

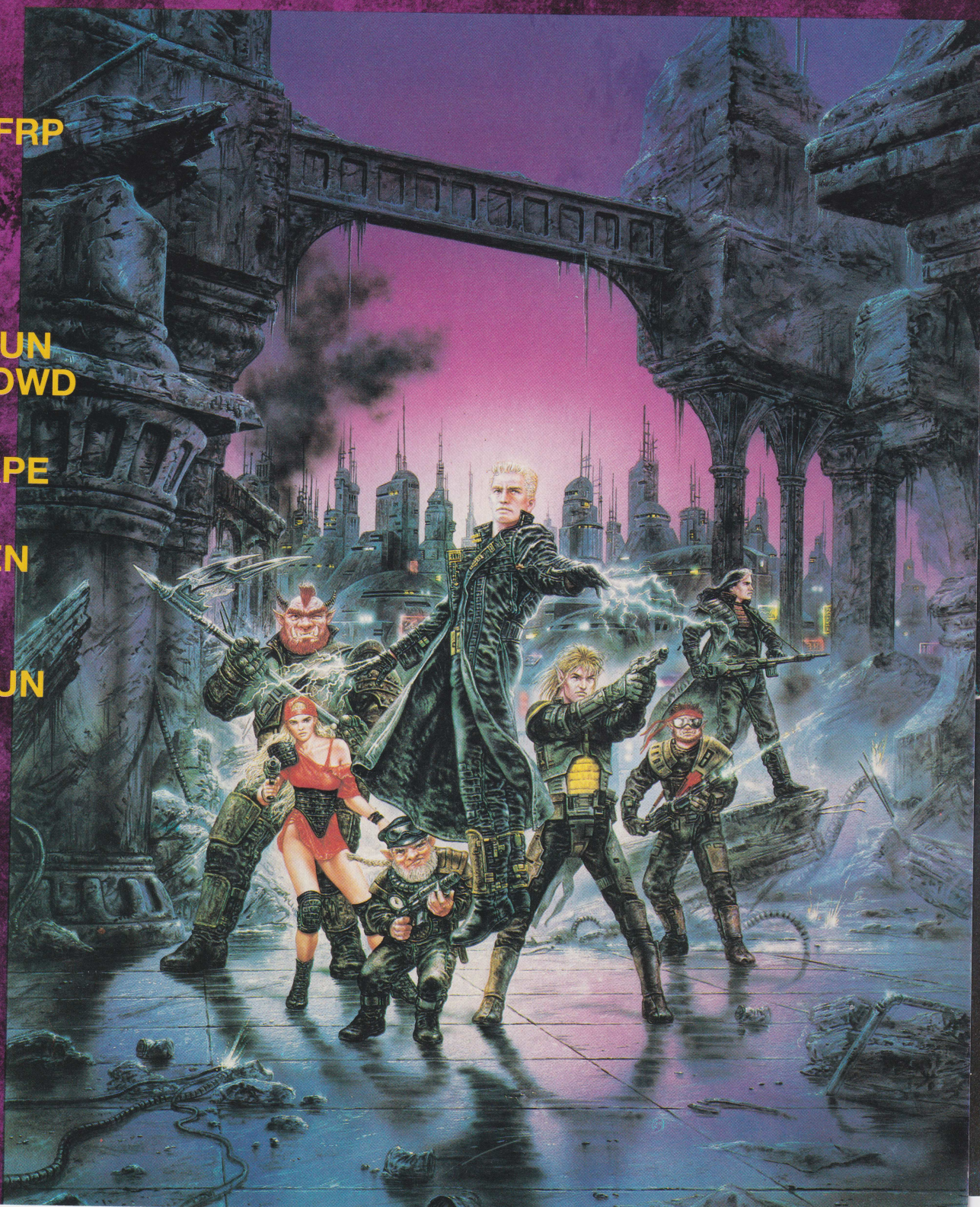
ISSUE
18

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Australian Realms

Issue 18, July/August 1994

The Australian Magazine of Role Playing

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Editorial Letters

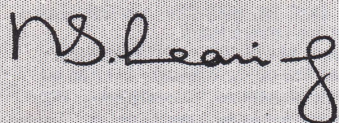
With the release of the **Adventures of the A-Team Annual**, our first production outside the magazine, we are feeling excited and proud that a new age is dawning for Australian Realms. We want to thank all our loyal readers whose popular support of the A-Team has enabled us to publish this book.

Another giant step forward for Australian Realms is our entry into the United States. To our American readers, welcome; we trust you'll enjoy reading the magazine as much as we do putting it together. And we look forward to hearing from some of you very soon.

Recently the Australian Realms offices suffered an extended power blackout as a result of damage caused in winter storms. Without power to juice our trusty Macs, staff were forced to rediscover the use of pens. My handwriting has always been poor, but after many years dependence on a keyboard it has become atrocious. What's more frightening is that without the ability to instantly self-correct as you can with a word-processor, I find it very difficult to write at all.

This dependence on technology is entering other areas of human interaction. Increasingly, I find people are more comfortable doing business and swapping messages by E-mail and faxes and less time is spent **talking**. This is happening in a hobby where 'roleplaying', a verbal art form, is championed as a great way to improve interactive and communication skills.

Not that I'm against technology - far from it. The tools we use to build Australian Realms from neat ideas into the paper and ink object you are currently holding are largely computers and other electronic devices. No, my concern is that on the much touted 'information super-highway' people may be in danger of speeding past each other with nothing more interactive than a casual honk on the horn.



Nick Leaning.

Jeremy McMahon
North Lambton, NSW

Dear Realms,

I remember, quite some years ago now, when I purchased Australian Realms issue 2, and was pleasantly surprised that an Australian magazine was developing. However, this issue had the same flaw as even current issues; namely, that the value for money is not as high as with some foreign magazines. Basically, the articles are good (some are superb), but few are long enough, and so I continue only to buy Realms issues that contain articles of particular interest to me.

I realise that longer articles add to the costs of production, but I for one would not mind if there were many more advertisements in the magazine. In fact, because they are Australian and therefore are relevant to me, I love reading the advertisements as much as everything else.

Because everything in 'Realms is Australian, I will always enjoy (y)our magazine. I've recently found out that the Newcastle University Gamers Society, of which I am a member, has decided to purchase a subscription to 'Realms so that its 80 or so members can decide on an issue by issue basis, if they want to purchase the magazine, so keep up the good work that is impressing us all.

Jeremy, many thanks for your comments. As you do not name the 'foreign magazines' that you consider to be more value for money I cannot make any direct comparisons. We believe, however, the cover price of Australian Realms makes us very competitive with all imported gaming mags, and the number and length of useful feature articles we run exceeds most. Plus we strive to provide an enthusiastic, varied, and independent coverage of our hobby. We welcome letters like yours as they help us to maintain our focus on what you, the all-important readers want to see in Realms.

Warren McGaw
Mt. Gravatt, QLD

Dear Realms,

First of all, congratulations on a great magazine. I have missed many issues, but what I have I like! What more could we ask for - Australian made, written, published and supported and at a GREAT price. Well we could ask for more, MORE Realms! Your competitions, letters and interviews are great. Reading the letters and articles on gaming systems/products gives interesting feedback on people's views, for instance "AD&D is out and new systems like Vampire are in".

But I believe the system you use does not matter, because when I write a campaign, I do not write for a particular system, but for a particular genre, be it fantasy (AD&D, Palladium, Gurps) or futuristic (Cyberpunk, Star Wars, Rifts), if I have an idea I develop it first, then adapt it to the system I want.

When it comes to rules, do what I do - change what you don't like or get rid of certain rules completely. Don't just say "the stupid system doesn't work", adapt it to what you want.

I remember being told Shadowrun 1st Edition was a pile of #\$\$%, and not to bother with it. I was silly enough to listen, and never found out for myself. Now I've been told (by the same people) that the 2nd Edition is much better. My advice is 'don't listen to what other people say'. Go out and make up your own minds! Why not try a new or different system at a Gaming Convention. There is always something different on offer. You never know, YOU MIGHT JUST LIKE IT. What you are told or read is just somebody else's opinion. It may be accurate and you might agree with it one hundred percent. But it doesn't have to be what you believe. The system is only as good as you make it. Remember, this is just MY opinion.

The most impressive feature of AR (to me) is the UNAE campaign setting. It is great. The articles about the various lands and cultures that make it up have been one of the major reasons why I have continued to buy your magazine. This brings me to my question - Do you still require\ are looking for people who can help with the writing of modules\ and or background development for the UNAE setting.

PS. I now own a copy of Shadowrun II. I'm looking forward to playing it, instead of GMing for a change. Also, when is Castle Falkenstein arriving? I want to GM it.

Warren, we are always open to Unae campaign submissions. If you have a proposal for Unae you'd like to put to us write first requesting our Submission Guidelines. Please remember to enclose a Stamped Self Addressed Envelope. Castle Falkenstein should be available now - ask at your local gaming store.

Jillian Andersen
Perth, WA

Dear Editors,

First let me say how much I enjoy your magazine. (But watch your apostrophes please!).

Just adding my 2 cents to the 'women in skimpy clothing' issue. Nick, I think you are getting silly when you compare this to a picture of an orc getting its head bashed in. May I remind you that orcs are creatures of fantasy. Imaginary beings do not as yet count as a special interest group (though it may come to pass!). Women are real and as such have feelings and emotions. And yes, one does get tired of being confronted over and over again with the stereotypical warrior woman with huge breasts and very little armour image. Don't female warriors get the same armour choice as male ones???

Now I'm not suggesting that we wipe this type of character out completely. The WWwHB definitely has a place in fantasy mythology. My very favourite (and longest surviving) AD&D character was just such a

woman. She was not terribly bright, but woe betide anyone who said that to her face! And how boring it would be to ALWAYS play fine upstanding women who put forth their views and are taken seriously and don't have a vindictive bone in their bodies. (Almost as boring as always playing a bimbo sex object women with no minds of their own!).

VARIETY is the keyword to this whole situation, isn't it. If you find that every female image in your magazine is half naked, it's time to review the situation! Consumers who want more flesh can go and buy the 'Women in Fantasy' calendar can't they.

PS: I like how you alternate between he and she for personal pronouns.

PPS: Doesn't anything nice EVER happen in Unae, e.g. birthdays, weddings, enjoying the fresh air/ flowers/ birds singing, fertility festivals, etc.?

Jillian, WWwHB? Now there's an acronym. See Karen Ogden's article on page 32 of this issue for her further advice on this.

The point I was trying to make in issue 17's Editorial about orcs is that their depiction in rpgs as acceptable objects of violence may be just as objectionable as the overtly sexist depiction of fantasy females. Orcs don't exist, but nor do fantasy female warriors. It is the attitude of acceptance of these images - the orc having his head bashed in because of its race and ethos - that needs to be examined.

Oh, and yes, nice things do happen in Unae, but as soon as the Episkopom hear about it they arrange for the Inquisition to send along Des Sankta Glavos knights to put an end to the activity! Burvoy may be a chivalric exception to this rule - see this issue's Unae campaign article.

Clayton Johnston
Bunbury WA

Dear Realms

I would like to congratulate you on a fine editorial in issue 17. Sexist images and the associated arguments have had a healthy life in the magazine, with, I believe a healthy outcome. But now you have truly opened a can of worms.

Violence - politically incorrect?

Racism - politically incorrect?

Or just plain wrong.

If people were serious about being 'correct' and 'sound' then they would also deal with these topics. To not to do so would show a type of selective blindness, something many Vampire players already seem to suffer from when they patronise 'their' game company. Printing 'her' instead of 'him' is fine, perhaps even cool. But not fine in my books if that allows you to splash Werewolf entrails, Vampire blood and violence across every other page.

Clayton, all I can say is - exactly my point! If we are going to be serious in our responses to oppressive images in rpgs we have to give them all equal consideration. Sexism is an ill that ails the world - but not the only one.

Dennis Ismay
12 Cary Avenue
Wallerawang NSW 2845

Dear Nick,

After having recently moved to a town near Lithgow, NSW, I not only can't find Realms in the magazine shop but gamers are relatively hard to find in this area. Perhaps one of your readers would be interested in playing a one-on-one play by mail game. No fees, each player moderates for the other and the two players construct the world/game as they go along. I prefer a game world that might start along the lines of Saturnalia (UK PBM) or Warhammer Fantasy Battles and then develop from there; but I am open to good suggestions. Anyone interested?

Daniel Burgess
Ringwood East, NSW

Dear Nick,

I am stunned by the quality of AR. My first purchase of your magazine was issue 16 and I was so impressed that I back-ordered issues 11-15. After receiving these, and reading the available Unae material, I have just ordered issues 6-10.

My favourite part of AR, is the artwork. I can't get enough of it and so I send my most profound thanks and appreciation to your artists; they've done a great job. I do have one suggestion for AR, and that is a trading post or a place where readers could buy, sell or swap gaming gear that they no longer want or need. I know that I have some commercial modules for AD&D that have been collecting dust ever since I ran them, once. And I also have some D&D stuff that I no longer use.

Anyway, keep up the fantastic work with AR and the artwork. Looking forward to many more issues.

Andrew Edney
1 William St
Keiraville NSW 2500

Dear Realms,

First let me say how great your mag is, everything about it is top.

Next I'd like to have a bit of a grumble. I am the owner of roughly thirty different roleplaying systems, some of which are no longer made. I would like to express my disgust at the cost of them, especially the systems that don't give you a complete set-up in the initial rulebook; I mean why put out a game (I'll use AD&D, for example) that you have to buy handbooks or even world books, the player wants at least the world (or a world) in the rulebook.

As a player of eight years and a GM of almost as long I have played many games with a very wide range of people. The group that I play with at the moment is into real roleplaying (not hack & slash or Monty Haul) and we try to know everything about the characters. In fact I ran a Pendragon campaign not long ago and out of five gaming sessions we had three combat sessions each lasting no more than five minutes of the complete session and they were having a real great time.

I'd like to take this opportunity to ask if anyone out there has a copy of the two CORPS books "Deathwind" and "Organisation Book 1", if they want to get rid of them, contact me, please. I have been searching for these two books for this game for a long time. If you get a chance, check this game out.

Dennis, Daniel and Andrew, we've received many requests to open up a 'trading area' in Australian Realms. So we've decided to start a new column - Nailed To The Post. See Lip Service (page 39) for more details.

So Sorry

Unfortunately I do not have a special offer for you in this issue. New games of Combat, Trolls Bottom, Battle Master, Isle of Crowns and Balance of Power have recently started.

Naturally, Australia's most popular PBM game, Quest, is still available with 3 free turns.

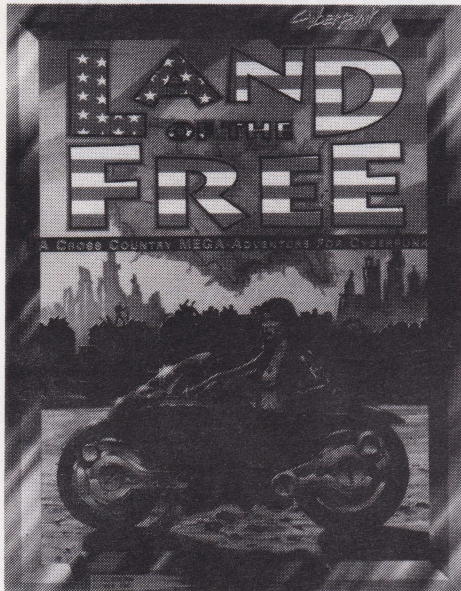
Say! Maybe you would be interested in a play test of my new 4 player game called Allsorts. Send \$2 for the rules and your exclusive Australian Realms special offer.



LAND of the FREE

Cyberpunk Campaign Set
by R.Talsorian Games

Reviewed by Paul Mitting



This new mega-adventure campaign boxed set from R.Talsorian is based in the United States as described in their *Home of The Brave* supplement. It comes in a colourful box full of goodies, which comprise a soft bound adventure book, two sheets of cut out 25mm vehicle counters, a huge map of the United States and various clues and map handouts for the players.

Quality of the production is quite high, with well rendered computer maps and evocative non-player character (NPC) and adventure illustrations. The only downer for me was that I swear the 25mm vehicles look too small, but that is probably because they are accurately scaled whereas most of my figures aren't. On the matter of figures, I wonder why they didn't provide 25mm scale street plans since they obviously intended the vehicles to be used in play.

The campaign is divided into five major segments, with various encounters and situations to be resolved in each. In the 120 pages of adventure, the main focus is to rescue a woman named Adriana from the clutches of Norcross Pharmaceuticals. Only she's not exactly a woman. Adriana is the world's first fully viable clone, making her immeasurably valuable to nearly everybody in continental USA. *Everyone* wants her!

Once the extraction of Adriana is accomplished, the players face the daunting prospect of getting her safely across the States. They will have to travel from New

York on the east coast to Night City on the west. Sounds pretty straight forward doesn't it. Initially it is. Then the players meet the airborne merc units, river pirates, corporate solos, assassins, religious fanatics, fixers, rockers and as many Elvis' as you could swing a monokatanata at.

The scope of the campaign is huge, and a fair amount of pushing the characters in certain directions is required unless you want to freeform the whole shebang. Owning *Home of the Brave* is not exactly compulsory to running this race across America, but if your players resist your subtle hints and prods you may need it for back up.

Major and minor non-player character's abound, all presented with useful background and why they are involved in the adventure. There are definitely more bad guys to waste the players than there are good guys to help them, but then life in 2020 was never meant to be easy. If you want easy, stick to dwarves and elves, my friend. A bonus in this set is that all the NPC encounters are indexed at the front of the book so you can quickly locate them when needed for a firefight or two.

Individual portions of the campaign look viable as mini-scenarios (with a bit of tinkering), so the options are to either run the whole campaign as designed or to use the pack as a game reference with adventures provided. Either way your players are going to get a load of hot action in the **Land of the Free**.

BLOODBOWL

SECOND EDITION
by Games Workshop

Reviewed by Wesley Brooks



The new **Blood Bowl** is another of Games Workshop's revisions of their already popular and talented games. For those that don't know, **Blood Bowl** is a miniatures board game of fantasy football loosely based on American grid iron, but where mashing and maiming opposition players is almost as important as scoring touchdowns. Set in the Old Warhammer World, teams can include orcs, elves, ogres and other insane critters.

Once again I find myself opening one of those huge game boxes from our friends at GW, this is of course after you finish with the magnificent cover art. Inside you discover all sorts of goodies; heaps of counters, two teams of 12 miniatures each (humans and orcs), reference cards, roster sheets, plastic range ruler, scatter template, player and team cards, special dice and a beautifully painted playing field.

Half of the 48 page Handbook is dedicated to the rules of play, which like all Games Workshop's recent game revisions simplify the rules and speed up game play. The rest of the book goes into the history of the game and of its more famous players, how the game fits into the Old World and of course, the teams - famous and infamous.

The rules for Turnovers is the real key to the ease and speed that **Blood Bowl Second Edition** has achieved. Some of the things that can occur are amazingly quick and fun to play. You can be called for an Illegal Procedure by forgetting to move your turn marker; or, if your player fails to catch a

pass thrown his way, or one of your players falls to the ground then your turn is over, the ball is now in play for the opposing coach to have his turn. In contrast to these disasters, as long as every move you call comes off, your team can continue blitzing its way through a long turn, and even go on to score!

New team layouts and skills give your old edition **Blood Bowl** team a distinct new feel, and with the new field set up restrictions the whole game has dramatically improved. You now have to work harder to achieve that all important touchdown.

All in all I like the new rules a lot and the Primrose Petal is back in force (my Elf team). The new speed at which the game can be played is great. The only negative comment I have to make is that as with all the Games Workshop revisions you can feel the large holes left in the system that the follow up boxed set will have to fill. We can expect **Death Zone** to include Dirty Tricks cards, Star Players Random Events, and rules for running leagues.

Any avid **Blood Bowl** player is gonna love this game's 100% improvement. And for those who haven't tried the game, there is no better time to start as support for the game is going to wind up again.

I really am enjoying the new Games Workshop design philosophy - speed and ease of play are the top priority for their games. All of their new stuff has it, I just wish I could find the time to play them all!

Excellent fun.

PLANESCAPE

AD&D 2nd Ed Campaign Setting
by TSR

Reviewed by Adam Whitt



Just when we were all wondering "Where to next?" with AD&D, the TSR design team have crafted a winner in the **Planescape** campaign setting. Designed by David "Zeb" Cook, this product stands out from the milling crowd of AD&D material produced in recent years - in my opinion, their best effort since *Dark Sun*, and much better than that.

Planescape comes in a chunky boxed set with an interesting 'Aztecque' logo on the cover, which turns out to be a depiction of the Lady of Pain, enigmatic ruler of Planescape's hub of campaign activity - Sigil, the City of Doors. Sigil is where most Planescape campaigns will begin with its convenient entrances to all the Planes of the Multiverse. A sound idea, well executed.

Inside the box are three main books - a 64 page 'DM Guide to the Planes' (too skimpy to do the job right, but supplements are sure to follow), the 96 page 'Sigil and Beyond' (the main event, with enough good gear to get the campaign started), an *extremely* attractive and *useful* 32 page 'Player's Guide to the Planes' (this sets the scene for the players and features the most colour art of the three books), and a neat 32 page 'Monstrous Supplement' of plane dwelling creatures.

I want to stress something here; the art in these books is fabulous - the illustrations, the incidental art, the layout, even the customised font all looks wonderful. This stuff is worth a looksee just for the graphics; congratulations to all who were involved.

And the text is great too; you know how often reading gaming rulebooks you find yourself falling asleep? Not here. The flavour of the text, and campaign, is sufficiently new and evocative to make even the most jaded gamer's eyes light up.

Getting back to the contents; in addition to the four books, you get four posters all printed two-sided which means four maps, an illustration of Sigil, some colour logos of the Factions of the Outlands (philosophical interest groups whose beliefs can actually change the shape of things), and two large sets of tables. The final item in the box is a four-leaf fold out card referee's screen which adds some tables specific to the campaign to the usual THACO and Saving Throw tables.

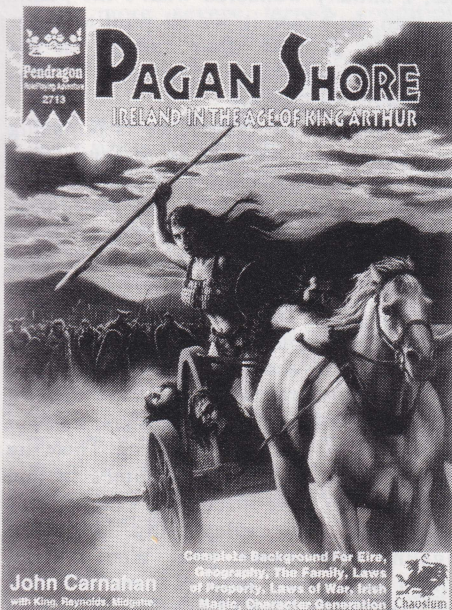
Game play? Well that is where **Planescape** really comes into its own. I had a preconception of this product as just another place to go bashing monsters, only the monsters would have more hit points than the National Debt, and with magic powers that'd send Monty Haulers into ecstasy. But I was wrong. **Planescape** is a fantasy campaign setting for roleplayers. Sure, things are tough if you want to engage in combat; but that's not what this is about. Players are treated to a wealth of intriguing campaign material and anyone with a gaming soul will find themselves longing to explore **Planescape's** many stories.

The outstanding AD&D release for 1994; don't miss it!

PAGAN SHORE

IRELAND in the Age of ARTHUR
Pendragon Sourcebook
by Chaosium

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels



Set in the Emerald Isles at the time of Malory's Arthurian cycle, **Pagan Shore** is a complete guide to Dark Age - Medieval Ireland. The cover of a barbarian chieftainess in full flight looks a little bloodthirsty for such a regal game, so what's inside?

The book starts with a glossary of Irish political jargon. Apart from giving an interesting insight into Irish politics, the glossary also provides a phonetic breakdown on how to say what for me is the unpronounceable Irish language. This is followed by a guide to the landscape, geography and climate, giving a nice feel for the setting and how Pendragon Ireland functions. **Pagan Shore** details numerous places of interest including monasteries, castles, villages and of course, the famous Irish bogs. All very good background colour.

Now we have explored where, we are presented with who. The Irish character, customs and laws, differ markedly from those of feudal England. The Irish do everything differently, from electing chieftains to their property laws. The Tuaths, or Family Clans are dealt with in detail alongside descriptions of the other races/groups which share Ireland with the Irish. These groups, such as Arthur's British, or the Vikings allow varied roleplaying options. You can play an Arthurian Knight alongside and Irish Berserker.

No journey through Ireland would be complete without a look at the mysticism and mythology that the Emerald Isles are

steeped in. The Druids, Poets, Gods and Sacred Groves of Ireland are all there and placed in context with the wider Irish society, which makes interacting with these elements far clearer - something often overlooked in other roleplaying products.

There is also a selection of spells drawn largely from Irish folklore. Some of these, like 'Femininity' and 'Interrogate Severed Heads,' add real colour. Not forgotten are the creatures that haunt the dark corners of Eire, such as the Fear Gorta, which if refused alms, curses you and yours with an unquenchable thirst and neverending hunger. One to avoid! And of course, this sourcebook wouldn't be complete without the ubiquitous Leprechaun. The book finishes with the game mechanics, character generation tables and a very interesting table for generating Geases for the 'luckier' players.

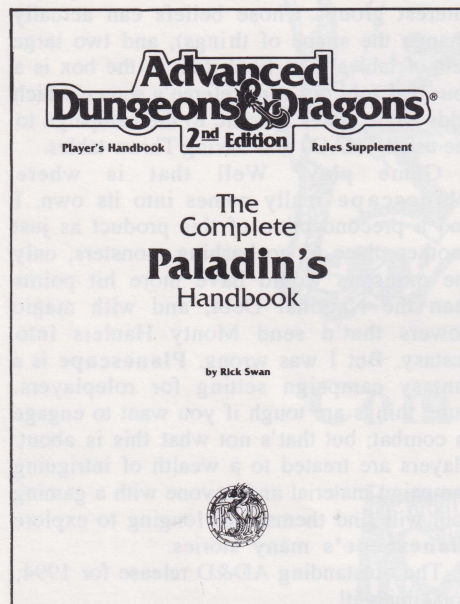
Pagan Shore is a positive step for the Pendragon game. It places the game in a setting outside of the usual constraints of the Malorian Cycle, and so gives the players greater variety and scope in their actions. The production of the book is up to Chaosium's usual high standard of presentation, being clearly and concisely written typeset, and liberally illustrated with good quality black and white drawings.

Highly recommended for Pendragon players and strongly suggested for anyone looking for a different setting for their next fantasy or historical campaign.

THE COMPLETE PALADIN'S HANDBOOK

AD&D 2nd Edition Supplement
by TSR RRP \$34.95

Reviewed by Lee Sheppard



You won't be surprised when I tell you that this supplement contains 128 pages, four excellent colour plates lifted from other TSR published works and twelve new character kits. Unlike the "*Complete Ranger*" handbook that I reviewed a couple of issues ago however, this supplement was also surprisingly good to read.

The nine chapters in the handbook cover character creation, paladin abilities, ethos, the twelve new paladin kits, proficiencies, equipment, role-playing, faith and paladin orders. The first few chapters expand, in great detail, the short description of the paladin provided in the *Players Handbook*. It's really nice to know, for example, that paladins cannot suffer from tooth decay (which helps to explain Virgil's obscene smile), as well as other more pressing concerns such as healing, holy swords and turning undead.

While guidelines are provided for players and DMs who wish to play a less "traditional" paladin, the main emphasis is on the ethics and virtues displayed by the romanticised version of the good knight (for example, there is a section on role-playing courtly love), as evidenced in films such as "*Ivanhoe*" and "*Excalibur*", and the many other tales describing the Knights of the Round Table.

The three chapters on ethos, role-playing and faith take great pains to emphasise that paladinhood is a way of life, and that players

the handbook also describe how the version of the knight depicted in such media varies quite significantly from the real thing.

The three chapters on ethos, role-playing and faith take great pains to emphasise that paladinhood is a way of life, and that players who transgress the strict guidelines laid down for such a calling should (and will) be suitably punished. Perhaps more than any other character class, the paladin needs to be played by the rules (that's rules of conduct, not combat rules), and players who aren't too keen on refusing any treasure offered, giving 10% of their income to the church and negotiating with creatures rather than just bashing their heads in had better avoid this character class like the plague.

The overriding problem with the paladin is that if the role is played correctly, there will be a noticeable lack of compatibility with the other character classes the paladin is likely to be thrown in with. To get the most value out of the *Complete Paladin's Handbook* requires a commitment from the player and an understanding group of fellow gamers (or at least a very good referee), who are prepared to accept the paladin's idiosyncrasies and use them to their advantage. If you aren't prepared to make that sort of commitment, then you should probably avoid this supplement.

For those of you that do like the idea of role-playing a Sir Gawaine or Sir Galahad this is a suitably useful supplement.

TRIAx and the NGR

Rifts Sourcebook
by Palladium Books
Reviewed by David Capon

At 224 pages this new Rifts sourcebook presents a new range of power armour and robots, seventeen in all, with each design being reasonably balanced with the rest of the Rifts system. Nine complete cyborgs are fully detailed, saving much time when creating this character type. Add to this over a dozen new military and combat vehicles and some new hand weapons and you're already getting value for your money.

The Triax Industries overview gives enough information for the easy going GM and still leaves space for the inventive. A short history details their rise in power to European mega-industry. Germany is also well detailed, explaining human, D-Bee, and monster territories. Europe is briefly covered in seven pages at the back of the book. The Gargoyle Empire is also given a solid overview introducing some unique features.

Triax and the NGR supplies another sixteen character classes to be added to the already formidable number available. Most of these new classes are related to the New German Republic's army, leaving only the Euro-Juicer and Gypsies as new playing options for the non-military oriented.

With the material easily adapted to other games of the genre, this is a very good addition to the Rifts roleplaying game.

DENIZENS: Volume I

Earthdawn Sourcebook
by FASA
Reviewed by Malcolm Adler

This latest *Earthdawn* book is a fantastic compilation of essays on four of the eight player races found in the RPG. Covering the histories, cultures, perspectives and homes of Elves, Humans, T'Skrang and Windling, with speculation on their individual futures.

The book is presented in the same format as the '*Explorers Guide to Barsaive*' from the *Barsaive Campaign* boxed set, meaning that it is full of 'real' accounts from both the scholars compiling the work and comments from 'other readers'. This book covers the races included in good detail, in a well worked format, quite frankly I was amazed by the detail.

Denizens of Earthdawn Vol. I is 128 pages of text, good illustrations and includes 16 pages of colour art showing further examples of the races and aspects of their culture.

In summary I can only praise this product, it comes in high above my already lofty expectations. My only complaint is that the one column format of the text can make it an awkward read, that aside it is flawless.

If you are playing *Earthdawn* this product is a must. The other book of the two volume set will be available in a few months, I for one will be waiting by the mail box for a copy.

Ye BOOKE of MONSTRES

Call of Cthulhu Sourcebook
by Chaosium
Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

For a game which prides itself on its creatures being too horrific to even contemplate and remain sane, let alone run into, I initially wondered what's the point? But then, let's face it, we all want to know what that horrible thing lurking in the shadows really looks like, and in this sourcebook we find out!

Ye Booke of Monstres is brimming with nightmarish new races, strange Outer Gods, and assorted beasts for use in Call of Cthulhu. The monsters are largely drawn from the classic horror tales of the likes of Lovecraft and Derleth, and each has a little character description taken directly from the source to give it life. Alongside these are the statistics for game play and some suitably gruesome black and white illustrations.

As is to be expected, being taken directly from the works of the the masters, most of these creations are truly horrifying. There are enough eyes, tentacles and slimes in this book to keep most discerning Cthulhu fans happy and their roleplaying characters giggling with insane glee. What's more, with a little effort, most of these monsters could be easily adapted to other roleplaying game formats to add a frightening twist.

Ye Booke of Monstres is a fine anthology of truly creepy creations.

OBITUARIES

Kim Sharpshire
Sales Manager

The funeral for Kim Sharpshire, a sales manager for Stonehill Publishing will be at 3 p.m. today at M.T. Burke & Sons Funeral Home, with burial at Bridges Cemetery.

Mrs. Sharpshire, 27, died from injuries obtained in an automobile accident last Friday.

Surviving are her husband, Wade R. Sharpshire (28) and daughter, Julie Sharpshire (7).

"Daddy,
where do people go when they die?"

Face Death.

Wraith.



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AUSTRALIAN REALMS

A high quality role playing magazine that is produced right here in Australia, in Perth. A bi-monthly publication that has already seen 15 issues, it contains 48 A4 pages and a full color cover. It reviews new products, a regular section on PBM games, book reviews, a brief overview of new products from a host of suppliers, and lots of scenarios, adventures, short stories or source material for many different role playing games, including *ShadowRun*, *AD&D*, *Cyberpunk*, *Mage*, *Earthdawn*, *Traveller*, *Vampire*, as well as popular board games and miniatures games, such as *BattleTech*, *Space Marine*, *Warhammer 40,000*, etc, etc.

\$27.00 for 6 issues ☐

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BATTLETECHNOLOGY

A bi-monthly publication that exclusively covers the uni-verse of Battletech & Mechwarrior. Regular departments include: News Service - historical type stuff; Unit Update - a regimental guide; BattleTac - analysis of campaigns & tactics; plus BattleMechanics - new weapons tech data. Feature articles include such things as short stories, indepth studies of Inner Sphere politics or military prowess, and other such related matters. Indispensible to all diehard 'Mechheads'!

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CHALLENGE

Games Designers Workshop's monthly mag' is the definitive publication for Sci-Fi roleplayers. Every GDW system is covered; 2300AD, Megatraveller, Twilight 2000, Space 1889 & Dark Conspiracy. Other games such as Warhammer 40K, Battletech, Cyberpunk et al, are also covered (through not as profusely as the former titles). Article definition involves RPG adventures, wargame scenarios, variant rules, new equipment, and general gaming essays. Publication regularity is very good.

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DRAGON

TSR's popular monthly magazine. The emphasis is on AD&D with a veritable treasure chest of articles, adventures & ads(!) for Forgotten Realms, Dark Sun etc. Features on Top Secret SI & Marvel Supers are tolerated, albeit with less proliferation. Every issue includes such things as new spells, magic items, strange monsters, variant NPC classes, short stories, comics, game reviews, and a broad selection of essays on gaming techniques & campaigns. Publication regularity is excellent.

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DUNGEON

TSR's bi-monthly publication specifically dedicated to AD&D or D&D adventures - with enough danger 'n' loot to satiate the wander-lust of any party. The player's quest for riches, fame & challenges is fulfilled with at least four, moderate to exceptional quality, mini-modules per issue. Every game is complete, with all necessary maps & diagrams included. Some adventures are campaign-specific, set in either the Dark Sun, Spelljammer, Ravenloft, or other such realms. Publication regularity is excellent.

\$40.00 for 6 issues ☐

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GENERAL

Avalon Hill's great publication that deals exclusively with Avalon Hill simulations (what a surprise!). Each issue highlights a specific (usually new) product, with extensive feature articles. However a selection of popular games (such as ASL, Third Reich, Diplomacy etc) are also regularly covered in detail. Article definition includes series replays scenarios, designer's notes, strategy & tactics, optional rules, coming attractions & (infrequently) variant counters. Good publication regularity.

\$50.00 for 6 issues ☐

\$80.00 for 12 issues ☐

PYRAMID

Steve Jackson's new bi-monthly role playing magazine. It is 72 pages in length, and features reports on overseas cons, reviews hot selling games, such as Earthdawn, contains scenarios and designer's notes on things such as GURPS, Car Wars, Toon, etc. It also has many regular features such as Steve Jackson's games news and release schedule, industry news, AADA news, etc. It also contains some rather tongue in cheek rip offs of other games. For example, they are running a series of Toon supplements, such as: Hampire: The Masked Ace Raid, and coming is Werewolf: Ah, Pork Lips, Gee, which games are they ripping off?

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UNSPEAKABLE OATH

A professional American fanzine-style B4 digest of arcane lore for the Call of Cthulhu keeper, player & enthusiast. Articles include the standard selection of scenarios, campaign details, new Lovecraftian (?) besties, background source material, and the other related miscellany. Everyone who enjoys chaosium's superb horror RPG would be well advised to invest in this magazine. Quality material by known english and Australian authors are regularly included. Publication regularity is slow. Back issues available are: 5 and 3, the double issue 8/9.

\$30.00 for 4 issues ☐

WHITE DWARF

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

\$36.00 for 6 issues ☐

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WHITE WOLF

A bi-monthly role playing magazine published by White Wolf. It features a mix of articles, scenarios, and regular columns and heaps of reviews. Although published by White Wolf it has an independant outlook, and recent games featured ShadowRun, TORG, Vampire, Cyberpunk, Ars Magica, Werewolf, Pendragon, Call of Cthulhu, etc. It includes both colour and black and white pages, and space is given to PBMs, and regular features on artists and their superb works. 80 pages. A percentage of the proceeds are sent on to sponsor a real life wolf pack.

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Friendly Guise

Back in issue 12 we ran a competition for readers to send in a proposal for an adventure set in our systemless fantasy campaign world, *Unae*. Friendly Guise is the winning entry, an adventure for mid-experience characters. By A.K. Michell.

When evil comes a-calling, it wears a friendly guise.

The stragglers left the woods and stumbled down the hill to join the rest of their bedraggled company. Only half those who had left on the raid had returned, and most were wounded.

"This is not good enough!" barked Lord Malachiam, "We are losing too many of our troops to these infernal ogres."

"They must be stopped, lest they damage our plans," came a quiet voice from the shadows, "and we have no other forces... at this time."

"I am aware of that priest," hissed Malachiam, "but we must gain new allies to defeat the ogre menace before all our work here is undone. Salainor my loyal friend, go to the city of Lombaro where sellswords and freemen seek work. Find capable men to aid with our problems, promise them whatever payment they want. I will waste no more soldiers destroying these wicked man-beasts. We have other works to attend to."

Friendly Guise is an *Unae* adventure set in Greater Baimiopia (see issue 13), specifically a border Barony near the Heletian Spine mountains. The adventure details a village community on the troubled frontier, its future hangs in the balance as the players are called on to play their part.

This adventure is designed for play using either the AD&D or WFRP rules system. Statistics are provided for both, but we do encourage players using other systems to adapt this adventure to their favoured game.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

1. The characters encounter the noble warrior, Salainor in the city of Lombaro. He makes them a lucrative offer to accompany him to his master's nearby border barony so that the group might help deal with an ogre incursion.
2. Upon the group's acceptance of the offer, they travel to Malachiam's barony and establish themselves in the village of Mirandola. While there they learn about the problems associated with ogres in the neighbouring woodlands.
3. Next the party find evidence of odd occurrences in Mirandola, but are distracted by their mission and leave to tackle the ogres.
4. The group encounters the ogres and discover that they are not what they seem, more embattled than ferocious. The ogre cabalist offers to parley; the group will hear an alternate story of what gives in Mirandola.
5. The party learn that kultists of the Horned God have driven the ogres from their homelands in the mountains into the woodlands closer to the village. Furthermore, they find that Malachiam's claims about the ogres are not all true. The party enter the mountains and deal with the evil creature in the ogre's village.

6. The party should defeat the dark threat in the ogre's village and find damning evidence to implicate Malachiam as a dangerous kultist. Driven by righteous anger the party return to confront the Baron.

7. The party should combat the lord and his servants in his keep, destroying the kultists and freeing the village from their corrupt control. From here the party decides its own path.



THE OFFER

The players should begin a single location in Lombaro, any place where people gather. The party could be in a minor encounter that shows off some of their tact and ability such as a small brawl that they must break up or a contest in which they participate or judge. This serves to bring the group to the attention of Salainor who is also in the location at that time. It is quite plausible to simply have him approach the group based on their reputation or on the advice of others he might question. Eventually Salainor (see description at the end of the adventure) should introduce himself as a potential employer and ask the group if he can buy them a drink.

When roleplaying the encounter with Salainor remember his background; once a noble paladin, he has turned to dark ways. He has a charming exterior, but within his motives are false.

Salainor will be generous with the drinks and entertaining in conversation, but his point will be to attract the group to travel with him to the border barony run by his lord, Malachiam Appiano. He will emphasise his lord's generosity and the beauty of the land, while playing down the actual dangers of the ogre threat. Salainor will praise the party's skills and express his lord's desire for specialised individuals to deal with the ogres who are too powerful for the guards he has in his garrison. He offers monetary rewards (appropriate to your campaign style - please be reasonable!) and possibly a land grant in the barony. Salainor can afford to be generous because he does not intend for the party to collect. He will not make offers that make the party suspicious, just an attractive offer for what seems a reasonable job.

If the characters do not have horses, Salainor will purchase some for the trip, lending them to the party until they reach the barony. The party leave soon after they agree to take the job.

- Vespesia, the Heletite, 365 EK

THE VILLAGE OF MIRANDOLA

Mirandola is in a pleasant dale close to the Heletian Spine mountains. A river runs through the town. Principally the village is structured around this and the road to Lombaro. Farms can be found to the west and a forest is beyond the hills to the north west. The village has 156 citizens, and is founded on farming, trapping and logging. The baron's fort is located to the east on the nearest hill of the Spine foothills. Between the forest and the village is a church, partly ruined, seemingly in recent times.

The history of Mirandola is long but unexciting. It is one of hundreds of rural villages settled over the past five centuries to harvest the timber of the dark woodlands that border Greater Baimiopia. The latest baron, Malachiam Appiano, rose to power in a shroud of mystery. His predecessor, Alberto Palerni, was slain in the forests, supposedly by an ogre raiding party, along with his son and heir. Appiano was a lieutenant in the lord's employ who had been sent to this backwater after personal conflicts with his cousin, Duke Damon Appiano (see Greater Baimiopia issue 13). It should not surprise that Appiano accompanied Palerni on that last tragic hunting trip. Appiano rose to fill the gap in command at Mirandola and the local urbestro accepted this as a temporary measure, a convenient replacement until a proper appointment could be made by the Duke of Lombaro. Malachiam proved such an able administrator, however, that to date the Duke has found no reason to dispute his control of the area and the truth is, cares little enough to change anything. Appiano has since replaced the old lord's men with his own loyal cadre of soldiers.

The villagers are not happy with their new lord. They consider him a cold administrator disinterested in their affairs. His men have not endeared themselves either, with their haughty manners and rowdy debauches. What is more, most of the ogre incidents of the past few years have occurred since the old lord's death. Most of the villagers do not dare speak out, but attentive characters will note this tension and may learn of the villagers' concerns.

THE TRUTH

Malachiam and his henchmen are kultists of the Horned God who are trying to establish a power base in this village. They killed the local churchman and have been summoning evil spirits, plotting malign deeds and gathering strength. The local ogres were perceived as a possible threat and so have been subjected to one of the kultists' evil sendings. Those that survived this attack have mounted counterblows against the Baron and his malign magics but are unable to defeat him. Likewise, Malachiam's forces are not yet strong enough to finish off the ogres. For this reason, he has called in the party to do his dirty work for him. Only the baron and his men know about the party's true purpose in the village.



LOCATIONS

The party will arrive in Mirandola late in the afternoon following an uneventful journey. (If the referee would like to design some minor encounters on the way to the village, I suggest you make them non-violent as the players are going to need all the resources at their disposal). Salainor will find the party lodgings at the "Riverside Inn" (location 5) then leave them for the evening whilst he reports to the Baron. He will tell the players that he'll return in the morning and take them into Appiano's presence. Until then the characters are free to explore the village.

1. The Church was once consecrated to the Church of Baimiopia. The priest who worked here, Brother Aidan, was slain by Malachiam's men. The story they concocted was they discovered an ogre raider murdering him. The ogre escaped (naturally, or they'd have to provide a body) and the people have not entered the church since. Villagers have claimed to hear noises and see lights at the church in the night and Malachiam has attributed them to the restless ghost of Brother Aidan. Unfortunately the Church is unable to send an exorcist "for quite some time" (especially since the Baron hasn't asked for one to come) and until they can, Malachiam has ordered the sorry site closed to the people. A sentry is posted to watch the woods for ogres from a position near the church, and he also serves to guard the church from trespassers.

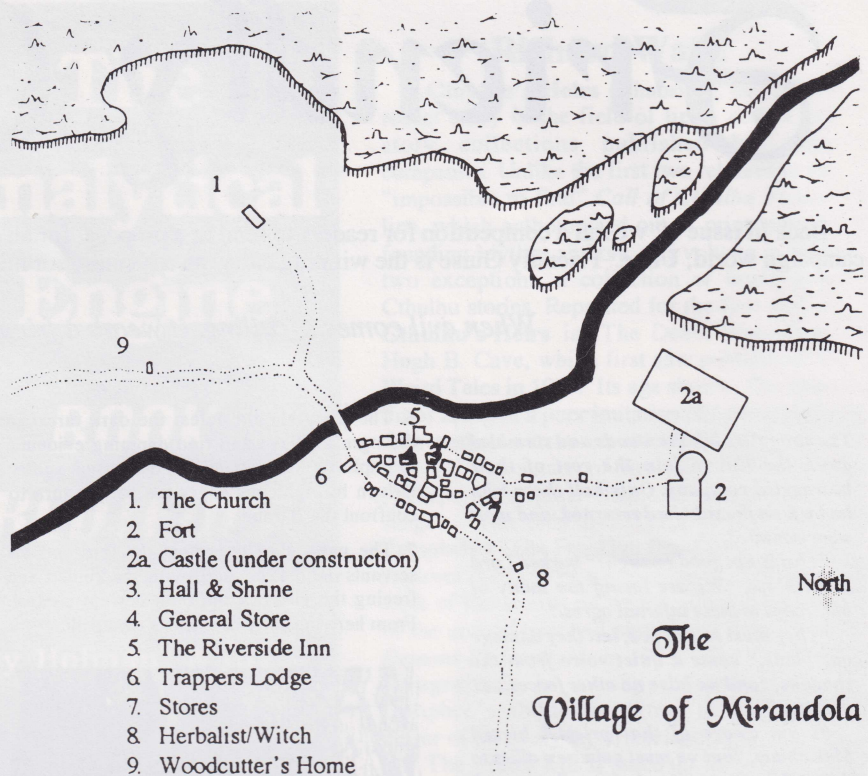
The graveyard near the church is also off limits to the villagers unless they are conducting a burial. Recently some of the guardsmen sent against the ogres have found places here. Henobarbus, the priest of the Horned God *Kult of Markosa* (see the end of the adventure), has animated eight skeletons from their graves which now guard the church from inside, attacking only should an unwanted person (one without a *Markosa* symbol) enter.

Malachiam uses the church as his shrine to Markosa. The building looks partly ruined because of the damage inflicted on it by the kultists, but within the walls Henobarbus holds terrible ceremonies for his faithful. The strange chanting and lights also serve to keep the superstitious locals away. Henobarbus sleeps here and can be found here most times.

The church has been attacked once by the ogres after it was taken by the kultists as they sensed the evil at work. Baron Appiano consequently claimed that the ogres were trying to defile the house of Krienta and so had a perfect excuse to place a permanent guard.

2. The Castle that Malachiam is having built (2a) is far from complete. The current lordly residence is the keep that has stood for over a century, but is little more than a barracks for Malachiam, Salainor and the guardsmen (20). The villagers have had no reason to visit the lord's keep and are not welcome except on days that he is hearing villager's disputes.

3. The Main Hall is the village meeting place, centre for gossip and erstwhile trader's corner. Ever since the church became forbidden to the villagers they have been holding small services in this place, led by the village urbestro, Carlo Bienni. The hall is generally bare, with some long wooden benches used for seating during meetings and services. A small shrine has been erected in honour of St. Baimio and Krienta.



4. The General Store is a standard supply shop for the village, supplying some but not all of the item's players may want. The store certainly provides only leather armour and small weapons such as daggers and axes. The store also carries a range of bows for hunting purposes, with appropriate arrows. Most items of equipment are mundane, to suit the needs of a rural community.

5. The "Riverside Inn" holds the village's only real accommodation for travellers, and the village 'pub' where entertainment and conversation can be found. Many of the rumours to be heard will be told here and there are many locals willing to engage travellers in tales if the travellers offer stories of life in the larger world for the benefit of the crowd. The people here are simple folk with little grasp of the goings on in the land at large.

The proprietor, Tommaso, is very glad to have visitors renting his rooms but the rates are not cheap (equal to high quality rooms in Lombardo). The service is good, the food is acceptable and the inn should feel like a secure resting place for the adventurers.

6. The Trappers' Lodge is a wooden longhouse used by a local group of fur trappers as a storage house, sleeping place, and trophy hall. Skins of various animals are stored here and can be bought at competitive rates before traders from Lombardo buy stock for their city shops. A variety of traps are also on offer although the trappers are reluctant to let someone buy too many - lest they become a competitor. If anyone asks as to the presence of traps in the forest, the trappers will admit to having removed all the traps from beyond the church for fear of having their kills taken by ogres. Some traps have been lost over the weeks, presumably to the ogres.

7. The Tradesmen & Crafters. The four buildings along this part of the street belong to the local blacksmith, weaver, baker and potter. Characters can purchase items typical to these small rural businesses at reasonable prices.

8. The Stone Bridge was built by church soldiers in the very early days of the original conflict with the ogres to make crossing troops into the Heletian Spine mountains easier at this point of the river. The walls of the bridge are decorated on both sides with bas relief studies of the saints of the Church of Baimiopia (see issue 12) going to war and ultimately winning against a monstrous army.

9. The Herbalist's Hut. At the edge of Mirandola is a strange woman that many of the other villages are disquieted by; yet they call on her when they need help. Mharliana is only a young woman (mid-twenties) yet skilled in many healing arts. She is the village mid-wife, a source for herbal cures and treatments, quite an effective surgeon of sorts and a dabbler in druidic magic (and follower of Tergaia - see issue 15) although few locals know about the latter talent.

Mharliana is not fully aware of the kultist's activities, but is constantly at odds with the Baron and his men including Salainor who made some amorous advances and was refused. He particularly advises people away from "the witch-woman" and encourages Malachiam to finish her off.

Mharliana was a close friend of the priest Aidan and is very suspicious of his death and the activities of the Baron, though not yet willing to make the connection. If players are in serious need of assistance in the village, Mharliana is likely to be the source, be it healing or advice.

10. The Woodcutter's Hut is the hut that a local family (Petre, Maria and little Kari) have been reportedly taken from by the ogres, but there is no sign of a struggle, and nothing else has been stolen. The innocent family were in fact taken by Malachiam's men and sacrificed by Henobarbus in order to summon the *Horc Spirit* that was then sent to attack the ogres.

The villagers will sadly point at the now vacant hut when talking of the terrible curse that the ogres have become.

LOCAL RUMOURS & LEGENDS

During their stay in Mirandola the characters should be encouraged to speak with the villagers. Although few dare to speak out against the Baron, many have loose tongues when it comes to sharing a drink and a story in the taproom of the Riverside Inn.

Some of the rumours set out below are suggested hooks for further adventures for those referees who want to keep their players in this remote but potentially interesting region of Unae.

1. The Ghost Barge. "Further up the river, nearer the mountains, a ghostly barge has been seen drifting along the river, with a wailing boatman who tries to stop people from travelling into the mountains." True, the boatman was an auxiliary for church Des Sankta Glavos knights, who was responsible for transporting wounded downstream. He was killed by an ogre and now his spirit appears to travellers to warn them lest they meet the same fate. Laying his spirit to rest would constitute an act worthy of reward by St Silva.

2. Ogre Citadel. "In the mountains is one of the ancient ogre forts, long abandoned and filled with ancient lore and treasure. The river has its source near the base of the fortress, and the ogres used the river to flush their sewers beneath their keep." True. This is the original home of the ogres of the nearby area, although no one really knows what it holds.

3. The Grand Dragon. "An ancient grand dragon lives in an extinct volcanic crater in the Spine near here. It drove the ogres from their lair onto the village and may soon come out to ravage the countryside. Some people have already claimed hearing distant roars and the sounds of wings echoing in the hills." False.

4. Lost Treasure. "Further up the river is a huge, cascading waterfall. Around the cliff face and beneath the falling waters are a series of caves that lead back into the mountain toward the ogre fortress. Rumours abound about lost treasures in the caves and a connection to the ogre's cellar rooms." True and false. The caves exist, but the rest is speculation.

5. Holy Relics. "Some people believe that when the church was originally built extensive catacombs were dug beneath it for the bodies of all those who died in battle with the ogres centuries ago. These corridors contain both the bodies and belongings of many fallen Des Sankta Glavos knights. It is said that the very sword of St. Silva lies beneath the church, a holy artifact of immense value." True and false. There are tombs of warriors and priests beneath the church, but St. Silva's relics are elsewhere.

6. Corruption in Lombaro. "Duke Damon Appiano is accused of numerous strange activities (issue 13). The Duke may have a stronger connection to his cousin and a particular interest in the small village." Where there is smoke, there is fire. Only the urbestro is likely to volunteer this rumour. Referees wanting to base their Unae campaign in this area should pursue this as much as they desire.

DEALING WITH THE OGRES

Salainor will fetch the players early the next morning and take them to an audience with Baron Malachiam Appiano. The Baron will ask them a few questions about their past, and how they propose to deal with the ogre threat. He will freely give information about the ogres - their current locale, their expected numbers and that they have shamanic magic. The Baron is eager to rid the area of the ogres, but unwilling to offer any martial assistance as his men have already suffered too many losses. If the players show reluctance, Appiano will promise grants of land, and to put in a good word for them with his cousin, the Duke of Lombaro.

The party should set off into the forest in search of the ogre camp at the prodding of Malachiam and Salainor. No one from Mirandola will accompany them as there are no helpful scouts or woodsmen available, and they will certainly not provide extra muscle. Signs in the forest of the ogres presence are easy to spot with trails and evidence of the skirmishes between Malachiam's men and the ogres. The ogres will be found on the second day, deep in the woods. At first there will be only a fleeting glimpse but then the party should gradually see a group of ogres forming beyond the trees ahead.

AVOIDING A BATTLE

The ogres slowly form into a line, aggressively toting weapons and appearing in strong numbers. It should be quite clear that the ogres are all wounded, their equipment is damaged and they all appear quite tired. The party might react by attacking the ogres and engaging the bedraggled enemy, although the ogres will fight until several are slain, or at the sight of offensive magic, when they will then withdraw deeper into the forests.

Describe a series of running battles until the ogres return to their camp. Only here, defending their families against the end will the ogres continue fighting no matter what. The players may well kill the ogres and return to Mirandola, jubilant with victory - if so go to the section on returning and deal with them as they deserve.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Should the players react with hesitation at the apparent weakness of their opponents the ogre cabalist, Gar Makken, will stride to the fore with his distinctive appearance (white cropped hair) and open a parley. He will invite the party, provided they show no aggressive behaviour to come to their camp and see the results of the Baron's attacks. Some players may hesitate, believing it a trap, but they will be allowed to keep their weapons (magic used to detect honesty will reveal genuine intentions on the part of the ogres).

The ogre camp is a collection of tents and possessions salvaged from their village. The female ogres appear to be tired and fearfully clutch small children to them as the party are brought closer to the camp. Wounded warriors lie on the ground in various states of health, including numerous who have been torn by large savage claws. Gar Makken will soothe the crowd from any hostile reaction to the party's intrusion. The players will be invited to sit at the communal cooking fire for a meagre meal and the parley.

The discussion is led by the cabalist and the Kurger, Karvarg, who discuss their position in the Heletian (Sidian dialect) tongue. They will deny killing Aidan the priest, the woodcutter's family or preying on the people of Mirandola (although they will concede that desperation drove them to taking from the snares of the trappers). They believe that the Baron has

been using the church on the hill to perform dark rituals, which is why they attacked it. In retribution the Baron and his underlings had sent a powerful spirit to their mountain village to destroy them. This forced the ogres to move from the mountains to the forests and hunt in new grounds, closer to Mirandola. Since then the Baron has continually harassed them with his soldiers, wounding many of the ogres.

If the spirit were to be removed from their village they could go back to their homelands and leave the human villagers to themselves. Although they are strongly opposed to the evil instigated by Baron Appiano, they cannot stop it. They beseech the party to help them reclaim their village: Karvarg will lead them to the village and aid them in the battle. The ogres will discourage the party from simply returning to Mirandola to accuse the Baron without evidence of his crimes. Hopefully the party will agree to help them drive out the spirit.

THE OGRE VILLAGE

The ogre village is located several miles from their temporary camp, in a high vale in the Heletian Spine. The buildings in the village are a lot more impressive than the ramshackle camp in the forest, with mud-plastered brick huts that have slate shingled roofs. Each hut has been painted in very basic tones, but the overall effect is one of a quaint village, rather than the brutish camp the party may have expected. There is scattered evidence of a violent struggle in the meeting circle, and the remains of some ogres who have been brutally slain and partially devoured.

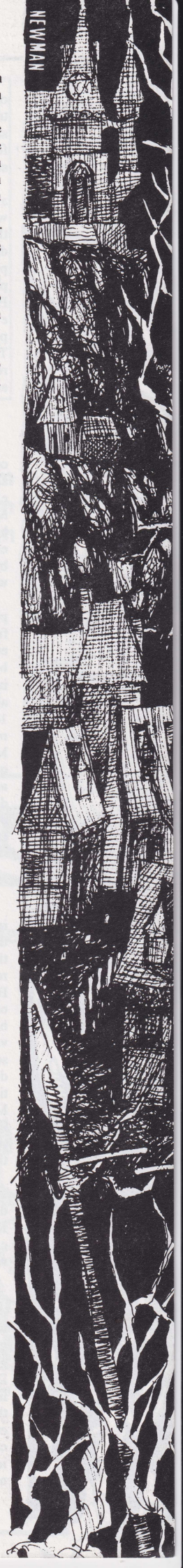
The player characters may be surprised to see how skilled ogre craftsmen are, and how well developed their culture after a steady diet of church teachings that the ogres are a barbaric race of blood drinkers. The Kurger's building contains numerous pieces of copper and silver, and beautiful items of ogre culture - totem, statuettes and carvings. The cabalist's hut contains numerous spell components and several arcane objects. The camp appears empty. The party can explore the camp at will, until the Horc Spirit takes an interest in them.

THE HORC SPIRIT

The spirit will watch the party from the Varng's hut where it has made a temporary home. It has feasted on the ogres in its initial attack and desires to continue the hunt. This entity is quite intelligent, wickedly cunning and should be played as a powerful but careful opponent. The suggested strategy for its attack involves the careful use of its innate magic combined with powerful assault, preferring to take out one character at a time. If the party do not split up, it will wait for the group to be collected together somewhere in the centre of the village and blanket them with its darkness spell, having already scried the party with both detection for invisibility and magic. It will then wait for the characters to emerge from the darkness, attacking solitary targets in the general confusion.

The beast will strike viciously, maintaining the attack only where it has the obvious advantage. If hard pressed, the spirit should be allowed to retreat and return to the fray only when it has recuperated its powers. Whatever happens, the Horc Spirit will be unwilling to continue pursuit down into the mountain valley or the forest.

The ogres are very reluctant to tackle the Horc Spirit as it is the evil manifestation of a dark aspect from their lore (Henobarbus knew this when he summoned it). Ogres confronted by the Horc Spirit are subject to *fear* (AD&D: save versus Spell or paralysed with fear for 1d4 rounds; WFRP: save versus cool for same effect).



THE MOUNTAIN SHRINE

The shrine that was used in the summoning of the Horc Spirit is located through scrub and trees to the north of the camp. It is easy to find since the entity has spent time moving back and forth between it and the ogre village since its summoning.

A small bloodstained altar remains here, along with the remnant bodies of the woodcutters family and a bloodied dagger with the Appiano crest engraved on the hilt. The dagger along with the rumours, Henobarbus's presence in (and the changes to) the church, plus several books on Markosa in both the Baron's library and study will give enough evidence to implicate Malachiam Appiano if presented to the already suspicious villagers. The party can examine these records and realise the truth behind the words of the ogres, and the deception of the Baron and his men.

RETURN TO THE VILLAGE

If the party brutally killed all of the ogres as ordered without questioning their actions, they should receive only half of the combat experience for it. Upon their return to Mirandola, however, they will be lauded as heroes by the villagers but before they can enjoy their victory they will be whisked away by Salainor to the keep for celebratory drinks with the Baron.

Baron Malachiam at this point, will be pleased that his plots have borne their dark fruits and will be looking to tie up the loose ends - the player characters. Their drinks will be drugged (AD&D: save vs. Poison, fail indicates 1d10 pts damage, plus -2 penalty on all attack, save and proficiency check rolls for 1d4 hours. Save indicates no damage, -1 on all rolls for 1d4 turns. WFRP: treat as 1 dose of Manbane see pg 82 of the rulebook) and once quaffed the party will be set upon by the Baron and his guards (a dozen or so). The kultists will dispose of the characters efficiently and brutally, although if they can subdue and capture some, Henobarbus would welcome strong souls to sacrifice to Markosa.

TRUE HEROES

If the characters have the right thing and investigated the rumours in Mirandola thoroughly, been cautious and open-minded in their dealings with the ogres, then they will return to the village wanting to apprehend the Baron. The characters may try to enlist the aid of the townsfolk against the Baron and his men, but even when presented with evidence the villagers will be hesitant to fight against armed soldiers. The townsfolk will call a meeting and discuss a course of action but this will take time. If the players vacillate too long in town, Malachiam will get wind of their trouble-making and attack them, using the excuse that the players fabricated the evidence because they are dealing with the ogres.

The ogres cannot be persuaded to aid the attack against Malachiam because of the devastation already wrought on their numbers. Karvarg will provide any weaponry that they can spare (swords, daggers and Gar Makken will cast healing magic if necessary).

THE KULT PRIEST

Should the players confront the Baron he will lead an attack with twelve of his guardsmen, including Salainor, while another goes to the church to summon Henobarbus. During the battle (approximately ten rounds in), two more guardsmen burst in, followed in the next round by Henobarbus himself. He will espouse the ideals of his twisted religion while casting spells to foil the party's attacks, including holding, commanding, animating and necromantic magic. His maniacal fanaticism

motivates the guards to continue fighting no matter how badly they are faring. Only when the kult priest dies will any of the guards be willing to surrender.

The Baron Appiano and Salainor are faithful kultists, but not suicidal. If they see the battle going against them, they will order their men to form a protective screen so that they might escape, leaving their men and the fanatic, Henobarbus to their fate. If they manage to getaway, Malachiam will head for Lombaro and remain underground until the fuss has died down. He has several powerful connections in the city (including his cousin, the Duke) and the referee could easily make Malachiam and Salainor long term adversaries for the players.

If Malachiam is killed, Duke Damon Appiano may publicly reward the party for clearing the region of kultists, but secretly he will plot against them.

THE REWARDS OF THE ADVENTURE

The characters should ideally resolve the adventure by achieving certain goals:

- 1) Protect the village from the ogres.
- 2) Restore the ogres to their village and defeat the spirit in the mountains.
- 3) Defeat the Baron and end his reign and the growth of the Kult of Markosa in the area.
- 4) Restore the desecrated church.

For achieving these goals, the players should be given appropriate experience point rewards, (we recommend each goal represents 10 to 15% of the necessary experience to advance each character one level or one step in their career) in addition to the normal awards for defeating their opponents. Also the players should be entitled to a monetary reward from the urbestro of Mirandola, taken from the baronial treasury.

The villagers will be profoundly grateful if the ogre and kultist threats are removed and would appreciate the party staying in town until a new lord is appointed. The ogres too, may be grateful for the freeing of their village and the players may gain assistance from them at a future time. Some referees might consider awarding the Barony to one of the characters, in a similar succession to Malachiam's. Whatever rewards the party receives, no doubt St. Silva will look kindly on them if the church is cleared of the kult, and a new priest of the Church of Baimiopia installed. (AD&D: +1 to Saving throws versus kult magic. WFRP: +1 fate point).

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

All these rewards augur well for the player character's future in the region. There is now a power vacuum that the players could fill, and the Local Legends and Rumours section has several hooks for plotlines the referee could readily develop. On the other hand, the Kult of Markosa and the Appiano family are powerful enemies. And the Church of Baimiopia will soon send a new priest to serve Mirandola; this individual is going to be hard to convince regards the orge intentions of lasting peace. He will badger the characters to persecute a 'holy purge' of their newfound ogre allies. If you are continuing a campaign in the area of Lombaro these should all become seeds of future trials for the party.

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Torrential rain lashed Sigil, the City of Doors for its many sins, cleansing its scummy inhabitants from the darkened streets. Not even the upper-storey boys would venture out on a night like this for fear of accidents on the steep pitched roofs with their grime covered slates; footholds would be thrice perilous tonight with water running over the slippery tiles in bitter cold torrents.

THE DOOR IS OPEN

Beneath the overhanging eaves, cascading water fell to narrow winding streets, thundering out of leaky gutters and cracked downpipes to beat a constant dirge upon the cobblestones, splashing the boots of miserable Harmonium factol watchmen wearily patrolling their beat.

The water, encouraged by the curious curved topography of the City, tumbled over the smoothed cobbles in a thousand competing rapids, dodging around the minor obstacles thrown in their way by Fate such as a dead Prime, or a refuse pile, ignoring the inadequate drains, always seeking the swifter way to the low lying slum Ward known as the Hive. There it gathered in the flats into muddy puddles and trenches of unknown depth, slowly seeping away through the soggy timbers of the ancient warehouses, sheds, lean-tos and cellars before finally finding refuge from the filthy upper city in the dank under-realm of Sigil where none but the rats do dwell.



Into this waterlogged realm, a cutter with business urgent enough to force him out on this lonely night enters with a light spell burning softly at his fingertips and a sheaf of papers wrapped in an oilskin clutched to his chest. The poor berk enters the dark office of his editor...

The Passion Returns

Not wanting to sound too old and decrepit, but sometimes being a long time player of roleplaying games you find yourself losing the sense of excitement, the passion, the wonder that hooked you into the hobby in the first place. You see another game product released and you have a flick through it and you say, ho hum, been there, done that. And then, just once in a very long while, along comes a product that wakes you up from your slumber and gives you the shakes because it's that good; a product that makes you rush to get the gang back together and roleplay again.

This year that release is **Planescape**.

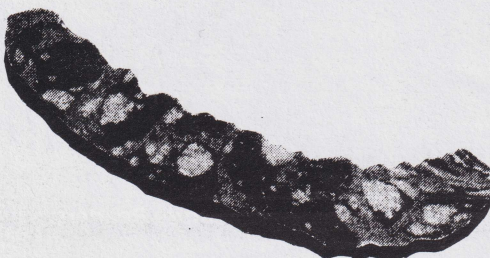
Planescape has been described by one of my colleagues as TSR's "Thank you for long and loyal support" to its legion of veteran fans; a mature gaming product with all the classic fantasy elements of AD&D that you love but presented with an innovative freshness that has been too long absent in the game.

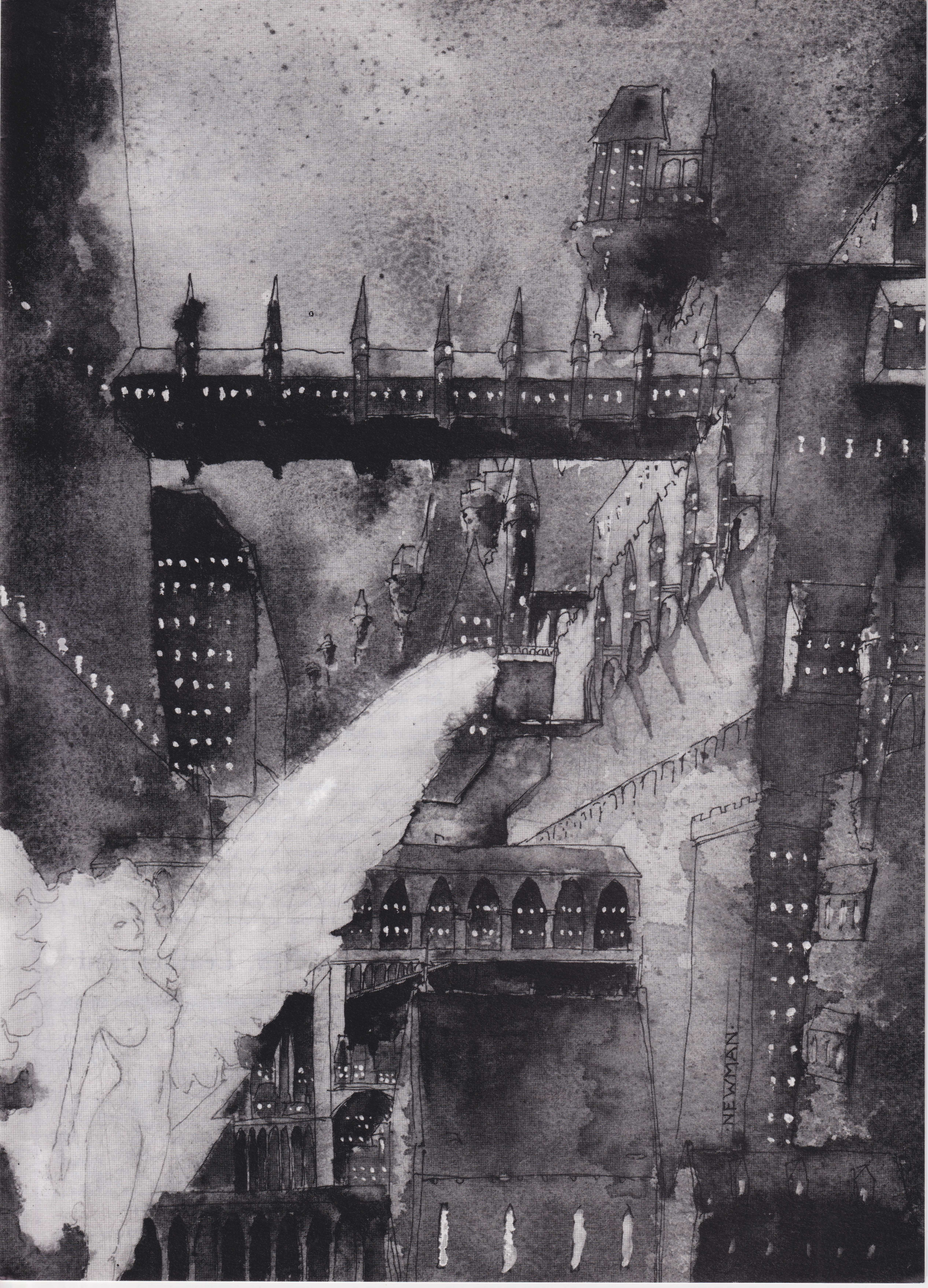
Master, the The Sensates have found a way to distil emotion. They are touting it to any bub with silver to buy. If we be not careful, the City will be overrun with happiness!

- SAVID MOGRED, BLEAKER

Certainly opening up the box with a lack of real enthusiasm I was absolutely blown away by what I found inside; not since the original Dungeons & Dragons boxed game have I seen anything as wonderful published by the good folks at Lake Geneva. Hey, I'm raving right? Well that's because **Planescape** is that good. And now TSR have done the right thing by the faithful, the faithful need to make their pleasure known by getting into it, that way this will get the sorts of sales that'll ensure more mature and interesting products are released. Go for it, berk!

So now you know why I am writing this overview of **Planescape**. What I hope to do is to introduce the exciting potential of the setting to those who have not yet seen it, and to those who have, present some of the adventure hooks that sprang to mind when I was reading through it so that you can quick start your **Planescape** campaign soon.





What is Planescape?

Planescape is a setting for AD&D 2nd Edition that takes the player characters into the wider multiverse beyond the Plane Material Plane. Where Spelljammer introduced the idea that the many Prime Material Plane campaign worlds - Greyhawk, the Forgotten Realms, Dragonlance, Athas and all your homegrown campaigns - could be linked by time consuming (and often boring) 'space' travel through the phlogiston, Planescape takes us beyond those almost endless opportunities for variety of play into the even greater diversity of the Inner and Outer Planes where just about everything is possible, and does it much quicker. Living in Sigil? Want to go to Toril for the weekend? Just find the right doorway and the right key and you're there. No lengthy journey, no referee tearing his hair out trying to describe the intervening light years. Why, even Unae is only a stride away.

Planescape suggests an almost Moorcockian multiverse of inter-linked planes and interwoven destinies. Initially the enormity of this idea, this vast and complex potential (which, let's be honest, many referees have already tinkered with because it's so darned obvious) scared the living daylight out of me - how is a referee supposed to control his campaign if the players suddenly have access to a multiverse without horizons! But all credit to the TSR design team, they have thought this through already - the scope of the Planes is vast, but the means of access can be controlled. Recommended play commences in the City of Doors, Sigil, where the referee can decide which doors are available to the characters and to where they lead.

Atmosphere and Attitude

But Planescape is not simply another numberless set of encounter locations where your standard AD&D monsters and villains strive to belittle and belay the player characters in ceaseless succession. The graphics, the tone, the very vocabulary and feel of this breakthrough release is steeped in a unique and evocative atmosphere. Planescape is AD&D with attitude.

Most of what you see in the many brilliant illustrations that adorn the box, books and maps is based in fairly standard Western European mediaeval fantasy, but added to these images there is also a cross-hatching of a much later period pervading the material and creating a rich atmosphere which offers new roleplaying experiences for the jaded veterans amongst us. For example, the 'cant' used to write Planescape is borrowed from the slang of the gutter scum of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries - sanitised of course, for general consumption, but colourful and idea provoking all the same.



And the plot elements seeded into the setting are all geared to pulling the players into a sense of wonder and wanderlust. Exploration is the key to this - players will want to explore Sigil, the Outlands, the Factions, the Outer Planes, their own motivations, and the underlying story of the campaign.

Alignments Realigned

The core rules of AD&D have always told us that alignment is a system of rules codifying character behaviour to add to our roleplaying enjoyment of the the game.

Yeah, right - and like everyone took as much notice of this as our friend Virgil does, the paladin who fumbles with his fortune cookie when the group discussion turns to thieves and killing innocent maidens.

Well, with Planescape, cutters (Planescape cant) have an excellent reason to take note of their alignment. See, the dark of it is the Blood War and every other petty campaign of manoeuvre, espionage, intrigue, indoctrination, revolution and conquest waged by the Powers is based on the fact that in the Inner and Outer Planes a *place's* alignment determines its location. If enough cutters in a burg on one plane begin adopting the mores of the alignment of an adjacent plane, that town will gradually drift into the neighbouring plane and the Power that rules there gains a whole new batch of berks to rule over. Interesting, huh?

Factions

Added to the alignment concept, is that of the Factions. These are organisations which codify a Planar's philosophy, and are grouped according to the member's way of seeing the multiverse. For example, The Dustmen (also known as the Dead) believe life is a big sad joke, that everything and everyone is dead, a shadow of another unreachable multiverse. Goth roleplayers rejoice, now AD&D is open to you too!

There are sixteen Factions outlined in Planescape, each with its own unique view of the truth, each with its goals and designs and each open to player characters. Now there are roleplaying elements ready built into player character backgrounds. A Planescape campaign could easily exist just on the ins and outs of Faction activity as the players are hooked into the schemes of one high up man or another and hired, cajoled, blackmailed, tricked, seduced, or unwittingly caught into conducting clandestine and esoteric Faction business.

Sigil, Not Sijil, Leatherhead

Not pronounced Sijil, we're told, but Sigil, the City of Doors is the place to begin a Planescape campaign. How the characters get there is up to you. Either they are Planars, natives to the Outlands, or else they're Primes from one of the Prime Material Campaigns who have found a way into Sigil.

Sigil is city which, because of its myriad doors into the planes can be considered, for all intents and purposes, the centre of the multiverse. And it is a relatively safe haven, as the city's ruler, the Lady of Pain will not allow serious disruption to the peace. So, people of all origins can and do live side by side in uneasy truce. And the Powers cannot get in, so if you pull the beard of Odin, and need to find refuge, get a kip in Sigil.



Where To From Here?

Being at the very centre of things, Sigil has access to the best and worst of everything in the multiverse. If this doesn't spin you out, nothing will. So you're looking for something, anything - goods, magic, knowledge, employment, excitement, entrance to somewhere - where else would you start but in the bustling, close and overcast streets of Sigil. Now every AD&D campaign world is instantly linked, and why stop at AD&D, why not have a look at some of the other games in your cupboard, ever wanted to mix them? So long as the basic flavour of Planescape is not violated (it's too good as it is to twist too much) then just about anything goes. Here are a few ideas to get you started...

THE SOUL REAVERS

Every cutter knows that enough people of the right alignment can tip the scales and move a berg into the next plane. So the Powers are always making subtle moves to shift that delicate balance and snare a new domain. Well not all the Powers have such a nice touch. And where there is a need, there is usually someone to feed it.

That is where the Soul Reavers come in. These are a bunch of unscrupulous Primes, pirates who found their way into the Outlands when their spelljamming vessel was blasted through a Planar rift (yup, rifts, now there's an idea!) by a Mind Flayer nautiloid. Not wanting to change profession at this late stage in their careers, they have taken to hiring themselves out as reavers who hunt down souls of opposing alignment in any of the Outland border towns to upset the balance of alignment and trigger a movement of the city into the Lower Planes.

Players can either be part of the crew, or a victim of the reavers, or perhaps they are enlisted by an opposing faction or Power to combat the Soul Reavers.

BACK TO GUIRADR

Back in issue 7 you'll find "That's My Boy" which is set in a pocket plane within the Astral Plane, the city of Guiradr which has been kidnapped wholesale by githyanki as a slave city. This adventure will fit readily into a Planescape campaign.

The major hook from that story is the young boy the characters are trying to locate, Sir Andrew, is the only legitimate heir to Arkatha, the Illithid overlord of Subtrepia. The player characters could easily become embroiled in a war between the mindflayers and githyanki, or get them to do what they can to restore Guiradr to its proper home on the Prime Material plane, or perhaps they find documents in the city library containing ancient lore which confirms the view of one of the Outland factions. If this latter hook is the case, then the other Factions are going to want to suppress those documents and how!

THE WORM OUROBOROS

Read any good books lately? Any settings in them strike you as an ideal place for an AD&D adventure but you don't want to invest the time and effort in fully converting the book into game material. Well, Planescape is the answer.

A fictional land I've always wanted to adapt is the Witchland of E.R. Eddison's classic fantasy tale, *The Worm Ouroboros*. Here the forces of good and evil wage a constant war of intrigue, stroke, and counter stroke. And just as one side eventually triumphs, totally wiping the other out for all eternity, the world miraculously reasserts a balance, and the political situation restores itself to the very same struggle for the same protagonists and their descendants to repeat ad infinitum. Enter the players into this closed system, irrevocably tipping the balance in favour of one side or the other. Do the characters do this knowingly and then find themselves pursued by enemies out for revenge? Or are they duped into the whole deal, and then have to find a way to restore the old balance before the Witchland disappears forever? Or perhaps, twist within a twist, will the players be simply absorbed into the whole cycle and subject to Witchland's weird order, now trapped forever!

What Are You Waiting For?

I've raved on enough. Take a good look at Planescape yourself, and if you're disappointed I'll give up gaming! ♦



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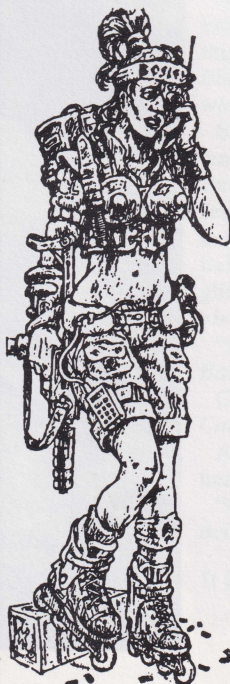
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Dancing in the Dark

How to get the most out of Vampire: The Masquerade

by Michael Butler

She is too quiet.

Mattias rose and turned, running in sudden panic towards the lift shaft. The blood music roared in his ears as he shifted his form. His clothes disappeared as his mass doubled, doubled and doubled again. His head flattened into a dinosaur-like muzzle, as his limbs lengthened and thickened. Extra digits, tipped with four-inch talons, sprouted from his hands and feet, making seven on each extremity. His body expanded upwards and outwards. By the time he reached the elevator doors he was seven feet tall and looked like something out of a nightmare, a hideous amalgam of demon and dinosaur. He wrenched the doors open, shimmied up the cables, punched a hole in the bottom of the elevator and clambered into the room. By then, Annabelle had turned on the lights. Mattias saw the decapitated figure on the bed his first and truest friend, Sequanto.

His scream of rage surprised everyone in the room, but none so much as Mattias himself.

Vampire: The Masquerade is a different kind of game. Not just because of its emphasis on mood and story over rules and realism, but fittingly enough, by virtue of the protagonists the vampires themselves. What follows are some suggestions on how to get the most out of a game of Vampire, whether it be a single-session filler between your regular game or a long-running campaign.

Read the Rules

Not as silly as it sounds. Precisely because the rules are so straightforward, there is a danger, especially for more experienced gamers, of reading through them once and charging on in. This can lead to some embarrassing moments for both players and storytellers when, after a break in play, somebody decides to bone up on the rules before recommencing. In one game I played in, it took us a couple of sessions to notice that you have to expend blood on celerity every turn, not every scene. And almost as long to realise that if you use blood to heal wounds, you can take no other action that turn. As you can imagine, our combats were quick and deadly, and the Toreador in our coterie was hell on wheels. Oops.

These may sound like dumb mistakes, and indeed they were. The point is, the players and storyteller in that campaign were all experienced gamers, confident in their mastery of the rules. How many errors are troupes sitting on because they haven't read the rules carefully enough? And lest one think that I'm generalising too much, go to any convention or even any game store and listen in on a discussion on a game. Wait until they start talking about rules, and see if everybody (or in fact anybody) agrees.

If you find yourself in a situation wherein you've discovered an error in your reading of the rules, there are a number of strategies you can adopt. Firstly, don't panic, because rules (mis-)interpretations are generally evenly applied. In the game I mentioned above, we only spent blood, not blood and an action, to heal wounds in combat. But so did our opponents. And ditto with our error on celerity, so the game wasn't out of balance. One option is to continue with an error, adopting it as a house rule; another is to use the rule as written. But perhaps the best approach is to discuss, during a break in play or at the end of a session, the ways in which

the rule has been applied and to come to a group decision. The thing to avoid is changing a rule in the midst of play. Wait at least until the end of the session before correcting a rules error, or until the end of a story. That way, you avoid complaints that the change in the rules has favoured one group more than another. Of course, rules decisions are ultimately up to you (the storyteller), but it's important to let your players have their say. After all, it's their game too.

Become A Storyteller

Vampire is a storytelling game. So the person who runs it is a storyteller, not a dungeon master, referee or game master. It is surprising the difference a little change in terminology can make. Storytellers don't write scenarios, or adventures, or dungeons, they write stories. So be what you are a storyteller.

One helpful thing to do is to keep a notebook (and a pen) close at hand at all times. Jot down interesting phrases, news stories, ideas, images, descriptions, anything which leaps into the mind and makes you pause. These are the raw material of your stories. Don't worry if you don't get many ideas for a start, or if you can't use everything you've written down; other ideas will come. Don't worry about being original or creative or writing up characters or plots which have never been thought of yet. Just get your game happening. As long as you can come up with an interesting slant on events in your city, your players will keep coming back for more.

And read! Not just the rules, not just Anne Rice and Nancy Collins, not just comic books. Read the newspapers, science magazines, history books, philosophy texts (Nietzsche is good), other games, fashion magazines, novels (go beyond fantasy, sci-fi and horror), plays, anything. Go to the movies. But also go to the theatre, the opera, rock concerts, pubs, poetry readings. The more you immerse yourself in writing, and in the real-world culture which is the basis for the Gothic-Punk milieu, the easier it'll be to make it your own. It is also nice to have NPCs who quote poetry or philosophy at the players, or even to build an adventure around the plot of a familiar story. For example, *Macbeth* is a play about a man overcome by his ambition to become king. Forsaking all else, he continues on his path despite the cost, and is eventually brought low. Sounds tailor-made for Vampire, right? Right. Now imagine how much more dramatic it will be when a once-respected elder is brought low by her own machinations; confronted by the characters, she tells them that:

I have liv'd long enough; my way of life
Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour,
breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, but dare
not.

(*Macbeth*, Act V Scene III)

If your players react appropriately, reward them with extra experience points for role playing, a humanity point or some such. Sound corny? Only if you don't believe in the story you're telling, only if you, the storyteller, think it is a silly. Vampire isn't suited to silliness, even if every character is a Malkavian. Play Toon or Paranoia if that's what you want. This a game of drama and tragedy.

Take Care Of Your Players

As far as you are able, let your players do what they want. If they decide to go after the Anarch gang who were merely pawns of the real villain, let them. Just make sure you can steer them gently back into your story. You must be attentive to the desires of your players, but at the same time the ultimate responsibility for the tone of your campaign lies with you. If you are concerned that your players are becoming power-mad diabolists, intent on joining the Sabbat and hunting down and destroying all the elders they can, rather than getting involved in the struggle to save the city from the machinations of the Primogen whilst preserving their precious humanity, you can encourage them to rethink their actions.

A light touch is needed nobody likes to feel that they're being railroaded. But simply by supplying consequences to the actions of your players, you can let them know that they've lost touch with the theme of the campaign. Using the example above, the power-mad diabolists, the players should soon find themselves in a great deal of trouble, not only from the friends and allies of their victims, not only from other vampires who've decided to get their prince on side by removing the danger that the players now present, but from the entire power structure of the Camarilla itself; diabolists violate the sixth tradition, and for that reason alone, are in big trouble. If, despite the dire consequences of their acts, your players persist, you may have to reconsider your campaign or your players.

This works on all levels, not just for the big things. If Jimmy the Malkavian insults and humiliates Natasha the Gangrel in front of the Prince, then it doesn't matter what she thinks of the Prince or the Harpies she'll be out for revenge. And if your players help out a struggling Toreador as she runs from the wrath of the Elder she's just insulted, she'll be in their debt; and if she forgets about it or ignores it, the players have a legitimate axe to grind. The key here is *consistency*. So long as they can count on their deeds being remembered, and so long as you are fair and consistent in your characterisations and rules interpretations, your players will feel secure that what they achieve won't be forgotten or ignored.

It is also a good idea to make your players important. If they're neonates, the elders may ask them to do dirty jobs because they're expendable. But this merely gives them the chance to prove their mettle to all and sundry. They may be considered pawns but what if the pawn turns out to have a mind of its own? This is the stuff of which grand stories are made. If they're elders, ease them into the larger-scale politics of the Camarilla (or Sabbat, Anarchs or Inconnu). Let them make decisions which will affect the society in which they live. Then supply the consequences of those decisions. Consistency and consequences are the key.

Another good ploy is to give every player something unique to their character. This may be extra information, special access to equipment or places, an unusual connections or past; anything which helps the player to feel that he can make an unique contribution to the game. It's not as much fun to have the same contacts, gear and info that everyone else has. So let the Gangrel player know more about the Garou, the Tremere more about Mages, the Ventrue more about the financial manipulations of the Giovanni.

This is one area in which contacts, allies, clan and Camarilla status, mentors and the like can come into play. One of the characters in my Seattle campaign has the Nosferatu elder as an ally; consequently, she has access to information unknown to the other players. The flip side to this is that occasionally she is asked to perform odd jobs for him, which is not always easy or pleasant ('your mission, should you choose to accept it and you'd better' type stuff). Another character started play with no contacts, no allies, and no clan connections (she's a Daughter of Cacophony). Her player has devoted a good deal of time to cultivating contacts within the Camarilla, so that she'll have the same sort of protections and resources as the other characters. She has also been progressively writing up her story (subject, of course to my approval) which makes it easier for her to know and understand Diva's motivations, and easier for me to weave her into my stories.

Make each character unique, and the players will feel the value of their own contribution to the game. Nobody likes to feel that things would have gone on just as well without their input. This is one of the strengths of the Storyteller games. The emphasis on character

development and mood encourages each player to fully realise their persona, independently of your own input. Make your characters important to each other as well as to their city, and encourage them to work on their own stories, and they'll keep coming back for more.

Know Your City

Rule one: buy a map. This is the single best thing you can do for yourself, especially if your game is set in a city you are not familiar with. The next thing to do is to get hold of a travel guide or some other tourist information. A lot of it will be useless, but you'll also find a mine of useful and interesting tidbits about the city and its inhabitants. It is even worth doing this if you're running a game in your home city; none of us know everything about the places we frequent.

Having a map and a good general knowledge of your city makes the difference between saying 'You drive across town to Elysium to meet the Prince. Its an old museum building' and 'You park your cars on Broadway and walk up the path to the Museum. It is surrounded by grasslands, and the place is being renovated. There is a large sculpture on the front lawn, between two large circular pools ringed by low hedges. The building is an inelegant concrete block; as you approach you can see where the graffiti is being scrubbed off the walls'. It also helps to be able to give actual addresses and locations of important (and not-so-important) places (Elysium, havens, nightclubs, subway stations and the like), rather than a generic its downtown and it takes you 10 minutes to get there.

Some knowledge of the history of your city is also helpful. Vampires live a long time, and some of them may have been active (in their breathing days) in the community. Local history is also a wellspring for ideas about feuds and rivalries, peculiarities, superstitions and urban myths. Resist the temptation to put a scheming vampire behind every event and individual; this soon becomes predictable (and uninteresting). But if you can selectively interweave real-world history and your campaign history, you will add yet another layer to your game.

Photographs too can make great play-aids. A picture is worth a thousand words, after all. Just recently, I visited the city (Seattle) where my campaign is set. I roamed the streets, taking photos of the clubs, bars, libraries, museums, markets, alleyways and other places frequented by my players. So now when I tell them that they meet at the art museum, I can give them a photo of the place. You don't have to visit, of course. If your campaign city is big enough, you should be able to get hold of photos from all sorts of places. National Geographic is an excellent resource for this, especially if your game is set in North America, and its articles are full of the sort of regional trivia and local colour which is ideal for fleshing out a city.

Above all, avoid the generic city syndrome. Even if you can't get a map, have no photos, no idea of your city's history and have never visited it, fake it. Invent buildings, describe locations in detail and make a rough mental map of the city. Do everything you can to make it come alive. If your city doesn't feel unique, your players will have a much harder time of feeling involved in its activities. And if you later do get hold of some real-world information on your city, don't panic! In the Gothic-Punk world, things are different. Maybe Pentex came in and levelled an entire suburb, erected skyscrapers, paved over the parks and built a subway system. After all, its your city, and your game.

Build Your NPC's

Vampire is a game about characters. Feuds, rivalries, friendships and hatreds are the real movers of vampire society, far more than the Jihad or the war between Camarilla and Sabbat. Vampires are creatures of controlled passion, guarded love, barely suppressed fury. This is the starting point for your NPC's, not numbers on paper.

Don't create generic characters. Nobody's wants interact with another Toreador art freak who's only interested in opening nights and haute couture. But a Toreador who has a passion for demolition, who sees the beauty in destruction and chaos, is someone different. Nobody you will ever meet is two-dimensional. We all have our own stories, our own secrets and fears. So does, or should, every character in your game; if you give these traits to them, they will become as real as the PCs.



Read chapter four of the Storyteller's Handbook. Then read it again. Start small by writing down a one sentence description of each vampire, and of each important human NPC in your city. Even the ones the players won't meet for a while. Nothing fancy; here are a few examples from my own game: *Avdotya Kushkin (Ventrue): Arch-conservative and staunch defender of the Camarilla. Draga (Gangrel): Practical joker and oddball (when he's in town).*

This is a start. It doesn't take too long, and is easy if you think about the characters clan, nature and demeanour. You can leave your planning here if you like. But the more detail you have, the better. Work up your NPCs one at a time. Do a paragraph on each, noting their clan, generation, nature and demeanour, main motivations and personality traits.

For example: *Adam (Brujah 10th; cavalier/simpleton): Unsophisticated country boy. Embraced very much against his will, Adam has yet to come to terms with his vampirism. Has been temporarily persuaded not to try contacting his family, who think he died in a brawl in the city. Trying to stay out of politics, but will come to the aid of anyone he feels is being unfairly treated.*

Now, if your characters unexpectedly bump into Adam, or decide that they need to see him, you will be able to play him with confidence. For most NPCs this will be enough. But for the really important ones, note down their goals and resources as suggested in the Storyteller's Handbook. That way, they themselves will start to generate plots and story ideas. Do two NPCs have conflicting goals? Then there's a story. And if you know that one controls the police and the other controls the fire department, you know how they'll attack each other. Pretty soon, you'll have a delightfully convoluted web of conspiracy and intrigue and your NPCs will have done it all for you.

Lastly, never be afraid to kill off an NPC. Sometimes the best thing for dramatic impact in your story is to stage a dramatic death scene. It is always possible to bring someone back if you really need

to (but don't do it too often, or your players will get frustrated), and as the referee of a Vampire game I played in said, a good NPC is made to die. Think about how you envisage each NPC dying. It may be at the hands of a diabolist, or fighting to save a loved one. But if you can get a handle on the most appropriate way for a character to die, you'll be a long way towards having a handle on him. Just make any death scene memorable, and the NPC won't have died in vain.

Remember, the more work you do on your NPCs, the more your game will come alive; never use your NPCs as spear carriers; they should always have their own reasons and motivations for their actions, not just the Storyteller's whim or need to have a message delivered. Your players will define their characters largely through their interaction with your NPCs, so make sure that they are just as real. Nobody likes talking to a cardboard cut-out. So bring those numbers and statistics to life, by treating them as human beings.

No no no no no. He cannot be dead. He cannot be.

Mattias was running down the street, oblivious to the traffic and pedestrians, oblivious to the fact that he was still seven feet tall and looked like something out of one of Geiger's more inspired dreams, oblivious to the fact that he was breaking the first and fundamental law of the Masquerade: Thou shall not reveal thy true nature to those not of the Blood. Doing such shall renounce thy claims of Blood. The penalty for breaking this law was death. But none of that mattered to Mattias.

Sequanto was dead. The first friend since his embrace who had not been bound to him by the mystical ties of the Vaulderie. Dead.

He raced down the street, unthinking, uncaring. Sequanto was dead.

Shadowrun, Second Edition introduced the concept of Threat Ratings to aid the gamemaster in the control and maintenance of non-player characters. Since then, we've received a great deal of feedback and suggestions regarding the care and handling of that system. As always, the final decisions on what systems to use are left to the individual gamemaster.

The Threat Rating system alleviates a certain degree of bookkeeping from the gamemaster, specifically with regard to the calculation and tracking of dice pool usage for multiple non-player characters. Instead, a constant number of dice (the Threat Rating) is used for every Success Test (of any type, offensive or defensive). The gamemaster does not have to worry about how many pool dice were spent for each non-player character, especially when an opposition team might include six or more characters, some with multiple dice pools. Additionally, off-the-shelf non-player characters, or even Archetypes and Contacts, can be used to represent more formidable foes simply by increasing the value of the Threat Rating, and hence the additional dice rolled with every Success Test.

As it is difficult to prejudge the balance of certain multi-opponent combats, especially in *Shadowrun*, the Threat Rating provides a valuable tool to the gamemaster in that the value can be adjusted on the fly. A gamemaster can adjust the Threat Rating of any opponent as the fight plays itself out and a better sense of how much of a challenge a fight is turning out to be, versus how it should feel for the purpose of the story, is felt. By simply adding or subtracting a few points from various non-player characters, a fight that's turning out to be an undesired breeze can be turned into the nail-biter it's supposed to be (or vice-versa.)

Some gamemasters, however, desire a more involved system that perhaps better represents the capabilities of a non-player character as created by the game system. To that end, we've come up with the following guideline and rules for the assignment and use of Threat Ratings, including multiple Threat Ratings per non-player character that better represents that character's strengths and weaknesses.

HOW MUCH THREAT?

There is no easy way to calculate non-player character's Threat Ratings to provide a specific level of challenge in a *Shadowrun* combat. There are too many variables (different kinds of weapons, spells, cyberware, bioware, etc.) that come into play during a fight that prevent that. There are, however, a couple of things that can be done to better represent that threat.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF THREAT

Different non-player characters in *Shadowrun* are good at different kinds of things. Some are good at combat, some at magic, some at hacking, and some at controlling a vehicle. It is perfectly reasonable then to set a Threat Rating for each of those areas, more specifically for each area that character would normally have a Dice Pool for. Therefore, there are now Combat, Magical, Decking (Hacking), and Vehicle (Control) Threats, as applicable for each non-player character.

The basic value for each of these Threat Ratings is equal to one-third (round to the nearest whole number) of the number calculated for the normal Dice Pool.

Combat Threat

This Threat area covers ranged combat as well as armed and unarmed combat. An imbalance of firepower could certainly shift a fight in favour of underskilled opposition, or vice-versa, so the gamemaster needs to take care here. The same holds if one of the groups has melee weapons, especially those with Reach ratings, and the other side does not.

Optionally, gamemasters can calculate the effects of Initiative by figuring out the average number of Actions a given character has in a Combat Turn. The effective Threat Rating is increased by 50% for two Actions, by 100% for three actions, and by 150% for four actions. This is an effective increase for comparison purposes only. The player-character's Dice Pool ratings can be adjusted similarly as well, for comparison purposes. Those gamemasters wishing to go the full distance in these calculations can also add in one-half the character's highest dominant combat skill.



Magical Threat

Virtually the same logic applies for Magical Threat as it does for Combat Threat. More powerful spells, or a better selection could shift the balance, as could the presence of spirits. With all the options of foci, spirits, and augmentation spells, micro-managing Magical Threat could become a full time occupation, so it is recommended that gamemasters simply eyeball this one and rebalance accordingly on the fly.

Non-player character spell defence can be applied from Magical Threat at a ratio of 2 points of spell defence per point of Magical Threat allocated for this purpose. This point (1 die) is simply then not added into any subsequent magical Success Tests until the points are removed from spell defence.

Gamemasters may also wish to add one-half of an Initiate's Grade to determine their effective Magical Threat, for comparison purposes. Also note that only spellcasting magicians have a Magical Threat. Conjuring Adepts do not have a Magical Threat, per se, though one could be figured for comparison purposes equal to one-third (round to the nearest whole number) of their conjuring skill. The effect of the spirits, however, should really be applied across the entire battle rather than in favour of one character.

Decking Threat

Figured as for the other Threat areas, except here an imbalance in cyberdecks and/or programs could shift a fight radically. Also, corporate deckers fighting in the home system automatically have an advantage since they ignore Security Codes and the like.

If necessary, Decker Threat dice can be allocated to suppress intrusion-countermeasures at a ratio of one-half of a Decking Threat point (round up) is needed to suppress a piece of IC.

Vehicle Threat

This is really Vehicle Control Threat and isn't concerned with the firepower a vehicle is packing. (That should be factored into a fight overall and not applied in the benefit of one character). The Handling of a vehicle could make or break a control "fight" (such as a chase) and so the Threat Rating should be adjusted accordingly.

SHOULD THEY BE SCARED?

The gamemaster needs to figure out how tough an upcoming fight is intended to be. To this end, we're setting five levels of fight in ascending order of ease.

FIGHT LEVEL TABLE

A Breeze (33%)	The proverbial cake walk. Barely a scratch on the 'runners.
Tricky (75%)	Not so simple, but not really a concern. A lucky shot, however, might cause damage.
Even Up (-)	The two sides are evenly matched, and all things being equal the fight could go either way.
Hard (125%)	The 'runners are going to have to work to pull this one off for their side. The opposition is tougher than they are, but not unbeatable.
A Bruiser (150%)	When this fight's over, the 'runners will know they've been through a fight. Everyone ends up hurting after this one.
We're Screwed (200%)	Overwhelming odds against, the 'runners need to be either <i>real</i> smart, or <i>real</i> lucky, in order to not end up <i>real</i> dead.

The percentage in parenthesis is used for determining (roughly) if a fight is balanced or not. Generally speaking, and this is not a hard and fast rule, the balance of a fight can be determined by comparing the *combined* Dice Pool values in a given area with three times (x3) the *combined* Threat Ratings of the opposition in that area. The percentage of the Threat Rating total as compared to the Dice Pool total sets the level of the fight. (That's what the percentages in the above table are). For example, a group of runners who total out to a 36 Combat Pool will find a fight with an opposition group with a total Combat Threat Rating of 12 to be A Breeze, with a total of 27 Tricky, a 36 Even Up, a 45 Hard, a 54 a Bruiser of a fight, and well, against a total Combat Threat Rating of 72 or greater they are simply Screwed.

The gamemaster needs to make this comparison in each of the Threat areas, however, certain of them are only relevant in certain situations. For example, Decking Threat is only important when decking, and the Vehicle Threat is only important in chases and other situations where the Control Pool applies. The most common street fights, street actions and the like, are fought with a combination of Combat and Magic Threat, and those are the two areas the gamemaster should focus on for those kinds of action.

Additionally, the gamemaster needs to keep in mind the equipment and resources of both groups. For example, a non-player character group with poor Combat Threats will do better in a fight if their weaponry outclasses the player-characters. Grenades and other independent area-effect attacks like missiles can easily shift a fight in favour of an under-skilled attacker. The gamemaster, therefore, must adjust the opposition Threat Ratings accordingly to balance the fight. Fire support in the form of vehicles also needs to be evaluated and adjusted.

Magical comparisons apply as well. Spellcasters with better spells (especially ones that do more damage) are more effective, as are ones with spirits on hand or immediately summonable (magical fire support, if you will).

There is, unfortunately, no real way to make these comparisons quantitatively without turning this process into a mathematical orgy. (Technically, the gamemaster could sit down and figure out an average of all the weapons, melee weapons, unarmed attacks, spells, spirits, combat programs and defensive utilities, and vehicles in use and then compare those values with similar values for non-player characters. We will not be doing that). The gamemaster needs to look at the 'runners' team and the proposed opposition in each of the Threat areas and make some adjustments based on how balanced the two sides seem. Lastly, the Threat Ratings should be set to whatever they need to be for a given story.

Creatures and spirits have Threat Ratings as well. These are the equivalent of Combat Threat ratings and are equal to one-half (round all fractions up) their Reaction for creatures and Force for spirits. This should, and must, be adjusted upward for creatures if paranormal abilities are present or if spellcasting ability is present (specifically in dragons) by one-half the creature's Essence if a combat, damaging, or neutralising paranormal or spell ability. Do not add this for spirits. ■



Written by Tom Dowd

Excerpted from Prime Runners

FROM THE REALMS CAMPAIGN WORLD OF UNAE

BURVOY

By Daniels, Sheppard, Taber & Whitt

You ask me what I know of Burvoy? I have had little to do with those who live to the south-east, but the contacts that I have had has revealed much. They enjoy a good fight, these Burvois, I'll give them that. But even with all their military successes they still to me are amusing, these pretty armoured knights on their war horses, with their incessant posturing and bravado. Let's see how well they posture with two feet of arrow shaft sticking out of their noble bellies!

- Forwao, Elven Charlatan

Our continuing exploration of the Realms fantasy world of Unae now returns us to Burvoy. The initial scenarios in Issues 8 & 9 touched lightly on this kingdom, and now we are due for another look.

BURVOY

This fiercely independent human nation has stood for near on five centuries, but it has a past beyond that. You see, like the Prabesk of Evora, the Burvois come originally from across the Tempestus Sea.

THE GREAT JOURNEY

Four hundred and eighty years ago while Greater Baimiopia was still in its political infancy, those whose descendants can now be found occupying Burvoy lived as part of a much larger kingdom known as Burgandy. The original Burvoy was one of a number of principalities that came under the control of King Charles V, a very unpopular monarch.

While overall there was great delight at the untimely demise of King Charles from a virulent strain of syphilis, his passing created an unexpected problem. Although the King had left many bastards he had failed to acknowledge any of them as his rightful heir. The fight for the throne was bitter bloody as each faction supported a different contender. The kingdom was thrown into a state of civil war, a period of strife lasting fifteen years.

Abelard de Perigord, Prince of Burvoy had the weakest claim to the monarchy. Having

made a number of enemies over the years, the most powerful, being the ultimate winner of the throne, Abelard realised that his lands, and probably his head would soon be forfeit.

Diverting his efforts from trying to win the monarchy for himself, Prince Abelard threw his resources into the building of a great fleet of ships to carry him, his soldiers and any who would follow to a new and better life. As his fleet was being built a number of ships were sent out to find a new land that the Burvois could call their own.

One of these ships, the "*Qebelle*" was sent westward; it first landed along the inhospitable coastland to the east of the Heletian Spine. Landing parties encountered a fierce welcome from the resident population of orcs. The *Qebelle* quickly hoisted anchor and followed the coast north and west until it encountered the Heletians. Once in the Maroklaran Sea, the *Qebelle* passed from city to city of the Heletian League searching for vacant land. Nowhere were they welcome until they arrived in Vangre, eldest city within the Kramer Confederation; there the merchant leaders, keen to make a quick profit, offered the strangers an open-ended lease on a tract of land their agents had claimed on the south coast of the Akvoturi Sea.

The town of Karlamar had been built by Heletian settlers from Kramer as a stepping stone for the colonisation of the verdant pasture land and game-filled forests to the east; unfortunately, ogre resistance to the settlement had been fierce costing Vangre dearly. Thus, when an opportunity came to offload the expense of the colonisation whilst maintaining access to its long term profits arose, they grasped it like the good merchants they were. To Captain Jacques Le Penn of the *Qebelle*, with a warm climate, workable soil and no native population, the land looked ideal to the Prince's purpose.

The *Qebelle* returned to Burgandy a year after setting out, now with emissaries of the Kramer Confederation carrying title deeds to a large domain of vacant land. The decision was soon made, the deeds signed and a fleet of two hundred ships set out on what is known in Burvois history as *La Grande Voyage*.

The voyage took over five months to complete. Of the ships that had originally set out, only one hundred and sixty reached their final destination yet they contained over twelve thousand followers of the Prince.

Prince Abelard named the new domain Burvoy, so as to maintain his claim to rule

over his people. Avoiding the marshy site of Karlamar, the Prince landed his fleet at a deep natural harbour some miles to the north of the mouth of the Kalais River. The coastal town of Qebelle was quickly built out of timbers taken from the vessels that brought the settlers to Burvoy and the planting of crops begun. All appeared well until three months after they had arrived, when the native inhabitants were finally encountered.

THE OGRES AND ROSEMAIGNE

When the crew of the *Qebelle* had first been shown the coast of what was to become Burvoy, they had arrived at an extremely inopportune time. The ogre clans who normally made their summer camps along the coast from where they constantly harassed the Heletian colonists at that time had been campaigning to the north east against other encroaching Heletian settlements. As the more permanent ogre settlements were to be found further inland, the crew of the *Qebelle* remained ignorant of their presence.

It was a surprise to all concerned when a large force of ogres appeared that summer at the gates of the new town of Qebelle. What should have been an excellent opportunity for inter-racial understanding turned to tragedy when the highly suspicious Burvois misunderstood the ogre delegation sent to demand the *intruders* intentions and attacked, killing over half of those assembled, the remainder fled. The first retributive strike by the ogres occurred two days later when a Burvois patrol was slaughtered, their skinned bodies found one night later at the city gates.

The Burvois were not at all pleased that they had not been forewarned about other claimants to the region, and relations with the Kramer Confederation soured. Thus began a three way animosity that has continued to this day; twixt Burvois, Heletian and Ogre.

Out of these early days of conflict a hero was to arise, a man whose life was to have an enormous bearing on the future of Burvoy. One of Prince Abelard's finest soldiers was a man called Rosemaigne de Derwent. The illegitimate son of a knight and his concubine, Rosemaigne inherited his father's title as the only surviving heir. Trained to be a knight as a consequence of his inheritance, Rosemaigne vowed that he would display none of the attributes that had marked his father's lifestyle. This personal philosophy (celibacy, abstinence, poverty, honesty and service) would one day be adopted as the creed of the Burvoy Paladins.

Rosemaigne was a natural fighter, an excellent horseman and a born leader. His initial exploits against the ogres were to serve as an inspiration, his later victories the stuff of legend. His greatest triumph came five years into the settlement of Burvoy when he personally lead a unit of his elite cavalry to victory over a large settlement of ogres. The ogre fortress town was razed to the ground, its foundations used to build the nation's new capital, Tyon. Rosemaigne was made the Duke of Qebelle for this victory, making him second in command in Burvoy.

Rosemaigne's successes were to grow over the next thirty years, as was the settlement of Burvoy. The town of Pont de Fasselle was established with Pont de Fasselle's Boureaux Castle being the greatest engineering feat south of the Heletian League.

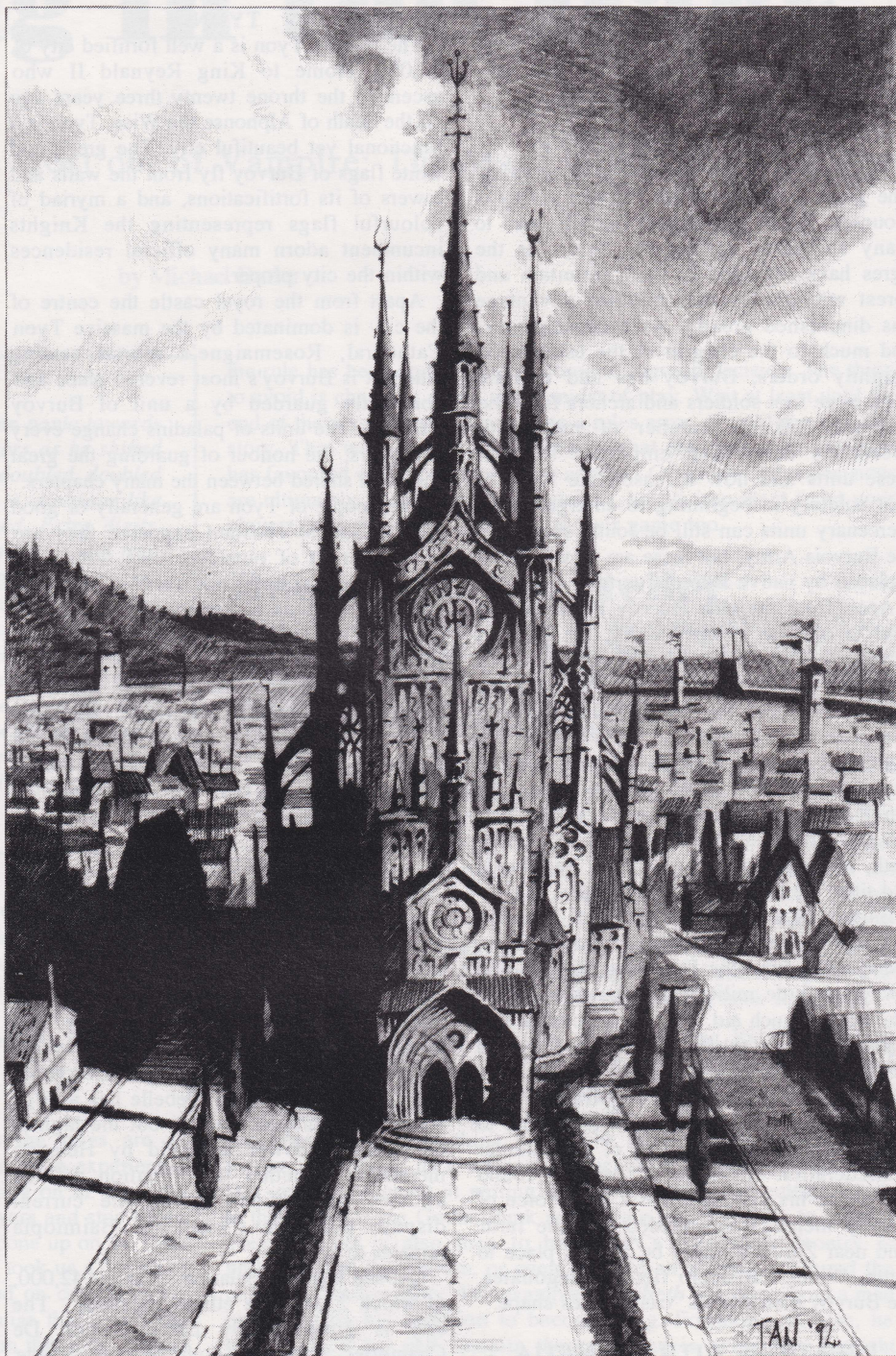
Throughout all of his battles Rosemaigne was never wounded, his apparent invulnerability leading the common folk to believe that Rosemaigne was actually a *divine incarnation* sent to Unae to help them win their new Kingdom. This belief was to be put to the test at the battle of Kalais River.

A vast ogre army raised from the many local clans had gathered for a major offensive. Avoiding the well defended Pont de Fasselle, the ogre army made its way around the Caspas Forest, attempting to strike at Tyon and Karlamar from the west. The army struck at Karlamar first, but dogged resistance by the town's largely Heletian inhabitants allowed sufficient time for King Louis I to arrange for reinforcements to arrive led by Rosemaigne, the King's aging champion. Although eighty years old at the time, he was still physically and mentally capable of waging war. Rosemaigne's massed cavalry struck the ogres near the Kalais River, striking a savage and decisive blow. In the confusion of the vast melee however, Rosemaigne and his personal guard of paladins were cut off and surrounded. By the time the victorious main force had fought their way through, Duke Rosemaigne and his guard were dead. As his life had been, so too Rosemaigne's death was the stuff of legend. Forty ogre bodies laid at his feet, but on Rosemaigne's body there was no mark.

Duke Rosemaigne's body was carried to the capital, Tyon, where a period of national mourning began. A great cathedral was constructed around his crypt, and each year a day of mourning, known as "Rosemaigne's Loss" is held as a mark of respect for Burvoy's greatest hero. With the support of the popular masses, Rosemaigne's elevation to godhead was assured.

BURVOY NOW

The past four centuries has been spent consolidating earlier successes. While the banks of the river Kalais are quite fertile and the north western coasts receive good rain, much of the remaining land is dry and infertile. Those arable lands not farmed by the Burvois are controlled by the ogres. Burvois cities are therefore all found near the Kalais or on the coast.



Trade with the Heletian League, until two hundred years ago, was exclusively done through the city of Karlamar; this had been one of the irksome conditions of the Burvois 'tenancy'. About two hundred years ago this changed with Queen Alloite challenging the legality of the monopoly in Vangre's courts. As neither copies, or the original deeds of title were available in either Burvoy or Kramer (a mysterious loss that is still hotly debated in some Vangre merchant houses) Alloite's barristers were successful.

Since that time, trade has flourished, with a variety of goods exchanged between Burvoy and a number of cities throughout the Heletian League. This along with the gradual southerly journey of Heletian settlers, and

the depopulation of the bypassed city of Karlamar to Qebelle has led to a large Heletian community in that city.

This influx of the formerly distrusted Heletians into Northern Burvoy has seen a rise in influence of the Church of Baimiopia which in turn has meant an increased strain on Burvois-Heletian relations. For, while the Church of Baimiopia's missionaries (issues 11-13) are freely allowed by the egalitarian paladins to establish churches and conduct services in Qebelle, and indeed all of Burvoy, the Paladins of Rosemaigne are themselves not legally able to even worship their god in the Heletian League, let alone seek converts. While several *hidden* churches exist in nearby League states (such as the Kramer

Confederation) many priests chafe at the restrictions they must work under while their 'competitors' freely preach in the very nation Rosemaigne helped establish.

THE MILITARY MACHINE

The strength of Burvoy lies in its cavalry. The great majority of the Burvois Army is mounted. While this aspect initially lead to many successes against the ogres, as the ogres have retreated to their mountain and forest strongholds that military advantage has diminished greatly. As a consequence, and much to the chagrin of the established knightly orders, Burvoy has had to train even more foot soldiers and archers from the common folk. A number of mercenary specialists have been employed to train these units and now a reasonable force of foot soldiery is beginning to emerge. Some mercenary units can still be found serving in the Burvois Army, but these are slowly being replaced by native Burvois units.

Apart from the elite Burvoy Paladins who tend to operate independently, the Burvois Cavalry has two arms; the Knights and the Mounted Spearmen. Both perform the same military function, but the knights hold land and positions of trust and power when not fighting. Burvoy is a feudal society, and the Knights (and their sons) are the lords who run the estates in their King's name. The mounted spearmen are soldiers of less noble birth, but who hope to win their own lands and titles by fighting well in battle.

Burvoy as a whole is a nation of warriors, and many Burvois mercenary units can be found throughout the Dormetia. Burvoy will always provide military assistance to those who request such aid, but this aid comes at a high price. Once established in a new area as the result of such a request, the Burvois tend to want to stay and consolidate their position long after the conflict has come to an end. Kavaliro Carpaccio of the Kramer Confederation city-state of Zarustra found this out to his dismay when a large force of Burvoy mercenaries decided that the farm land near Zarustra might be a great place to settle. While Carpaccio fiercely negotiates, the Burvoy mercenaries' castle takes shape.

RELATIONS WITH DORMETIA

Burvoy has warm relations with the Heletian League (destined to cool again due to religious restrictions within the League) and Evora. It also has good trade contacts with Fletland and Wair-Rae.

THE MAJOR CITIES

The ogres have restricted the expansion of the Burvois until only recently. The major cities have therefore developed quite significantly, with these centres serviced by the many smaller farming communities. These small towns and villages are governed by their lords, who work the local populations hard. Some towns may have a small castle and wall for protection, but the majority have only a fortified residence where their lord can be found.

TYON

The capital, Tyon is a well fortified city of 70,000. Home to King Reynald II who ascended the throne twenty three years ago on the death of Alphonse the Wise, Tyon is a functional yet beautiful city. The green and white flags of Burvoy fly from the walls and towers of its fortifications, and a myriad of colourful flags representing the Knights incumbent adorn many official residences within the city proper.

Apart from the royal castle the centre of the city is dominated by the massive Tyon Cathedral, Rosemaigne's mortal resting place. It is Burvoy's most revered place and constantly guarded by a unit of Burvoy Paladins. The units of paladins change every two years, the honour of guarding the great cathedral shared between the many chapters.

The people of Tyon are generally of good spirits. Due to constant exposure they are more tolerant of outsiders than their rural counterparts. Those not serving in some military, religious or administrative capacity are usually merchants, artisans or employed by local business. Many of the Knights' families spend considerable time in Tyon, the demands of courtly life being as they are.

The current concerns are the growing number of the Church of Baimiopia's missionaries in the city, rumours of an ogre offensive and the trouble in Karlamar.

QEBELLE

The oldest strictly Burvois city, Qebelle's wooden buildings have long ago been replaced by stone and glass. Once the capital until Tyon was established some 470 years ago, Qebelle reverted to a predominantly mercantile and hence cosmopolitan city. The large wharf and warehouse district is frequented by ships, sailors and merchants from all over Dormetia. Qebelle has a large Heletian population, and all but the highest positions of power are held by Heletian merchants. Whether this situation will be allowed to continue, given the current dispute with the Church of Baimiopia remains to be seen.

Qebelle has a population of about 42,000, of which 27,000 are ethnic Heletians. The city is governed by Duke Gaston De Chambrier, a retired Knight of considerable military experience. He is well liked by the local Burvois, for local taxes are levied far more heavily against the Heletian residents.

One of the most interesting sights to visit in this coastal city is the perfectly preserved vessel that gave the city its name, the *Qebelle*. It has sat in *La Musée Du Voyage* for the past 400 years, providing inspiration to many Burvois over the years.

KARLAMAR

Queen Alloite's historic breaking of Heletian Karlamar's trade monopoly, and the encroachment of silt in the port's harbour, has meant this once bustling centre of trade has degenerated into Burvoy's greatest current shame. The largely Heletian population has, over the past two hundred

years, fallen from 50,000 to 25,000. Many have fled the supposedly poisonous mists that constantly blanket the town (see Issue 9), leaving Karlamar to its sorry fate.

Five years ago with the appointment of Arch Duke Angrine III an investigation into ways that Karlamar could be reclaimed from the massive silt delta that threatened the city's existence was instigated. Instead of assistance, however, Angrine found only apathy, decadence, decay and corruption.

News has now reached Tyon that the local chapter of the paladins have forsaken their creed and seized Karlamar for themselves. Of Arch Duke Angrine there is no word, but two rumours that have filtered out of the city have it that the Arch Duke is either a prisoner in Thvatta Prison, or escaped and hiding somewhere in the swamps near the city, trying to organise some form of resistance.

Martial law has been declared in Karlamar, with a number of dangerous prisoners released from Thvatta Prison and sworn in as Dark Paladins. The reason for this change in attitude is not known, but rumours suggest that a number of Cabalists may be involved. While the King consults with his paladins in Tyon to determine some course of action, Karlamar remains a dangerous place to visit.

PONT DE FASELLE

If Tyon is Burvoy's heart and mind, then Pont de Fassel is Burvoy's fist. Boureux Castle dominates this fortified city, sitting impregnable as it overlooks the Caspas Forest to the west. The castle has never been taken in its four hundred year history, a testament to the engineers and paladins who built it those many years earlier.

The population of Pont de Fassel has never been significant, rising only slowly over the years to 19,000. This is set to change quickly though as a hardy group of adventurers are claiming to have charted a path through the Caspas (see *The Forest* scenario in issue 8). Once a road is built, the contact between Pont de Fassel and the capital will increase markedly.

The Lord of Boureux Castle is Duke Jean Pierre Falchon. He is a brilliant military strategist and visionary, and the major influence behind the recent changes to the Burvois Army. He is extremely concerned about the rumours of an ogre offensive, especially since he realises that he will probably be called on to provide a military solution to the problems in Karlamar.

The other rumour doing the rounds in the city is that a delegation has recently been sent to negotiate with a tribe of orcs that live in the Caspas Forest. Given the suspicious nature of the general population, especially where non-humans are concerned, Duke Jean-Pierre will have to tread very carefully if he is to avoid condemnation.

CHALON-SUR-FLEUVE

Found in the fertile valley that begins at Qebelle and ends at the Caspas, Chalon-Sur-Fleuve was initially established to defend the farmers' harvests, in the days when ogre

raids were more common in this part of Burvoy. These days, as well as providing the infrastructure required to ship grain down the river to Qebelle, it also serves as the main training camp for the Mounted Spearmen. Once a year, all those young men and women who wish to try out for the various Mounted Spearmen units, or whose parents are rich enough to buy their commission, make their way to Chalon-Sur-Fleuve, and Belvoir Castle in particular.

At these times, Chalon-Sur-Fleuve's native population of 12,000 swells to 18,000, with 1,000 hopeful recruits joined by family and friends, and travelling merchants setting up stalls to cash in on the yearly celebrations. Though the testing for the recruits is hard, a carnival atmosphere exists in the town during the two weeks that the testing is run. The selection of the new recruits ends with a great joust and feast, the successful applicants allowed to wear their unit's colours for the first time on this day.

The other side to Chalon-Sur-Fleuve is its agricultural role. The town serves as the main loading point for grain barges, which make their way down the river to Qebelle, to be transferred to merchant ships and exported all over Dormetia. Many of the barges are run by Heletian merchants, who come up from Qebelle to supervise the loading of grain. Recently there have been a number of disturbing incidents involving some of these barges, with one burnt in port and the crew of another found murdered down river. Whether this is the work of rival traders or something more sinister is yet to be discovered.

VIERZON

Vierzon is home to the Monks of Derwent, their monastery and stables dominating the lush green hillsides to the south of town. There are 500 monks who live at the monastery, the town having a population of 5,000. The current ruler of Vierzon is Father Castille, the Abbot of Derwent Monastery. There are no foreigners in the town, Vierzon being the least tolerant of Burvoy's towns as far as strangers are concerned. For native Burvois, however, Vierzon has much to offer.

Vierzon is known for the horses bred by the Monks of Derwent, reputedly the best in Dormetia. These are not for sale as they are bred for the exclusive use of the paladins. Many other local farmers specialise in horse-breeding, perhaps convinced that their own horses receive some blessing by being near those of their god, Rosemaigne. Those horses that are not snapped up by the Mounted Spearmen are offered for sale in the town markets, always at top prices.

SAUFHAVRE

It soon became obvious once they began to expand their settlements, that the easiest way of transporting men and supplies to Pont De Fassel was by sea. The road through the Caspas was treacherous indeed, and to take supplies around the forest was time consuming and expensive. To solve this problem, a second sea port was built seventy

years ago, on the coast at the southern most point of the Caspas Forest. Called Saufhavre, this small town has grown steadily.

Currently ruled by the paladin Gaspar Tellebrave, Saufhavre now has a population of 18,000, with new settlers increasing this number almost daily. Farmers have already begun to fell trees at the Caspas' edge, using the timber to build their farm houses and put up fences. Tellebrave has warned the settlers to be cautious, as much of the Caspas remains unexplored, but his words so far seem to be falling on deaf ears.

Saufhavre is a popular disembarkation point for mercenaries as much of Burvoy to the west of this point is now patrolled by units of the new Burvois army, removing the need for mercenary units. Most mercenaries are now heading north and east, out to the mountains beyond Pont De Fassel and to unknown dangers.

AUXERRE

Auxerre is one of Burvoy's newest towns, built only fifteen years ago. Basically rural in nature, Auxerre provides some simple facilities for the ever-expanding eastern frontier. With only a small population (2,500 in total) of farmers, soldiers, merchants and missionaries Auxerre often manages to have many more making use of its facilities at any one time however, for the town also serves as a major staging post for a number of large mercenary units.

Auxerre houses the current headquarters of the *arbohalae*, with about 100 scouts making this their base of operations. They spend much of their time scouting the mountains to the east, although a rumour currently doing the rounds also states that a dozen scouts were recently recruited for a special mission in the Caspas. A small force of Burvois Paladins and Mounted Spearmen have recently been sent to the town by Duke Falchon of Pont De Fassel, at the express request of Auxerre's Mayor, Bertrand Cassajoux, due to the increased tension between the mercenary units and the local

population. If rumours of a new ogre offensive are true, the mercenaries will soon find their hands full with enough conflict to keep them happy for a long time to come.

THE TERRORS OF BURVOY

Burvoy is a harsh, divided land hiding all manner of threatening things. From the horrors of the Caspas Forest (issue 8) to the ogres, orcs, spirits, pirates and the rarer crag and forest dwellers that choose to keep themselves hidden, here there are many things to be fearful of.

THE CABAL

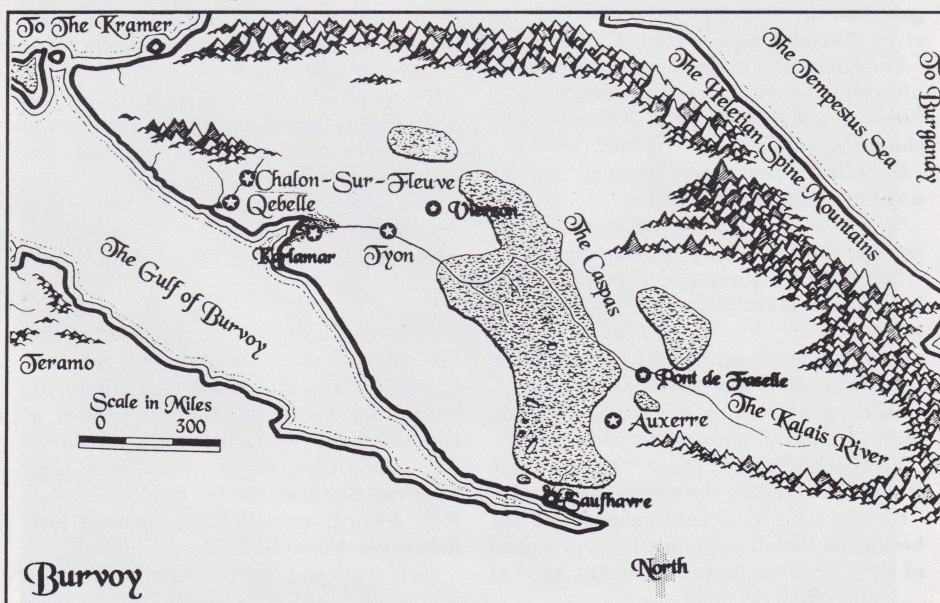
The Cabal of Burvoy is a very secretive and mysterious organisation. Not once in the nearly five hundred years of chronicled history of the nation has it been mentioned as meddling in the offices of power, regardless of the fact that its membership numbers in the thousands. The average person on the street may not realise it, but Burvoy is very active magically, it is the discreteness of its cabalists that have protected them from prejudice and stigma.

In the cities magic can be cast in public, attracting crowds of curious gawking locals. While in rural areas the reaction may be more guarded, perhaps even hostile. For this reason most local cabalists save spell weaving for their private laboratories.

RUMOURS

Although the nation's new tolerance of Heletians is being severely tested by the arrogant missionaries of the Church of Baimiopia there are still many opportunities for those seeking work or adventure. In particular the eastern regions offer much for the brave. Burvoy is in a state of expansion and will choke if it cannot open up more farming land. As these lands are taken, and scouts move ever eastward, who knows what secrets await discovery? Only the brave or foolish will find out.

It is 514EK, it is Autumn ☼



OSSARD!

Home of Dark Malice:

King Giovanni cursed his servants as they clumsily dressed him by candlelight. This once, at this unearthly hour, they were all bleary-eyed equals. All had been called from their beds because of an urgent message from the Holy Benefice of the Church of Baimiopia. The King cursed again. Considering how relations between the crown and church had become tense, occasionally even bitter, he dreaded whatever news Verrocchio held.

Finally the king was dressed. Soon he was in his coach, later he was climbing the stairs of the Citadel, the residence of His Holiness and the heart of the Church.

"I present his Majesty, King Giovanni II."

The King passed the servant who had announced him, the poor man shrinking into the shadows. Benefice Verrocchio slowly stood and walked to the king, clasping his outstretched hand.

"I regret having to disturb you at such a late hour sire, but we have received a message from Wair-Rae which clarifies the rumours concerning Ossard."

"Could this have waited? It's a city state, not my domain. Why is this so urgent?"

Verrocchio let go of his king's hand and looked into his sovereign's eyes.

"High King Caemarou of Wair-Rae has threatened war by the end of winter."

The colour drained from the King's face, but he did not move. Verrocchio gave him the letter penned by Forwao, the elven charlatan and servant of Wair-Rae.

The King read the letter and dropped it, his clenched fists shook uncontrollably *"How could this happen? An entire city claimed by kultists of the Horned God?"*

Benefice Verrocchio winced at the naming of the unmentionable.

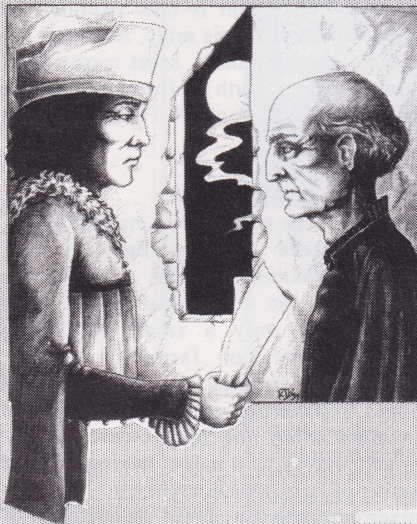
"If you've been holding information from me Verrocchio I'll have you executed!"

The Benefice ignored the threat, letting his disdain show. A servant poured some wine, Verrocchio sipped at it before answering his sovereign *"I knew nothing for certain, but I had heard rumours."*

"Rumours! You're a man of Krienta, hasn't He shown signs of this perversion?"

Verrocchio feigned shock *"I don't think it is wise to question the ways of our Lord."*

Finally King Giovanni calmed and sat beside the Benefice, glumly he took a glass of wine. Now he looked nearly as aged as



the Benefice who was many years older.

"What rumours have you heard?"

"Well, the Ossard delegation was absent from last month's Heletian League meeting. A lone Runner claimed an unseasonal storm was ravaging the city, making it impossible for the delegation's ship to sail."

"Perhaps the storm was not merely unseasonal. I smell the Cabal in this."

"Maybe," shrugged Verrocchio, "strange times are indeed afoot."

The King spoke strongly *"The entire city can't have turned so quickly, there must be refugees arriving at St Augustine, and loyalists within the city itself. If we are swift we may yet save them."*

"I believe you are right my King, people don't change faiths quickly. We must strike firmly at any corruption taking root, we may have only the one chance."

The King smiled, pleased with the Benefice's answer *"Send for Vincenzo."*

Verrocchio smiled, *"I already have."*

* * *

By dawn Cardinal Vincenzo, head of the Inquisition, stood at the foot of the Citadel. With him were fifty mounted inquisitors, waiting to set off for Ossard, a full third of the Inquisition. At Saint Augustine they would meet with one hundred Sankta Glavos, knights of the Holy Sword; named after the long lost holy artifact used by St Baimio himself.

Verrocchio and the King approached.

"Good morning your Majesty, your Holiness. Your force is ready to depart."

Giovanni ignored the universally disliked Cardinal, instead speaking to Verrocchio *"I hope our strategy is sound. It will take a month for them to reach Ossard, let alone take it."*

Verrocchio nodded *"Our ports are a weakness, full of sailors, vice and kultists. To send them by sea would be a hard enough task, but also worthless if the forces of dark malice discovered we were coming. Trust me, overland is best."*

Reassured the King turned to speak to Vincenzo, but was interrupted...

Thick smoke erupted from the worn cobblestones, immediately a man stood forth from its midst clad in red rune covered robes.

"Your Majesty," bowing low the man's many talismans and amulets clinked and jingled as he showed proper respect for the King. Inquisitors jumped from their horses, drawing swords and surrounding him, Vincenzo ordered them back.

"My Lord, I present to you and the Holy Benefice a message and also something which may aid this endeavour."

The King found his voice, *"A message?"*

"Forwao is coming to Baimiopia, and will be here in less than two months time, the same day these forces shall return."

Giovanni looked about him at the unyielding men of the Inquisition, *"You must be wrong Cabalist, these men will be liberating Ossard, not home by then. And what of this aid?"*

Smoke billowed and the man was gone, leaving a great sword on the cobblestones. Panic had taken the priests and even a few inquisitors, only the King remained completely calm. As he left the square behind him Verrocchio clasped the glistening sword, examining its blade with his aged hands and failing eyes.

"Behold! The Holy Sword of Saint Baimio! Krienta is with us! A good omen!"

Giovanni muttered to himself *"The Cabal is with us, a bad omen."*

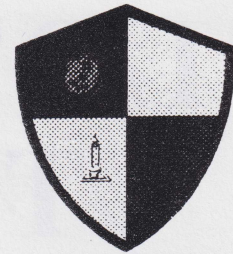
As he mounted the carriage steps he heard a whisper, *"Beware the Elves."*

"On Driver! We dare not stay here for the madness of Ossard seems contagious."

It is 514 EK, it is Autumn ☉



MIDGARD



The Barbarians are Coming !! The Barbarians are coming !!

With the advent of the coming of another barbarian Invasion to the fair shores of Midgard, the people of the land prepare to do what ever is necessary to protect their interest

- The **Boda Family** and the **Merc Verk Mercenaries** plan to hit the Barbarians head on.
- The **Getham family** plan to unveil their special collectors edition of designer bear skin rugs and up holstered great axes.
- The **Roder family** complain that it is the wrong time to start breeding horses and that their crop estimates are down.
- The **Imperials** hide in their preserves and hand out income tax returns.
- The **Blood and Fire Religion** will send excessive amounts of letters to all the major factions telling them 'Nah! Nah! I told you so'
- The **Gift religion** prepare for a major (and I mean MAJOR) leaflet campaign.
- The **Ring religion** will continue to do whatever they do because they probably won't notice
- The **SOA** will have even more fun because there are now all these other people to spy on, steal from, and assassinate.
- And lastly, the **Barbarians** will do what they do best. Be Barbaric. (Small furry woodland creatures beware!!)

The World of Midgard :

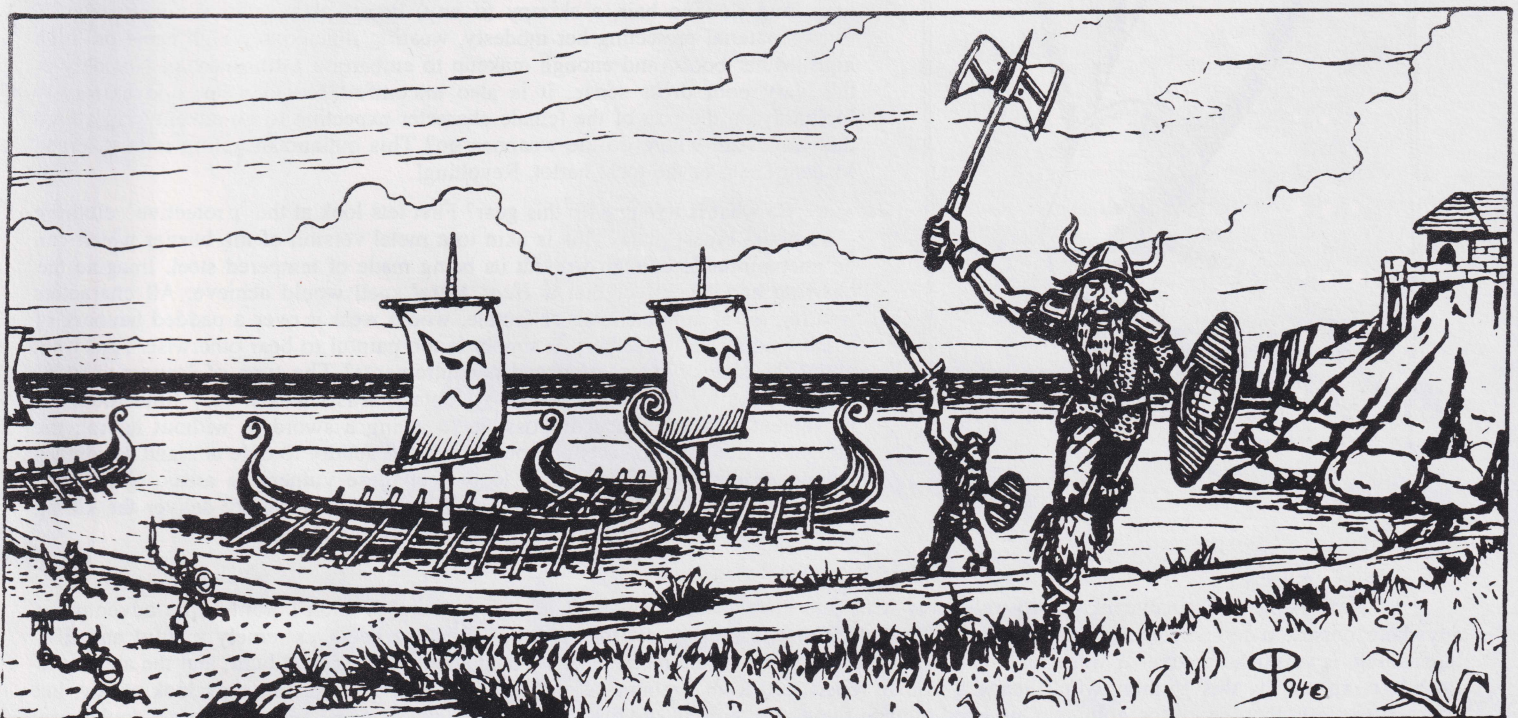
Midgard is a Play-By-Mail Role Playing Game set in its own universe and filled with rivalries, and feuds between opposing factions. It allows you endless opportunities to explore a complex Medieval world filled with war, famine and political intrigue.

At the moment there are 175 players in Midgard with new players being added all the time. New players are set up in completely unexplored areas so that they will know things about the land that some of the older players don't. One of the easiest ways to get ahead in the world is to get in contact with some of the big players and say "I know about this area, lets swap information"

Midgard costs \$15 for a rule book, set-up, and 2 free turns. It costs a set \$7 per turn and players can have turns as often as they like with a minimum delay of ten days. Players only pay when they have a turn so if you only want to play once in a while then you only pay once in a while.

For more information and a copy of our free magazine, please write to :

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Would you invite this man home to meet your mother?

CLOTHES MAKETH THE WOMAN

A Guide to Sensible Dressing For Female Adventurers

Written and Illustrated by Karen Ogden

This is a partly serious, partly tongue-in-cheek discussion on how to dress to avoid hypothermia, scratches, sore feet and sunburn, mainly to inform male players and referees of what we female players already know...

Bambi tottered down the track, balancing perilously on the loose stones which crunched under foot. Her thigh length, patent leather boots glistened in the midday sun. Long golden tresses bounced, along with everything else Bambi had on display, as she tried to keep up with the rest of the party.

"It's cold," she whispered as she tried to rub away her goose bumps.

"Shhh. I think I can hear orcs up ahead."

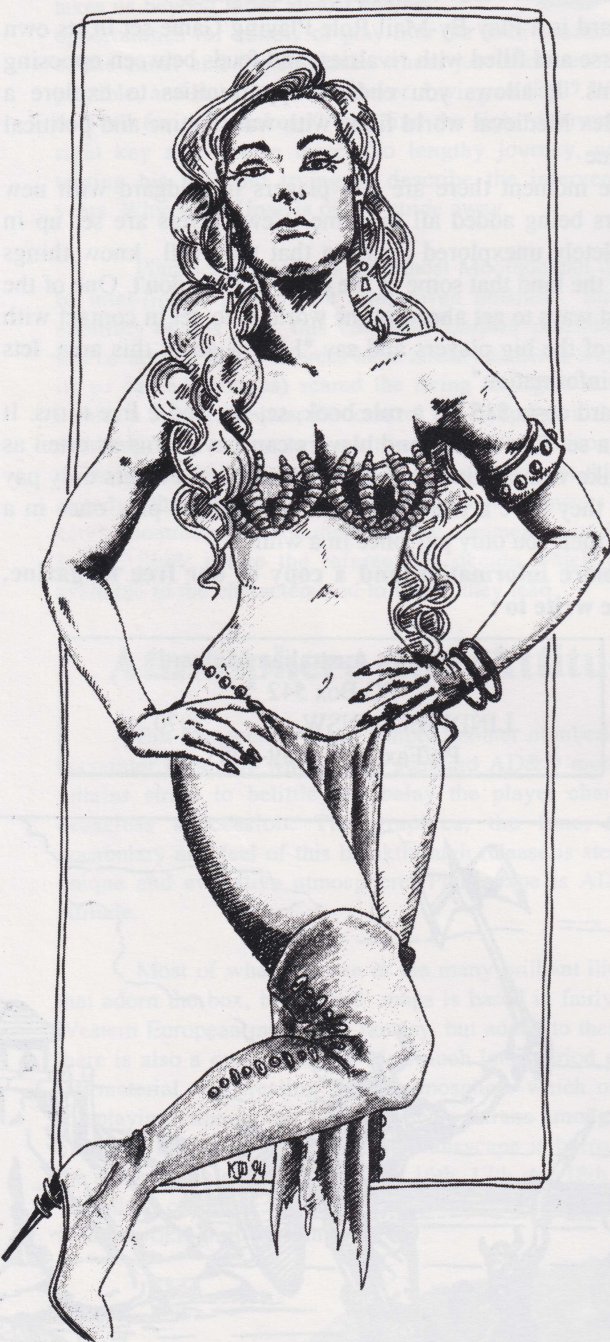
Bambi reached for her sword but she wasn't wearing one; there simply wasn't anywhere to carry it without a belt around her bare midriff, and besides, it would have clashed with her boots.

"Oops," she whispered under her breath.

Why is it that most women depicted in fantasy art, particularly on the cover of roleplaying products, are wearing so little clothing? Why are these women shown with enormous double-D sized breasts and wearing stilettos in an environment of peril where they are certain to suffer harm as a result of their inappropriate dress? The answer to this question that bewilders us women is, because most are drawn by men and are the embodiments of male FANTASY.

Well, that's fair enough. You can't police someone's fantasies. Big Sister, I ain't. But I do find it quite silly that a female adventuring character should be shown drawn in this fashion. Take, for example, the female fighter who is the most common object of these misrepresentations. She's shown with big boobs, very long flowing hair, a skimpy (if any) breast plate, a translucent piece of flimsy material protecting her modesty, wearing ridiculously high heels on thigh high leather boots, and enough makeup to embarrass a transvestite. Not only is this very poor dress sense, it is also uncomfortable to wear, and extremely foolhardy on the part of the female character expecting to go adventuring attired this way. And where do the weapons go? This outlandish get-up is best left to Madam Lash, or the local harlot. Revolting!

So what is wrong with this gear? First lets look at the 'protective' clothing - the bikini breast plate. This is akin to a metal version of the bustier which can be uncomfortable enough without its being made of tempered steel. Imagine the chaffing and the effect that a *Heat Metal* spell would achieve. All characters wearing metal armour, male or female, would wear it over a padded hauberk of some kind (cloth or leather). It simply is too painful to bear otherwise. And what about the size of these supposed accoutrements? The type of 'saucer-shaped' breast plates for women favoured by fantasy artists leaves very little room for movement and are almost impossible to swing a sword in without having the obligatory double-D breasts pop out for all and sundry to ogle at... and remember the whole purpose of armour is to protect these vulnerable areas. Unless the strategy is to distract the bad guys while the rest of the party deliver the killing blows, forget skimpy armour and get something more effective.



Next item, the translucent dignity preserver with fine metal chain ties. Well, if it was me, I wouldn't want to be adventuring anywhere outside a temperate climate. Hypothermia would not take long to set in. Frost-bite, besides being extremely painful and life-threatening, is very unattractive. A warm climate wouldn't be much better, the metal chains would soon warm up and burn, and the amount of flesh left exposed by this garment would leave a woman lobster-red from sunburn before too long. And those chains may look sturdy, but attached to cloth, they count for nothing. One good tug and the whole thing would disintegrate; even professional strippers wear a double row of dental floss for added strength and wouldn't trust to such a flimsy attachment - and they're not adventuring over rough terrain or fighting rabid orcs in their outfits (well, not usually!).

Now to the stiletto-heeled, thigh high boots. They may look impressive to the fevered male imagination, and could prove useful as impromptu daggers, but practical adventuring wear they definitely are not. They are a chiropodist's nightmare, forcing all of a women's weight onto the ball of the foot, making it difficult to balance properly or even to walk for any length of time. Mountain climbing is out of the question, descending uneven steps into a dungeon improbable, and running away from a monster breathing down your neck, impossible. And the long, flowing, golden tresses? I myself have long hair and do like it. As far as fashion goes, a lot can be done with long hair and short hair needs constant cutting to maintain the look. But long hair, left unfettered, has the irritating habit of getting in your way. Wind will catch it in the nearest tree, bush, or hook on a dungeon wall. If it's not kept clean (a difficult proposition when you are adventuring away from the creature comforts of civilisation for extended periods) things start to grow in it; in fantasy worlds some of these things can be very hazardous to your health. Orcs can catch you by it and pull, quickly achieving maximum pain levels. Female characters are advised to wear their hair up; plaits are usually the most efficient way. Or simply cut it.

So how do we fix this adventurer's fashion nightmare? Let's get constructive and take a look at how a sensible fantasy female warrior really would dress. There are three main areas to consider when dressing for adventure; comfort, cover/protection and individuality.

Comfort really depends on where you are adventuring. The climate and terrain is one of the first things I try to discover from the referee. As you know, he or she doesn't always have to tell you, so be prepared for any environment. If you are going to be travelling in hot, desert conditions, there is no point trying to show off a svelte outline. Figure hugging clothes are too hot and restrictive. Wear loose, light coloured clothing that covers everything and don't forget to wear a wide-brimmed hat. If it's colder climes that you will be bashing through, rug up. Soft leather is warm and relatively easy to move in. Gloves will help prevent numbing hands - important if you are a thief character expected to disarm traps and unlock doors. In all weathers, forget the stilettos. Soft, flat-sole boots allow for long hours of trudging to the next encounter and will cause less blisters.

Adventuring is a dangerous business. It is what makes it exciting and fun to do. But don't make it too dangerous. Protect yourself. Travelling through forests or over jagged rocks you'll want sturdy pants and a jerkin to avoid painful snags and tears without overly restricting movement. Again, a soft leather or heavy wool is usually the best material, as thinner materials (especially all those that give that translucent effect beloved of fantasy artists) have a mind of their own and will float with the slightest breeze, catch and tear easily and leave the adventurer with torn skin. Any female adventurer who engages in combat will need maximum protection. I once saw a comic strip of a female in an arrow peppered chainmail bikini, with not a scratch on her. The caption read "Lucky I was wearing my armour." Sorry guys and gals, referees don't play that way. Well, not the ones I know. Look at the history books available in any library or gaming store; fighters wore full plate, chainmail, or leather from neck to knee, and they didn't forget head protection. Wear a helmet, even if it does obscure your face and hair - what good is it to protect your body and leave the most vital part exposed? One good hit on the head and you're either unconscious or dead.

Dress has always been a form of code, allowing those that look at you to know your caste or station, even your trade. Everyone wears some sort of uniform, or standard dress that serves as a visual signal to others who and what you are. To this you want to add a touch of individuality. It is true, for some women clothes mean a lot. Other women really couldn't give a damn. This, however, should be always a matter of individual choice, and not a degrading stereotype forced on women by the fantasies of men. If your character is well off, you'll probably buy good garments made from quality materials with plenty of adornments. Full plate armour is within the financial reach of any moderately successful adventurer. If you're just starting out, or are in any way impoverished, seconds or patched gear will have to do. Sometimes you'll want to give the impression that you're from a different background, or class. All this can be achieved by selective purchases and a bit of imagination.

So, as a general rule, remember the following. A lot of adventuring involves long treks through orc-infested mountains covered in dark, overgrown forest, or across open plains in searing heat. Imagine all the damage that could be done to naked flesh. Ouch! Get real, get protection, get dressed.



Liz edged silently down the track, her soft boots carefully searching out stable footholds. She stopped and listened carefully. Something moved up ahead. Turning to the following party, she raised a gloved finger to her lips then pointed ahead. The rest of the adventurers nodded, and moved quietly off the track.

Liz melted into the nearby tree line, her dappled clothing merging with the foliage. She reached for her sword and slowly drew it from the well-oiled scabbard, hefting it easily in one hand.

She smiled and waited.

Poisons and Venoms of the

FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Scott English

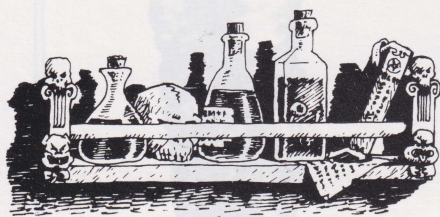
These are strictly unofficial rules, written and published for those players and referees who are looking for something to add to their Forgotten Realms campaign. Each group should make their own decision as to whether or not these venoms will be allowed into their game.

Ulke Irwine, Scholar

It was my great good fortune to chance upon a "horse-tender" by the name of Delbossan, while he was still plying the Inner Sea - Sword Coast trade routes. Being one with a keen eye for new knowledge I purchased a nondescript, leather-bound tome which he had "acquired" on a recent journey with a Seven Suns merchant.

I was eager to begin translating the tome, for it was scribed in a foreign code. Through diligence and good luck I managed to crack the code and discovered the tome's contents. The book proved to be the work of a now deceased Waterdeep alchemist, Fost Gerth, and is his encrypted journal of the various deadly venoms which can be found within the Sword Coast region.

Not being one to hide my discoveries, I have herein transcribed a portion of the more interesting and useful information contained within its leather bindings...



Kraken Sepia

Many a sailor on the Sword Coast weaves tales of the mighty Kraken when they are spending their times in the inns and taverns of their port stops. Very few have actually seen a Kraken, for it has only been found in the deepest areas of the Trackless Sea, and even there it is extremely rare.

Handra Searaven, a half-elven pirate/trader of small renown specialises in the supply of Kraken Sepia. Searaven owns a war galleon, the "Death Maiden", which is manned by a very hardy (or foolish) crew.

Searaven takes the Maiden to the deep waters surrounding the Island of Gundarlun (which lies due west of Neverwinter), where he sets his galleon to drift and orders her crew to begin beating out a steady rhythm on deep drums in order to attract the Kraken. There is a 5% (non-cumulative) chance that one will appear, for every hour of drum beating.

If the Kraken arrives, Searaven and his crew attempt to engage and harpoon it. Searaven was able to recall many a time when the Death Maiden was nearly dragged below the surface of the cold water by a strong Kraken. This is why they first attempt to weaken it as much as possible before using harpoons. Once this has been done, the Kraken is towed back to shore (usually Gundarlun), where it is cut open for its sepia glands. This must be done within 1-4 days of the death of the Kraken or the sepia will dilute and become useless. Normally, one or two standard oil flasks of sepia can be extracted. Some of the flesh is also kept and sold in Neverwinter and Waterdeep where it is considered a delicacy. The sepia is highly sought after by several sages and wizards who use it as a poisonous ink in their tomes.

If the sepia is stored in sunlight (direct or ambient), it will lose its potency at a rate of one point of damage per week. When the poison is initially extracted it will do 1-4 damage per round (1-2 if save vs. poison is successful). However, if the sepia were to be stored in the sunlight for one week, it would only do 1-3 damage per round (1 if save was successful). After four weeks the sepia becomes inert, but is still useful as an ink.

In fairly large quantities, such as in a vial, sepia looks black like ink, but in smaller quantities, such as along a blade, it will appear to be brown. As mentioned earlier, the sepia is mainly used as a poisonous ink. Anyone reading something that has been written or drawn with this sepia (and perhaps using their fingers to trace out the words or lines - or perhaps licking their finger to change pages), will be affected by the poison. In a book or scroll, the sepia will remain poisonous almost indefinitely.

Method: Contact, Injection.

Onset: Small (Immediate), Medium (1 rnd), Large (2 rnds), Giant (3 rnds).

Strength: 1d4 per round (1d2 if save).

Frequency: Extremely rare. Usually only found in Neverwinter or Waterdeep.

Cost: 500 gold coins per vial (enough for about 15 pages or to wet a sword 10 times).

Seawolf Saliva

It has been brought to my attention by a Ffolk merchant recently that attacks by Seawolves have increased in frequency in and around the Moonshae isles. These attacks seem to have been concentrated in the southern parts of the Isles, and there have been no news from the Northmen of such attacks. These raids were of particular interest to me because the Greater Seawolf possesses a lycanthropic spittle which can be extracted and used in much the same way as any poison!

Contrary to what some believe, the saliva of a Greater Seawolf cannot be drawn from a wound. It must be drawn from a live specimen. It is very potent and has the effect of changing the victim into a Seawolf. Any method of getting the saliva into the victim's system can cause lycanthropy, as long as the method itself isn't fatal. For example, if you bash someone over the head with a sword coated with Seawolf saliva, then they will eventually change into a Seawolf. If however, the blow killed them, then the only thing they are likely to change into, is a corpse.

Once the lycanthropic change occurs, the victim will head for the nearest salt water with uncontrollable need, jump in and change into a Seawolf. It will then seek out other Seawolves if it can.

Method: Injection.

Onset: Small (1-4 days), Medium (2-5 days), Large (2-8 days), Giant (3-12 days).

Strength: Lycanthropic (see above). No effect if save versus poison is successful.

Frequency: Very rare, usually around the Moonshae Isles; it is available from certain Northmen in the region.

Cost: 300 gold coins per dose.

Mantrap Fluid

A woodsman was once tempted to enter the Wood of Sharp Teeth by the prime trees growing there, despite the fell rumours in Baldur's Gate about the denizens of the woods. Being poor, he saw this as an opportunity to get his family out of the poverty stricken life they seemed to be stuck in. Within the edges of the wood he noticed a sweet smell like that of newly cooked apple bread, and went to investigate its source. Before he knew it, he had lost all thought except that of finding the source of this

smell, and deeper into the wood he went. Soon he drew near the source of the smell, a large plant with dark green foliage and bright yellow flowers. He kept walking toward the flower, though his mind reeled with fear. At the last moment, a small stag bounded in front of him and into the plant. He watched in horror as the dark leaves of the plant wrapped themselves around the stag. Slowly the struggles of the stag slowed and ceased. The woodsman ran blindly, the spell broken, until he had run out of the forest and into the waning sunlight.

The Mantrap is known to attract its prey with a sweet scent so it is advised that if you intend to collect the Fluid of a Mantrap, you protect yourself from its lure by plugging your nose with crushed garlic lest you fall prey yourself.

Once the Mantrap has lured its prey, it dissolves it with acidic fluid secretions. This fluid can be obtained by feeding the Mantrap with some animal and then pulling the partially consumed animal from the snare of the Mantrap and scraping all fluid from the carcass.

Extreme care must be taken as the fluid of the Mantrap will dissolve any organic matter quite quickly and even metals slowly succumb to the acid. Any creature effected by the fluid receives damage equal to their AC (not counting dexterity bonuses), each round! All equipment exposed to the acid must save every round or become useless (metal objects get a +2). The acid can be removed by water and thorough scrubbing (needs 1d4 rounds).

Method: Contact.

Onset: For all sizes: Immediate.

Strength: Damage equal to AC (without dexterity bonus). Half damage if save.

Frequency: Only ever sold in Baldur's Gate, and even then it is extremely rare.

Cost: 700 - 900 gold coins per flask (enough to splash on a medium sized creature or 10 uses on a weapon).

Miner's Poison

Miners (the creature not the profession), can be encountered in many of the forests and woods along the Sword Coast and especially along the well-travelled paths through these areas. The Miner will lay just under the surface of the path and extend its barbs up through the path. Anything stepping on the barbs will be injected with the Miner's venom.

Rangers and Druids are sometimes taught to spot and identify these barbs; intelligent woodland creatures are generally aware of the location of Miners in their territory, or are able to spot where a Miner lies in wait. Once the Miner has been identified it can be dispatched, and the barbs are then carefully removed from the spine of the dead Miner. The poison sac is then removed from the barb, and the poison is deposited into a vial or flask (there is a 35% chance of bursting the sac and ruining the poison). Each poison sac holds enough poison to effect a medium sized creature, and there will be from 6 - 25 barbs on the average Miner.



Method: Injection.

Onset: Small (1 rnd), Medium (1-2 rnds), Large (1-4 rnds), Giant (1-6 rnds).

Strength: Paralytic (duration of 2-40 turns), no effect if save.

Frequency: Very rare, only likely in major towns and cities.

Cost: 150 gold coins per dose (enough to paralyse a medium sized creature)

Ophidian Venom

The snake men as they are commonly known in the area around Lizard Marsh carry a highly sought after semi-lycanthropic poison in a sac within their jaws. The Ophidian is a snakelike creature with human-like arms, similar in some respects to the mighty Naga. The venom sac must be removed from the Ophidian while it is still alive or within 1-4 rounds of its death or the venom will be spoiled.

This venom sac contains enough poison for 2-3 victims. The effect of which is to transform the victim into an Ophidian for 8-16 days. If the victim of the venom is not humanoid, they will die at the time of Onset, horribly mutated.

Method: Injection.

Onset: Small (1-4 days), Medium (2-5 days), Large (2-8 days), Giant (2-12 days).

Strength: Semi-lycanthropic (see above). If save, there is no effect.

Frequency: Rare. Sometimes found in the bizarre of Daggerford.

Phycomid Fluid

Phycomid's are found within many of the swamps and particularly dark and damp forests all along the Sword Coast. When endangered or threatened the Phycomid shoots forth a globule of highly caustic alkaline fluid. This fluid can only be extracted by cutting open the stem of the Phycomid and the stomach-like muscle found inside. This is where the fluid is created and stored, and will immediately leak out once cut open.

Any creature exposed to contact with this fluid will immediately take 3-6 points of damage from alkaline burning. If the fluid isn't washed off that round, and the victim doesn't make their saving throw, then the victim becomes the host of a new Phycomid colony. Once this happens, mushrooms and fungus will immediately start to sprout all over the victim's body causing 5-8 points of damage each round. Once the infection has progressed to this stage, the priest Georgia of Waterdeep claims that the miracles of her god are required to cure the disease. In any case, I believe a deity of similar powers of healing would be able to grant such a cure as long as the victim was still alive.

In 5 to 8 rounds the victim will die, and what remains of them will feed the newly spawned Phycomid which takes their place.

Method: Contact

Onset: All sizes: 5-8 rounds.

Strength: Disease carrier. If save, no effect.

Frequency: This is rare almost everywhere because of the difficulty finding Phycomid patches and then retrieving the fluid.

Cost: 500 coins for enough to affect a one creature.

Deadly Puddings

Deadly Puddings can be found throughout the Realms, and in fact the Brown Pudding has become a quite a nuisance in some areas. The only Deadly Pudding that isn't really seen on the Sword Coast is the White variety, which are more common on the great white glacier to the north east. The two varieties that can be found on the Sword Coast are the Brown and the Dun Puddings.

Brown Pudding

These can typically be found in dark, wet, and mouldy places. They eat through leather and wood voraciously (within a round). They cannot eat through metal however, and this is why they are often collected with metal implements like giant spoons or tongs, and stored in metal flasks or vases. A common,

and often amusing tactic employed by some gnome clans in the area is to fling the Pudding with a large spoon-like implement that looks much like a personal catapult of sorts. When it comes into contact with flesh, the Deadly Brown Pudding immediately feeds off the victim, causing 5-20 points of damage per round until killed, or removed (not an easy task).

There is also a gnomish tale of a tribal leader who disliked his brother, the leader of a neighbouring tribe which had splintered off from his some years earlier. Upon inviting his brother to a royal feast, he fed his brother a Deadly Brown Pudding. The brother, thinking it was a delicious desert, gulped the Pudding down and received a stomach upset of monumental nature (which proved fatal).

Method: Contact.

Onset: All sizes; Immediate.

Strength: 5-20 per round. No save.

Frequency: Uncommon. They are a pest in some areas and hence are given away. In other areas, they can be seen peddled by very small shop owners.

Cost: 0 - 25 coins per specimen.

Dun Pudding

Fortunately, this variety of Pudding is not as common as the Brown Pudding for it has the unnerving ability to eat its way through metallic substances as well (it has been known to eat through chainmail in 2 rounds, and platemail in 4!). Ceramic tools are usually employed to collect Dun Puddings, and they are often stored in ceramic containers in order to prevent them escaping at inconvenient times. They are often used covertly, by leaving them in a place where someone is likely to walk into them (next to someone's bed or in a hallway in the middle of the night). A victim will receive 4-24 points of damage per round until the victim is dead or the Pudding has been removed. A sometimes nasty and quite rarely known fact is that Deadly Dun Pudding can eat through glass, so glass vials are *not* an effective means of storage.

Method: Contact.

Onset: All sizes; Immediate.

Strength: 4-24 per round. No save.

Frequency: Rare. Only found in the more arid areas of northern Sword Coast.

Cost: 150 coins per specimen.

Rat Saliva

Not commonly recognised as a poison by the middle to upper class of Waterdeep society, but seen as a readily available form of getting revenge by the lower classes, is Rat Saliva. In some places, Rats are actually farmed for the purpose of collecting their saliva, the individuals that do the farming proudly call themselves 'Rat Herders'. Rat farming is a very competitive business in Waterdeep with several herders aggressively vying with each for market share, and smaller numbers appearing in cities such as Neverwinter and Baldur's Gate.

At least one Rat Herder is likely to be found in any population centre that has a rat

infestation. In smaller settlements, rats may also be farmed as food.

The saliva of the rat is obtained by picking the rat up by hand, forcing its jaw open and then scooping out all saliva within the mouth with a swab. The saliva is then placed straight in a jar or vial in which it will be sold. These can be obtained from any Rat Herder worth their salt (they always carry bottles of saliva around with them), or even through some of the merchants in the poorer segments of a settlement.

The whole point of farming Rat Saliva is because of the high chance that the saliva will be carrying a disease of some sort. It is for this reason that the rats are kept in the most putrid conditions possible, in order to promote the likelihood of disease. Disease is an occupational hazard for Rat Herders, many will be infected by at least one disease, as they are often the victim of rat bites. For this reason, Rat Herders are not welcome in polite company.

The most common application method for Rat Saliva is to mix it in with food or drinks. Those poorer folk who wish to extract pain and vengeance, or who like to see the slow suffering of someone over a period of time will buy Rat Saliva, slip into the unsuspecting victims meal and take the chance that the Saliva has a disease in it. A person injected with or ingesting Rat Saliva has only a 5% chance of coming down with a disease of some sort, which will then take effect in 1 to 7 days.

Method: Injection or Ingestion.

Onset: All sizes; 1 to 7 days.

Strength: Disease Carrier. If save is made, chance of being infected is reduced to 2%.

Frequency: Common. A Rat Herder or merchant selling Rat Saliva can usually be found in the poorer districts of most moderate to large settlements (and the best prices can be obtained in Waterdeep).

Cost: 20 gold coins per vial (5 coins in Waterdeep), which is enough for approximately 10 doses.

Retch Plant Sap

Retch Plants usually have globe-like growths in which they carry an extremely foul, noxious and sticky liquid. To obtain these globes, the collector must in some way be able to reach the height at which the globes grow within the plant's branches and remove them like coconuts. This must be done extremely carefully because the globes consist of a very fragile membranous skin (which can sometimes be broken by the wind alone), atop of which is a small stem. These globes are so fragile that handling them in any way other than grasping them by the stem will most likely cause them to burst. Another point that one must be wary of is that the Retch Plant is extremely sensitive to vibrations around it. Chopping the plant down, attempting to climb it, or even just walking under the plant is likely to trigger off 2 to 5 globes, which are simply released from the plant's branches and dropped to the ground, immediately bursting.

When the globes break, everything within 5 feet is splashed with the sticky liquid, and 25% of creatures outside 5 feet but

within 10 feet are splashed. Creatures that have been splashed by the fluid will spend the next 3 rounds retching and vomiting, and for 6 turns afterward their strength will be reduced to half.

The smell of the liquid is extremely attractive to inquisitive creatures (especially to carnivores), and will increase the likelihood of randomly encountering such creatures. The smell of the liquid will slowly fade in 1 to 4 hours unless the liquid is washed from the victim with any sort of alcohol. The liquid can be smelt up to 50' away. There is no saving throw allowed to avoid the splash of the liquid.

Method: Contact.

Onset: All sizes; Instant.

Strength: Nausea.

Frequency: Rare. The plants are very hard to find, and actually retrieving the globes from the plant, intact, is difficult.

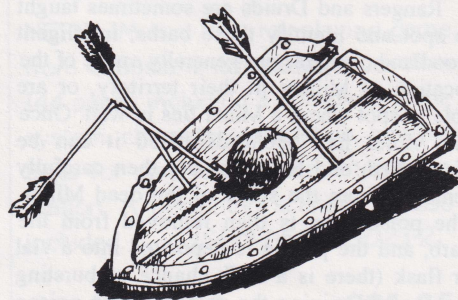
Cost: 250 gold coins per globe.

Hidden Secrets

Reading his manuscripts, it becomes obvious Fost Gerth conducted much of his secret (why else the strange foreign code?) research into venoms and poisons for a very important person, someone high up in the Waterdeep hierarchy. It seems possible that this patron may even have been one of the secretive Lords of Waterdeep; and the question that leaps into mind is why should such an exalted one require knowledge of these dangerous concoctions?

Although far be it for me, a humble scholar, to point any accusations at those who direct and control our lives behind the scenes, still, Gerth's work does leave one wondering, and worrying about the flow of things in Waterdeep. I have shared this study on poisons and venoms so that in my own small way, I can help balance the ledger of knowledge and power within our City of Splendours. For, what can be used against us by the powers that be, can also be used against *them* at need.

Suffice to say, Ulke Irwine is not my true name. To reveal my identity would be to put into jeopardy all that I live for and aspire to. Waterdeep has many currents running beneath the surface which can swiftly drag under and drown the unwary, carrying his corpse to an unknown grave. Beware. ■



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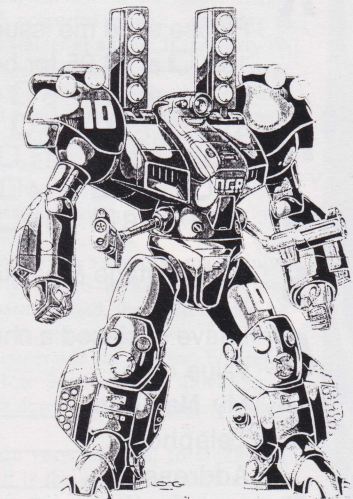
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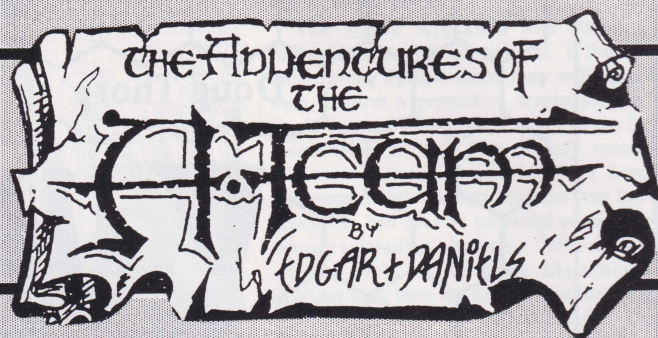
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LIP SERVICE

LIP SERVICE

It's been a whole eight issues since we brought you this irregular column, the aim of which is to bring you, our loyal legions of readers, up to date with what is happening at **Australian Realms**; office gossip (who's being doing what to whom with which), project updates (beware the deadline, the scourge of Editors everywhere) and other choice tid-bits.

STAFF MOVES

A number of staffing changes have occurred over the past two issues, so we thought it only fair to bring you up to date (at least for those of you who don't go blind trying to read the small print on the contents page). Karen Leaning has moved from Assistant Editor to her new role as Administrator, and Colin Taber is thoroughly enjoying his new role as **Unae** Project Editor (the man never sleeps!).

Their places have been taken by Lee Sheppard, a cheerfully enthusiastic lad who has been working quietly in the background for a few issues now. With over 17 years experience in role-playing, recent successes in *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazines, and a very silly sense of humour, we look forward to a long association. Sadly, Gary Morton has left us to pursue his own graphic design business. We wish him all the best with his new endeavours. His shoes have been more than filled however by Steve Newman, whose **Unae** sketches have attracted more fan mail than any previous art published.

A-TEAM GOODIES

By the time you read this the **Adventures of the A-Team** first annual will be available. Scott Edgar's recent illness put us slightly behind schedule, but we can assure you all that the delay has been well worth it. Nick is still raving about the new artwork for the book, and anything that causes Nick to rave is very special indeed. I would advise those of you who are fans or collectors to order a copy of this groundbreaking publication as soon as possible because this book is HOT and has been produced as a limited run.

The work on the **A-Team miniatures** is also progressing nicely, with Scott's sketches (which are absolutely brilliant) soon to be forwarded to **Inquisition Miniatures** for sculpting. We hope to have the miniatures available in late August or early September, so keep a look out.

And so that you can put your miniatures to immediate use, the **A-Team Tavern Brawl Boardgame**, which was planned to appear in this issue, is now scheduled for inclusion absolutely **FREE** in next issue.

ONWARD AND OUTWARD

Ongoing negotiations with a number of distributors in the United States (some conducted at obscene hours of the night local time - Nick isn't allowed to sleep either!) have now borne fruit and this is the first issue where our magazine will be available in the traditional home of role-playing. Apart from the obvious benefits such as taking the views of Australian gamers to the world, we at **Realms** are really looking forward to one day dwarfing the TSR castle at GenCon with our papier-mache Ayers Rock.

REALMS SCENARIO SPECIAL

Our **Scenario Special** is also being worked on. Containing six fully-detailed scenarios (**Shadowrun** and **Unae** by Colin Taber, **Cyberpunk** by Paul Mitting, an **A-Team AD&D** dungeon bash by Andrew Daniels and another two **AD&D** scenarios by Adam Whitt), this should prove to be quite popular, especially if your regular comments are anything to go by. The staff at **Realms** recently playtested the **Cyberpunk** scenario and had a great time. The spectacular death of Lee's "Solo" character will be talked about for some time to come; nine kilos of plastic explosive certainly focuses the mind when it's about to explode in your face!

UNAE

A recent editorial meeting discussed the future plot lines and projects for **Unae**, our own fantasy world. Colin Taber, the Project Editor for **Unae**, shocked us all by outlining a time-line that will take us well into 1995 and beyond! Expect something soon on the **Elves of Wair-Rae** and the **Ogre Clans**, the two areas that we most often receive requests for more information upon.

Colin also informs us that the first **Unae World Book** is on schedule for release by Christmas this year. Centring on the human races found in the area known as Dormetia, this book will expand on the information already presented in the various source articles of the past two years, with new artwork and new more detailed maps.

WRITERS AND ARTISTS

Don't forget, **Realms** is always on the look out for new writers and artists. If you think that you've got what it takes, please send a **stamped, self-addressed envelope** to Australian **Realms** PO Box 220 MORLEY WA 6943, and we'll send you our writers and artists guidelines. If you've got what it takes you could be sleepless too!

T-SHIRTS

Realms T-Shirts are proving quite popular, and why not? You have a choice of size and get to pick your favourite **Realms** cover to decorate it (in full colour we might add). What a great way to proclaim your support for Australian Gaming!

WITHER REALMS IN 95?

1994 has already been a great year for us at **Realms**, with the **Adventures of the A-Team**, the **Scenario Special** and the **Unae World Book** signalling our first steps into establishing ourselves as a fully fledged Australian publishing company. 1995 looks to be even more exciting, with a "**How To**" Book, a second **Scenario Special**, **A-Team** and **Unae World Book** already on the drawing board. We don't want to give too much away at this stage, but we'd advise you to stick around, 'cause you certainly haven't seen anything yet.

NAILED TO THE POST

In response to a huge reader demand we have decided to open a trader's area in Australian **Realms**. Every good fantasy campaign has its market square with a huge lump of timber sunk in the ground (sometimes this is a tree - but most towns have cut down all available trees in the process of getting built) onto which all and sundry are invited to stick their public notices. So that is what we are going to do; sink a post in our market square and anyone who wants to can nail their notice to it.

There are a few rules, however - sorry, but **Realms** is a lawful establishment. These are 1) a notice can only be displayed for one issue, 2) notices should be brief and to the point, 3) notices should be for non-commercial purposes only (conventions excepted).

This service is offered to readers to use to make contacts, swap old material, promote non-profit events, clubs and conventions, and for other gaming related messages.

THANKS TO YOU

None of this success would have been possible without the support of a great number of people. To the gaming companies who have encouraged us, the contributors who have filled our pages, and the advertisers who have supported us, we thank you. Our biggest thanks however go to you, our readers. We might say it a hundred times, but we mean it more every single time.



More Aussie Literature

In previous issues our erstwhile purveyor of all that was good and wholesome in the galaxy of sci-fi, Peter Crank, decried the lack of good Australian novel publications in the speculative fiction field. This issue we take a look at two fine exceptions.

Graham Holman

Aphelion Publications of South Australia claims to be perhaps Australia's only 5 to 9 publishing house, intent on proving that a modest quality program can sustained "after hours". Its proprietors, Peter and Mariann McNamara both pursue careers outside publishing, but have never allowed their 9 to 5 identities to rule their lives. Aphelion gives expression to their shared interest in speculative literature.

Voices in the Light: Book One of Greatwinter (Aphelion, \$12.95) is the Adelaide company's ninth book and is written by Adelaide author, Sean McMullen. McMullen comes with a strong pedigree of short stories on which he has built an impressive record of fine stylised writings. The Greatwinter series represents his quantum leap into the world of the major novel and is based on many of his earlier short stories. Expecting this jumbled mass of ideas and scenarios to be accumulated into a messy porridge of confused but clever rambling, I was wiped out by just how strong a story has grown out of the morass.

Voices in the Light is a tremendously understated novel. With an extremely silky short story style of writing, the book oozes with atmosphere and character, whilst being filled with a bleak vision of life as we are going to know it. Set in Australia in the years after man's submission to technological madness, the world has been reduced to base technology. From out of this Greatwinter the world has developed a whole new culture and religion.

McMullen has exquisitely crafted a world into which the reader falls into the atmosphere and glides along with the characters in the quietly developing story. Hidden throughout are the great ideas and thoughts on which all good sci-fi novels live or die. The mundane activities of the world after Greatwinter are shaped by ingenious precepts based in the long distant past of the now technologically destitute world. Without the hype and "look here comes the point of the novel" manner found in lesser works, **Voices in the Light**, gives up its secrets through the passing comments of its characters. This is a book to be savoured.

With the forthcoming novel **Mirrorsun Rising**, Greatwinter is a series that deserves to be read, if only to enjoy the smooth and stylish atmosphere found in McMullen's writing style it will be well worth the effort.

Adam Whitt

Pan Australia are continuing to publish locally produced speculative fiction, with plans to output around six novels a year. Western Australian author, Shannah Jay's **Quest: Book One of the Chronicles of**

The Analytical Engine BOOK REVIEWS

by Holman, Whitt
& Watts

Tenebrak (Pan Australia, \$11.95) is another book in this ambitious program. Pan Australia so far are only publishing works that fit the tired 'fantasy epic quest trilogy' format; probably because that way they are at least guaranteed sales.

Quest does fall within the epic quest category, but its differences make it stand out enough to warrant attention. Set in the small medieval technology world of the Twelve Claims, **Quest** is one of those new breed of fantasy/science fiction novels which combines elements of both genres. In a classic tale of "who is watching whom?" the Twelve Claims are being observed from a space station in orbit above the planet by a survey/study team from the advanced space going civilisation, the Confederation. The irony of the book is that these supposedly higher beings are slowly drawn in to the drama of life on the planet they are assigned to dispassionately observe, and in the process rediscover their own humanity. Furthermore, it transpires that there are other unseen players with an interest in the planet.

The heroine, Katia, is a reluctant inductee to the Sisterhood, a sect of peaceful care givers who have been, for around 20,000 years, selectively breeding and nurturing women with special 'talents' - psychic powers that enable them to heal, protect and serve the good folk of the Twelve Claims. The Sisterhood have their enemies, however, and the main conflict of the novel centres on the attack on the Sisterhood by the outrageously chauvinistic cult of the Serpent - a stereotypical war of the sexes. Katia is a special talent, and her love for Davred of the Confederation's science team is where the hope for the Twelve Claims' future lies.

Quest is a slow moving, but passionate and warm novel that engages your interest steadily but surely and with not a few surprises throughout. A good beginning to the series, I'm looking forward to the next episode.

Richard Watts

Cthulhu's Heirs (Chaosium, \$9.95) is a recent entry to the field of tie-in novels and story collections published by game companies. Unlike the first two releases in the "impossible to find" *Call of Cthulhu Fiction* line, which anthologised out-of-print tales by founding Mythos authors, this volume is, with two exceptions, a collection of brand new Cthulhu stories. Reprinted for the first time in **Cthulhu's Heirs** is "The Death Watch," by Hugh B. Cave, which first saw publication in *Weird Tales* in 1939. Its age shows. The story limps along in a poor imitation of Lovecraftian first person narration, attempting to wring horror from a tale of the evils of science. Perhaps an original theme in 1939, but no longer. The only other reprint is Ramsey Campbell's "The Franklyn Paragraphs," which explores the fears of a horror writer faced with truth of the stories he writes. First published in the author's second short story collection, *Demons By Daylight*, in 1975. "The Franklyn Paragraphs" is a superb example of Campbell's ability to portray the alienating horror of the everyday urban landscape.

The stories which make up the remainder of **Cthulhu's Heirs** are on the whole, well written, and original in concept and content. The most successful tales are those in which the authors employ their own style to horrific effect, rather than attempting to write adjective-laden Lovecraftian prose. Among the outstanding stories are "Those of the Air," by Darrell Schweitzer and Jason Van Hollander, and Gordon Linzer's "Pickman's Legacy," both of which are written as sequels to specific Lovecraft tales ("The Dunwich Horror" and "Pickman's Model,") but which take the themes and ideas of those stories in completely unexpected directions. "Those of the Air," is surprisingly touching, its pathos unexpected, given the story's subject matter, but not at all intrusive, while "Pickman's Legacy," is simple but deliciously macabre.

Other highlights of **Cthulhu's Heirs** are "The Likeness," by Dan Perez, a tale of tattooing and other rituals; the tongue-in-cheek "Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock," by Robert M. Price, which reveals what happens to those who read too many forbidden and blasphemous books; Craig Anthony's "Scene: A Room," a disturbing, psychedelic screenplay; and "An Early Frost," by Scott David Aniolowski, the only Cthulhu scenario author to have a story included in the book, who tells a tale of love and AIDS, and of what happens when New Age holistic therapy meets a horror from the stars.

With one or two exceptions, the varied stories contained within **Cthulhu's Heirs** are excellent explorations of the Cthulhu Mythos. This book should appeal to horror fans and Lovecraft fanatics alike.

Another recently released gaming-related anthology is **The Beast Within** (White Wolf, \$9.95) the second fiction release from White Wolf, and the first to explore the unlife of the Damned. It comprises 13 short stories set within the vampiric community of San Francisco, detailing struggles with elders, the Sabbat, and the characters' own natures. Contributors to **The Beast Within** include

such gaming stalwarts as Keith Herber, of *Call of Cthulhu* fame, and White Wolf's own Bill Bridges, as well as S.P. Somtow.

Given the literary roots of *Vampire: The Masquerade*, one might hope that the game's themes of personal horror and emotional turmoil would be easily translated to horror fiction. If this book is anything to go by, such hopes are in vain. This is not a good anthology of vampire fiction. Nor is it a bad one. The majority of stories contained within the book commit the unforgivable sin of being merely average. Their awkward phrasing suggests that the authors should focus their efforts on roleplaying games rather than fiction. Even one of the most competent of stories of the collection, Somtow's "The Voice of the Hummingbird", jars in that it contradicts standard *Vampire* lore, having its Cainite protagonist walking about during the day. The many continuity errors that run through the book, for which none but the editor, Stewart Weick can be blamed, are distracting flaws.

These criticisms aside, *The Beast Within* is not without merit. Keith Herber's "Dancing with the Devil", is rich in San Francisco flavour, and conveys something of the intensity of an immortal being's memories. "Masquerade" by Kevin Andrew Murphy presents the intrigues and agonies of vampiric existence in a sympathetic light, in addition to being a well-crafted story (although its portrayal of leather queen and human ashtay James Dean as homophobic is problematic to say the least). However, even these otherwise fine tales cannot save *The Beast Within* from being a lacklustre anthology. By all means borrow a copy from a friend, but save your cash for a more worthy product.

On the subject of vampires, Poppy Z. Brite's debut novel of the undead and teen angst, *Lost Souls* (Abyss, \$4.99 US) has recently been released in paperback. This young author has created quite a stir with *Lost Souls*, a blood, drug, and sex-drenched tale set in the USA's deep south. Although her debt to Ann Rice is obvious on almost every page, Brite takes the homoeroticism of Rice's "Vampire Chronicles," considerably further than has currently been the vogue. As well as being able to drink semen as a blood substitute, her vampires thrive on a range of chemicals, from alcohol to LSD.

The central character of *Lost Souls*, Nothing, is an alienated and disturbed member of Generation X. Fleeing his boring life in a small country town, Nothing falls in with a gang of vampires, one of whom, Zillah, becomes his lover. Nothing soon discovers that Zillah is also his father, (Brite's vampires are a race separate from humanity, but related closely enough that the two species can interbreed.) The doomed love of Steve and Ann, two small town kids, is played out against the background of Nothing's incestuous amour, observed by Ghost, a psychic, and Steve's close friend. (How close is left deliberately vague, adding to the decadent atmosphere which permeates the book.)

Lost Souls is an atmospheric and stylish entry in an often lack-lustre field, its vampires both terrifying and attractive. With her first novel, Poppy Z. Brite has proved herself a talent to watch.

Dice Are Dead

Play-By-Mail Column

Submissions To:

Dice Are Dead
PO BOX 220
Morley
Western Australia
6943

Companies mentioned:

Baron's Australian Midgard
PO Box 542, Lindfield NSW 2070

Imagination Games
PO Box 730, Glenelg SA 5045

PBM Sports
PO Box 14219, Melbourne Mail
Centre, Melbourne VIC 3000

Roma Games, PO Box 1957,
Toowoomba QLD 4350

REVIEWS

Victory!

Imagination Games

Reviewed by Mike Trace

Victory! is a complex, play by mail, pseudo World War II simulation. I say pseudo as WWII is the historical era for the setting and the weapon systems of the time for the game. A nicety of this game is that as the turns progress (bimonthly in game time) the tech level increases thus allowing you to build and upgrade to better equipment and weapons as the war progresses. The game does not accurately follow a historical WWII in detail but allows players (and there can be as many as 40) to build up their armies, navies and airforces in an attempt to capture other nations and their capitals.

In theory each Nation starts off with a similar build capacity and resources to win the game; this in practice is not true as some nations have significant advantages with reduced borders, a larger number of provinces and an increased resource potential. There is no compulsion for WWII allies to follow history, in fact the game I reviewed has England aligning itself with Germany and France to attack the Lowlands (Holland and Belgium) and Switzerland. WAR it appears makes for strange bedfellows.

The aim of *Victory!* is to capture enemy territory by moving your ground forces (divisions), supported by your air force and Navy, to adjacent provinces, destroying those enemy ground forces, then assaulting the enemy city within the province. Once both the city and the province are captured you may then start to use their captured resources and factories to build more units to conquer yet another province and then the rest of Europe!

You may have to do a little repair work to the captured city and put down a few partisans but that's why the game gives you security units. The only obstacle to your victory are the other 40 players trying to do to you what you're trying to do to them. That's where diplomacy comes in, you will need allies and *Victory!* allows players to negotiate one of either three alliances available in the game; either a total alliance, an alliance or a non-aggression pact (Oh yes, "peace in our time"), thus hopefully securing a border or two so that you can mass your armies in a classic surprise attack against an unsuspecting neighbouring country.

A word of warning! this game is not a pure combat orientated wargame; there are significant logistics and industrial infrastructure components, ignore them and your panzers will run out of fuel, munitions and general supply and your factories won't produce the oil, aircraft, armament and ship building points so essential for a Nation at War. If you don't feed your population both your own and the conquered, your National Morale will fall and the partisan activity will increase destroying rail and industrial production.

The game includes land, air and naval forces; all need to be fuelled, armed, maintained, moved and then thrown into combat. To do this you issue written mission orders to your units and cities on the orders sheets provided in the game. Each order sheet allows you to select up to 30 orders per proforma from the comprehensive rules booklet provided upon set up. You are initially limited to two orders sheets per turn but as the war progresses and you have larger and more numerous forces you are allowed to submit more. The only catch to the player here, is that each order sheet costs you \$8.00 to have processed or \$7.00 if you use the disk swap option (available only for IBM compatibles) it certainly pays to be precise and efficient when giving orders.

The game moderator, Douglas Coff at Imagination Games is extremely helpful and always eager to assist the players. Most questions are answered on the phone right away with only the occasional curly one needing a call back. The only two minor problems I have had are that the Amphibious Invasion Mission order was covered under the army rules but it is in fact a naval mission (I ended up with a Marine division out at sea trying to land for 6 weeks until I got the order right). The second is all the additional house keeping, you really need to draw up tables to keep track of the resources your factories keep chewing up and monitor them constantly or else you end up having resource shortages which significantly affects your production and construction of units.

Victory! is an addictive PBM that keeps a WWII wargamer like me looking eagerly for the postie for my next turn sheet, I know when it's late. The turn works on about a two week turn around time and to date there has only been one glitch with a delay of one week on that turn. The processing of turns is efficient as rarely do orders get entered incorrectly, never if using the disk option (which I strongly recommend), in fact the operators obviously assist with input if users have made an obvious error on their orders. The turn sheets are easy to follow and comprehensive and apart from some of the minor annoyances already mentioned becomes a chronicle of your warring nation. They include details of the State of the Nation, your treasury (which never lasts long), political alliances, espionage ratings, training levels and current commanders (you get bonuses with these in combat).

The city and province reports include a wealth of information detailing population air/naval bases, rail capacity, fortification levels, and in location security units. Industries are also listed including type and number, resource potentials, fixed defences which include; coastal heavy/light batteries, heavy/light AA and the cheap but very useful local defence battalions. Production stockpiles are listed by city allowing you to produce in those cities your ground, navy and airforce units.

The combat ratings, morale and movement ratings of each of your services are covered in summary in each of the three service reports

with a detailed listing of each unit by type in their respective arms reports, the Divisional Report, Air Group Report and Ship Report. Finally and the most important are the Battle Reports which detail the results of the battles, land, sea and air that have occurred during your turn, the results of which determine whether you are to achieve **Victory!** in the war in Europe.

On a scale of 1 - 10 this game for me is high 8.5. Turn cost \$8.00 per order sheet, \$7.00 if you use disk IBM only. Length of game 72 turns - two weeks per game turn real time. Time taken for you to process your turn sheet - at least two evenings or a full day!

Dino Wars

Roma Games

A Play Tester's View by Cameron Thomas

It took a hit movie to revive a long lost interest in dinosaurs, for people of all ages. And with the resurgence in interest, came the obvious marketing of dinosaurs in forms such as video games, cartoons and toys. What didn't happen straight away, was what most play by mail gamers would have expected, a PBM game based on dinosaurs. In such a saturated market, new ideas are hard to find, so when Roma Games announced in late 1993 to its players that it was planning to introduce a game with a saurian theme, I jumped at the chance to be part of the play test.

VICTORY!

"The Battle For Europe"

- IMAGINE - controlling a World War Two nation pitting your tactical and strategic skills against 39 other leaders.
- IMAGINE - flying B-29 Superfortresses' against enemy fortifications, destroying all major installations
- IMAGINE - seeing your SS Panza Tanks punch a hole through the opponent's cavalry in a perfectly executed pincer movement.
- IMAGINE - ordering your subs to lurk on the other side of a minefield, waiting to ambush any cargo vessels which manage to creep through.
- IMAGINE VICTORY! The Battle For Europe.

IMAGINATION GAMES

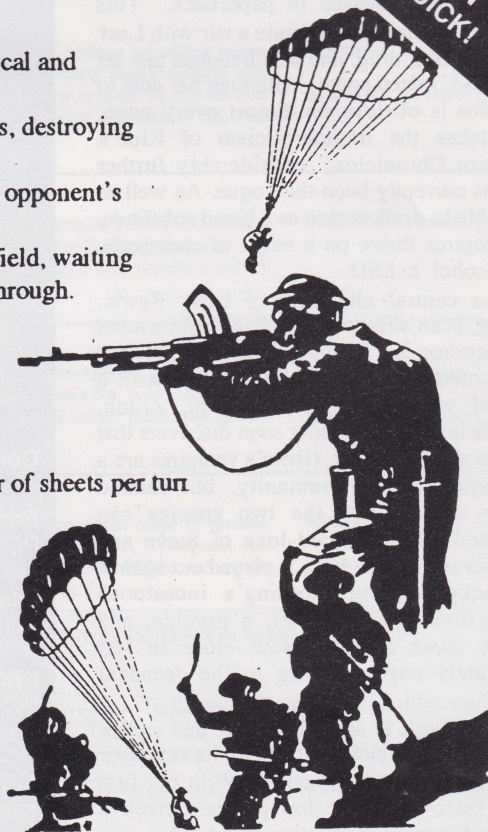
- * A 3 year game, 73 turns at 15 day turn cycles.
- * \$8.00 per ordersheet with the ability to issue a number of sheets per turn
- * This game is BIG !!

Please send me a rule book and map so I may know more about this awesome game. I have included \$15.00 to cover the cost of these items.

Name:

Address:

Imagination Games
PO Box 730
Glenelg SA 5045
Ph: (08) 376 0171



GAME 3
NOW OPEN
GET IN QUICK!

Why Play Test A Game?

When a new game is introduced it has to go through a refining process before it is ready for commercial release. A game designer may have a new idea like a game about dinosaurs, but he also has to have game mechanics that work; throwing a game out on the market without testing and based just on the initial concept has never succeeded. Why be involved in a play test? Because you get to see the development of the game, as well as have a strong input into changes required.

I have a suspicion that Peter Catling, the game moderator and designer of **Dino Wars**, has always wanted to design this game. Having played most, if not all of his games since he started in the PBM business several years ago, I have seen the progression of technology take a dramatic effect on his games. The availability of scanners and laser printers with postscript capability has led him to design games that not only play well, but that look good too. So the first thing you notice is that the **Dino Wars** turnsheet looks attractive with its graphics and it is professionally printed.

Game Mechanics

The game is set on a fixed map of 152 (10 by 16) non-wrap-around hexes. Each hex represents terrain found in the times when dinosaurs roamed free. Ranging from harsh Volcanic land to Swampland and Grassland, the lands set the battle field for ten players to lead their lone starting dinosaur to victory. Each player is allocated a Coelophysis, a small carnivorous dinosaur, and are given a range of orders they can complete to expand their domain. Your initial dinosaur can move to explore and control new lands and examine other dinosaurs you find, to see their strengths and weaknesses. If you are feeling more aggressive, you can stalk or hunt dinosaurs you wish to pursue, or attack them outright if they share the same location as you.

There are over 70 different types of dinosaurs, divided into two groups, herbivorous and carnivorous. The carnivores benefit from the spoils of battle but suffer from more severe terrain conditions. Herbivores do not have many adverse terrains and regain strength quicker from damage taken. All dinosaurs are rated in hit points and attack points; both these factors are dependent on the size of the dinosaur.

If you see a dinosaur you want to have join your side, you can attempt to dominate it to take control. If you see a dinosaur you wish to lead your growing saurian empire, your main dinosaur can possess the target dinosaur and it will become your main dinosaur. You can group dinosaurs of the same species and they then move and fight together. From one small carnivorous dinosaur at the start of the game, you soon find yourself leading a mixture of dinosaurs striving to dominate the world. It all sounds easy but like any PBM games there are limitations that make strategic play important.

Prestige

Your main dinosaur accumulates prestige points from the first turn of the game onwards, and it is prestige that determines the ability to control other dinosaurs. Winning

battles and controlling land adds to your points, as well as each having a prestige rating which gains further points each turn. While bigger dinosaurs like a T-Rex may be great in battle, they score poorly in prestige compared to the small weak dinosaurs. Prestige is used to control further dinosaurs based on the target dino's mental strength. In reverse to prestige, the larger the dinosaur the higher the mental strength, and the harder it is to control. It is a balancing act to decide whether to control a small dinosaur, risking an easy death in battle but gaining high prestige to control more dinosaurs, or to go for a big tough dino thus limiting your ability to build a large force.

Through the period of the playtest, play balance seemed good. I chose the path of a small lead dinosaur with a high prestige. This allowed me to dominate other small dinosaurs and expand by taking territory quickly. This in turn helped my prestige total even more. I wasn't the toughest player around, and so I took a peaceful if not a little boring approach to the game, sitting back and getting bigger. Meanwhile, another player neared my border, and I could see this position had taken an opposite approach to the game. This player manage to control two of the biggest and meanest dinosaurs and was attacking any dinosaur in sight. While I couldn't beat the size of his attack, I was able to run around the land and avoid battle as best I could with my horde of small dinosaurs.

Winning The Game

Victory points are obtained for the dinosaurs you have, the terrain you control and the battles you fight. While I scored well due to large control of land and dinosaurs, I scored little in battle. The reverse was the case with my aggressive opponent. One of the problems that a playtest attempts to solve is when and how the game will finish. **Dino Wars** players are asked to submit turn number between 12 and 25 in which they wish the game to end. This number is averaged over the ten players to find the last turn, but no player actually knows when that will be.

Up to 60 titles are awarded through the course of the game to dinosaurs of exception (most kills, most cowardly etc.). Through the game, these titles have no effect, but at the end they act as a bonus to the final score of the player, and can influence the result. A player could, for instance, concentrate on combat ignoring other aspects of the game, score badly through the game, but still do well at the end by dominating the many combat orientated titles.

Worth A Look

Dino Wars is not a complex game, and for that reason it is attractive. For those who wish to play by modem or disk, a graphically superb support program is also available. The game has been through the playtest run, but still expect to see enhancements added to the game to keep players interested. It is certainly worth a try...

Editor's Footnote

Cameron is too modest to tell you he won the playtest quite handsomely. His 'peaceful' force wiped out my group of cearadacylus' near the end of this good fun game.

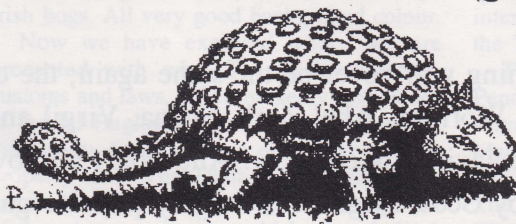
NEWS

PBM Sports has acquired two new licenses from Software Simulations in the United Kingdom; **NBA Slam Dunk** plays much like NBL Slam Dunk except there are now sixteen teams to a league as opposed to eight, and the basketballers listed are all from the real life NBA - Shaq is back. **Gameplan Boxing** is a strategy game in the style of **Gameplan Grid Iron** except you coach a prize fighter to the top of his weight division.

The Baron's Australian Midgard tell us their fantasy roleplaying **PBM Midgard** now boasts about 175 players and is entering an interesting phase. **BAM** has also acquired **Postal American Football League** from Australian Wizard - the preseason games are over but many top teams are still available. ■

Dino Wars

The PBM game of prehistoric battles and conquest.



- ☛ A fast paced game with 2 week turnarounds
- ☛ Over 100 different species of Dinosaurs
- ☛ Outstanding graphics & illustrations
- ☛ Only \$4 per turn. No hidden costs
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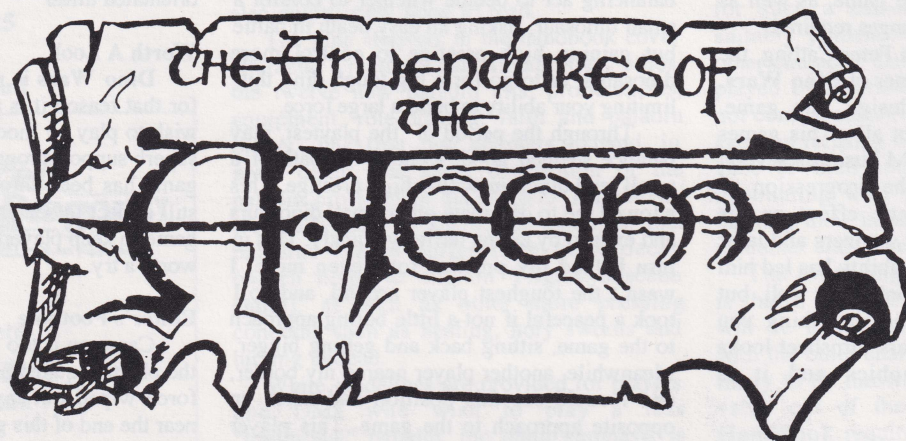
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Australian Realms

PROUDLY PRESENTS



Comic Book Annual #1



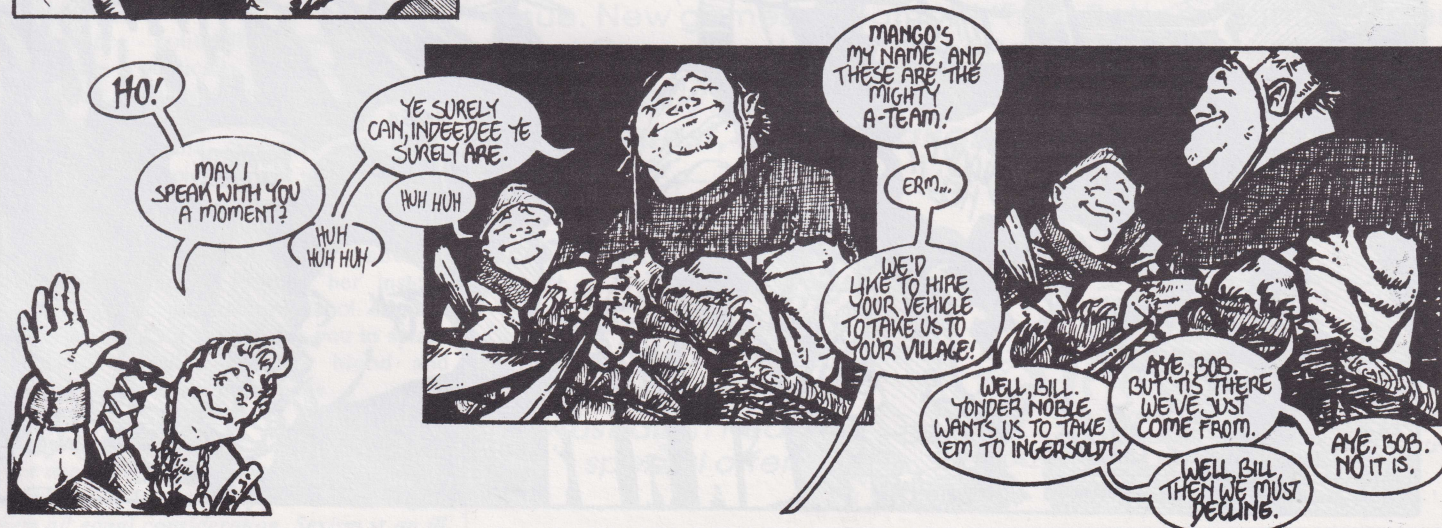
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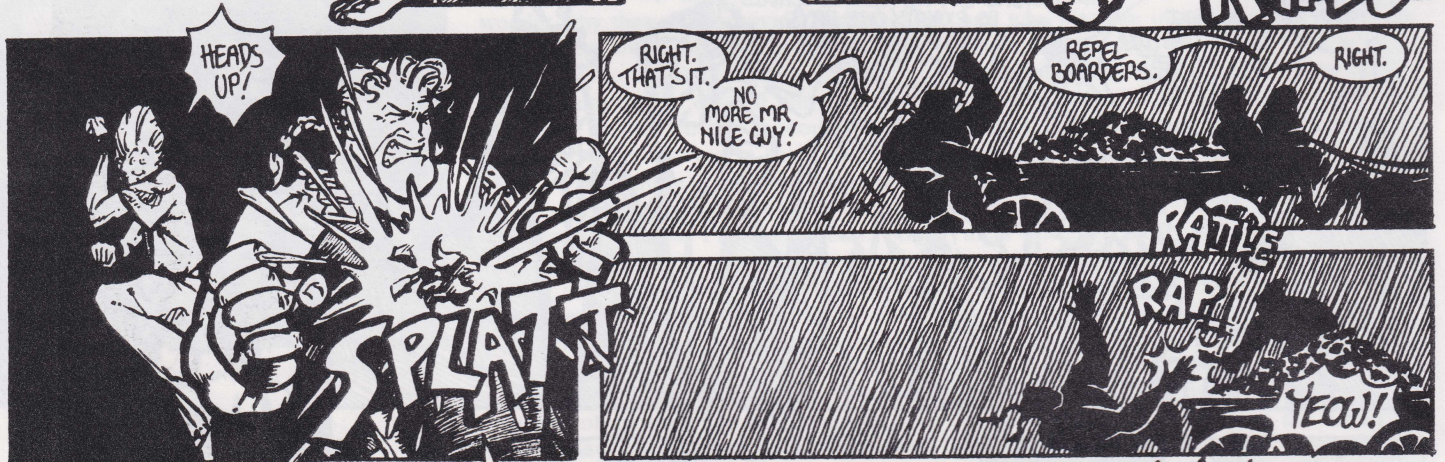
Fantasy roleplay gaming will never be the same again; the crazy antics of Mango the Magnificent, Wilson Wormke, Abel Zeek, Shana, Virgil and Spud have set back the cause of serious roleplaying indefinitely. And don't we love it! Written by Andrew Daniels and drawn by Scott Edgar, this hugely popular gaming comic is a **limited edition** so stocks will not last. Order your copy now.

Available for only \$19.95 at all good hobby specialists,
comic shops or by Mail Order to Australian Realms,
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THE ADVENTURES OF THE

THE WORLD OF GOTH LOOKED GRIM. A BLASTED HEATH IN THE FOREGROUND, A RAGGED MOUNTAIN RANGE ON THE HORIZON, BETWEEN, CROOKED SAW-TOOTHED BUILDINGS HUDDLED TOGETHER BENEATH A GLOWING LEADEN SKY. A MASSIVE CASTLE PERCHED ATOP A MIGHTY STONE CRAG TOWERED LEERINGLY OVER THE VILLAGE. MIASMAL MISTS SMOTHERED EVERYTHING IN A DEATHLY SHROUD. THE A-TEAM DID NOT CARE. THEY'D DEAL WITH ALL THAT LATER. FIRST THERE WAS SOME SERIOUS WHINGING TO DO.





NEWS

Traveller Game Aid

Planet III Software, an American outfit consisting of professional software engineers who've programmed applications for the Microsoft Windows environment have loved *Traveller* since it came in a small black box with red lettering, and are pleased to announce the release of version 1.1 of **Traveller Navigator - Diaspora Sector**.

Navigator is a computerised game aid for *Traveller* players and referees. The Dis sector is mapped in an interactive Microsoft Windows hypercard type application (in fact it feels a lot like the Windows Help utility), allowing the user to move around the worlds of the sector easily. Notes for each world can be readily updated, pre-collapse information for each world is included, allowing the referee to tell at a glance what the history of the world has been for the past 70 years. Rules for starship combat and in-system travel are only a mouse click away. Complete starship specifications, updated *Brilliant Lances* standards, plus a wide variety of ships - all printable.

Traveller Navigator - Diaspora Sector costs \$US29.95 plus \$US2.50 shipping and handling. For more information, write to: Planet III Software, 999-C Edgewater Blvd., Suite 361, Foster City, CA, 94404. Or you can e-mail them at PlanetIII@aol.com.

New Releases

Chaosium Inc

Talking to Chaosium before their Summer Solstice (an arcane company holiday!) we were able to find out a bit more about their upcoming GenCon release - **Nephilim**. Written in France, the playtest version looks very interesting. Touted as an occult roleplaying game, **Nephilim** is set in our contemporary world where science and the mundane world form a veil of illusion hiding the world of the supernatural from humanity. Living beyond this veil are the Nephilim, ancient spirits who need a human body to inhabit so that they may undertake their eternal quest for Agartha, a transcendent state where the the Nephilim can directly manipulate the five forces of magic - fire, air, water, earth and moon. Players take on the role of a Nephilim, striving for Agartha and combating the secret societies which seek to permanently suppress them.

If at all sounds a little familiar, that's because all occult roleplaying games draw on 'real world' concepts and history of how magic works. First impressions are that this particular look at the genre is going to be excellent.

Chaosium also will be releasing the **Miskatonic University** book for *Call of Cthulhu*, which offers an ivy-league glimpse inside the most notorious university in the world; **Strange Eons**, a collection of adventures set in different time periods from the Inquisition to Elizabethan England to off-world encounters (also for *Cthulhu*); and **Beyond the Wall**, a *Pendragon* sourcebook that peeks over Hadrian's Wall to the wild northern lands of the Picts and Scots - includes background on the area, notes on the cultures, a fold-out map, and information on heathen religions. Hoots, mon!

Palladium Books Inc

Due out this month is **Rifts Sourcebook Three: Mindwerks** which is packed with new psionic brain implants, bionic systems called psynetics, bots, weapons, monsters, magic and villains, and an insane mastermind, the Angel of Death - all the top quality stuff that makes this highly imaginative game system unique. Also on its way is **Rifts World Book Six: Mercenaries** with rules for creating mercenary outfits, 9 new OCCs, more weapons, more ideas, more adventure than you could game through in several lifetimes. Where will it end?

For *Heroes Unlimited* players the news is work is underway on **Mystic China** which is designed to work with *Heroes Unlimited*, *Beyond the Supernatural*, and *Ninjas and Superspies*.

FASA Corporation

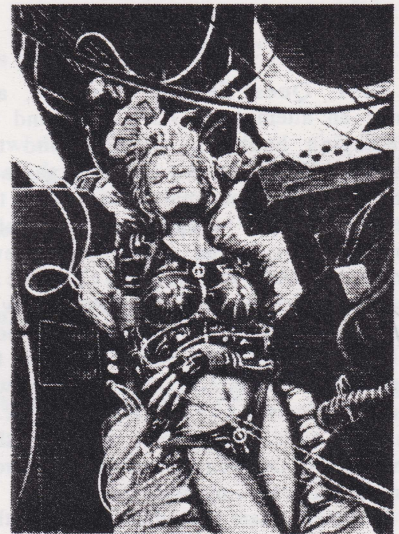
Earthdawn players are to be treated to **Parlaint: the Forgotten City** in August - a boxed set campaign featuring the abandoned and decaying old Theran capital of Barsaive. This promises to be a massive dungeon-bash with sprawling ruins containing lost treasures, primeval magic, and hidden secrets of the world before the Scourge. Sounds even more 'ready-to-play' than was the superb Barsaive campaign set.

Denver, the Treaty City is a hotbed of intrigue, deal making, and desperation. Now available, this exciting campaign package for *Shadowrun* includes player-accessible material plus a book of background elements for the referee to choose from, making every *Shadowrun* campaign unique. Also coming soon for *Shadowrun* is the 'maxi-adventure', **Harlequin's Back**. This accessory provides six interconnected adventures that take players beyond their worst fantasies and wildest nightmares. Somebody's been eating too much cheese before bedtime!

In August, *BattleTech*, the gargantuan game of mechanised combat, will celebrate its tenth anniversary with a hardcover release; **BattleTech Compendium: The**

Rules of Warfare. The book covers a lot of ground - rules to simulate conflict between BattleMechs, vehicles and infantry; revised and streamlined material from *BattleTech 3rd Edition*, the original Compendium and other sources; loads of background information on the *BattleTech* universe; several 'Mech designs; rules for miniatures play; and several full-colour plates.

In addition, *FASA* are also releasing the **Compendium** on CD-ROM! A multimedia extravaganza of all of the book's text and graphics plus graphic and data displays of the 'Mechs from the Technical Readout series, a 'Mech construction and record sheet generation program, and to cap it all, megabytes of state-of-the-art, computer animation of BattleMechs in action. Yes.



R.Talsorian Games

A fax just in from Lisa Pondsmith advises: "To: Everyone Everywhere **Castle Falkenstein** has gone to the printers." Which means by the time you are reading this it should be on sale. Although fans have been patiently waiting for this steampunk roleplaying game to appear for a quite a while, the news is good - the book has grown from an original 160 to 224 pages. Buckle your swashes everyone!

The *Cyberpunk* production schedule has been much smoother, with **The Rough Guide to the UK** supplying everything you need to play a down and dirty dark future campaign in the United Kingdom, available in July; **The Pac-Rim Sourcebook** to follow in August includes background material on Australia, Japan, Korea and China; and beyond those, there is enough 21st Century technology to fill a fleet of container ships appearing in September with **Chromebook III**. *Cybergeneration* is not ignored, with **Mediafront** set to take the *CyberRevolution* across the air-waves.

Huge Space Battlewagons! Giant Bug Battlesuits! "Retro-Tech" Mecha! What is it? It's the **Mekton Mecha Manual Vol 1**. out now. This book contains twenty four different mecha and vehicle designs from twelve different anime-style backgrounds. Sounds awesome.

Games Workshop

To follow up the new release of **BloodBowl** will be the smaller format boxed set **Death Zone** containing the Dirty Tricks cards, Star Players, Random Events and League rules. Also due for release is a revised version of **Talisman** in a large format box. Although the changes are supposed to be largely cosmetic, the game will no doubt feature some delicious graphics on the game board, Spell cards, Adventure cards, and Purchase cards. And there are 12 plastic playing figures including a goblin fanatic (swing that ball and chain, Roy) to look forward to. There will be four expansions for **Talisman**, each one adding to the game board as a wrap-around on the four corners. For **Warhammer 40,000** the green-skinned hordes are detailed in the **Orc Codex**, 'eavy metal figures to follow, "Waargh!"...

TSR Inc

First Quest is now available, and marks an attempt by **TSR** to expand the roleplaying hobby in general, and the **Advanced Dungeons and Dragons** game in particular into the mainstream and the average family's lounge room. Basically, **First Quest** is an introductory level version of **AD&D** with an audio CD game aid included which teaches the players how to roleplay. A slick production, but it will need to be marketed aggressively - say, like the **Nightmare** interactive video game was marketed - for it to succeed. We wish **TSR** all the best with this project as few other companies in the industry have the resources to make this very important move.

As always, there is a whole swag of other gaming goodies on their way from **TSR**, the more interesting items are - number 13 in the ongoing Player's Handbook series is **The Complete Druid's Handbook**; in September look out for **Rogues in Lankhmar**, a gazetteer that takes a look at Fritz Leiber's classic sword and sorcery city with a focus on the area around the Thieves Guild, this is written by Australia's Wes Nicholson; the **Council of Wyrms** boxed adventure offers players the chance to play a good dragon in an epic quest to aid the dragon races; the **Player Packs**, one for each of the four main character classes, are cute looking plastic carry cases each containing three metal miniatures, a painting guide, instruction booklet, seven dice, character sheets, and a pencil with room left over to hold rulebooks and other essential gaming stuff - chips, cola and dip?

White Wolf

Wraith, due out in August, is number four in the hugely successful **Storyteller** series, or is it five now that **Street Fighter** has muscled its way into the schedule? Anyway, this time the players get to explore life beyond the grave; undertaker's makeup, mouldering flesh and haunting will become the new fashion!

Rage Across Australia is the **Werewolf** sourcebook for our shores, written by a compatriot and **Realms** contributor, Richard Watts. We are all looking forward to

discovering what the Apocalypse has in store for our homeland.

White Wolf are pouring a lot of resources into the mass-market fiction side of their business; apart from numerous original items they appear to have secured the rights to reprint several Michael Moorcock novels starting with - **The Eternal Champion** and the appropriately named **Elric: Tales of the White Wolf**.

Ed Greenwood

The creator of the **Forgotten Realms** campaign setting (purchased by **TSR** to become their setting for the Second Edition of **AD&D**), **Ed Greenwood** is visiting Australia for most of July. The visit has been organised by the South Pacific Branch of the **RPGA** and **Roc Books** - Ed is here to promote his novel, **Crown of Fire** at some book signings and to spend time meeting and talking with Australian gamers at several of our conventions.

If you'd like to know where you can catch up with Ed, contact Wes Nicholson of the **RPGA** for a rundown on his itinerary (06) 259 1914. **Australian Realms** will be interviewing Ed while he is here, and we'll be running that in issue 19.

Bloodsongs Restricted

Bloodsongs, the Melbourne based magazine of horror, now into its second issue, has struck trouble on the newsstands with one unhappy customer sending it to the Australian Office of Film and Literature where it was passed before the censorship board. The board determined that the magazine had unsavoury material inside which warranted a Category 1 rating. This means **Bloodsongs** has to be sold in a sealed plastic wrapper and is effectively banned in Queensland where such naughty restricted publications are not allowed on sale. If you cannot find the magazine, and wish to subscribe, you can contact the publishers, **Bambada Press** at PO Box 7530, St Kilda Road, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000.

Readers Poll

Thank you to everyone who filled in and sent issue 16's Readers Poll form to us. The response was fantastic, and the information provided invaluable. It was heartening to see the overwhelming support the **Unae** material has received. We always believed there was room for a well detailed, gritty and colourful fantasy campaign world in the magazine, but were never too sure how it was going to be received. Due to your vote of confidence, Colin Taber has been moved onto the project fulltime, and there are exciting **Unae** products planned for late 1994, early 1995.

Many other suggestions offered in the Readers Poll will lead to some subtle, and some not so subtle changes over the next few issues as we fine tune the magazine to meet your demands. Thank you for taking the time and effort to make a contribution to the future of Australian gaming.

Prize Winner

As incentive to fill in your Readers Poll we offered a prize to one lucky respondent of over \$500 worth of gaming products. The winner of the prize has been drawn - **Tim Silby** of Sale in Victoria. Congratulations Tim, we'll be sending a big box of goodies to you very soon.

Issue 19

The September/October issue of **Australian Realms** will be a Halloween special with gouts of horror for the fans of **Ravenloft**, **Vampire**, **Werewolf**, and **Call of Cthulhu**, plus we'll bring back Alan Ogden to tell us how to find inspiration for adventure ideas, and we'll be taking a close look at the Black Death plague, plus there'll be more **Unae** and **A-Team** and all our usual features. On top of this, the **A-Team Barroom Brawl** is coming for sure this issue. It is going to be a one truly scary magazine, so until then...

...see you round like a d100!

TACTICS MAGIC The Gathering

Monthly Tournament

The last Saturday of every month is Magic:The Gathering day at TACTICS.

Card Trading commences at 10 am. Tournament starts at 11 am.

Tournament Rules are available on entry.

1ST PRIZE \$25.00 gift voucher **2ND PRIZE \$10.00** gift voucher.

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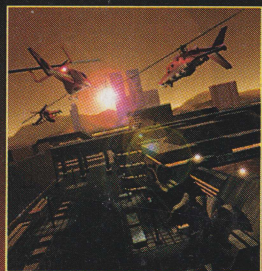
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WELCOME TO DENVER A MILE HIGH . . .

PASSPORT • TIR TAIRNGIRE		Category	Entries	Visas	Departures
		P/D4			
		Passport #			
		002598763			
	Name	GALLAGHER, TARA J.			
	Nation/Nationality	TIR TAIRNGIRE			
	Date of Birth	3/14/26			
	Place of Birth	SALEM			
	Gender	FEMALE			
Genotype	HOMO SAPIENS SAPIENS				
Date of Issue	10/21/54				
Date of Expiration	10/21/64				
Authority	PORTLAND PA				
Amendments/Modifications	DATAJACK; HEADWARE MEMORY				
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			<div data-bbox="834 512 1248 837"> AZTLAN SECTOR 3/17/55 Admitted 13:12 </div> <div data-bbox="859 826 1127 1229"> UTE 3-18-55 Sector Admittance: 06:40 </div> <div data-bbox="1167 770 1403 1084"> UCAS SECTOR 3/17/55 Access 20:29 </div> <div data-bbox="989 1095 1468 1386"> EXPIRED 3/18/55 </div>		

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