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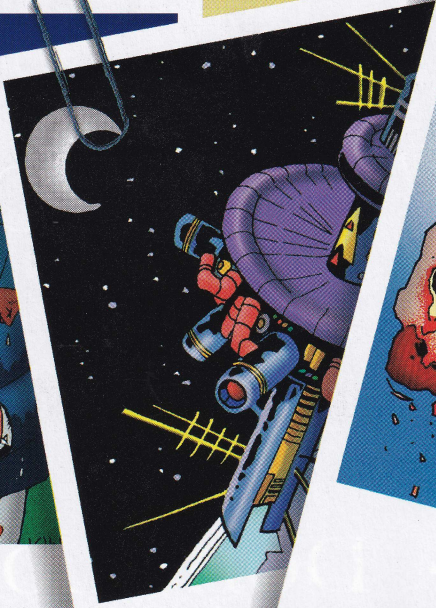
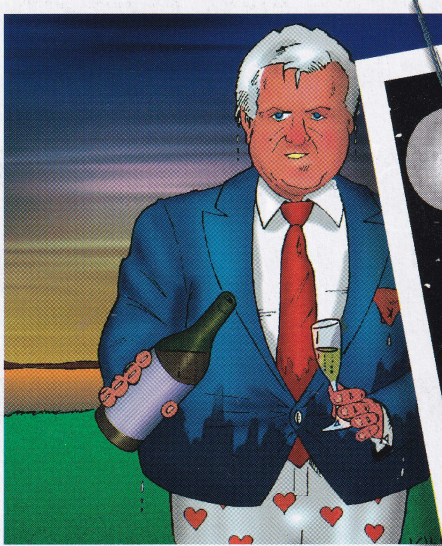
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Australian Realms

Bimonthly Role Playing Supplement

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Editorial Letters

I love music! I've a close friend who says 'music is mankind's finest achievement'. I find it difficult to argue with him. My office has music playing continuously. Every page of the magazine is sweated over to the beat of my favourite tunes. The Cure's *Fascination Street* is a song that can really shove me through that painful deadline wall!

Recently, Lee and I (both of a 70's teen-vintage) have been playing songs from our dusty record collections to each other. Memories... hard rock, glamour rock, disco, punk, rockabilly, New Wave, early techno, smooch etc.

One of the huge bands from that era were Pink Floyd. *Dark Side of the Moon* still sells! 'Money! It's a hit, Don't give me any of that do-good, good bullshit!' What a line - it really summed up the feelgood 70's.

And if you're wondering where's the RPG tie-in here?... well, the 70's were the decade when the role-playing hobby was born. Many of the people still writing the games today grew up listening to these tunes. Scary, huh?

Donny Osmond, *The Twelfth of Never*? Can it be true... the end of the hugely popular Adventures of the A-Team comic? The final episode of A-Team mayhem appears in this issue...

"Until the twelfth of never, and that's a long, long time" - a girl sang that to me when I was eleven; our Puppy Love affair lasted eight days.

Anyone remember Sweet? How about they're hit - *Blockbuster*? That's the tune that is spinning around my skull as I look at our next issue. To celebrate the milestone, and to thank all the people who supported us and helped us get there, we are going to make issue 25 a BLOCKBUSTER! It is going to be a huge and exciting ish.

Until then I'm humming, "It's only rock and roll, but I like it".

M. Leaning

David Addison
Campbelltown, NSW

To the Editor,

A few months ago I read a letter in your magazine that I found somewhat concerning. This letter by Alan Bierce and your reply were in issue 21 and both attacked the current trend in "dark" role-playing. Now after considering the matter for a while I've decided to reply in defence of "dark" roleplaying, in particular the Vampire game.

When played in the spirit that Mark Rein-Hagen originally intended Vampire to be in, the characters are not "a murderous, blood-sucking incarnation of evil", nor are they tragically hip punks with some ill-defined characteristic called "attitude", they are in fact people like you and me who one night had their entire life destroyed. The theme of man versus the beast, or the ego versus the id, is very strong in the game, players who do not work and work hard to temper the cravings of the beast quickly lose humanity and this, when their humanity is gone, their character. I'm sure you'll agree that the one thing worse than having a character die is seeing her become a g.m. controlled n.p.c. who turns up three stories later as a major bad guy. This is horrible no matter what system you play. As a player I work hard at this, trying to keep my character from getting hungry, taking only a little blood from any source so as to keep the victim from dying (once I even rang an ambulance when I thought I took too much). As a g.m. I make sure my players understand the dangers of revelling in Dracula or Lestat style behaviour; if they persist in it they lose their characters.

That said, in virtually all the "dark" role-playing games I've played or g.m.'d, including Vampire, Werewolf, Nephilim and Mage, I've found something to aim for so as to prevent my characters sinking into the mire, either a brighter future to aim for, or a horror at the back of my skull to avoid. Playing these games I've learnt more about myself than the high fantasy of "That Game That Shall Not Be Spoken" could teach because almost all of these "dark" games are set in an only slightly different version of our own reality - it is much easier to put yourself in your character's place.

Two final points, I'll make them quickly; firstly I am not a vampire, I am a role-player and I love my hobby. I consider anyone who is not sure of their status as a human over a blood-sucker, and who entertains, even for a moment, the idea of hurting someone to find out, to be no better

than the person who runs through a shopping mall macheteing and shooting innocent people dead because they read pornography (the murderer, not the innocents). In other words I consider them to be dangerous individuals who should be locked up. Secondly, a question. Who is worse, a vampire trying desperately to avoid a curse, a way of life she didn't ask for, or the heroic fighter who slaughters some orcs, steals their copper, eats the wild boar they were hunting and never gives a thought for the women and children who have lost their menfolk?

David, thanks for an excellent letter. True, so long as we are all clear on what we are doing and why, then I don't see anything but good coming of our role-playing, whatever the genre or style. Reminding people of this doesn't hurt either.

I don't usually do this, but Chris' letter will be answered by a series of interjections...

Chris Thomas
Heatley, QLD

Dear Nick,

Due to recent events I found myself with issues 20, 21 and 22 of Australian Realms unread! So I read them... all... on Saturday. Take it from me the renovations have worked, 144 pages and I want more, please. Next I started a letter to tell you what I thought of it all but when I went to grab a thesaurus to find yet another word meaning 'very good' Saint Jude appeared to me in a vision and told me to stop wasting his time. So here are my highlights from the last three issues:

- Thank you terribly much for the sundry third staple used to fasten the *Wraith* poster, it saved (me) time, effort and possibly a magazine cover.

If only they knew, hey Lucy? Refolding thousands of Wraith posters so that we could place a staple was an experience!

- Remember, if you fail your first lockpicking attempt (at the Balingup cheese Factory) you can't try again until next level, even a 01 won't help.

Believe it or not... we managed to repeat the episode of locking our keys in the car the next time we took the family to the movies! Divorce proceedings were averted after making a VERY DIFFICULT cool test!

- I agree with your 'opportunity' attitude towards *Magic* cards et al. Tongue-in-cheek rationalisations aside, I imagine I would never have seen *Card Magic* #1 if you hadn't taken it on board.

So far reader reaction to Card Magic has been positive. People are asking for more checklists, but these take up a fair bit of space. What do you all think about that?

- Space on the letters page seems so limited,

there is no room for readers to continue a discussion past the next issue, or perhaps the bimonthly turnaround makes this unfeasible. Is there any way to cram more in? It's always over so quickly (sigh).

We could cram more in, but you might go blind trying to read it!

• TSR? Who needs 'em (anymore)? Personally I found AD&D scenarios needed most work to adapt to a different game because the AD&D statistics, while generally recognisable to roleplayers, were part of a generally incomparable system. (Anybody for a classes versus skills debate?) Which is why IF you are playing AD&D you can still use our fantasy material because we don't include any stats anyway!

• Dark roleplaying: apparently it's fine to cut your bloody swathe through Waterdeep or 21st century Seattle but not Sydney 1995. Roleplaying's detractors are just keeping up with the times. The argument hasn't changed only the detail.

See my response to David's letter.

• Mark Arsenault requested material for publishing: what sort of material does he want; what sort of publication is it for; and when, where and how does he want it?

Mark can be contacted at: Gold Rush Games, PO Box 2531, Elk Grove, CA 95759-2531, USA. Email: tgceditor@aol.com.

• Indigenous Australians are aborigines not

aboriginals. It may be pedantic but using the adjective as a noun stems from an offensive view of aborigines as sub-human.

Noted. I'll be more vigilant in future.

• A review that starts with "This is dreadful" or begins "Realms watchers will be well aware of my feelings about Planescape, I love it" and ends with a faint "Better than most" is a review I would take note of, a review written in the reader's interest rather than the product's.

Honesty and integrity is our policy... oh, and having fun comes in pretty high, too!

• "Boring charts, endless character kits and dry as dust rules variations" are dead, long live the *Adventure Hook* and *How To...* articles! New and better fun, that's what I want from my roleplaying magazines.

This is the formula that we worked out for Australian Realms in consultation with our readers. We'll change when you do.

• After Lee Sheppard went to all the trouble of making his dungeon appear logical for *The Lonely Halls of Hra Kurban* it would be nice to see a map of it.

Lee supplied a map but I ruthlessly cut it out. Perhaps we'll use it in the boxed set version. Meanwhile Lee suffers in silence (mostly!).

• Please get Peter Crank in out of the sun. It seems, recently, that if he's not crapping on about why he didn't read a book he's filling *The Analytical Engine* with reviews of

modern warfare books. What was the last WWII roleplaying game you played?

Peter is a one off. I'd hate to change him.

• The A-Team is excellent. "The Lords of Balance permit Free Will only to those who behave according to their Ethos", I laughed so much I almost forgot to read the rest of the strip.

Yeah, the A-Team was great fun, but they do say that all good things must come to an end... wink,wink!

Thanks, Chris.

Ian Walker
Pahran, VIC

Dear Realms Team,

Just a quick note to say thank you for the free Magic the Gathering card in Issue 23. I was lucky enough to pick up a Vesuvian Doppelganger!!! Hey - not bad for a \$4.95 investment. Any plans to repeat the exercise some time in the future?

By the way, are you intending to print any more card lists, like you did in issue 22? I find them quite helpful, especially when they are wrapped up in a great mag like *Australian Realms*.

Your wish is our command, Ian - just check out the INWO list in this very issue, and we are working on arranging more card giveaways for future issues. Stay tuned! ■

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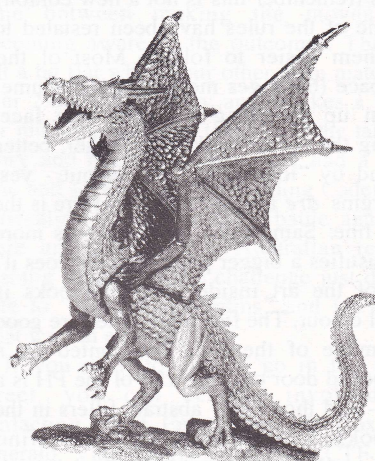
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RE VIEWS

PLAYER'S HANDBOOK & DUNGEON MASTER GUIDE

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Core Rules
By TSR, Inc
Reviewed by Adam Whitt

The foreword to the new **Player's Handbook** screams out at you in large type, red ink "*This is not AD&D 3rd Edition*". And having read through both books I can confirm that. This is not a new version of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, more a renovation. If you already own copies of the 2nd Edition **Player's Handbook** and **Dungeon Master Guide** there is no need to buy these reprints; save your cash for the upcoming *Option* books. On the other hand, if you're a collector of all things AD&D (sucker), or if your current play copy of the **Player's Handbook** is falling apart under the stress of searching out obscure encumbrance rules, or if you're contemplating playing the AD&D game for the very first time then these books represent a reasonable purchase.

The books do look good. Both are sexy black hardbacks with new paintings by Jeff Easley on the cover. These illustrations set the tone for the game quite well - the **Player's Handbook** (320pp) cover shows an adventuring party bursting through a dungeon door, the **Dungeon Master Guide** (256pp) shows a band of monsters doing much the same; potential players are left in no doubt about what the AD&D game is - a dungeon-basher's delight!

Inside, the text is very much the same as in the previous versions. There are no rules changes (remember this is not a new edition) but some of the rules have been restated to make them easier to follow. Most of the extra space (64 pages more in each volume) is taken up by using a larger type face, replacing the old artwork with bigger, better pics, and by "improving" the layout - yes, the margins *are* all wider/deeper. Here is the bottom line: Same rules spread across more pages justifies a bigger price tag. Or does it?

All of the art inside both rulebooks is now full colour. The full page plates are good - the image of the thief confronted by a multi-locked door on page 123 of the PH is a classic - and those silly abstract fillers in the old books are replaced by some fine supporting illustrations. Although these are rendered in a style that lacks definition, most have strong narrative elements making them useful inspiration for players and DMs.

TSR have renovated these rulebooks to improve their market appeal; visually they may have succeeded, where they have certainly failed is in making the rules more entertaining to read. The latest generation of roleplaying games tend to mix the dry-as-dust rules text in with colourful game world information; the reader is entertained and educated at the same time. There is a contrary game design philosophy that says you should keep the game rules separate so that they are readily referenced during play and, as in AD&D's case, the rules can then be applied to several different game universes. All I can say in reply to this is, reading the AD&D **Player's Handbook** cover to cover is not an option unless you have the constitution of a troll on steroids.

Despite its many flaws, AD&D is still a great game system if you enjoy high fantasy - heroic adventure, fast paced combats, exotic lands to explore, hordes of monsters to expunge, and mounds of gold and magic to acquire. It is a good first-timer's role-playing game, and despite many gamers' snobbish attitude - "Oh, you don't play DnD do you?" - it remains THE most popular RPG around which makes finding players to game with relatively easy. I still love it. As for this reprint: Same lolly, different wrapper.

SHIP OF FOOLS

Psychosis Campaign Book # 1

By Chameleon Eclectic

Reviewed by Lee Sheppard

This is a fascinating release. Quite simply, I have not seen anything like it before. I'll have to do my best to explain how this game works without revealing the actual *Ship of Fools* campaign plot, as to do so would spoil everything for potential players. Here goes...

Each of the characters in the campaign cannot perceive reality as it actually is, their experiences of the world lived out instead through a series of bizarre psychotic "episodes". For example, a character who in real life was a patient trying to escape from a mental hospital, and pursued by hospital guards, might actually "see" him/herself in a 1950's B-Grade horror movie, with the hospital corridors becoming the walls of an underground sewer system, and the hospital security guards becoming giant ants, or space-aliens within the same psychosis. But - if the player manages to escape from the

giant ants in their psychosis, then they also manage to escape in the real world. Now imagine these psychoses changing at random, while the characters move through an underlying plot-line (called the *Spine Story* in the campaign book), never quite knowing what is real and what isn't, and you have the basis of *Ship of Fools*, and the **Psychosis** RPG. Told you it wasn't easy to explain, didn't I?

Simply, the general idea is for the characters to work their way through (ie survive) their individual psychotic episodes, while also (unknowingly) moving through the underlying plot to it's eventual conclusion. Success or failure in those psychoses can lead to the players moving closer to or further away from reality, having to repeat some psychoses, or in the worst cases, the death of their characters.

This is role-playing at it's highest level. No character sheets, no statistics - your characters don't even know their own name, or their own face. On those rare occasions when some sort of skill check is required, players rely on the use of a hand of Tarot cards (Do you know how expensive those bloody things are? - A free pack included with the game would have been a wonderful idea...), but even this involves the players in a role-playing exercise, as the element of chance can be overcome by choosing the best option presented by your current hand (ie combat, stealth or negotiation). It's great to see games getting way from the randomness generated by dice throws.

Problems? A few, but none serious enough to discourage trying this game out for yourselves. One - I have some concerns about the long-term playability of the game. Once the spine story has been eventually resolved, then it's time to move on to a *completely* new game, which might upset those players who like to develop characters further. Two - with 40 different psychoses detailed in this campaign alone, I wonder how long future releases can avoid repetition. Three - despite comments in the campaign book to the contrary, this is NOT a game for novice GMs. Trying to referee three to six players, each embroiled in their own *completely different* interpretation of the campaign world is not the ideal way to begin your GM'ing career. For experienced GMs though, this game could prove a real inspiration, and deserves to be tried.

With releases like this hitting the gaming shelves, it's amazing to see how far our hobby has come in the seventeen years since I first started playing. This is certainly a *unique* role-playing experience, and authors John Fletcher and Charles Ryan deserve to be congratulated for turning the RPG world on it's head.

Vampire? Wraith? Nephilim? - State of the art! Hah! Check out this acid trip, baby!!!

PHASE WORLD

Rifts Dimension Book 2
By Palladium Books, Inc.
Reviewed by Paul Mitting

Phase World presents the latest of the alternative 'dimensions' for Palladium characters to play in. It is styled in the *Rifts* format, but is intended for use with any and all of the Palladium range of games.

The Phase World dimension is one in which the various other realms of the Palladium universe can be accessed, either by magic, rifts, pyramids or any other means the GM desires. The heart of the dimension is the world of Phase, where most trade and powerful creatures tend to congregate. Other parts of the dimension are covered, including political powers, creatures, weapons and vehicles.

Phase World is home to some of the biggest and meanest beings I have seen in a game for some time. In fact, I got the impression that Phase World has been designed with the power-gamer in mind. Everything and everyone is bigger, better, faster and loaded with mega-damage hit points. It is a trend I have noted in the few other Palladium products I have seen.

Maintaining game balance will be difficult for an inexperienced GM in this dimension. Powerful beings are everywhere, and many are available as player characters! I liked the Cosmo Knights myself, mystic guardians of the Cosmic Forge who go about delivering mega-damage in the name of goodness. These guys are so tough it made me wonder why include them as a player character - their abilities are pretty impressive, and their only game role seems to be dealing with the other super powered evil beings. Mind you, if playing ultra-palladins is your cup of tea, go for it.

The presentation of the supplement is in traditional Palladium style - nice colour cover and lots of black and white interior illustrations. The interior stuff ranges from good to excellent, but focuses on portraying vehicles, weapons and beings. There are no real "setting" pics to show you what the actual places described look like. Oh well, back to using the imagination.

In summary, the supplement is a diverse background dimension in which to throw your characters. As powerful as they may be, it has the advantage of always having something tougher to use against them. It offers a variety of adventure ideas and hooks, and is reasonably well presented. I consider it a follow on the gaming style I remember of about 5 to 10 years ago, with plenty of action and big weapons blazing. For non-Palladium gamers, it is an interesting place to send your characters on a dimension hop. I give it a 5 out of 10 as a product for them, and 8 out of 10 for dedicated *Rifts* players.



STEAM AGE

Castle Falkenstein Sourcebook
By R. Talsorian Games
Reviewed by Lee Sheppard

This represents the first follow-up release for the excellent *Castle Falkenstein* game and, while it will certainly satisfy die-hard fans of the RPG (like me!), it probably won't do much to convert those who have yet to pick up the game.

Steam Age takes the format of an issue of *Popular Invention*, a magazine read with interest by those living in the Falkenstein world, and so follows the standard set by the original rule-book in terms of good humour, heroic Victorian attitudes and mood-setting language. Within the 104 page book are vivid descriptions of both common and rare vehicles, airships, naval vessels and infernal devices, each beautifully illustrated in a style appropriate to the period.

Also featured in the book are short profiles and/or "interviews" with many of the famous and eccentric characters of the setting, both real and fictitious. These should be of great use to "Hosts" who may not have access to the source material mentioned in the *Castle Falkenstein* RPG, but some of these could certainly have been longer. In addition to these character profiles, the end of the book contains notes for Hosts on Scientists, Masterminds and Aero-pirates and a series of suggested adventure ideas. Many of these hooks are

excellent campaign springboards and are a very welcome inclusion. I can't wait to take the Editorial team to Sussex to look for a captured Martian Tripod, or under the Mediterranean Seas in the *Nautilus*.

There are some small problems with the book. While each invention is illustrated, there are no interior plans included for any of the featured airships, sea-vessels or vehicles. While this might only be a minor sore point with some GMs, those Hosts who do wish to have floor plans for their players to use in their campaigns are once again left with a lot of work to do. This was a perfect opportunity to provide interior plans of the *Nautilus* for example, or a Bayern Aeroship.

And, like the original rule-book, **Steam Age** also tends to provide more questions than it does answers, as the book probably contains too many unresolved campaign hooks and less-than-fully detailed characters to be of real use to inexperienced (or at least well-researched) gamers. This consequently left me with the feeling that there is so much more to this world than may ever be fully revealed. What this game really needs now is fully detailed adventure scenarios, which provide everything that the novice or overworked Host needs to run an exciting and successful game. To that end, I am really looking forward to seeing *Comme Il Faut*, the upcoming Host's Guide to see whether it addresses some of these concerns. I sincerely hope so, because I really love this game and what it's trying to do.

TALES OF GARGENTIHR

Roleplaying Game

By Sanctuary Games

Reviewed by Malcolm Adler

Tales of Gargentihr is a new fantasy role playing game of serious proportions. The rule book is 340 pages with a perfect bound soft cover. Presentation is good, and it certainly feels weighty. This is a game with presence.

Tales of Gargentihr is a complete game, short of only dice. It takes itself very seriously, illustrating a complete game world of unique and interesting dimensions. In its inception, mannerisms and depth it could be compared to *Skyrealms of Jorune*, perhaps it takes itself too seriously.

The background is a good read and well thought out, adding to that rules that work, with a few interesting tidbits wrapped in a veil of good to great artwork; the product is well conceived, concise and good looking.

If you are looking to try a different fantasy game, one which has continents slowly floating on seas of silt, with a well constructed setting which has depth and a colourful history, than you should give **Tales of Gargentihr** a go.

While I have no problem recommending this game, do consider it will demand a lot of your time by its insistence on abandoning gaming standards in relation to 'gaming jargon' and by having such a different setting in the same way as *Skyrealms*. If you are prepared to invest the time you should be well rewarded.

As its slogan cries: Real Fantasy.

VIRTUAL FRONT

Cybergeneration Sourcebook

By R.Talsorian Games

Reviewed by Paul Mitting

This latest Cybergeneration product is in the typical style of these sourcebooks - well written, entertaining text interspersed with some excellent graphics. The fictional author is Rache Bartmoss, he of the previous Net foray *Rache Bartmoss' Guide to the Net*. His insane insights into the world of Cyberspace add a keen counterpoint to the high tech info that is presented.

I am not generally interested in the Net aspect of CyberPunking, or even the new and improved V-Net. However, the use of the Rache Bartmoss character brings it within reach of my computer illiterate brain. I like his style, which for you net-virgins out there is very reminiscent of our own rabid cyberpunk, Peter Crank. Great fun to read, and a whole new view of reality can be yours.

The sourcebook covers the state of the V-Net in 2027, and offers GMs and players a whole range of new ideas and tricks to use when running the game. I especially liked

the Codeguns - virtuality zappers for those rogue AI programs. Don't like that pesky virtual advert that follows you down the street? Toast it with your Argus Code Steel!

As you would expect the V-net and its effects on society are covered in some detail. It is a powerful tool for both the ISA to control and revolutionaries to battle with. The effects are felt throughout 2027 America, and nearly everyone and everything is using the V-Net in some way.

Two new yo-gangs are presented as well. V-Punks live to improve their programming and better their equipment. They live as much as possible in the virtual world of the V-Net and enjoy creating elaborate games and simulations for other punks to experience. The other gang are the Networkers, whose whole reason to exist is the trade of data. It doesn't matter whose data or how they got it, so long as it's hot. Naturally, these yo-gangs fit expertly into the V-Front environment. They also remind me of a few computer nerd friends in my own real world. How close does this stuff get!

Finally, every sourcebook has to have a mega adventure. This one is called Operation Upgrade and deals with an evolved artificial intelligence with the monicker "601". The adventure has the usual twists and turns and looks suitably interesting for those with a V-Net bent. There is potential for total character annihilation in this adventure, so it needs to be played skilfully and intelligently.

Overall, another fine piece of work in the line of quality CyberProducts from RTG.

DON'T LOOK BACK

Pulp Horror Roleplaying Game

By Mind Ventures

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

The world is not as it seems! Beneath the cool facade of calm, lurks a deeper subtext of horror and madness! You know that creaking sound in the middle of the night is much more than the house settling. You've seen the films. You've kept your eyes open right through the scary bits in the "X-Files"! Well now it's time to go and get it! To boldly face that scratching at the window! Tonight, terror is never far behind!

Nice build up huh? I'm reviewing *Mind Ventures'* game **Don't Look Back** (DLB), and RPG set in the 'here and now but not quite real world of today'. (Well we can't go saying this stuff is too real now can we?). The writer, Chuck McGrew, has resisted the current trend of churning out yet another ponderously massive game that reduces mortals to half-witted prey to be toyed with by angst-ridden immortals, and presented a game which harks back to role-playing's roots. DLB is simply a fun adventure game in which the environment is horror/sci fi

based rather than the more traditional fantasy setting. No frills. No struggling with a glossary of archaic terms. No soul-searching. Just put your players into your fave horror flick, lock and load the shotgun and have some fun blasting the bugs to hell!

About bloody time! But I know you want more than this subjective drivel, so what *do* you get for your dollar? Well, the book is reasonably well laid out... in other words it follows the traditional formulae. We start with an introduction which walks you through the 'what is role playing and what does it all mean' stuff and is clearly aimed at the Generation X gamer who thinks waving swords is all a bit daft, and ends with ALL the games tables, statistics and character sheets conveniently placed alongside an INDEX. What a useful idea!

Character creation comes next. Bog standard, but nicely done. Six personal statistics are augmented by trading for attributes. Benefits like a photographic memory or wealth have to be balanced with penalties like foot in mouth disease or, for the serious role-player, blindness; that'll sort the pro's from the card players! Still, onward to the rules. Again sticking with McGrew's KISS principle, nothing hard here, and yes, you only need six-sided dice. Thank you, thank you! Action resolution is based on your skill plus various difficulty modifiers. The rules are clear enough to enable novice GM's to adjudicate without too much difficulty, while still giving enough flexibility to give the players something to argue over.

Following this, we go into the dark gloomy world of the Guide (GM to the uninitiated). Here we get an outline of the modern setting and some ideas for the novice on how to go about setting up the game. Outlined are world orders and secret brotherhoods. Characters are also offered a range of paranormal abilities such as telepathy, but again these must be played against a disadvantage such as a grotesque appearance, in order to balance out the character. Also included is a whole gamut of monsters to give your players something to shoot at. The book ends with a short scenario, very "X-Files"-ish, involving the Justice Department versus some very odd blood-sucking greeblies. This is not bad, but a little short to be truly useful.

Don't Look Back has set itself a goal and has stuck to it - a fun and playable game for fans of the pulp horror genre. Its great let down is the atrocious artwork inside and out. If, however, you are looking for a starting point in horror RPG's, or if you're an experienced gamer who doesn't want to take four months to learn a game *and* hire a psychiatrist to help you figure out 'what's all about?', then this game is for you.

DLB is good, unwholesome fun! ■

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A high quality role playing magazine that is produced right here in Australia, in Perth. A bimonthly publication that has already seen 23 issues, it contains 48 A4 pages and a full colour 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.

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We've been looking for a top quality magazine on Japanese anime and manga ever since *Animag* disappeared forever. We have found one! *Protocolculture Addicts* is brought out bimonthly - there have already been 29 issues. It is produced by *Janus Publications*, the people who have given us *Heavy Gear Fighter*. This magazine reviews all things to do with anime: games, CDs, cartoons, books, manga, and videos. It has full features covering anime movies & videos, with episode by episode descriptions; anime stories, etc. Profusely illustrated with shots from videos, etc.

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PYRAMID

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

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SCRYE

: The Collectible Trading Card Game Guide A high quality 68 page magazine by ILM International, that specifically covers Collectible Trading card Games. The first two issues have been a huge success and sold out the world over. I'm looking at issue # 2 while I write this review, and it contains many goodies: the complete rules for the *Star Trek Next Generation Collectible Trading Card Game*, a preview of *Galactic Empires*, some teasers on the *Illuminati Collectible Trading Card Game*, a complete price guide for: *Magic: The Gathering Alpha*, *Beta*, *Unlimited*, *Arabian Nights*, *Antiquities*, *Legends*, *Spellfire*; a checklist for *The Dark*; interviews, designer notes for *Jynhad*, the rules for *Galactic Empires* - need I go on?

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THE DUELIST

By Wizards of the Coast, this is a brand new full colour quarterly magazine that supports *Magic the Gathering* and future *Deckmaster* products in the collectible trading card game genre. Every issue features the latest trading card products, articles on game variants, previews of up and coming *Deckmaster* products, interviews with artists and designers, news from the tournament circuit, and tips on play.

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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 (?) beasts, 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.

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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.

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WHITE WOLF

A bimonthly 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 independent 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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LEGEND OF CHICAGO

AN ELECTRONIC INTERVIEW WITH LOU PROSPERI

by Nick Leaning and Colin Taber

NICK: In Australia, the US city of Chicago is known for two things (it's probably more than that, but sheepdip, I'm the one who's writing this stuff and I can only handle two propositions at a time in one sentence), these being that it is called the Windy City (presumably for the cold winds that sweep in off the Great Lakes), and the fact that it's where Al Capone set up shop during the Prohibition and started all the gory glory-boy gangster legends with the Valentine's Day Massacre. Chicago, the city of freezing blizzards, blazing Thompson machine guns and home to FASA Corp.

So, when Australian Realms blew into Chicago recently, cruising the information superhighway in our clapped out Mac- powered combi van, Taber out the back on a length of chain, rollerblading down West Cermak ("Look, Mum, no hands!"), we drove by the FASA offices and Colin fired off these questions in one devastating email burst. Lou Prosperi, developer of FASA's increasingly popular Earthdawn product line was alone inside, working back late; he didn't know what hit him. Yeah, we made him eat lead alright, but we were outta there before you could yell "Wind chill factor!" and Lou was spilling his guts all over the infobahn...

COLIN: Actually, it was nothing like that, more a civilised chat between good friends, no baseball bats nor nothing, boss!

COLIN: *Please tell us a bit about yourself; what is your personal background?*

LOU: I grew up near Boston, Massachusetts. Through junior high school through to college I studied music, both performance and composition and arranging. I attended the University of Lowell from 1982 to 1987, where I majored in Music Composition.

COLIN: *Your interests (business/pleasure)?*

LOU: Aside from gaming, I am also a big comics and sci-fi fan. My main interest right now is The X Files, but I also enjoy Star Trek, Star Wars, and other obscure stuff such as The Prisoner and Thunderbirds.

COLIN: *Tell us about your start in gaming/roleplaying...*

LOU: My first gaming experience was with Mayfair Games' DC Heroes. I was a big comic book reader, and DC Heroes allowed me to play the same types of stories I was reading.

COLIN: *How did you get started in the industry?*

LOU: My interest in DC Heroes led me to playtesting for Mayfair, as well as writing a few small bits that appeared in some of the marketing and advertising material. I later helped Mayfair at a number of conventions, including Gen Con, demoing DC Heroes, etc. Shortly after that I went to work for Mayfair, and helped in the development of DC Heroes 2nd Edition and Chill 2nd Edition.

After leaving Mayfair, I continued playtesting for them and various game companies, before getting my first (small) freelance projects for West End Games (a pair of short adventures for TORQ). This project led to larger projects, and further playtesting for both WEG and FASA, specifically for Earthdawn.

COLIN: *How did you come to work for FASA & Earthdawn?*

LOU: Being a playtester for the game and an author with a few projects under my belt (mostly WEG stuff, but also a pair of projects for TSR) I was hired as the Earthdawn developer.

COLIN: *What were the design philosophies behind Earthdawn ie. what is your vision of what makes a successful fantasy roleplaying game?*

LOU: Well, I think my vision of what makes a successful fantasy RPG apply to a successful RPG in general. I believe that people play RPGs as a form of entertainment. Period. They play to have fun. What makes a game fun for the players is not constant. Different people have fun for different reasons, but I think there are three main reasons people play RPGs. First, these games are social games, allowing people to get together with friends. Second, RPGs involve storytelling, a form of entertainment that has been popular throughout history. Third, RPGs are GAMES, like checkers, Monopoly, etc.

I think Earthdawn address the latter two of these very well (virtually all RPGs are social). First, Earthdawn is ideal for a variety of story possibilities. The Setting is full of interesting races, peoples, conflicts, etc. and also features a unique and unusual treatment of magic and how it is used. The Characters are both interesting and special among the population, having unusual powers that enable them to deal with the challenges of the world in heroic fashion. The possible plot ideas combining the Setting and Characters are near limitless.

As a game, I think that Earthdawn offers players a lot. Its mechanics are fast, simple, and allow for fantastic feats of heroism. Characters come from a variety of races, they have a wide range of abilities (many of which are really cool!), and they are able to grow and advance as the player dictates. One of the key ideas here is what Greg Gorden (the game's designer) calls 'The Nintendo Effect.' What this means is that at every stage of a character's development, there is always more cool things to learn, i.e. more special abilities or powers to acquire. This results in a near never-ending progression, allowing characters to start as minor adventures, and eventually grow into legendary heroes.

COLIN: *What fantasy elements did you want to include/exclude?*

LOU: We wanted to include most of the most familiar fantasy elements such as dwarfs and elves, but at the same time, we didn't want to go overboard. For instance, there are no hobbits (halflings) in the game, nor are there dark elves or faeries.

One of the main goals was to create a setting that contained certain elements of fantasy, but also include a rationale explanation for their inclusion. For instance, kaers are much like dungeons, but in Earthdawn, there is a reason for these vast underground cities.

COLIN: *What themes are central to Earthdawn?*

Legends are perhaps the most important theme in Earthdawn. Legends are the living history of the world. They serve as the background and history of the present, inspiring heroes to become the legends of tomorrow.

COLIN: *The kaer's appear to be Earthdawn's "dungeons" - why do gamers so enjoy "dungeon" exploration do you think?*

LOU: I think that many gamers play in a very goal-oriented style. Exploring a kaer, either to loot it of its treasure, or to kill the Horrors that lair inside are both clear, easy to understand goals. For some players, it's like getting to the next level in a video game (we've killed all the monsters in this part of the kaer, where do we go next?).

Also, if a dungeon or kaer crawl is run well, there is an element of the unknown or suspense in the game. The players may know that there are monsters ahead, but they don't know which ones, or what the monsters will do. In Earthdawn, the variable nature of the Horrors further accentuates this feeling.

COLIN: *There have been many 'rumours' about links between Earthdawn and Shadowrun (history/setting/critters)... are there any? Will Shadowrun see a return of the horrors?*

LOU: There are definite links between Earthdawn and Shadowrun. Some of the most obvious are the similar races, including the dragons, and the fact that in both, magic is said to flow in a cycle. I would rather not discuss other links here, since most of them are fairly obvious. There are a few out there however, that we have left intentionally vague to allow us to follow up on them later. This is part of the fun for us, so I hope the players and gamemasters enjoy it as much as we do!

As for Horrors in Shadowrun, there is evidence that indeed, the Horrors and a third Scourge are on their way, but it would likely be at least several hundred years before the Horrors would pose any serious threat on a large scale.

COLIN: *Will there be an Earthdawn collectible trading card game?*

LOU: We have no current plans for an Earthdawn collectible card game.

COLIN: *What does the future hold for Earthdawn? Where is the storyline heading?*

LOU: This summer we get our first glance at the Theran Empire with the Sky Point and Vivane Campaign Set. This together with the next Earthdawn novel, Shrouds of Madness, should give players a good idea of the scale and power of the Therans, while not giving it all away.

As for other main story plans, we don't have many, though I am considering an adventure which would follow up on some of the loose storylines from previous adventures such as Mists of Betrayal, Infected, and Shattered Pattern.

NICK: Thanks for talking with us, Lou, and best wishes for the future of Earthdawn. If ever you want to live in the world's second windiest city, come to Perth in Western Australia. We'd be happy to welcome you. ■

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THE ELF, THE T'SKRANG, THE OBSIDIMAN AND THE DWARF

Earthdawn Adventure Hooks inspired by this issue's cover art.
by Colin Taber and Adam Whitt

MIDLAND TRADING POST

At a point roughly halfway between Haven and Blood Wood, nine days' ride from each, the adventurers come upon the Midland Trading Post.
- "Mists of Betrayal"

Situated on a crossroads with routes leading east to Parlainth, west to Blood Wood, south to Barsaive's towns and north to the wilds, obsidiman Gurt's Midland Trading Post is an oasis in the wilderness for travellers. Here, mingling with beings of all Barsaive's Name-giving races, adventurers can replenish supplies, have their horses reshod, wash the trail dust from their throats and fill their bellies with sound victuals. Here they may also encounter some of the 'residents' and learn of the adventure opportunities that lurk in the background of the Midland Trading Post.

FARLEN AND KAR'KIREN

Farlen, an elven warrior and Kar'kiren a T'skrang swordmaster both have plenty of reason to intercept travellers arriving at the Midland Trading Post. With the urgency of their work gathering, and omens bad and indifferent haunting these two solitary figures any interaction between them and your players could be something that suffers hints of their growing paranoia, or worryingly draw of their deepening fear. Perhaps unwitting travellers could get caught up in these events, and whisked away in an unexpected direction.

Both Farlen and Kar'kiren are hunting fellows of their own race who have brought shame upon all of their brethren. This has made the two comrades of a sort, which is why they can often be found together when not pursuing their distant, and more lonely scouting patrols.

Both are, to use the term loosely 'based' in the Midland Trading Post. They share a small shack that Kar'kiren acquired in a gambling game some years back. In most cases when players visit the Trading Post only one or other of the two will be there, they meet but once a fortnight at most, for perhaps a day or two. The shack is a rickety wooden board affair that keeps little out but the fresh air. Found on the very edge of the trading post it is left alone by the locals, and watched over by those who have taken a personal or other interest in Farlen and Kar'kiren's affairs.

FARLEN THE ELF

Nine days to the west of the Midland Trading Post is Blood Wood. Much has been said of the blood elves and their Queen wanting to reopen the wood to the world of late, but little as yet has been done to advance such goals. It seems to be just more talk.

"More lies from that thorny queen bitch, the horror that she is..."

Farlen is the sole descendant of a small elven community that returned to Blood Wood after spending the Scourge sealed in the dwarven city of Throal. Although many of her fellows survived the Scourge, they did not last the return to Blood Wood, attacked by the remaining Horrors on the road back to the Wood, the last of them were killed at the edge of the twisted and cursed forest. All but Farlen were slain.

Farlen will not speak of these terrible times, her memories are clouded and perhaps as much dream as reality... and nightmare. She haunts the western road up to three days out of the Midland Trading Post, harassing, attacking and hounding any blood elf travelling groups that are small enough for her to deal with. She has also scouted the road for good sites for ambushes, and has laid many plain (but dangerous) booby traps. She is a young elf, of only fifty four years, but very skilled and wise.

To say that she has but a single purpose, and is obsessed with her 'mission' is no distortion. She will quiz travellers on who they have seen on the roads of late, becoming only forceful or dangerous when Blood Wood is involved. She is also very knowledgeable about the area and will gladly share that knowledge if treated well.

KAR'KIREN THE T'SKRANG

To the south rumour tells of T'skrang slavers, of organised gangs more cruel and merciless than the dreaded Theran slavers who hunt across Barsaive. Such pirate federations have worked the area for long enough for word to have spread. Kar'kiren is here to deal them an answer. The mere mention of the names 'Slaver' and 'T'skrang' in the same sentence is enough to make his blood boil. He has personally attacked whole bands of slavers, killing them outright and setting their prisoners free. For such duties he has made many friends and won much respect, several residents of the Midland Trading Post owe their freedom, and their lives to him.



Kar'kiren doesn't speak of his past, but common rumour holds that he was a slave to the Therans, caught by his own kind and sold to them at Skypoint in the distant past. The Swordmaster is a very talented man, and such tales of previous capture would seem implausible if it were not for his burning hatred of slavers, and his single mindedness in destroying their hunting parties.

Kar'kiren spends much time watching the road and lands south of the Midland trading post, rumour says that he is watching for the slaver who so many years ago claimed him for the Therans.

Such revenge, when it comes will be a very terrible thing.

"Were we born boxed in chains, stooped to others? No, no we were not my friends..."

Kar'kiren will befriend any travellers who are not slavers or their associates. He is more than capable of looking after himself and exudes a kind of confidence that is his best defence. While rarely asking directly about slavers he will often steer the conversation and seek for his company to unwittingly divulge any information they have.

GURT THE OBSIDIMAN

"Buying and selling secrets, now that's the real commerce here. What stories have you got to trade, stranger?"

Gurt bought the Midland Trading Post from its disillusioned founder, Keris Briarthorne, and has made a moderate success of the establishment. Gurt, a warrior, is a shrewd businessman who drives a hard bargain; few can read his granite features, but he is generally fair in his trading with all Name-givers. He has few dealings with the elves of Blood Wood but is in regular contact with Torgak of Haven (Parlaint) and they often exchange letters of credit. Many of the trade goods that come up from the south are bought by Gurt then onsold to Torgak's Supplies and Goods.

Gurt always has his ears and eyes open to the news and rumours that travel up and down the roads that meet at The Midland Trading Post. He is a gold mine of information for adventurers able to persuade him to part with these valuable snippets. He, like all obsidimen, yearns to understand the world and all its doings. The best way to get him to part with information is by trading information with him. But any false rumours and lies will be readily detected by this wily operator.

Gurt is a relatively honest trader, but realises that due to the isolation of the Midland Trading Post and the meagre traffic it brings he cannot afford to be too choosy about his business dealings. Nor does he feel so superior as to be any man's judge. If a traveller has goods for sale and cannot produce proper bona fide's as to their ownership and origin, well, so be it... such skulduggery should not be allowed to interfere with profit. Adventurers with hot goods might find this a good place to offload them.

Along these solid business lines, Gurt is peripherally involved with the band of Ork Scorchers who operate in the region, often giving them refuge when they ride in to his trading post. He is quite amused by their energetic antics in lessening the load of passing caravans and travellers, and as long as they do not murder folk for no good reason, nor break the furniture when they brawl in his inn, Gurt tolerates, perhaps even enjoys their presence.

Gurt is currently gathering intelligence of the rumoured dragon's hoard that lies somewhere to the south. Although vastly skeptical of their authenticity, he is willing to pay well (with information, not gold) for news of the Great Dragon. He has been toying with the idea of mounting an expedition to find and recover the riches that such a dragon, if it be real, would have in its store. The greatest bait on this hook is that a dragon is sure to have a long and colourful history and much knowledge to pass on.

OTELLA THE DWARF

To the north of the Midland Trading Post is a wild and lonely place. Rumours of a 'ghost village' that comes and goes in wafts of mist are generally discounted as balderdash by the people hereabouts. One person who is not so sure is Otella. Otella is a belligerent, elemental dwarf from Throal who has travelled far and wide in his quest for the perfect seed stock for his father's apple orchards. On one of his recent sojourns in the north, Otella was troubled with strange dreams of a beautiful orchard in a mist shrouded valley beside a homely looking village. In his dream he entered the valley and came upon these trees bearing ripe, golden fruit. He plucked an apple and tasted of the fruit - its flesh was juicy sweet, the most delicious apple he had ever tasted. He awoke with the taste lingering on his tongue.

Otella is looked on as an eccentric by the regular customers of the Midland Trading Inn. He carries with him always a leather satchel stocked with small pouches filled with apple seeds - each marked with the name of a different strain from every corner of Barsaive. He also carries with him a dark secret of a shameful past which has driven him to a life of loneliness and desperation. Originally from Throal, Otella left there in disgrace after an unfortunate accident at the family cider brewery. He and his younger sister were playing hide and seek inside the brewery when he playfully shoved her into a vast stone vat of freshly pressed apple juice. Sadly, Arellan knocked her head on the side of the vat and was drowned before he could summon help to fish her out.

Otella fled his father's wrath and has since roamed Barsaive in search of the perfect cider-brewing apple in the forlorn hope that this will atone for the tragedy he brought on his family.

Unknown to him or anyone that has encountered him, Otella is horror marked. The weird dreams he has are partly inspired by his guilt and partly by the horrors that sometimes choose to haunt him. He is an idealist embittered by his past folly.

Otella can often be found in the Midland Trading Post inn washing away his guilt with cider and when drunk will argue the truth of his visions with all and sundry. Characters convinced of the veracity of his stories might be persuaded to mount an expedition to go in search of Otella's Golden Apples - the way he tells it they are literally made of gold.

"Those apples were real gold, I tell you, worth a fortune they are, my friend."





Steve Scholz '95.

A POSTCARD FROM SPACE

BY PAUL MITTING AND LEE SHEPPARD

"When those heavy boosters kick in, the G-force will really hit you. I'd like to tell you that it won't hurt, but that'd be a lie.

It hurts like a bitch, choomba - you'll swear some drek-head is trying to push the top of your head out through your butt while your kidneys try and work their way up through your body and out of your nose."

Subspace Message Transfer
08:45:24:07:2037

To: Christopher Taylor
Bjelke-Petersen Residential
Block
Brisbane Arcology
Republic of Australia

From: Nathan Taylor
PSV Sirocco
Thru Ceres Transmit Station
Asteroid Belt

Message Reads: Yo, Groundsider! It's your old Uncle Nathan here again, from my floating workstation somewhere in the greater Asteroid Belt. Your Dad contacted me the other month and told me you'd got some damn fool idea in your head to leave Earth

and come out into the Dark. I'm glad to see that you stuck at your work and managed to save up your uplift fare - I'm proud of you for that. But you should have told your Dad earlier about undertaking the acclimatisation program. I have to tell you that your Dad was really pissed, chombatta, what with everything that happened to your Mum and all, and he's asked me to try and have a talk to you to put you off the idea.

I think I know you pretty well though, Chris, and anything I say is not going to put you off one bit. I suppose the only way you're finally going to make up your mind about whether you really belong out here is to come and have a look for yourself. "Experiential Learning" is what my old University lecturer would have called it - I'd just call it the School of Hard Knocks. I won't kid you, Christopher - its hard out

here, damned hard. There aren't any second chances either - you screw up, no matter how small, and you're dead, pure and simple.

Your Dad isn't going to like me for what I'm about to do for you, but hey, that's *my* problem now isn't it? Seems that if you've truly made your mind up about coming out here, the very least I can do is give you a few survival pointers to make sure you last longer than a few minutes once you get here.

If you haven't made your transit booking yet, you might want to consider by-passing Cape York Spaceport and scooting over to one of the European spaceports. You'll save a fair bit of money on your uplift, especially if you go via one of the Soviet heavy lifters. They often have stand-by passenger seats available, and you should be able to get on one for about half of what you'd pay for one of the British Space Commission or ESA shuttles. Yeah, I know what you're thinking, I've heard the rumours too, but the Sov Rocket Corps has really got its act together over the past few years. Many of the guys I've worked with out here travelled with the SRC and had no complaints at all (apart from the stewardesses, but then they've always had that problem).

I wish your Dad had let you take that school trip to the moon after your mother died. I suppose it was only natural to have overreacted like he did, but her death was just a freak accident - one of the only Gateway accidents ever to have resulted in fatalities. I've talked to a few people in the know out here since the accident, and some have told me that the *Perseus* was probably fitted with a dodgy Theodorsen Field Modulator, one of the early counterfeit models, before code encryption was fully operational. I'd really like to get my hands on the bastards that were responsible for fitting that faulty TFM, I'd soon show them the perils of space travel. But anyway, I'm wandering off the track a bit here. What I really wanted to say was that if you'd taken that trip to the moon, then at least you'd have experienced lift-off and zero-grav.

It'll still come as a bit of a shock to your system, regardless of having undergone acclimatisation training. If you've taken my advice, you'll be travelling in one of the Soviet heavy lifter rockets. Now these guys are principally designed for transporting cargo, so you won't be travelling in the most luxurious comfort. When those heavy boosters kick in, the G-force will really hit you. I'd like to tell you that it won't hurt, but that'd be a lie. It hurts like a bitch, choomba - you'll swear some drek-head is trying to push the top of your head out through your butt while your kidneys try and work their way up through your body and out of your nose. Fortunately, that feeling is only going to last for about fifteen minutes (ha ha - I remember your mother telling me how pleased she was that someone had finally

invented a way that men could experience the pain of child-birth).

Once you're up, you'll get your first taste of zero-gravity - and if you're like me, you won't enjoy it one bit. It gives you one hell of a headache the first time, and if you don't heed the warnings and have a big lunch instead of the dry crackers the stewardesses issue you before takeoff, then you're going to be seeing that lunch again *real* quick. So don't be embarrassed when you do "pull a Kranston", just make sure you get it all into the bag - 'nuff said?

The disadvantage of taking one of the Soviet Rockets is that you won't get an outside view, but that won't really matter, because the view from one of the orbiting space platforms (probably Edinburgh, although you might transit through the older Johnson Space Platform) is well worth the wait. My advice is to take a day or two to get used to the lighter gravity and use some of the money you saved on your uplift to secure a decent trip on an OTV (Orbital Transfer Vessel to you dirt-sniffers). If you can, try and get on one of the French-crewed OTVs out of Edinburgh (or any of the Qantas OTVs out of Johnson) - they have far better facilities and the stewardesses are much better looking (if you're going to see a girl in a skin-suit for the first time, make sure the experience is worth it, I always say). All kidding aside, they also operate the fastest OTVs - Low Earth Orbit to the Theodorsen Gateway Transit Station (Heathrow) in 16 hours, the fastest non-military trip possible at present.

If you leave from Edinburgh Space Platform, make sure you get a seat on the starboard side of the OTV. If you're lucky, and the orbits are right, you'll have a real good chance of seeing New Buckingham Palace as you pull out for your trip to Heathrow. That's where Queen Victoria II and her Parliament now live - right above the old one in London. I shouldn't have to tell you about her though should I, wasn't she technically your "Boss" when you were working for the Government last year? Good luck to her I say, as long as her RUK Marine boys keep those fracking pirates off our back out here in the Belt, she can rule forever as far as I'm concerned.

Which brings me to one important point, Christopher - and one you'd better listen to pretty carefully. It's not the Gold Coast up here, boy. I'm sure you already know that from my previous letters and vids, but don't get any drek-head ideas about getting yourself chipped up with a smart gun or buying one of those fancy gyrojets to protect yourself. You'll be passing through some pretty heavy security before they'll let you board one of the Gateway Liners, and the penalties are tough if you get caught carrying a piece. So don't try anything stupid - you'd hate to spend the first 12

Some Terms Explained...

Archie - RUK slang term for Cyborg. From a mid-20th Century comic strip character, Robot Archie. See also Borg.

Borg - colloquial term used to describe both Cyborgs and Cyber-evolved life-forms, such as those found in the Mercury colonies.

BSC - British Space Commission. The civilian and scientific arm of the RUK space program, responsible for the maintenance of the Theodorsen Gateways.

Ceres - largest asteroid in the Belt. A number of Corporate, Military and Private colonies are established on Ceres, providing important facilities for the tens of thousands of space miners who make the Asteroid Belt their home.

The Commonwealth - those nations which have realigned themselves with the RUK and forged the new Commonwealth include India, Singapore, Canada and the twin Republics of Australia. In combination with the RUK, the Commonwealth is the most powerful "nation" in space.

Dan Dare - RUK Space Marine pilots are often referred to as "Dan Dares", a reference to a popular British science fiction comic of the 20th Century.

Dirt-Sniffer - slang term for one who doesn't live, travel or work in space.

ESA - European Space Agency. The second biggest player in the provision of space transport and off-world colonies.

Gateway - see Theodorsen Gateway.

NASA - where have you *been*, dirt sniffer?

New Buckingham Palace - Queen Victoria's orbital space station, which incorporates the RUK Parliament and Civil Service Headquarters.

months of your time in the Dark in one of the Belt Prison Mines.

If things do get heavy when you eventually settle down somewhere, I can always put you in contact with a few individuals who can help you out. Just leave the heavy stuff to the professionals - if you can keep your nose out of where it doesn't belong, then you'll be fine - it's only when you start poking your nose into other people's business, or you choose a lifestyle that invites danger (like mine) that you'll run into the sort of situations that need a more direct approach, if you know what I mean.

And while we're talking safety, don't *ever* forget the Triad - Atmosphere, Radiation and Gravity. Acclimatisation Training covers the basics for you, but you *must* practice the principles - I honestly can't stress that enough. Check your suit every day, check the Use By dates on your Goop Balls and listen to the Daily Radiation Warnings - they could all make the difference between survival and death.

Woah! - enough of the heavy stuff for the moment. If I'm not careful I'll end up doing just what your Dad asked me to do - put you off taking the trip. OK, by now you've booked yourself on to one of the better OTVs and you're making your way to Heathrow Transit Station at 25,000 kms/hr. It's certainly a sight to behold as you draw closer, all four rings and massive solar panels. Given that the station is over 4 kilometres in diameter, it's really hard to believe that it rotates at 2 complete revolutions a second!

You won't get to see the actual Theodorsen Gateway from Heathrow, as that's over 3,000 kilometres away at one of the Luna LaGrange stationary points, just in case of accidents and the like. What you *will* be able to see is the dozens of military ships, deep space cruisers and interplanetary cargo and passenger ships that use Heathrow as a transit/repair station. Who would have believed that just 10 years ago that modest collection of ships would have represented the entire combined Deep Space fleets? Shows what a quantum leap in technology the Theodorsen Gateways were, huh?

As for the station itself, if you thought the Space Platforms were amazing, you just honestly won't believe Heathrow. What is it about airports, spaceports and bus stations (a form of transport before your time, kiddo) that seems to attract all the wackos? I suppose it's the fact that most people heading to the outer colonies have to pass through Heathrow that makes it such a magnet for all of the religious freaks, pickpockets, conmen, salesmen, hookers, fixers, solos and other detritus that always seem to be there, but the place still continues to freak me out every time I visit it. The last time I was there, some guy actually tried to sell me a Persian Rug! For

my Zero-G work station! Can you believe it?

Seriously though, if you know the right people to talk to, you can make some really good deals on your equipment. If you haven't bought your space-suit yet, make do with a rental until you get to Heathrow. Look for Delta Designs on Level 3 of the Mercantile deck. Ask for Jenny M'Zinga and tell her how you know me - she'll do you a real good deal on your first space-suit, and it won't run out of warranty the first time you head into zero pressure atmosphere.

And don't worry - Heathrow is not as dangerous as you might think it first looks. Regardless of all of the loonies you might run into while you're visiting, the RUK Space Marines based there maintain a very high level of law and order, and as long as you keep your credit cards close to your body and don't make any deals that you can't cover financially - you'll be fine. If you have the time, take a couple of days to have a look around Heathrow. They have a great tour that lasts a half day that takes you to all but the highest security areas of the station - well worth the time for a groundsider like you!

Now the actual amount of time you'll end up having to spend at Heathrow Transit Station will depend on a number of factors - where you eventually want to go, how long the delays are in getting through the Gateway backlog (any current military actions get first priority for access) and the general availability of empty seats on the passenger ships. Big word of advice here, Christopher - don't take the cheap option when it comes to travelling through the Gateways. Always travel with one of the big three - BSC, ESA or NASA - you'll not only stand a far greater chance of getting to where you want to go, but you'll have a far more enjoyable time getting there. A week in the hyperspatial realm between the Gateways sure beats a year iced and braindancing, but it's still a week.

Remember, you can't look out of the windows when you're in transit through the Gateways or you'll fry your brains, so you'll just have to sit back and enjoy the in-flight virtual entertainment. Me, I always spend a lot of time in the Zero-Gee gymnasium, keeping my body toned for the many months of Zero-G I spend in my workstation out here in the Belt. If you find you get on well with the crew, ask them to run the VirtualNet™ simulation disc I sent with this message disc - a friend of mine says it's a pirate copy of one of the RUK Space Marine training simulators from the DreamPark™ training facility in Bournemouth. Knock yourself out, kid - literally.

I must admit that through all of this I have been assuming that you were always intending to miss the Luna colonies altogether, and make your way out to one of the new planetary colonies. Obviously, if it's your intention to spend some time on

one of the dozens of Luna mining or residential colonies to "test the waters", then you don't really need to worry about making your way to Heathrow Transit Station at all. Knowing you though, I can't see you settling for the monotony of the Luna colonies. Geez, if they keep moving entire city populations to the moon the way they have been recently, it won't be long before it becomes as overcrowded as the Earth already is - and that won't be fun for anybody. Why move straight back into what you're trying to get away from by heading out into the Dark in the first place?

My suggestion is for you to make your way out to Mars - the Big Red One. It has some pretty large cities to hang out in nowadays, and there are plenty of employment opportunities for people with your particular skills. It's also the most popular jumping off point for trips to the Asteroid Belt or the Jovian system, if Mars turns out to be a no-go for you. Besides, you shouldn't have any problem getting on a ship heading out to Mars, as 3 out of every 4 ships making the jump through the Gateways seem to hit Mars first. As it stands at present, if you wanted to head straight out to the Belt or Jupiter from Heathrow, you might end up having to wait a week or two until a ship that was headed that way put in an appearance. That's why it's far better to head out to Mars - at least you're half way to where you might eventually want to go, and you get to check out Big Red while you make your final decision.

If you do make your way to Mars, even if it's only for a few months while you finally make up your mind, there's really only two choices when it comes to finding casual work - only Olympus Base and the Carter Colony are big enough to support an itinerant workforce. All the other bases are either too small or exclusively Corporately staffed, so you probably won't be able to get work in any of those unless you've already arranged it before leaving Earth. That doesn't mean you can't have a good look around while you're there though, as all of the bases and colonies are open to visitors.

Mind you - Mars isn't without its problems. I don't know how much news gets past the political and military censors about what's going on in the Mars colonies at present, but there's certainly a lot more going on there than you'd probably be aware of on Earth. The best that I can do is to tell you what I've picked up from the crews of the supply ships that make their way out here, bearing in mind that any news I pass on will already be three to six months out of date (even with the number of new colonists coming through Belt Gateway I really only manage to get news updates when I make my quarterly trip to Ceres).

I suppose the biggest news concerning Mars at the moment is the secessionist

movement. I've been told that many of the colonists are keen for Mars to declare its independence, and while that view isn't a new one, I've also heard that some of the members of the Martian Assembly are now being swayed towards popular opinion. I can't see the Earth giving in too easily though, and many of the colonists remember what happened as a result of the attempted coup at Isidis Base in 2025, so both sides will be wanting to tread very carefully.

My advice, if you *do* end up staying on Mars for more than a few months, is to try and keep out of the secessionist movement altogether. I'm told that there are a lot of lunatic fringes popping up on both sides, and given your strong political views (I still remember our arguments over the Jovian War fiasco when you first started University) I could just see you joining up with the wrong group and getting yourself fragged over some stupid "Freedom for Martian Rocks" movement. I reckon it could get pretty dirty over the next twelve months - why else would the UN be taking such a big interest in procedures? They've even taken two UN Marshalls out of Ceres and re-located them on Mars, and trust me, you don't take any lawmen out of the Belt unless you've got a damned good reason.

Speaking of the Belt, you might be thinking of coming out to visit your favourite Uncle. Hey, I'd certainly love to see you, but I really can't recommend it at the moment, especially while the pirate raids have picked up again. Most of the supply ships that make it out this way are now forming convoys for protection, with a couple of RUK or Commonwealth gunships riding shotgun. I was speaking to a Dan Dare the other month and she let slip that the Archies might be behind some of the pirate raids, as they had picked up a couple of Borgs in a ship they had recently captured. Now what would the Borgs be doing out here attacking supply ships and kidnapping or killing their passengers? Besides, it's one hell of a way from Mercury to the Belt. If the Mercury colony *is* involved, were talking about a five to ten year plan being put into effect here. Can they really be that far thinking when their brains are that close to the Sun all the time?

Pirates aren't the only problem out in the Belt mind you. Some of the various Rover clans are getting a bit brazen when it comes to claim jumping and squatting in temporarily vacated workstations. A fellow workganger on an asteroid claim near me came back from a supply trip the other month to find his workstation completely stripped. No doubt about it being Rovers, everyone else out here usually obeys the unwritten laws when it comes to being allowed to work a claim unmolested. The frightening thing is that I've picked up rumours of a vigilante movement taking

shape to take on the Rovers. I can't see the UN Marshalls letting that go on for too long without stepping in. Looks like there's going to be more popsicles floating about before things calm down again.

I suppose that what I'm really trying to say is that I think the best and safest option for you at present would be to try and pick up some fill-in work on Mars, and then contact me by Subspace Message Transfer when you get settled. Then, if things have finally calmed down out here in the Belt, you can book passage on a Belt-bound supply ship and come and check out my humble workstation.

Anyway, enough for now. Say hello to your Dad for me, and tell him I'll be in contact again soon. Look forward to seeing you soon, chombatta.

Stay happy, groundsider.

AND SO IT BEGINS...

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SOLSPACE:

A WHOLE NEW ATTITUDE

OTV - Orbital Transfer Vessel. Spacecraft designed for transferring cargo and/or passengers from Low Earth Orbit (LEO) to higher orbits, such as the Space Stations or Luna.

Queen Victoria II - current ruler of the RUK and the Commonwealth.

RUK - The Re-United Kingdoms. After the bloody civil wars of the late 2020s, England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland reformed as the Re-United Kingdoms under the rule of Her Majesty Queen Victoria the second.

TFM - Theodorsen Field Modulator. Spaceships can only use the Gateways if they are fitted with a TFM, a device that effectively acts as a "key" to the entrances to the hyperspatial realm.

Theodorsen Gateway - in 2025 Professor P. Theodorsen discovered the existence of a "hyperspatial" realm, theorising that this could eventually be used as a "short-cut" to significantly reduce travel time between the planets in our solar system and beyond. Theodorsen, with financial and scientific assistance from the BSC, then created the technology to provide access to this hyperspatial realm. Theodorsen Gateways are now the principal method of transportation for interplanetary travel.

Transit Stations - large space stations built to provide accommodation and facilities for Gateway crews, RUK Space Marine Detachments and passengers waiting for flights through the nearest Gateway.

United Nations - the UN has official mandate across the solar system, acting to preserve law and order (through UN Marshalls), uphold civil rights and promote free trade among the various colonies and Earth.

VANGRE AFLAME

VANGRE'S UNDERCITY HOLDS MANY SECRETS, AND OIL...

The ogre's hands worked quickly now, making the last few gestures to complete the spell that he had begun some six hours earlier. The cauldron at his side continued to bubble and pop, it's contents kept at a constant boiling point by the fire that the Cabalist's apprentice was tasked with maintaining.

As the last few words of the spell were spoken, there was an audible hiss from the magical brew. Almost immediately, thick tendrils of white fog began to sprout over the lip of the cauldron and snake down the hill towards Vangre. In the hills that surrounded the city, a dozen similar cauldrons would also vomit the same mystic fog, thick enough to block out the very sun, if it had yet risen.

Garrekk the shaman allowed himself a rare smile, pleased with his handiwork. If all went well today, many of the humans in Vangre would never see the sun again.

Silently and swiftly the supernatural fog smothered the slumbering city...



OGRE OFFENSIVE

The first episode of this adventure was featured last issue wherein the Kramer Confederation city of Vangre was besieged by a huge ogre army, and the players found themselves right in the middle of it all. It now turns out that this is only one of a number of crucial offensives being undertaken by the Ogre Clans, as the citizens of Argentia, Portre and Pont de Fasselle also find themselves under attack. A new leader has emerged from the feuding Ogre Clans and successfully forged the many tribes who inhabit the Darner Mountains and the Heletian Spine into one cohesive force. Ta Aknad Kurger has convinced his people that a number of strategic strikes will halt the human settlers' advances into the last few remaining areas of ogre held territory.

The ogres have repeatedly assaulted Vangre, finally forcing a breakthrough into the north-east section of the city where they are currently held by units of Vangre militia. Part One of the adventure concluded with the players being used to summon members of the Vangre Cabal to a meeting with Reganto Heletiano, Vangre's appointed ruler and the players' current employer. While the Reganto meets with members of the mysterious Cabal, the ogres prepare for their most audacious strategy yet, as hundreds of ogre troops secretly make their way into the maze of tunnels that lie beneath the city...

As with all Unae material, this scenario is designed to be played with any of the popular fantasy roleplaying systems; rules and statistics are replaced by adventure and atmosphere.

SOURCE MATERIAL

It's not every day that you get to blow up a city right from under the players feet! The second part of this scenario ends with the destruction of large parts of Vangre. Fire is the cause of the devastation, as the leaking oil that fills many of the tunnels beneath the streets (known as the Undercity) is ignited by the lunatic fringe cult known as The Order of the Cleansing Ekzalti.

In the first instalment we gave referees some reference material that they could examine for information on running sieges. For those who would like to do some prereading this time around, we suggest that you concentrate on sources that cover such things as street-by-street fighting (Stalingrad and Berlin in WWII; Bosnia and Chechnya in more

recent news reports) and the effects of fires (the Great Fire of London in 1666 in particular). When conducting your research look for sources that concentrate on the human aspects of these events (eye witness reports etc.), as it is such images that you want to present to your players to make this a truly memorable role-playing experience.

BESIEGED VANGRE

Summary of Events- The Next Four Days

The following events occur within the last four days of the siege of Vangre, being days 22 to 25 (days 1 to 21 were detailed last issue). They serve as a rough time-line of events, providing an overall framework to the various sub-plots and adventure hooks suggested later in this scenario. Players will become involved in many of these events simply by being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Day Twenty Two - Vangre's citizens awake to find a strange mist blanketing the city. As confusion ensues, and terrified citizens gather in The Square, hundreds of ogres pour out of the Undercity. Using the mist to their complete advantage, the ogre forces quickly wreak havoc throughout Vangre. By mid morning, a number of sections in both halves of the city serve as ogre "beachheads", with ogres using these areas to launch further attacks.

At noon, the discussions held between Reganto Heletiano and the Cabal finally bear fruit as, throwing off all pretence of secrecy, Vangre's Cabalists openly join battle against the ogres. Initial Cabal-supported victories are very swift, brutal and complete; the eastern half of Vangre is retaken by dusk. Even so, large parts of the western half of Vangre continue to remain under Ogre control.

During the night, a rumour quickly spreads through the city. The Order of the Cleansing Ekzalti have found a way to defeat the ogres completely, and will demonstrate their "holy powers" at noon the following day, in the Cathedral Square.

Day Twenty Three - The Cathedral Square is packed with citizens, the majority arriving many hours before noon. Guiliermo Tosti, the leader of the Order of the Cleansing Ekzalti, makes an impassioned speech to the crowd, who cheer his every word. With the aid of two fellow worshippers, Tosti magically tears open a small section of the Square's ground, thereby exposing the first level of the Undercity beneath. Calling on Krienta, he then casts a magical firestorm into the Undercity. As blue and red jets of searing flames thunder into the gaping hole the crowd falls back screaming in fright, nearby priests of Krienta calling cries of "Sacrilege!".

It is some seconds before anyone realises what Tosti has actually done, but by then it is too late. At first, a low rumble begins under the citizens' feet, quickly increasing in strength until it is thought that an earthquake has struck the city. Then, suddenly, as thousands of litres of oil that have leaked, over the years, from the Vangre oil works ignite - Vangre literally bursts into flame!

Huge gouts of fire can soon be seen exploding all throughout Vangre, as openings to the Undercity vomit flaming oil. Trapped pockets of oil by-product gases ignite with disastrous consequences; undermined buildings begin toppling into the crowded city streets crushing the screaming occupants. Thoughts of ogres are quickly forgotten as Vangre begins to burn...

Day Twenty Four - Fire rages in both halves of the city. Most of the western section of Vangre is now fully aflame, and panicked citizens flee the conflagration any way they can. Six surviving Des Sankta Glavos Knights, some militia soldiers, and some cabalists fight a desperate rear-guard action at the three bridges crossing the Sarmona River, managing to keep the attacking ogres from crossing to the eastern half of Vangre.

Early that evening, a number of tunnels that cross beneath the Sarmona River collapse as a result of the subterranean fires, and millions of litres of water flood the Undercity, fortunately helping to extinguish the inferno that threatens to completely destroy Vangre. During the night, the ogres suddenly withdraw from battle. They are not seen again.

Day Twenty Five - The last of the fires are extinguished in the early hours of the morning, as Vangre's surviving Cabalists now throw their combined magical resources into the fire-fighting effort. Militia scouts report that those few ogres who survived the cataclysm have fled the area, probably intending to return to their mountain homes. Reganto Heletiano sends a message to King Giovanni of Greater Baimiopia - "*the siege of Vangre is broken, but the cost has been too high*".

Almost a full third of Vangre is reduced to ashes, with a large percentage of the western half of the city completely destroyed. Although exact numbers of casualties will probably never be known, estimates put the loss of life at 30,000 to 40,000 inhabitants; sadly the great majority of those were victims of the fire.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Phew! Pretty intense stuff, huh?. As can be seen, there is a lot to get through in four game days, and your players' won't get a lot of time for rest as a result of all that's going on around them. So be it - try to keep the pressure up and keep your players confused as to what exactly is going on, as this will help to simulate the experience of living through such calamitous events.

The adventure hooks are described somewhat differently than those presented with the first part of this mini-campaign. Given the nature of the events of the last four days of the siege, it could be almost impossible to predict what any one group of players will do in each given situation. The sudden appearance of the ogres, the involvement of the Cabal, and the disastrous fire make the usual "programmed" hooks (such as those tasks allocated to the players by Reganto Heletiano in the first 21 days of the siege) extremely difficult to stage.

Each adventure hook is therefore described in the following manner. First, each of the major events of the last four days of the siege is completely detailed, noting any special generic gaming effects that may apply (eg the fog affects vision and hence, combat rolls). This overview will allow referees to become fully aware of the "big picture", so that they can be more prepared for their players' actions. Following each description is a series of suggestions on how the players might get directly involved in each of those major events, with some options provided in those situations that may change as a result of the players' actual location and actions within Vangre.

1. An Unholy Mist - The fog created by the ogre shamans spreads quickly over the entire city. Any player who happens to be out and about before dawn while the fog is still emerging will feel a chill as the fog passes over them, but nothing more. However, any player who happens to possess the "gift" (one who wields magic) will also feel a sense of uneasiness as the fog moves on, but will not be able to determine the exact cause of this feeling.

For all intents and purposes, the fog literally remains invisible until the sun rises, when the fog then takes on the appearance of a real "pea-souper". Visibility is reduced to a maximum of only 30 feet, and even the sun only appears as a grey disk through the thick cloud. Sounds echo mysteriously, and clothing clings damply to bodies.

The fog will remain over the city for three hours after dawn, when the heat of the day and the coastal breezes finally combine to dissipate the magical mist. During this three-hour period all close combat rolls are to be reduced due to poor visibility (-1/-10%, dependent on system used), and missile fire should be considered impossible.

Referees are encouraged to obtain and view the John Boorman film "Excalibur", which contains two sequences (the scene where Uther Pendragon takes on the form of the Duke of Cornwall to seduce Igraine and, more appropriately, the final battle scene between Arthur's and Mordred's forces) that perfectly illustrate the sort of effect the magical fog is intended to create.

Given the events of the past few weeks the fog will terrify most citizens. Referees should describe the population flocking to the nearest militiaman or priest for help, information or guidance, not preparing their defences for a possible assault. Then the ogre units begin their surprise attacks...

How the players might get involved - there is nothing the players can really do to detect, stop or disperse the fog (such is the power of an important plot hook!). The players should certainly become concerned about the fog, as it is obviously magical in nature, but there is nothing they can do to physically affect the mist. Where they can have some effect is if they realise that the fog may be part of a planned attack of some kind. Trying to rouse the populace out of their fear and confusion, or to warn the militia units that an attack may be imminent can all help to lessen the final effectiveness of the ogre attacks (at least in the city section that the players find themselves in).

2. "From Beneath Our Very Feet They Came..."

The ogres' initial attacks have two objectives; to incite panic, and to try and capture key areas of the city. Almost a thousand ogres are involved in the first wave of attacks, with another thousand in reserve to reinforce and hold captured areas. The key targets for the ogre units are the three bridges that cross the Sarmona River, the Naval Port (area 14 on the Vangre map, featured last issue), the three Eastern gate houses, the Mint (area 16), the Senate (area 23), the Temple of St Romeo (area 25) and the main Commercial Area (28, west of the Pit, neighbouring 11 and 15). Once these areas are captured and held, a planned breakout from the north-western slum quarter would literally cut the city in two. Regardless of each ogre unit's prime target however, all have been given instructions to cause as much death and panic as possible, whether they are successful in capturing their target or not.

The shock attacks of the ogres prove devastatingly effective, and within two hours, all but the three eastern gate houses and the main bridge over the Sarmona will be held by ogres (although the players may be able to halt some of these ogre victories - see below). Casualties on both sides are high, but the human defenders and citizens will certainly come off far worse.

How the players can get involved - this part of the siege is really for combat freaks, as the players will soon be fighting for their lives, and the future of Vangre. Unless the players happen to be hiding well away from the hot spots, they are certainly going to be fighting ogres, at least until the Cabal joins in. Apart from the fog, the ogre attacks should come completely unannounced, perhaps with the doors of a nearby warehouse suddenly bursting and ogres pouring out, or the players simply turning down an alleyway and finding it filled with huge warriors. The fog and panicked crowds adds to the confusion, with the players never really sure where the next attack is coming from (or going to).

Referees should let the players make their own decisions while the ogres go about their business. If the players want to get directly involved in the defence of Vangre, then let them take charge of militia units and organise defensive positions, should they so desire. If the players do a good job of marshalling their troops, then let their section of the city remain free of ogre strongholds. None of the previously mentioned ogre targets are essential to the development of the plot, so players can be made to feel as though they have "made a difference".

Those players who have no desire to "lead the troops" will still have plenty of encounters with the ogres as they move about the city, or run errands for the Reganto. If cowardly players are lying low, they'll soon find their quarters under attack from rampaging, nine-foot tall, three-handed-sword wielding ogres!

If the players are in the Undercity then they're in for a real treat, aren't they? If the players happen to be in the Undercity while the ogres are taking up their positions beneath the city streets (anywhere from about midnight to dawn), then the players will almost certainly run into them. In this situation, make the time the players spend in the

Undercity one big chase, with the players' very lives at stake in every encounter. The players find ogres everywhere they turn, blocking exits to the surface, assembling in larger chambers and so on. Have the players harried at every step so that they manage to break through to the surface just as the ogres begin their attacks on the city above.

3. Cabal Counterattack - One hour before noon the ogres have established a number of strong points within the city. Ogre forces within the north-western slum quarter have made some sorties to test the defences of the militia defenders, but no concentrated attack to force a breakthrough has yet been made. The ogre attacks on the outer walls of Vangre drop in intensity, but still continue, thereby ensuring that militia reinforcements cannot be taken from the walls to attack the ogre strongpoints. At noon, lead by the tolling bells of Vangre Cathedral, and joined by the city's other churches, is bell ringing with an intensity never before heard in the city. It is a signal - a Cabalist signal.

Kamora, Vangre's undisputed leader of the Cabal, simply walks from his house (area 12), passes the University and enters the commercial area of Vangre (map location 28, near the Guild District labelled area 15), the very middle of the ogre forces assembled there. Followed by a desperate crowd that slows, and eventually stops to watch as he enters the ogre stronghold. Here he calls upon the elements and spirits to do his bidding. As the area becomes a place hidden by smoke and mists it is but ten minutes later before he walks out of the area by himself, quietly walking back to his house and locking the door behind him. No ogre remains alive to tell of what happened.

This scene is repeated in a number of locations throughout Vangre, albeit nowhere near as successfully (or dramatically). Some victories are relatively easy with the ogres quickly cleared from their strong points or forced back into the Undercity. Other battles are far more evenly matched however, with ogre cabalists duelling against the cabalists of Vangre.

The fighting continues for the rest of the day, with human attack met by ogre counterattack. The human cabalists eventually gain the upper hand, however, and the ogres are forced back, west across the Sarmona. Even so, the ogres still manage to hold onto all of their strongholds in the western half of Vangre. At dusk the Vangre cabalists withdraw from the battle, their magical powers all but exhausted. Most just attempt to get as much rest as they can during the lull in the fighting, sure that battle will soon be joined again.

How the players might get involved - unless one of the players happens to be a cabalist, then the players role in this particular hook is likely to be one of defensive support. If the players have remained in contact with Reganto Heletiano, or elements of the Vangre Cabal, they might initially be tasked to undertake scouting missions for the cabalists - assessing the areas of greatest threat, ogre troop numbers, best place to attack etc. Militia units will also have to be informed of the coming attacks, so that they can provide armed support for

any attacks. The players may also be tasked with escorting cabalists to various parts of the city, so that coordinated attacks can begin when the Cathedral bells sound.

While these activities might seem particularly menial for the players, they provide both a way for the players to remain directly involved in the events of the siege, and a means of getting the players out and about in the city, where they can run into ogres (if they've managed to avoid them so far). This is also an ideal time for the players to start picking up rumours about the Order of the Cleansing Ekzalti's "Demonstration of Faith" that will take place in the Cathedral Square the following day.

The players can also get directly involved in the fighting by providing close support to the cabalists while they work their "art". Especially in those situations where the Vangre cabalists are drawn into magical duels with ogre cabalists, conventional ogre forces will still have to be dealt with. The battle will also take place beneath the streets of Vangre, and the players could be involved in a "clearing out" of some sections of the Undercity.

4. Rumours in the Night - During the night of Day 22 of the siege a rumour begins to spread among the citizens of Vangre. The initial rumour is, of course, spread by members of the Order of the Cleansing Ekzalti, who have remained somewhat quiet since one of their number set fire to himself on the steps of the Cathedral (see last issue). They hope that a dramatic demonstration of their faith will win the people of Vangre over to their cause. What the general populace do not realise (and none of his followers in the Order know) is that Guillermo Tosti, leader of the Order of the Cleansing Ekzalti, is quite insane.

Guillermo Tosti, an elemental wizard of some reasonable skill (and a renegade cabalist), is one of only a few survivors of the damned city of Ossard (see Realms Issue 20), driven completely mad by the many terrible things he witnessed during its fall. Having escaped to the safety of Vangre, his madness has been given new impetus by the ogre siege. To his tortured mind, the events of Ossard are repeating themselves in Vangre, and he is convinced that only the holy flames of retribution will cleanse the city of its curse. As is the case with many such insane fanatics, his personal charisma has ensured that he has attracted a number of loyal followers. He has sent his followers into the streets to drum up spectators for his "Holy Spectacle".

How the players might get involved - this hook provides a more cerebral challenge (or at least more of a role-playing opportunity) in the embattled city. The players might at first only pick up a whisper of a rumour ("*Something is going to happen at noon tomorrow...*"), more facts becoming evident as the night progresses and the players investigate further. Some rumours are incredibly outlandish, tavern talk being what it is: "*Krienta will come and save us at dawn - a priest told me...*".

If the players are not naturally inquisitive, then they can be tasked by the Reganto to "*investigate this malicious rumour that is spreading like a pox throughout the city.*" Much of the players time

could be taken up with trying to find out which rumour is the correct one, who is behind the programmed display of faith, and who leads the Order of the Cleansing Ekzalti. Eventually, the players should be able to establish those key facts, but not the exact nature of the holy spectacle itself - that will have to wait until noon the next day.

For those referees who are running this adventure as a follow up to the Ossard scenario, this hook provides an opportunity to add some dramatic tension to the events. The players can be told that the name Guilliermo Tosti rings a bell, but they can't exactly remember where they have heard it before. Shortly before noon, after actually seeing Tosti's face, one of the players can have a "flash of inspiration" (a nicely faked die roll will take care of this), remembering seeing Tosti in the streets of Ossard, screaming about the "*flames of retribution*" and tossing fireballs into nearby citizens. A player might be able to put two and two together and try and stop Tosti before it's too late, but the crowd is so tightly packed...

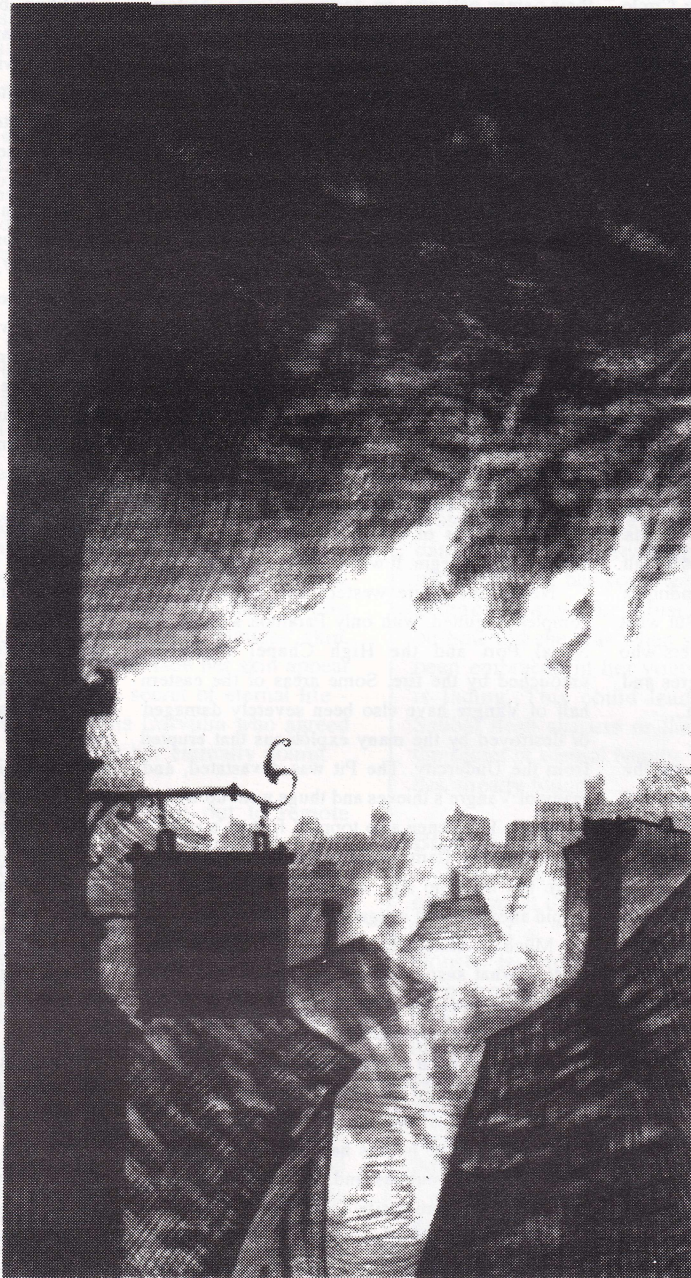
5. The Fires of Damnation... - Day 23 of the siege begins quietly, with no hint of the great tragedy that is about to unfold. The ogres maintain their positions, obviously uncertain about facing the cabalists so soon after yesterday's encounter. A large crowd begins to gather in the Cathedral Square. All thoughts of keeping the crowds away are quickly forgotten as over ten thousand citizens pack into the square to hear the "sermon" of Guilliermo Tosti.

Tosti's speech is truly inspirational, with just the right amount of fear invoked at the beginning, then quickly offset by religious rhetoric and promised salvation for those who would put their faith in Krienta. The crowd cheer his every word. There is no way anyone could get to Tosti now. Not the true Church of Baimiopia's priests who try to break up the sermon at the mention Krienta's holy name, nor the cabalists who realise Tosti is a wanted renegade of the Cabal, late of Ossard.

No one can stop him.

Tosti has no such trouble moving through the crowd though, quickly clearing an area of the Square with a dramatic wave of his hand. With the aid of two acolytes Tosti magically tears open a section of the Square's cobble-stoned ground. An underground passage can be seen through the yawning hole, but nothing more. Then, before anyone can act, Tosti calls on Krienta, and calmly casts a magical firestorm into the Undercity.

The crowd both cheers and falls back in fright as the spell is cast, totally unaware of the consequences of what Tosti has just done. A couple of seconds later however, the cheers stop as the first low rumble reaches the Square. Cheers soon turn to screams as the ground literally moves beneath their feet. Suddenly, a huge gout of flame shoots into the air from the direction of the Pit, and horrific screams can be heard. Similar explosions



occur all over the city, moving outwards from Cathedral Square. Slowly, but surely, Vangre begins to burn.

Guilliermo Tosti dies at the hands of his own followers, thrown screaming into the flaming pit of his own creation. His followers fair no better, however, as they are quickly and brutally stoned, beaten or hacked to death by an incensed and unforgiving citizenry.

The fire spreads quickly throughout the city during the day, and the night is a hideous world of gagging smoke and a sky that glows red...

How the players might get involved - there is no way the players cannot get involved in this adventure hook, as all of Vangre is affected by the fires. The players will have their hands full just trying to stay alive while the fires are brought under control, but some more substantial encounters are also possible: **Fire-fighting** - the fires have to be put out by someone, and the players could always do their bit. Large-scale magical fire-fighting techniques will not come into play until the night following the 24th day of the siege, as many cabalists remain occupied with fighting the ogres (see *Ogre, Ogre* below), so conventional methods will have to suffice. This means buckets and other devices (manned pumps from the Sarmona river etc) must be used to try and combat the spreading fire.

Many buildings within Vangre are chiefly made of stone, so some areas of the city will succumb far more slowly than others but even these are in peril as tunnel collapses in the Undercity destabilise foundations. The areas most affected by the fires are the slum quarters and their adjoining residential areas, the Pit, and the warehouse and dock areas. The fire is far worse in the western half of Vangre, as the close proximity of the oil works adds enormous amounts of fuel (including byproduct gases) to the blaze.

Perhaps even more mysterious, however, is the fact that Aimon-Ro, the elvish quarter, also bursts into flame, even though no major fires come close to the enclave. Perhaps the Flets finally had their revenge after all... (see issue 16).

Rescues - the fire adds a whole new element to the siege, one the players might already be familiar with - thousands of refugees. By the morning of day 24 of the siege, much of the western half of Vangre is on fire. Many citizens perish in the initial explosions, but many thousands more survive and have to be taken to safety. In addition to the perils of the fire, at least until the night of day 24, ogres also remain a considerable

problem for the citizens of Vangre, so large scale evacuations of the western side cannot be undertaken by using the three bridges. The tunnels in the Undercity are also impassable, if not because of fire, certainly because of flooding after the collapse of the tunnels under the Sarmona. The best remaining option is to evacuate by ship, and Vangre's considerable fleet of merchant and naval ships are quickly commandeered.

The first objective for any sea-borne rescue is the liberation of the Vangre Naval Port, the perfect site for a massed evacuation (the burning oil works

and the main ogre forces making other sites impractical), but still currently held by ogre units. Players can be part of one of the units that land at either the Heletiano Docks (a chance to recover any booty that may still be held in one of Heletiano's warehouses), or Paramon's Keep. The ogres will put up a strong fight to retain the Naval Port, but their numbers are thinned out by the fires.

Once the Naval Port has been recaptured, evacuations begin in earnest. Wealth means nothing to fire, however, and those of the Unchino Circle find themselves just as threatened by the flames as those of their less affluent neighbours. Enterprising players can expect to be offered numerous certain commissions to retrieve that "special little item" for some of the wealthier evacuees. These missions have their own inherent risks of course, with rampaging fires, panic stricken citizens, looting cut-throats and stray ogre units all to be contended with.

Reganto Heletiano stands to lose much of his personal wealth to the fire, as many of his ships and nearly all of his warehouses are found directly next to the worst of the conflagration. The players might therefore be given specific salvage missions to undertake while on the western side of the Sarmona, perhaps being asked to bring as many of the Reganto's ships across the river as the players can save. Of course, any cargo that could also be saved by the players would certainly be a bonus. The players will have to make quite a few difficult decisions, especially when it comes to finding a balance between risk and potential profit. But what a tavern tale would be told of the adventurers who brought a burning ship, swarming with ogres and laden with cargo, safely across the Sarmona...

6. Ogre, Ogre - while the fire does become the greatest threat to Vangre's existence, the ogres still remain in force within the city until the evening of day 24. The ogres initially suffer quite considerable losses as the result of Guillermo Tosti's fire-storm, as many ogre units were still within the Undercity. Even so, some 4,000 ogres still remain alive within the western half of Vangre by dusk on day 23 of the siege (some 6 hours after the initial firestorm), and are quick to use the fire to their own advantage, making one last effort to take the city.

The majority of the fighting is concentrated at the bridges crossing the Sarmona River, as the flaming conflagration going on in the Undercity now makes all subterranean thoroughfares impassable. Large units of ogres remain in control of the Naval Port and the north-west gatehouse, and continue to harass those militia units stationed in Paramon's Keep. Once the Naval Port is recaptured, and hence the garrison at Paramon's Keep is relieved, the remaining ogres fall back to defensive positions near the three bridges.

The fighting around the bridges is perhaps the most fierce of the entire campaign, with no quarter expected or given by either side. The western half of Vangre is now completely aflame, and the ogres wish a similar fate for those areas that remain relatively untouched in Vangre's eastern quarter. Wave after wave of ogre warriors attack the bridges in a seemingly unerring blood frenzy.

While many tales will be told of the siege of Vangre, none will attract more popular appeal than those told of the stand at Sarmona's Tower. Here the six remaining Des Sankta Glavos Knights make their last stand, finally overwhelmed before reinforcements push back the temporarily victorious ogres. Here too fall many others - militia soldier and mercenary, armed citizen and cabalist. If the players are directly involved in the fighting for the defence of the bridges, it is possible that their names will also go down in Vangre history, immortalised as 'Heroes of the Bridges'.

From the early evening of day 24 of the siege, the ogres begin to withdraw from Vangre. Their losses have been very heavy, but they are pleased with the devastation they have caused. As they withdraw, the ogres take as much loot and booty as they can carry, the Unchino Circle having turned out to be particularly profitable (which in itself may provide an excellent follow-up adventure hook, as the players are tasked with recovering an important stolen item). By dawn the following day, the ogres are already more than twenty miles away, heading back north to their mountain strongholds.

7. Aftermath - The last few fires are extinguished on the morning of day 25 of the siege, and Vangre's tired citizens finally allow themselves a few brief hours of rest before the slow task of rebuilding can begin. It will be a monumental task.

Nearly the entire western half of Vangre is completely gutted, with only Paramon's Keep, the Naval Port and the High Chapel remaining untouched by the fire. Some areas of the eastern half of Vangre have also been severely damaged or destroyed by the many explosions that erupted from the Undercity. The Pit was devastated, and many of Vangre's thieves and thugs went up with it. Kamora's Residence also toppled from its rickety perch into the flames of the Pit, and of Kamora there has been no sign, although many doubt he would allow himself so ignoble an end.

Much of Aimon-Ro was also destroyed by fire, in somewhat suspicious circumstances, and many serious accusations have already been made by those few elves who managed to survive. It will not be long before such allegations lead to bloodshed.

The majority of the rest of the fire damage in the eastern half of the city occurred in residential areas where some houses had their own access to the Undercity - cultists and their ilk - and these scattered fires were easily contained.

Of an estimated Vangre population of 160,000 (residents plus 40-50,000 refugees from the outlying towns and villages), over 40,000 were killed, most falling victim to the fire. Some losses were especially significant, with all of the Des Sankta Glavos Knights stationed at Vangre killed during the conflict, and (according to rumour) almost half of the Vangre Cabal met a similar fate.

A deeper effect of the ogre invasion is the ravages to the local countryside. Ogre foraging has severely depleted winter stores of foods in the region. Worse still, seed grains and tubers set by for next year's planting were also taken or spoiled by ogre raiding parties. Famine is a serious threat.

There are some positive results from the siege, however. Much of Vangre's merchant and naval fleet was saved from the fire, even if many of the warehouses that line the Sarmona River and Nolanta Bay were destroyed. Even with the effects of the siege and the resulting fire therefore, Vangre will soon enough resume its position as one of the key trading cities in the Heletian League. Import tariffs and docking fees will rise over the coming months to cover some of the costs associated with rebuilding, but these will do nothing to hinder the many thousands of ships that will soon be flocking to Vangre with urgently needed food, supplies and building materials (the price of such goods will be highly inflated over the coming year). It is highly likely that some men and women will turn quite a tidy profit from Vangre's misfortune.

One thing is certain about the siege however - the ogres probably fared much worse than the citizens of Vangre; of the 21,000 ogres estimated to have besieged the city, it is believed that less than 3,000 survived and made their way back to their homelands in the Darner mountains.

How the players can get involved - these final few adventure hooks and rumours are provided both as a denouement to the actual siege of Vangre, and as a possible springboard to further adventures:

1. Which Way Did They Go? - volunteers are called for a scouting mission and the players may wish to offer their services. The mission is a simple one - have the ogres really left, or are they just regrouping for another attack? This adventure hook is best placed on day 25 of the siege, or up to a couple of days after this, as scouts are required to determine if it is safe to return to the many outlying towns and villages. Once it has been confirmed that the ogres have well and truly gone, then the villagers can return to what is left of their homes.

While it is not suggested that the players encounter the retreating ogre army, they may run into small groups of drunken (too much consumption of ill-gotten gains) or wounded ogres, perhaps hiding in one of the outlying villages and still keen for a fight (combat fans), or even willing to negotiate for their freedom (for roleplayers).

There is also the opportunity for players who are sick of the big city life to move to a more rural atmosphere. Many of the small villages and towns found to the north of Vangre were destroyed by the advancing ogre army, and will also need to be rebuilt. Perhaps the players might like to work on a smaller scale, helping a town or village to rebuild itself, eventually becoming important citizens presenting all sorts of future plot hooks.

2. Looters - looting was not just the privilege of the ogres, and will continue to be a problem in the days immediately following the end of the siege. All citizens who are caught looting may be executed on sight by authority of the Vangre Senate. There are two ways in which the players can get involved in this particular adventure hook.

If the players have performed admirably during the siege, serving Vangre's better interests, then they may be given positions as official deputies, and

one of their tasks may be to ensure that no large scale looting occurs, especially in the damaged warehouse districts.

If the players are of a more self-serving outlook, then they could take positions on the other side of the fence. They may try to liberate a few choice items from houses in the Unchino Circle, or explore the secrets of Aimon-Ro (a very dangerous task), or try to find the body of Kamora the Cabalist (just to make sure none of his enchanted devices were stolen, of course).

3. The Undercity - the Undercity is a shambles. Nearly every tunnel was affected by the firestorm, collapses and flooding. This means a lot of secrets and individuals lay under 30 to 40 feet of water, ash, and rubble just waiting for some enterprising individuals to recover them. And what happened to the necromancer, Pietro Carra? (see Australian Realms issues 12 & 23).

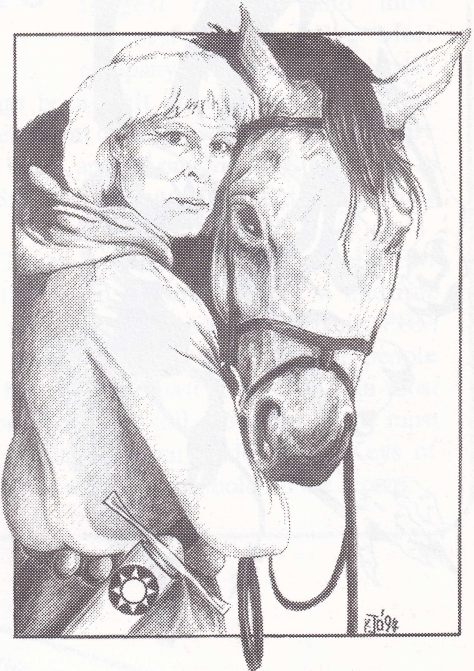
4. Employer/Employee Relations - Vincenzo Heletiano, possibly the players' direct employer for much of this adventure, has suffered considerable personal loss as a result of the siege. While many of his ships survived the fire, and he may be able to trade his way out of his current situation, his warehouses were nearly all destroyed, removing most of his negotiating capital. Removed from his position as Reganto, he will find he is just another merchant, still a member of the Senate, but otherwise without much political or influential clout. This is where players who enjoy political intrigue, spying, dirty tricks and one-upmanship will come into their own as they can aid Vincenzo Heletiano's attempts to remain a powerful figure in Vangre.

And as for Pietro Heletiano, Vincenzo's son, keep reading Realms for exciting developments.

5. He Who Laughs Last - several weeks after the siege of Vangre, a large elvish trader appears in port, docking at the ruins of Aimon-Ro. Work

begins on rebuilding the elvish enclave, much to the chagrin of the nearby Flet quarter. Over the coming days, Flets begin to disappear in mysterious circumstances, and tales are soon told in the dock-side taverns of furtive, black figures being seen at night in the alleys and streets near Aimon-Ro.

6. New Knights - three weeks after the siege of Vangre has been lifted, a contingent (20 in total) of Des Sankta Glavos Knights ride into town, to re-garrison Paramon's Keep. What is perhaps more disturbing about their arrival though is the fact that the Knights are also accompanied by five Inquisitors. The wide-spread use of cabalist magic during the siege has not gone unnoticed by the Church of Baimiopia, and regardless of the heroic part the cabalists may have played in saving the city, any player cabalist will have to be very careful he/she isn't selected by the visiting inquisitors for an "explanatory interview".



KEYS TO THE CITY?

And what of the players, and the part they played in the siege of Vangre? Were they heroes, living to be immortalised in verse and song, throwing themselves into every challenge with reckless abandon? Or did they just look out for themselves, avoiding each conflict by the skin of their teeth, making no friends but liberating plenty of booty? If the players were heroes then let them reap the rewards of their efforts. Considering the number of situations that they were thrown into (and survived, we assume), they probably deserve everything they have managed to salvage from their encounters. In Vangre the players should never have to look for accommodation or a seat in a tavern again. They may even be offered positions of authority within the city (vacancies are many) and then they'll be able to see how dirty the fighting can really get!

If the players have maintained a relatively low profile throughout the siege, then they may stand to

profit from many of the suggested follow-up adventures. Vangre remains one of Unae's most fascinating cities, just perfect for a group of players willing to take the chances required by the hunt for ample reward.

In either case, your players should have had lots of fun participating in the siege of Vangre. Please let us know your "Tales of Vangre", and what you thought of this mini-campaign. We'd love to hear from you.

Don't forget to send in the name and class/career of your character(s) who heroically helped defend Vangre so that we can add them to the Vangre Honour Roll. These characters will be printed in a future issue and many of them will be given places as famed NPCs in Unae. So send your details to us by 6th October 1995. Mail to: Vangre Honour Roll, PO Box 220, Morley, Western Australia 6943. Email: nicklean@perth.dialix.oz.au.

Reganto Vincenzo Heletiano stood on the steps of Vangre Cathedral, surveying the black ruin that was the western half of Vangre. He could see right across the river from this point, to where his docks and warehouses had once stood, before the fire that had consumed everything.

He was approached by a group of six men, all of whom he recognised. They, like him, were merchants by trade, and fellow members of Vangre's ruling council, the Senate. As they approached, Vincenzo wondered if the other fourteen members of the Senate has survived the siege.

Arnudo Breggi, the Wine Merchant, spoke for the group.

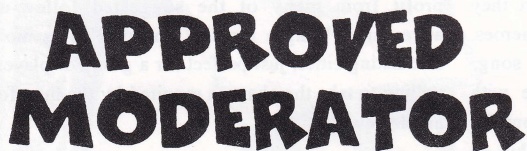
"I have to inform you that we have just held an emergency meeting of the Senate. Your handling of the siege of our city was judged to have been incompetent. We have taken a vote, and have removed you from the position of Reganto. Please move your possessions from the official residence by the end of this week as our new Reganto, Jeunet Pisani will be ready to take up residence."

Heletiano smiled. "Thank you for your overwhelming show of gratitude" he said, with an almost vicious note of sincerity in his voice. "I am aware that Vangre needs a scapegoat at this time, and accept your terms. It was not unexpected."

As the six Senate members made their way back across the square, avoiding Tosti's gaping pit, Heletiano thoughts turned to the future.

"Hurry home, Pietro, my son" he said aloud, "The future of House Heletiano rests on your shoulders..."

It is 515 EK, and winter has begun in earnest. ☉



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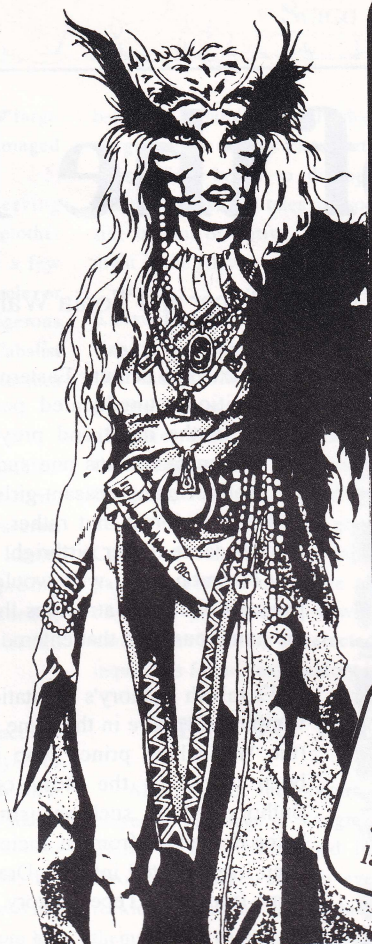
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Women of the Night

Written and Illustrated by Louise Pieper and Tonia Walden



Elizabeth Bathory (1560-1614)

"On one occasion, a lady's maid saw something wrong in her headdress and as a recompense for observing it, received such a box on the ears that blood flowed from her nose and spurted on to her mistress's face; when the blood drops were washed off her face, her skin appeared much more beautiful."

- Baring Gould, The Book of the Werewolf

In sixteenth century Eastern Europe it was not uncommon for the superstitious, uneducated peasants to believe in creatures that lurked in the night and preyed on them for their blood. In the Carpathian mountains one such monster did exist and she caused the death of many peasant girls. However this was no beast that hid in the dark forest, but rather one of the Transylvanian aristocrats who, because of her birthright and beauty, was sure she was above any common laws; who would listen to the terrified stories of the peasants about the atrocities that were carried out in her castle, and the numerous girls that entered there never to be seen again?

Elizabeth Bathory's reputation has become linked to the body of vampiric literature in the same way that her countryman Vlad Tepes (the Wallachian prince who impaled his victims on stakes) has been linked to the story of Dracula. Elements of Elizabeth Bathory's story, such as using blood to preserve her youth and being descended from an ancient noble Hungarian family, may have been incorporated into the Dracula story as these elements did not come from Vlad Tepes history.

Elizabeth was born at her family estates in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains in Hungary in 1560. The Bathory family was powerful, with its members holding high positions in both the government and the church. Elizabeth's uncle was king of Poland and her cousin was the king of Transylvania. The family owned large estates with numerous castles and villages. The Bathory line, as with many other noble families where intermarriage was rife, was tainted with scandal due to the decadence and the madness, epilepsy and other psychological disturbances that seemed to run in the family. Indeed, her uncle considered himself a warlock and may have introduced her to the black arts, and her sadistic aunt also involved herself with Elizabeth's upbringing.

Elizabeth was only eleven when she was promised in marriage to Count Ferencz Nadasky and they were married when she was fifteen. It is a measure of how powerful her family was that she retained the name Bathory and her husband adopted it. Although they owned sixteen fortresses between them, they moved to an isolated castle in Csejthe which was located on a barren mountain in Hungary.

Her husband busied himself with the war against the Turks - he became a war hero and was known as the "Black Knight". This meant he was often absent from home while Elizabeth stayed in the castle surrounded by servants. She was bored and spent many hours obsessively maintaining her appearance. Supporting her head with her arms, she would gaze into her mirror for over two hours at a stretch, occasionally making incantations into the mirror. She took on the task of managing the castle and this included disciplining the servants. She was a severe mistress and would punish the servants for any minor transgressions and this developed into another of her passions - she amused herself by inflicting frequent punishments until they became outright torture. At the time the nobility considered torture and punishment an effective means of dealing with trouble makers or captives of war. The peasants were regarded as chattels and effectively had no rights and no one but the victims would have worried that Elizabeth's punishments were more vigorous than most.

Character Profile

In her youth Elizabeth was extremely beautiful with long raven hair. Although she displayed affection for her family she was a compulsive sadist and to her victims she was inhumanly cruel. She enjoyed inflicting pain and suffering, probably because she was insanely jealous of the youth of her victims. She was very well educated and could speak a number of languages and knew how to read and write. Arrogant and proud due to her birthright, she is capable of maintaining a facade of respectability and charm to trap the unwary.

She had a daughter and three sons, but this did not soften her attitude to her serving girls. Her reputation as being a witch had started to spread among the townsfolk and she hired two old women Helena Jo and Dorka whose duties included helping her with administering the cruel punishments.

In 1604 her husband died and Elizabeth realised she had complete freedom. She sent her children away and devoted herself to debauchery and witchcraft. It was at about the same time she hired Anna Darvulia who was said to have encouraged Elizabeth's bloodletting and taught her new forms of torture. One day while out riding, Elizabeth taunted an old woman for her ugliness. The old woman answered: "Mock me if you will mistress of Csejthe, but one day you will be as I am now". This horrified Elizabeth, whose vanity hid her great fear of growing old. She became obsessed with finding a way to halt the aging process. It was said that one day she struck a servant girl who had pulled her hair too hard, while brushing it. The blow drew blood and fell on the Countess' skin. She was convinced where the blood had fallen made her skin appear younger and thought she had discovered the secret of eternal life - the blood of young girls. She consulted Anna Darvulia who agreed that bathing in the blood of girls would keep her eternally young.

She was helped by three servants who went out to remote villages in search of girls, with the promise they would be given paid employment at the castle. Stories of what happened at Csejthe had spread among the townsfolk making it difficult to find willing girls to enter Elizabeth's employ. She increased the number of servants sent out to find girls who often took them by force or bribes. Eventually Elizabeth went to seek the advice of a witch who suggested that the blood of young noblewomen would be "purer" than that of common peasant girls. To keep their mistress happy the servants dressed peasant girls as noblewomen, but Elizabeth herself lured the daughters of nobles to her home with the promise of tuition in the social graces. The news of Elizabeth's behaviour had not reached her social circles and they were pleased to send twenty-five young baronesses and countesses for her to teach. This was Elizabeth's undoing as the disappearance of the aristocrats brought her crimes to the attention of the authorities. No-one paid a lot of attention to the disappearance of the peasants, but under Hungarian law killing a noblewoman was punishable by death.

The King ordered an investigation and it would be nice to suggest that it was because of a sense of outrage and righteous justice - but his actions against Elizabeth had a political motive. If Elizabeth was found guilty of murder and witchcraft, she would be executed and her estates would be confiscated by the Crown. The Bathory family wanted to keep her estates and they quickly sent Prime Minister, Gyory Thurzo, who was a cousin of Elizabeth's, to apprehend her so they could stage a trial themselves and stop the estates being confiscated. Thurzo led troops to Elizabeth's home and they broke into the dungeons and were horrified by the stench

of death. They discovered seven young noblewomen who were still alive in the dungeons. Elizabeth was down there too, covered in blood, and she commanded them to leave still imagining she was above the law. Her crimes were worse than Thurzo had feared - they found a book in which Elizabeth had kept notes on her victims and it contained over 650 names, though this number may have been exaggerated at the trial. They arrested Elizabeth and her retainers. The servants who had helped her were executed, but Elizabeth's trial was kept secret to avoid scandal to the Bathory and Nadasy families. She was accused of numerous counts of murder; the disturbing testimony of her servants explaining her methods of torture, and the fact that she liked to bite human flesh, led to accusations of werewolfism. Ordered to be confined for the rest of her life in a tower in her castle, Elizabeth was bricked up in her bedroom with only a small slit for food and water to be passed in.

She lived imprisoned in this way for four years before she died. The scandal was kept hushed up and the King forbade people to speak her name in polite society. This did not stop the stories of the peasants who did not really believe that she was gone, as they were convinced she was both a vampire and a witch.

Plot Hooks

Storytelling with Elizabeth

Elizabeth could be used with White Wolf's Storyteller system where she may be an NPC Malkavian Elder - extremely dangerous and unpredictable. Her insanity is her obsession with regaining her youth and she will be absolutely ruthless at getting her way. Her actual physical appearance would depend on how old she was when she was embraced. Even if she had been embraced in her youth she is still convinced her beauty is fading. This could lead to her being involved with the Sabbat flesh shapers or the Tremere magicians searching for the secret of eternal beauty. The irony is that as a Vampire she has already found it.

Bloodbath At Csejthe Castle

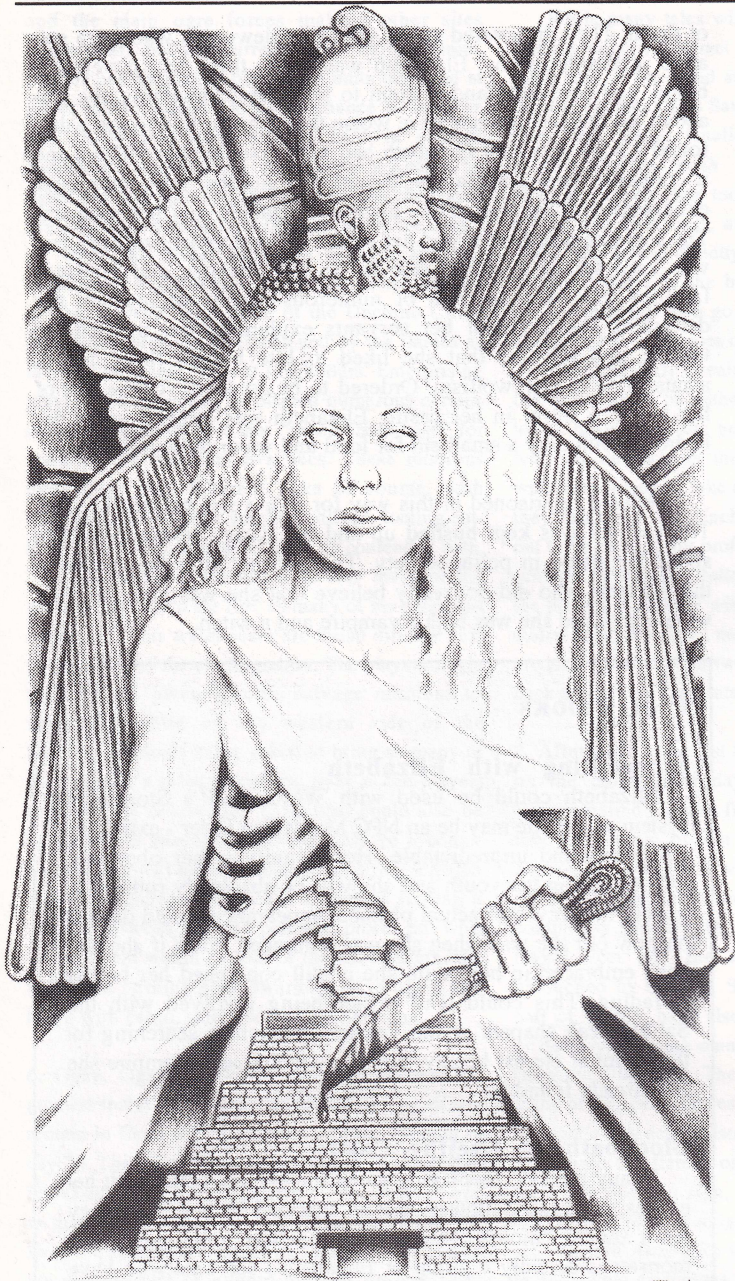
In any fantasy roleplaying game the players could visit her estates, meet the Countess, and be charmed by her. Then they learn that a "monster" has been stealing local girls. The monster is actually a group of Elizabeth's servants who have been procuring victims for their mistress. Through confused local gossip and some help from the local village priest and the families of the victims, the party could come to the conclusion that the "monster" originates from the castle and slowly unravel the horrible truth. Elizabeth's entourage at the castle will attempt to prevent any "storming of the castle" by the characters and will fight to protect their mistress.

A Haunting Beauty

In any traditional horror or fantasy campaign Elizabeth could be used as a vampire who is bricked into her prison eternally. The players visit or acquire her castle. Terrible tales emerge of the "forbidden tower", and eventually the players are drawn to explore it. Opening her prison they find Elizabeth is not a pretty sight, she is completely demented and **starving!**

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Lilith, Queen of the Night

*Her sweet tongue could deceive
And her enchanted hair the first gold
And still she sits, young while the earth is old
And subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave
Till heart and body and life are in its hold*
- Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Body's Beauty*

Lilith, the Queen of the Night, is the original femme fatale, a being whose existence depends on draining the life from men; the seductress and slayer - *la-belle dame sans merci*.

Lilith's story is a very ancient one and she underwent a number of transformations in mythology before she became the blood-sucking lamia of Jewish religion. The Sumerian and Akkadian civilisations existed in 3000 BC along the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Mesopotamia. One of the most powerful Sumerian goddesses was Inanna, The Lady of Heaven, who represented womanhood and was credited with influencing peoples'

fortunes. She was worshipped for 2000 years but over this period of time her worship became merged with the Akkadian goddess Ishtar, the personification of the planet Venus "the goddess of the morn and the goddess of the evening". Ishtar was a goddess of many different personalities and she seemed violent and intolerant compared to Inanna. She was the mother goddess of fertility, motherhood, and sex; she was said to be the "courtesan of the gods" and her priestesses were sacred prostitutes. She was also a goddess of war and would take on a terrifying aspect when she went into battle. One of her more malevolent aspects was known as Lilith - in this she appeared naked and winged with bird's talons. She was credited with the powers of divination, incubation and interpretation of dreams. She was beautiful, terrible, and could tenderly heal a man or turn rivers to blood.

One of the most interesting tales about Inanna was the story of her descent into the underworld and it stands as one of the oldest myths of journeys of souls from the land of the living to the lands of the dead. It is said Inanna/Ishtar once went to the realms of the dead to battle with her sister Ereshkigal the mistress of the underworld. As she went through the seven gates of the underworld each gatekeeper required an item of her clothing before she could pass that gate. Naked, she had no protection against the death glance of her sister and she became a corpse. She was helped by another of the gods and was returned to life and accompanied back to the world by evil ghouls or demons who "knew not food, knew not water". She had to provide a substitute for her release from the underworld and sent back her consort, who to her chagrin was enjoying himself and not mourning her death.

The erotic aspect of the goddess and her cults associated with sacred prostitution incurred the wrath of the Old Testament prophets. In their doctrine they changed Lilith from a goddess of the storm to the night demon of Jewish mythology. According to Jewish legends Adam had a wife before Eve, whose name was Lilith, who was created in the same way as him from the soil. But she quarrelled with Adam and fled from Paradise into the airy void. Three angels pursued and overtook her and ordered her to return but she refused. She hates the children of Eve and tries to destroy them, especially newborn infants who she seeks to kill or feed off their blood. She endangers women in childbirth and seduces sleeping men so she might breed more demons who accompany her in her night flights. She is the first of the vampires, the Queen of the Night, the image of women as temptress and destroyer. In some versions of her legend, she is an unearthly beauty with her only physical flaw being her legs which are covered in coarse hair, of which she is quite ashamed and keeps covered.

To guard against her it was appropriate for young men to hang the following script on their bedroom door or wall: "Adam and Eve may enter herein, but not Lilith the Queen".

Character Profile

Lilith can be accused of many things, but lacking beauty is not one of them. She appears as the epitome of every man's desires, and she uses this 'sex appeal' to seduce her victims. Lilith is very adaptable and extremely resilient; she has survived many attempts by mortals and immortals to destroy her over her thousands of years of existence. She makes a terrible enemy. Although characterised as uncompromisingly evil, some GM's might approach Lilith from the angle that she was a matriachal goddess of nurture who has been tragically transformed into the symbol of Everyman's misogynic fears by a patriachal church.

Plot Hooks

The Queen of the Night

Lilith could be used in any fantasy or horror campaign as a demonic adversary, as she is the original succubi, or she could be the goddess of a diabolical cult. Another protection against Lilith was thought to be an amulet bearing the names of the three angels who chased her. If the party are intent on combating Lilith, they may first have to retrieve this amulet.

Antediluvian Evil

It is possible to personify Lilith as the character of an ancient immortal - perhaps a vampire. Here, one of the ancients discovers Sumer and the cult of Inanna the mother goddess. She is intrigued by the story of Inanna's resurrection from the dead, so similar to her own rebirth. Sick of wandering, she decides to make the cult her own. She manipulates the priestesses and allows her decadent tastes to corrupt the religion into one which pleases the baser human desires from which she has become so divorced. Her religion of self believes in gratification both of sexual desires and the lust for blood in battle. She also realises that her people still need the comfort and strength of a mother goddess and she gives them this too. She would rise at the evening and retire at sunset, which she attributes to the appearance of the planet Venus in the sky at night and its disappearance in the morning. To her followers there is no one more beautiful or wise and they build ziggurats and temples in her honour.

But change is inevitable and to the followers of the Old Testament the ways of the old gods are blasphemy. The cult of Istar is especially loathed for its worship of war and sex. When the civilisation collapses, the ancient one is lucky to escape with her life. Her temple is raided during the daylight when she is weakest and the faith of her attackers burns her body and mind. They are successful in exorcising "the demon" and she, much weakened, is forced to take to wandering again. Now she waylays unsuspecting travellers and feeds from them; stories of a beautiful but deadly traveller of the night begin to frighten the people of the area. The priests denounce her as the evil demon Lilith who sucks the life from men and kills innocent babies. This ancient vampire on whom the legends are based still exists today, fully recovered from the ancient battle and she is an NPC the characters could encounter either briefly, or perhaps she's manipulating events that have started to involve the party. She should be presented as an enigmatic, disturbing character who is only known through half-truths, rumours and superstition.

Redefining the Myth

The real villains are the church elders who have twisted the mythic truth behind Lilith's legend. The players discover ancient texts, stellae, wall murals or tablets that depict an older, more benevolent version of Lilith. Then they are challenged with setting the record straight. Many vested interests will resist these revelations, some will resort to violence or worse!

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SIXTY CARDS

MORE HINTS & TIPS FOR MAGIC: THE GATHERING

by Len Henderson

Okey dokey, here we go again with another fun-filled action packed article on our favourite game: *Magic the Gathering*, with your friendly neighbourhood Planeswalker.

By the way, I tried a game of *Illuminati* the other day at SwanCon. I actually enjoyed it. If you get a chance, have a game. It's a much better multiplayer game than Magic. Talking about multiplayer games, do you always seem to have those multiplayer games where everyone picks on one person, or are you the one player who's deck is too powerful for words, so everyone picks on you? If so the first section of this article is for you as it deals with multiplayer games and how to even them up.

MULTIPLAYER MAGIC

I was lucky when I started to play *Magic the Gathering*, as I had a mentor who gave me tonnes of cards (Legends, Antiquities, Unlimited, Arabian nights, etc.) and some great advice on how to play, and all of this was free. Nice guy by the name of Chris. Everything you see in these articles is partly thanks to his teaching. Anyway, I've been fortunate in not having to spend X² dollars (where X = your weekly earnings) to really set up myself as a power player of the game. And so, I get picked on in multiplayer games, and it really annoys me. So, how do you even things up?

Alrighty, some good tips on multiplayer games can be found in the *Player's Guide*, and forgive me if I repeat one or two that I have found are really fun. Here's some good multiplayer variations:

EMPEROR: is my favourite variation. Trouble is you have to get 6 players together, but you know who is going to be picked on to begin with, and they get a bonus to begin with. Full instructions to follow.

ATTACK LEFT: (or right), in this variation, creatures and creature effects may only attack left. You may want to put a range rule in this system (see below). This system makes it like a single player game in that you only have to attack one person, and you only have to worry about a single player's creatures.

THE RANGE RULE: in this system (commonly used with Attack Left) all spells are deemed to have a range of X (commonly 1 or 2). This means cards like Pestilence, Fireballs, Black Vices etc. only effect players within X positions away from the person who played the card in either directions. So if the range is set at 2, in a six player game, and you were player 1, you could target players 2,3,6,5. Okay, so this is not all that great, but in say a 12 player game (Hey, I've been in a game with 34 people) a range of 2 makes the game a lot more interesting. This rule is often used with an attack left system, where creatures have a range of X as well.

SENGIR WIZARD: this is something I made up. If a player is the first to die, in every consecutive game, he gains 10 more life, so it is more difficult to kill him. This rule works best in games of more than say four people.

BURLY WIZARDS: I'm sure everyone has heard of this one. To toughen up your wizards start the game with additional life. This is done in order to give 'slow' decks more time to develop and the chance to play complex combinations. Thus each player might start with say 30 life.

COLOUR GAMES: this is a more advanced multiplayer option where each of the five players selects one colour of magic each (only one to a colour please), and are seated around a table in the order shown on the back of the Magic card ie. in clockwise order white, blue, black, red, green. In this system, you must play only the colour you have selected plus artifacts. Normally in this game you don't play colour specific cards such as Karma or Volcanic Eruption. Stuff like Conversion and Circle Of Protection are probably out too. Ask for your opponents' consent if you want to play any colour specific cards. You may only attack the two colours opposite yours with spells and or creatures. Opponents are only the two opposite you. For instance, white may only attack the red and black players with spells, effects and creatures. Red may only attack white and blue. The winner is the one who's enemies die off first. This means if I'm playing red, and black kills off white and green kills off blue, I win (heh! heh!). There is an 'advanced' version of this game which I will describe shortly.

EMPEROR

There are six people required in a game of Emperor. There are two teams of three players each. Each team requires an Emperor and two Generals. The whole idea of the game is to kill the opposing team's Emperor. Normally in this game, you sit at a rectangular table, each team facing the other, with the Emperors in the centre of their side. Each Emperor starts off with 30 life and the Generals have 20. Spells have a range of 2, so that there is one person on the table you cannot attack at until someone dies, ie. the Emperors cannot attack each other at the start of the game.

Creatures have a range of 1 and they can be moved between players of one team. Thus I could not pass my Black Vice to one of my Generals so that it would effect my opponent's Emperor. To move, creatures tap. For example, say I am Emperor of my team, and I summon a Grizzly Bear. Since I cannot tap any creature (with the exception of Nether Shadow and Ball Lightning) in the round it is summoned, I cannot move it until next round. Next round, I tap it to move it in front of one of my Generals. It still untaps in my turn. In all ways it is still my creature. I decide how it blocks, if it uses a special ability etc. It is only my mana that can power any of my creature enchantments that I cast on it.

A quick note here: did you know that if you cast a creature enchantment like Firebreathing on an opponent's Scryb Sprites, YOU are the only one who can power up that enchantment, not the person who controls the creature. Similarly, for things like Geas Liege, for instance, if I summoned it and moved it to one of my General's play areas, it's strength is still governed by the number of forests that I control.

When playing this variant of magic, you may want to get together with your team mates, and plan what type of decks you will play. I have found the team works well if the Generals play creature intensive decks with life giving spells in support while the Emperor plays with countering and destructive spells. For this reason, Emperors work best if they play white/blue/red while generals tend to play green/red/black/artifact.

ADVANCED COLOUR MAGIC

Five people are required in this form of Magic. Each person again selects a colour, but they also get the two colours nearest them as minors. Therefore, in their deck they may chose cards from their colours in a ratio 2:1:1 where the first number is the major colour, the second and third are the minors. If I was playing green for instance, in a sixty card deck, I would have 20 green spells, 10 white and 10 red (and of course 20 mana). Artifacts may only be put in on a one for one basis taking out minor colour cards only. In the case of mana, 10 green, 5 white and 5 red (assuming no multilands). Using this form allows more variety and tends to offset the inherent weaknesses in each colour. Other than these minor changes, the game functions exactly the same as the original form of Colour Magic.

Multiplayer games are lots of fun, and make sense if you've got a group of friends together who all want to play, swap idle chit chat and gobble from the same snack bowl. Try these and if you don't like them, modify the rules to suit your own preferences.

Now, time to take a look at deck construction again...

EAT YOUR OPPONENT

I was going to write up the deck that won the SwanCon tournament, but unfortunately the guy who won was going to write it up himself, and he had cards in it that I hadn't even heard of before, and couldn't get even if I wanted to, so I decided not to bother. Instead, we will talk about a deck I call *Eat Your Opponent*. The whole point of the Eat Your Opponent deck is to 'eat' anything the opponent brings out (no, I don't mean pick up his cards and start chewing!).

The best thing to eat your opponent's creatures is a Sengir Vampire. Unfortunately, of course, no-one in their right mind, or without an ulterior motive would attack you with a small creature when you have a Sengir Vampire out. So, to counter this, you need to stick some Nettling Imps in. Then you can tap the Nettling Imp to force a small creature to attack so that your Sengir Vampire can eat it, and get bigger. As for your opponent's hand, you want that to disappear, so chuck in some Hypnotic Spectres (a GREAT creature). And because you want to get them out in the first round, chuck in some Dark Rituals. If you lack Hypno's, chuck in Hymn To Tourach and Mind Twist. Disrupting Sceptre or Wand Of Ith might also go down well. Then, in case that scumbag across the table takes it into his head to Fireball your creatures, add in some Counterspells. Finally, just to really annoy the hell out of anyone you are playing, put in some Millstones. Sea Singers and Phantasmal Terrain also help, so that you can use your opponent's own creatures to kill him. (heh! heh!)

If you are going with the Mind Twist option (which is a restricted card, remember) other cards that you might add to make a full 60 card deck are Terror, Amnesia, or Power Sink. Most people I know call these black/blue decks 'Bruise' decks. Actually, decks like this one are often denial type decks, made to counter anything the opponent brings out, or remove all cards from his hand.

Deck Name: Eat Your Opponent

Colours: Blue/Black (Bruise colour)

Artifacts: Yes.

Expansion Sets: As required

Black:

4 Hypnotic Spectres
4 Sengir Vampires
4 Nettling Imp
4 Hymn to Tourach
(1 Mind Twist)

Blue:

4 Counterspell
4 Phantasmal Terrain
4 Seasinger

Artifacts:

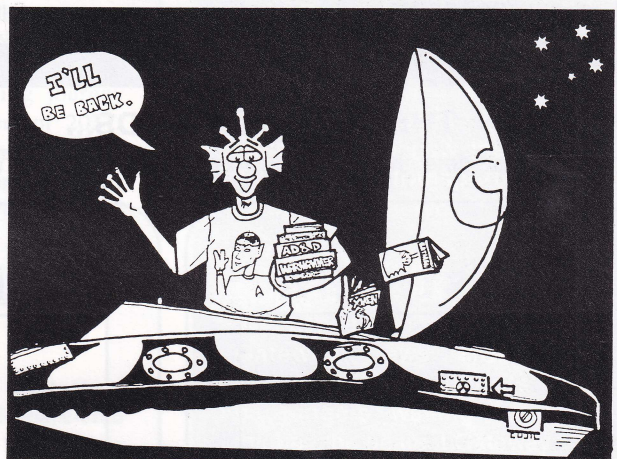
4 Wand of Ith
4 Disrupting Sceptre
4 Millstone

TWIDDLE TWADDLE

Twiddle is back! The Fourth Edition has brought back this much-feared card. Well here is a quick rule clarification for people who think that Twiddle is the best thing since sliced bread, or the worst thing since Sarin (depending on whether you are the player or target). A creature attacking is considered a fast effect, although it can only happen in the attack phase. So, if you Twiddle a creature after it was tapped to attack, the damage still takes effect, and you now have an untapped creature as well. Remember that fast effects happen at the same speed as instants. For more information on instants, please refer to my article in issue 23.

Anyway, that's it for this issue, as my editor is shouting at me for using too much room in his mag, so till next time - Chow!!!

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DESIGN-A-CARD-COMPETITION WINNERS

Nick: In Issue #1 of Card Magic we ran a competition asking readers to submit their ideas for an Australia card for the upcoming INWO expansion, ASSASSINS. Your entries were both alarming and amusing! Now over to the judges...

Steve Jackson: My thanks to everyone who submitted ideas for Australian cards. You people are sick. Really sick. I would like to shake your hands. And my thanks also to Nick at AUSTRALIAN REALMS, for getting the whole thing started and acting as Down Under organiser. This was fun.

Steve: I have returned all the entries to AUSTRALIAN REALMS and encouraged its demented management to print as many of them as they see fit [Nick: look out for some next issue]. But a couple of these Australian cards will, indeed, make it into the ASSASSINS supplement. So, without further ado, our winners:

FIRST PRIZE goes to **Glen Barnett**. He sent us a truly fiendish Disaster (No Beer), which Dan Smith is illustrating even as I write this. And this was only part of a huge batch of demented suggestions. Glen gets a complete INWO Limited Edition set, with an extra set of Limited Illuminati cards signed by the responsible parties.

SECOND PRIZE goes to **Ewan McDonnell**, for an incredibly twisted Resource - The Big Prawn. He wasn't the only one to think of Real Big Australian Animal Statues, but he was by far the funniest. He gets an INWO Factory Set, and **Dot McDonnell** (whose alarming illustration helped plant this idea firmly in our minds) gets a complete set of signed Limited Illuminati cards.

HONOURABLE MENTION goes to **Chris Irvine** and **Dan McKinlay** for suggesting that Australia's special ability might have to do with alcohol consumption. We took the idea and ran with it. They requested that if they got a prize, it be appropriately divisible. However, we thought it would be more fun to send them a complete set of the Unlimited edition and let them fight over it.

And, because the Illuminati are really in a good mood tonight, Glen, Ewan, Chris and Dan will all get healthy batches of sealed ASSASSINS packs when those come out, as well as a few examples of their own cards.

AND NOW THE ACTUAL CARDS...

Please note: these are only mock-ups, ...the words will remain the same, but the art and layout is yet to be done...

Place

Australia

"G'day, mate! Grab a coldie and I'll throw another prawn on the barbie!"
Once Australians make up their mind, it's hard to change. Especially after a few beers. Once they belong to a Power Structure, *double* their printed resistance. If it is the weekend, a national holiday in the country where you are playing, or after 5 p.m. on any day at all, double it *again*.
All Organizations you control get +4 against any attack to Destroy, because of Australia's remoteness. Australia itself gets 10 against any Attack to destroy.

3 **6**
Power Resistance
Conservative, Government Huge, Coastal Nation

No Beer

"We're out of WHAT?"
Disaster! This is an instant Attack to Destroy any Place. It does not require an action. Its power is 16 normally. Against Australia, Germany or Texas, its power is 24. Against France and Italy its Power is only 8. By spending their action, the Liquor Companies can either halve this attack's Power or double it!
If the attack succeeds, the target is *Devastated*. This attack cannot actually destroy its target.

Disaster!

Resource

The Big Prawn

"But *HOW* is it attracting the tourists? Never mind. I don't want to know."
The Big Prawn is the ultimate tourist attraction. Link it to any Coastal Place to double the Power of that place, through tourism. It cannot be stolen or moved in any way once linked; if destroyed, it cannot be rebuilt.
The Place's owner may also permanently add, subtract or remove any one alignment from the Place at the moment the Big Prawn is linked.
If the Big Prawn is destroyed, the local economy is automatically *Devastated*. If host Place is devastated or destroyed, the Big Prawn is destroyed.

Unique Gadget

ILLUMINATI NEW WORLD ORDER CHECKLIST

| RARITY KEY | NAME | RARITY | NAME | RARITY | NAME | RARITY | NAME | RARITY |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| C -- Common U -- Uncommon | Red Cross | R | RESOURCE (Group) | | Faction Fight | R | Stock Split | C |
| R -- Rare I -- Illuminati | Reformed Church of Satan | U | Angel's Feather | C | The First Thing We Do, Let's | C | Straighten Up | C |
| S -- Special | Religious Reich | C | Ark of the Covenant | R | Kill All The Lawyers | R | Sucked Dry And Cast Aside! | U |
| NAME | RARITY | | | | | | | |
| Republicans | U | Bigfoot | C | Flower Power | U | Sweeping Reforms | U | |
| Rifkinites | R | Book of Kells | U | Fnord! | C | Sweepstakes Prize | C | |
| Robot Sea Monsters | U | The Bronze Head | C | Foiled! | U | Swiss Bank Account | C | |
| Rosicrucians | C | Clipper Chip | C | Forgery | U | Talisman of Ahirmanes | C | |
| S.M.O.F. | R | Center for Weird Studies | C | Freaking The Mundanes | U | Tax Breaks | U | |
| Saturday Morning Cartoons | U | Crystal Skull | R | Full Moon | U | Terrorist Nuke | C | |
| Savings and Loans | R | Cyborg Soldiers | R | Fundie Money | C | Time Warp | R | |
| Science Fiction Fans | C | Death Mask | U | Gang War | U | Unlucky 13 | R | |
| Secret Service | R | Earthquake Projector | C | George the Janitor | C | Unmasked! | R | |
| Secular Humanists | U | Eliza | U | Good Polls | C | Upheaval! | C | |
| Semiconscious Liberation Army | C | Flying Saucer | C | Grassroots Support | C | Volunteer Aid | C | |
| Society for Creative Anarchism | C | The Frog God | C | Gremilins | R | Voodoo Economics | C | |
| South American Nazis | R | Hallucinations | C | Harmonica Virgins | C | Vultures | C | |
| Subliminals | R | Hammer of Thor | C | Hat Trick | C | The Weak Link | R | |
| Supreme Court | R | Hidden City | U | Head In A Jar | U | The Weird Turn Pro | C | |
| Survivalists | C | Hitler's Brain | R | Hex | R | Whispering Campaign | C | |
| Tabloids | U | The Holy Grail | R | Hidden Influence | R | World Cup Victory | R | |
| Telephone Psychics | C | Immortality Serum | R | Hoax! | U | | | |
| Templars | C | The Library at Alexandria | U | I Lied | U | GOAL (Plot cards) | | |
| Tobacco Companies | C | Loch Ness Monster | C | Impostor | C | Criminal Overlords | U | |
| Trading Card Games | C | Mercenaries | C | Infobahn | C | Fratricide | C | |
| Trekkies | C | Midas Mill | C | Interference | C | Hail Eris! | C | |
| Trilateral Commission | R | Necronomicon | U | The Internet Worm | U | Kill For Peace! | R | |
| TV Preachers | C | Orbital Mind Control Lasers | C | Jake Day | C | Let Them Eat Cake! | U | |
| Underground Newspapers | R | Perpetual Motion Machine | R | Jihad | C | Power For Its Own Sake | R | |
| United Nations | C | Principia Discordia | C | Just Say No | C | Power To The People | U | |
| Urban Gangs | C | Rogue Boomer | C | Ketchup Is A Vegetable | C | The Corporate Masters | C | |
| Vampires | R | Shroud of Turin | R | Kinder and Gentler | C | The Hand of Madness | C | |
| Video Games | C | Soulburner | R | Let's Get Organized | C | Up Against The Wall! | R | |
| Voudonistas | U | Spear of Longinus | C | Let's Get REALLY Organized | U | | | |
| W.I.T.C.H. | C | Suicide Squad | U | Let's You and Him Fight | R | NEW WORLD ORDER | | |
| Wall Street | C | Warehouse 23 | U | Liberal Agenda | C | (Plot cards) | | |
| Wargamers | C | Weather Satellite | U | Logic Bomb | R | A Thousand Points of Light (blue) | U | |
| | | Xanadu | C | March On Washington | C | Bigger Business (yellow) | U | |
| PERSONALITY (Group) | | | | Market Manipulation | U | Chicken In Every Pot (blue) | C | |
| Al Gore | C | PLOT CARDS | | Martial Law | C | Don't Forget To Smash | U | |
| Bill Clinton | C | 18 1/2-Minute Gap | R | Martyrs | C | The State (yellow) | C | |
| Bjorne | C | Agent In Place | C | Mass Murder | R | Energy Crisis (blue) | R | |
| Count Dracula | R | Air Magic | U | Media Blitz | U | Fear and Loathing (blue) | U | |
| Dan Quayle | C | Albino Alligators | C | Media Connections | R | Gun Control (red) | U | |
| Elvis | R | Alternate Goals | C | Messiah | R | Law and Order (yellow) | U | |
| Fidel Castro | U | And STAY Dead! | U | Miracle Diet Plan | C | Military-Industrial | C | |
| George Bush | C | Angst | R | Mistaken Identity | R | Complex (yellow) | C | |
| Gordo Remora | C | Annual Convention | R | Mob Influence | C | Peace In Our Time (red) | C | |
| Hillary Clinton | C | Are We Having Fun Yet? | C | Monopoly | C | Political Correctness (red) | U | |
| Imelda Marcos | C | Assertiveness Training | C | Mothers' March | C | Solidarity (red) | C | |
| Jimmy Hoffa | R | The Auditor from Hell | C | Murphy's Law | U | Tax Reform (red) | R | |
| Manuel Noriega | C | Backlash | C | Mutual Betrayal | C | World Hunger (blue) | C | |
| Margaret Thatcher | U | Bank Merger | U | Nationalization | U | World War 3 (yellow) | R | |
| Media Sensation | C | Benefit Concert | C | Never Surrender | C | | | |
| Nancy Reagan | U | The Big Score | R | New Blood | C | ASSASSINATION (Plot) | | |
| Ollie North | C | The Big Sellout | R | New Federal Budget | U | Car Bomb | C | |
| Prince Charles | U | Bimbo at Eleven | C | Nice Idea. It's Mine Now. | R | Hit and Run | C | |
| Princess Di | U | Blitzkrieg | C | Nobel Peace Prize | C | Poison | C | |
| Ronald Reagan | C | Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat | R | An Offer You Can't Refuse | R | Sniper | U | |
| Ross Perot | R | Bodyguard | R | Opportunity Knocks | R | Withering Curse | R | |
| Saddam Hussein | C | Botched Contact | U | Payoff | C | | | |
| | | Bribery | U | Pledge Drive | U | DISASTER (Plot) | | |
| PLACE (Group) | | | | Power Corrupts | C | Atomic Monster | C | |
| Brazil | C | Celebrity Spokesman | U | Power Grab | C | Earthquake | C | |
| California | C | Censorship | U | Privatization | C | Epidemic | C | |
| Canada | R | Charismatic Leader | C | Privileged Attack | C | Giant Kudzu | U | |
| Center for Disease Control | U | Citizenship Award | C | Pulitzer Prize | C | Hurricane | C | |
| China | U | Clone | U | Purge | C | Meteor Strike | U | |
| Dinosaur Park | R | Cold Fusion | C | Reach Out . . . | R | Nuclear Accident | C | |
| England | C | Combined Disasters | U | Read My Lips | C | The Oregon Crud | R | |
| Finland | R | Commitment | U | Red Scare | U | Plague of Demons | R | |
| France | U | Computer Security | R | Reload! | U | Rain of Frogs | U | |
| Germany | R | Computer Virus | U | Reorganization | C | Tidal Wave | C | |
| The Great Pyramid | S | Corruption | R | Resistance Is Useless! | R | Tornado | C | |
| Hawaii | U | Counter-Revolution | U | Revolution! | U | Volcano | U | |
| Hollywood | C | Counterspell | R | Rewriting History | R | | | |
| Israel | C | Cover of Darkness | U | Sabotage | R | ILLUMINATI | | |
| Italy | R | Cover-Up | C | Save the Whales | C | Adepts of Hermes | I | |
| Japan | C | Crop Circles | R | Savings & Loan Scam | U | Bavarian Illuminati | I | |
| Las Vegas | C | Currency Speculation | R | The Second Bullet | C | Bermuda Triangle | I | |
| Moonbase | C | Deal Engine | R | Scandal | R | Discordian Society | I | |
| New York | U | Deep Agent | C | Secrets Man Was Not | C | Gnomes of Zurich | I | |
| Orbit One | U | Dictatorship | U | Meant To Know | U | The Network | I | |
| Pentagon | R | Dollars for Decency | U | Seize The Time! | U | Servants of Cthulhu | I | |
| Russia | C | Double-Cross | C | Self-Esteem | C | Shangri-La | I | |
| Silicon Valley | U | Early Warning | C | Senate Investigating Committee | R | UFOs | I | |
| Stonehenge | U | Earth Magic | C | Slush Fund | C | | | |
| Switzerland | C | Eat The Rich! | R | Spasm of Violence | R | So, get collecting and save the | | |
| Texas | R | Embezzlement | R | The Stars are Right | C | world from the fiendish plots of | | |
| Vatican City | C | Emergency Powers | C | Stealing The Plans | C | the Illuminati! | | |
| | | Exposed! | C | | | | | |

STACKING THEM UP

- Reviews



RAGE

Collectible Card Game
Published by White Wolf Games
Reviewed by Chris Johnson
(krystal@death.cage.curtin.edu.au)

Yet another trading card game (can you say 'bandwagon' boys and girls?) is the eagerly awaited **Rage**, based on White Wolf's popular *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* roleplaying game.

Werewolves (Garou) spend much of their time fighting the Wyrms which is anything that they believe is tainted with a spirit that wishes to destroy the Earth, or Gaia. Garou believe vampires are "of the Wyrms" (though the jury is still out on that point) thus most vampires try to avoid being spotted by a Garou. Warring with the Wyrms is not the only Garou pastime. Divided into groups (or packs), Garou spend a large amount of time warring amongst themselves trying to raise their pack's, and their own, standing (Renown). Enough with the background, onto the card game itself.

First impressions, that would be the Art and card design, were good. White Wolf have enlisted the talent of many good artists, including a few of my favourites; Drew Tucker, Richard Kane Ferguson & Quinton Hoover all have work in there, and, based on his work for **Rage**, I believe I will look out for Lawrence Allen Williams' work in the future. The card design complements the artwork nicely, with various Glyphs decorating each well thought out card. My only complaint in this area is that you can't read the artist's name on the Gift cards.

There are three main types of cards; Garou, Combat and Sept. Garou cards are double sided with the breed form - wolf (Lupus) or human (Homid) - on one side and the werewolf (Crinos) form on the reverse side. When a Character takes damage equal or greater to her Rage she flips over to Crinos form and becomes much more dangerous. Each Character has four main stats; Renown, value in votes (Moots); Rage, ability to fight; Gnosis, spiritual strength; and Health. Other information on the card includes Breed, Tribe and Auspice. Auspice is the phase of the moon the Garou was born under. Combat cards are the way that Garou inflict damage on their opponents, each card requires that the werewolf has a certain Rage, and may inflict a certain damage. Sept cards make up the rest, that is all the non-combat, non-werewolf cards. They include Actions, Equipment, Gifts, Allies, Enemies, Events, Moots, Rites and Past Lives. Much too much to fully explain all of them here.

Now I'll explain my favourite concept in this game. *You don't have to beat up your friends.* I know this is a turn off for some of you, but after a pathetic game of Magic where none of us actually wanted to attack, the ability to beat up something other than the person you want a ride home with is quite a bonus. What you can do is play Enemies cards. Enemies are placed in the hunting ground, and during the combat phase you send an Alpha (your choice of Garou from your pack) into the hunting grounds to battle the other Alphas or any other enemies or characters that happen to be there with you. I intend to make a deck rich in Enemies, I won my first game without ever attacking my opponent!

The game is also rich in Votes and Rites with a good tribal feel to it, however this can cause problems in a two player game, indeed **Rage** is designed as a multi-player game, though it plays much better one-on-one than does *Jyhad*.

Overall I rate **Rage** very highly and I recommend it to everyone.



ICE AGE

Magic the Gathering supplement
Published by Wizards of the Coast
Reviewed by T.S. O'Carroll

Available in 60-card starter decks and 15-card booster packs. The world of Dominaria, the setting of *Magic: The Gathering*, is in the frozen grip of an ice age. These survivors of the Antiquities War have more to contend with than just snow and freezing wind,

however: they must fight against the undead legions of Lim-Dul and Leshrac, who want to destroy all life on Dominaria...

This is the basic background to **Ice Age**, the first "stand alone expansion" to Magic: The Gathering. Just what is a stand-alone expansion, anyway? Well, unlike other expansions to Magic, you don't need cards from the basic set to play. In fact, **Ice Age** is an alternative to the basic set of cards itself. Some of the spells in **Ice Age** are the same as in The Gathering, around 8%, another 8% are "tweaks" of Gathering cards-slightly modified. The rest of the cards are all new, and all cards have new artwork.

The new artwork on the cards is absolutely gorgeous-the overall level of artwork is superior by far to the original set. As WOTC releases each new set for magic, the standard just seems to get better. Some of it I really don't like, but all of the art I don't like is by the same few artists, so perhaps that's a matter of taste.

If this were simply a redoing or revision of the original basic set, it would get a big yawn from Magic mavens like myself. **Ice Age**, however, is superior in a number of ways. Firstly, there is a lot more background cohesiveness than in the Gathering. On several cards, for example, there are quotations from General Jarkeld, "the Arctic Fox." There is also a General Jarkeld card-players can summon him to fight for them! The great flavour text on the cards really draws the players into the Ice Age world.

Secondly, **Ice Age** is much more balanced than The Gathering. This set has been very extensively play tested and it shows - most rare cards are not really much more powerful than the common cards, they just have unusual or specialised effects.

Thirdly, **Ice Age** innovates. There is much more co-operation between "friendly" colours of magic. Look at the back of a Magic card - the colours are arranged at the points of a pentagon. The two opposite colours are enemy colours, the two adjacent colours to any colours are friends. For example, Black is the enemy of Green and White but friendly to Red and Blue. There are plenty of cards which punish the opponent for using an enemy colour of magic in the Gathering, but none which help "friends" cooperate. There are quite a number of these in **Ice Age**. Also there are cards which have "draw one card" as an extra effect, so that in effect these cards don't cost a card to cast. Since players only draw one card per turn normally, cards are always in short supply. There are also "Legends" (a special type of creature card) and "multi-coloured" spells (spells that take more than one colour of mana to cast.)

Ice Age is a terrific new world for Magic players to explore. You can play it by itself, or mix it with your Gathering cards and supplements. Either way, it's worth buying a starter or two.



MAGIC:THE GATHERING 4TH EDITION

Collectible Card Game
Published by Wizards of the Coast
Reviewed by Chris Johnson

The latest M:TG release (at least at the time of writing) is the re-revised set, or **4th Edition**. WotC's regular (re)cycling of cards from expansion sets into the basic set. This provides the recent Magic victim with a way to get

some of those cards that the old timers have. Following is a list of the cards cycled into 4th Ed. from various Magic expansion sets:

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Abomination | Coral Helm | Immolation | Sindbad | White Mana Battery | Flood |
| Alabaster Potion | Cosmic Horror | Junun Efreet | Spirit Link | Winds of Change | Ghost Ship |
| Ali Baba | Crimson Manticore | Kismet | Spirit Shackle | Winter Blast | Goblin Rock Sled |
| Amrou Kithkin | Cursed Rack | Lost Soul | Strip Mine | Xenic Poltergeist | Inferno |
| Amulet of Kroog | Cyclopean Mummy | Mishra's Factory | Sylvan Library | Yotian Soldier | Leviathan |
| Ashnod's Battle | Detonate | Nafs Asp | Tawnos's Wand | Zephyr Falcon | Mana Clash |
| Gear | Divine | Oasis | Tawnos's Weaponry | | Marsh Gas |
| Backfire | Transformation | Osai Vultures | Tempest Efreet | And from The Dark... | Marsh Viper |
| Battering Ram | Durkwood Boars | Piety | Tetravus | | Mind Bomb |
| Bird Maiden | Elder Land Wurm | Pit Scorpion | The Brute | Angry Mob | Morale |
| Black Mana Battery | Elven Riders | Pradesh Gypsies | Time Elemental | Apprentice Wizard | Murk Dwellers |
| Blight | Energy Tap | Psionic Entity | Triskelion | Ashes to Ashes | Pikemen |
| Blood Lust | Eternal Warrior | Pyrotechnics | Tundra Wolves | Ball Lightning | Rag Man |
| Blue Mana Battery | Fortified Area | Radjan Spirit | Twiddle | Bog Imp | Sisters of the Flame |
| Brainwash | Gaseous Form | Rebirth | Untamed Wilds | Brothers of Fire | Sunken City |
| Bronze Tablet | Giant Strength | Red Mana Battery | Urza's Avenger | Carnivorous Plant | Uncle Istvan |
| Carion Ants | Giant Tortoise | Relic Bind | Vampire Bats | Cave People | Venom |
| Clay Statue | Grapeshot Catapult | Sandstorm | Visions | Diabolic Machine | Word of Binding |
| Clockwork Avian | Greed | Seeker | Wall of Dust | Erosion | |
| Colossus of Sardia | Green Mana Battery | Segovian Leviathan | Wall of Spears | Fellwar Stone | |
| CoP: Artifacts | Hurr Jackal | Shapeshifter | Whirling Dervish | Fissure | |

I generally like this revision, I came into Magic *just* after Legends sold out, and although at one stage I had many Legends commons and a few uncommons, I never had more than three rares at any one time. The same goes for Antiquities, and Arabian Nights, well forget it, I managed four commons. So I was quite looking forward to the "new" cards in **MTG 4th Edition**, whatever they were going to be. I have a list of cards below that I believe stand out, for whatever reason, from the new inclusions:

Carion Ants [Ha!] I never got one of these, they're great in multicoloured decks and it's one in the eye for those players that liked to rain on your picnic with the Ants.

CoP: Artifacts [Ha!] Was over priced, but quite useful card.

Cursed Rack [No...] Did WotC have to *add* another rack to Magic, two are bad enough.

Divine Transformation [Yes!] Oh, the art. All praise NÈNÈ.

Elder Land Wurm [Yes!] Another great piece of art, and another boon for white.

Greed [YES!] This is my favourite in 4th Ed. It goes straight into my "I want MORE cards" deck.

Kismet [Yes!] Cool card, great art, brings down an overpriced card.

Psionic Entity {Kewel} A Funky card I've always wanted to play. Just put a Blue Ward on it...

Segovian Leviathan [Kewel] Straight into the landwalk deck (but why is it dwarfing those whales if it's only 3/3)

Spirit Link [Ha!] Another one in the eye for those that kept flaunting their Spirit Links, also brings the value of the card back down to earth (\$45 indeed)

Strip Mine [Ha!] I could've done without this card, but I will include it as standard, if only to combat a Maze of Ith.

Sylvan Library [Hmmm] Now I've played with it a bit it's a cool card and is worth highlighting.

Tetravus [Kewel] I've always wanted one of these...

Time Elemental [Ha!] Not a hugely useful card, but highly valued.

Twiddle [Kewel] This proved wrong all those who believed WotC wouldn't bring back anything from previous basic sets.

Visions [Yes!] Artwork!

Wall of Spears [Kewel] My fave wall, the only first-striking wall.

Yotian Soldier [Groan] We're already up to the eyeballs in these!

Angry Mob [Kewel] Artwork, and a cool white card.

Inferno [Kewel] I can't believe it's an instant.

Sunken City [Groan] I believe this is the worst inclusion, it is too good and weights Blue too strongly.

Next, cards that stand out from those removed... all the 'copy stuff', that is *Doppelganger*, *Copy Artifact*, *Clone*, *Fork*. A shame because this was one of Blue's more social themes, rather than stealing and hacking. As for the Fork, it was Red's *only* copy card. *Demonic Tutor* was a cool Black card, but hardly worth removing. *Regrowth*; again, a cool card, it suited Green very well, I don't see why it had to be removed. *Reconstruction*; with the removal of this and *Regrowth* there is now no way to get artifacts back from the graveyard in the basic set. WotC made a lot of noise about closing the gap between old and new players before **4th Edition**. But I believe that the removal of these cards will widen the gap, not close it.

Flying in the face of the more vocal, opinionated Magic players I would have to say I like this revision, but I probably had made my mind up before it had even arrived, much like those that hate it. On the technical aspects, no land in the boosters is very nice and the new, higher printing density is very welcome; the art excellent WotC just shines now.

All in all, I heartily recommend this to all Magic players.

And that's all from Card Magic this issue. We've got heaps more to check out next issue. Look for more free card giveaways coming soon: INWO Assassins expansion cards and an exclusive card from the upcoming Warlords CCG. from SSG. See ya there! ■

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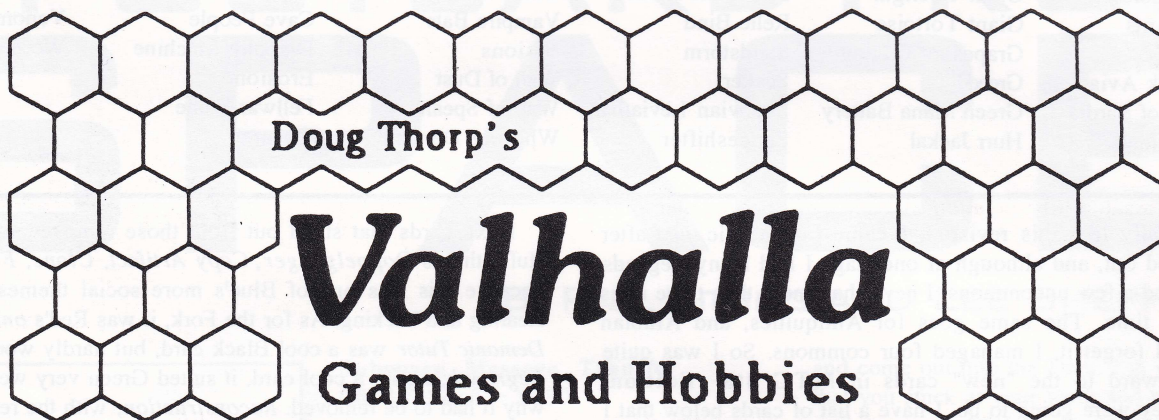
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TE MAORI

Incorporating the Legends of the Maori into a Fantasy Campaign

by Andrew Boswell.

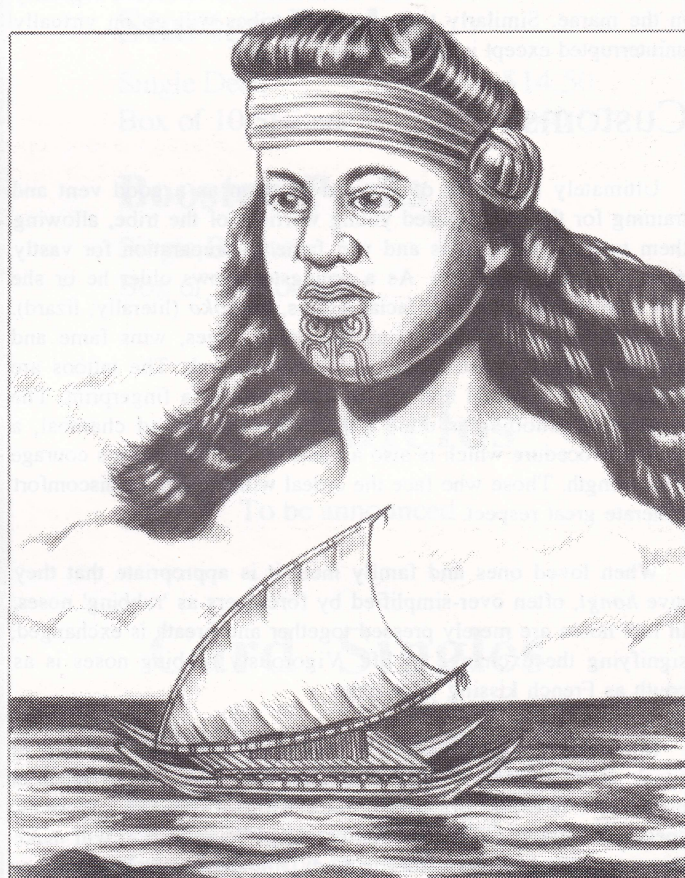
Introduction

This article is based on the legends of the Maori as passed down in great lyric tradition and recently recorded in writing. Elements of these legends have been interpreted literally for a fantasy gaming world as has been done with many other cultures such as the Amerindians, the Aztecs, the Celts and so on. Set in the God Time when great heroes such as Maui walked the earth, the ideas presented here are in no way intended to be a description of the real Maori way of life, nor is it intended to trivialise a powerful and poetic theology. Hopefully players and referees will see the opportunities for using a proud culture such as the legendary Maori in their games, for they can add colour and depth to a campaign. Euro or American centred game scenarios have been the typical fare for many years now and we shouldn't be deluded into thinking that they represent the only cultures which have contributed to our ideas of beauty and fantasy. This is especially true for us in the South Pacific.

Society

Maori society is tribal and based on the extended family, each of which maintains its own traditions, tracing a line back to the immortal Gods. Several families make up a village, and any number of villages make a tribe or *ngati*. A typical number referred to as a total number for a tribe is 1000 individuals, though it is impossible to say whether this is an accurate numerical relationship or merely the statement of 'an extremely large number'. The legends which refer to the annihilation of an entire tribe will state "all 1000 were slain"; such a task is considered extremely difficult, and naturally quite a noteworthy event.

The king (*ariki*) of a tribe can assume the post by inheritance, election or by right of arms, depending on the circumstances of succession. Once decided in his position, the king will be supported by the people of his tribe, all of whom are able to trace a blood relationship with him (this connection may date back many generations). Tradition, religious knowledge, practical information and these familial bonds are maintained by a strong oral tradition which is exercised nightly in the *marae*, or courtyard/meeting place. After the daily chores in the fields and hunting, fishing, building etc. are completed and meals are eaten the tribe gathers here to hear the words of the *tohunga*, a priest, and any others who wish to relate some tales of the gods or epics of ancestors. Here too, in the *marae*, the men of the village will gather to discuss matters of concern ranging from agriculture to war. While the decision making process is not literally democratic in the Greek sense it certainly is completely consultative and fair. Internal discord within a village or a tribe is rare due to these unifying processes.



A central concept in the traditional Maori tribal life is that of *utu*. Roughly translated, *utu* is 'just compensation', 'revenge', or 'satisfaction'. If damage is done to life or property the aggrieved party will demand *utu* which can be often satisfied with some form of payment in kind. This may mean helping to rebuild the house that was destroyed, sharing in the gains of the next hunt or fishing expedition if a pet was accidentally killed, and so on. Where a person or persons have been killed it falls to the nearest of kin to seek revenge on the perpetrator.

Within villages or the tribe *utu* is usually clearly established and the opposed parties are within their rights to crack each others skulls publicly. Between tribes, however, preparations can become quite elaborate and consume much time and effort. Rising from these preparations are revenge raids and murders into the opposing tribes territory. In most cases the aggrieved young warrior whose right it is to seek *utu* will recruit his most trusted friends to accompany him on the raid. To be so selected is considered a great honour.

For greater crimes, such as the murder of a king (or very close relative of the king) the entire tribe may decide to go to war to seek *utu*. Up to two hundred warriors will take the field after extensive plans and logistical arrangements have been made.

The kidnapping of wives and marriageable maidens is also known, and the *utu* for this is to retrieve the captive and probably slaughter the kidnapper. The family of the slaughtered kidnapper then has the right to extract *utu*. Thus the cycle of *utu* between the tribes continues. At all times, therefore, it is likely that some form of warrior activity is going on between tribes. In no way should this indicate that the Maori are continually at war, however. Most tribes will be in some way related by blood, and all are ultimately related by being born of *Rangi*, the Sky Father, and *Papa*, the Earth Mother. The almost continual seeking of revenge is normally kept to a manageable level by the clearly understood economy of what constitutes 'satisfaction'. These economies are discussed regularly in the *marae*. Similarly trade between tribes will go on virtually uninterrupted except in cases of complete war.

Customs

Ultimately the cycle of *utu* can be seen as a good vent and training for the hot blooded young warriors of the tribe, allowing them to hone their skills and win fame in preparation for vastly more important conflicts. As a youngster grows older he or she will earn the right to wear facial tattoos, or *moko* (literally; lizard). These tattoos are added to as the person ages, wins fame and renown through great deeds, and achieves rank. The tattoos are completely individual and are as distinctive as a fingerprint. The process of tattooing is done with stone knives and charcoal, a painful procedure which is also a measure of that person's courage and strength. Those who face the ordeal without sign of discomfort generate great respect.

When loved ones and family meet it is appropriate that they give *hongi*, often over-simplified by foreigners as 'rubbing' noses. In fact noses are merely pressed together and breath is exchanged, signifying the exchange of life. Vigorously rubbing noses is as couth as French kissing your sister.

In important conversation it is considered extremely bad luck to speak directly about a topic or mention the name of the object at hand. This is especially true if some form of quest is underway; speaking the name of the person or object being sought will make that very object all the harder to find. Diplomatic matters therefore are generally very polite and circumspect, with both parties attempting to aid each other without violating this rule. Additionally, clearing your throat or coughing while delivering a speech to the *marae* or conducting negotiations indicates that the words to follow are very important. Characters invited into the *marae* will be treated with much more respect, and will gain assistance and trust easier, if they follow these diplomatic guidelines when speaking.

Weapons & Warfare

The principal Maori weapons of war are the *mere* and *patu*, (short heavy bladed clubs made of either bone, greenstone or hard wood), the *maihi* (a long wooden spear resembling the halberd), and the *taiaha*. The *taiaha* is a complex compound weapon appearing at first to be a spear or club of about five feet in length. The base of the handle comprises the spear element - a short blade which is heavily carved to resemble an out-thrust tongue. The length of the shaft becomes flattened and broad as it approaches the far end, and forms both an efficient long club or mace if the flat

of the shaft is used, and a devastating two handed sword if the flattened edge is used. Never thrown, the *taiaha* requires years of practice to fully utilise, and a warrior using it in battle will appear to be almost in dance when bringing all three elements to bear. Spending too much time watching the spectacle will be fatal though as a flat downwards blow on the head, followed by a raking slash across the ribs with the blade, followed by the coup de grace of the spear point in the face, all in the space of a couple of seconds, is no laughing matter. In roleplaying terms, parrying these very divergent attacks will challenge most characters who are used to striking with a sword and parrying with a shield. Maori warriors as NPCs should be given three attacks per round due to the power of the *taiaha* as a weapon.

Additionally there are the thrown spears and slings. These will seldom be used for combat, being used mostly for hunting. All the same, if pressed, and disarmed of *taiaha* and *mere*, a Maori warrior is just as likely to improvise as any other fighter, and the practice of felling birds from trees with spear and sling ensure that these weapons will be accurate and effective.

In attack the war party will often first perform the *haka* which is a war dance, greeting, warning, threat, challenge to battle, demonstration of prowess and morale booster all wrapped into one. During the dance the leader of the war party will parade about the troops shouting out the initial parts of the song to be answered in song by the party. All the time the song is in progress the warriors are demonstrating their fierce resolve. To flee or show fear before a war party in *haka* is to demonstrate inferiority and thus to boost the morale of the attackers. Fleeing a *haka* in progress will cause the singing warriors to attack immediately with no quarter. Facing a *haka* boldly or indeed conducting one of your own, or something similar, induces respect and the battle is likely to be honourable with the victors often comforting the surviving losers.

Typically warfare will not be positional. Coming from a mountainous, heavily forested country the Maori are masters of guerrilla warfare and will approach from unexpected directions, do battle and then disappear again. If forced into a fixed defensive posture they have devised the *pa*, a fortified village surrounded by high palisades and defended by concentric circles of trench works. Only the introduction of the mobile cannon really defeated a well stocked *pa*. For fantasy campaign purposes a *pa* will only be constructed when there has been a general war. Direct assault has little chance of success. Depending on the commonness of magic in your campaign, only that and thieving skills of hiding, climbing and assassination will disrupt a *pa*. Shooting burning arrows into a *pa* may set alight the thatched hut roofs, but the thick, wet wooden trucks of the walls will be immune to such treatment. Bear in mind also that the Maori live in a rain forest environment so rain can be expected on a fairly regular basis.

Magic

Magic is common throughout Maori legend. The method of casting spells is via the *karakia*; a spoken chant/poem/prayer. These spells can be temporary and used for a specific situation and then expire, or can be used to create permanent effects or to enchant artifacts. Common spells used for short term situations are as follows *Change Form* (usually into birds, Maui used this spell often), *Talk To Animals*, *Enhance* the effectiveness of snares and hooks for hunting and fishing, *Walk on Water*, *Silence*, *Speed-dart* (giving a thrown or shot weapon a greater probability of hitting), *Bail Canoe* (giving the instrument used to bail out the sinking vessel miraculous powers in moving water), *Raise The Dead*, *Healing*, *Path Find* (especially through forests), *Ascend* into the

higher planes of existence or 'heavens', *Disguise*, *Make Invisible*, *Cure The Blind*, *Safety* and *Good Luck* (this would give a Maori a higher luck roll or better saving throw chances as is applicable to your game system), and *Speak with Spirits*. Each tribe will have in addition to these a large number of spells known only to them for use in building, hunting, fishing, correct reverence to the Gods, and so on. A certain economy may exist with the trade of these spells but it is not common for tribes to share them; each karakia being a part of that group's own heritage. Player characters may be taught karakia only once they have completely gained the trust of their hosts. While the Maori may be interested in learning a spell to create a firestorm, it is unlikely that they will divulge tribe karakia to someone they don't like or trust.

If your game system requires you to place these spells within a framework then the general term of *druidic* fits the bill. Short term spells most often work through nature and are seldom sorcerous in nature. Nowhere, for example, is there any reference to fireballs or bolts of lightning in the available legends. Maori warriors are like rangers; tough, independent, with high moral codes and in tune with the magic of nature.

Magic which lasts for more than a few minutes is associated with objects and locations. Certain manmade objects such as meres, patus, often taiahas and especially created works of art (of which the *tiki* is an example) may be enchanted. Weapons will be given a higher hit probability by a factor of 10% to 15%. Damage may also be increased. In all game systems these weapons should be legitimately recognised as magical. Thus an enchanted weapon will soon become the personal weapon of a warrior and will be carried as a symbol of their prowess. Enchanted weapons will be handed down through a family from father to son. Loss or damage to an enchanted weapon is a terrible blow and demands that *utu* be taken. Works of art such as the *tiki* must be gifted to a person, the creator can never make one for themselves. Again, therefore, it is extremely bad luck and a loss of honour to lose such a gift.

The powers of these tokens vary but are mostly passive; cure wounds, good luck, resist disease, improve armour or defence etc. Since every creation is unique the wearer of one will be recognised as a friend of so-and-so of that tribe and can expect to be greeted as if they were family of that person. In an environment of tribal and family bonds, this can be the next best thing to a passport.

Locations which are 'magical' or are areas of deep religious or spiritual significance are *tapu*. They are under religious restriction and only certain people are allowed to enter there, or indeed would dare. Whatever the rivalries of tribes, none will violate the *tapu* areas of another. *Tapu* areas can be the revered resting places of ancestors and also cursed ground where evil spirits dwell. The ceremony to remove the *tapu* status is a *purenga*.

Magic is not necessarily everyday but it is certainly not unusual or abnormal - warriors will chant their chosen karakia before battle, fishers before casting their bait, the village *tohunga* for good weather or fertile crops, women for the health of their children or husbands. Not everyone will know the casting of magical spells, they must be learnt from another who is willing to teach. Maui knew several spells such as changing himself into birds, or making his fishing lure irresistible, which he would not reveal even to his own brothers. In general it is safe to assume that probably half of a village or active group will know some magic, and one in five will know spells which are more powerful or useful in battle. Only one in twenty will have an enchanted weapon. And while it is likely that all members will have a piece of token art which identifies them as members of a family, only one in ten will actually have measurable enchantments cast on them. Note, however, that the piece of art has deep intrinsic value to the wearer and to their family, and will have profound effects on that person's morale if it is lost or otherwise interfered with.



Commerce

The major components of trade are foodstuffs such as the roots of the bracken fern, yams, kumara, ipomoea batatas (a type of dark fleshed sweet potato), fish and shellfish, and various preserved bird fleshes. Above this common currency are the more prized worked goods of clothing, ropes, fish hooks (carved from bone and baw, also known as the abalone shell) and weapons. More valuable still are the beautiful feathers of various birds, commonly woven into magnificent cloaks. A person's wealth and station within the tribe can be determined by the rarity of the bird plumage in their cloak.

Gold is known, but has little trade value. By far the most valuable item of trade is either raw or, most prized, worked greenstone. Greenstone is broadly a jade, but is distinguished

from that product by being of darker, richer colours than the more common, insipid coloured Chinese jade. Greenstone is extremely hard and strong and will commonly be worked into meres and patus. The short spear point of the taiaha may also be made of this stone. Weapons painstakingly rendered from greenstone will almost invariably have enchantments cast on them and will always be family heirlooms. This is also true of works of art including family identifiers and gifts such as the tiki.

Creatures in Legend

The most well known monsters in the legends of the Maori are the *taniwha*. These are a sea, or lake dwelling creature of immense size and power. Descriptions vary from tale to tale and so it can be assumed that the word applicable to any large and fearsome aquatic monster. In roleplaying terms, typical creatures that would fit the bill as taniwha are aquatic dragons, gargantuan turtles, enormous killer whales, and the kraken.

More accurately described creatures are the *ponaturi*. These sea dwellers are humanoid in form but live beneath the sea and prey upon humans. Frequently they will also have houses on shore where they will go at night to sleep. Bright sunlight kills them and they are susceptible to all normal weapons. They can move along the bottom of the sea as fast as a man can run and will often make attacks on coastal villages by approaching in this fashion.

The legend of 'How Tawhaki Destroyed The Ponaturi' describes how Tawhaki sought out these creatures to seek utu for them killing and eating his father. This tribe of monsters had long ago attacked his village, killed his father and taken his mother as a slave. Hema, his father, was eaten and his bones hung in the communal house by the ponaturi. At night they would return from hunting and playing in the sea to sleep. Tawhaki's mother was made to sit at the door and to wake the evil creatures at the first sign of morning. Sneaking into the house Tawhaki saw his mother and chanted a karakia which caused his father's bones to rattle in recognition. This proved to him that his search was at an end. Quickly he formulated a plan with his mother to cover all cracks and crevices of the house with fern and mud to prevent the sun from shining through. Then they waited for broad daylight, many of the ponaturi waking and commenting that this was the longest night they'd ever experienced. At the given signal all the doors and windows were thrown open, thus slaughtering nearly all of them (except for one named Tongahiti, but that's another story).

Patupaiarehe and *pakuturi* are sprites or faeries which inhabit the forests of Aotearoa and Hawaiki. All forests are the domain of the God *Tane* and these tiny creatures are his servants. Tane and these creatures demand that certain rituals be obeyed when within the domain. A person cannot, for example, simply chop down a tree without first chanting the correct karakia which gives appropriate praise and thanks to Tane. Failing to follow this procedure courts disaster as the hero Rata found to his cost. When Rata was in the process of creating a canoe in preparation for an attack on the evil ponaturi, the forest sprites simply chanted their own karakia when he left to sleep which completely restored the tree to living, standing health. Any disruption in Tane's domain which is not preceded by the correct karakia will cause the tiny forest protectors to do some mischief that night. Knowledge of the appropriate karakia can only be learned from the tribe living closest to that forest, and deep trust must be established before they will be taught to foreigners. The little folk are not only mischievous though. In the same tale when Rata realised his mistake he was deeply ashamed, and seeing this the forest sprites cast another karakia which completed the canoe in magnificent fashion overnight.

Placement in Your Game World

Aotearoa, or the ancestral homeland of Hawaiki are both mountainous, rain forest lands. Islands, potentially of great size, they should at first be isolated from the rest of your game world. This will allow the colonising urges of the Maori to discover your characters or vice versa. Both lands are populated only by birds and reptiles. The only mammals will be the fruit bat, dogs and rats, the last two having been introduced with the colonists. Birds have thus evolved to fill all ecological niches, from ground foraging such as the *kiwi*, to grazing pasture as represented by the mighty *moa*. The moa is a bird resembling both the emu and ostrich but attaining enormous size; up to three metres tall, and can deliver lethal kicks with their brutal toe claws.

Reptiles, similarly, have fairly broad lifestyles. The *tuatara* resembles a monitor lizard or goanna and achieves a size of about two metres long. Tuataras are generally non-aggressive but can be provoked into attacking. Their bite is non-poisonous and unlikely to be fatal, but certainly it cannot be ignored. Significantly there are no snakes of any sort in Aotearoa and there is no mention of snakes in Hawaiki either. Being a nautical people the Maori are doubtless aware of aquatic snakes. Insects and spiders are also present, and like the reptiles, most are harmless. Only the tiny *katipo*, which resembles the redback or black widow, is poisonous. Only a character in a weakened state could expect anything more than severe illness, like a bad bout of flu, from a katipo bite.

If you are running an existing fantasy campaign and looking for somewhere new and exotic to send your intrepid players, then Te Maori presents an exciting and intriguing option. Encountering the Maori should be a magical experience as their culture and traditions are so unique. The focus of a Maori campaign should be on their close relationship with the mountains, the forests and the lakes, rivers and seas of their homelands. Aotearoa and Hawaiki should be lands steeped in natural magic - perhaps the spirits and legendary characters of legend still walk the world. If the characters come to make war, to conquer and to subjugate the Maori, they will find the Maori understand their environment and are in harmony with it, making them formidable enemies. The riches the players seek to plunder will not be relinquished easily. On the other hand, if the players come to explore, to learn and to share in the bounty of the lands they must first earn the trust and respect of the Maori.

A more challenging, and ultimately more rewarding option, would be to open your campaign in Aotearoa or Hawaiki. The players are young Maori, seeking to hone their skills, to win fame, to earn their tattoos, and to advance the honour of the tribe. Utu is a constant source of adventure hooks in this setting. The player characters may become embroiled in the conflict when 'outsiders' invade their tribal lands or else maybe they are sent as explorers and emissaries of the Maori to make contact with the "outsiders" in their own lands. Whatever you decide, respect the legends.

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"Recruit Ballan Bannersbane, perhaps you would be kind enough as to state basic Banner ideology."

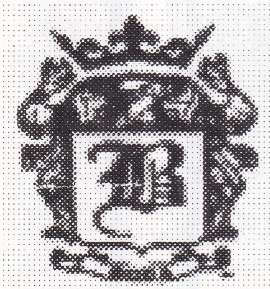
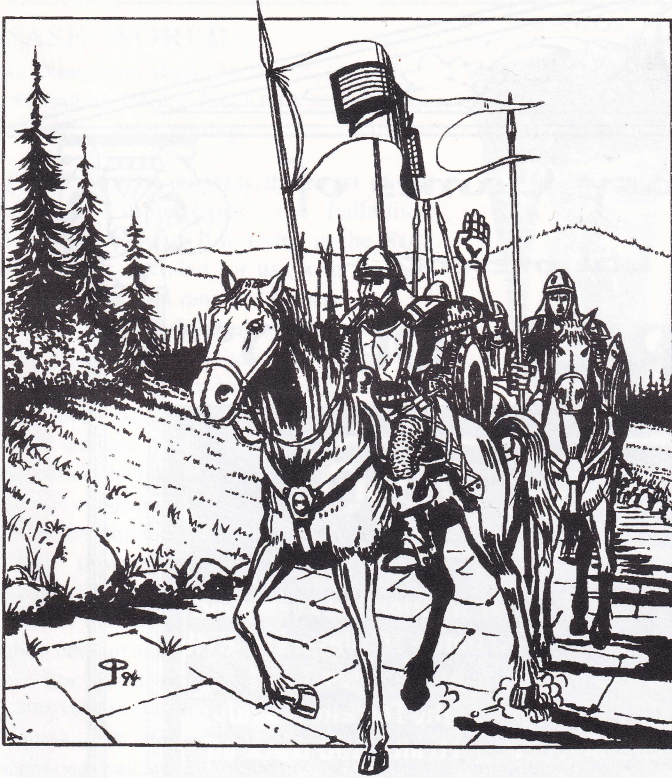
The recruit drew himself stiffly to attention. His braids had been shaved down to a bare fuzz on his scalp.

"SIR! Politically correct BANNER ideology is as follows," Ballan Bannersbane pointed at his fellow boot camp trainees. "If you're smaller than me, then I'm in charge. If you're bigger than me, you're in charge, and if something's gone wrong, he's in charge!"

"Very good" The hot sun glinted from the lens' of follower's round, wire-rimmed spectacles. His ears twitched dangerously. He removed a small note pad from his greatcoat pocket and scribbled a few notes. "You, Owen the Red, name a test to determine whether a recruit is fit to become a Banner retainer."

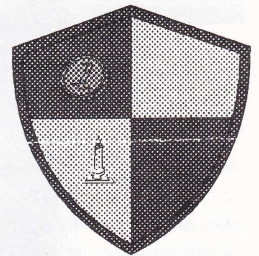
The man scratched his trimmed beard. "The recruit is tied...", Owen hastily corrected himself, "The recruit is volunteers to be tied to a sabre-toothed tiger and shut up in its cave. If the recruit comes out, he's passed. If the tiger comes out, he failed. If the recruit comes out riding the tiger, make him a follower."

"Excellent," the follower's unnatural golden eyes gleamed, "Excellent."



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That rare commodity that almost never shows its head in anything that Australians do that is not sports related is THE primary reason why Midgard has over 320 positions. No longer are players just little minnows being swept away by the random eddy's of the game. Players push and the game moves. The Two thousand year alliance between the Boda Family and the Ring Religion is almost extinct because the leading Boda player did not like the leading Ring player's attitude. All over the game players are leaving their mark (often in the form of corpses but there is a player run orphanage (please send tax deductible donations to player 3031 ...)) and this has seen players getting INVOLVED, because Midgard has a Human touch to it that is not just the product of a GM but that of the players. Admittedly the human touch has meant a two thousand year alliance has gone down the drain but hey.. that's progress.

The Players

Most Factions now have a core of experienced players that are often enthusiastic enough to run their own newsletter within the faction. Combined with the Midgard Newsletter called 'Tales of Wonder' that runs at about 30 pages, new players never need to be in the dark about what is happening in the world. New players are often started in new areas so the older players, who are always on the lookout for scouting information, would be willing to offer you more than just advice. Midgard is popular because it is full of Enthusiastic players that really MAKE the game

The Baron's Australian Midgard
PO BOX 542
LINDFIELD NSW
2070

Rulebook Set up and 2 free turns for \$15. \$7 per turn with a 2 Week turn around
or ask for a Free copy of the House Magazine

DICE ARE DEAD

Play-By-Mail Column

CTF 2187

Robot Mayhem

PBM Enterprises

Reviewed by Graham Holman

Rip open the brown envelope. Flick through the bot stat sheets to find the all important "Action Report". What!!! Phase 1 - My bot has staggered off in ever decreasing circles. Phase 3 - With its back to an enemy Ravager it attempts a slow turn and falls over. Phase 5- Stumbling to its feet it fires its machine gun whilst being blasted with Heavy laser fire. Grab a copy of my last orders and check the Turn Results instructions. Have I misread the rules and sent my pilot Cadet Dirk Ausrealm on a suicide mission? No! Australia Post have taken 5 days to deliver my orders and my default standing orders have just blown a whole turn. This is the darker side of Play by Mail heaven. Thank goodness this was the sole dark spot in my rather enjoyable sojourn into *PBM Enterprises* robotic battle game CTF 2187.

CTF 2187, from *Advanced Gaming Enterprises* in Sacramento, has been running as a play by mail game in France, the US and the UK since 1987, and is now being run in Australia by *PBM Enterprises*. With a very heavy "BattleTech" flavour about it, CTF 2187 offers all good Mech jockeys the chance to pilot an individual Bot and blow the living daylight out of any Bot in range. Each postal turn comprises of five movement and firing phases. Just long enough to provide meaty results from each turn without making forecasting of your opponent's moves too much of a crystal ball gaze. Continuity between games is provided by individual pilots having their characteristics improved by applying experience points gained through playing the game. Certainly in my game it seemed to make little difference what level of pilot was controlling the mechs. To be fair this was only the second game so I suppose none of the pilots had much of an opportunity to build up their experience points. There is no similar facility for improving bots, and as all games start with 100% functional bots,

first time players pretty much start off on an even footing with experienced campaigners.

With an average ten turn game (each turn consisting of five phases), there isn't much room for fancy game tactics, but that isn't to say that a good team plan implemented early won't provide devastating results against an uncoordinated opposition. In the two team game it is essential that you organise your team and coordinate your fire against single opponents. A good Team Leader goes a long way in determining the success of your forces. Mobility and firepower combined with good use of the available cover are definitely the way to go in this arena, with Lake hexes providing a welcome relief to that ever-present heat problem. With the addition of the latest bot releases, there is now some dozen bots to choose from, although weapon choices are still fairly basic. Heavier bots such as the Titan are a potent destructive force, even though the rules only allow for one weapon to be fired in each of the five turn phases. As far as bot choices go, it takes a certain type of personality to go through the game in a small bot with limited firepower and light armour. As each of the five movement phases require guessing the enemies moves, manoeuvrability does not seem to have the same impact as being able to blast your opponents body armour into oblivion using a PPC.

There is a very simple set of easy to follow rules. As a player it is really only necessary to come to grips with the rules for movement and firing. Detailed explanations of rules such as line of sight are not available and may cause minor problems until you come to grips with their intricacies. I indeed spent a whole turn firing at what I thought was a clear line of sight to the enemy command post, until I received my turn results plastered with "Line of sight blocked - Attack order cancelled". An expensive waste of one turn's firing opportunities. In a ten turn game this can really put your victory point quest behind the eight ball. (At the time of compiling this review, a new set of advanced rules was due for release. Due to unspecified problems,

however, the release has been delayed until discussions with the designer can be resolved).

The data sheets returned at the completion of each turn provide standard information on game status, orders received for the last turn, System Status, and the all-important Bot Visual Sighting Display. The display report shows all bots and terrain within a five hex range of your bot. Considering the game arena is 30x25 hexes in size, this leaves an awful lot of the action outside of your view. In my game I was lucky enough to have a team leader who was prepared to go to extreme lengths to provide a complete play area display of all terrain, bots and command posts within the team's scanning range. By combining each of our team's bot scan info, he prepared a full map which enabled all the team's strategy to be planned for the next turn. Without this overall picture I would have found team tactics pretty hard. *PBM Enterprises* should take this on board as a standard report and include it with the turn results. It would certainly improve the playability of the game for teams not lucky enough to have such a committed team leader. My thanks go to Robert Beverley of Queanbeyan, NSW, who was our team leader and coordinated all our team's moves. His drive and enthusiasm was a major factor in making the game enjoyable.

Playing this game as a lone player in your particular State or town would be pretty expensive unless you were an employee of Telecom or you wanted to make all your moves in isolation. The way to go is to form your own team amongst your friends and play a proper team game against the opponents. There is certainly something to be said for that buzz of expectancy that comes from opening that little envelope that contains the results of your last turn. Play by mail games give that appetising amount of time between making the moves and becoming aware of the outcomes. They do fall a bit flat when your other team mates are over 2,000 miles away and it takes a \$5.00 per minute phone call to go over the tales of glory and disasters. Even so I had a great time and expect I will be sending Cadet Dirk Ausrealm into the fields of battle again. If there are any Western Australian readers wishing to take on the challenge just drop a note to "Australian Realms" and we'll see what we can arrange.

If you want to have a go in the arena direct, you can become involved by contacting *PBM Enterprises* PO Box 278 Emerald, Victoria 3782. To enter CTF 2187 simply send them \$10.00 which will get you the rules plus a Pilot/Bot setup. Turn fees are a low \$5.00 a fortnight, and *PBM Enterprises* supply a free newsletter. ■

Chicam

SPUD, YOU GET
THE CASNET. VIRUL
YOU DEAL WITH THE
END-OF-LEVEL
GUARDIAN.≡

IN A DARK, DARK CASTLE
THERE IS A DARK, DARK CRYPT,
AND IN THAT DARK, DARK
CRYPT THERE IS

ALL RIGHT, ALL
RIGHT. WE PASSED

ALL RIGHT, ALL
RIGHT. WE PASSED OUR
SCAREDY-CAT CHECK.
LET'S GET ON WITH IT.

WH?

BE WARNED. LEAVE
NOW OR DIE AT THE HAND OF
KARL GUISARME, HIGH LORD
KNIGHT AND SLAYER OF THE
HATED ARCHMAGE LOCHE
VERMICULITE!

WHO?

PARDON?

WHO?

WHAT DO
YOU MEAN,
"WHO"?

WHAT DO YOU
MEAN BY WHAT
DO I MEAN?

GREAT
ROLEPLAYING,
VIRGIL.

SURELY THE
WORLD HAS NOT FOR-
GOTTEN THE EVIL THAT
WAS VERMICULITE, AND
HOW I, KARL GUISARME,
DEFEATED HIM?

WELL, IT HAS BEEN AN AWFUL LONG TIME SINCE THIS ADVENTURE BEGAN WAY BACK IN ISSUE 15.

OH.

ANYWAY, YOU CAN'T
HAVE THE CASNET, SO
BUCKLE UP OFF.

AT THE SAME MOMENT,
DOWN BELOW,"

WAIT
FOR ME!

MUNCH

STRANGE.

I WONDER WHAT
A DARK, DARK
CASTLE WOULD WANT
WITH SO MUCH
LAMP OIL?

RANDOM
GEON FI
AGAIN.

**BEST
IGNORE
IT.**

WHERE
TO NOW?

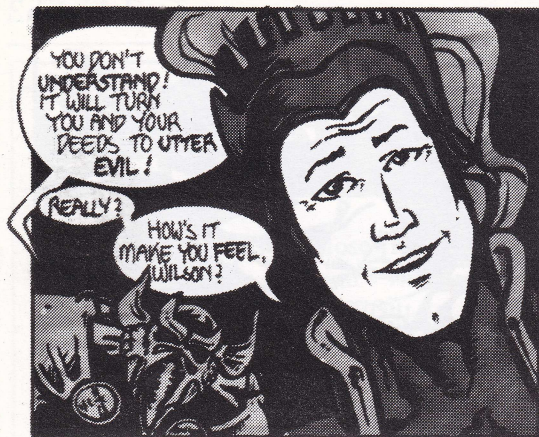
THOSE
HALFLINGS
WON'T HOLD
THE GURGLER
FOR LONG.

ZEET
FOUN
(T.

QUIET.

I HEAR VOICES,
SOUNDS LIKE
SHANA AND THE
LADS.

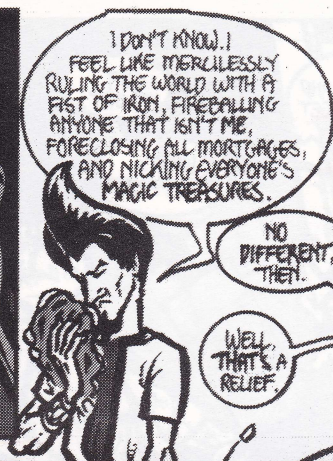




YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! IT WILL TURN YOU AND YOUR DEEDS TO UTTER EVIL!

REALLY?

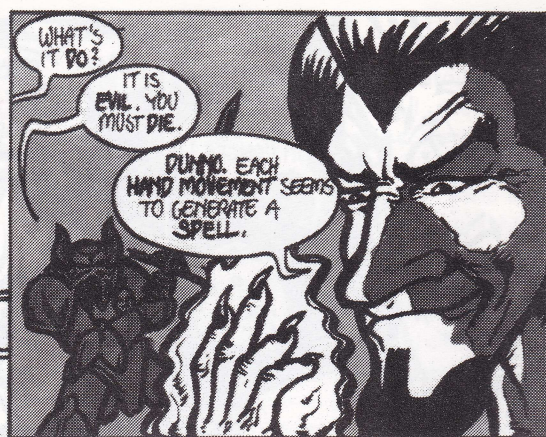
HOW'S IT MAKE YOU FEEL, WILSON?



I DON'T KNOW. I FEEL LIKE MERCILESSLY RULING THE WORLD WITH A FIST OF IRON, FIREBALLING ANYONE THAT ISN'T ME, FORECLOSING ALL MORTGAGES, AND NICKING EVERYONE'S MAGIC TREASURES.

NO DIFFERENT, THEN.

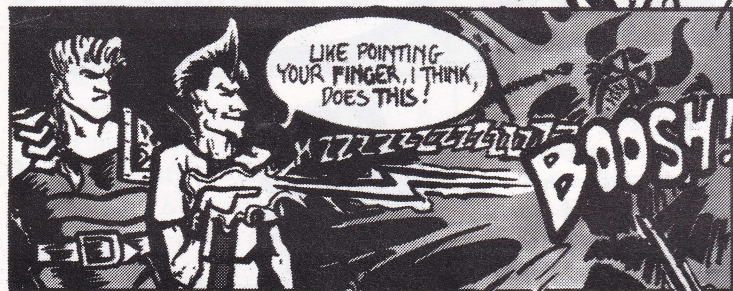
WELL, THAT'S A RELIEF.



WHAT'S IT DO?

IT IS EVIL. YOU MUST DIE.

DUNNO. EACH HAND MOVEMENT SEEMS TO GENERATE A SPELL.



LIKE POINTING YOUR FINGER, I THINK, DOES THIS!

BOOSH!

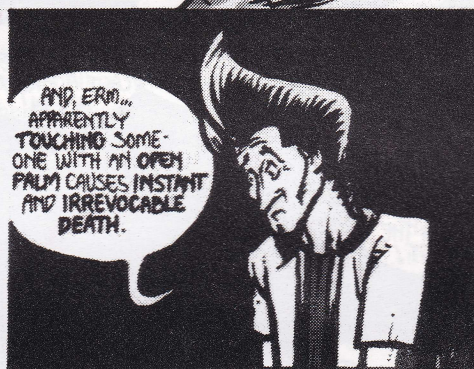


YO! NICE SHOT, WILLO!

HIGH FIVE, DUDE!



GGERCHWILE!



AND, ERM... APPARENTLY TOUCHING SOMEONE WITH AN OPEN PALM CAUSES INSTANT AND IRREVOCABLE DEATH.



PANG

SPINE

POOF

POOF

POOF

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ZEEK! LOOK OUT!

NO PROBLEM!



WELL DONE, ZEEK!

THANKS!

WHAT'S DOWN THERE, ANYWAY?

OH, NOTHING. JUST A HUNDRED BARRELS OF LAMP OIL.

It wasn't the six foot up in the air that the castle jumped that did the damage. It was the thousand foot fall to the valley below that really hurt. The dark castle landed smack on top of the sleeping village of Ingersoldt. Nobody survived. And so ended the A-Team, and their silly adventures.

THAT'LL LEARN 'EM. I WILL NOT BE REPLACED BY A CARD GAME!

WARLOCK

TM

Black Spiral

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue robe, is shown in profile, looking down at a pendulum she is holding with her right hand. Her left hand is held out palm up. The pendulum has a long chain and a brass-colored metal bulb. In the background, there is a stone castle tower with battlements and some evergreen trees under a clear sky.

A role-playing game from:

 **BLACK GATE**
P u b l i s h i n g

P.O. Box 1134

Portsmouth, VA 23705-1134

Necronomicon '95

Necronomicon '95 will be held on 29th Sept - 2nd Oct at the Newtown High School Performing Arts King St. Newtown Sydney NSW. Events include roleplaying, seminars and Magic the Gathering. For more information write to: Necronomicon 12 Mason St. Parramatta 2150 NSW.

Corp Shakeup!

Sam Lewis is due to leave FASA to take up a position at Kesmai, a FASA licensee for on-line games (could this mean BattleTech on the Internet?). Promoted into Sam's position of Chief Operating Officer and president of FASA is Jill Lucas. Australian Realms have always found Jill to be a highly motivated and professional operator with a fabulous sense of humour and genuine willingness to help. We're sure FASA Corp have a great future ahead of them with Jill at the helm.

SolSpace Blasts Off

This issue sees the teaser story for SolSpace, our new *Cyberpunk* campaign setting. We are very excited about this project - Paul and Lee have been working very hard behind the scenes over the past few issues, nutting out the details before forwarding them to Derek Quintanar of *R.Talsorian Games* for official approval. We're happy to say that we have received RTG's full support for *SolSpace*, which can now be considered an officially authorised "alternate future" for the *Cyberpunk* RPG.

It is good to work with a gaming company that sees the *benefits* that can arise from allowing others to cooperatively use their concepts and trademarks. We promise that we will always treat that level of trust with the respect it deserves.

US Agent Signed

Australian Realms is very pleased to announce that we have signed a deal with **Mind Ventures** who will be handling sales and distribution of our products in the USA. Chuck McGrew of Mind Ventures says: "We are eager to help the AR staff expand the reach of this great magazine". US gamers who are interested in subscribing or retailers interested in a distributor list should contact Mind Ventures directly at PO Box 1032, Starkville, MS 39759.

New Card Games

We could probably fill this page with announcements about new collectible card games (CCG) that are in the works. We won't. Instead here are a few that we found especially interesting:

Call of Cthulhu is going to be adapted into a CCG ready for release sometime around March 96. According to the 'net chat, Chaosium are working on the project with great care... no single designer is allowed to keep the entire game on one computer lest the Great Old Ones should be disturbed from their deep slumber and the world as we know it should be utterly destroyed. Stay cool, scary guys!

Warlords the popular computer fantasy conquest game designed by Australian company, SSG is being converted into a CCG and will be out later this year. Ian Trout of SSG tells us they are also about to release a **Soccer CCG** with the backing of the Australian Soccer Federation (ie. art will include full colour pictures of Australian soccer players). Ian says "this of its kind anywhere in the world; a sports collectors set that is also a playable game".

Last Crusade is due for an October release and comes from Chameleon Eclectic Entertainment, Inc., in conjunction with Pinnacle Entertainment. The *Last Crusade* is based on the invasion of France by the allies and the Battle of the Bulge - the struggle between the American and German forces in Northern France, Belgium, and Germany in late 1944 and early 1945. Cards feature infantry, armour, and air units from both German and American forces (each card generally representing a platoon-sized element), as well as terrain, leaders, fortifications, and special events. Apparently the game actually plays like a wargame but without the millions of fiddly counters and mind-snapping "housekeeping" that most wargames entail. Sounds like a blast.

Grymalkin

Always willing to promote anything "Australian made" we are very pleased to note the arrival of a new Australian game company called **Grymalkin**. These are based out of the Australian Capital Territory, Grymalkin have recently released **The Book of Angels** which is a generic sourcebook for any gothic punk rpg but seems mainly aimed at the Vampire crew. Review next issue.

New Releases

R.Talsorian Games: *Mekton Z* is here! Expect a review of this Anime RPG next issue. Also released this month is *Neotribes* - the nomadic sourcebook for *Cyberpunk*, and *Comme Il Faut*, the *Castle Falkenstein* Host's Guide. And speaking of *Castle Falkenstein*, look for a special inclusion in the next issue of *Australian Realms* - a full colour *New Europa* map, surrounded by an exciting *Castle Falkenstein* scenario.

Palladium: Hold your breath, cause here comes *Rifts Underseas* (glub, glub). Coming soon are *Robotech Strike Force*, *Nightspawn* and what no doubt will be a popular purchase - *Rifts Japan* (whip out your Wakizashis people!!!)

FASA: July releases for FASA include the *Aztlan* sourcebook for *Earthdawn*, the *MechWarrior Companion* and Carl Sargent's first *Earthdawn* novel (boy, he didn't waste any time!), *Shroud of Madness*.

Hogshead Publishing: *Warhammer FRP* comes back with a vengeance with a number of re-releases (*Shadows over Bogenhafen*) and some original works. *The Dying of the Light* is the first new WFRP adventure in three years, and *Apocrypha Now* is combination of out-of-print *White Dwarf* material and new articles. Also coming from Hogshead is *FRUP*, a satirical fantasy RPG in the tradition of Monty Python and Terry Pratchett.

White Wolf: Just in case you hadn't noticed, *White Wolf* magazine has changed its name to *Inphobia* (hey, don't ask us!). As readers of Card Magic would now be aware, *Rage*, the collectible trading card game is now available. *Giovanni Chronicles: The Last Supper* is the first *Black Dog* (read: naughty words and pictures) release for *Vampire*.

TSR: The first of the "optional" player's handbooks hits the streets this month - *Skills & Powers*, with the first DMs option rulebook (*High-level Campaigns*) due next month. The first of the new *Birthright* campaign books is also due for release this month (when we get a copy, we'll let you know what its about)

Next issue is NUMBER 25! Wow! And are we gonna make it a celebration. Hope to see you there. Until then, good gaming and...

...see you 'round like a D100!

THAT WAS THE NEWS

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