



## SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

ISSUE 16  
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### FICTION

Carrión Troll  
by Allen L. Wold

### FACT

Amazons of Antiquity  
by Janrae Frank  
Those Changers  
of Shape  
by Keith Taylor



### GAMING

Dramatic License in FRP  
by Mark Zutkoff

Rogues' Gallery: NPCs for MSPE  
by Michael Stackpole

Hot Pursuit: a T&T mini-solo set in Gull

PLUS OUR REGULAR FEATURES



# TROLL TALK

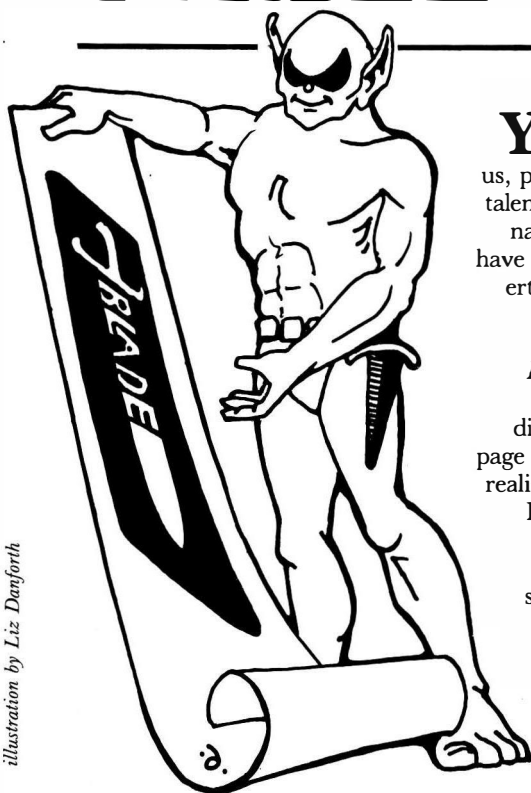


illustration by Liz Danforth

**Y**es, we're late. Again. Bear with us, please. And if you're talented, creative, good-natured, over 18, and have taken a vow of poverty (and play soccer), send me a resume!

**Blade** needs you! *Blade?* What's *Blade*?

We are — a longer discussion appears on page 22, but basically we realized a while ago that Flying Buffalo was 2 companies in one.

The play-by-mail side offers Starweb, Heroic Fantasy, and others. The game manufacturing side prints games: T&T, Nuclear

War, and the Catalyst series. We made the split official by birthing a division of Flying Buffalo: **Blade**. Watch us now — the games we produce will be sharper than ever! *[Did I really say that...?]*

You can see some of the change in this issue — "Sorcerer's Apprentice" is becoming just **SA** as we add material that isn't just fantasy. We added color to the interior some time ago and we hope to do more with it as time progresses. We've added a

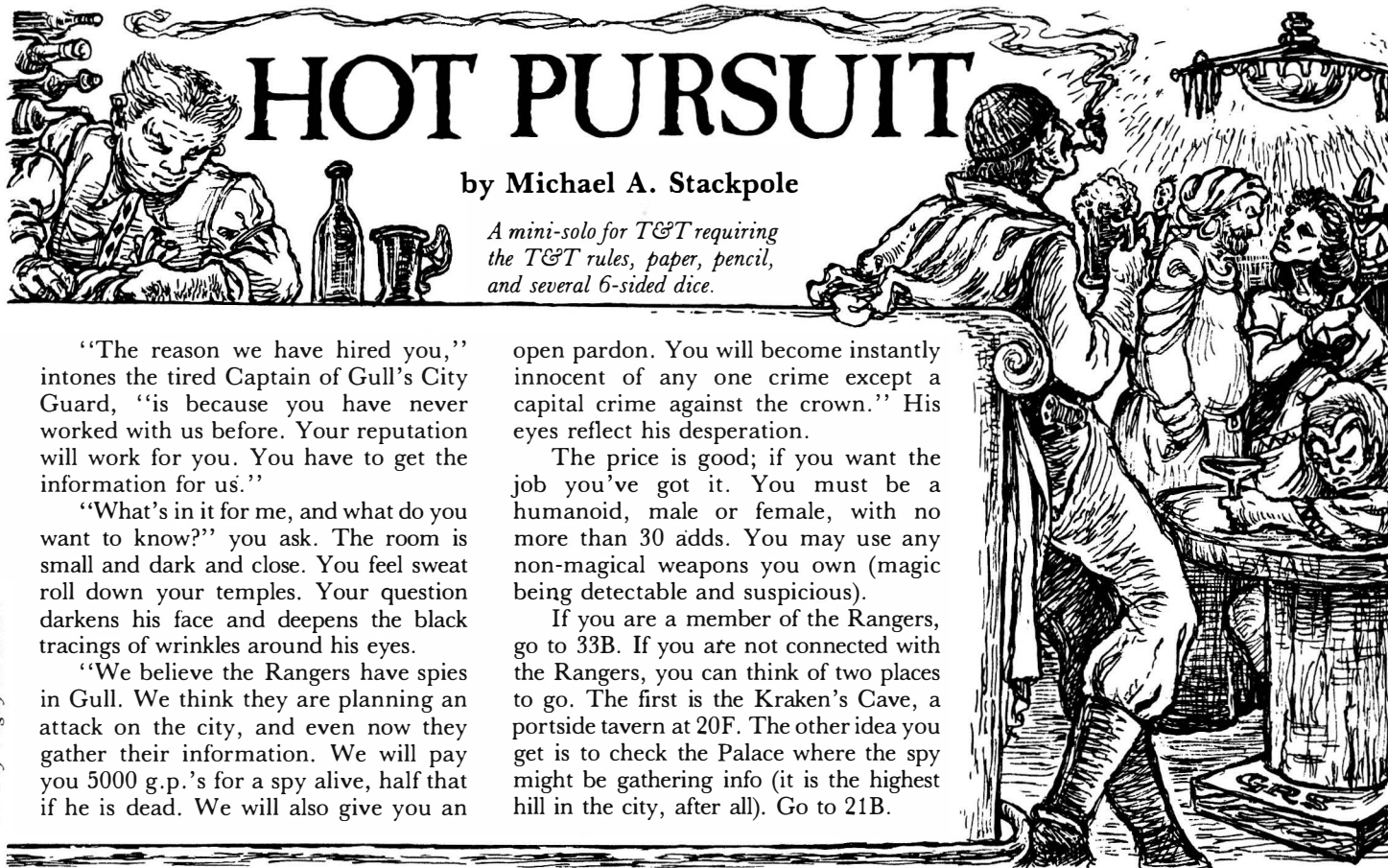
few more pages this issue, and we adjusted the interiors so there's more text on each page — more inside, for you. (If perchance you have trouble reading anything, *don't* see your optometrist, *do* write and tell me! Simple enough, okay?)

Coming next issue (which I hope you won't wait so long for!) you'll get a surprise and a delight — the issue will be an oversized one (but not a double issue like 9/10). It will include a *lot* of specific game material and as for the fiction . . . it will be the first Kane story from Karl Edward Wagner in 6 years! (Don't know the name? Why not? Ask your local bookseller for the novels *Bloodstone*, *Death Angel's Shadow*, and *Darkness Weaves*. They're well worth the effort!)

One final note: as with SA subscribers, our T&T solo dungeon subscribers receive copies somewhat erratically. With the solos we have an excuse: they aren't *supposed* to appear on any schedule. We produce solos when there's a good manuscript in hand. Your solo dungeon sub gets you the solos *as* they come out, *when* they come out. It's still worth dropping us a note if you've heard through "Arcane Graffiti" that a new solo has been released, but you haven't seen it — our friendly mailroom people will be happy to try to help you.

Grateful for your patience, I am gamefully yours . . .

*Liz Danforth*



## HOT PURSUIT

by Michael A. Stackpole

*A mini-solo for T&T requiring the T&T rules, paper, pencil, and several 6-sided dice.*

"The reason we have hired you," intones the tired Captain of Gull's City Guard, "is because you have never worked with us before. Your reputation will work for you. You have to get the information for us."

"What's in it for me, and what do you want to know?" you ask. The room is small and dark and close. You feel sweat roll down your temples. Your question darkens his face and deepens the black tracings of wrinkles around his eyes.

"We believe the Rangers have spies in Gull. We think they are planning an attack on the city, and even now they gather their information. We will pay you 5000 g.p.'s for a spy alive, half that if he is dead. We will also give you an

open pardon. You will become instantly innocent of any one crime except a capital crime against the crown." His eyes reflect his desperation.

The price is good; if you want the job you've got it. You must be a humanoid, male or female, with no more than 30 adds. You may use any non-magical weapons you own (magic being detectable and suspicious).

If you are a member of the Rangers, go to 33B. If you are not connected with the Rangers, you can think of two places to go. The first is the Kraken's Cave, a portside tavern at 20F. The other idea you get is to check the Palace where the spy might be gathering info (it is the highest hill in the city, after all). Go to 21B.

illustrations by Gregory R. Suriano





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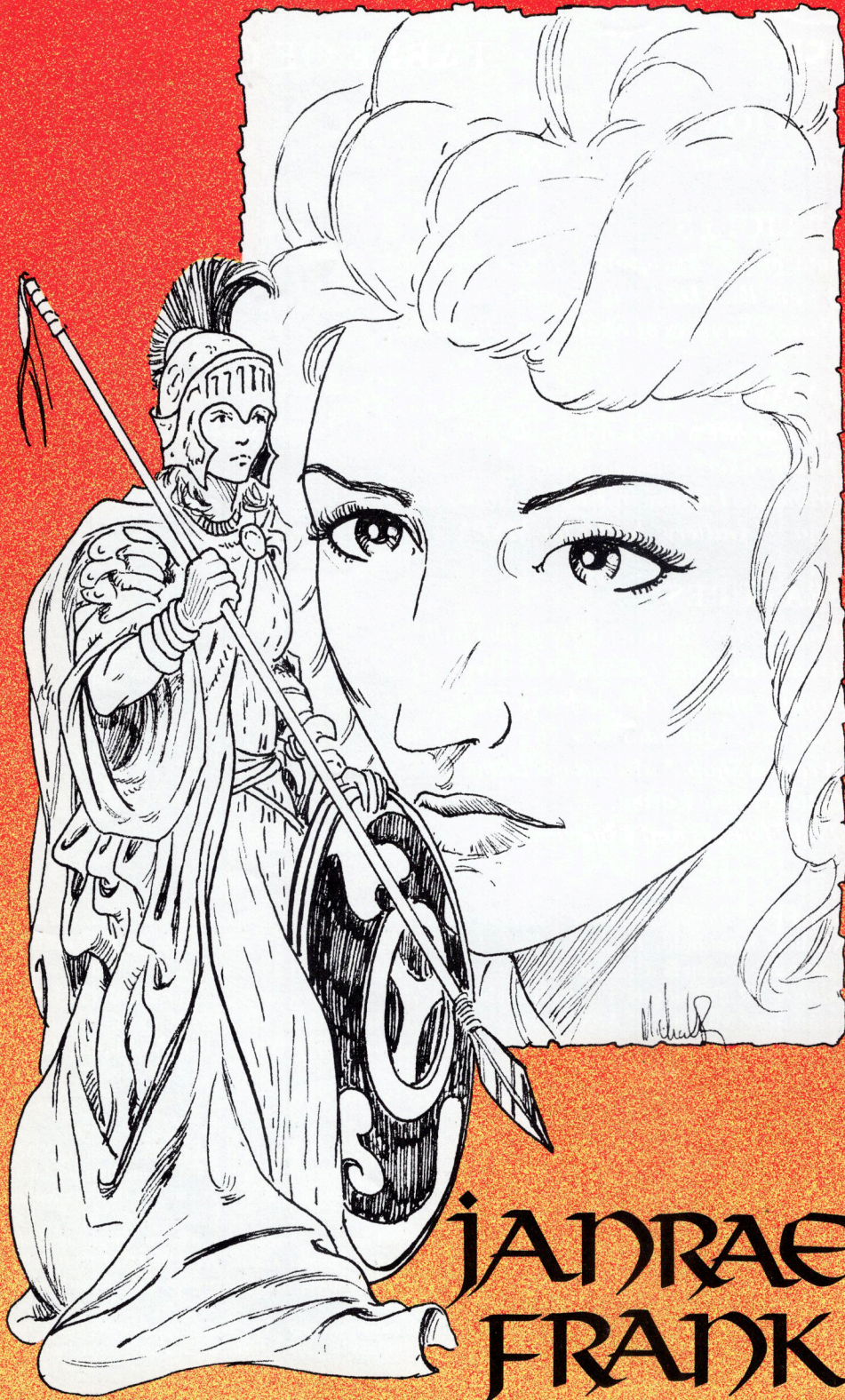
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# AMAZONS OF ANTIQUITY



illustrations by Michael R. Adams

Of the amazons of antiquity, more knowledge has been lost than has survived. What has survived are tantalizing fragments of legends and histories, myths that may be more allegory than anything else, and questions. Did they ever exist at all? Certainly there have been actual historical amazons, warrior-women such as Artemisia of Halicarnassus, Tomyris of the Massagatae (a Scythian tribe), and in the Medieval Japan there was Tomoe Gozen . . . and a multitude of others. But the amazons of Greece and Rome and their ancient world, those that originated with that name, brought the term "amazons" into being with their existence. Their reality will be forever disputed. Many people, myself included, would like to believe that every word written about them was gospel. Unfortunately that would mean being unrealistic in the extreme. And that I will not be accused of.

Joseph Cambell in *Myths to Live By* has, in Jungian fashion, suggested that myths exist to satisfy emotional needs, because they portray emotional and psychological truths which may differ from physical reality (creations myths, love goddesses and war gods, the eternal mother who nourishes us all). This doesn't explain amazons. Of course they may be an allegory for the defeat of the matriarchal original civilizations by patriarchal tribes and revolutionaries. That doesn't explain much beyond the legend of Perseus and Medusa, and they're not amazons (though the hero is reputed to have had a run in with those "ladies"). Now it could happen that an early aspiring novelist somewhere around 1000 B.C. invented them. On the other hand, there might be that proverbial mustard seed someplace at the bottom of the tales — history even. At this late date no one can say for sure — unless some fortunate archaeologist makes an astounding discovery.

Jacob Abbott, in his introduction to volume III of *The Makers of History: Cyrus the Great*, offers this:

The question how far the stories which Herodotus and

## JANRAE FRANK



Xenophon have told are true, is of less importance than one would at first imagine; for the case is one of those numerous instances in which the narrative itself, which genius has written, has had far greater influence on mankind than the events themselves exerted which the narrative professes to record . . . The events themselves have long penetrated into and colored the literature of every civilized people . . .

They transcend the events themselves with the power that is granted to legends. The same can certainly be said for the amazons whose legends and myths and bits of verifiable history has come down to us in the writings of Herodotus, Diodorus Sciculus, Appolonius Rhodius, Virgil and Ovid, and Quintus Smyrnaeus. These are the best and most extensive stories of the amazons in classical literature and history. Herodotus is famous as an "embellisher" of history; to some extent he polished small apples, so to speak. Modern historians don't trust him at all, the old scoundrel, and he is a major source for this article, so *caveat emptor*. At least one of these stories is pure myth, one of them is a literary work for which the author, Virgil, may or may not have had access to historical accounts that are no longer in existence (there were a lot of those), two are undeniably historical, and the rest is legend. Legends often have a bit of history in them, but that is for you to decide. These are the major stories from Homer's Greece to Imperial Rome, the oft-repeated ones in classical tomes.

• • •

Virgil sent Camilla thundering across the Plains of Latium at the head of her Volscian cavalry in the *Aeneid*. The mounted amazon with her spear and her bow, wearing Scythian trousers and tunic is the archetype most commonly depicted on the surviving bits of pottery and wall paintings of the Greeks. The amazons were primarily cavalry.

The use of cavalry as an ancient tactical unit had its ups and downs. It was the core unit of the Persian Empire circa 500 B.C., and they were essentially mounted archers. Marathon and Plataeae and Kunaxa, respectively 490 B.C., 479 B.C., and 410 B.C., saw the complete defeat of the cavalry units by the Greek footsoldiers (hoplites), and it wasn't until the mounted warriors of Philip of Macedonia defeated the Greeks at Chaeronea in 338 B.C. that

horse cavalry returned to favor.

In the *Aeneid* Camilla, impetuous and hot-headed, throws in her lot and that of her cavalry with the Latins against the invading Trojans under Aeneas . . . something she did not need to do since her realm was sufficiently distant as to preclude its being in any danger from them.

Camilla dreamt (in line with the rather primitive values of the time) of greatness on the battlefield and a warrior's name. She came to Latium in spite of many unfavorable omens and oracles, choosing to interpret them in a light that served her plans and desires.

She was a virgin, pledged in the service of the Goddess Diana to never surrender her chastity, and she carried a bow and a quiver of arrows which were given her by her divine patron. Her core group was composed of select warrior-women, but the main body of her warriors were male.

Camilla carried a sword, but relied mainly on her javelins and arrows, which are not close-quarters weapons. It must be noted that the swords may or may not have been bronze, a metal which was already losing its popularity as early as 1000 B.C. (the height of the Mycenaean civilization of Greece, the destroyers of Troy), and the Etruscans of Italy were working iron circa 800 B.C., possibly earlier.

The male warriors of Troy would have gladly ganged up and slain her to shatter her troop's morale. In those days, as in the European Middle Ages, a soldier's loyalty was to his leader and was not bound to continue in a war once their leader was slain. She was not as strong as many of the male warriors, mighty Trojan heroes that they were, and relied on the asset of the superior mobility her horse provided to carry her out of situations when she was in danger of becoming surrounded. Her favorite tactic was to send her horse leaping from a knot of enemy warriors, retreat a short distance, and then turn on her pursuers with javelins flashing. Javelins, thrown or thrust lance fashion from horseback, easily pierced the light armor of the period. In encounters with a man in mail or a heavy breastplate, she could aim with startling accuracy for the face, throat, or the leather protected area of the groin.

What confounded Camilla was her temper. At one point in the battle, a Trojan foot soldier dared her to fight him face to face, as an equal on foot, instead of from her horse. She promptly dismounted, and he stole her horse. Fleet of foot, she ran after him, snatched the reins, and hauled him back off,

finishing him with her sword. Swiftess was one attribute Camilla shared with the great warriors of the period such as Achilles, Aeneas, and Hector.

Her impetuosity ultimately defeated her. Raging enthusiastically among the foe, she spied a warrior-priest in magnificent golden armor and decided to kill him and seize it for her own glory (standard Greek and Roman operating procedure). Camilla angled eagerly toward him, oblivious to everything else, convinced, as all the heroes of antiquity seem to have been, of her own invincibility, and a treacherous hunter, turned warrior, struck her down from behind. If she had not been so eager, so consumed with chase and glory, she might have noticed him lurking nearby on the periphery of the conflict.

Virgil also recounts the acts of the amazonian demi-goddess Juturna in the *Aeneid*. She was trying to protect her brother, Turnus, from Aeneas, who (it had been prophesied) would slay him. Aeneas, who has come unscathed through myriad perils, is wounded by an arrow shot by Juturna from amid a crowd of Latins. Having failed to slay Aeneas, the goddess makes one last effort to save Turnus. Juturna assumes the likeness of her brother's charioteer and for most of the final battle prevents Turnus from reaching Aeneas to fight him. Eventually Turnus discovers the truth and banishes her from his chariot to ride to his doom at the hands of the Trojan prince.

Penthesilea may be a myth. Certainly Homer did not see fit to mention her in the *Iliad* though she is widely spoken of by other authors in varied tales and often hinted at as in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*:

How much better  
To have been killed outright by a manly woman  
Than womanish man, to have the Amazon,  
Penthesilea, whom he slew, been victor  
With her great battle-axe!

The Labrys, the double-bladed amazon axe, was most likely a cult weapon, one not generally used in other forms by the rest of the warriors of the period (the axe being a common weapon of the later Scandinavians). Quintus Smyrnaeus in his long poem about Penthesilea, which according to his contemporaries paraphrased heavily from a now long-lost Greek epic, has her favoring the heavy thrusting spear. Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths* (and whether she is a myth or a legend is anyone's guess) provides the easiest access to all the varied accounts of the amazon queen.

Penthesilea went to Troy with her



women to be purified of the accidental murder of her sister Antiope, Priam being the only person who could perform this task. There she was persuaded to enter the battle against the besieging Greeks (Mycenaeans). Quintus says that the amazons drove through the Greek ranks and reached their very ships before invulnerable Achilles and Patrocles halted the bloody rampage of Penthesilea and her shield-sisters. By other accounts she drove Achilles himself from the field several times before their final encounter. In all versions recorded, it was said she reaped a terrible harvest among the Greeks, slaying many important warriors before she herself was finally slain by Achilles. One writer goes so far as to claim that she actually slew Achilles and Zeus brought him back to life, whereupon he slew the mighty queen. Yet when he had slain her and removed her helmet as a trophy, he saw how beautiful she was and wept.

• • •

Herodotus has come to the conclusion that there were in fact *two* heroes named Herakles, and that one of them came from Egypt long before the son of Amphytron and Semele was born



**6A** "We thrashed them scurvy Rangers more than a score of years ago, and the Death Witch beat 'em after that. Them dogs is as tough as sea foam!" you growl. Over the edge of your tankard of ale (someone has just bought you a drink for that), you study the crowd. A fat merchant man looks nervous while a dark-haired ruffian scowls in your direction and stalks out of the bar. If you wish to follow him, go to 38A. If you wish to seat yourself next to the merchant, go to 21C.

**6B** The blow takes him by surprise and knocks him out. Suddenly you are surrounded by City Guardsmen who hustle the two of you off. The Captain appears and congratulates you on a successful venture. The man you hit was a spy, worth 5000 g.p.'s to you. You get 300 e.p.'s for the adventure. You are done.



in Greece. Certainly the tale of how the brawny Greek hero gained the belt of Hippolyta, the amazon queen, is generally regarded as pure myth — possibly intended as an allegory for the transition of matriarchal to patriarchal civilization — it is also the most famous amazon story, in part because the twelve labors of Herakles is the most widely known and reproduced in movies and print of the Greek myths, and this account leads into another tale mentioned later.

An assault upon the amazons is traditional fare for all Greek heroes: Bellerophon, Perseus, Theseus, Bacchus, *et al.* It is unlikely that these heroes' purported mass slaughters of the warrior-women, the daughters of the war god Ares, are true since the amazons would have been decimated long before recorded history by just a few of these legendary confrontations and never have survived to fight the later battles that figure so prominently in literature, legend, and myth. Alexander the Great encountered a tribe of amazons that offered him a large number of skilled cavalry to aid in his conquests, but he declined to accept them on the grounds that rivalries and jealousies among his men would be provoked by the mere presence of women in their ranks.

Now where was I? Oh yes, Herakles and Hippolyta. There were three cities on the river Thermoden, each ruled individually by Hippolyta, Antiope, and Melanippe. Herakles anchored in the mouth of the Thermoden River and Hippolyta, trusting his reputation for honor implicitly, visited him aboard his ship. She was immediately smitten with a strong physical attraction for the brawny Greek hero — so much so that she offered him the sacred girdle of Ares as a love gift. But Hera, Zeus' cuckolded wife and Herakles worst enemy, deluded the amazons into believing that Herakles was in fact kidnapping their queen. They attacked his ship while Hippolyta was aboard. Thinking this to be a deliberate

treachery, the giant Greek slew the queen, took her belt and axe by force, then slaughtered the assailing amazon army. And that is the most commonly recounted version in books on Greek mythology.

• • •

Thermoden was most likely a trading city on the river mouth, much like other cities of its time. And the question will always remain as to whether the amazons were simply matriarchal with both male and female warriors but only female leadership, or whether they might have been cults of warrior-priestesses that were extant well into Roman times. Mary Renault, scholar as well as author, postulates in the historical notes in the back of *The Bull From the Sea* as well as in the text of the novel itself that they were actually a small sub-culture of maidens dedicated to Artemis by their parents (as sacrifices for good crops and such) and that the word amazon meant not *one-breast* (they were said to sear off one breast in girlhood to facilitate archery) but *moon-maiden* as worshippers of the virginal goddess of the moon and the hunt, divine Artemis. The amazons allied with the Scythians when they assailed Athens.

Probably the single most important amazon military campaign of the period is the war with the Greeks. The largest of the three cities was Themiscyra. As was made clear in the legend of Herakles, the amazons appreciated good looks in men, and they were delighted when Theseus arrived with his handsome sailors. Antiope, Queen of Themiscyra, visited Theseus' camp often during the months that the Athenians remained on their shores. Several Athenian youths fell madly in love with her, but she cared only for Theseus. One of the young men, despairing of her love, drowned himself in the Thermoden River. This prompted Theseus' decision to return home . . . taking Antiope with him.

Whether Antiope went willingly out



of love for Theseus or not, the amazons perceived this as an abduction. This parallels Hippolyta's story and suggests that one inspired the other, though it seems rather a chicken and the egg question of which came first. Oreithyia, Antiope's sister, concluded an alliance with Scythia and prepared to invade Greece. The legions of Themiscyra crossed the ice of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, forded the Danube, then rode on through Thrace, Thessaly, and Boeotia. Those realms could not have felt entirely comfortable with such a large, formidable force passing through their lands, and there must have been skirmishes of which no record remains today. Oreithyia camped at last on a plain near Athens. From there she dispatched an invasion force into Laconia to prevent any reinforcements reaching Theseus from the Peloponnesian isthmus.

The amazons breeched the walls of Athens and cut the city in half. Theseus' right-wing attacked their left and was routed in furious fighting. However, the Athenian left-wing was able to drive the amazon right-wing back to their camp, inflicting heavy casualties. The war lasted four months, at the end of which time the amazons offered peace terms, and the Athenians accepted them. The amazons were allowed to withdraw without further hostilities. They settled in Scythia, rather than return home in ignominious defeat. The detachment returning from the invasion of Laconia was turned back at the isthmus, and so ended the amazon invasion of Greece.

If, indeed, the amazons did actually invade Athens, then what probably defeated them, ultimately, was the same problem that all would-be conquerers encounter: their supply-lines grew too long to effectively support a prolonged campaign, while the Athenians were on their own lands with resources and reinforcements close at hand. The reason the Romans could conquer and hold so great an empire was that they acquired it kingdom by kingdom, taking the time to consolidate each new holding before acquiring the next.

Antiope's fate? It is told two ways. One version says she was slain by her own people, shot down by her own shield-sister, Molpaida, for fighting at Theseus' side in the war. Mary Renault favors this one in *The Bull from the Sea*. But the more likely tale is the one that connects back up with Penthesilea's story. Antiope, jealous because she had been set aside by Theseus in favor of Phaedra, gathered her kinswomen and burst in on the wedding festivities, threatening to massacre the guests. She was slain by

Theseus in a grim combat to the death between these two former lovers.

• • •

Our old friend Herodotus offers us these final tales as being historical. Sauromatae, the fabled kingdom on the borders of Scythia, whose warrior men and women lived as equals, began when Herakles stole the girdle of Hippolyta, the amazon queen. He captured as many amazons as could be taken alive, reducing Themiscyra to ashes and rubble. His captives were divided between three ships. On one ship the amazons got loose and massacred every last man on board, but not being a seafaring race, they had no knowledge of rudder or sails, and the boat — at the mercy of the wind and wave — ran aground far from home. This land belonged to a race of free Scythians, a nomadic people who lived in wagons. Their lifestyle of hunting and plundering was very similar to that of the Themiscyrans.

The amazons came upon a herd of grazing horses (whether these were wild or Scythian horses is never made clear), and seizing them, set out to raid the countryside. At first the Scythians were bewildered by these swift, daring raiders and were unable to discover where they came from. But inevitably some of the amazons were slain in battling the defenders; needless to say the Scythians were startled to learn that their attackers were women. It changed the tactics they used considerably.

A detachment of the Scythians youngest and handsomest men were selected (perhaps a voluntary duty). They set up camp near the amazons. At first the amazons pursued them, but the men offered them no resistance and didn't fight back; instead they gave ground and fled, only to return later and camp nearby once again. When the amazons saw that the males seemed to mean no harm, they ceased to molest them. Every day the two camps drew closer together, both living the same kind of life: hunting and plundering.

The young men, discovering the amazons went off in twos and threes to ease themselves at midday, began to spend time in a similar manner. One day a Scythian encountered a lone amazon and initiated a series of sexual overtures. This pleased the young warrior woman so much that when they had sated themselves she suggested that he bring along a friend for her friend the next day. Gradually the amazons paired off with the Scythians — making love was much more pleasant than making war.

The men could never master the intricacies of the amazon language, but the women quickly learned the Scythian tongue. Eventually the Scythians asked the amazons to go home with them and be their wives, promising to take no others (unusual at the time). But the Themiscyrans refused. They could see no sense in submitting to the subservient role of the nomad woman. And if they had to choose between freedom and their newfound mates, they would choose freedom. Instead the amazons suggested the men should come away with them and they could found a new land together. This seemed a sensible solution and, after much discussion, that was what they did. Sauromatae was the result.

The women of Sauromatae rode to the hunt with and without their men, they kept the old amazon ways through all their generations and dressed in the same manner as their men. Their marriage laws even forbade women to marry until they had brought home the head of a slain foe.

• • •

Tomyris, Queen of the Massagetae, may have killed Cyrus the Great in an actual historical encounter. The Massagetae were a peaceful folk at the



**7A** As you stoop over him, you notice two things. The first is that his throat has been torn up by the garotte used by the spy, but he is still breathing, barely. The second thing you notice is a bunch of guards who have come up and are surrounding you. If you wish to kneel and try to revive the guard with some first aid or a *Poor Baby* spell, go to 40A. If you run off to pursue the spy, go to 28E. If you stand and try to command the guards to go after the spy with you, go to 34A.

**7B** The loyal citizens assembled in the bar decide they do not like your political stance. They gather together and throw you, bodily, out of the tavern. They threaten to kill you if you ever return. Your cover has been blown, you are known as a Ranger sympathizer, and no Ranger would ever come near you. This adventure has been worth 100 e.p.'s, though no gold. Better luck next time . . .



time that Cyrus was marching across Asia with his Persian army intent on conquering a world. The widowed Queen sent him a message when he was camped on her borders: "King of the Medes [Persians], I advise you to abandon this enterprise, for you cannot know if in the end it will do you any good. Rule your own people, and try to bear the sight of me ruling mine. But of course you will refuse my advice, as the last thing you wish for is to live in peace."

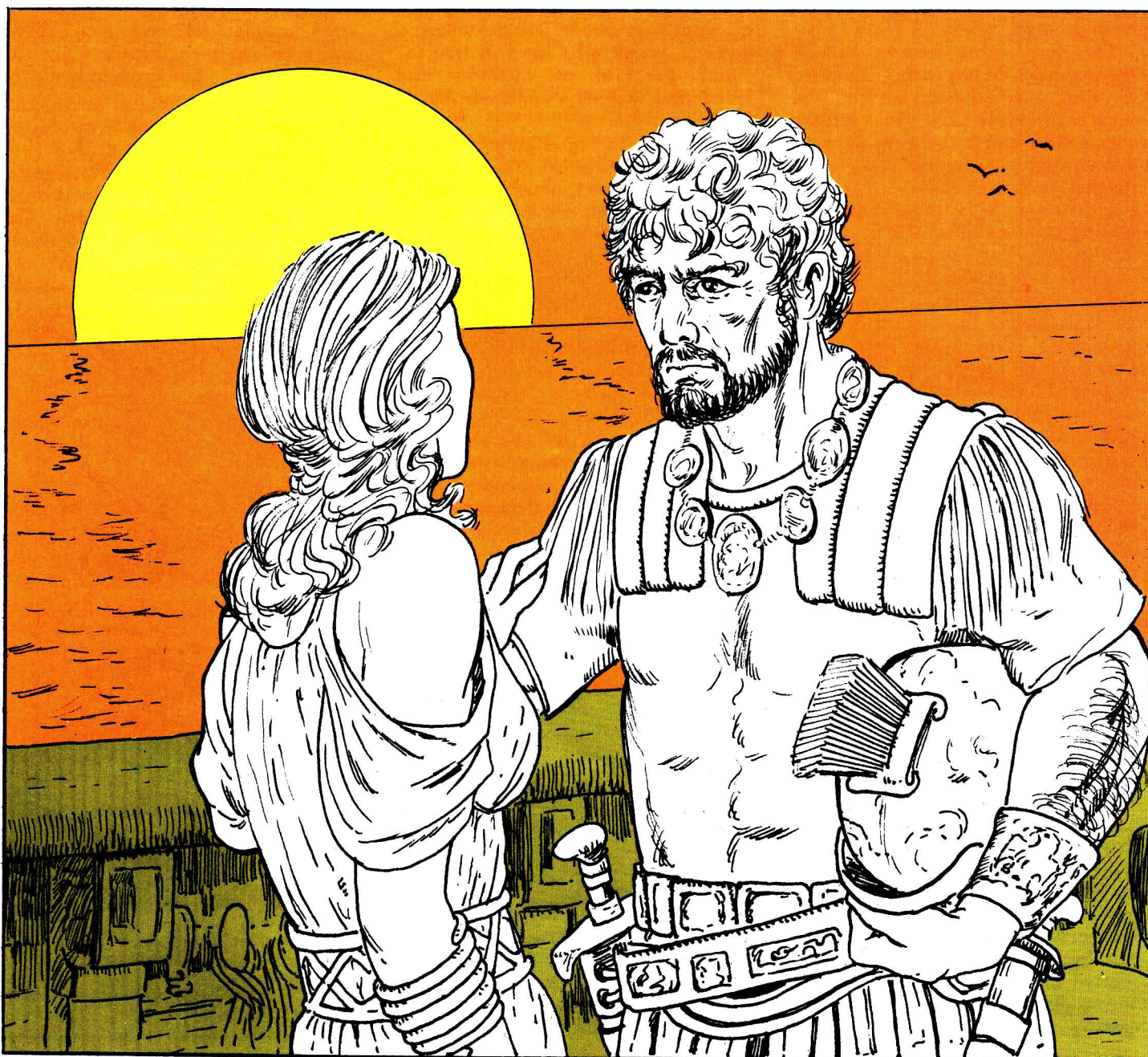
Cyrus crossed the river-border and entered her lands though she warned him that he would be strongly opposed. He made camp and prepared a great feast in his tents, then when the Massagetae attacked he retreated, abandoning the wine and meat to them. He waited and watched for the soldiers of the Massagetae under the leadership of

Tomyris' son to enjoy the fruits of their easy victory. By dawn the soldiers were all drunk and satiated. At that point Cyrus returned to take advantage of his clever ploy. He captured Tomyris' son.

The great queen warned him to release the young man, but it was already too late; fearing torture, her son had slain himself. Tomyris' wrath was terrible. She promised Cyrus that she would fill his throat with more blood than even his gluttony could tolerate. She made good her promise, overwhelming Cyrus' army and shoving the King of the Medes' head in a bucket of blood — whether he was already dead or not is not certain. She may well have drowned him in blood.

Darius succeeded Cyrus and in turn passed the sceptre of Persia to Xerxes. One of Xerxes' primary advisors was the

Queen of Halicarnassus, Artemisia. Her actions at Euboea were "surpassed by none" though it is not specified whether those actions took place during the terrible storm which destroyed much of the Persian fleet at Euboea or in the battle that followed. She warned Xerxes that the Athenians were invincible at sea, and advised him that they could only be defeated by an overland assault. Nevertheless, when Xerxes ordered her to take his navy into the Bay of Salamis to fight the Athenians, she obeyed. The battle went swiftly against the Persians, their heavy multi-national barges moved less quickly and with less maneuverability than the Greek crafts. Only one Persian ship escaped: the ship that carried Artemisia. Finding her way blocked by one of her own ships, she ordered it rammed and managed to break out of the





bottleneck of Salamis Bay.

Herodotus spoke of Artemisia with great pride. He was from Halicarnassus. With his tendency toward embroidery and the fact that his travels were financed by his writing (so therefore it had to be interesting when he brought back his "histories" to Greece), he may have emphasized and favored his queen beyond the actual facts.

• • •

The woman warrior is not a modern phenomenon. The amazons of Dahomey gave the French Foreign Legion some of their worst moments in Africa. The Etruscans had a love for something they called "feminine audacity" and Rome was layered over their civilization. It is, perhaps, from them that the Roman women inherited their social freedoms which went so far beyond anything that Greek women enjoyed. It even suggests that with such an emphasis on feminine audacity among the Etruscans or among some ancient contemporaries of theirs there may indeed have been Camillas and Tomyris and others.

But far beyond the importance of whether or not there actually existed these women, as John Abbot says of

Cyrus the Great, it is the power of the legends and not the outcome of the battles that continues to affect our society. And so, where does the importance lie? Our country is not, as Athens was, in danger of imminent invasion from the Themiscyrians. Penthesilea will not soon be chasing Ronald Reagan up the White House steps — or will she? The amazons pervade our literature, fiction and non-fiction; they reincarnate again and again. Is the question of their possible reality in history or as historical personages pre-eminent? You might as well ask where is the importance of Robin Hood or King Arthur — reality or legend? If tomorrow it was proved beyond the shadow of any possible doubt that no one inspired those legends, that there is no history behind the dream, would we cease to love King Arthur, or Robin Hood . . . or the amazons? Would they loose that deeply personal reality for those of us who are not afraid to dream? Would they no longer influence our thoughts and our literature — and yes, our gaming? King Arthur will remain forever King Arthur, the king who sought a better way for all men. Robin Hood will remain Robin Hood, robbing the rich to

feed the poor. And the amazons will forever be there: for little and not-so-little tomboys to dream of, for men to dream of seducing as the Scythians did, for writers to write of, and for Gamemasters to place in the imaginary woodlands, castles, and towns of the games and campaigns everywhere.

• • •

#### Recommended Reading:

Most of my sources are cited in the text. If you read the *Aeneid*, the Humphries translation is the easiest to come by being periodically reissued in trade paperback and it is the most readable by far, though the Dryden translation isn't bad either. For tactics and weapons, *Warriors and Weapons of Early Times* by Niels M. Saxtorph, (Macmillan, 1972) is a nice little book, extensively documented and illustrated — translated from Danish. Also, *A Military History of the Western World* by Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, 1954, Funk & Wagnalls Company. You might find this one in a library or if fortune favors (as it did with me) discover it in a good second-hand bookstore. Herodotus, *The Histories and The Persian Wars*. No special translation. Quintus Smyrnaeus will be hard to find, except possibly in a university library (or second-hand bookstore with really great luck). Ovid, *The Metamorphosis*, Humphries translation. Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths*. A good secondary source for amazon-hunting is Elizabeth Gould Davis, *The First Sex*, extensively documented. ■

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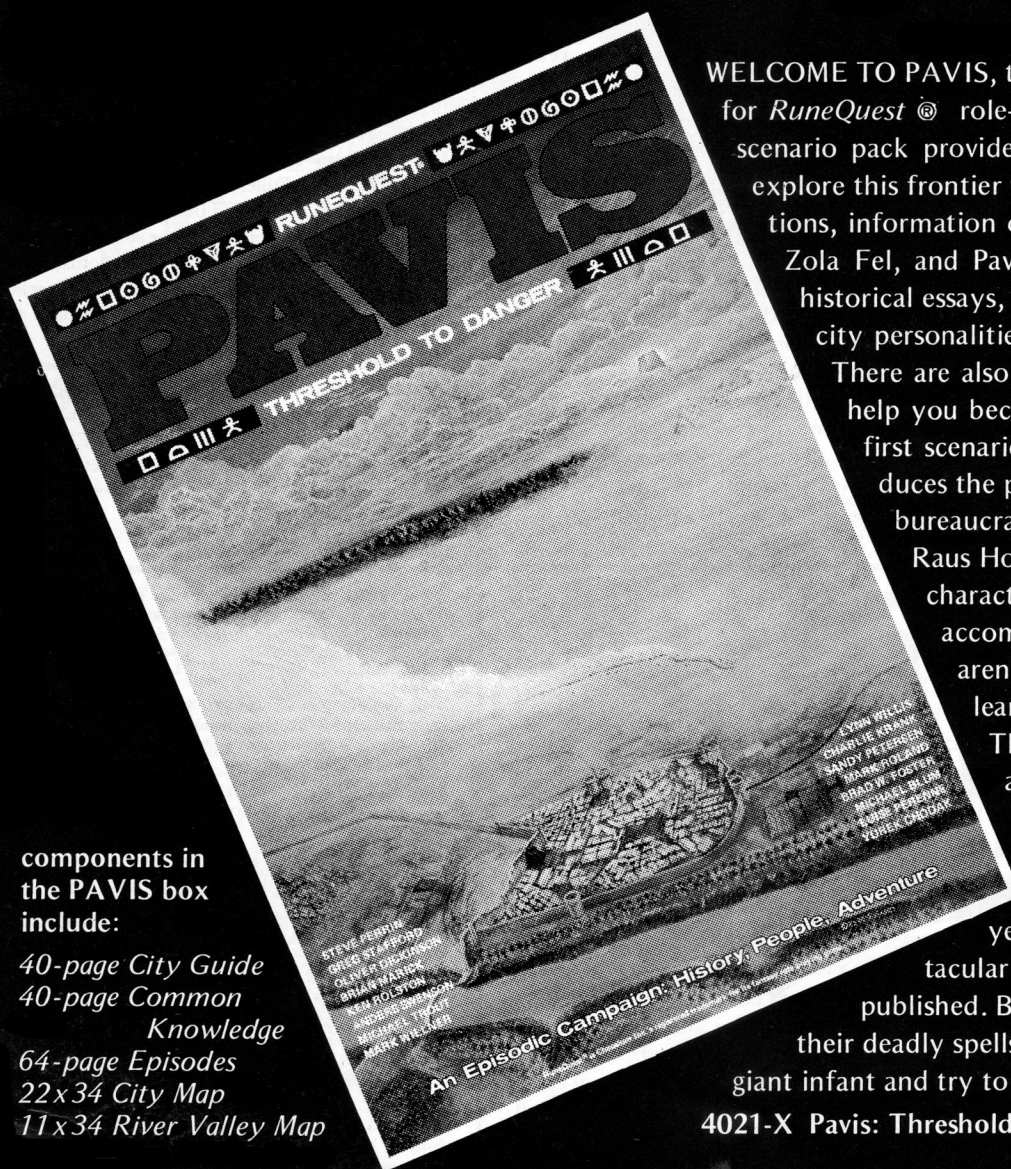
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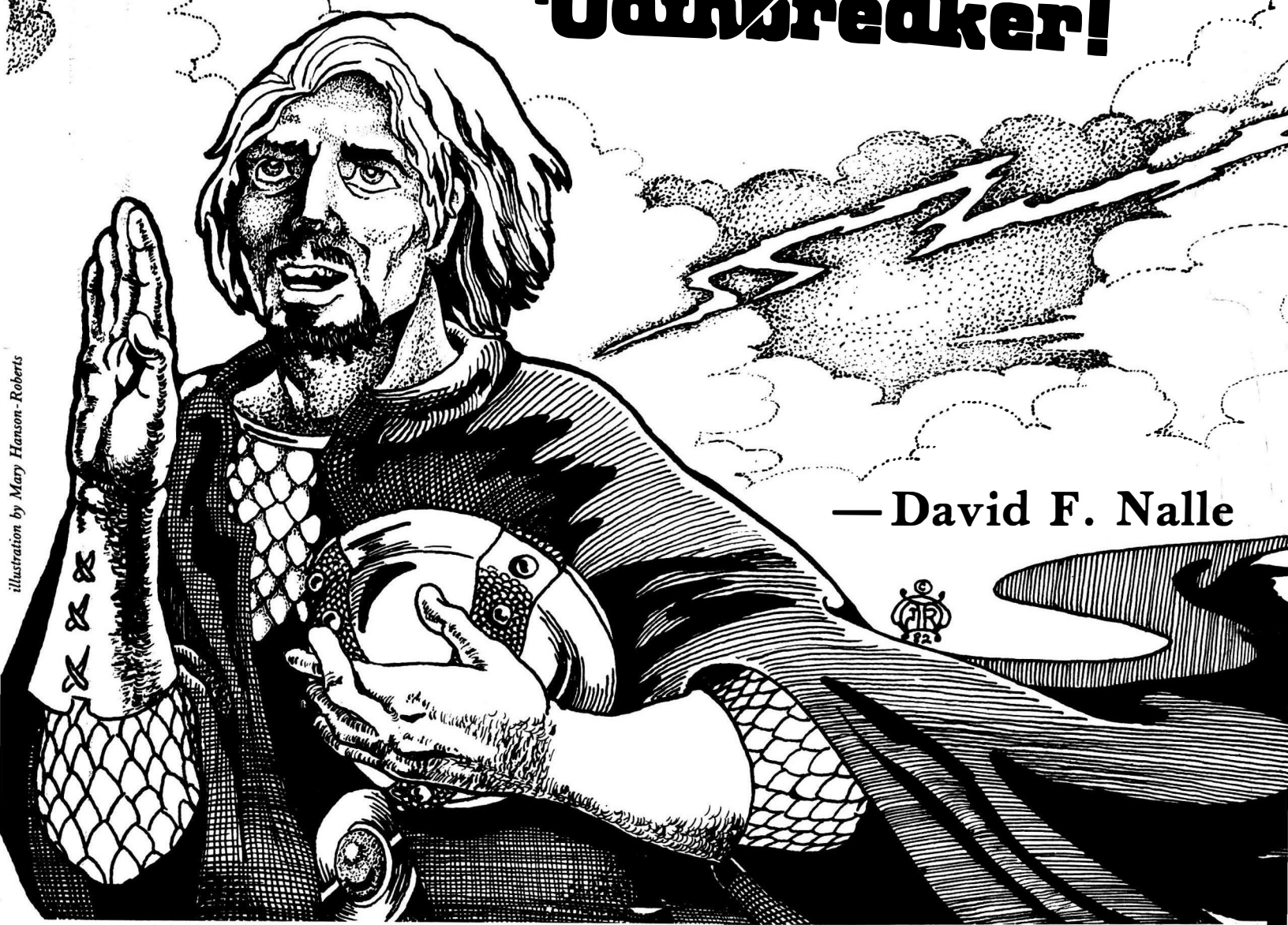
WRITE FOR OUR FREE CATALOG.



# Oathbreaker!

— David F. Nalle

illustration by Mary Hanson-Roberts



In many fantasy campaigns, little use is made of religion as a limiting and controlling factor. In our world, religion can only affect our actions through our conscience and morals; the only power which modern religions have over us is in our minds and through our faith. A fantasy world can be very different. In your campaign, gods can be real — often more real than the players might like. The power of local deities might be pervasive, changing the flow of events on an adventure and forcing the characters into unexpected courses of action.

One of the simplest and most logical ways to bring gods into play is through oaths. In European legend and literature, an oath had a cosmic power. When a man entered into a bargain and swore by a god to do something, the god usually felt that his reputation was involved; he saw to it that the oath was fulfilled or the oathbreaker was very, very sorry. This form of voluntary deity invocation can

be a great aid to a GM in keeping his world from getting out of hand, especially since the characters bring their troubles on themselves.

In many campaigns, the GM will be dismayed by the way players abuse the faith of the other inhabitants of the world. Players tend to act with shameful opportunism, advancing their characters with little regard for bargains, promises, or contracts. They often walk all over the people of the world — because they probably aren't responsible to any authority outside the context of an adventure (and it may not be worth the GM's time and effort to prosecute such offenders). Other characters in a world cannot exist outside of the law with the ease that players do. This situation can be very frustrating for the GM who sees his carefully-created characters repeatedly abused and bilked by players.

The oath is a symbol of an honorable agreement between two people. In some

societies, a person who broke his oath was cast out of his tribe or family. In some cases, oathbreakers were even outlawed and declared fair game to be killed on sight. At the least, an oathbreaker would be shunned and mistrusted.

In a world where religion is prominent, swearing an oath by a god makes that deity a party to the oath, sort of an arbiter and witness. Thus, it falls to him to see that the oath is kept. In most cases a man would swear by his god (unless he was asked to swear by a god more appropriate to the situation). In either case, the deity would take a personal interest in the oath and its outcome.

As GM, you can easily take advantage of oaths. When a player makes a deal — say, to perform a task for a local lord — have him swear by his god to fulfill certain conditions. Then, in the course of his task, he will probably meet a temptation to betray his oath. If he gives in to self-interest and is foreshorn,



it's time for you to have fun. Not only has the lord been betrayed, but the god has also been offended. A lord's power is temporal and may not reach very far in the earthly realm — but a god has greater forces and range at his command, and could make life very unpleasant.

A god can take vengeance in any number of ways. Just what he would do should vary according to the magnitude of the breach of faith and any mitigating circumstances. It is also essential to consider what best serves the deity's own interests in the situation and what uses he has for the traitorous player. The gods are often more volatile than other beings, and their powers are many — so their reactions and sensitivities may be hard to predict.

Typical results of oathbreaking resemble the effects of curses, though they are usually more subtle and far-reaching. Such effects are often related to the nature of the crime. If a man stole the crown of a king to whom he had sworn fealty, he might be afflicted by a headache which felt like a burning crown. The punishment might also vary according to the powers of the god involved. Such things as withered limbs, madness, haunting, disease, or blindness are common curses.

A player should be able to atone for his

crime in an appropriate way. Restitution and apology might satisfy the victim, but it will not be enough to please the god (as the player has lost a fraction of his deity's respect). To square things with a deity, the player might have to do something to aid him or add to his prestige: embarking on a holy quest, establishing a new temple, or some form of service appropriate to the nature and needs of the deity and his church.

It may not be easy to get a character to swear an oath right off. You should not make it seem to be out of the ordinary when you first introduce the idea. If you put the oath in an appropriate situation, you can make it look like the natural thing to do. Trying to con a player into making a spontaneous and foolhardy oath of vengeance on a foe will probably not work, but such things as contractual oaths and oaths of fealty are natural in a medieval context. Once you have carefully introduced the idea of oaths, good role-players may start making them rashly as the spirit takes them.

A character who has frequently fore-sworn his oaths should begin to lose credibility both with his god and with the other inhabitants of the world. Punishment might become more radical, and people would begin to mistrust him. This might

take the extreme form of a "Mark of Cain," which would result in others shunning him because of his clear state of disfavor with the gods. Those who aid the severely accursed run the risk of drawing the god's wrath upon themselves.

The greatest responsibilities in an oath situation rest on the GM. He must keep good records, and know how far he can safely go in punishing a player. It requires an awareness of the interrelationships between players and characters, and a complete understanding of the world, religion, and society. The GM must be able to make decisions and stick by them, but consider them well enough so that he maintains a fair balance. A good GM cannot afford to get carried away in favor of the world he has created. To some degree, players must be allowed to prey on the NPC's of a world — but they should not be allowed to flagrantly bully them.

Oaths are an ideal method of introducing a controlling factor — religion — into your campaign. They can create a situation where your world is more challenging, adding a new facet to the challenge which each player faces. This will create a heightened awareness in your players and encourage interaction with the campaign world, while keeping events more balanced and realistic. ■

Recently we had a bunch of merchandise returned to us by a Canadian distributor who is going out of business. Unfortunately, a lot of it is unsaleable because it is either out of date (there is a more recent version) or it has scuffed or torn covers (still quite readable and useable, of course). We can't expect one of our customers to pay full price for these, but if you don't mind a non-color cover, a tear or scuff-mark, you can save a lot of money.

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*The following solo Adventures are in good shape, they just have the old style covers (two colors instead of full color):*

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Deathtrap Equalizer	3.95	2.95
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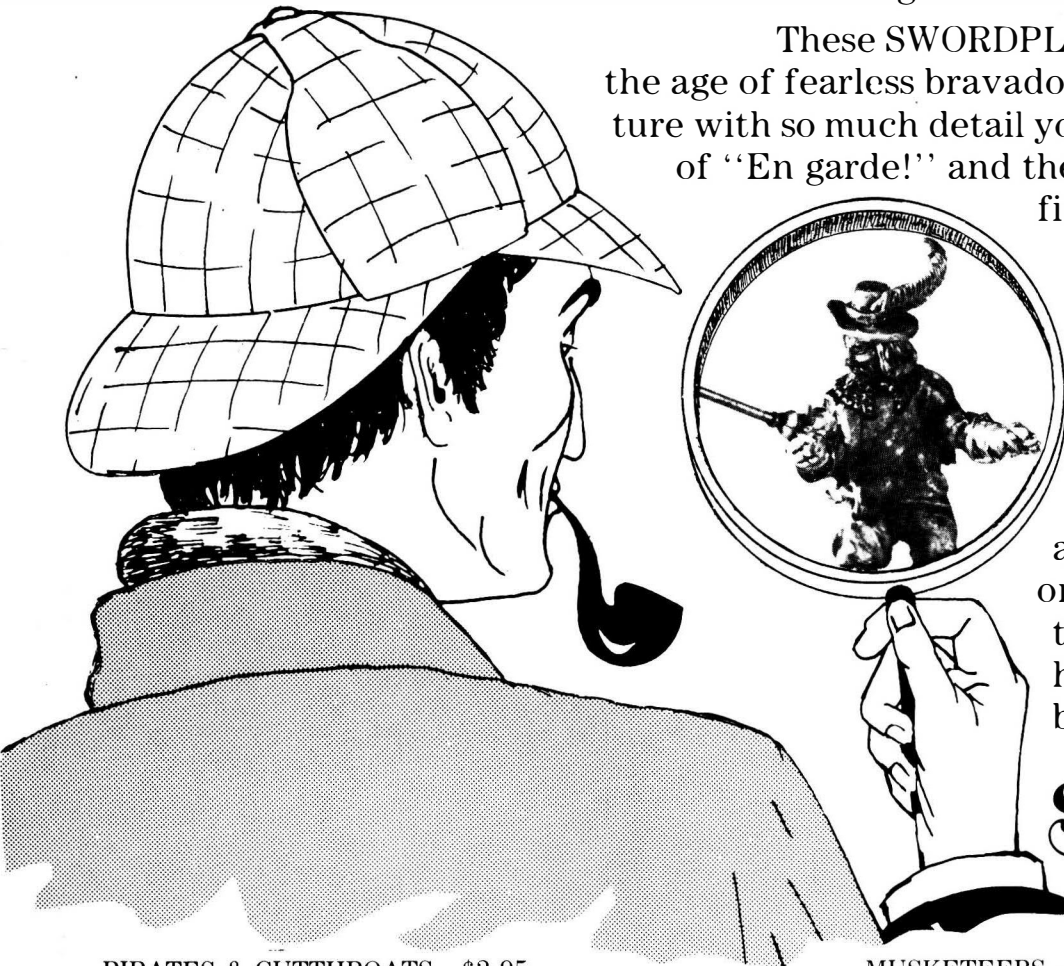
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# Arcane Graffiti

## - news, clues and reviews

### - MICHAEL STACKPOLE

News for the fantasy and gaming world: upcoming events, club announcements, the latest games and playing aids, and 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 and review material to: Michael Stackpole/Arcane Graffiti, c/o BLADE, PO Box 1210, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

This edition of Arcane Graffiti is being written in mid-April. This is the second version of this column because the first became very out of date. The delay in SA, caused by the work of bringing out *Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes*, dated the first version. Some of the things I had planned to cover have been deleted because they will be horribly old hat by the time you read this.

As you can read on page 22, Flying Buffalo Inc. has christened its game division **Blade**. Blade managed to release three products before Christmas. **The Complete Dungeon of the Bear** brings together all three levels of the original Dungeon of the Bear with Castle Ward. It has a new cover by Chris Carlson, and the interior work of the booklet was split between Liz Danforth, Rob Carver, and Steve Crompton. **Gamesmen of Kasar** is Roy Cram's latest solo for T&T. The cover artwork is by Jim Talbot, now with Avalon Hill, and the interiors are by Douglas Herring. It is a good solo adventure. Last but certainly not least is **Grimtooth's Traps Too**. This second collection of delver-stoppers is moving faster than rumors about SPI — and with good cause. The artwork is better than in the first trap book, and the 101st and 102nd traps are very engrossing.

**Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes** premiered at the end of April — a bit later than planned, but worth the wait. Brian Hamilton's cover is nothing short of brilliant, and the interior illustrations by Michael Kucharski really bring life to the pages. The text is much more than 'guns for T&T' and one playtester

noted that the section on scenario design was the best discussion of design he'd seen. **The Adventure of the Jade Jaguar** is the first solo adventure for MSPE. It comes provided with rules and statistics for **Espionage!** by George MacDonald of Hero Games (see below). The cover is by Liz Danforth and the interior illustrations are by Michael Adams. I wrote both MSPE and Jade Jaguar, and I hope you will enjoy them.

Hero Games (92-A 21st Ave., San Mateo, CA 94402) has released **Champions II**, an addition to their popular Champions superhero role playing game. It covers new skills, powers, and disadvantages, and a host of other things to make controlling your evil conspiracies much easier. Throughout, it has helpful suggestions for ways of playing economically. It is quite good.

Hero Games has also released **Espionage!** This game is similar in system to Champions, but deals with spy agencies, concentrating on the CIA. **Espionage!** comes in a box with rules, dice, and *Merchants of Terror*, a series of three adventures to play. The product is well put together and a snap to master for anyone who has enjoyed the Champions system.

Blade and Hero have agreed to cross-stat our MSPE and **Espionage!** adventures so there will be more to do for each game. Both companies hope this cooperation will help players get more for their money from the adventures they buy, while it frees us to do adventures that do not cover the same turf. Let all of us know what you think of this idea!

Boardcraft Simulations, Inc. (PO Box 23256, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523) presents **Village Paths** and **Castle Paths**. Each set includes 12 double-sided "tiles" of different sizes which have village or castle scenes and places on them. The perspective is from above, as if you were looking down into the room, hallway, or what-have-you. Also included are character counters, numbered chits, a copy of Chaosium's Basic Role Playing, and a unique adventure for each set. The tiles are well produced and can lend a great deal to an adventure. They would work very well if a GM designed an adventure based on the tiles, so the features in each room would actually be what the characters would find. If you are in the market for playing aids, you could do much worse than these. Check them out!

Douglas Herring (PO Box 7, Whitmore, CA 96096) has produced **The Book of Swords and Other Magical Weapons**. It is a digest-sized booklet with beautifully-reproduced illustrations and descriptions of magical weapons. They are mostly given in statistics for D&D™, but the descriptions and pictures are sharp enough to make a translation into another game system worth the effort. Doug also offers hand-colored prints of some of the weapons. Contact him for prices.

The Dragon Tree (118 Sayles Blvd., Abilene, TX 79605) has produced a full line of GM playing aids. **The Handbook of Traps and Tricks** is a 100-page digest-sized booklet full of tricks, traps, and general advice to dungeon masters. The handbook is full of interesting and wise advice for GMs, and is well worth looking into. **The Book of Artifacts** is a compendium of well thought-out treasures for FRP game use. While the weapons appear to be statted for D&D, the advice presented for constructing magical items at the beginning of the work outweighs this problem, in my opinion. **Amazon Mutual Wants You!** and **Monster File #1** are also aids statted for D&D, and they will require translation. AM is a collection of adventures in which the starting point is always that the players are being hired to perform some duty by an "assurance corporation." The Monster File is a booklet printed on heavy stock where pictures of monsters are presented in a format suitable to be cut apart into cards. The monster pictures can then



be used during games, as the pictures can be shown to players while the stats are kept secret. I would suggest taking a good look at these products before you buy, however, to make sure they are right for you.

Ragnarok Enterprises (1402 21st St. NW, Washington, DC 20036) produces **Abyss**, a fanzine now in its 23rd issue. It provides a forum for interesting short articles and scenarios that has shifted its focus recently, from being a magazine concerned with D&D supplemental material, to a magazine offering articles and scenarios suitable for use or translation into other games. Ragnarok Enterprises also produces **The Ysgarth Rule System**, for FRP gaming. While the mechanics of this system seem a tad more complex than they need to be, the imagination and detail put into the world designed for the game are worth taking a few notes from. **Field of Honor** is a game of jousting knights that looks interesting . . . but it completely lacks a movement system. All of Ragnarok's products are printed in a 5 1/2" x 8 1/2" format and are typewritten, as opposed to typeset. Despite the lack of high-quality production, the products contain many good ideas, and they are a source of inspiration that gamers should find interesting and useful.

RPG, Inc. (PO Box 485, Lincoln, AR 72744) has produced **Recon**, The Role-Playing Game of the Viet Nam War. I was rather shocked to see the game, and would have thought that the Viet Nam war was too close to be "gamed" on an individual, role-playing level. I was offended by a full page illustration of Vietnamese soldiers labeled "Luke the Gook." The creators of the game included a cover letter which read, in part, "In submitting this for review by your magazine, I hope you will inform your readers of an enjoyable game. At the same time, it may help those who were not in 'Nam to develop some understanding of the ambiguities that faced the men who fought there. Viet vets will only achieve the same respect as World War II vets when the public is informed of the risks and courage of another generation of American fighting men." If they hoped to speed that process along with this game, in my opinion they have not succeeded at all.

The rules are presented in a very open style, laced with Viet Nam slang that leads the reader to think everyone over there breezed through the war

bringing away nothing but neat words and war stories. The rules are simple enough, but the writer consistently uses "2d100" when "1d100" is obviously what was intended — a considerable gaffe, to be sure. The rules are also written with no consideration of those people who are not already playing other RPGs. They do not fully explain the purpose behind each section of the game, and the booklet is poorly organized. Skills are listed and rolled for on page 9, but are not explained until page 22 . . . which is in the middle of a combat explanation.

For me, the problems with organization and wording could be excused if the subject was not one I felt should not be gamed with. I certainly do not feel any Viet Vet should apologize or deny his participation in Viet Nam (nor feel that others might expect him to), and I don't hold Viet Vets in contempt for what happened there. But Recon causes me to wonder about the people who could treat the subject with such flippant handling. If any message is going to get across to these guys at RPG, Inc., the message will come from the marketplace. I urge you to avoid this game.

(The following reviews are quick plugs by Liz Danforth, filling in for Mike . . . . Responsibility for any error in what follows is hers).

Game Designers' Workshop (PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61701) has joined the ever-expanding number of companies who have seen fit to publish a hard-bound version of their major role-playing game: in this case, **The Traveller Book**. At 160 pages, it's a hefty little number, but for a hard-core Traveller player who has worn out his original set, this isn't to be missed. GDW has also released two referee booklets: **Prison Planet**, and a Double Adventure, **Night of Conquest/Divine Intervention**. In addition to these, **Supplement 11: Library Data (N-Z)** is now available.

GDW has also announced that it is releasing a new publication, *The Workshop Newsletter*, which will appear irregularly 10-12 times a year. Send them an SASE, and they'll send you the most recent version of it.

Role Aids, a division of Mayfair Games, Inc. (PO Box 5987, Chicago, IL 60680), has produced several scenario packs, including **Beast-maker Mountain**, **Nanorien Stones**, and **Fez I: The Valley of Trees**. The latter is a tournament design.

These scenario packs include a plug which states they are designed to be used with most popular FRP systems, including Tunnels & Trolls. However, translation will be necessary, as no statistics have been included for any system but D&D/AD&D™. The last of the Role Aids offering is **Dwarves, a Complete Kingdom and Adventure**. This 96 page book is designed for use with AD&D, and is extensively detailed. The scenario designs seem elaborate enough that they may be worth the effort to you, if you're looking for several pre-designed dungeons or adventure settings.

Fantasy Games Unlimited seems to have an unlimited supply of designs for complete role-playing systems. Their most recent releases are **Daredevils**, and **Star Explorer**. **Daredevils** challenges players to become just that: a daredevil in the pulp tradition — "action and adventure in the two-fisted thirties." The box set includes a 64-page rulebook and "Daredevil Adventures," a set of 4 game-master scenarios collected into one 32-page booklet. There is also a sample blank character sheet and a GM's screen that doubles as a world map for the



**15A** You twist the globe from his grasp; it feels warm and almost alive in your hands. Neither of you noticed as you fought, but guards have entered the room. The Captain who hired you steps forward and directs his men to drag the spy off. "Thank you. You have saved Gull!" he says. He takes the globe from you and hands it to two wizards who will use it to destroy the wizard who was spying through it.

This adventure has been worth 350 e.p.'s for you, as well as the 5000 g.p.'s for the captured spy. You are done.

**15B** Congrats. For each dead spy you get 2500 g.p.'s, and for each live one you get 5000 g.p.'s. Your e.p.'s for this adventure are 350, and you have saved the city. Well done.

**15C** The spy has a MR of 48. If you kill him, go to 28D.



1930's, and a collection of necessary charts needed by the game master.

Star Explorer is a "final frontier" game that is designed to be a little bit of role-playing in what is primarily a boardgame. Players run a StarShip captain exploring strange new worlds, seeking out new life and new civilizations . . . you get the idea. Since the game has a definable end (after 20 game turns), it could doubtless be a fine evening's diversion, especially if they cancelled your local rerun of *Star Trek*.

On the other hand, FASA Corporation (PO Box 6930, Chicago, IL 60680-6930) went the whole nine yards and released **Star Trek: The Role Playing Game**. The game is costly at \$25, but it's really worth the price for what you receive inside — a lengthy rulebook, a three-adventure scenario pack which has an addendum of information on ships, complete deckplans for the Enterprise and a Klingon destroyer, some counters and I've probably missed some more things. You too can be Captain Kirk, if such is your yen. However, the rules do not insist you play an established character — you can be any character you create, from a Tellarite scoutship captain to a Edoan security redshirt (if you have a strong deathwish!). The section on character creation is so well organized as to make character creation a pleasure. If the scenarios had been so well organized, it would have helped; they're a little tough to run, especially for someone still getting the rules under his/her belt. Source material for the game includes the television series and the Saturday morning cartoon series, but neither of the movies. Still, this one isn't to be missed if you ever got your kicks out of *Star Trek*. Recommended.

(The management returns you to Mike's reviews; thank you).

The Companions, Inc. (245 Water St., Bath, ME 04530) have produced four very good products for fantasy role playing games of any stripe. **Chilling Chambers** is an anthology of rooms and traps. Each room is described in exquisite detail, the amount of information given depending on whether the characters take a Rapid Glance, Detailed Look, Brief Search, or a Thorough Examination. The maps provided are suitable for miniature use, and often provide a cut-away view of the room as well. The system details are up to the GM, but there is no lack of

information provided just because the stats have to be added for each game. **Alluring Alcoves** is the second product in the Places of Mystery line and is similar in construction to Chilling Chambers. Both of these products are very good and more than worth the time to convert to your individual game.

**Cards of Power** is a gamemaster's playing aid detailing five different decks of cards to be used with different effects in FRP games. One deck is formed of cards to be cut from the front and back covers of the booklet. The other four require a Tarot deck to make full use of them. Cards of Power provides rumors, abilities, and meanings for the cards. I've used Tarot cards to supplement adventures and they can bring an interesting random element to any campaign. This product is very well thought out and I highly recommend it.

Last I come to **The Curse of Hareth**. Curse is a series of adventures that comes as a ready-made campaign. The players are provided with a full-color map of the area, a large double-sided map of the area in greater detail than the color map, and two smaller maps of great detail concerning structures to be found during the adventure. The text of the adventure is loaded with details that make the adventure feel very real, including all the legends and rumors that get players going on an adventure. The NPCs are described well and all the information for the adventures is set up for easy use. This is one of the best scenario design packages I have ever seen and your money will be well spent on it.

One final notation for your information: if you're trying to contact Midkemia Press, they moved not long ago to: 2691 Murray Ridge Rd., San Diego, CA 92123.

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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 the listing means *Flying Buffalo/Blade* has made plans to attend.

■ May 27-30. **Grimcon V.** *SF and fantasy gaming.* Membership at the door \$17. Write Grimcon, PO Box 4153, Berkeley, CA 94704.

□ May 29. **M.I.G.S. IV.** *Military Interests and Games Society gamefest.* Free. Contact Les Scanlon, 473 Upper Wentworth Street, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L9A 4T6.

□ May 27-30. **Doctor Who Science Fiction Convention.** *Guests Paul Edwin Zimmer, Barbara Elder (director of NADWAS), Diane Paxton. FRP gameroom available. Held in Palo Alto, CA. Call for info (213) 337-7947 weekdays, no collect calls.*

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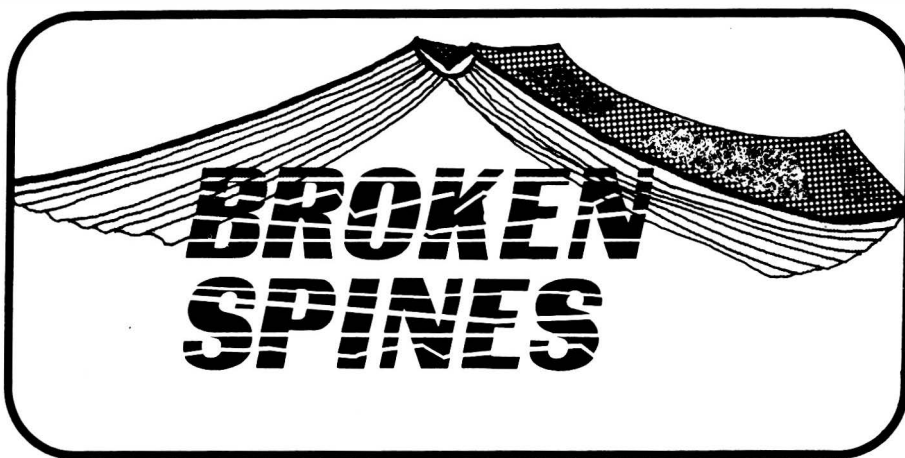
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□ *The Secret, a Treasure Hunt* by Byron Preiss and others (Bantam, illustrated, part color plates, 224 pp). Reviewed by Ken St. Andre.

Here is a book that should really challenge all lovers of puzzles, as well as all etymologists and lovers of the English language. More than \$10,000 worth of elaborate jewelry has been hidden around the United States, and the clues about how to find it are contained within 12 fantasy paintings and 12 cryptic rhymes at the beginning of the book. I know one thing — I'm not going to find any of it. It is very, very difficult.

The first 32 pages tell the story of how the Fair Folk (in all their many forms and guises) abandoned the Old World to come live in the New, and how when Europeans discovered these continents they had to go into perpetual hiding, or change form to live in the modern world. Then come the 12 full-color paintings, and the rhymes that are supposed to explain them and lead the reader to the treasure troves. Finally, beginning with the *maitre d'emon*, the reader falls into the land of National Lampoon humor which fills the rest of the book. This last half of the book is an advanced course in punning. The perpetrators of this book are totally shameless, inflicting such atrocities upon their readers as the *Elf S. Presleys*, the *Kinderguardians*, the *Unreal Estate Agents*, etc. *ad nauseum*. On the off chance that they missed any bad puns, the reader is invited to submit examples of the new Fairy Folk for future editions. That's really low.

*The Secret* is not the sort of book that one can sit down and read from cover to cover. A little of that *Saturday Night Live* style of humor goes a long way. Don't put this book in your library with your classics of wit and art — place it on a shelf in the bathroom for those inconvenient moments when you need a bit of levity. Nevertheless, I highly recommend it.

□ *Lensman From Rigel* by David A. Kyle (Bantam Books, \$2.50, 212 pp). Reviewed by Ken St. Andre.

Another reviewer (I forget who) once called E. E. "Doc" Smith's famed *Lensman* books "The Boy Scouts Conquer the Universe." Doc Smith (1890-1965) single-handedly invented the genre of space opera with his *Skylark of Space* series in 1915. Doc cheerfully ignored all known laws of physics and ground out tales of ever widening warfare between the forces of good and evil. I remember reading these books between the ages of 12 and 16, and loving them.

Well, the Boy Scouts are back. David Kyle has resurrected all our old heroes and a whole passel of new ones, plus a new menace to threaten two galaxies.

Smith's original *Lensman* series was so bad it was good. The sheer scope of his imagination, the alienness of his aliens, the breakneck pace of his stories could carry a young reader into another sort of universe. Kyle's *Lensman* series is so bad it's bad. Kyle is a more sophisticated writer, and he feels it necessary to inject modern astronomical theory into the galactic civilization of a thousand years hence. And just in case you missed Doc's original books, Kyle used up half the book telling you who are Kim Kinnison, Tregonsee, Thorndyke, Cardyng, Neil Cloud, Clarissa, Worsel, etc., etc. The writing is still terrible, but since there is so much to explain now, it moves at half its old pace.

Space role-playing is popular, and at the top of the list, doubtless, is *Traveller*<sup>TM</sup>. The *Lensman* mythos will not — I repeat, *will not* — adapt itself to play in the *Traveller* universe. Fantasy Games Unlimited's *Space Opera* might work as a game system for a *Lensman* game. It would be better if someone could design a completely new game for the *Lensman* universe.

If you think "Great Klono!" is a mighty oath, and "QX" is the appropriate response to every comment, then don't miss Kyle's new *Lensman* novels. If you're over 14 and know the difference between an adjective and an adverb,

pass these books. If you've never read a *Lensman* book in your life and feel masochistic, go to the public library and get a copy of *Gray Lensman* by E. E. Smith. It was the best of the series, and far better read *Lensman From Rigel*.

□ *The Darkling* by David Kesterton (Arkham House, \$12.95, 259 pp). Reviewed by Ken St. Andre.

I can't decide whether I love this book or hate it. The rather sombre cover shows an anemic dragon sticking out its tongue at a primitive man flourishing a bow in its face. This portrays the scene wherein the hero, Maradek, a tribal teenager with rudimentary psychic powers, confronts the monster of the title in single combat. Both as art and as fiction, it is far from the most exciting thing I have ever seen.

Arkham House has a reputation for publishing weird books — this one certainly fits. The author's style is bleak and choppy — hard to read and understand. It reads like a bad translation from Icelandic, but it feels appropriate to the subject matter.

*The Darkling* starts out to be a sword and sorcery book in the vein of Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth*, about primitive humans in a post-holocaust Earth, but about two-thirds of the way through the book the focus changes and it becomes pure science fantasy. The magical monsters we have been reading about are revealed to be the artificial genetic constructs of a race of starfaring aliens who have invaded and effectively conquered the Earth. I liked the book better when it was pure fantasy.

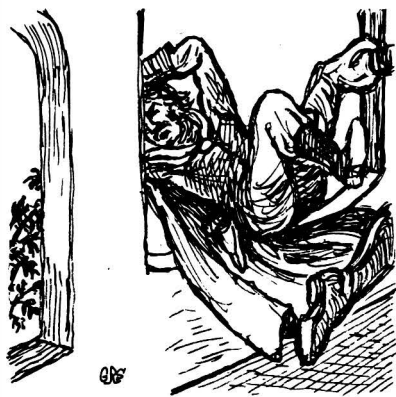
I don't think there is much for the average gamer in this tome. Several monsters are described that could be used in FRP games, but they fall into two classes — old monsters with new names (i.e. the *Darkling* is just a winged dragon without flame), and new ones that are completely ineffective (i.e. a race of stick-creatures somewhat weaker than your average 3-year old). Although alien technology is part of the plot, no new weapons or tactics are shown.

The reviewer's main task is to make a recommendation. As a novel, *The Darkling* is flawed. As a tale of marvels and strange worlds, it is average — indeed, a bit forgettable. As an allegory about the growth of an individual from youth to maturity, it is full of everything that makes psychologists grin with glee — interesting if you like psychological works. As an Arkham House book, it is inherently collectable and will undoubtedly gain value in years to come. Buy it if money is no object to you.

□ *The Prometheus Man* by Ray Farraday Nelson, illustrated by George Barr. (Donning). Reviewed by Lee Russell.

At heart, this is a reasonably





**20A** Arion kicks out at the man's knee and trips him as the door bursts open and guards pour in. The spy scrambles to his feet and dives through the window. He batters you aside, and you fall to the courtyard below (2 dice damage). Before you can recover, he bounds up and over the wall to freedom.

The next morning the man is found dead with a note pinned to his chest. It reads, "We think the Prince should take better care of his sparring partners. Marek and Rais."

You did manage to alert the guards which eventually led to the capture of the spy. You get 150 e.p.'s and 1500 g.p.'s.

**20B** This was not the brightest plan you ever had. The Rangers are not loved in Gull. Add your ST and CHR and then divide by 2. Use this new attribute to make a second-level saving roll (if people think you look impressive and strong, they'll not attack you). If you make it, go to 21A. If you miss it, go to 7B.

**20C** The man you were chasing managed to signal others in the bar that he was going to draw you off. Four of them, beside him, are waiting for you as you round the corner. Each of them has a MR of 10. If you kill them, go to 15B.

**20D** The window opens into the War Room of the Palace. On the table in the center of the room, you see a scale map of Gull with small figures of men representing the defenses of the city. You also see the spy standing over it, holding a glowing blue globe above his head. In the globe you see the face of a wizard.

If you would like to attack the spy, go to 15C. If you wish to wrestle for the globe, go to 28F. If you wish to tell the man to stay put and surrender, go to 28C.

**20E** Your return home with them is uneventful, but the Merchant is grateful nonetheless. He gives you a magic dagger that will allow you to unerringly trail any one person no matter where that person goes. This adventure has been worth 275 e.p.'s for you. You are now done.

**20F** The man takes you outside and is revealed to be the Captain. "If that is your idea of Ranger hunting, you're fired . . ." This adventure has been worth 250 e.p.'s, though no gold passes into your coffers. You are done.

enjoyable old-fashioned sociological science fiction book. But it is dressed up with a mish-mash of undeveloped references (both passing and thematic) to such diverse things as Greek and Norse mythologies, the works of the Golden Age science fiction and comic-book writers, arcade and fantasy gaming, nineteenth century economic thought, the beatnik culture of the mid-20th century, and even the artwork of the author which is, of course, *not* included in this illustrated edition. It is distressing to discover that Superman had a boy pal named Jerry Olson, and worse yet to see the theme come down to something more Zen-Marxian than Promethean. To find all this in an overpriced, under-illustrated, softcover book containing more typos than a high school student's first term paper does make it difficult to enjoy the essential good-heartedness of the story.

Fantasy gamers may find an interesting dungeon alternative in the maze-like, city-sized complexes. A less obvious game setting could be developed from the ecologically self-contained geodesic balloon where the society's intellectual elite intend to ride out the impending social collapse. The actual game references in the story are probably included more to make the reader and author feel "hip" together than for any other reason.

There is much to be enjoyed in this book, but don't let the pretentious packaging fool you into expecting anything extraordinary. And as for the title, if you want to read a really *good* fantasy novel on a Promethean theme, go back to the classics and reread Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

□ **The Unicorn Creed** by Elizabeth Scarborough. (Bantam, 1983, \$3.50). Reviewed by Ken St. Andre.

Take a book that has a unicorn who is dissatisfied with his virgin, a sexy dryad who is a revolutionary, a king who is a Frost Giant, a heroine who is a witch, a hero who is a love 'em and leave 'em minstrel with mermaid blood, an evil wizard who is collecting all the unicorns to bottle them as healing elixirs, dragons, gypsies, brigands, Tinkerbell-style fairies, zombies, an evil prince with a magic sword, an ogress and her beautiful daughters, werewolves, and more magic than you can shake a stick at. Now assume I've forgotten to mention half the marvels, and note that the writer handles the language beautifully, works hard to develop some of her characters beyond the stereotypes, and describes a world that would be completely familiar to most players of any FRP game. Sound good?

It is wretched. How something with

so many good ideas could come out so boring, I'll never understand. Perhaps the length has something to do with it. For 300 pages, the main characters run around the forests while the situation goes from bad to worse. Maybe it's the very feast of marvels. Every turn of the page, Scarborough has something new and wondrous to display. I know that the fabulous make-everything-wonderful *deus ex machina* ending was the last straw for me. Fool me, Scarborough! Turn this rewrite of *All's Well That Ends Well* into a tragedy! Then the book might have some punch. Not recommended.

□ **The King Arthur Companion** by Phillis Ann Karr. (Reston, 1983, 174pp). Reviewed by Michael Stackpole.

*The King Arthur Companion* is a comprehensive encyclopedia of Authurian lore. It is divided into three sections: People, Places, and Things, and covers every imaginable detail of the myths of Arthur. There are maps, lineage charts, plus other useful charts and commentary like discussions of lesser occupations, costumes, and battle strategies.

The work is very well put together and of extraordinary value for someone interested in Arthurian mythology. Its uses in constructing an Arthurian campaign are legion. It is singularly lacking in illustrations, but this oversight is forgivable because of the sheer volume of information presented. This is not the sort of book one would pick up for an evening's light perusal, but its value as a research tool makes it well worth the \$15.95 hardcover price.

□ **The Kalevide** by Lou Goble. (Bantam, 1982, 397pp). Reviewed by Liz Danforth.

Being involved in fantasy gaming makes one aware of historical fantasies and legends. I'd come across references to the Kalevala epic, which sounded something like a story of the Finnish Beowulf. When *The Kalevide* appeared, proclaiming it a modern version of the Estonian Kalevala, I snapped it up.

The book details the story of the great hero, Kalevide ("son of Kalev"). His world is as magical as that of any ancient hero, and the story is a tragic one. But modern English or no, his long treks and short thoughts make it an interminable struggle to read. Perhaps the fact that this is the author's first published work has something to do with it — he certainly cut out a big job for himself. The shame is that it wasn't accomplished better.

I can't recommend this book except to those desperately in need of inspiration for a campaign or an FRP role-model for a character that is unusually dense but destined to rise above the common crowd in spite of that. I suspect it might be easier to read in the original. ■



# QUERIES & QUANDARIES

*Stackpole tried, but as with most wretched humans he failed miserably. I will admit I almost thought he would succeed. For several issues running he had a response the like of which had never been seen at Sorcerer's Apprentice. Stackpole pitifully claimed that the questions he picked for last time were lousy, but any excuse will do for a man on the rack. His piloting of my experiment clearly led to its demise.*

*I, however, am not going to let my experiment die! I do not ask for your answers, I demand them! I trust this is clear.*

*I will clean up the mess Stackpole left and then plunge on into new areas of inquiry.*

**Pushy players: as a player or GM, how do you deal with them?**

If, by "pushy player" you mean one who tries to tell everyone what to do, I have 2 solutions. First, a touchy NPC wizard casting some sort of "Silence Spell." Second, all the talking will attract a sharp-eared monster.

I wouldn't insist on complete silence by the player after a silence spell — too awkward — but I would expect him to say very little and mostly to me.

I don't think ignoring such a player would be wholly practical. It depends how the other players behave because if they just let him run things you have to do something. Throwing anyone out is a last resort. Working within the game ought to be done carefully, turning the player's behavior (which, in such a case, tends to be the character's behavior) against him.

—David Bell

I define a pushy player as one who tries to control more than his share of the game. When I am GM, I normally deal with the players as adults capable of acting as such. In most cases, therefore, simply passing the player a note saying "You are talking too much — let the other people play" is sufficient. If that doesn't work, I speak to him privately and explain exactly why I feel he is talking too much (out of character, knowing too much too soon, others don't get a chance, etc.). At the same time, the other players are presumably resenting his mouth and taking their own actions, such as telling him to shut up, having their characters threaten his, ignoring him, shorting him on treasure, and other similar stuff. If the other players

are too weak-willed and/or inexperienced to do this sort of stuff, I suggest it . . . Believe me, it takes a grade-A jerk to continue being power-mad when the GM says to another player, "Why don't you bludgeon him unconscious the next time he shoots off his mouth?"

—Dean Simmons

**How do you deal with cheaters?**

As long as everyone sees the dice fall and I know the character's stats, I don't think there's much chance of cheating by any player. If you can't trust your GM, why are you playing T&T with him?

If somebody does cheat and is caught, I think I'd throw [him] out of the group. If the rest of the group didn't agree with that, I'd walk out on them, assuming they are convinced of the cheating. If the others were unconvinced, I'd finish the adventure (I hope fairly).

—David Bell

When GM, I always see every roll. If I thought the dice were loaded, I would switch dice. If the guy makes multiple guesses, I poker-face and ask him to choose one.

—Dean Simmons

• • • • •

Now I have questions that each of you will do your best to answer fully and quickly.

**1. When adventures present you with traps or puzzles that need solving, what techniques do you use? Is it fair to bring a pack of low level characters as trap fodder, to find out what happens before your higher level characters dare the trap? How do you determine what the trap will do and how much danger are you willing to risk in attempting to gain some treasure?**

**2. How, as GM's, do you cure a player of mindless slaughter, of playing only a "slash and hack" role? Is there a place for "slash and hack" in role-playing, and (if so) do you make allowances for it within the fabric of your campaign? Or do you indulge in it as a means of blowing off steam?**

*Answer these questions quickly and concisely. I want replies to flood in: to the point, and insightful. While I think you should consider it an honor to have your answer*

*published, my staff insists I bribe you by paying our normal contributors' rates for replies. So be it. I will know who doesn't answer. Remember what happened to Stackpole; it could happen to you. . . .*

—Grimtooth



**21A** Everyone decides that you look a bit too tough to mess with right now. You cross the floor and seat yourself at a table. Soon a serving girl comes over with a mug of ale. "The hooded gentleman in the corner booth offers this with his compliments." As you look over, the man raises a glass in salute and drinks. If you do the same, go to 38B. If you refuse to drink or pour the ale on the floor, go to 40B.

**21B** As you walk through the darkened streets towards the Palace, you managed to see the shadowy form of a man silhouetted against one of the rising moons. You run towards the Palace wall even as you see his shadow meld with that of a guard. You cut up the hill and hear a strangled cry from the guard and then a thud as his body hits the catwalk of the wall. You quickly reach the wall and scurry up with the rope left by the spy. Once over the wall, you see the body of the fallen guard and the whisp of a shadow entering a window on the second floor.

If you would like to see if you can help the guard, go to 7A. If you wish to climb the trellis and pursue the spy, go to 20D.

**21C** "You wouldn't want me spreading the word that you trade with Rangers, now would you?" you ask him, gambling a great deal.

He breaks down. "They have my daughter. Unless I give them plans, they will kill her." He continues to explain they are going to make the exchange tonight. You suggest that you will follow and free his daughter while he hands them plans that you will doctor. Both of you work on the plans until midnight when the meeting is due. If you want to run ahead and wait at the meeting place, go to 34B. If you want to shadow him, go to 33A.



# We Are



If you take a good look at this issue of *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, you will see a new look to the magazine and a new imprinture for the publisher. *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, and all of Flying Buffalo Inc.'s games will now be produced by **BLADE**. So who or what is **Blade**?

To accurately answer that question I'll have to delve into the history of Flying Buffalo a bit. Rick Loomis, our president, had planned on opening a coin and stamp shop upon leaving his stint in the army. The Buffalo-Tailed nickel and the Flying Eagle penny lent portions of themselves to form the name Flying Buffalo, a name Rick rightly felt would be memorable. Yet while he was in the army, Rick got an idea for running games that all the mail-hungry people in the world would slaver over. In 1970, Flying Buffalo Computer-Conflict Simulations was created and therein began the play-by-mail gaming business.

Rick soon realized he was sending hundreds of letters out to people and they were sending him money. He correctly reasoned that they would probably be willing to buy games from him by mail, especially since those were the days when not many games were available in stores. In 1975 Ken St. Andre brought him *Tunnels and Trolls*; it sold well and Buffalo moved into the games production area. In the winter of 1978, Liz Danforth was hired and slowly a Productions division of Flying Buffalo grew up around her.

Those of you who have been with T&T and FBI since the early days of game production can easily remember the inexpensive printings and the lack of graphics we began with. We were doing the best we could, but at that time it wasn't very pretty. Every so often a page would be reversed in one of our ring-bound solo adventures, and heaven forbid you ever leave a ring-binder out on a dashboard!

Slowly but surely we got better. We began to demand more out of our writers. My third submission for a solo, *City of Terrors*, was typeset and done on glossy paper. It was crammed full of artwork, its appearance a vision of the future of our products. And quality sells: COT is still at the top of the charts.

In September of 1979, we brought out the fifth edition of *Tunnels and Trolls*, complete with a color cover. That Christmas the box appeared and began

to show up in stores. In 1980 we printed the first of the full-color covered solo adventures, the rewritten *Overkill*; rewritten to bring it up from the bottom of the line in quality.

With each product we did, we raised our level of quality and showed ourselves and others what we could do. We got better and better, the future looked brighter, especially when we signed a contract with Coleco for electronic T&T. *Traps* and *Citybook* opened us to a whole new line of games, products that everyone could use. *Citybook* is the best product we have turned out in quality both of production and content. We had reached a summit of excellence that, in the words of reviewers, showed everyone else the way things should be done.

And yet with all this progress, we were still having problems with recognition.

Too many narrow-minded individuals still remembered the days of ring-binders and missing pages. Too many people had heard terrible things about Flying Buffalo and T&T. While they were impressed that *Citybook* or *Traps* or the latest solo looked as good as it did, they couldn't believe Buffalo had turned it out. And no one would argue against Flying Buffalo being a memorable name, yet our marketing people were finding that some buyers for stores had difficulty in believing a company with such a fun name was legit.

We decided that just as the image of our products had changed, so the image of the productions half of Buffalo had to change. Flying Buffalo, our parent company, was and still is the premier play-by-mail company and will stay that way. Flying Buffalo means a level of excellence in PBM gaming and will continue to stand for that. We'll always be the one to shoot for.

**Blade** has become the name for our game division. **Blade** was chosen for the feelings of adventure and quality it conjures up. Sure, there were the puns — Blades are sharp and so are we — but behind the laughter there lay our commitment to unparalleled excellence, to being the best. **Blade**, and what it stands for to us, the people of **Blade**, is a promise to our customers that we will not produce shoddy material to make a quick buck; we will do the very best job possible on every project we produce.

A few people have already written to

lament this seeming shift in attitude, from the tongue-in-cheek nature of T&T to the stern and forboding picture of **Blade**. Fear not, we're still the same. The reason the first product to be produced by **Blade** was *Grimtooth's Traps Too* was to show that we are the same. After all, you might imagine us emboldened enough by **Blade** to buck Grimtooth, but then you've not been asked by the Troll over for dinner . . .

So what can you come to look forward to from **Blade**? Already *Gamesmen of Kasar* has been released, the latest solo for T&T. *Mercenaries*, *Spies*, and *Private Eyes*, as evidenced by our back cover, is under final production and is scheduled for release in April. Following on its heels will be a solo called *The Adventure of the Jade Jaguar*, and a large GM adventure titled *Stormhaven*. *Darksnoke* is finally being finished up, as is *Fleur D'Morte* and *Adventurer's Guild #1* (a collection of small GM adventures by Roy Cram). *Web* is under production again after being delayed by MSPE, and we have signed a contract on a new solo that will make COT look like a Pocket Adventure.

We also have new product lines in mind. *Mythospaks*<sup>TM</sup> are to be thematically designed rules supplements to T&T, MSPE, or Web. They will give you the mythos — specific mechanics you need to run an adventure in a particular era. The T&T *Mythospaks* will contain elements like special weapons, new magic systems, gods and monsters, daily life, and maps for places like Arthur's Britain, sub-Saharan Africa, Imperial Rome, Atlantis, and Asia. MSPE *Mythospaks* will deal with post-holocaust worlds, the wild west, the London of Sherlock Holmes, and other areas of time and space. All will require the rules for T&T or MSPE or Web, but we won't stiff you by charging you to buy the same rules system over and over again.

What we especially want to do is help you get the most for your money. If you have stores you want to carry our goods, let us know and we'll contact them. If you have an idea for a game, or a design you want to sell, let us know and we will see if we can do anything with it. Really, we're trying to do for you what we wish someone would be doing for us in a similar situation.

We are **Blade**. We are the same people who have brought you the quality products you have bought for years. We're a bit older, more tempered, and honed to a sharper edge than before, but we are still the people committed to bringing you the best.

After all, what is a rose by any other name. . . .

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IN THE CURRENT ISSUE: With a cover by James Odbert, the long article this issue is an intensely personal autobiographical one by Jack Dann. The interview is with Joan D. Vinge. Other contributors include Gregory Benford writing about aliens, Frederik Pohl's column, Vincent DiFate writing about William Cameron Menzies, Robert Silverberg on incorporating for writers, plus letters, reviews and ads.



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# CARRION TROLL

Baron Isambard stood in the cold pre-dawn mists on the slope of the battlefield. Though there were other men out here, he might as well have been alone. The fog swirled in great coils and ropes, moving banks that sometimes obscured the hand in front of his face, sometimes let him see hacked and broken bodies three or four paces away. It was a gray fog, just barely illuminated by the skylight from the not yet risen sun. It was cold, too, in this valley, but that was not the only cause of the baron's shivers.

The feeling of isolation was not complete. Baron Isambard could hear the muffled sounds of those who, like himself, felt a need to be here in spite of the unseen danger. Their reasons were different from his, but their concern for the fallen overrode their fear, unlike the majority of

his troops who had remained back at camp at the top of the ridge behind him out of the fog.

The gray mist swirled around him, thick tentacles and masses, offering tantalizing glimpses of the battlefield, only to obscure it the next moment. He caught sight, over to the side, of a soldier, kneeling and weeping by a fallen companion. Anxiety and grief had overridden the man's fear. Baron Isambard encouraged strong friendships like that between his men. They fought all the harder knowing that another's safety was their responsibility. Baron Isambard grieved with him.

There were fewer men out on the battlefield than there should have been, considering that the baron's forces had won. They were afraid, would have been even had the battlefield been clear of the thick mists. They would not

come down until the full light of day. Not fearful of the shattered dead, of course, but of something else which walked here.

They had every right to be afraid, Baron Isambard thought. It was one thing for men to kill each other in the glory of battle. It was another thing to discover, on the morning after, that some of the fallen had been partially eaten.

He heard a cry from down slope. Though the words were muffled by the coils of the fog, he recognized the voice of Tilloch, his squire, one of his small hunting party of five. They were on the slope now, in the strangling fog, among the dead. He had sent them scattered to search for the mark that the corpse eater left wherever it went.

He had made a plan, and presented it to his knights and sergeants, but only five had agreed to join him. It did no good to threaten punishment for those who hung back. What was a whipping, or even a beheading, when the alternative was being cannibalised, leaving one's soul to wander through eternity? His companions this morning were with him because, like he, they had been horrified at the spiritual implications of cannibalism. And each had seen the body of a friend half eaten.

Baron Isambard started toward the call, moving carefully but not fastidiously among the bodies and pieces of bodies on the ground. He was in full mail, but carried no shield. His sword was sheathed at his side, but in his right hand he carried a single-bitted battle axe.

The Priests and Brothers were down here now, of course. They had been the first on the slope this

morning, leaving the safety and warmth of the camp with the first light, descending into the sea of fog. They sought out those of the baron's men who had fallen, to give absolution to the dead, succor to those who had survived the night. There were plenty enough of the former, few enough of the latter.

There were a few soldiers as well, such as the one he had just seen, come down to search for a missing companion in spite of their fear of the thing which ate the dead.

It was the Priests and soldiers who, after past battles, had caught glimpses of the corpse-eater, and who had run to tell about it. Not a wolf or a bear, but something else, a man-thing, huge and shambling. A troll. What else would one call it?

Baron Isambard would be the first to attack the troll when it was found, though the thought made his bowels jump. There was glory to be had, if he slew the troll. More importantly, there would be justice. Too many souls hung in limbo. The Priests had not yet decided whether being eaten by the troll prevented a man's soul from going to heaven or not, but they suspected that it did. The death of the monster would in some way restore balance, release the souls of those it had eaten, and ensure their salvation after all.

A dark shadow loomed up ahead in the mist, bulky and misshapen. Baron Isambard clenched the shaft of his axe, but a break in the fog showed him it was only Tilloch, with another man a step or two behind him.

Tilloch was nervous, holding his naked sword out as if to defend himself. He was a young man after all, and though trained in the arts



# -ALLEN WOLD



of war, not very experienced. Like the baron, he was fully armed and armored.

"Here's the mark," Tilloch said. His voice revealed his relief at seeing that it was Baron Isambard and not the troll coming out of the fog. The mists swirled around them both again. He pointed at the ground by his feet with the tip of his sword.

Baron Isambard looked once at the shabbily clad man behind Tilloch, then stooped to examine the mark.

Yes, this was it. A bare foot, half again as big as his own, its toes widely splayed, the big toe almost like a thumb. There were other marks nearby, but this one was especially clear, showing the heavy nails at the ends of the toes, pointed like a dog's, not flat like a man's.

It was two years since the first troll-eaten body had been discovered on the morning after a battle. It had haunted every battlefield since then, seldom seen, always desecrating at least a dozen corpses. So far it had contented itself with the fallen. It had not attacked a man strong enough to stand on his feet, nor had it pursued anyone who ran away. Not yet.

But God, the sacrilege. Wolves and bears and crows were one thing. They were only beasts, part of God's plan, evil though they might sometimes be. But the troll was wholly evil, and unnatural. It ripped off arms and legs, opened up a man's body to get at the liver, plucked out eyes, chewed off genitals, bit through a face as if it were a soft melon to get at the brain. It was an abomination, and it had to be destroyed.

He straightened up, feeling a certain grim satisfaction. The marks were not all that old. The monster usually came in the dark and left before dawn, but the fog must have handicapped it as much as it did the baron and his hunting party. It should still be here, on the slope somewhere. The thought was not completely reassuring.

"Who's that?" he asked Tilloch softly, nodding at the mist-enshrouded man behind his squire.

"His name's Adin, my lord," Tilloch said.

"Come closer and let me see you, Adin," Baron Isambard said. The man did so. "I don't recognize you, you don't live at Deerford," he went on, naming the town which his castle defended.

"No, my lord," Adin said, bobbing and touching his forehead with his left hand. His right shoulder had been badly broken at one time, and though the forearm and hand still functioned, the elbow and upper arm were pressed close against his side. "I'm from up by Mossy Tor." That was a village well to the north.

"And what are you doing here," Baron Isambard asked, "so far from

your home?"

"We go where the battles are, my lord, me and my son Sprigg."

Adin and his son were body-pickers, then, scavengers who ransacked the corpses of the enemy for what they could find, before the salvage and burial crews came out. Most such, like Adin, were broken men, or old or otherwise too frail to fight, men who gleaned a small living from the consequences of battle. Adin and his son's need, apparently, was greater than their fear.

"I hope you know which side won yesterday's battle," Baron Isambard warned. If he found any of his own men looted, he would have this Adin and his son on the gallows.

"Yes, my lord, I only pick the bodies with the green and black, not the ones with the yellow."

"I'm glad you understand that. Don't you fear the troll?"

"Yes, my lord, but I can still run, though I can no longer fight."

"Pray God that you can. Have you seen it before, on other battlefields?"

"Yes, my lord, many times."

"It is here today. If you see it this morning, call out when you run. I mean to slay the monster if I can."

"Slay the troll? Ah, no, my lord, you cannot do that."

"I can and I will." He became impatient to be on with the search. The troll would be gone by the time the fog burned off, though there was no sign of that happening soon. "Be off with you then."

Adin the body-picker bobbed again and disappeared into the fog. Baron Isambard turned back to his squire.

"Go and find Sir Kavalam," he said, pointing along the slope of the valley toward the south. "He's over there somewhere."

"Yes, my lord," Tilloch said, and trotted off as he was bid. The lad was afraid, Baron Isambard knew, but he had the courage to master that fear. Baron Isambard had every intention of making him a full knight when he was old enough.

Soldiers were becoming reluctant to fight. Not that they feared death, rather they dreaded being eaten by the troll if slain. It was too much for a man to bear. Fight for his lord, yes, or die for him if need be. At least then one found grace in the eyes of God, eternal rest in heaven. But to be *eaten* . . . and who knew when the troll would tire of carrion and start to hunt among the living?

He turned to follow the footprints of the troll, angling slightly up slope in the opposite direction. The trail led past several bodies, none of which were disturbed, thank God. The monster had a

stride longer than a man's, but not as long as the size of the feet might suggest. The depths of the prints hinted at great weight.

He followed the trail a way, losing it once in a patch of untrampled grass, recovering it in bloody mud beyond. There were fewer bodies here. One had been turned over, its face purple with settled blood. But it had not been eaten, thank God.

The light was improving somewhat, but the fog clung as thick and as wet as ever. It took him a moment to find the footprints again. He followed them only thirty paces or so when someone called to him from the right.

"My lord? Is that you?"

"Yes, Croyble, what is it?"

"The troll, my lord," the sergeant said, emerging from the gray mist. He was another of Baron Isambard's hunting party, and was fully armed and armored. "It's eaten Selig."

"Damn," Baron Isambard said, feeling a clenching in his chest. He had hoped to find the monster before it had a chance to desecrate any of the bodies. "All right, let's go see."

He followed Croyble through the fog, now turning white with skylight. The sergeant, his mail protected by a thin yellow tabard, led him down slope a bit to where Paget, another member of the hunting party, was waiting by a body.

"Why are you two together?" Baron Isambard asked the sergeant and the soldier.

"Just crossed in our quartering, my lord," Croyble said. Paget didn't say anything. There was a smell of fresh vomit in the air. Baron Isambard looked down at what was left of Selig.

One arm had been ripped off, and the partially chewed bones lay nearby. Baron Isambard knelt by the man, saw the dried blood of yesterday's chest wound, the fresh blood on the stump of the shoulder. He reached out to close the dead man's eyes, then jerked his hand back as if burned.

"He's still warm," he said.

"Yes, my lord," Croyble said. "He must have been alive when the troll found him."

"God help us." Baron Isambard rose to his feet and turned to Paget, whose face was white and damp, and not with the fog. It would have been he who had vomited. Croyble was a harder man than that.

"Are you all right, Paget?" he asked.

"Yes, my lord."

"Good for you. How long ago did you find him?"

"Just a few minutes ago," Croyble answered. "He couldn't have been dead long. The blood hasn't clotted yet."

An especially dense curtain of mist



passed between them momentarily. Somewhere off up slope there was a moan of pain, and another voice speaking reassuring words, as someone helped a friend who had fallen and survived the night. Selig had survived the night too, but he would not be going home now.

"The troll must be somewhere nearby," Baron Isambard said. "Find its tracks."

"They go off this way, my lord," Paget said, pointing down slope. The stream that ran through the center of the valley wasn't too far off, though the fog prevented them from hearing it.

"All right," Baron Isambard said. "Croyble, you come with me. Paget, you stay here. Tilloch and Sir Kavalam should be along soon; bring them with you when they come."

"Yes, my lord," Paget said. Baron Isambard hefted his axe, then with Croyble, started off in the direction Paget had indicated.

There were more footprints, deep and widely spaced, as if the troll had been running. Croyble's arrival must have disturbed it at its unholy feast, and driven it off. Baron Isambard and the sergeant hurried after, as fast as the glistening fog would let them. After a bit, the trail started to curve around to the left.

"It's circling back," Croyble panted. And then they heard Paget scream.

"God have mercy," Baron Isambard prayed. They turned back the way they had come and ran, heedless of the occasional corpse.

By the time they got to him, Paget was mercifully dead. His helmet was missing, his head had been burst as if in a vise, his eyes plucked out.

"Sweet Lord," Croyble prayed, then shouted, "the thing is right *here!*" He was unstrung. He turned around wildly, his drawn sword up and glistening in the white fog.

Dark shapes loomed toward them through the mist. Croyble backed a step, raised his sword, then the sheet of fog parted to show two men, not a troll; a Brother, and another man, unarmed, not a soldier.

"Brother Eliakim," Baron Isambard said as Croyble lowered his sword with a shudder of released fear, "call out when you approach. The troll is very near, and we thought you were it." He recognized the other man too, now, Hallock, a body-picker from Deerford.

"I'm sorry, my lord," Brother Eliakim said. "We heard the scream and came at once." He looked down at Paget, gulped, and turned away. Hallock just stared, licking his lips.

Baron Isambard didn't like the man. He was physically able, but had no moral fiber. The ghoulish work of body-picking suited him perfectly.

"Croyble was right," Baron Isambard said. "The monster is very near. Don't stand there like posts, keep an eye out, so we aren't taken by surprise like poor Paget!"

Croyble and Brother Eliakim turned around to face outward into the fog, frightened but now alert. Hallock knelt by Paget, touching his neck.

"He's dead, my lord," he said.

"I can see that, Hallock. If you aren't careful, the troll will get you too."

"No it won't, my lord. I got a charm, my Mum gave it to me." He displayed a small leather bag tied to a thong around his neck.

"Throw that thing away, boy," Brother Eliakim snapped. "That's the devil's work."

"No it ain't." Hallock rose to his feet. "It's a charm, it keeps trolls off."

"Let's hope you never have to test it," Baron Isambard said. "Be off with you now." Hallock nodded vigorously several times, then trotted away.

"We've got to find the others," Baron Isambard continued. "Brother Eliakim, stay or depart as you wish. These men," he indicated Selig and Paget, "can be attended to later. Croyble, the two of us alone can't handle the troll."

They set off southward, along the slope of the valley, toward where Baron Isambard had sent Tilloch to find Sir Kavalam. There were more bodies here, sometimes lying on top of each other, three or four deep. Down slope to their left, somebody moved, a soldier looking for a missing friend.

"Get back to camp," Croyble called to the man. "The troll has killed two men this morning."

The soldier stopped and seemed to look at them. The mist and fog moved, and for a moment the air was clear around them. The soldier, a man named Faber, picked up a sword from the ground, then the fog closed in again, thicker than ever. Baron Isambard and sergeant Croyble went on.

Tilloch was up ahead, shouting for them. Sir Kavalam, and the fifth member of the baron's hunting party, Dred, were with him. All three had drawn their swords.

"We saw something down there," Tilloch said, pointing in the direction of the stream, which they could now hear, fifty or sixty paces off. The mists swirled, bright and wet.

The five of them moved cautiously yet quickly down slope, Baron Isambard





**28A** You swing high and the Prince kicks out. Your blow kills the spy outright. A crystal ball falls from within his clothing and shatters on the ground.

The Prince rises as the guards burst through the door. He commands you to kneel and instantly dubs you a Knight of the Kraken, making you one of his personal agents. This adventure is worth 250 e.p.'s and the honor is worth 4 points to your Charisma. You also get 2500 g.p.'s for killing the spy. You are done.

**28B** You burst around a corner and smash into the group of men your quarry had gathered with hand signals to waylay you. You scatter them, half-falling unconscious from impact between you and the walls of the alley. You smash one in the face and spin another into a wall. They are down, but your quarry waits in the cul de sac he has found himself in. He as a MR of 30. If you kill him, go to 15B.

**28C** Average your ST and CON. Make a third-level saving roll on that number to see if he thinks you look formidable enough to avoid fighting. If you miss, go to 15C and fight him. If you make it, go to 32A.

**28D** The globe falls from his lifeless fingers and explodes. Guards, attracted by the sound of fighting and led by the Captain, pour into the room. You have succeeded. This adventure has been worth 300 e.p.'s and the 2500 g.p.'s for the dead spy. Congratulations.

**28E** "Halt, dog of a murdering spy!" one of the guards warns in a low voice. You protest your innocence, but they haul you off. Luckily for you, the guard lives and the old Captain testifies for you at your trial. However, the spy escapes capture, although evidence of his passing is present the next morning.

You get paid 1000 g.p.'s for your efforts. This was also worth 150 e.p.'s for you. Your failure was not really your fault, but convincing the Captain of that is not easy. He signs the checks, as it were.

**28F** His Strength is 20. Use his Strength and your Strength as Monster Ratings and fight with them. The winner of the wrestling match gets the globe. If you win, go to 15A. If he wins, go to 32B.

**28G** You attack when they are in the middle of a bridge. One instantly goes over the edge, the maps go with him and are ruined. The other two are mad. Each has a MR of 25. If you survive this fight, go to 15B.

in the lead. The ground became damp.

"Prints, my lord," Dred said, pointing to one side. It was the troll's spoor all right. Water from the damp ground was still seeping into the prints. They were very fresh.

"Spread out," Baron Isambard said. "When we come upon it, try to surround it and divide its attention."

He followed the track toward the stream, Tilloch and Croyble on his left, Sir Kavalam and Dred on his right. The mist began to thin a bit. He jumped up onto a low boulder, the better to see. The troll's footprints, which came right up to the boulder, did not reappear on the other side.

"Hold back," Baron Isambard called. "We've lost the trail." Then the boulder moved under his feet; he was raised up into the air and flung to one side.

He knew, even as he fell, that it had been no boulder but the broad back of the troll he'd been standing on. He hit the ground hard, knocking both consciousness and breath from him. He struggled to recover himself. He heard yells and an eerie groaning that sounded almost like words.

He forced himself up on his elbows. Four or five paces from him, his four men were battling the troll, half veiled by the thinning mists. It was eight feet tall, bow-legged, with a massive chest, a head as big as a boar's, with arms, longer and thicker than a man's legs, ending in huge hands. It turned and lunged and turned again as the soldier, the knight, the squire, and the sergeant slashed at it with their bright swords.

Sir Kavalam struck the monster's arm with a dull chunk. The troll bellowed, wrenched the sword from the knight's hand, and broke it with a shake of its wrist. Tilloch thrust at it from behind, but the point of his blade skittered across the troll's hide. The monster swung around, its outstretched arm hitting Tilloch almost inadvertently, knocking the squire backwards.

Sir Kavalam stood numbly, then drew his dagger and jumped on the troll's back, catching it around the thick neck, stabbing at its face over and over again. The troll reached back, caught Sir Kavalam's head and wrenched it off his shoulders.

Croyble aimed a blow at the monster's groin, but the thick leg jerked up protectively, and a huge fist caved in Croyble's body. Tilloch staggered dazed to his feet. Dred just dropped his sword and ran.

Hands helped Baron Isambard up.

"Come away, my lord," Brother Eliakim whispered urgently. Just six paces away, the troll, huge and brown,

was stupidly examining the cut on its forearm, the scratch—only a scratch—along its thigh. Its blood was thick and slow and bright red.

"I have it now," Baron Isambard said through clenched teeth.

"You can't kill it," Adin the body-picker said from his other side. "Come away."

"It killed Kavalam!" Baron Isambard shouted. The troll turned toward him.

Its eyes were large, like a cow's, and showed about as much intelligence. It cocked its head at the three men. From up the slope came the shouts of other men — running away.

Baron Isambard found his axe, picked it up, and shrugged off the Brother and the body-picker, who were trying to restrain him. The troll opened its mouth, red and fanged, and grunted. Baron Isambard strode toward it.

He held his stroke until the troll reached for him, then swung, over the reaching arm, at the monster's neck. The heavy shoulder came up, deflected the blow, which caromed off the troll's skull with a loud clang. But the troll staggered.

"My lord, please," he heard Adin call. "Oh God have mercy!" Brother Eliakim yelled. There were no other sounds.

Baron Isambard stepped to the side, aimed a blow at the monster's shoulder, but turned it down into the troll's thigh. The blade bit deep, the troll bellowed and lurched backward, turning and stumbling into Adin, knocking the body-picker to the ground. Eliakim picked up Dred's sword and struck futilely at the troll's back, not doing it any damage, but distracting it momentarily. The monster turned, caught the Brother in one hand, and shook him. Bones broke loudly in the silent mist. Baron Isambard struck at the troll's unprotected back. The axe bounced off.

"Dear sweet God," he said as the axe fell from his numbed fingers. The troll dropped Brother Eliakim and turned on Baron Isambard. Under the monster's feet, Adin struggled to get clear.

Tilloch sprang from the side, between the baron and the troll. The monster swung a hand down and drove Tilloch into the mud. Baron Isambard drew his sword.

Adin struggled to his feet, his crippled arm hanging limply. The troll glared at Baron Isambard, snarled, and stepped on Tilloch's head as it came toward the baron.

There was only one chance. Baron Isambard held the sword out in both hands, then sprang at the troll like a human spear, dropping the point in mid-air to strike at the monster's groin. The troll could not respond fast enough.



The sword bit — but not through the genitals, only into the soft inner thigh.

The troll screeched, grabbed the sword, wrenched it from Baron Isambard's hands, and threw it away. The baron staggered back, on his knees. Then the troll swung both hands together, as if clapping. The baron was between them. There was a crunch, a gasp, and blood spattered everywhere.

The troll turned ponderously toward Adin, its face contorted in pain. All the others were dead or fled. It lurched toward the body-picker, blood streaming down from the wound in its thigh.

"Sprigg!" the body-picker called. "No, Sprigg!"

The troll stopped, confused, surprised.

"Sprigg," Adin said again. He looked around him. There was no living man in sight anywhere. "It's me."

"Father," the troll said. "I hurt."

"I know, Sprigg," Adin said, reaching out to take the troll's hand.

The point of a sword suddenly thrust out from the troll's abdomen, just below its breastbone. Its eyes and mouth got very large. Adin stared uncomprehendingly as it went to its knees, a gush of blood running from its mouth and nose. Adin jumped back, barely in time

to keep from being crushed by the huge body as it fell forward on its face. Behind the troll stood Hallock.

"What have you done?" Adin demanded in a low, shocked voice.

"I killed the troll," Hallock said proudly. He brandished the charm his mother had given him. "I just rubbed it on the sword lying here, to make it work, and it did."

"It did indeed." Adin looked down at the troll. It was not yet dead, but dying quickly. "Let me see that," he asked the other body-picker, reaching for the charm.

Hallock handed Adin the leather bag. "My mum gave it me," he explained. Adin examined the bag gingerly, opened it and peered inside.

"Interesting." He closed the bag, took it off its thong, and tucked the bag into a pocket. Then he reached down and fumbled at the troll's chin, jerked at something there. When he straightened up he held another, similar bag, its thong now broken.

"A very good charm your mum gave you," he said, "but it's done its work." He put the troll's charm on Hallock's thong and handed it to him. "Put this one on now."

"Will that keep trolls away?" Hallock asked. He took the charm and thong, and looked at it uncertainly.

"Oh, for a certainty. Put it on now." Adin bent down over his son the troll. Sprigg's eyes were still open but glazing, his breath short and shallow. When he stood again Hallock had placed the thong around his neck. The bag hung close under his chin.

"Very good, Son," Adin said, watching as Hallock's eyes became dreamy and distant. "You *are* my son, you know," he went on.

"Uh, yeah," Hallock murmured. He fumbled at the bag with clumsy fingers. "This thing smells funny."

"Sure it does," Adin said. "That's the charm." At his feet, the troll died.

"I'm hungry," Hallock said, tugging at his clothes as if they were too tight. He kicked off his shoes.

"I don't wonder," Adin said. The mists swirled around them, but thinner now. Soon the battlefield would be clear. "We'll have to feed you up," he said. "Took a long time to get poor Sprigg here as big as he is. Come on now." He took Hallock's hand and led him away from the rapidly decaying corpse of the troll. "You and I have a lot of picking to do." ■



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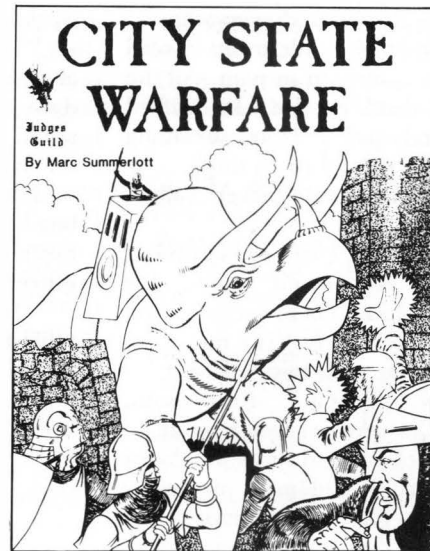
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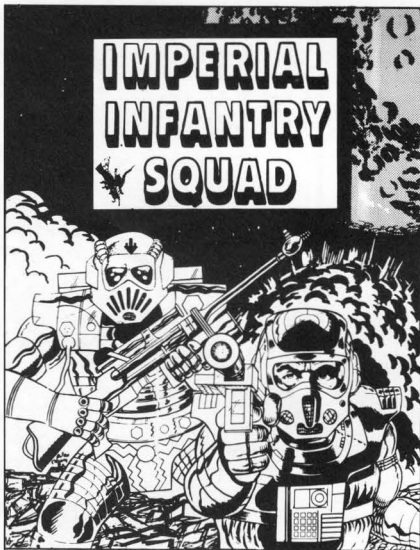
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# THOSE CHANGERS OF SHAPES



## Keith Taylor

If you're determined to pillage the world's most nastily haunted places for a living instead of being a woodcutter like your old man, it's certain that you will meet a shapeshifter someday (and maybe you already have). If you're lucky, the meeting will be pleasant. If you're not lucky, you may not even survive. For that matter, if you offend a magician, you may end up *being* a shapeshifter for the rest of your life. With no control over when and how you change.

Are you sure you wouldn't rather be a woodcutter?

No, I thought not. When the craving for riches or adventure strikes, it is a dreadful addiction, and shapeshifters are one of the occupational hazards so the more you know about them, the better your chances.

Gods and demons are at the top of the tree. They can assume any form they wish, from tiny to enormous, as quickly as a viper can bite. While demons can sometimes be controlled by magicians, gods, let's face it, are answerable only to other gods and are usually pure trouble to mortals. The best thing you can do is hope they never notice you.

Vampires are noted shapeshifters. Their ability to turn into bats is well known, but they can also become large black dogs or dissolve into mist. Since their weaknesses are just as well known, you can equip yourself against them in any village with garlic and wooden spears.

After the undead, consider the dead. Many a

ballad and legend tells of returning ghosts who appear to their loved ones in a different shape at first. Later, they allow themselves to be recognized. Sometimes this is a test, sometimes a low treacherous trick to gain entry to a dwelling by being invited in as if they were normal guests — for ghosts don't always come back for gentle purposes, and their return may be feared with good reason.

Far more common are shapeshifters who meet two (comparatively) reassuring conditions. They are human, and they are alive. Because of these qualities, they are far more likely (a) to *want* to join your party as allies, and (b) to be welcome.

These human shapeshifters are of three main types: they were born that way, they became shapeshifters by their own choice and effort, or they had it forced upon them.

The evidence suggests that born shapeshifters owe their power to a set of recessive genes. A person with the full set has a second identity as a certain kind of animal and can physically become that creature by willing it. He or she will also have an overwhelming need to do so. No ritual or spell is needed, no magic apart from what they carry in their chromosomes.

In myth and legend, the were-beast is often the most formidable creature in the region. It makes a better story that way. However, there would seem to be more to

this than the wish of bards and storytellers to be sensational. Among the things that make any animal impressive is its size — and in any region human beings are in the top one per cent of living creatures for bulk. In an instinctive, physical transformation, there must be a certain agreement between the bulk of the creature's two shapes. If a woman turns into a hare, what happens to all that excess bone and flesh?

(A trained sorceress who wanted to become a hare for a little while could solve that problem with complex spells and preparation. But she would run a dreadful risk of no longer being able to think coherently enough — with a brain the size of a hare's — to resume her own form.)

Suppose you enter a country where a monstrous were-bear is destroying herds and people. The culprit in human form ought to be conspicuous. You'd be wasting time with any suspect shorter than six feet or lighter than 300 pounds.

Finding a were-wolf is trickier. He may be any runt. One hundred pounds may not be impressive, shaped like a man, but it makes a sizable wolf. One hundred and fifty would be enormous (if you meet it at dusk, red-eyed and snarling on a lonely forest path, it's apt to look twice its true size to you anyhow).

All were-creatures are strong and swift beyond natural limits, and all but unkillable in their beastly shape. Any slash or stab wound will heal in seconds, without a scar. Amputations will not, but they're hard to inflict. A were-beast's speed and agility makes it hard to lay an edge to its flesh, while the uncanny toughness of its tissues makes it hard to cut deeply.

Their weakness is silver. A silver weapon can inflict a terrible wound easily. Were-creatures feel such overmastering revulsion for the metal that they run away, though. Unless you wear seven-league boots or the equivalent, you have small chance of catching them.

After bear and wolf, the were-pig is probably the most dangerous shapeshifter of Europe. Selchies, or seal people, are rarely dangerous. They live a precarious and sometimes tragic existence, forever caught between the sea and the land.

Selchies take human form by shedding their animal pelts. In the same way, swan-men and -mays put off their plumage, and by stealing it you can gain power over them. There are cases of men marrying transformed seals or swans through this kind of blackmail and trapping them in domesticity for years. They usually found their stolen pelt in the end, however carefully hidden, and then they were gone.

Now, obviously you can't gain their services as *shapeshifters* in that way. Before they can change shape again, you'd have to return their pelt. Unless they have shape-



shifting cousins willing to pick up the bill for them, you'll have to get voluntary help. It may be appropriate to your venture or it may not. For instance, if your journey is to be wholly by land, with a series of tunnels and dungeons at the end of it, a selchie will be about as much use as measles . . . unless some of the tunnels happen to be flooded. A swan-man wouldn't be of much help underground, either. On a voyage to an island riddled with undersea caves, some of which contain treasure, their aid might be priceless.

Less well known are were-deer. Mostly these are of the roe or fallow species. Few humans are big enough to change into red deer. About the only mention of these beings in popular tradition has been in sad ballads about beautiful women whose husbands hunt and kill them in ignorance. A hart is a fierce adversary, though; its antlers are far more than ornament.

A wild goat would be even better to have on your side in rugged country. Were-goats are tough, agile, able to scale the most forbidding slopes, leap chasms, watch from otherwise inaccessible crags, and fight hard. Their horns are no joke.

So far I've been writing about shapeshifters of northern descent. *Born* skin-turners or lycanthropes have an affinity with the region, the habitat, that their



**32A** You look tough to him, and he stops. As he raises his unburdened hand, a blue fire pours down his right arm from the ball. He screams as you see the flesh burn away from his arm. Before you can do anything, he becomes a human torch. In a moment, he is reduced to ashes!

The guards come to his screams, and you quickly relate to them what happened. This adventure has been worth 325 e.p.'s and the 2500 g.p.'s for the dead spy.

**32B** Even though you lost your fight, the guards who were alerted by the sound of it have entered the room and killed the spy. The ball, however, falls and breaks on the ground. Your mission has been a success, and you get 275 e.p.'s for it as well as 2500 g.p.'s for the dead spy.





ancestors lived in longest. A shapeshifter with mainly African forebears would become a leopard, hyena, baboon, gazelle, or wart-hog. Baboons are agile climbers and savage fighters, but if you encounter a were-baboon (male) keep in mind its vile temper and indiscriminate tendency to rape. A horny baboon will violate almost anything that moves. All weres have some characteristics of their animal selves, even in human shape. It's a point to remember if you decide to hobnob with them.

There are many Central American legends of were-jaguars. The Olmec civilization left statues of "jaguar children" with heavy-lipped, downturned mouths and slanted eyes. The jaguar cult was an important part of their religion. Were-condors, were-tapirs, and were-llamas are not mentioned even in legend, so far as I know. Neither are were-anteaters. Still, they may exist.

I've described born shapeshifters as the result of a complicated set of recessive genes. It seems the only explanation that covers the facts. So many must have been killed as children, and yet they keep being born occasionally, to parents who are not themselves changers. Many people must have *some* lycanthropic genes and possess

the urges and hungers of their particular beast without being able to physically change into it.

I suspect that's the case with most berserkers. They cannot become a wolf, bear, or boar, but for a short while, in fits of terrible rage which must come easily to people in their frustrating position, they become inhumanly strong, savage, and immune to weapons. When the fit does pass, they are left exhausted and may not notice until then that they've taken death wounds.

In Europe, lycanthropes are usually loners, doomed to be killed by ordinary folk once discovered. Other cultures have been more tolerant — or perhaps lacked the means to kill them, such as silver. North American legends describe whole tribes of wolf or bear people, just over those hills or beyond that river, accepted as neighbors.

Magicians and gods have been known to impose shapeshifting as a punishment. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a large collection of such stories. In the Welsh *Mabinogion*, Gwydion and Gilvaethwy were changed successively to deer, swine, and wolves because they had raped a royal attendant. In Tanith Lee's story "The Winter Players," an evil being enslaves one of the protagonists by cursing him with lycanthropy.



**33A** Two Rangers hustle the Merchant off before he can get to the meeting place. It is lucky for you that you decided to tail him instead of going on ahead. They obviously saw you talking to him. Soon they are joined by a third man. The maps are exchanged for the daughter, who came with the third man.

If you wish to wait and escort the Merchant and his daughter back to their home, go to 20E. If you want to take on the Rangers, go to 28G.

**33B** As you leave the room, you suppress a laugh. Being connected with the Rangers, you know all about the invasion plan. You go out and select some helpless Humgruffin and frame him as the spy. You kill him, and bring him in to collect the reward. They pay you 2500 g.p.'s and give you the pardon; this was good for 50 e.p.'s. You find that very funny; after all, you are the spy . . .



**34A** The guards rush into the building through the lower floor while you go up the wall. At the window, you hear sounds of fighting. Inside you see the spy locked in a swordfight with Prince Arion, the 14-year old Prince of Gull! Even as you watch, the Prince slips and the spy poises himself for a death blow.

If you merely stand and watch, go to 20A. If you shout and attack, go to 28A.

**34B** If it would have been a nice plan if it had worked; however the Rangers saw you talking to him while in the bar. They hustled him off to a different meeting. You spend a cold night waiting for a meeting that never takes place. The merchant talks and your cover is blown. This adventure has been worth 225 e.p.'s and little cash. One thing you should know, however, is that the Rangers still only got doctored maps. Your attempt was not a total failure.



All this may convince you that it's better to acquire shapeshifting powers yourself than depend on someone else's. It's quite possible. I never heard of anybody becoming a vampire by choice — and I certainly wouldn't recommend it — but there are other ways.

Chinese Taoists teach that the power to change shape can be achieved by increasing your "vital essence." Study and meditation is the lawful way to go about it. Dark magicians take a short cut by stealing the vital essence of others, a little here and a little there. Like the western incubus, they do this through sexual intercourse, making sure their partner orgasms while holding back themselves. Besides the obvious drawbacks, if you try this you had better fear a lightning bolt from the thunder god, Lei Kung (he punishes those who waste rice as well as wicked sorcerers, so eat your breakfast cereal).

In legends from northern China, the most common were-beasts are the fox and tiger. Neither is compatible, mass for mass, with the human form, unless of a giant or dwarf. There would only be a few of those. The rest were probably ghosts or very sophisticated sorcerers. Besides, China's ancient culture places such emphasis on discipline and organization that even the

gods are shown as heavenly bureaucrats, each in charge of a particular function. Creatures as lawless as born were-beasts were no doubt conscientiously expunged. Less coyly, wiped out.

Magicians were accepted. To become an animal by the appropriate spell or ritual was not improper. In China, even the gods must use a particular formula to transform themselves. T'ien-kou, the Celestial Dog who assists the Second Lord to drive away evil spirits, knows seventy-two spells for changing his shape.

Even in the younger western cultures, many people did change to animals by design. The vikings knew that one did not have to be born a were-wolf. It was possible to become one by wearing a wolfskin and chanting the proper runes, or by putting on a belt made from the skin of a hanged man.

Some kinds of shapeshifting are not physical. A magician can cast the semblance of something different on an object or person. He can also take it upon himself. This kind of "shapeshifting" is only illusion and deceit, but it can still be effective. Gwydion, the sorcerer-poet of the *Mabinogion*, was a master. Lady Vivayn in my novel *Bard* is another expert.

A different kind is often used by shamans. Aided by fasting, chanting, or drugs, the shaman enters a trance and sends his spirit out of his body in a different form. No fleshly transformation is involved, so there needn't be any correspondence between the size of the shaman and his spirit beast. It may be a toad, serpent, otter, fox, cat, mole, fish, or wild ox. Very often it will be a bird, as the purpose of the trance is to fly to the Otherworld and find hidden knowledge there.

The dangers are many. The shaman's physical body is helpless while this happens, and it must be hidden or guarded. His spirit form is vulnerable to harm by supernatural beings he may meet in the Otherworld. If not damaged, his spirit may be trapped and detained — and unless he returns to his body within a certain time, his body dies.

In fact, being a shapeshifter is so dangerous that most people would thank their gods they weren't born one. Fearful mobs persecute you, the greedy or power-crazed seek to control you, and fanatics try to exorcise you, convinced you're possessed by demons. Self-appointed heroes and champions want to fight you, generally with the unfair advantage of silver weapons.

Anybody who wants to turn his skin in the face of all this is welcome to experiment. ■



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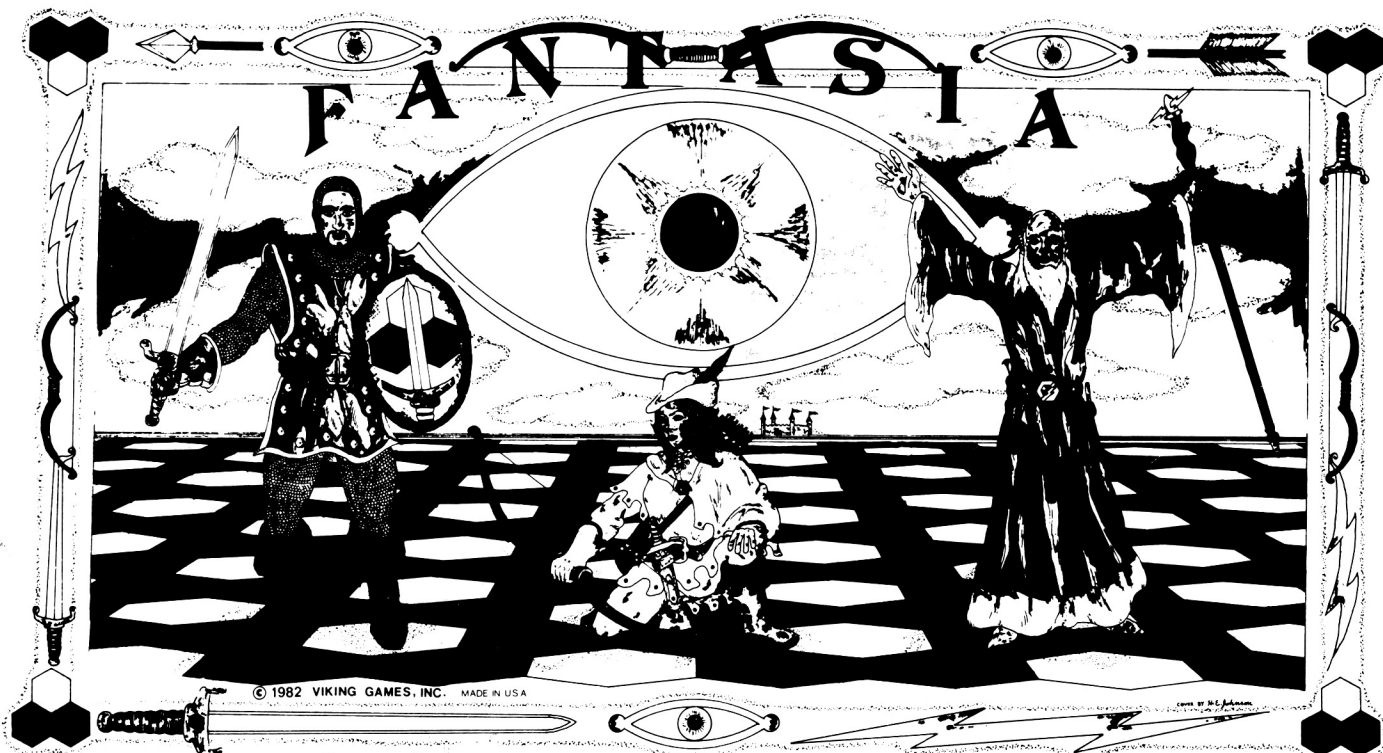
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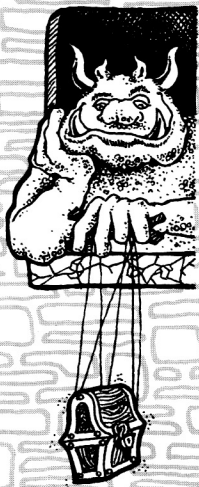
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# DRAMATIC LICENSE

## Goal-Oriented Role Playing

—Mark Zutkoff

No matter how dedicated, the serious FRP'er can still get tired of "the game". Eventually, whatever system is played, it becomes an endless parade of horrible monsters surprising parties around corridors, empty room after empty room, long treks through the wilderness to get to yet another dungeon . . . And the player packs up the game and looks for another system on the market that has "more realism".

There have been debates upon debates involving "realism in fantasy games". As with the evil wizards and mountainous ogres which players must face and destroy, in the battle of realism vs. fantasy — there is no middle ground. Either a game has too many unexplained phenomena and seemingly random or capricious die-rolls, in which case it is "not realistic enough"; or valuable gaming time is spent rolling up a character with 25 characteristics who will be out of the game in two minutes because he forfeited his rent adventuring and not working at his "job" in the fantasy world. "Too realistic," is the cry (true-to-life, maybe, but too realistic for a fantasy game).

What is missing in the game is a sense of *drama* . . . a pattern of purpose to the

play. In a game of imagination, there seems to be a dearth of creativity. And players, therefore, are always looking for something better.

Examine the root of FRP: fantasy literature. FRP came from the written words of authors like Robert E. Howard, Edgar Rice Burroughs, J.R.R. Tolkien, and others. Most FRP systems are offshoots of this original source material, and thus by their very makeup had to borrow from the impetus of fantasy novels.

What made Howard worth reading? What made Tolkien's world so inviting that we not only liked reading more and more about it, but wanted to travel to it and be a part of it ourselves? When Conan entered a sorcerer's catacombs, was he just wandering aimlessly, waiting for a wandering monster to attack him? When Frodo and Sam traveled miles and miles to the Mountains of Mordor, were they doing it for experience points? When John Carter jumped into a melee with four gentlemen of Barsoom, was he doing it to go up a level?

No!! Conan either wanted to steal a wizard's treasure or rescue a fighting companion or beautiful girl. Frodo and Sam didn't cross into Mordor for their



health; they were bound by the terrible mission to destroy the ring. And John Carter was usually trying to rescue Dejah Thoris again.

Why do so many FRPers try to write fantasy literature of one sort or another? They find that they must *structure* what is going on more than in their average fantasy game; they must give their characters a background, if the reader is to identify with them; they must create a goal, or mission, for the characters to accomplish, lest they wander around aimlessly for 300 pages. The neo-authors seem to enjoy the challenge of this structure; they gain the ability to share, with those they have never met, the excitement and drama of their fantasy world.

The point is that fantasy literature works because of *dramatic license*. We identify with the characters because of their background or idiosyncracies, but we identify with the *situations* because they are *goal-oriented*. There is a mission . . . and we live or die with its success.

This is one reason that some of the Tolkien or Howard imitators' writings do not stand up well. They huff and puff to create a world around some characters . . . but forget to give real motivation to the characters' actions. A sense of mystery works . . . but not when it confounds the dramatic capability of the story.



**38A** As you pause in the doorway of the Kraken's Cave, you let your eyes adjust to the darkness. A shadowy figure darts into an alley to the right. You run after him. Make a second-level saving roll on Speed. If you make it, go to 28B. If you miss it, go to 20C.

**38B** You begin to have terrible pains in your throat and stomach. Your teeth crunch when you bite down, and your tongue hurts. The drink contained ground glass. Take four dice damage, no armor will help. You fall over and black out, whether you live or not.

When you awaken, you are told two things. First, the person who got you with the drink had lost a son to the Rangers in a raid, hence his attack on you. Second, the spy has been caught. Your services are no longer required. The Captain pays you 500 g.p.'s. This has been worth 75 e.p.'s . . .

Drama in a game can be heightened by mystery. But somebody has to know what the mystery is about — otherwise, nobody cares about the solution. Too many FRP games emphasize the necessity of keeping things secret from the players, and the maintenance of surprise. But too few give the reasons why such a need exists: *not* so the players can't guess what's going to happen, but so the players will see a *reason* for things being kept from them.

**Goal #1. Keep the "how" from the players, not the "why".**

This mania for secrecy developed at first because of the sheer plethora of rule sets, charts, and articles in the hands of players. Players knew all the books and supplements backwards and forwards. There was no more surprise! A good GM should design the events in his dungeon or world so that even if the players *know* what is about to happen, they will have to act decisively to either prevent it or be a part of it.

*Adventure* (available for Atari's cartridge Video Computer System), a "game" of modern technology, contains a simple goal: find the enchanted goblet and bring it to the Gold Castle. The enemy: three dragons, scattered throughout the "kingdom", each harder to kill than the last. The obstacles: labyrinths, catacombs, locked castles, and a black bat which takes perverse pleasure in stealing things from you.

You know what's been programmed each time you play the game. However, armed with this foreknowledge, you must invent solutions to reach your goal. For example, you can grab the bat as he passes with your sword, and use *him* to kill the first dragon. You can outrun the red dragon instead of standing and fighting, because he'll kill you every time. You can use the magnet to attract the goblet rather than trying to pick it up by hand.

The events are rigidly structured; they have to be for the game system to work. But there is plenty of invention and excitement every time the game is played. One could still adventure throughout the catacombs and castles, slaying dragons as one went, if the quest for the goblet were removed. But there would be no tension, no real surprise. Why do so many of the successful fantasy novels, movies, or modules involve a quest (or quests)? The quest provides the "story". The characters provide the moving elements that bring the story to its conclusion — successful or not.

**Goal #2. Give the players a mission to handle — every time you play.**

The most successful game modules or solo dungeons are those which contain a goal, a mission, a quest. The element of surprise is inherent in the "story" of these modules, not in some random, off-the-cuff die roll. Those which are not as well



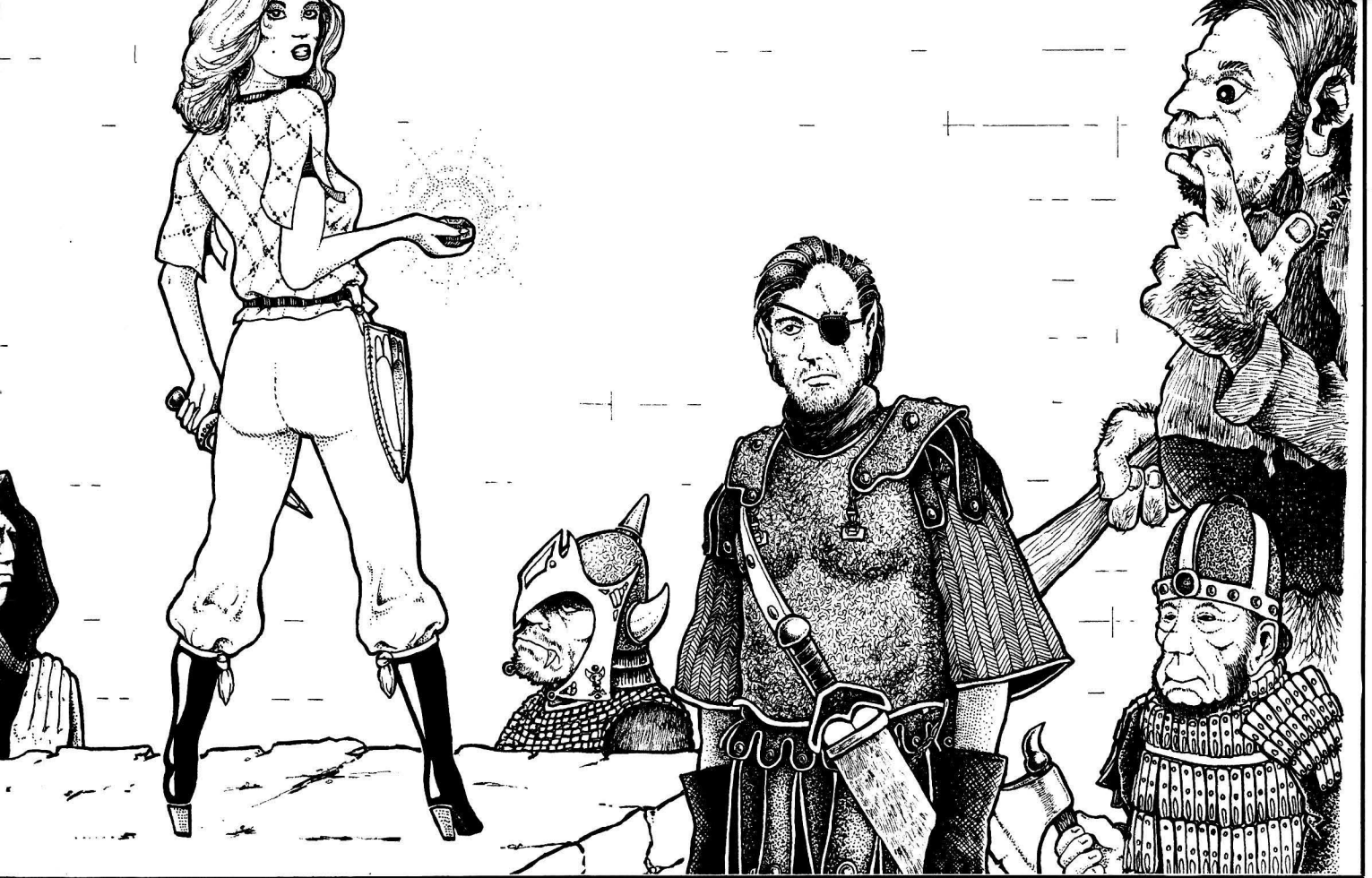
received are usually of the "hack-slash" variety, with an opening statement like, "You are standing in front of a dungeon," without a word about how you got there or what you are looking for.

FRP is not usually restricted to one adventure. Its strength is the use of continuing characters in new situations, adventure after adventure — similar to series television. You will almost never see an episode of a television series which does not have a mission or goal for the characters to accomplish — whether it be as simple as Hawkeye trying to humiliate Major Burns by making him think he's being promoted, or as complicated as Captain Kirk restoring the future by seeing Edith Keeler killed. (If you see an episode without such a goal, count it as likely the show will soon be cancelled.)

**Goal #3. Provide a brief, utility-oriented background for each character. Better yet, let the player provide it (within reason).**

Some systems attempt to jump over the problem by substantiating a world or universe within which players can adventure. The overall effect of such systems is to bog one down in the tedium of everyday living, rather than to give a player a mission and allow him to complete it. While a system which provides a "job" that the player returns to after each mission may be technically correct, it does not lend itself to the adventure-orientation required





by the fantastic. In a word, such a world becomes "mundane". A world which postulates that the player spends all of his time in the dungeons, never needs a bathroom or a steady income, and never spends three months of game time waiting for the next adventure period to take place, may not be "true-to-life," but it's a damn sight more exciting to play in!

Some would say that those who structure the "story" or the characters in this way take too much *dramatic license* in the game, introducing too independent an element for the GM to coordinate. A romp through deadly-land, with tricks and traps becoming the mainstay of an otherwise pointless journey, does not require too much imagination — just a good wrist for die-rolling. But FRP, by its very focus on the fantastic, *requires* a stretch of the imagination by both players and GM — something it gets very rarely.

**Goal #4. Let the story dominate, not combat or the game system.**

Scratch an FRP'er and you find . . . a wargamer? Most FRP'ers would deny this. But ask a typical player about the last adventure and you'll probably hear about the time the party was attacked by fifteen orcs. Despite the technical requirements of combat (charts, dice, position, etc.), it is the easiest — and most noticeable — part of fantasy role-playing.

Combat as the main emphasis only

turns FRP into a traditional wargame. By the nature of its conflict, a War Game already has a goal built in: break through the German army, kill three Messerschmitts, etc. The combat becomes the means to attain the goal, and thus contains its own dramatic license. In FRP, the game master must create this drama.

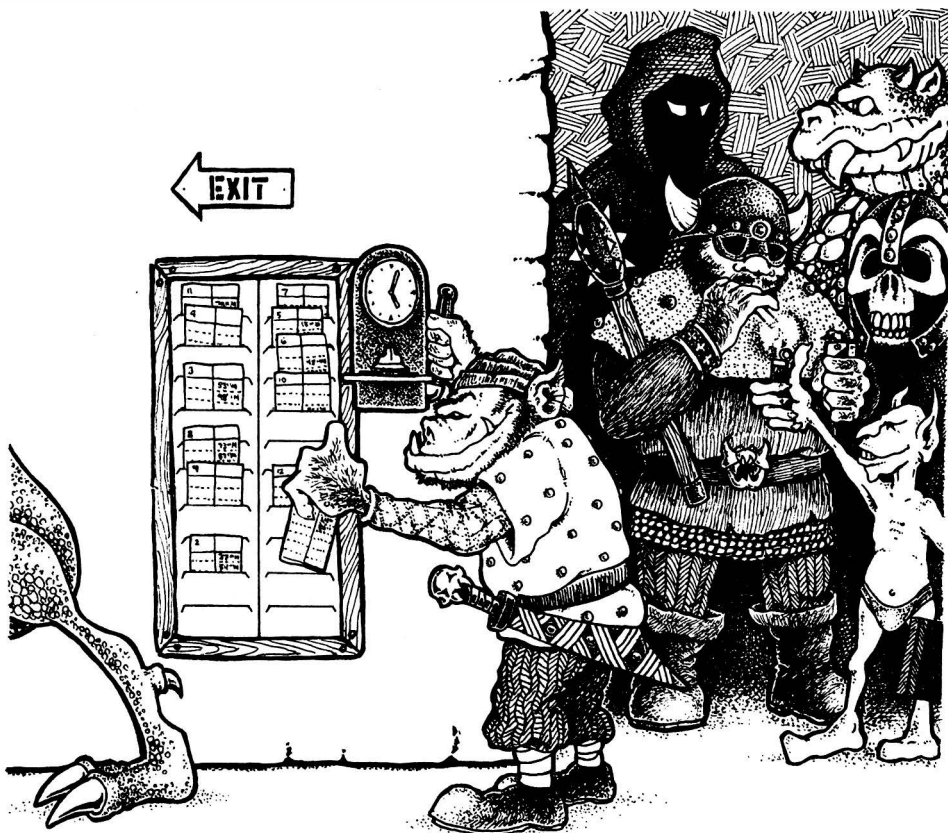
The systems themselves do not contain the drama. It is up to the Game Master to take this dramatic license and include it in his or her world. Why are the players going to the dungeon? Not just to "look for treasure," but for a particular treasure, one which an evil wizard across the land has searched for throughout his life to complete a set which will give him infinite power . . . etc. Why a cross-country trek? Not just to get from here to there, but perhaps to attract the notice of a nearby warlord, or to discover a lake which contains a magic liquid which is worth many shekels, or . . . You get the idea. Each situation carries within it its own goal. *And the players are made aware of this goal.*

Once this is done, the surprise is *not* "what you're going to discover," but what's going to *stop* you or what you'll discover *about* your goal. The players' roles become more dramatic. Each contains a motivation. Perhaps one player has designs on becoming a great and powerful wizard himself, and agrees to find the treasure so that *he* can keep it instead. Or perhaps a

priest, finding himself in a strange land, looks for souls which are broken so that he can mold them into an army to support his lord, who is fighting a losing battle with the original inhabitants of the land . . .

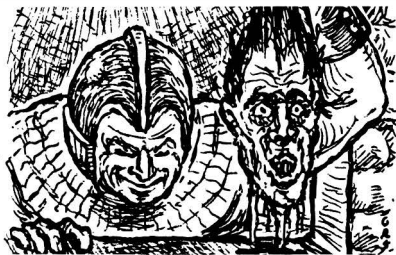
Generally, the game systems differ in three areas: character generation and maintenance, world generation and maintenance, and combat. With obvious exceptions, character generation is constant from system to system (the exceptions usually involve much more information being generated than the average gamer needs or uses). Character maintenance is also constant, in that it is left up to the player to maintain the character. In the absence of stronger guidelines, it might be advisable for the player to work closely with the GM in maintaining the character throughout a connected series of adventures. The character's goals should change as his health, company, and financial status change. The GM should be made aware of these changes and keep them in mind when designing adventures or foes.

A player should also be aware that a character's likes and dislikes are not usually in stark black and white, but come often in shades of indecisive grey. Conan may have had prejudices against wizards, but he would do their bidding when their pay was good. Frodo and Sam didn't like Gollum, but they worked with him for a while. A



**40A** "A spy, men; get him!" the guard croaks. You point to the window he went through. Black armored guards pour up the wall and into the Palace. You hear the sounds of a fight, then a scream. One of the guards appears at the window with a head held aloft by its hair.

You have succeeded. You get 200 e.p.'s plus the 2500 g.p.'s promised. They also give you the pardon and make you a Knight of Valor; Gull's legendary award for civilians who have done a great service to the city. This adds two to your CHR. You are done.



**40B** The man rises and says he demands "satisfaction" and wishes you to meet him outside. If you go with him, go to 40C. If you hit him here and now, go to 6B.

**40C** The Kraken's Cave is packed with sailors, harlots, and servants of every size, race, and description. You're smart enough to have changed from street clothes into something vaguely appropriate for your surroundings. But with this crush of people, you've got no idea how to handle your investigation. If you'd like to raise a glass in toast to the Rangers, go to 20B. If you'd like to curse them aloud, go to 6A.

reaction of hate just because another character or NPC is "opposed" to that character's "background" is *not* in character, and should be avoided.

Moreover, the GM should be aware that a character's background should not become a stereotype for that character. The concept that a penalty be imposed should a player act "out of character" is widespread but misplaced. Instead, a reason for the aberration should be found — if not by the player, then by the GM, and a story can and should be created around that. Comic books have used this device for years: a character acts "out of character" and spends five issues searching for the reason. Seize the opportunity and work with it!

World generation differs from system to system in piddling ways. Some use charts; others use die rolls; nearly all have their roots in random determination. It is up to the GM to come up, not with a "reason" for the world, but a "method" to the world, even if such a method is shrouded in madness (after all, look at our own . . .).

Why does the world have all these dungeons? For that matter, are they dungeons? Maybe they are above-ground establishments, but with dark, dismal, and winding staircases or rooms. Maybe a civilization was influenced heavily by stories of underground creatures and designed its architecture accordingly.

Why the various wizards and brigands and orcs? Find a method and make it stick.

Find a structure that allows for future building, and then build on it. Take a leaf from one of television's most imaginative writers: Gene Roddenberry. His formula for a successful series could be tested by his sitting down and writing story outlines. If he could write twenty quick story ideas and outlines in a day, he was on to a formula that had real potential. Even if you don't write the whole thing down, keep it in your mind and let it fester. Think about it; enlarge upon it; and then unleash it in your gaming.

"But what about combat?" Every game system has its own method of conducting melee and magical combat. Pick one and use it — *only when you must*. Combat is an interlude, an act-ender, a momentary flash compared to the ongoing drama of the story. Don't get so wrapped up in combat that you forget about the rest of the intrigue.

In fact, use the combat as a bridge for future stories. A magic sword suddenly fails to kill its victim. Why? Immunity . . . an ancient curse . . . a counterspell . . . any of which could be investigated. A particularly loathsome creature stays out of the fight, attacking only when forced, and fighting with an anguished cry. Why? A geas . . . a transformed man-creature . . . a genuinely non-violent monster . . . any of which are springboards to adventure. Design your fights and monsters the way you design the rest of your world: with a method, with care, and with an eye to furthering adventure.

#### Goal #5. "What if?"

Constantly ask yourself this question. What if a character became deathly ill in the dungeon and his friends couldn't leave him to die? *Find out!* What if a wizard condemned an entire town to inhabit a dungeon as monsters? *Find out!* Pick a "what if" and play it out.

Of course, you may not be a budding Tolkien. You may not have the story instincts of a Roddenberry. But you've picked up this magazine; you've got one or more FRP games; you've shown you have enough imagination to investigate that which is out of the realm of the ordinary. Your friends will notice what you're doing and (once they get past the initial shock) will aid and abet your "plotting". Of course, you have no guarantee of the soundness of your structure as you would if you bought "Battle of the Bulge" with its board map of Europe and its counters of precise American and German troops.

But that's why FRP games don't come with a board or counters. Your imagination and sense of drama are the ingredients necessary to make the game work. Take the "dramatic license" the game gives you; you don't even have to pass a test to get it. That's your first goal in goal-oriented FRP. ■





*... featuring weapons and armor of unusual nature, items not often well-defined in fantasy role-playing games. Values marked with \* are those which seemed closest to how such a weapon should be treated under the T&T rules. If you play other game systems, the descriptions should help you adapt the weapon to suit your own requirements.*

## NUNCHAKU a Class III Hafted Weapon

**Origin:** Southeast Asia, ancient derivation

**Length:** each haft: 30-45 cm.

link between hafts: 5-20 cm.

**Cross-section of haft:** 4 cm. diameter

\* **Weight:** 20 weight units (2 lbs.)

\* **Cost:** 100 gold pieces

\* **Dice:** 3 dice

\* **Dexterity required:** 16

\* **Strength required:** 7

### CONSTRUCTION

The nunchaku is a pair of hardwood hafts hinged together by silk cords or a light chain. A universal joint permits the pieces to swivel independently; one haft is held and the other swings freely as the weapon is most commonly used. The length of each of the two hafts may be all of the same diameter, or they may taper slightly towards the hinge. The cross-section of the hafts may be square, hexagonal, or octagonal in shape. The nunchaku hafts may be wrapped with metal to help support the wood and marginally to increase the clout of the thing when it connects.

### COMMENTS

The weapon is, like many others, derived from an agricultural implement — in this case, a common flail. Whereas in Europe the weapon derived from the flail has a long haft to hold onto while a shorter section swings freely, in Asia the weapon so derived has hafts of equal length. The result is a smashing weapon better suited to in-fighting. The nunchaku can also be used to deliver a jabbing or poking attack, as well as being useful to ensnare fingers, hands, wrists, and such as well as delivering anything from moderate pressure to destructive crushing. The amount of parrying which the weapon can provide is neither more nor less than the usual amount which any weapon can offer. Note that the nunchaku has been unreasonably glorified in poor kung fu films, and against an armored foe it will not be particularly effective while still bringing the wielder into close proximity to his or her opponent. ■



illustration by Steven S. Crompton



# LETTERS

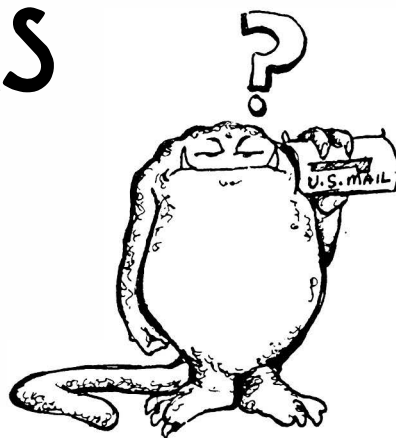


Illustration by Mel. White

What can one say about issue 15? It was good! Not great, but good. Although it did *not* contain a GM's dungeon, it did have a few things that more than made up for it. "First Command" was the best mini-solo that I have seen to date, although I fail to see why a shark-skin shield can take 8 hits. I've seen sharks punctured by *extremely* dull diver's knives. A sword, it seems to me, would have little difficulty going through it.

"We Who Are About to Die" and "When in Rome" came along at just the right time. My city's arena has just gone into operation, and these two articles were just what I've been needing. The Hit Location Chart is a GM's dream! And the REP points are great. The only problem now is, "How do I get all of those delvers *out* of my arena?"

I have to totally agree with Fred Meyer that we need more background on Rhalph and Khazan, Khosht, Gull, and Phoron. Newcomers to T&T are always asking me to give them more details on Khazan or Khosht. And I can't tell them anything except what little I have gleaned from the Solitaires.

"The Opal Egg" by Robert Vardeman was an exceptionally *great* piece of fiction. How often, I wonder, does he play RPG's? Probably a lot.

"Magic Stuff" by the ever-popular Mr. Cram is something that I have been long awaiting. It clears up a few problems that I have run across in T&T. The list of potions provided was all too short, but it did start the wheels rolling in my little brain and before too long I had added about twenty more potions (with complete descriptions) to the list. Mr. Cram, my helmet's off to you! Good job!

And last but definitely not least, Michael Stackpole's "Skills" was another great article. It also was one that

has been needed for a long time, and it was altogether *too* short!!

Michael Jarrell  
Tel-Aviv, Israel

*Sounds like the issue suited your tastes except for all around being too short, eh? Congratulations on doing what was clearly needed, and filling in the blanks to fit the articles to your use!*

*Shark-skin shields . . . ? While not my area of expertise, where would butchers be if cows came "shielded" in their own skins? Perhaps the merfolk have some special shark-tanning methods unknown to the more mundane races.*

Just got SA #15 — great issue! Always like to get into the T&T gaming articles and this had lots: the gladiators, spell staffs, alchemical potions, skills. The mini-solo was good, too, though I was disappointed that there was no lump of e.p. or payment (g.p.) for completing the mission (you'd think there'd be something after such an adventure!).

Michael von Glahn  
Coralville, IA

I am very disappointed that I have not received my summer issue of *Sorcerer's Apprentice*. I initially thought that possibly my issue was lost in the mail, but after I checked my neighborhood hobby store I found out that the summer issue wasn't even on the racks yet. I realize you are understaffed, but it's Autumn [October] already, and supposedly time for issue #16 let alone #15 which I have seen neither hide nor hair of!

By the way, whatever happened to all those projects we readers voted whether or not we'd like to see? So far all I've seen is the *Citybook*.

Kraig Binkowski  
Detroit, MI

*Astutely enough, you've noticed that we are, in*

*fact, very behind. Citybook was halfdone when that survey was run. Some projects listed then are in that state now, and you'll see them when they're ready — but not before. Meanwhile, see the editorial for a glimpse of the special contents of SA 17 — what promises to be an extraordinary issue!*

When I saw the cover of SA #15, I thought it looked like just a so-so issue. Then I began looking at the cover more closely, and I began seeing all the little things: the glowing eyes in the background and how the tree limbs were hands. It became a great game just looking at the cover!

"First Command" turned out to be a pretty good solo, except it wasn't up to Ken St. Andre's almost infallible expertise.

All in all, it was a great enough issue to make Grimtooth brush his teeth every night! Keep up the Grim-great work! (P.S. Bring back "Weapon's Shop" or I'll gut you!)

Brooks Rogers  
Deephaven, MN

*When Grimtooth brushes his teeth, it's a little like a warrior cleaning his sword . . . he has work to do (or clean-up from work done!).*

*I trust you'll leave my guts where they belong, thank you; "Weapons Shop" returns this issue, thanks to the very capable artist/writer, Michael von Glahn. However, to keep up with the column, we'll need more submissions . . . some of you must know interesting and bizarre weapons and their particulars, yes? War spoons? Aboriginal yo-yos? Hockey sticks?!*

. . . about berserking in the T&T rules. It states that someone berserking will lose all his personal adds. The rule we use is that you lose your DEX adds only, because you are not particularly trying to hit something vital, you are just trying to pulverise your opponent. We do give ST and LK adds. Your adds will, of course, go down because your ST is reduced as normal, but it still gives you a better chance.

We found that after a few adventures with attributes and adds being raised it is not profitable to berserk at all. Surely it is always profitable to berserk. After all, Conan berserked quite frequently, and his great strength was a significant factor in pulverising his victim. This is why we have made this rule. Do you think that this is a good idea? If so, let other berserking delvers know.

Ian Winstanley  
Littleover, Derby, England

I would like to know what, if any, system you use for characters who are martial artists. I currently use four dice hand-to-hand, the double combat adds



of a barbarian, restricting them to non-berseker fighting — only two-die weapons — and the ability to choose how much of their combat adds to use at any time. This is in addition to meeting the attribute requirements of Strength, Intelligence, and Constitution of at least 12, and Dexterity of at least 14 (they are obviously a sub-class of warrior).

This system seems to work well, but I was just curious as to how you might do it.

Dave Schuey  
St. Louis, MO

*If it works well, and preferably simply, then it's probably a good system. If others have comments, they're welcome to pass them along.*

• • • • •

*I'm not sure why we're printing the two letters that follow (one of which arrived just moments after the first), but there was this strange compulsion to include them in the letter column this issue. I don't understand it, but I'll let you decide for yourselves . . .*

This is it, Gargonzales [*sic*]! We've had enough of your ridicule. Just because we don't have our own book of 101 campfire songs for kazoo and electric bagpipe doesn't make us inferior. Right now we would like to

point out a few things that Gargonzales forgot to say about his great society. For instance, their recruit training, the Boy Scout Handbook, and the Charlie Brown Dictionary [are] all they use for basic training. Oh yeah, Garg', you better check your Charlie Brown Dictionary because you spelled DIDDY wrong! You say your "tentacles" are long and subtle. We know of your methods, and in fact, they remind us much of the Monty Python sketch about the Spanish Inquisition in which the priests torture a prisoner with a comfy chair, poking with a pillow, and making [him] read a nice magazine. Something you also forgot to tell the world was that the only reason that you removed those three letters from the alphabet was that you couldn't draw them and that with your thick Brooklyn accent you could barely say them.

The Foolish and Entertaining Refutation and Rebuttal of Exasperating Talks Trio of Wotan's Order of the Oriental Druidic Conclave of Hellishly Unspeakable Cosmic Knowledge.

**WARNING!** Do not read what follows while seated under a pyramid of jade or lithium having inclines steeper than 37 degrees . . .

Regarding Frater Gorgonzola's message that you so kindly chose to print in SA #15 and WOODCHUCK's response: here at the ol' Sanctum Triarchus of the Magical Army of Rascals for the Muddling of Obvious Truths, we look upon FERRETT's disjointed ravings with mirthful glee.

It is quite clear that the sub-bayronic Byronic iambic pentametrical paleoglyphs we inserted into Frater Gorgonzola's letter were more than successful in scrambling the synapses of the WOODCHUCK minions who read the thing (we hope no innocent parties were similarly affected). Never before has a *letter spell* worked so well, heh, heh! All according to plan . . . and thanks for the Monty Python giveaway, FERRETT; we've long suspected a security leak in the Supreme Council. Heads will roll, we promise you!

For reasons of ill health, Frater Gorgonzolas has been retired from his post of Hierophant and cannot at present autograph any more MARMOT T-shirts; however, he will retain his office as Chief Designer in our Department of Aerospace Chiroptery.

Yours truly,  
Frater Dissolvo,  
Grand Leaping Bushbat  
MARMOT



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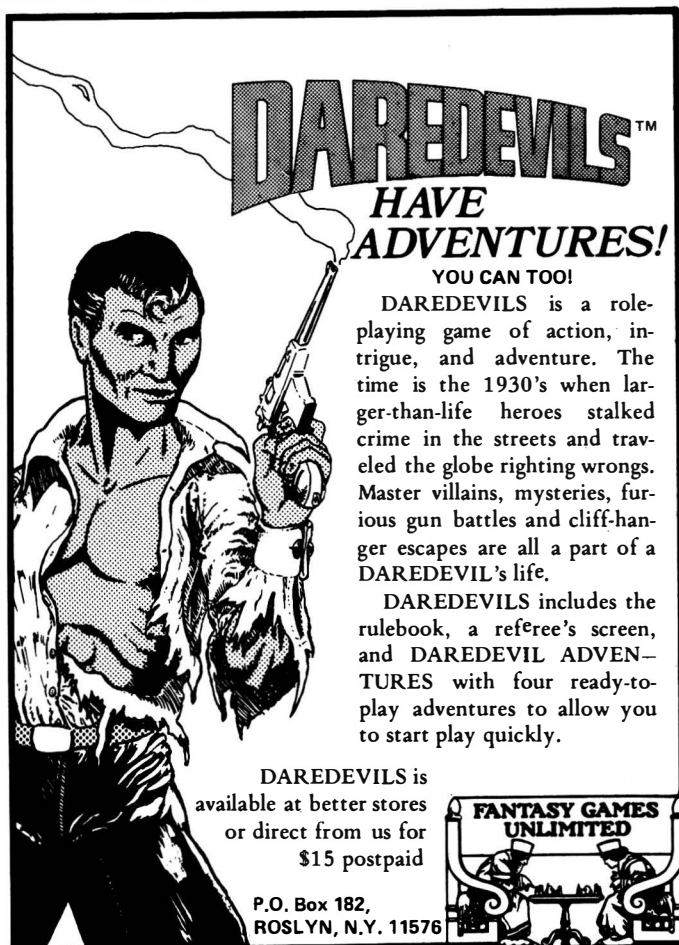
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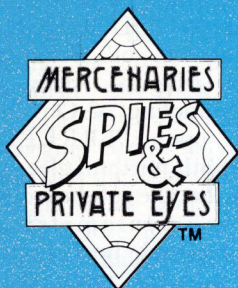
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# ROGUES'

**R**ogues' Gallery is a feature that presents different characters who can fit comfortably into campaigns and games of Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes. The NPCs listed here provide interesting people for the players to deal with, and the background and personality of individual characters may suggest adventures for a GM to run for his players. Each of the characters below are given their stats and something about their background. Following that are suggestions on how these characters can fit into a campaign. GMs are encouraged to add other details that will bring the characters more into line with their own campaigns.

## ■ Detective Sgt. Ellen MacDonough

ST:13 IQ:16 LK:11

CON:12 DEX:13 CHR:12

SP:8 HtoH adds:2 MW adds:0

Sex: F Age:31 Race: Caucasian  
Nationality: U.S. Employment: Police  
Psychic Skill: Precognition (controlled)  
Adventure Points: 5505 Level: 3 Money:  
\$50 carried; \$650 saved; \$300/wk wages.

Daughter of murdered cop. Studied for Criminology degree and computer skill. Took BS in Criminology. Rose rapidly in ranks after capturing Baytown Strangler. Ht. 5'9", 120#. Blond hair, medium length. Language: \*English.

**Skills (skill: level/APs):** Karate 3/na; Clip Pistol 2/1300; Revolver 2/1000; Shotgun 2/1000; Research 3/3000; SI Police Procedure 3/3250; SI Crisis Management 2/2000; Leadership 2/2000; Computer 4/7150; Cryptology 1/500; Bureaucracy Mastery 2/2000.

**Weapons/Armor:** Astra .357 (4 + 1) 6 shot; customarily wears Mark II vest.

## ■ Elmer "The Fish" Jones

ST:9 IQ:9 LK:10

CON:15 DEX:7 CHR:7

SP:9 HtoH adds:-2 MW adds:0

Sex: M Age:44 Race: Caucasian  
Nationality: U.S. APs: 2500 Level: 2  
Employment: News hawker & stoolie.  
Money: less than \$5 carried; \$10 saved;  
\$75/wk wages.



Sells magazines and newspapers from corner newsstand. Has done time for buying and selling drugs; now engages in buying and selling information. Height 5'2", 150#; brown eyes; bald. Eighth grade education. Language: \*English, plus street talk dialect.

**Skills:** Knife Fighting 2/1000; Revolver 2/1000; Shotgun 1/500; OS Thief 1/300; Street Fighting 3/3000; SI Boston Celtics 2/1000; SI Underworld Gossip 2/2000; SI City Directory 2/1000.

**Weapons:** Switchblade (2).

## ■ Davenport Brand

ST:12 IQ:12 LK:10

CON:12 DEX:24 CHR:15

SP:5 HtoH adds:12 MW adds:0

Sex: M Race: Caucasian Age: 35  
Nationality: U.S. Self-Employed  
APs: 3175 Level: 3 Money: \$50  
carried; \$1,150 saved; \$6,000/mo.  
income. (Note this income can be another way  
to handle an independently wealthy character).

Davenport is something of a "man of mystery"; he has no apparent job but the dough rolls in. He carefully protects the fact that he writes popular romance novels under the name "Regina Flame." Took a BA in English. Has won target and skeet shooting champion-

ships. Height 6', 350#. Excess weight is not entirely fat; he is a very large man under the best circumstances. Black hair, thinning and graying at the temples; violet eyes. Habitually well-dressed and well-mannered. Language: \*English.

**Skills:** Pugilism 1/250; Fencing 2/1000; Clip Pistol 2/1000; Recreational Skill-Competitive Shooting 3/3000; Recreational-Skill Skeet Shooting 2/2000; Shotgun 2/1000; Gambling 1/500; Research 2/1000; Secret Identity (Regina Flame) na/na; Elocution 1/500; OS Writer na/na; SI Romantic Poetry 2/1000.

**Weapons:** Walther GSP (1 + 1), 5 shot clip. Carried only on rare occasions.

## ■ David "Handsome Dave" DiAngelo

ST:10 IQ:8 LK:9

CON:10 DEX:17 CHR:14

SP:10 HtoH adds:5 MW adds:0

Sex: M Age: 28 Race: Caucasian  
Nationality U.S. Title: Torpedo  
Employment: "Collection Agent"  
APs: 2550 Level: 2 Money: \$300  
carried; \$1,300 saved; \$1000/wk wages.

After a difficult youth in Chicago, "Handsome Dave" found his place as a leg breaker and bagman for a loan shark. Partner of "Bull" Burrell. High school education (barely). Height 5'11", 140#. Curly dark hair. Language: \*English.

**Skills:** Pugilism 2/1000; Knife Fighting 1/500; Revolver 2/1000; Fast Driving 2/1000; Seduction 1/250; OS Car Thief 1/500; SI Inflicting Pain 2/1100; OS Vandalism 1/900.

**Weapons/Armor:** Colt .357 Magnum (4 + 1), 6 shot revolver. Switchblade (2).

## ■ Edward "Bull" Burrell

ST:13 IQ:10 LK:9

CON:15 DEX:11 CHR:6

SP:15 HtoH adds:1 MW adds:0

Sex: M Age: 23 Race: Negroid  
Nationality: U.S. Title: Torpedo  
Employment: Leg breaker for loan shark  
APs: 2045 Level: 2 Money: \$100  
carried; \$1,100 saved; \$1,000/wk wages.

Raised by foster parents until age 15;



# GALLERY

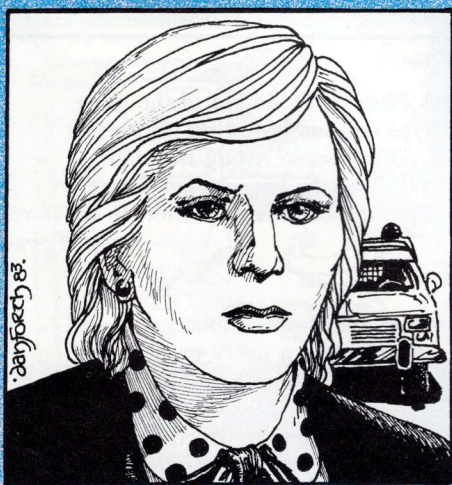
by  
Michael  
Stackpole

then left home and has been on his own since then. Education through 10th grade. Currently the partner of "Handsome Dave" DiAngelo. Height 6'3", 225#. Short dark hair, moustache. Language: \*English.

**Skills:** Gambling 2/1000; Environmental Survival-Urban 3/3000; Elocution 1/500; Ambush 2/1000; Knife Fighting 2/1000; Karate 4/na; Clip Pistol 2/1000; Street Fighting 2/1000; Fast Driving 2/1000; Motorcycle 1/500; Lockpicking 1/500; Safecracking 1/500.

**Weapons:** Colt 1911-A1 (4 + 1), 7 clip 45 automatic. Hunting knife (2 + 2).

The characters presented above may be slipped into a campaign with a little additional work by the GM. The GM will need to provide them with a place to live and a job location appropriate to the campaign. Connections between these NPCs and the player characters should be developed, as well as connections between these NPCs and other NPCs developed by the GM.



*Ellen McDonough* should be employed by the local police. The obvious place for her to come in contact with player characters would be at the scene of the crime. She should probably react to characters initially with a certain amount of distrust. Her tolerance, trust, and

even liking of the player characters should grow or diminish as is appropriate to reflect their successes and/or failures in the adventures where she encounters them, and in what ways their actions affect her and her duties. If she comes to trust the characters, she might confide in them and enlist their aid to crack a case that her precognition has alerted her to — yet she cannot track down the clues, or she cannot confide in her colleagues (perhaps because the clues implicate another cop as being the criminal). The worst thing a GM could do with Detective Sgt. MacDonough is to reduce her to being just a secretary *cum* crime computer taken advantage of by the characters. Make sure she receives a favor for every favor she gives them, and have her grant any favors at all very reluctantly indeed.

*Elmer Jones* should know much of what is going on in the underworld of your campaign. The more valuable the information, the higher the price. If a character is very anxious to get some morsel of intelligence, Elmer will hold out for a great deal of money. Elmer will also sell the fact that someone was asking about a certain subject, especially if the person who made the original inquiry would pay to discover who is asking questions. The thing that is most consistent about Elmer is that anything he has is for sale, but it is also important to note that he will not get personally involved in actual crimes ever again. The threat of imprisonment is not something he can easily deal with. This weakness is not knowledge he would allow to be broadcast, and the players will have to discover it for themselves if they can.

*Davenport Brand* can be introduced to the characters in a number of possible ways. The characters could be present at a reading he is giving, or they could just happen to engage him in conversation at The Empire Club. Brand will be quite personable and entertaining, though he will deftly deflect inquiries about his occupation with small talk about his "novel." Any of the women who frequent

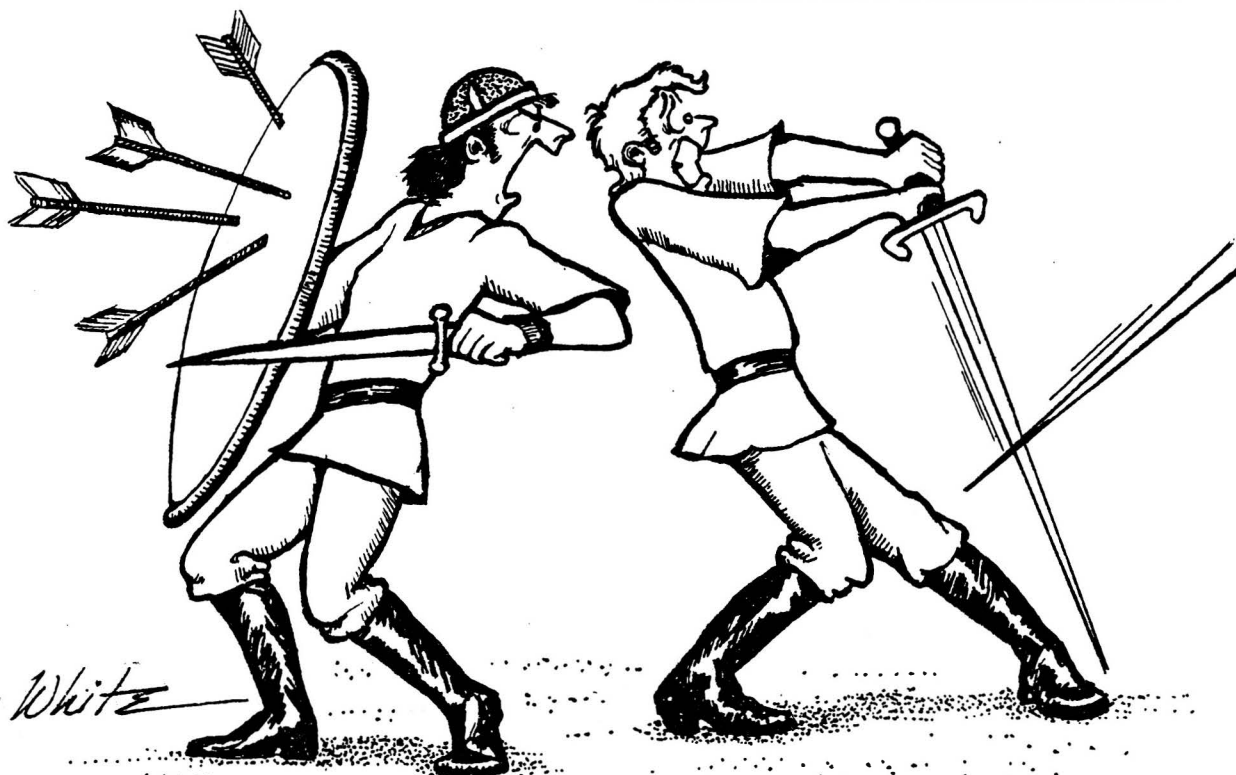
the social teas where Davenport gives his readings will be able to fill in the information about Davenport's epic novel about America, about the broad cast of characters, and all of them will express regret over the fact that he has not finished it yet. Davenport will be an appropriate character to bring in to a mystery involving the upper crust of the city, and he could serve as the passport for characters into the local high society.

*Handsome Dave* and *Bull Burrell* are thugs who can easily enter a campaign in the thick of the organized crime element. Neither is very bright, and both are likely to utter mindless (and not very subtle) threats against any characters who run afoul of them. These two will function well as leg breakers, beating up those late with payments, or as bodyguards for some local bigwig, or as bagmen collecting protection money. They're likely to kill those who talk to the law about their operation. If the GM first introduces these two through flying rumors, he can heighten the tension of that inevitable first meeting. (This will be especially true if the characters first hear of the two from the sobbing widow of one of the victims, or something equally emotion-packed. Emotionally involving the characters will ensure their interest.)

If these characters are used carefully and skillfully they can provide added color and fun to your games. The descriptions should make these characters more than just cardboard walk-ons, and repeated appearances in your games can add more personality traits to make them even more useful. The addition of background details or the creation of scenarios centered around these characters will lighten the GM's load and provide games with more than just AP awards at stake. Furthermore, don't forget the possibility of twisting these character descriptions: Bull Burrell could actually be an undercover FBI agent, for example, which leads you to even more convoluted scenarios. Good luck with these NPCs; may they serve you well. ■



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A demented muttering gnome,  
Quite enraged by a river's white foam  
Dived in with a jeer  
To fish with his spear  
While piranha reduced him to bone.

—Vic Melucci

The GM's have infamous deeds  
Which a good player certainly heeds.  
But is it that fair,  
When in a troll's lair,  
We're run down by a taxi that speeds?

—Kathy Dancsecs

There once was a she-elf named Leynir  
In battle, was often the feigner  
She'd lie on the ground  
And make not a sound,  
And live thru fights as the only remainder!

—Cat Francis

A Norwegian knight of the lords  
Was constantly testing his swords  
To prove wrong the claim,  
That he felt was his shame,  
That the knights were short in the fjords.

—Fran Pennock

Once there was Pholar, a wizard,  
Who owned a nasty great lizard.  
Their rations he lost  
At a terrible cost;  
So for dinner the lizard had wizard.

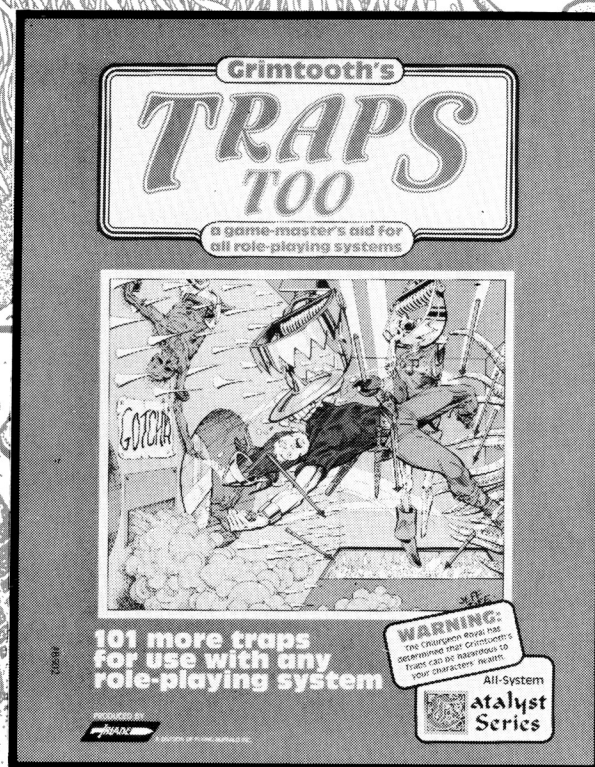
—Michael R. Jarrell

A tigerclaw fighter named Flack  
Said poison improved her attack.  
We found her last night —  
A terrible sight!  
She killed herself scratching her back!

—Peter Yearsley



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