out my copy of the book occasionally to admire the production job. Maybe being connected to T&T prejudices Traps readers? Or, being a universal supplement with no TSR/SPI etc. trademark makes people distrust it? Hmmm!

The "Devil Games" article was interesting. From occasional letters to publications that I've seen, it seems a few people are running/designing theistic FRP games already. This may itself have a backlash! If oralizing moralizing types don't like books that look dispassionately at religion, imagine what they'll think of a game that does the same, with the dice rolls determining God's behavior!

Stefan Jones
Locust Valley, NY

With reference to the reader survey, question 52, I think that Grimtooth's Bestiary is an excellent idea, especially if it is handled like his book on traps. Oh, I suppose a lexicon of the more common monsters is necessary, but it would be nice to see how other T&T players create (or design) monsters. The Citybook and the World of Rhalph are most necessary.

One of the problems that exists in role-playing games today is the very lack of creativity and imagination that you point out in *Queries and Quandaries*. Yet, beyond the article that appeared in *Different Worlds* a couple of years ago, we T&T players know very little about Khazan, Khosht, Gull, and Phoron. While the attitude toward open-endedness is a RPG system is commendable, some basic guidelines are necessary.

On the other hand, sadly, an individual is urged to "turn off" his imagination and creativity switches when he or she reaches late adolescence and is urged to "get serious" about life.

Furthermore, the prevalent attitude also seems to be "do it for me, I don't have the time to do it myself". The quick-fix is in and most role-players would rather buy and play a pre-packaged dungeon than sweat out the creation of one.

Fred Meyer
Lincoln, NE

I understand Ken St. Andre is preparing an article going into some greater depth about the world of Rhalph. Where he submits it for publication is up to him (I hope it will come to SA, but since he's an independent writer, it's his decision — anyway, he has to finish it first). I hope that offers you and those like you some of what you want. However, as you've noted yourself, it's a shame the "get serious" dictum is so prevalent.



Arcane Graffiti

- news, clues
and reviews
- MICHAEL STACKPOLE

News for the fantasy and gaming world - upcoming events, club announcements, the latest games and playing aids, conventions - are featured, reviewed and discussed in Arcane Graffiti. Personal ads and trade enquiries will be printed also, at 10¢/word (20 word minimum). Mail your news to: Michael Stackpole/Arcane Graffiti, Flying Buffalo Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, Arizona 85252.

In the time since I wrote the last Arcane Graffiti for SA, a great number of games and other products have been released onto the market. Many of them are very good, and this suggests that the gaming industry is growing and progressing. On the other hand every great product seems to be paralleled by an exceedingly poor one. If I seem to linger more over the poor products and worry them a bit, it is because I would prefer to make certain you know why they are bad and stay away from them. Good games, like good wine, stand the test of time and become classics; bad games deserve to be buried and forgotten, and I don't mind being the first with the shovel to do the job.

Flying Buffalo Inc. has released two projects since the last issue. The first is **Citybook I: Butcher, Baker and Candlestick Maker**. Citybook is a collection of 25 business establishments, the likes of which you might well find in any fantasy city. Each business, aside from having an incredibly detailed map with a full description, has fully described non-player characters and scenarios. We developed a system for attributing characters that truly adapts to any game system as well as each individual campaign. It is, without a doubt, the finest product we have ever produced.

Berserker is the board game of Fred Saberhagen's Berserker Wars. The game has both a tactical and strategic elements. The Berserkers are huge counters done in full color by Denis Loubet; the other counters were designed by Steve Crompton. Fred Saberhagen and Rick Loomis did the design work; Ugly John Carver and I developed it. The game has been very well received, especially in Chicago, and is well liked by those who have played it and commented on it to us. If it strikes your fancy, I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

Work progresses on **Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes**. We have the cover, a superior piece of work by Brian Hamilton. We have also come to an agreement with Hero Games, who are producing a game called Espionage. All GM adventures for Merces will be compatible with Espionage, and all of their adventures will be compatible with Merces. We are really looking forward to working with another company to provide more scenarios for players of our games.

Traps II has entered the final editing stage, and any left over traps we have will be held for Traps III. Citybooks 2,3, and 4 have been planned out and, by the time you read this, will be in the middle of being organized. **GameMasters of Kasar**, by Roy Cram of Mistywood fame, is the next solo in the line for production, and perhaps there is yet another one in the stack of them on my desk. Do submit solo adventures, we need good ones for publication.

Heritage USA has begun to produce an excellent little line of games called **Dwarfstar Games**. Their first four releases, commented on a couple of issues back, have been followed up by four new releases. **Grav Armor** is a game of 31st century tank combat. It has a new and novel movement/firing technique and several scenarios, and it looks like a fun, fast, and deadly game. **Star Smuggler** is a solo SF adventure of a Hans Solo-ish soldier of fortune wending twisted paths through space in search of adventure and **Dragon Rage**, which has an exquisite map, is a simple game of mythical monsters attacking a walled city. Magic and hero rules are included, as well as a set of rules that allows you to create your own scenarios. This game went over quite well at Origins and is worth your looking into. **Goblin** is an easy game of raid and plunder, where one player is the Goblin King trying to lay waste to the other player,

the Count, and his domain. The game is simple yet subtle and worth taking a look at. The last release Heritage has sent is probably the best of the lot, no mean feat that. **Dungeon Floors** is a fantastically beautiful and useful set of tiles showing floors, doors, pits, tables that actually stand up, corridors, and just about anything else you would want to see in the way of dungeon decor. Their components are modular so you need not be locked into one design - you can fit the pieces to *your* room description. If you want to start using figures or some other physical representation of characters and wish a place for the characters to run around, **Dungeon Floors** is a must.

Infinity Limited is a new company who has burst onto the market with a whimper. Their first product, **The Dungeon of King Lout**, is an adventure of three levels purported to be useful for any FRP system. This is true because they do not put any stats in, but then they also leave out anything else of interest. While printer's errors might account for the poor physical quality of the product, they cannot be responsible for the lack of color or content in the writing of the work. Dave Nalle, in his review of King Lout in *Different Worlds*, aptly noted that he could see no reason why anyone would want to buy this product. I must agree. While King Lout might have led us to believe that they had nowhere to go but up, Infinity Limited surprises us with their second release, **The Black Vial**. The artwork is horrible. As a primer of poisons the work is awful. The gimmick of the book is a retread of Grimtooth's 101st trap, and it is the most useful part of the book. After looking at these two products, someone pointed out, "They make Judges Guild look good."

Steve Jackson Games has released a large number of products since last issue. Eight sets of miniatures to go with their rereleases of **OGRE** and **GEV** have been produced, each set being well formed and nicely sculpted. Ogre and Gev are both out with full color maps, and are both available in hard plastic box SJ Games uses to everything for survival and storage. Origins saw the release of six new sets of Cardboard heroes: **8: Giants**, **9: Dungeon Dangers** and **10: Traps and Treasures** for their fantasy sets. For Traveller they added set 2, **Imperial Marines**, and set 3, **Zhodani Warriors**. They also added a set of Cops, Crooks, and Civilians for the host of Superhero games that have come onto the market. While the art is fine for all of the sets, I was a bit disappointed to see that Fantasy sets 9 and 10, as well as the two traveller sets merely contained three copies of 1 sheet, as opposed to the three unique sheets in the other two previous sets. Car Wars fans will

be happy to note that Expansion set #1 is out. It includes a new track and counters, with rules to explain some of the new counters offered. **Sunday Drivers** was also released. It is the boxed version of the scenarios offered in *The Space Gamer*, and it includes a full city mapped out to CW scale. Both of these offerings are a must for CW freaks. Lastly SJ Games, against horrible odds and secret attempts to stop them, has released **Illuminati**. Illuminati is a quick and easy card game where each player vies for world power by playing special interest groups off against each other, while maintaining secrecy and some sort of ethical stand. The game is good fun and just the sort of thing needed to relieve the boredom of the long winter's retreat from Moscow. Now if the threatening phone calls will stop . . .

FASA, P.O. Box 6930, Chicago, IL 60680-6930 has branched out from producing just Traveller projects since last issue. For their Traveller line they have added **Aslan Mercenary Ships** and **Merchant Class ships**: both sets contain deck maps, booklets, and counters for use in play. They look super. They have also turned out three new traveller adventures: **The Trail of the Sky Raiders**, **Rescue on Galatea** and **The FCI Consumer Guide**. All three are up to FASA's fine standards and will be useful in any Traveller campaign. FASA's new product line opens with **Traitor**, an adventure for use with Thieves' World. The piece is well put together and, while it does not have the myriad of stats for all systems, FASA has used a notational system that will make it easy to convert to other systems.

Chaosium has released two new products since last issue. **Borderlands** is a seven scenario supplement to RuneQuest. The setting is Glorantha, each scenario having its own booklet, and all are connected by a map of the area where the action takes place. It looks to be a fine product for RuneQuest players. Their second product is called **Soloquest**. I've heard one criticism from several people who have it: once you have solved each adventure you cannot play it again. All in all the product does not look bad, though some artwork would probably help the feel of the adventure a bit.

Nova Games Designs, Inc. has released **Bounty Hunter**. This game uses their award winning Ace of Aces system to simulate an old West gunfight. It is a bit more complex than Ace of Aces, but worth it. Take a look.

Midkemia Press had continued their fine work with the city Jonril. The city, presented in a 65 page booklet, also features a very well done map. **Jonril, the Gateway to The Sunken Lands**, is very useful in any campaign with a minimum of

conversion on the part of the GM. All that is needed for role playing is added. I highly recommend this product.

Fantasy Games Unlimited has released a scad of new products. First and foremost is the new boxed version of **Villains and Vigilantes**. It has been rewritten and improved, a very good buy for a Superhero game system. They also have two more scenarios for V&V, **Death Duel With The Destroyers** and its sequel, **The Island of Doctor Apocalypse**. Both are well done as well. Space Opera is backed up by three new releases: **Rowision II**, a Merchant service adventure; **Incedus III**, an espionage mission; and **Star Sector Atlas 11**, the atlas of 40 planets from an Australian campaign. They all look complete and ready to go, worth it for a Space Opera fan. Lastly, Bushido has an adventure packet called **Valley of the Mists**. It contains three different adventures, Tea Magic, and several new types of legendary characters. As always, this product reflects FGU's drive for quality and completeness; look for it.

Hero games has released **Champions 2nd edition** in a box. The rules have been cleaned up and corrected to avoid problems. The back of the booklet now contains several charts useful in the game. The box also contains a map of a street area and a scenario called Viper's Nest. It looks good and provides some interesting concepts in role playing. **Enemies II** is the second of the super villain books put out by Hero games and contains 35 foes to be dealt with. Each foe comes with a background story and illustration. It should also be noted one foe is really a prototype for a secret agent and therefore can act like a smally army if need be. Champions is well worth your time if you are looking for a Super Hero RPG.

The Companions, Inc. 245 Water St., Bath, ME 04530 is another new company that has chosen to enter the market with fantasy gaming aids. The first Companions' two offerings are both interesting and quite useful. The first, their **Hexagonal Grid Mapping System** consists of 50 sheets of numbered hex sheets, with ten hex wide megahexes traced lightly in gray. While printing the hexes in a color other than black might have helped avoid confusion when drawing a map with a pen, the product is still quite well done. Each sheet is three hole punched. The package sells for \$3.75 and is very worth the price.

The second product is titled **Companion Pieces: Fantasy Furnishings**. It consists of three 8½ x 11" sheets of tables, chairs, stools, chests, casks and other things printed on bumper sticker paper. The pieces can be cut out and pasted down in a room, or stuck to pieces of

cardboard so they will still be mobile. They are printed in black on white stock and are quite easy to color. At \$5.00 a set they are well worth looking into.

Nuclear War Declared On July 4th

12:01 A.M. . . . You are standing in the lobby of Adam's Mark Hotel in Houston. In the background, you hear what sounds like a chant . . . "NUKE 'EM TILL THEY GLOW!". Curiosity gets the best of you. "Am I hearing what I think I am hearing?" You follow the sounds. They grow louder as you approach the convention area of the Hotel. You open the doors to the ballroom and stare in, in dis-belief! Inside you see over 100 people, in various stages of costume, chanting in unison "NUKE 'EM TILL THEY GLOW!". Now you know you should have left the hotel bar earlier. This just can't be true!

What you have happened upon, is the **NANCON Fourth Annual Nuclear War Tournament and Costume Event**. Presided over by Frank Joines, Robert Balch, Robert Nine, Tommy Towns and Bill Owen, it was attended this year by 125 registrants and staff members of NANCON. This has become one of the most well attended and fun events at NANCON. This is one of the (unverified) largest Nuclear War Events in the world!

*** 15A** As you are checking on the evening watch, you find the third mate with his throat cut and wet footprints on the deck. As you bellow an alarm, a mermaid and merman jump you. The merman has a trident, and the merwoman has an enormous saw-toothed dagger. They are incredibly agile, and you are fighting for your life.

The merman has a CON of 40, but no armor. He gets 4 dice + 33 adds in combat, and it takes a L2-SR on DEX (25 — DEX) to hit him. The merwoman has a CON of 20, and is protected by a sharkskin shield that takes 8 hits in combat for her. She gets 2 dice + 50 adds in combat; to hit her, you must make a L3-SR on DEX (30 — DEX). In order for you to do anything but defend, you must choose your target before the round begins.

Conduct the combat in the normal fashion. If their total attack beats yours, you must take hits. If your attack beats their total, you may inflict the difference on one of them if you made the DEX saving roll.

If they kill you in 3 combat rounds or less, they will massacre the rest of the crew and sink the ship. If you last 3 combat rounds without killing them, or being killed by them, go to 25C.

If you kill them both in 3 combat rounds or less, the other merpeople will give up the attack. Take 300 adventure points for saving the ship. If you were sailing to Khazad, go to 32B; if you were sailing to Kayala, go to 11C.

Secret and Top-Secret lasted for several hours, and although not many players were eliminated, severe population damage was the order of the day, causing many strange alliances for later rounds. Propaganda lasted less than one round, what with 125 warmongers attempting first-strike strategy. The staff suffered the brunt of the initial damage, but in turn inflicted damage by way of *final-strike* on those who helped eliminate them.

By five o'clock Sunday morning, the world remaining consisted of only twenty hardy (in terms of population) players, who determined to eliminate each other by means of B-70's and Saturns, fully loaded. Finally, the world wasted away to ten (who received Bumper Stickers provided by Flying Buffalo), then five, and finally only two players, the winners, who received Supergerm T-shirts, also provided by Flying Buffalo.

And thus came the end of the world on Sunday July 4th, 1982 . . . until the other NANCON tournaments began again later that same day! ■

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CONVENTIONS

(To publicize your convention in this magazine send us a flyer or progress report. We assume no responsibility for the accuracy of the following listings. A ■ beside a listing means Flying Buffalo plans to attend.)

□ October 9—10. **Crossfire.** RPG, Miniature and boardgames. Membership is \$9.00 at the door. Write: Crossfire c/o Strategic Studies Group, Center 2394, University South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620.

□ October 8—10. **MadCon.** at UW Memorial Union, Madison, WI. RPG, Wargames, Miniatures battles and Seminars. Contact Mark Anderson, c/o Pegasus Games, 222 W. Gorham, Madison, WI 53703. Please include SASE for information.

□ October 22—24. **MileHiCon 14.** Ed Bryant, Kelly Freas guests. *Gaming and video rooms, Masquerade and artshow.* Contact Gail Barton at (303) 233-6958 or write MileHiCon P.O. Box 27074, Denver, CO 80227.

□ October 29 - 31. **Fall Sci-Fi Convection.** Three FRP rooms, Costume contest, special Halloween programs. Write Fantasy Publishing Company, 1855 West Main St., Alhambra, CA 91801.

□ November 12 - 14. **Western ReCon '82.** Guests: Fritz Leiber, Richard and Wendy Pini. For information write: Karl Miller, 837 N. University Village, Salt Lake City, Utah 84108 or call (801) 582-6076. Includes Fantasy Game Tournament.

■ November 12 - 14. **MDG Winter Gamefest.** Big game convention, FRP, Miniatures, Wargames, Video arcade, auctions, figure painting contest and artshow. For info write MDG W-11, Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.

□ January 14 - 16, 1983. **Costume-Con.** Panels on design, and design contest; two masquerades, display room and dealer room. Write: Fantasy Costumers Guild, P.O. Box 1947, Spring Valley, CA 92077. Send a SASE for info.

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This listing is to help out our readers and our dealers, letting each one find the other for their mutual benefit. All the stores listed here carry a large assortment of Flying Buffalo products, and welcome your business. Dealers, if you're interested in getting your name on this list, please see the information below.

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To get your classified ad in the fall issue of *Sorcerer's Apprentice* (#16), send in your ad and check for \$10 by Nov. 1st. Mail to:

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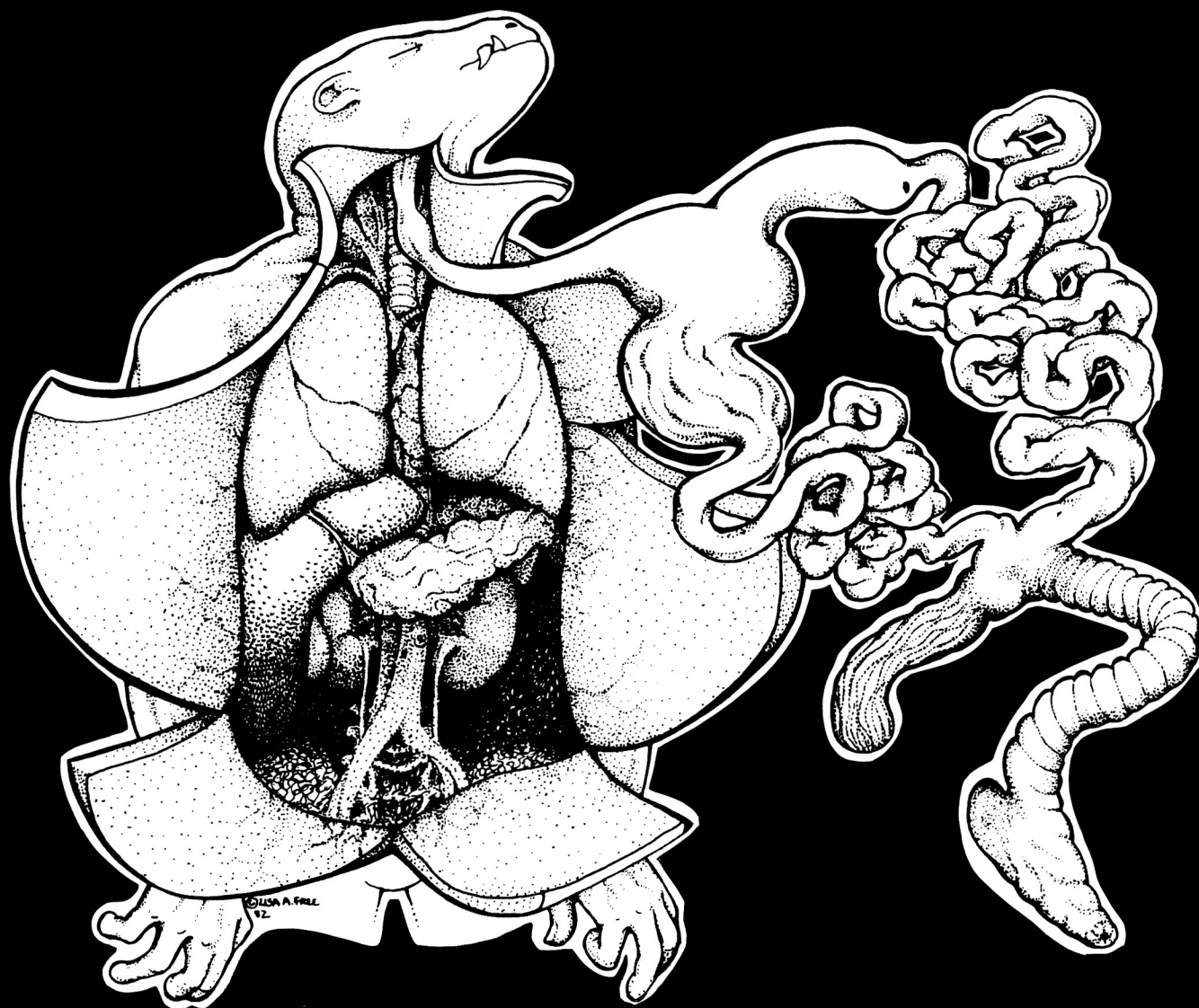
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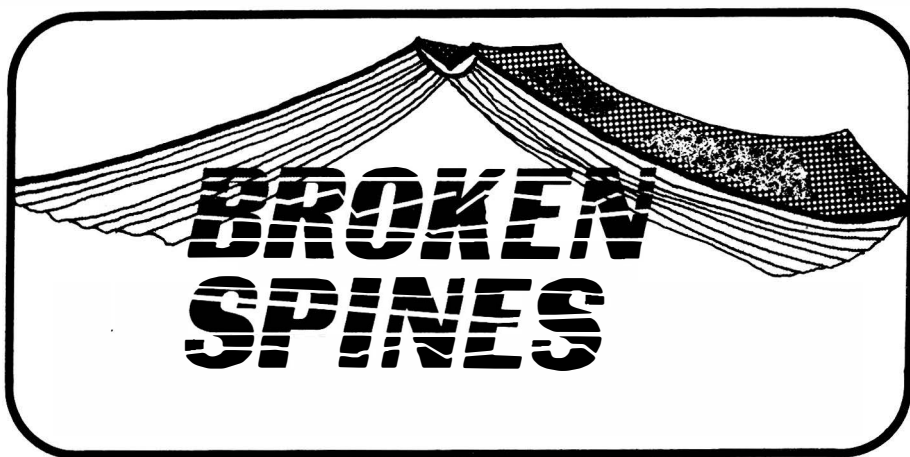


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Broken Spines is undergoing a little alteration, adjustment, and something of a face-lift. Little by little, we'll be trying to give you a column you can read and find both interesting and useful . . . if we can't find some mutually satisfactory arrangement, we'll look for something better to put on these pages! On the whole, the recent survey indicated *Broken Spines* was a feature worthy of its ink, so you'll see it here a while longer as it undergoes some adjustments.

One of the best of the recent releases is *Eyas* by Crawford Killian (Bantam Books, \$2.50, 352 pp; paperback). The novel revolves around the title character, an adopted son of the Fisher family of Longstrand. On the simplest level, the plot is nothing unusual to fantasy: divinely-blessed barbarian boy makes good trouncing the imperialistic civilized badguys (led by his evil half-brother) who broke up his happy home. Lotors, windwalkers, and other intelligent non-humans assure the reader that the book is indeed a fantasy, complete with magic. However, the tale is no more that simple than *Lord of the Rings* is about a little guy who wants to throw away this magic ring . . . First of all, a glance at the maps and you realize the world is our Earth — so far into the future that you get a quick review of your geology classes just realizing what the differences are and why. Secondly, the diversity of cultures and humanoids is finely detailed and understandable without the dull explanation by such worn-out devices as "Long ago Humans gene-engineered humans and horses to make centaurs, though we can't do that any more and haven't seen a horse for a million years or so." The world has a very day-to-day reality that (for all that) is completely different from anything known now. A gamer looking for an unusual world-setting could do a great deal worse than to borrow the cosmology and ideas, lock stock and barrel, from *Eyas*. Even better, the

setting is suitable for every time period you'd care to game in: straight fantasy, after-the-holocaust, or from several approaches in space/SF gaming. It starts slowly and takes some peculiar metaphysical twists, but remains well worth getting into. Recommended.

On the shelves you may have already seen Steven Bauer's first novel, *Satyrday* (Berkley Books, \$4.95, 211 pp; trade paperback edition). The publisher calls it a fable, with some justification. It is a fantasy more comparable to *Watership Down* or *Wind in the Willows* than to *Conan the Conqueror*, yet the evil owl villain is at least as heartless as Thoth Amon or Darth Vader. The owl's opponents are an unlikely group: Derin, a human boy raised by a decidedly Pan-like satyr Matthew, a magical white fox, and a raven rebellious to her owl overlord. The moon is stolen; the foursome must find and free her before the sun is destroyed as well, bringing eternal night — the owl's intention. The efforts of the heroes are punctuated by quiet humor and occasionally, briefly, unspeakable corruption worthy of Lovecraft's worst nightmares.

I can't say I found the book fascinating or even hard to put down, but it was diverting. From a gaming view, there are some useful tags to pick up. The theft of the moon would shock almost any player's character, and the *things* in the southern forest could put a stout warrior off his beefsteak for a week. Yet the heroes of *Satyrday* are no burly fighters . . . a GM could learn about the ways of characters of little might (i.e. low level) facing unholy odds (a high-level scenario) and acquitting themselves honorably. Worth reading, if not a world-breaker.

Reviews by Liz Danforth

The Lost Prince by Paul Edwin Zimmer is the first book in the *Dark Border* series (Playboy Paperbacks, \$2.95, 349 pp.). The

story is set in a late medieval time period within a country that borders on The Shadow, an area of evil. Only the might of human mercenaries and the Children of Hastur with their magic are able to keep back the Shadow. As if there weren't trouble enough, there is also a plot to substitute for the real King the Shadow-raised twin brother of the King; bunches of other plots threaten to rip the kingdom apart, and this all blossoms into civil war.

Paul Zimmer is a good writer, and he has great flair and style when describing the multitude of swordfights that take place in the work. He attempts to focus on five characters (perhaps too many): Istvan, an aging swordmaster who fears death; Martos, a young swordmaster who thinks a great deal about the woman he loves; Chondos, the King who does not want to be King (but takes the job anyway); Jodos, his Shadowy twin who replaces him; and Miron Hastur, a powerful magicker who must help hold back Shadow.

The book starts a bit slowly, and a reader is likely to drown in an initial deluge of strange names, though they come under control fairly quickly. The main problem with the novel is that everything

*** 19A** One night you awaken in darkness with the feel of cold steel at your throat. "Nice night for a swim, Cap'n." The low chuckles that greet this remark indicate that the mate is not alone.

The mutineers drag you up on deck. Your arms are bound behind your back, and you're stripped naked. The moon is bright, and you can see most of the crew. Not all look happy, but at least half are grinning ferociously. A rough plank has been thrust out over one rail, and you are forced up on it at the point of the mate's cutlass. You look down and see shark fins slicing through the water below you.

If you walk the plank, go to 6B. If you wish to cast magic at the mate, write down your spell and go to 9A. If you want to try and break your bonds and then attack the mutineers bare-handed, go to 35A.

19B Try to make a L5-SR on Luck (40 — LK). If you make it, you will manage to break free (losing only 3d6 worth of sailors), and the Orcs will let you go. The voyage to Kayala will take another 20 days. Go to 32C and start reading with the second sentence.

If you missed the saving roll, you suffered a surprise attack. Go to 35C.

19C Roll 1d6. If you rolled a 1-2, go to 25A; a 3-4, go to 15A. If you rolled a 5, the crew decides for you to go south; go to 6A. If you rolled a 6, you spend the day wretchedly suffering from sea sickness. Temporarily reduce your combat adds by half for the next three paragraphs and go back to 32C.

Zimmer does well, he repeats until it gets rather old. The endless descriptions of swordfights, or the repeated references to Jodos' cannibalistic desires lose their power when repeated too often. The organization of the end of this first book was too choppy for me, with its constant scene-shifting that does not let the reader get set in a location before the scene changes again.

All in all, however, this is not a bad book. It reads quickly and has its high points. Paul Zimmer shows some promise and style. If he improves as he goes, and I hope he will, he will be one of the better fantasy writers working today.

Review by Michael Stackpole

The following books haven't necessarily been read or finished, but they do appear to be of interest to a gamer, either as a source of ideas, or because they seem likely to please.

Elephant Song by Barry S. Longyear is part of a larger mythos-weaving which includes at least two other novels. Here, in the year 2148, it seems traveling circuses can really *travel* . . . ! The circus starship *City of Baraboo* crashes on Momus, and the survivors — freaks, fortune-tellers, and animal handlers —

begin anew, slowly building a truly unique civilization. (With a start like that, how could it possibly be anything but unique!?) The SF role-player would be amiss to overlook this one. (Berkley Books, \$2.50, 234 pp.).

Superhero and SF gamers alike should check out Philip Dunn's second book of The Cabal, entitled **The Black Moon**. The Cabal is a collection of "the most dangerous supercriminals in the universe" . . . need we say more? (Berkley Books, \$2.25, 201 pp.).

Doctor Mirabilis by James Blish is an oddity: neither fiction nor fact, not fantasy or biography, the novel concerns the life of the 13th Century genius, Roger Bacon. Blish is studiously true to Bacon's time, and any weekend medievalist should find the book a wealth of information and atmosphere, all the more assimilable for its fictionalized form. (Avon Books, \$2.95, 271 pp.).

It may do the authors and their works a disservice, but these next three books look like More Of The Usual: four-armed youths, giant telepathic war-cats, magic that can blight life from the world . . . It may be blase, but **Kingsbane**, **The Jewels of Aptor**, and **The**

Glass of Dyskornis seems undistinguished from other adventure epics. I confess to a certain taste for such, but I can also eat a bag of potato chips at one sitting (*mea culpa*). However, I can't exound on the delights of individual chips. Acknowledging that one or all of these could have something more than their appearance suggests, my recommendation is *caveat emptor*. (**Kingsbane** by John Morressy, third in the Iron Angel series from Playboy Paperbacks, \$2.50, 255 pp. **The Jewels of Aptor** by Samuel R. Delany, Bantam Books, \$2.50, 165 pp. This is a reprint of Delany's first novel. **The Glass of Dyskornis** by Randall Garrett and Vicki Ann Heydron, second in the Gandalaria Cycle, Bantam Books, \$2.50, 174 pp.).

Also received, but not reviewed:

The Lair Of Ancient Dreams by Asa Drake. **Nebula Winners Fourteen** edited by Fredrik Pohl. **Blooded On Arachine** by Michael Bishop. **Ecotopia Emerging** by Ernest Callenbach. **Planet Of Treachery**, #7 of the family *D'alembert* series, by E.E. "DOC" Smith, with Stephen Goldin. **Viscous Circle** by Piers Anthony. **Shield** by Poul Anderson. ■

editorial continued from page 2 my count over half the individuals depicted in whole or in part are doing something illegal, unethical, overtly crass, or are graphically injured, unconscious, or dead. People see and react to pictures first, text second. There's also the old saw about one picture being worth a thousand words, and those pictures have a lot more to say about the focus of the game than the words do. I've been an illustrator, editor, and publisher long enough to know the ropes on that count, and it is a fact of publishing. Whether the text encourages "proper" behavior or not (and it becomes almost lip service, at that), the illustrations graphically stress the worst, over and over again. Even the character record sheet (which you keep constantly in front of you, right?) shows 17 students, of which just one is engaged in what might be socially *neutral* behavior: a confused-looking nerd hiding behind a rifle-sliding militant sniper. You really are motivated to play the nerd, right? Sure.

Role-playing games are a powerful boost to the imagination. I consider a lively imagination and active creativity two of the best qualities a human can have. In my experience, gamers satisfactorily separate reality and games, but the younger the gamer, the less that's true. (It's simply a matter of psychology and

physiology: human clockwork is designed that way, if you will.) *AM* does sport a quickie disclaimer on the back cover that the "game deals with mature subject matter and is not suitable for children under the age of 14" . . . the birthday at which, one assumes, the "children" are instantly indoctrinated into the adventurous reality of acid, lecherous teachers, VD, and mutilation. Wow. Sometime during the years between entering and leaving high school, people get a good handle on the way they'll deal with the world and how it's going to be dealing with them, but it doesn't happen all at once — and I've seen plenty of people who still haven't got it down pat years later. Federal law assumes a person to be an adult at 18 — four years later than suggested by the small back cover warning.

Even if that warning were in bold letters thrice their size, it would hardly be enough. Mothers everywhere will take one glance at the game's cover and jerk away the offending publication, and even the more sensible ones are likely to pack it off to their preacher — as if the extremely religious weren't having a field day on RPGs in general. It's difficult to explain to such people that material like this is far, far from exemplary of the hobby. Matter of fact, it's usually downright impossible.

By and large (and with notable exceptions), the role-playing games

currently on the market overtly encourage roles that at some time and/or place have been considered heroic, noble, desirable — socially acceptable.

Saints kill dragons; billy goats break up a troll's tollbridge racket. James Bond loves 'em and leaves 'em, but the nefarious world-ending plot is put to an end (along with most of the bad guys).

Unfortunately, there's nothing heroic, noble, or particularly desirable to being a character in *Alma Mater*. There's little to reward the character who is well-motivated, the one who honors the "social contract". In simplest terms, I find the game offensive on several levels, and am somewhat angered that it could so easily be used against everyone in the hobby, professional and player alike. I feel that role-playing games are an excellent leisure entertainment, a fine pastime, and in general an encouragement to better things. I also feel that *Alma Mater* is none of these, though it is a sordid exercise in bad taste, bad judgement on the part of the publishers, and a blot on the gaming hobby.

To good gaming . . . let's hope it survives.



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Bob Vardeman, young, brilliant, and prolific science fiction and fantasy author (and sometime savior of the moon) and budding game designer, has entertained readers with books and stories from *Star Trek* to his and Vic Milan's *War of the Powers* series. The lamented *Swords Against Darkness* volume 3 had a tale dealing with the world dealt with in this tale. That tale was thrilling and entertaining, and so is this one. But then, that's how Bob writes. . . .

The broadsword gleamed brightly as it rose and plummeted down onto the naked helm. The victim of the fierce blow staggered and fell to his knees. He dropped his own sword into the dust and gestured defeat.

"Halt, my king, stay your mighty blow!" cried one of the onlookers to the mock battle. "Lord Masso has suffered much at your hand this day." Morven's lips curled back in a sneer as he mouthed the words. That blow had been innocuous. A swordsman of Masso's ability could have easily deflected it and retaliated with a deadly cut to the neck — could have, if his opponent hadn't been the king of the

realm. Only a fool bested his liege lord in a practice session of no real importance.

"Ha!" cried King Balint, rubbing his arthritic shoulder. "A good fight. You do well, Masso, but remember to use that shield! You allow to many blows to reach your helm. That'll be your death in real battle."

"True, my king. Thank you for the lesson." Masso bowed his head, both in obeisance and to hide the smile on his lips. He glanced up and silent communication flashed between him and Morven. Once, he had battled and bested all the knights. Once. Now the winds of time blew cold and chill past his thin frame. Even his mind lacked its former agility. Without Morven and the other advisors to the realm, Balint's far-flung amalgam of petty baronies would have split apart like an overripe fruit years prior.

Morven took the sword from the old man's hand and said, "Your Majesty has done well, as he usually does in battle."

"Battle? You call this lover's tryst a battle?" Balint snorted. "The Battle of Tymen, now *that* was hard-fought. Hard won, too," he said, drifting off into the endless corridors of his memories. It had been a noble battle, that one. Tymen marked the rise of his fortunes forty years ago. A barbarian from a distant land, he

had hired on as a mercenary to aid the rebels intent on overthrowing the Duke of the Outer Reaches. Overthrow the duke he had done, and more. Expert swordsmanship mixed liberally with shrewdness for manipulating others had brought him a throne. Balint remembered those days with fondness. Now the accountants ruled. The bureaucrats perpetrated ordinance after bewildering ordinance in his name, and he had a scant knowledge of what those meaningless proclamations accomplished.

The old days. Those were better, the king knew. Battles. Subtle alliances. Intrigues. Bold policies. His favorable marriage to the defeated duke's daughter Lesya had given him the legitimacy needed to pacify the commoners and make the nobles take heed.

King Balint. It hadn't happened overnight. It took almost twenty years, but he was still in his prime then. Now the twilight of senility crept through his mind, fogging it, bemusing it, making him the laughing stock of his own men, the son of men who had supported him so long ago.

Morven cleared his throat and softly said, "The council requires your presence, sire. Many new ordinances are to be passed on."

"Eh? Speak up, damn you, Morven. Always whispering." Balint stiffly bent

forward to shed his chainmail like a snake losing a layer of dead skin. He managed to get into his doublet without much posturing.

For that Morven was glad. The old man grew slower and more dense with every day. If only Prince Istuwan wasn't brain-damaged! On his worst days, Balint showed more courage and common sense than his retarded son, and Princess Adara was scarce sixteen summers old and legally restrained from rule for another two years. By then, Morven thought, his own son would be married to the princess — and his power would become even greater. Morven might never be king in name, but his power would be that of king. If only Balint would approve the marriage.

Morven walked half a pace behind Balint to the chamber of state. Once he would have taken this position as a matter of deference to his liege; of late, he had to guard against the king's stumbling. A fall might kill the old man. If that happened before the marriage ...

"What manner of nonsense worries us today?" demanded Balint, sitting in his throne and reaching into a huge chest to withdraw an oversized egg, glittering internally with faerie light. The old man's rheumy eyes drifted over the surface, tracing out the lovely patterns in the huge egg. The major axis of the egg matched the

length of the king's forearm. The distance around proved greater than twice his hand's width, and the surface gleamed like the finest fire opal ever mined.

"Sire, please, your attendance is required. A new sanitation system is proposed for the community of North Goodland. Our engineers say ..."

Morven's voice faded away as Balint became more and more engrossed in the flittering fireflies of brilliance inside the eggshell. He held it close and pressed his ear onto cool smoothness, as if listening. Balint smiled and nodded absently, then turned his own lips toward the egg and whispered a reply to the phantom voice from within only he heard.

At Balint's right, Baron Zesiro said, loud enough for all to hear, "The king's mind is truly gone."

"Silence," snapped Yucel. "He is still king!"

"King? In name only. We rule, Yucel, and well you know it. Who drafted those plans for North Goodland so they wouldn't drown in their own excrements? You!" Zesiro leaned back and pointed at Balint. "He even thinks Duke Darvin will attack through the mountains. Pah! That is the most difficult route of all. If that upstart pretender to the throne wants to attack us here at a Strongkeep, he must assemble his

men on rafts and float them down the Tymen River. In no other way can he muster the force required. And yet *he* insists we bleed our treasury white by arming the frontiers facing the el-Liot Mountains. Pah!

"The King," said Yucel, "is a strategist second to none. He has won more battles than the lot of you put together!"

"Aye, that he has — twenty years ago. You, Yucel, are the oldest of the council. You remember his brilliance but times change and the realm today is vastly different from his heyday. Look at him. He mumbles loving words to a present given him by some itinerant peddler. He is senile." Zesiro slumped back in his chair, arms crossed over his broad chest.

"I fear Zesiro is correct in his appraisal of the Darwinian problem," said Morven. "Since other matters have been dispatched, what is the feeling of the council on this question? Should we assemble our forces in the foothills some weeks travel away as our king prefers, or do we use our men to build water traps for a possible invasion down the Tymen River?"

"The river." "Traps in the water, aye!" "I second that. The river."

Around the table went the vote until it came to Yucel. He shook his balding head and pounded his fist on the table. "Nay!

The mountains! We must guard the mountains as our king decrees."

Morven smiled with humor as he said, "Fourteen in favor of barricades and fortifications on the River Tymen. One opposed. The motion carries."

"But the king!" protested Yucel.

Morven glanced at the old man, billing and cooing at the opal egg, and snorted in contempt. He didn't bother answering Yucel's challenge. He rose and left the chamber, the others following. Balint hardly acknowledged their departure.

"So the battle was decided by little more than the proper placement of a small troop of men," Balint explained to his egg. "On such things are great victories dependent!"

The egg gleamed in the ray of sunlight lancing through the open window. Balint continually stroked over the shell, his gnarled fingers curiously gentle when handling the egg. If any had been present to hear what followed, they would have known sorcerous powers were at work.

The egg spoke.

"Are you so sure this Duke Darvin will attack through the mountains?"

"Aye," said Balint vehemently. "I am. He is shrewd, that Darvin. Much like I was in earlier days. It would not surprise me if he studied every battle I fought and won, perhaps even giving the ones lost special attention. Such a march would aim a massive force directly at the throat of the kingdom. Strongkeep would fall within a day."

"What of this Zesiro and his contention Darvin will come by river?" The entire egg shivered visibly at the mention of the river.

"The river is too easily defended. Darvin knows that."

"I agree. The thought of being sprinkled with even a drop of water is repugnant." The egg shuddered again, a tiny crack appearing down one side. "Only Yucel supports you in council. Why not remove the others?"

Balint sighed. "Many times I've considered this, but they do well in the boring routines of kingdom. Never could I properly deal with the mountains of paperwork. They lack imagination, but they are basically good men for their jobs, as long as they aren't required to think."

"I personally think you should eat them."

Balint laughed at this barbarism. "Nay, my appetite is not so large that I could devour fourteen of them. Is yours?"

"No. Truth to tell, I know only slightly of such things. Vague memories, transmitted to me through the ages. Oh, what does it matter, anyway? Since I was stolen, nothing has gone well. I am blind and virtually deaf and without a friend in the world."

"I am your friend. Don't I speak to you

every day?"

"True, but you are senile."

Balint laughed as he stroked the surface of the egg. "I may be, but I am all you have."

"Such seems to be my sorry lot in life. While I am hardly deserving, is it possible I might be returned to the mountains from which I was stolen? You *are* king and such a minor task for such a minor being is within your feeble grasp."

"I shall take you to the el-Liot Mountains myself!"

"All the way?" asked the egg.

"It would be difficult," admitted Balint. "I'll leave Yucel as regent since Istuwani is hardly competent and Adara, lovely Adara who reminds me so much of her dead mother, lacks majority."

"Morven would marry his son to her," said the egg. "I overheard."

Balint gestured away the problems and called for his squire. Balint, egg and squire left for the mountains at sunrise the following day. Only Yucel was on hand to bid them farewell.

• • •

"**T**hey're after me. I know it," quavered the voice from inside the egg. "They are evil and I am helpless ..."

"It's not you they seek," said Balint. "I do so wish my squire hadn't taken flight, though. He was a useful lad for

doing the menial chores. But those brigands were rather fearsome." He chuckled. "I think I handled them well, even if I do say so myself."

"They do not seek to eat me?"

"No, no! They were after a few coins and nothing more. I may not be the swordsman I once was, but I can still swing a blade. And they must have been deterred by my silver-tongued claims."

"They thought you a crazy old man. Their clans demand protection of such," declared the egg firmly.

"Nonsense," snorted Balint, slightly indignant. He knew the egg was probably correct. His shouting and boasting of being king of the realm had made the brigands laugh. He looked down at his tunic and noted for the first time that the royal coat-of-arms embroidered on the front was obliterated by mudstains.

"Where do we find the lower passes in which you expect to sight Duke Darvin's army?" asked the egg. "I feel I should know, but I was stolen before full consciousness came on me. I know so little." The tone turned self-pitying. "Not even fresh from my egg and already a failure. How will I redeem myself?"

"You provide me with companionship when others of my own realm desert me," said Balint. "After this adventure I shall make you ..."

"**HALT!**" The word roared and



echoed down the rock gully they traversed. Even the partially deaf Balint heard the command.

"Who orders a king to stop?" he demanded, pulling his sword free from its sheath. The action took long seconds of fumbling.

The mighty voice roared again, "Leave! We do not want your kind in these hills." A spider larger than a peasant's hut leaped to bar his path. Balint's horse reared and threw him. The king lifted himself on one elbow and gaped at the monster. It towered twice his height atop the eight hairy legs flexing with sinewy power. Huge mandibles capable of slashing a man in half clacked ferociously. He grabbed for his sword knowing he had no chance against this fearsome mountain arachnid.

"You shall be my dinner!" bellowed the spider, advancing with a rolling gait. Balint scuttled away, unable to rise. He pulled himself into a sitting position and noticed the fate of his precious opal egg.

It had fallen from his grasp and broken apart on the rocks.

"Murderer!" cried Balint. "My friend is killed!" He had no firm idea what had lived inside the egg, but he had come to cherish the creature.

The giant spider hesitated, turned and looked at the egg. A coppery leg reached out and rolled the shattered eggshell into the sun for closer examination. Balint saw the creature stiffen in rage.

"Kidnapper!" roared the spider. "I, Dral-wilk'nek'niik, Webmaster of the el-Loit Mountains, will devour you slowly for your heinous crime!"

"Is all this wrath due to me?" came a scared, tiny voice.

Balint gasped at the large spider sitting on top of a nearby boulder — large, by normal standards. The furry beast's body was the size of a dinner plate and its legs stretched out to span a distance equal to a strong man's shoulders. Compared with the towering monster blocking the path, however, it was a midget.

"You live! Are you of this egg?" demanded the huge spider.

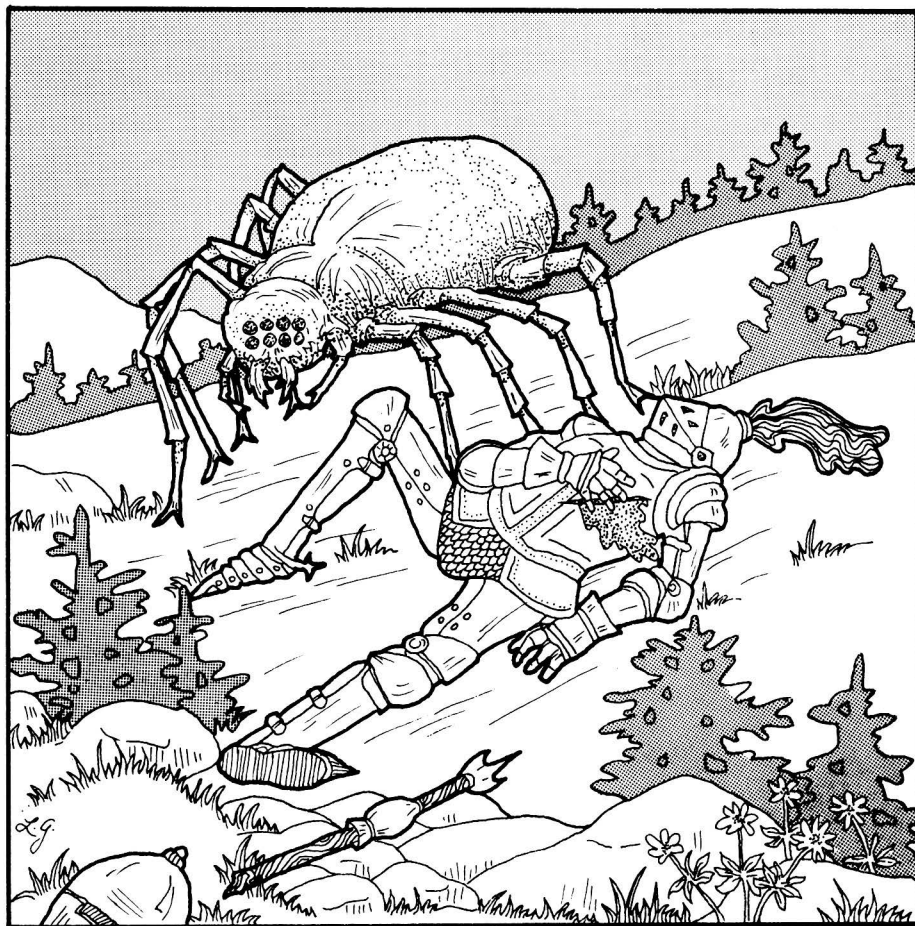
"I am unhappily the same. My eyes adjust now to the light and I see you are as I, though a trifle larger."

Seeing that the larger spider had relaxed noticeably, Balint ventured to speak. "This egg came to my hand by a scurrilous trader. When the egg began speaking, I answered. Was this wrong?"

"Krek!" cried the huge spider, ignoring the human totally. "You have returned to the web of your birthing."

"Krek?" the baby spider asked. "That sounds like a fine name, one befitting such as I, but who ...?"

"I am Kral, Webmaster of these mountains. You are my hatchling. When you were stolen, I despaired. Now you



have returned."

"Krek?" the smaller spider said again, as if savoring the taste.

"Krek-k'with'kritklik," said Kral, now shivering with joy.

"I like it," declared Krek. "The name fits nicely. Noble, even regal, and it rolls well off the palate."

"A name befitting a future Webmaster. Not that I intend to die soon, unless my mate finds me."

"You hide from her?"

"Naturally. I have little desire to be devoured. At this moment, she is occupied tending others recently hatched."

"Siblings?" Krek sounded hurt at the idea of others sharing the web.

"Yes, but not of noble birth."

Balint started to speak.

"Silence, or I shall eat you now!" snapped Kral. Balint pressed into cold rock as Kral clacked heavy mandibles inches from his nose.

"In all fairness," said Krek lightly, "this human brought me back. He is my ally. I was weak and he aided me."

"Then he deserves the protection of my web," stated Kral solemnly. With less belligerence, the spider added, "I apologize for wanting to devour you. I have had much on my mind lately and it makes me fretful."

"Quite all right," Balint said, painfully returning his sword to its

25A For a day and a night the wind and rain have been getting worse. Now the sky is as black as Lerotra'h'h's heart. Roll 3d6 for the number of sailors that have been swept overboard.

The gale has been blowing steadily from the west, and now a lookout cries, "Land ho!" You realize that you have been driven all the way back to the coast of Rhalph and may soon run aground. Your only hope is for the storm to break. Make a L3-SR on LK (30 — LK).

If you miss the roll, your ship is driven into fang-like cliffs and wrecked. Go to 26A.

If you make the roll, you find a sheltered cove. Subtract from 30 the number of days you have already spent on the voyage. That is how many days you have left to go before reaching Kayala. Go to 32C and continue the voyage.

25B "By thunder!" your first mate bellows. "You're a cap'n after me own heart." Go to 32C.

25C Your long struggle awakened the sleepy crew. The merpeople see that their attack can't succeed, and they abandon the ship. Roll 2d6 to see how many of your sailors were slain before you roused the ship. Take 100 adventure points for driving off the merfolk. Go to 11C.



26A He keeps getting in your way and showing his wares in your face. Go to 11A.

26B Can I interest you in a bridge? No? Well, go to 39A, anyhow.

26C "I can't kill an unarmed man," he says, rapping you behind the ear with his weapon. Go to 6B.

26A The ship hits hard and breaks in half like a dry twig. Sailors and slaves are tossed like pebbles into the angry sea. You are knocked down, but grab a line and don't go over the side.

If you are a wizard and know a *Fly Me* spell, you can make it safely to shore — go to 11B.

If you'd rather try and stay with the ship, make a L3-SR on Luck (30 — LK). If you make the saving roll, you will be able to outlast the storm and get to shore safely — go to 30. If you miss the saving roll, you have to swim to safety.

If you chose to swim to safety, or are forced to, make a L5-SR on Strength (40 — ST). If you make it, you reach shore at 30. If you miss it, you are dashed against the rocks and drowned.

26B Khazil to Khazad. Once each day you must make a saving roll on your Luck to determine if something breaks the monotony of the voyage. On the first day you need a L1-SR (20 — LK); on the second day, make a L2-SR (25 — LK); etc. If you make all the saving rolls, go to 32B; if you miss one at any time, go directly to 11D.

26C You now have a small ingot of mithril worth 5000 gold pieces. Make a L1-SR on Luck (20 — LK). If you make it, the voyage is uneventful, and you arrive at Kayala about 20 days after leaving Khazad; go to 11C. If you miss it, the ship gets caught up in a terrible storm at sea; go to 25A.

sheath. His shoulders ached with arthritis and his fingers stiffened from being wrapped around the hilt of his sword too long. As he rose, his mind began turning over the possibility of an alliance with the spiders who ruled so completely in these mountains.

"Are the other puny humans also your friends, Krek? I like them not, but all tell me I am too intolerant of my hatchlings' friends."

"Others? From the north?" asked Balint, now on his feet.

The huge spider bobbed its head. Balint walked slowly to the rock where Krek stretched his newly freed limbs. With a startlingly springy leap, Krek perched on Balint's shoulder. The king felt the bristly fur on the spider's legs brush his face. He flinched slightly, then decided this didn't look good, not while Kral stood only a pace away.

"These are enemies," said Balint carefully. "Krek and I journeyed to the mountains to stop them from ... from annoying you. I'm sure the humans passing into these mountains provide no end of misery for you and your kind. Didn't they steal Krek, after all?"

"They did," agreed Kral. "You would stop these annoying humans? It would be good to attend to web repairs again." Kral hissed like a venting fumarole. Balint hoped this was nothing more than a spiderish sigh.

"A treaty between your web and my kingdom can be worked out," the man said, warming to the task. It had been years since he'd been allowed to negotiate a treaty. Yucel told him that Morven and the others were more adept. Balint doubted that, yet acceded to Yucel's wishes. But it did take the zest out of being king, not being able to barter destinies and trade promises over the treaty table.

"Krek?" asked Kral. "Will these humans honor such a pact?"

"Balint is honorable. The others in his kingdom are less so."

"They can be dealt with," Balint said hastily. "We can provide guards at all roads into the mountains. Perhaps you require some small product of ours to make your lives easier?"

"There is a gummy substance the humans manufacture which makes excellent bonding for snare webs," said Krek. "I have not made such webs, of course, but memories flood my mind now. The strands hold prey well but break loose from rock moorings. This human substance bonds well between web and rock. We could trade them some of our lesser silks. Their cloth is so coarse." Krek's claws tightened on Balint's shoulder and wrinkled chainmail under his tunic. Balint didn't correct the spider's mistake.

"Can you stop Darwin?" he pressed,

his ancient heart hammering now. A treaty welded together and a war averted swayed in the balance. Balint felt years younger with Krek on his shoulder. No longer useless, he fulfilled the true destiny of a king.

"Naturally," said Kral, somewhat disgustedly. "A few humans cannot stand to a mountain arachnid."

"How few? How armed?"

"Not more than five thousand," Kral replied. "They wear those silly carapaces of metal."

"Breast plate," muttered Balint, conjuring the picture of a major army moving steadily through the mountains. Such a force would rip the guts from his realm. "Are they into the mountain passes?"

"Less than two hours' travel from here."

The baby spider said, "Are you doing anything important this afternoon, Kral? Besides leaping out and frightening these frail humans?"

"No."

"Why not turn these other humans around and send them back to their web? I could hardly do it," said Krek, jumping up and down, "but for a mighty warrior such as yourself, it should be simple."

"Of course." Kral paused for a moment before adding, "I might get several of the others to aid me. Perhaps your mother would join us. She needs the activity away from the web and your siblings to get that notion of devouring me out of her head."

Kral turned and loped off, not even casting a glance back at Krek and his pet human. Balint found himself hard-pressed to maintain the pace on foot. But he did. He was a king in the presence of kings. Dignity demanded it, even if the other royalty was an overgrown spider.

• • •

Balint saw Darwin's camp and stood in sheer awe. If anything, Kral had underestimated the size of the force. Ten thousand armed men, with supplies and horses, spread across an entire valley. Only his blurred vision prevented him from taking accurate count.

"But the numbers, Krek. Darwin has an army!"

"So?"

Balint studied the placement of the troops that the spiders would face. He nodded slowly as he realized Darwin had copied a position he himself had employed successfully on many occasions. Not many weaknesses and overwhelming strength in all areas where a human assault could be mounted. Balint carefully pointed out the failings of Darwin's position to Krek. The tiny spider absorbed all this with equanimity. When Kral loped into view,

Krek clicked and squealed rapidly, possibly pointing out all Balint had said or passing judgment on the silliness of humans. Balint didn't know or care. He was too excited at the prospect of battle again.

He only wished he could lead a force of his own men against Darvin. To be in the saddle again, under streaming battle banner, sword swirling brightly in the sun. He sighed. War was for young men and he was no longer young. All his thrill must be vicarious, but the excitement was nonetheless real for that.

He watched in awe the force led by Kral as it swept down into the valley. Fully twenty of the monster spiders bowled over the guards before they could recover from their shock at the sight. Then came carnage. The nightmarish spiders snapped and clawed through the center of Darvin's camp, juggernauts of prodigious power. The battle became confused, diffuse. Balint no longer followed the course as the spiders spread out to pursue individual fights.

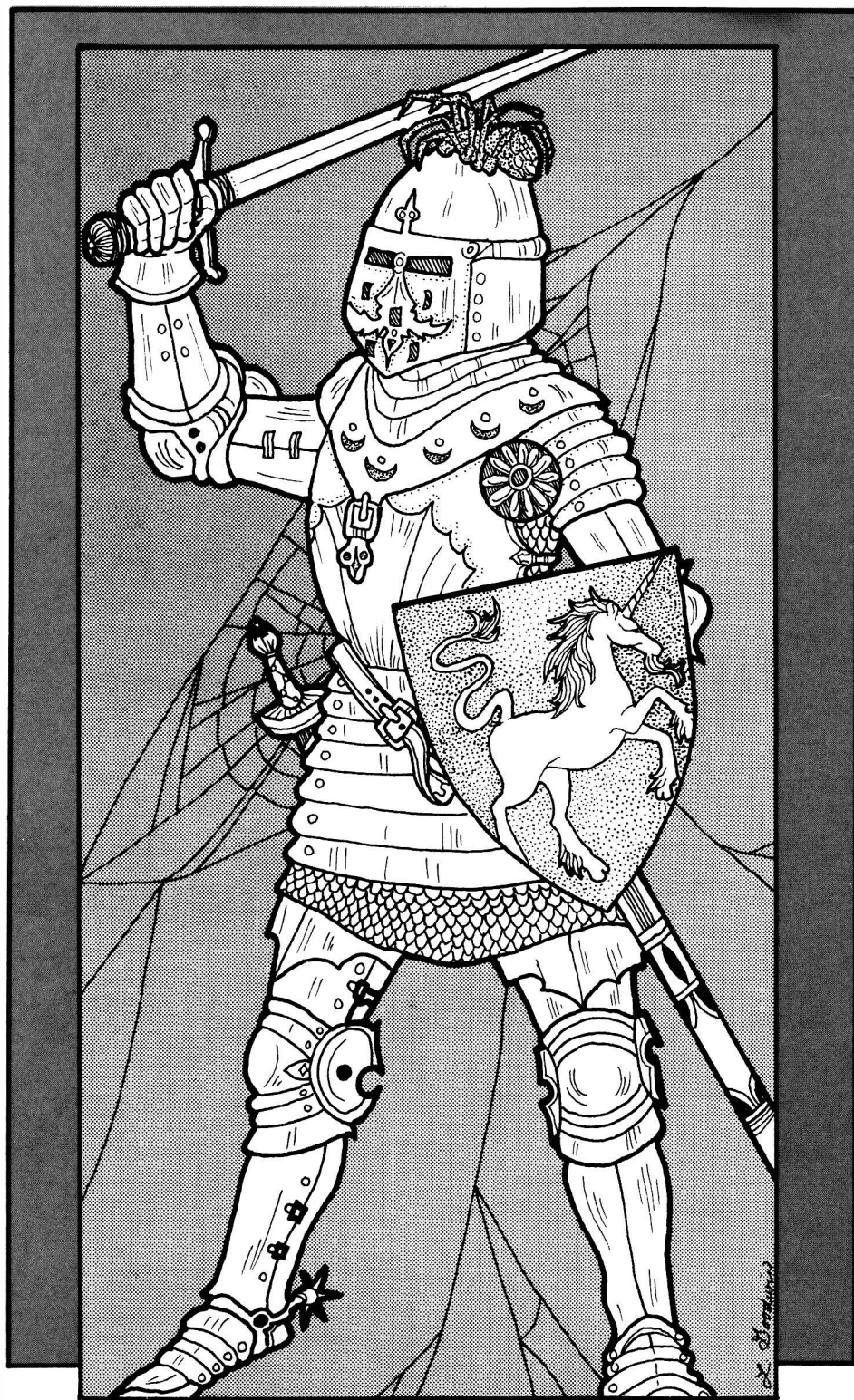
Once, a man clad in full battle regalia charged up the hill on which Balint stood. The king pulled free his sword, lowered the facemask of his helm and waited. His heart pounded as it had in the olden days and his hands no longer ached. He was transformed, he was a man forty years younger. As he engaged the soldier, he howled in glee. He fought hard, his muscles responding smoothly, his joints lubricated with virile youthfulness. Each cut he made was perfect, exactly on target. He beat back his attacker, forced him to his knees, then dispatched him.

And turned to meet another soldier attacking from the flank. Balint's blade leaped to the fray. He parried with the doublehanded broadsword and beat harshly at his opponent's blade. A leg betrayed him then, and he fell to his knees. A swift, powerful block prevented the soldier from decapitating him — and then Balint saw his ally. Krek had ridden throughout the fight on the top of his helm. Now the spider jumped and covered the Darwinian soldier's vision ports. The man shrieked and dropped his sword to pry loose the spider. Balint's blade drove upward under chainmail and into the man's groin. He died instantly.

Krek pranced back and preened, saying, "That will show them. I think I killed him nicely."

Balint blinked twice when he saw that Krek's baby mandibles had torn through the thick steel of the gorget and severed arteries in the throat. Whether his own thrust had killed or Krek's slash had done the trick, he couldn't say. He was willing to give the credit to the spider.

"A powerful pair we make," agreed Balint, leaning on his bloody sword, panting. His joints now exacted their toll



and stiffened on him until he moved only in agony. For the brief fight, it had been worth it. He looked past Krek into the once peaceful valley. Darvin's army was in rout, only a few rallying around the duke's flag to continue the futile battle against the mountain arachnids.

"I would parlay with Darvin. Can you arrange it, Krek?"

A high-pitched squeal echoed through the valley, cutting past the din of battle, and was answered by a slightly deeper

screech from below. In a few minutes, a man dressed in full plate armor was dragged to Balint's feet and uncereemoniously dumped.

Duke Darvin rolled agilely and managed to come to hands and knees in the heavy armor. He raised his head to a strange sight. Balint stood, helm under arm, smiling. The king had a replica of the deadly arachnids perched atop his head, as if this were quite normal.

"Balint?" asked the fallen duke,

unsure.

"Krek, help him from his armor." The spider leaped from the king's head and landed on the duke's back. In less than a minute, powerful mandibles had opened the man's armor and left him standing like a lobster without a shell.

"Are you willing to deal with me, Duke Darwin?" asked Balint, once Krek had regained his position on his head. "Your troops are defeated; mine hold the field."

"Yours?" the dazed duke said. "I underestimated you, King Balint. I knew you were wily. No ordinary assault down the river would have worked. I studied your strategies and decided a quick attack through the mountains would work. I never thought you ... the spiders ... this is too much! Name your terms of surrender."

"I think you will find them generous, Darwin, perhaps too generous for a brash youngling like you. But tell me, did you copy that battle formation from my own battle of Tymen? You were brilliant in adapting it to the circumstances here. I ..." and Balint forced Darwin to suffer through reminiscence from an old, garrulous and lonely king.

...

"This is madness!" exclaimed Morven. "Such a marriage is absurd!"

Yucel smiled wickedly as he said, "You have no choice. The marriage will take place and this realm will be united with Darwin's. Princess Adara has already left to prepare. She seems well pleased with the match. Especially considering her alternative." Yucel smiled even more as Morven uncomfortably looked away, his plans for personal power shattered.

All eyes turned to Balint, dozing on his throne. He snorted and stirred slightly, feeling content to let his advisors lament his decision. He had ordered two companies of armed men to establish sentry points along the foothills to prevent more humans from blundering into the el-Liot Mountains. It was a true bargain. The mountain arachnids benefited, but his kingdom benefited more having such powerful allies guarding the approaches to his realm. Also, he had seen the "lesser" silks Krek had sent; the merchants danced all night over the profits to be made from this trade. A worthless glue in exchange for the finest of silks. Trade. That was the essence of being king, to be able to negotiate successfully.

With a battle or two along the way to keep the joints limber.

Balint snorted as he turned in his uncomfortable chair and decided his other machinations were nothing less than brilliant, too. His advisors cared little for

Darvin, especially Morven now that his reprobate son had no chance at marrying Adara. But the young duke had a spark of ingenuity that reminded Balint of himself when he was younger. With Darwin on the throne, Balint need not worry about a capable heir. His kingdom would not suffer. And soon there would be a young prince to dandle on his knee. He smiled at the thought.

"But King Balint," came Zesiro's plaintive voice, "this duke is unable to administer his own duchy. He asks for our advisors!"

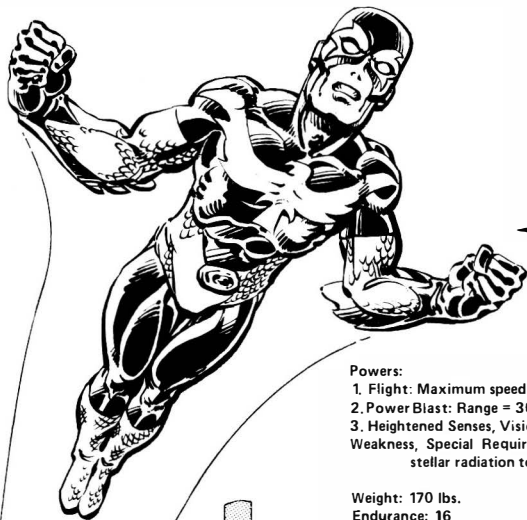
"A trick," muttered Morven. "He will kill them."

"No," said Balint, opening tired eyes. "He truly wishes to ally with us. Perhaps you, Zesiro, might show him how to properly tax his people."

"An entire duchy, untaxed. Virgin territory," muttered Zesiro. "Yes, very well, sire." He leaned back, smiling at the promise of tax revenues flowing into the coffers. He would support this Darwin. For a while.

Morven protested but the other advisors slowly turned against him. As Balint drifted off to sleep, he wondered if Krek might not be right. Perhaps he should devour Morven. His appetite was large enough for just one advisor. ■

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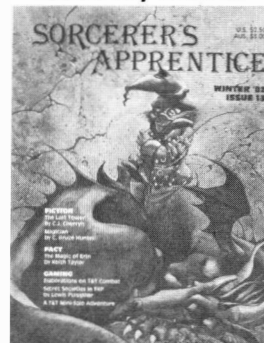
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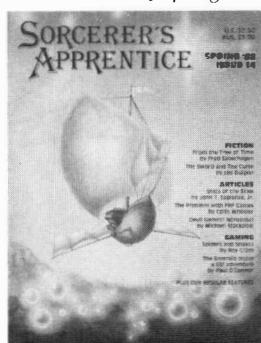
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QUERIES & QUANDARIES

Calling all T&T players... *Queries & Quandaries* is *YOUR* column! After all, there is no true "right or wrong" way to play *Tunnels & Trolls*; once you have the rulebook in your hands, T&T becomes your game. Here is your chance to help others understand the game better, and to play better because of your insights. If you have something to say about any questions raised here — send them to us!

The response to the new format of Q&Q has been overwhelming. I really want to thank all of you who have sent answers to the questions. Now, I've got a new problem: selecting answers from all those offered (not that I'm complaining...). Keep sending in answers and questions, however, and I'll try to persevere.

(Grimtooth, because of the bet he made in SA13, is slightly angry about all this. Please keep up the good work; being goalie for his soccer team is not enough to save me from destruction...)

— Michael Stackpole

Do you allow solo characters and GM-developed characters to participate in the same adventures? (SA13)

I don't feel face-to-face characters are more important than solo characters, but I don't allow them to mix because of the way they are used to getting experience points. I feel the main problem with mixing face-to-face with solo characters is that solo characters are used to running alone and might find it hard to adjust to companions.

— Laura Parkinson

I think that characters developed in face-to-face play tend to be more important to those running them than characters developed in solo adventures. I would certainly allow a "solo" character to enter my world, provided he/she/it did not disrupt the balance too much. This is something I require from any player-character entering my world, regardless of origin. If the character were too powerful, it would make it difficult to give the other player-characters a reasonably equal chance for fun and treasure.

The main problem I have encountered with solo characters is that it is much more difficult to develop their personality and/or style than it is to develop the same traits in face-to-face play. This is probably due to a lack of personal interaction: there are no other players present with which to exchange ideas. This tends to leave the solo character somewhat two-dimensional. I admit that I

have had little exposure to solitaire adventuring, although I have attempted to write a few, and may thus be considered biased towards face-to-face play.

— Cathy DeMott

I wouldn't say that solo characters *OR* face-to-face characters are more important. Almost all of my characters have experience in both realms. There's no doubt, though, that characters don't really gain a unique personality until they go "on their own" in a face-to-face adventure. That's where you find out who's belligerent, who's a craven and who's a Chuck Norris in leather mail. The only problem that ever arises is the character who becomes a "mega" through a solo (I've never met a GM crazy enough to turn a delver into a mega-character). I retire such monsters immediately, because when it becomes too easy the fun is gone.

I would rather delve with characters who can get into trouble, who have to survive by their wits. That's the challenge of the game. And the fun.

— Michael von Glahn

Characters developed in face-to-face play are definitely *NOT* more important than those developed in solo adventures. A character is a character; and, played properly, that character is an extension of the player himself. What does it matter if he/she was developed in the course of a solo adventure, rather than in face-to-face play? In either situation, the character is merely representing the fantasy persona of the gamer, and the character will act the same in either type of play.

On the other hand, when solo characters are used in group play, some problems may arise as far as game balance is concerned. Solo characters tend to have higher attributes, and sometimes ridiculous magic items (such as *Arena of Khazan's* Bronze Bodkin — a 66-die weapon) which I, as GM, cannot compensate for. A 2nd or 3rd level solo-type character will fare well when playing alongside 5th or 6th level face-to-face-type characters. And, sometimes, the GM may wish to disregard such distasteful items as Yuurk or the Bronze Bodkin, temporarily annulling their power (which is needed for a lot of the more nightmarish solos — *Overkill* comes to mind) for the duration of the adventure.

— Jim Robinson

When you design a trap and know "The Solution," how do you react if another workable solution is presented? (SA13)

When players manage to circumvent my best-laid traps and circumstances, I'll either break out into gales of laughter or concede grudging admiration. Whether or not they get away with a particular gambit depends on my mood, on the sensibility of the solution, and on the uniqueness of it. (I've been known to allow a totally ridiculous solution on the basis of its brazenly clever insanity...) As GM, I try to avoid unprovoked killings in my cosmos — but there are times and places where the wrong step — or word, or look — can lead to sudden and brutal death. Logic is always my guide, but whim plays its occasional part.

— David Hill

If the players come up with another solution to my deadly traps, then more power to 'em! If it's real good, I award double the amount of e.p. I normally give for the "real solution." As for the party "knowing certain facts," I think anything the player knows the character knows. (If I am stupid enough to explain a trap and it gets to the player, I deserve what I get!)

— Bill George Jr.

One of the most difficult parts of GMing is getting a player of a low-IQ character to role-play that character. Most players use all the brains they have, all the time, regardless of how "smart" their characters are. Since most T&T players rank 15 and up on IQ, the typical warrior is *forever* coming up with ideas. Now, even a moron can have an occasional bright idea, but T&T players rarely role-play their characters as "stupid" as they might be. Anyway, I never disallow a solution when the character is stupid; I might tell him to forget his next bright idea, *in advance* of the onset of the situation, e.g. "OK, Ferdunkle has an IQ of 9 and he's figured out how to escape my last two traps — but when he encounters the next trap he's not going to have any ideas..."

— Dean Simmons

If my players come up with an alternate solution to one of my traps, I use this system. If the solution will actually work, I give them a certain level saving roll; if they make the roll, I give them double the amount of experience points (depending



32A "Hold it right there, Pilgrim", you hear him say. "I got somthin' to say to you!". (His weapon is now touching the end of your nose, while your hand is still empty). He seems to have grown larger and more menacing. If you decide to listen, go to 11A. To attack with magic or bare-handed, go to 26C. If you draw your weapon anyhow, go to 11B.

32B "Mike Stackpole says it's as much fun as Nuclear War," he tells you, "and so does Tim Kask. Besides, it's educational. Did you know there are a dozens of ways to kill a man?" If you say "who?", or draw your weapon, go to 11B. Otherwise, go to 39A.

32A The breeze called the Dragon's Breath fills the sails as you depart from Khazil.

As you stand beside the helmsman, your mate comes over. "Arrgh, Cap'n. Shall we coast down the chin and look for easy plunder ashore as we go, or shall we catch the Serpent's Current for Khazad?"

If you order him to sail along the coast, go to 11A. If you head out for deep water and Khazad, go to 26B.

32B On the morning of the thirteenth day you row into the harbor of the island Orcs. Several hundred of them, with a large dragon, are on shore to meet you and ask your business. You tell them that you are gathering tribute for Lerotra'hh. Their leader says he owes no allegiance to the Death Goddess, but as a token of affection they'll send her an ingot of mithril. If you accept the gift and continue your voyage, go to 26C. If you threaten them with the power of Lerotra'hh and ask for more, go to 9C.

32C The voyage down the coast to Kayala will take 30 days. Each day you must make your L1-SR on Luck (20 — LK). Each time you make it you will complete a day successfully, and also gain 3d6 in gold pieces worth of plunder (disguised as tribute) from small communities on shore. As captain, you take half of all such "tribute", and the crew gets the other half. Each time you miss the saving roll, go to 19C. At the end of 30 days you will reach Kayala; go then to 11C.

on how deadly the trap is). The more workable the solution is, the lower the saving roll. The more deadly the trap was that they escaped, the more experience points given.

— Darren B. Angelos

How important is religion in your FRP world, and how do you handle it? (SA14)

Religion in my FRP world is used as a background. I have found religion to be a very convenient way of designing history, but when used to "drive" the current world, it tends to stifle role-playing and dominate events which have no religious connection whatever. To explain, when a character is in a world where religion is the dominant force, he will almost certainly align himself with one of the major deities. I have found that a lot of players will thereafter play their characters as stereotypical worshippers (good, evil, nature-loving, etc.). If religion is in the background, the players are required to put some thought into their characters' personalities, which inevitably makes the world more interesting.

Where the clergy is concerned, if the churches are in the foreground, very often the priests are given extranatural abilities to justify their prominence. Not only are those abilities often unrelated to the religion at hand, but they almost always detract from the function of a priesthood, which is in general to manage church affairs and to lead the worshippers in devotions. An exception to this is a person such as a tribal shaman, who should obviously have some magical abilities since he is not only a religious leader but also the tribal wizard.

In summary, using religion as the primary force in a campaign allows easy excuse for quests, divine intervention, and many other things, but I feel that using religion in that way is a crutch which should be abandoned as soon as the Game Master knows his players well enough to motivate them some other way. Preventing any single thing from dominating a campaign makes, overall, for a much more interesting world, and stimulates the role-playing ability of the players.

— Bradley L. Richards

How do you handle the design and distribution of magical items in your game? What do you do if a magical item is more powerful than you anticipated? (SA14)

First off, let me qualify what I am about to say by pointing out that I run a low-magic, low-money world (though I have tried it both ways). When I give out a magic item, I can therefore put a fair amount of work into it, tailoring it to the specific character or group of characters I expect to find it. The item may counter some weakness, or it may add to an already powerful ability. Or

it may be a joke or a cursed item. Regardless, few problems of balance crop up if an item is designed in the light of the recipient's known strengths and weaknesses. If someone unexpected acquires the item, and its powers are not already reliably known, it will do something different (again, tailored to the specific character).

If, in spite of everything, I toss in a minor magic item at 3:00 a.m. only to wake up the next morning to a monster, there are only two legitimate things to do. First, try to limit the situations in which the item is useful. Second, since a character rarely knows exactly what an item does, and is almost never sure he's found all its powers, the item can be modified to some extent (as long as it remains consistent to what the owner knows of it). If neither of those alternatives helps, about the only thing to do is live with it. Taking the item from the character through arbitrary action tends to disrupt the fabric of believability essential for a world to be successful in the first place. If the item is so powerful that you cannot live with it, talk to the player — admit a mistake and reach a compromise. Few players want an all-powerful character, as that removes the challenge of the game.

— Bradley L. Richards

• • • • •

Here are two new questions for discussion:

1. As a GM, how do you deal with a pushy player? Do you ignore him, tell him to leave your gaming group, or destroy him through the game? As players, how do you deal with pushy GMs and pushy players? What is fair in dealing with such ilk?

2. Along the same lines, how do you deal with suspected cheaters? What do you do when someone always makes his saving rolls? How can you play with someone who always second-guesses himself until he is right?

I really would like to urge anyone who has strong feelings about any of the questions asked to write us articles about their solution to the problems mentioned. T&T has always been your game. Q&Q is now your column, but your influence on the game need not end there. Articles are needed here at SA — and they're your chance to set the T&T world on its ear. Show Grimtooth that all humans are not wretched. (Just kidding, sir... GUURRK...)

If you have any questions you'd like answers to, send them to us — and likewise if you have any answers to any of the questions here! Any and all responses, at any length, are openly solicited. Each will be read, and those printed will be paid our standard contributor's rates. If you'd like your response to Q&Q returned to you in the event it is not used, please include a SASE.

— Michael Stackpole

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In nearly every sword-and-sorcery adventure ever written, wonderful items are found: scrolls, potions, wallets, wands, ceramic bulldogs, rods, frying pans, staffs, nose flutes, and what-have-you. It’s only natural that such items should also be available in the T&T milieu. Since the rulebook says little or nothing regarding these things, I have drawn up a few ideas and suggestions for introducing and using arcane devices in the game.

SCROLLS are a great boon to magic-using characters, allowing them to cast spells without cost to their Strength during an adventure (the ST cost of the spell was paid when it was enscribed). To keep scrolls from becoming so plentiful as to become a nuisance, however, I impose several restrictions on their availability.

Magical Requirements: While any spell may be enscribed, only a wizard who knows and is able to cast the spell may do so. He must also know the *Scrollspell* (L2, costs 500 g.p. to learn, requires a min. IQ

of 12 and DEX of 9). The Strength cost of the *Scrollspell* is one point per level of the spell being inscribed (in addition to the cost of the spell being enscribed).

Material Requirements: All scrolls in this system must be written on special ritually-prepared skins (paper or parchment will not work). The skin used affects the chances of the spell working properly when the scroll is read, as follows:

Source of Skin	Chance of Failure	Cost of Skin
Lamb	2—5 (2d6)	5 g.p.
Human	2—4 (2d6)	200 g.p.
Elf or Troll	2—3 (2d6)	300 g.p.
Dragon	2 (2d6)	600 g.p.
Demon	1 (2d6)	1200 g.p.

When a wizard attempts to use a scroll, and rolls within the “Chance of Failure” range, the spell does not work.

Skins must be taken from living creatures for maximum effectiveness. Hide removed from even freshly-killed specimens incurs a penalty of minus one (—1) on the dice roll. If, however, the skin was taken from a live virgin female (of whatever race!), a bonus of +1 is added to the roll.

Pens used to inscribe spells must be made from quills plucked from the wings of a live Harpy or Roc. The ink is ritually prepared from carbonized Mummy bones, Giant Squid sepia, and Demon (best) or Dragon (acceptable) blood. A pulverized sapphire of at least five carats weight is added to give strength to the mixture.

The above ingredients can be sold for good profits, and interesting scenarios can be built around such expeditions. GMs can add to or delete from the recipe as they see fit.

Preparing scrolls: It takes one hour per spell level to inscribe a spell on the skin. The slightest mistake or interruption ruins the product, and the wizard must start over from scratch. Once a scroll is finished, the wizard must make a final saving roll on his IQ to see if he did the job properly. If he misses the roll, he slipped up and the scroll is worthless. If a skin is ruined, it cannot be re-used.

Drawbacks of scrolls: In addition to time, expense, and trouble to prepare, scrolls are slower than spells. It takes about ten seconds per spell level to read one off. This can be a big disadvantage when you need that *Wall of Fire* to stop a charging horde of Orcs.

Rogues can’t make scrolls, and also read them at a disadvantage. Whenever a Rogue tries to read a scroll, he must make an IQ-SR on the level of the spell, to see if the spell works. Any wizard other than the one who made the scroll must also make an IQ-SR (but at two levels lower than the spell level). If the roll is missed, nothing happens; the scroll is wasted.

Finally, scrolls can only hold one spell, and this can only be used once. With these limitations, scrolls should play an interesting but limited role in the game.

POTIONS include elixirs, pills, drops, salves, suppositories, unguents, lotions, tinctures, and what-have-you. Wizards with an alchemical bent take delight in devising different kinds of liquid and solid vehicles able to absorb and retain a magical charge. The result is a sort of magical "Leyden" jar which releases its stored-up energy when the product is used. With a little imagination, a GM can devise some kind of dosage form for any spell in the rulebook. A few examples of this sort of thing are given below.

□ **#1. Cateyes Potion or Eye Drops**

Ingredients: Eyebright herb, a 5-carat powdered Carbuncle, and the eyes of an Owl or Cat.

Cost per dose: Potion — 120 g.p.

Drops — 75 g.p.

Effect: same as the *Cateyes* spell

Disadvantages: Photophobia (while using this preparation, the user cannot endure bright light). The eye drops also have a small chance (roll of 2 on 2d6) of causing temporary blindness due to irritation; this lasts 1—6 turns.

□ **#2. Healing Feeling Elixir**

Ingredients: One ounce of ground amber, Goldenseal, Blue vitriol, Hyssop, and Mummy dust.

Cost per dose: 400 g.p. Due to popular demand, this item usually commands two to three times this price.

Effect: Same as a *Healing Feeling* spell

Disadvantages: One elixir in 36 (a roll of 2 on 2d6) misfires, in which event the disease runs riot and the imbiber dies immediately.

□ **#3. Too-Bad Toxin Potion**

Ingredients: Sublimated Antimony, Deadly Nightshade, Ergot, stems from the Destroying Angel mushroom, venom glands of a spitting cobra, and one dram of pulverized Jasper.

Cost per dose: 280 g.p.

Effect: Same as a *Too-Bad Toxin* spell

Disadvantages: One potion in 36 (a roll of 2 on 2d6) will double the effect of the poison it was meant to neutralize. If the poison was a fatal one in this case, there is a 50% chance the imbiber will survive, but will become violently toxic to all other living things around him (this has a high probability of ruining the character's social life).

□ **#4. Double-Double Drops**

Ingredients: Ogre (acceptable) or Giant (best) blood, Garlic cloves, Saltpeter, Acorn dust, Mace, and a 10-carat pulverized Ruby.

Cost per dose: 700 g.p.

Effect: Doubles a warrior's ST, a wizard's IQ, and a rogue's LK for 5 turns. Warrior-Wizards should roll 1d6 to see whether ST or IQ was the attribute

affected (odd: ST; even: IQ).

Disadvantages: One batch of DD Drops out of 36 (a roll of 2 on 2d6) works in reverse, halving the affected attribute for 5 turns. Taking two doses in an attempt to quadruple a character's ability will knock him out cold for 5 turns (he'll wake up with a terrible headache).

□ **#5. Knock-Out Drops; Mickey Finn.**

Ingredients: Sweet Balm, Monkshood, Poppy seeds, and Agate powder.

Cost per dose: 80 g.p.

Effect: A dose of 2 drops per 100 lbs. body weight will put any creature to sleep for 2—7 hours.

Disadvantages: Imbibers of this potent nostrum wake up with devastating hangovers. Doses larger than 3 drops per 100 lbs. make the drinker nauseous (90% chance of throwing up before enough drug is absorbed to knock him out). This preparation is a favorite of slavers and shanghaiers. In most cities it is illegal to make, sell, or possess.

Just because a wizard knows a spell does not mean he can make any of the products described above. To learn this art, he must pay a 3000 g.p. tuition fee, and attend a College of Alchemy and Thaumaturgy for three months. To pass this rigorous course of study, he must make a L3-SR on his IQ. If he misses it, he flunks, and must take the whole course over again.

Scrolls, potions and their ilk can rapidly unbalance a game if they become too common. This undesirable state of affairs is easily avoided by mandating that characters make their own potions from scratch. The few exceptions should be well-guarded, trapped, or hidden — like any other extremely valuable thing. Any potion offered for sale should be very expensive, and should have a fair-to-middling chance of being a fake.

Mixing potions is a serendipitous business at best and can be catastrophic at worst. The GM should invent some amazing and interesting results for those over-bold persons who dare (like modern-day talkshow hosts) to bring together those things which ought to be left apart. By a similar exercise in creativity, the GM should also be quick to discourage players from gulping down dose after dose of the same preparation in the course of the adventure. No more than three or four consecutive doses in any 24-hour period should be permitted without something ominous or unusual happening to the offender.

RODS, WANDS, NOSEFLUTES, etc. The nature of certain spells makes it possible to store them in specially-prepared receptacles, and released when needed by use of a special command.



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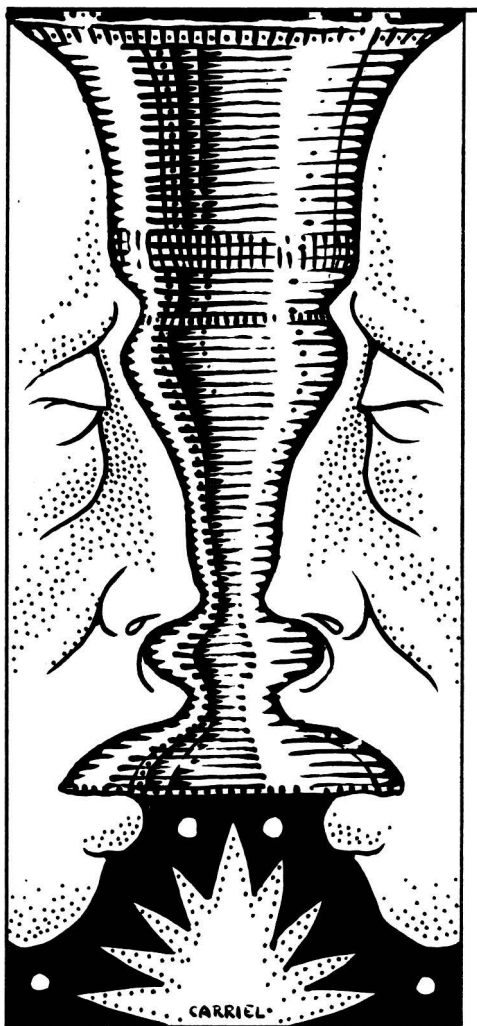
35A Make a L10-SR on Strength (65 — ST). If you fail, your bonds hold and you are forced overboard — go to 6B. If you make it, the rope snaps and you can attack. The mate gets his weapon plus his combat adds; you only get 1 die (bare hands) plus your combat adds.

If you slay him, you regain control of the ship. Appoint a new mate and continue your journey. If you were sailing along the coast, go to 32C. If you were sailing to or from Khazad, go to 26B.

35B "Arrgh!" snarls your mate. "I knew you were a follower of the Death Goddess!" and he stalks away. Make a L3-SR on Charisma (30—CHR). If you make it, go to 32C; if you miss, go to 19A.

35C You are hit with dragonfire from above, making the ship a blazing inferno. You may stay and die with your ship, or you can leap overboard and swim to shore where you are captured. Sometime later the Orcs sell you as an oarslave to a passing ship bound for Khazan. There you will be the main attraction in a Command Performance at the Arena. You, if you have a copy of Arena of Khazan, will fight three fights as a slave. Whether you win or lose, Lerotra'h will make you into an example of either a) a noble Khazani captain who can never be defeated, or b) a wretched traitor who has gotten what he deserves. If you are wounded and the crowd must decide your fate, they will, at the Death Empresses whim, condemn you to death.

If you don't have Arena of Khazan, the Death Empress exercises Option B from above and crucifies you with a couple of Bear Cultists on the Great Road outside of Khazan.



Such items are expensive and difficult to make, and the ST cost to ensorcel them is $1.5 \times$ the normal cost of the spell. Under most circumstances, only the wizard who made the device can use it.

Examples of a few possible magic devices follow.

Gem of Brightness. This is a piece of quartz on a silver chain which has been enchanted to hold up to ten *Will-o-wisp* spells. It will glow brightly on command for one full turn per spell, or until the crystal is broken. The light can be extinguished by the user, but relighting it requires the expenditure of another full charge. It costs 20 g.p. per spell to enchant this item.

Knock-Knocker. This short, cudgel-like staff can hold up to seven *Knock-Knock* spells. However, if it hits a door held by a *Lock Tight* spell cast by a higher-level wizard, it will burst, and the wielder of the staff will take one die of CON damage for each level of difference. It costs 30 g.p. per spell ensorcelled to make this device.

Rock-a-Bye Rod. This rod will hold three *Rock-a-Bye* spells, and costs 330 g.p. per spell stored to make. If dropped or treated roughly, there is a d6:1 chance it will discharge spontaneously. This hazard doubles (d6:1—2) if the person carrying it was not its creator.

Blasting Rods are as old as the history of magic. They usually carry one spell of great power, are about as safe to handle as hot nitroglycerin, and are usually only

constructed when a very special target is envisioned. Spells enchanted into such rods may include *Take That You Fiend*, *Blasting Power*, *Hellbomb Burst*, *Banishment*, and so on. A Blasting Rod has the same chance of going off spontaneously as a Rock-a-Bye Rod, and only the GM knows where it will be pointing at the time!

Smog Wand. Two kinds of Smog Wands can be produced. The first makes a dense cloud of smoke ($20' \times 20' \times 20'$) that completely obscures vision. The second type projects an invisible cloud of poisonous gas ($10' \times 10' \times 10'$). Creatures who unwittingly breathe this vapor must make a L4-SR on LK or take points in damage to CON equal to the margin they missed the SR by. Regardless of saving rolls, all creatures exposed to the gas lose their ST and DEX adds for 1—6 combat turns due to its very irritating effects on the eyes and mucous membranes. It costs 440 g.p. per spell to ensorcel these wands, and only 2 spells can be put into a single wand.

GMs should be able to expand on the above examples to liven up their campaigns: Dum-Dum blackjacks, Oh-Go-Away aftershave cologne, Poor Baby pills, Wind Whistle bottles, Zombie Zonk salve, Breaker-Breaker shields, and No-See-Me grease represent only a small fraction of the possibilities. However you decide to use "magic stuff" in your games, I hope it will make them every bit as interesting as it has mine. ■

Every issue of SA will make a special offer just to our readers. We find a game or product which we think has been overlooked, or maybe it's currently out of print, or perhaps it just happens to be something a little bit unusual that we think you might like. We offer it to you at a special price... maybe it isn't something for everybody, but that's just as well — quantities are definitely limited. If you want the current special, be sure to order before December 1, 1982.

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Pharaoh's Revenge

C. Bruce Hunter

Geoffrey glanced once more at the dusty papyrus scroll he had spread out beside a candle on the display case. He didn't need to read it again, of course. He had translated it a half dozen times to be sure there was no mistake, and by now he knew its contents by heart. There were the obligatory prayers to Osiris and Ra, a list of ingredients, instructions for their preparation, and the promise of eternal life and unlimited power. And a cartouche at the end he hadn't been able to translate, but he didn't have to know its meaning. He had already deciphered all the important information in the scroll.

Luckily all the ingredients still existed, though researching their modern names had taken three months, and assembling them had meant another month of exploring chemist shops, spice companies and industrial manufacturers. But he had finally completed the task, and the reward for his labors now

effervesced in a beaker in front of him.

He took a deep breath and reached for the long-forgotten alchemist's formula that would soon catapult him from the lowly status of junior Egyptologist to king of the world. Closing his eyes, he gulped the dark, astringent liquor.

It burned slightly going down and Geoffrey exhaled abruptly. The burning became a pain in the center of his chest, then spread slowly through his body. He gasped for air, but the pain turned into the searing heat of desert air too hot to breathe.

He gritted his teeth and groped for something ... anything to squeeze his hands against. He stumbled into the display case, knocking over the candle and thrashing wildly. Then, in one final, excruciating moment, an abject darkness invaded his head.

• • •

Outside the room, a shuffle of footsteps echoed down the hallway.

"I'm sure I heard a noise in here," said a muffled voice that was quickly followed by a jiggle of the doorknob and the rasp of a key in the lock. The door swung open and the curator stepped into the darkened room.

"Turn on the lights, will you, Smyth," he said, and when the overhead bulb flashed on and he saw the body crumpled on the floor, he exclaimed, "Good Lord, Smyth, isn't this one of the assistants in your section?"

"Why, yes. That's young Jones,"

Smyth replied. "What happened to him?"

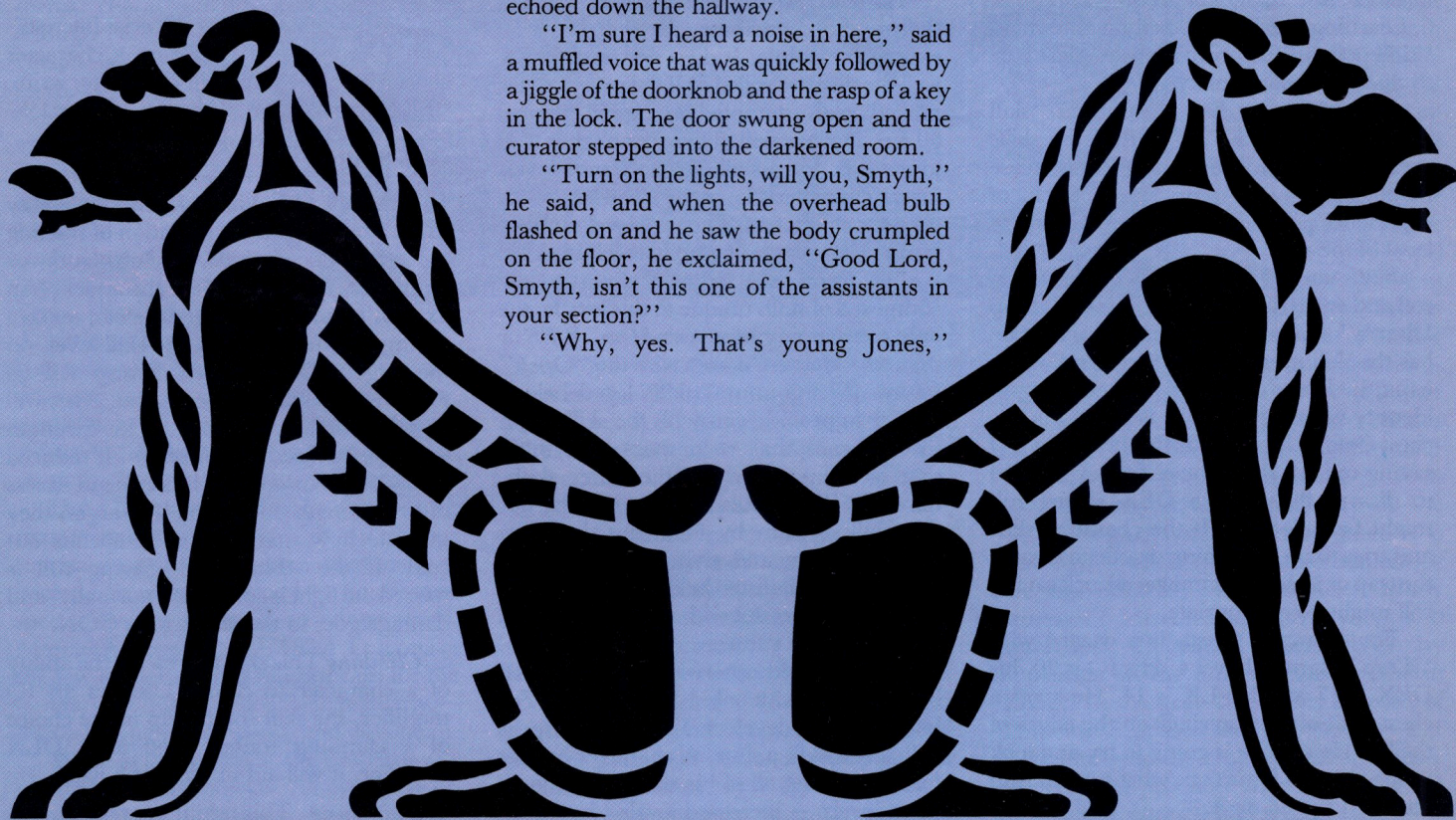
"Looks like he may have done himself in." The curator pried open the youth's fingers to free the crumpled paper clutched in his fist.

"What's that?" the other asked.

"It appears to be one of the scrolls from the store room. Jones here must have been translating it."

"Ah, yes," Smyth said, taking the scroll from his colleague's hand to examine it. "It's one of those formulas that's supposed to give life and power to its users. The museum has a number of them in storage; they're historically unimportant, really. Funny thing, though, I've never been able to make out this cartouche that comes at the end of some of them."

"Let me see," the curator said, peering at the crumpled document. "Oh, that's just a warning. It translates roughly, 'for external use only'."



Skills in Tunnels & Trolls

by Michael Stackpole

Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes and WEB will introduce the idea of skills to the Tunnels & Trolls family of independent but complementary role-playing games. The revised Monsters! Monsters! will also sport a skills system when it appears. Since the sixth edition of the T&T rules is still merely a nightmare, it was deemed a good idea to introduce skills for T&T in SA, to give you a taste of skills and a preview of Mercs and WEB.

Skills, as defined for role-playing games, represent knowledge of certain subjects gained by a character before or during his career as an adventurer. While many other game systems have skill systems, none of them have linked skills and their use as closely to the characters as we have in *Mercs* and *WEB*.

A character must have a certain IQ minimum to be able to master a skill. For instance, an "IQ 6 Skill" requires an IQ of 6. Learning a skill costs a certain amount of "skill points," according to the most part to that skill's complexity.

Each character has a supply of "skill points" equal to his IQ. All of the skills presented here will be allowed to increase in level. Players must keep track of experience points gained in a skill, and the level of the skill.

Skills usage is generally tied to a saving roll and an attribute. Using the skill "Trap Disarm" as an example, the character who has the skill must make a saving roll when using it. If the character is attempting to identify what type of trap is located in the chest before him, he must make an IQ saving roll. If, then, the character decided to disarm the trap, a DEX saving roll might be called for. If the character slips and tries to do something drastic to disarm the trap or lessen its damage, a Luck saving roll might be appropriate.

For example, 'Rista is a wizard with "Trap Disarm" Level 4. His IQ is 20, his DEX is 17 and his LK is 14. He spots a chest with ornate carvings on the edges of the lid. He says he is going to try and look at the chest to figure out what type of trap has been rigged on it.

'Rista doesn't know it, but the chest has

been trapped with something that requires a L3-SR to detect. Normally 'Rista would have to try and make a L3-SR on the 20 of his IQ. Since he is "Trap Disarm" Level 4, however, he is allowed to add his level number to his IQ for the purpose of making that saving roll. Instead of having to hit a 10 on 2d6, he now has only to hit a 6.

The level number for his "Trap Disarm" skill can also be applied to his Dexterity as he attempts to disarm it, or his Luck as he attempts to do something to save himself when he fails to disarm the trap, and perhaps triggers it. The level number for any skill can be used as an attribute modifier for any saving roll where the player justifies it to the GM. 'Rista could even use his level number as a Charisma modifier for a saving roll to see if a man hiring delvers will take him because of his skill with Trap Disarming.

For each saving roll attempted using a skill modified attribute, the skill earns 50 experience points. It does not matter how well the dice are rolled or if the saving roll is missed; each attempted saving roll is worth 50 e.p. for that skill. There is no other way to get e.p. for a skill. Skills change levels just as characters do, at the same e.p. totals used for characters. The new level number is the reward for going up in levels in skills.

The list of skills below is almost totally composed of skills unique to this article; the only overlapping here with *Mercs*, *WEB* or *Monsters! Monsters!* comes with the "Open" (or no IQ minimum) skills listed below. This is to provide you with the skills from those games that encompass everything that is not covered by the other skills. Shrewd GMs should be able to flesh out this skills system by following the ideas presented here and trying to imitate the spirit of the skills listed below. You can flesh T&T characters out with appropriate skills from the other games.

Unless noted otherwise, each skill can be purchased with only 1 "skill point". For balance, each level of T&T magic spells will cost 2 skill points. A character cannot forsake buying all of his skills to purchase extra levels — increased levels come from experience.

Open Skills

☐ *Special Interests* (1 point per interest)

"Special Interest" is the skill area used to lump almost anything that might be learned by a character doing personal study. The only areas that cannot be covered under special interest are areas covered specifically under another skill. (There is no special interest "Plantlore", because it is covered under the skill "Plantlore".)

A perfect example of a special interest from fiction was Shadowjack's interest in the non-magical side of his world as seen in his research on the subject. The level number of an interest is used as an IQ modifier for saving rolls concerning the gain of information on the subject in question. A character who is L5 or greater in one area of special interest would be acknowledged as an expert in that field.

☐ *Occupational skills* (1 point per skill)

Occupational skills represent one year or an intensive training course in one form of employment. A character with an "Occupational" skill should be able to find employment in that field. Work experience will only get an individual one level of an "Occupational" skill; only by gaining experience will an "Occupational" level skill be raised.

Once a character reaches L5 he or she will be known locally as very good in that job. Higher levels will denote more wide spread fame. *No "Occupational" skill can replace a skill already listed.*

Note: when recording "Special Interests" or "Occupational" skills on a character sheet we have found it easiest to write: "SI:dragons:1" or "OS:alley basher:1".

IQ 6 Skills

☐ *Bludgeon* This skill represents the ability to hit a target with the intention of making the target unconscious. A club, baton or body part must be used for the attack. (An ax won't work.) If the attacker can make a saving roll, modified by the skill level, on the target's Dexterity, all damage will go towards knocking the person out. Hits will be taken by the character on his Strength until it is reduced to 1 or below. If reduced below 1, the number of hits done in excess of his Strength do not kill the target, they indicate how many turns he spends out cold. If the "Bludgeon" saving roll is missed the fight is conducted normally, and damage goes to the character's CON.

☐ *Climbing* This skill represents the ability of a character to climb. Used as an IQ modifier, the skill could help in the choice of a climbing route. Used as a DEX modifier, it will aid in the climb itself.

☐ *Swimming* This skill represents the ability of a character to swim. The skill may

be used as a Speed modifier when attempting to swim away from something. It may also be used as an IQ modifier to see if the character manages to stay on top of the water while trying to breathe as he pulls armor off. (And perhaps combined with Luck to see if you survive an attempt to swim with armor on?)

☐ **Tunneling** This skill represents the ability of a character to dig a tunnel which will not collapse on him; and/or his ability to recognize subtle changes in direction and elevation when in a tunnel of his own or another's making. This skill could modify any attribute in the correct situation.

IQ 8 skills

☐ **Begging** This skill represents the fine art of getting money from those more fortunate than you allow yourself to seem. This will probably work as a Charisma modifier for the most part, and at strange times when a character wishes to appear to be a beggar. Luck, when the skill is needed for getting some cash, would also be logical.

☐ **Pickpocket** This skill represents the ability to slip items of wealth out of the pockets of the wealthy and into your own pocket. A DEX-SR, modified by skill, should be made against the IQ of the person you intend to rob. When robbing NPCs, a skill-modified Luck roll might be used to determine the value of the prize.

☐ **Treasure Evaluation** This skill represents the ability of a character to gauge the worth of an item of treasure. This skill will be used most often as an IQ modifier. Value of an item probably should not be offered out loud in a gaming group in case the character wishes to short-change the others.

IQ 10 skills

☐ **Trapping** This skill represents the ability of a character to set snares and traps to catch animals or larger prey. This would include IQ saving rolls to see where to set them, and DEX saving rolls to set complex traps. A Luck saving roll might be thrown in to see what was caught.

☐ **Trap Disarm** This skill represents the ability of a character to recognize and disarm traps. See the example above for how this skill works.

IQ 12 skills

☐ **First aid.** This skill represents the ability of a character to help heal minor wounds and damage to a character. An IQ saving roll would be needed to determine what treatment was needed; then 10% of the damage done can be healed on any one injury. "First aid" cannot be administered to a dead person and does not include the



illustration by Liz Danforth

use of any herbs or drugs.

IQ 13 skills

☐ **Navigation (Land/Sea).** (costs 2 points per subgroup of Land or Sea) This skill represents the ability to locate yourself and plot a course for a caravan or ship. In addition to the logical use of an IQ saving roll, a Charisma saving roll, modified by the skill, would be good to see if anyone is willing to follow the character's charted course, especially if it goes to perilous waters...

☐ **Plant Lore.** (costs 2 points) This skill represents the ability of a character to recognize plants, remember their uses and their antidotes. A GM will have to acquaint himself with herbal lore to be able to interact with this character, but it will add a depth to games that may be missing.

The skills offered above are just a small sampling of the types of skills offered in *Mercenaries*, *Spies*, and *Private Eyes*; *Web*; and *Monsters! Monsters!*. GMs should feel free to create their own skills, especially those that pertain to the peculiar quirks of their own world. For the most part, fashioning the skills the way they have been handled here is a good idea, and these skills should guide you as to "skill point" cost and IQ minimums for skills.

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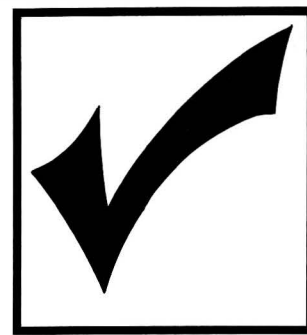
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reader response



The SA13 survey drew almost twice the responses of the previous reader survey, so thanks to everyone who responded. The information noted below provides, in part, a commentary on how the respondents see SA and FBInc. as a whole — what we've done so far and some comments on how things could be improved.

Most of the respondents were subscribers, and the remainder bought copies at a local game or hobby store. The respondents ranged in age from 12 to 52, but there were two clusters of age: one group in the teens and early 20's, and one group in the early 30's. 90% of the respondents were male; 10% were female. Occupations vary wildly, but approximately half are still students — many of them pursuing graduate degrees. Readers are to be found, literally, around the world: UK, Australia,

Mexico, Canada, and Japan — in the US, the heaviest readerships are in California, Michigan, Missouri, and New York. Concerning SA itself: fantasy gaming material, of any description, is what is expected from each issue — T&T material, specifically, is sought. One feature which we'll be making an endeavour to include with greater regularity will be the Weapon Shop. The Mini-solo adventures were, in general, better received than the GM adventures, but both are popular and we will keep putting both in. Response to Broken Spines was peculiar — we'll keep the column a while yet although we'll be making some changes in the style and format until (one hopes) we reach a level that satisfies your needs the best. In general, it was felt that AG was doing a satisfactory job of mentioning news and

new releases; however, from time to time there may be a few more longer reviews as well, provided of course that such are received! Finally, based on the readership votes, the covers of SA will continue to describe something of what's to be found inside — but we will be careful not to obscure too much of the art!

Concerning the gaming habits of the respondents: most play what they consider "often" in at least 3 different game systems — and as many of eight! Players of T&T usually play face-to-face, but they will also play solitaire — and in fact, *City of Terrors* was chosen more than 2:1 over the others as the favorite solo (*Arena of Khazan*, *Sewers of Oblivion*, *Sea of Mystery*, and *Sword for Hire* followed in that order). One more fact: there are people "playing" solos for the sake of a good read — without playing T&T whatsoever! ■

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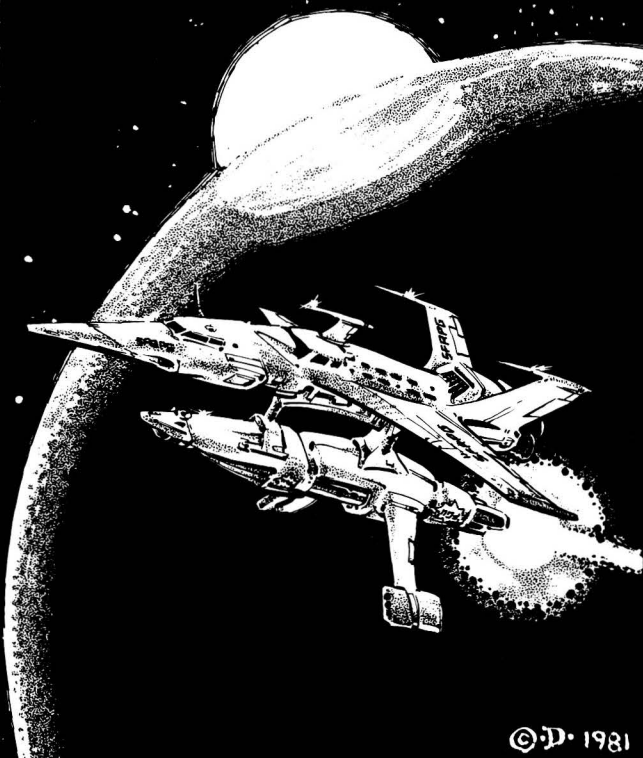
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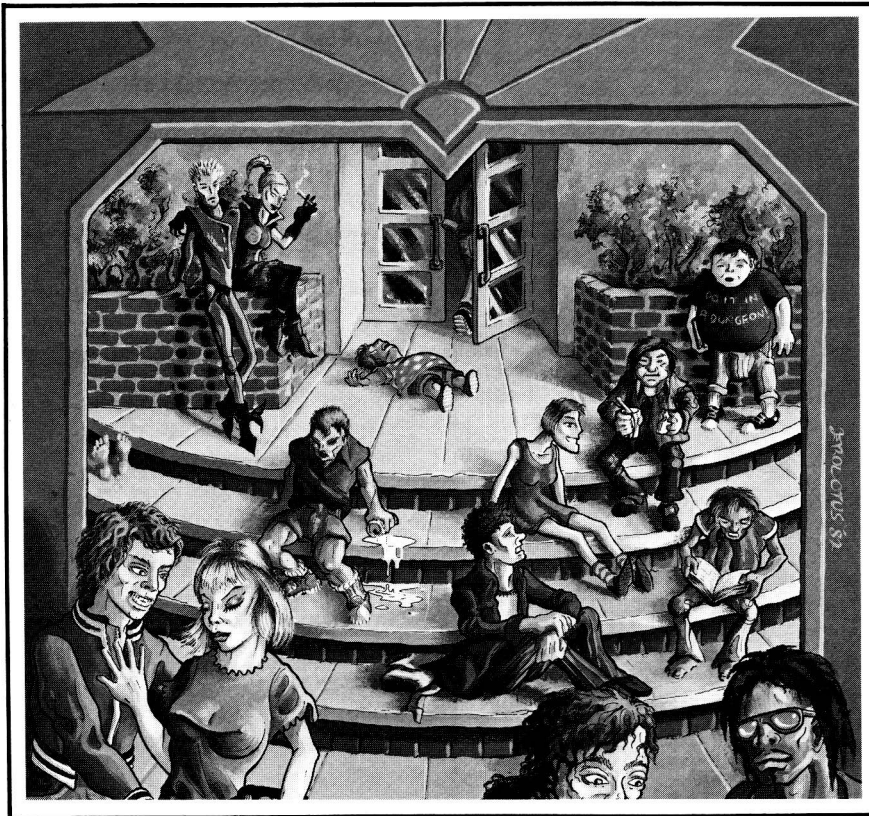


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ALMA MATER

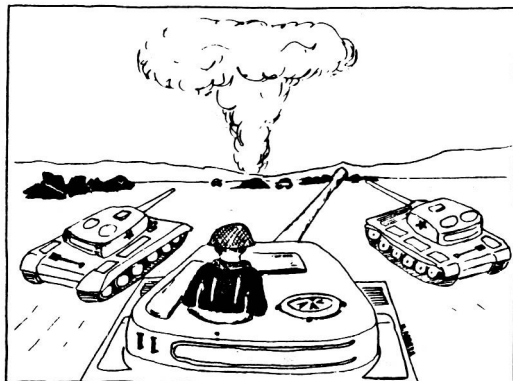


Nuke'm is a "blind" computer play-by-mail game in which 28-25 player countries (majors) attempt to gain the trust of up to 68-75 non-player countries (minors). To do this, the majors must establish a military presence and give economic aid so that when the final conflict breaks out, each minor will aid the major with the highest popularity in their country. The game also contains intelligence rules governing the use of spies, assassins, counterspies, and spy satellites which are useful in obtaining information on the offensive and defensive capabilities of your opponents and their minor countries. Once war has been declared by a major, the minors that you control will follow your weapon production and attack instructions.

Each game turn contains a production segment, and once war has been declared, an attack segment. One turn is played every six weeks. The adjudications contain spy intelligence reports, attack results, propaganda, and diplomatic notices from other players.

Send \$12.00 to receive your 8-page rule booklet and to pre-pay your first six turns. Each additional turn costs \$2.00. If you should be completely destroyed (and out of the game) before your account is expended, the balance may be applied to the cost of playing in another game or returned.

Oracle guarantees prompt turn adjudications (within one week of the turn deadline plus mailing time); otherwise you are not charged for the turn.



Alma Mater	\$ 9.95
Nuke'm	\$ 12.00

Prices include first class postage & handling. Please wait 2-4 weeks for delivery. Please send check or money order in US funds.

I felt as if I had butterflies in my stomach as I waited apprehensively outside the principal's office. Inside, no doubt, the Rat was planning some deviously sadistic punishment.

"So what!", I mused, "Yesterday, I started a food fight in the cafeteria, blew up the chemistry lab, got caught in the locker room with the girl's volleyball team, and smoked a joint in Mr. Fetish's English class. Still, did I deserve this torture?"

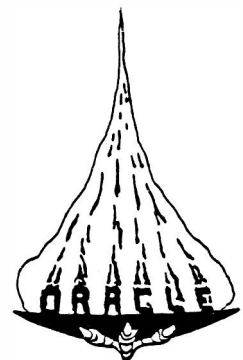
Suddenly the office door opened. "Get your tail in here, Snake!", the Rat commanded sternly.

Time stood still as I inched my way into the dark recesses of the Rat's office. "Just wait until I get my hands on that snitch, Dewey," I thought furiously, "I could tell that the day was off to a great start!"

Alma Mater is a role-playing game in which players may choose to be either a Jock, Cheerleader, Tough, Brain, Criminal, Average, or Loser. Their challenge is to successfully live as a teenager through four years of modern day American high school. However, play is not restricted to school. The game rules cover nearly every aspect of teenage life, including sports, social situations, fights, and hot rods.

In Alma Mater, you can act out your wildest fantasies and do anything that you would normally consider exceptionally foolish, suicidal, or down-right crazy.

This 48-page rule booklet, illustrated by Erol Otus and Owen Oulton, contains a description of the high school, "Central High" including NPC teacher and student descriptions; and a sample scenario, "Starr's Party". Maps for the school and Starr's home are provided along with a 17x22" color poster of the cover painted by Otus.



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TROLL TEASERS

I N E P T U N E D I S I M E T R A B E L
 U P E A A H C O C A R I V S U E T O R P
 T P A K H E I M D A L L Y R N D H A T P
 A Z E H E C A T L U N A S L E I P N E R
 L R E T C O L A L T L V T E R M I N U S
 L R O P L U T O B A L O R O G M A R S H
 A O O R H Q U S A R E T A M A R D U K A
 B M E H U Y A C A T E C U T L I O S A M
 R A T H T A R H E A L O A I A M N S L A
 I R R H J A N U S R N A N N A Y I A I S
 G U A C O Y H R S U E T A C E H S D T H
 I D T U N E E A U S M L T B R O N T E S
 T L S P U R R K H D E I M O S H U A F U
 O A A H J F M A C A S C A H C I H L N N
 H B R A N W E N C N I U Z E L O K I U O
 C E N E L E S I A U S E R T S E H L T R
 L V E N U S O N B S U E Z O B C H A A C
 A M M O N I R G A E S T L I U Q E T A C
 C L I B E R E A L B E S B A C A B A S T
 E R E H T E L L U M S U E R E N E H T A

Mythical Beings Word Search By Rick Brooks

Adonis	Bacabs	Cronus	Hera	Metztl	Shamash
Ahpuch	Bacchus	Danu	Hermes	Mider	Shu
Alilat	Baldur	Deimos	Huehuetotl	Nanna	Sleipner
Allatu	Balor	Diana	Hurakan	Nemesis	Sol
Amaterasu	Balu	Dis	Janus	Neptune	Tartarus
Ammon	Bast	Ecalchot	Juno	Nereus	Tefnut
Amor	Bel	Ehecatl	Kali	Nergal	Terminus
Anat	Boann	Eris	Keb	Ningal	Tlaloc
Apep	Branwen	Eros	Khuns	Ogma	Ulle
Artemis	Brigit	Ether	Liber	Pakht	Vali
Assur	Brontes	Frey	Llyr	Pluto	Venus
Astarte	Catequil	Hapi	Loki	Proteus	Viracocha
Athene	Ceres	Hathor	Luna	Ptah	Yacatecutli
Athtar	Chaac	Hebe	Maia	Rhea	Ymir
Aurora	Chin	Hecate	Marduk	Seb	Zephyrus
Baal	Coatlucue	Heimdall	Mars	Selene	Zeus

The on-going Limerick Contest continues . . . and we're getting more good ones than there's room to print! But there's still room for more, so send 'em in (you get \$2.50 for each one used). This particular assortment is all courtesy of reader/gamers in England . . . perhaps proximity to the land of blarney has something to do with it . . . ?

LIMERICK CONTEST

Immortals invading my den
 Each morning I count up to ten
 Each evening I eat
 Their hands and their feet
 Again and again and again!

—Peter Yearsley

There was a rich wizard of old
 Who couldn't turn lead into gold
 He was a bright fellow;
 He painted it yellow!
 If you want to be wealthy, be bold!

—Peter J. Watts

A cordon bleu ogre named Bligh
 Kills heros for delver-flesh pie
 Monsters travel so far
 For his "man-brain tartare"
 That it's almost an honor to die!

—Peter Yearsley

A bard with a magical lute
 Cast a wall spell 'round a mean newt
 The newt had a bow
 And a javelin to throw
 Fortunately, he couldn't shoot!

—Jeremy C. Burrows

A wizard I'd be, were I brighter
 Or a fairy perhaps, were I lighter
 I can't swing a sword;
 With crossbows I'm bored:
 I'm a hero with bludgeon or mitre!

—Peter Yearsley

SA asked readers to work all night
 And send all the limericks they could write
 So here's one from me
 Hoping this will be
 The one that they'll print; well, they might!

—Peter J. Watts

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Look for these new games* from GDW:

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The Traveller Adventure

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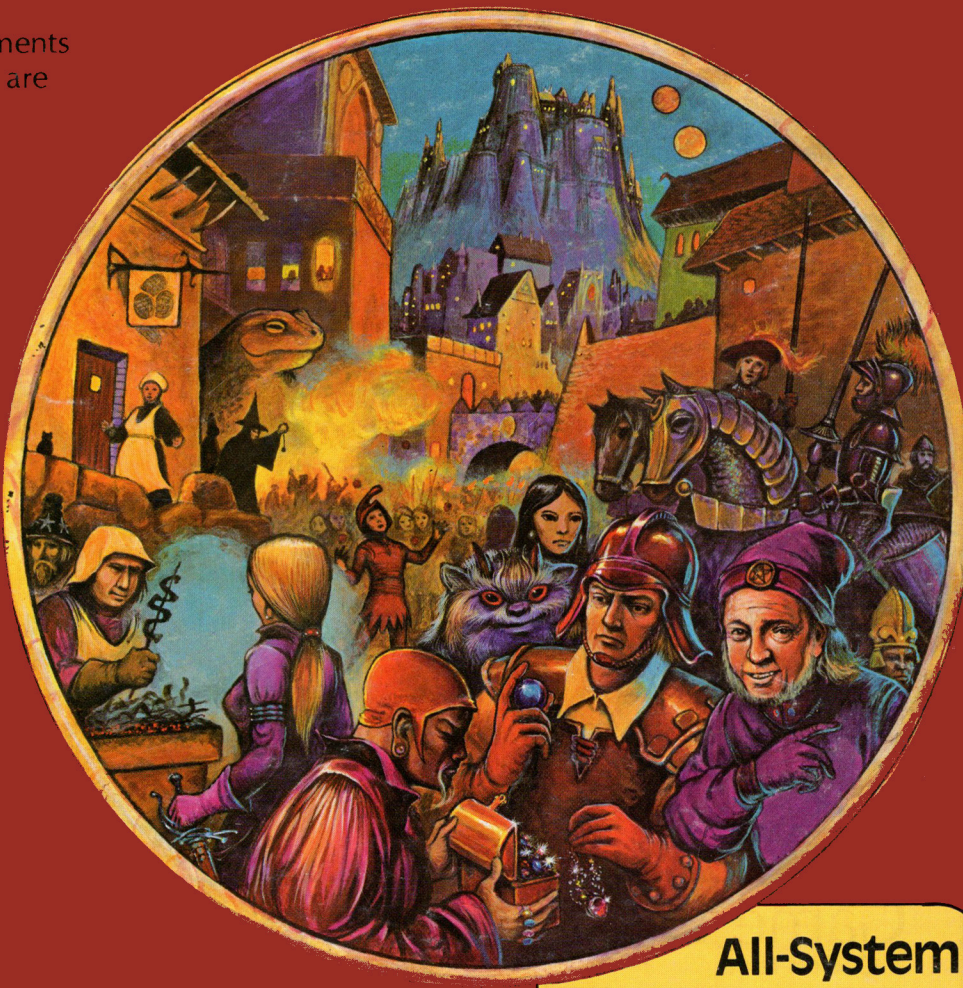
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