

ISSUE
27

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Australian Realms

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Editor
Nick Leaning

Assistant Editors
Lee Sheppard, Colin Taber

Layouts & Typesetting
Vindaloo Design Studio

Contributing Artists
Antonio Chiera, Danny May, Greg May, Tom Horne, April Littleton, Shaun Tan, Tonia Walden.

Contributing Writers
Paul Aebersold, Mike Bell, Andrew Boswell, Ben Chessell, Andrew Daniels, Graham Holman, Chris Johnson, Paul Mitting, John Pope, Lee Sheppard, Jonathan Spear, Colin Taber, Adam Whitt.

Publishers
N. Leaning & M. Page
Australian Realms
PO Box 220 Morley
Western Australia 6943

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by Shaun Tan.

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APOLOGY: We're sorry, but the KULT! poster did not arrive from the United States in time for this issue. We hope to bring this or another poster to you in issue 28 (April). Until then enjoy good reading, great gaming.

Editorial Letters

Happy New Year!

Old Father Time cheats! The years just reel by faster than a desperate role-player snatching up their fudged dice roll: "Natural twenty!!!"

So where to in 1996? We keep hearing about business closures, game properties changing hands, and key personnel flitting about or leaving and people are throwing up their hands and crying "The end of role-playing as we know it." Well I should hope so! Why would we want role-playing to stay the same forever, stagnating without fresh ideas and new energy? Change is good for business. The world is changing, we are changing, and so should the industry that caters to our gaming needs.

I'm sure the hobby can withstand another period of change (it's all happened before, you know), and whatever the format (RPGs, cards, tabletop battles, computer games etc.) the role-playing activity remains basically the same - exercising your imagination and having fun in the company of good friends.

You can expect some changes from Australian Realms too. We are already getting some solid indicators of where we've got to go from the Readers Poll responses we've already received. Have you had your say? If you have not already done so, please take the time to fill in the Poll form we provided in issue 26 and send it in to us by 31 March.

Then there is the role-player who never fudges his dice rolls. You gotta feel sorry for 'em as they announce the die result and ask - "Do I have to roll higher or lower than the listed number for my saving throw against instantaneous and irrevocable character obliteration?"

I love an honest player.

James O'Rance
St Marys, NSW

Hey Editor Guy Thing,

I just picked up *Changeling: The Dreaming* from my local games store. I thought it was pretty good, and certainly worthy of discussion. As the final chapter in the *World of Darkness* a great deal of interest is going to be focused upon this game, which is distinctly different from any of the four which preceded it.

I like the premise of *Changeling*; the loss of dreams and imagination to the encroaching banality of a mundane world gives the opportunity for a different kind of horror than the violence or oblivion of other games. Sure, the *World of Darkness* is a savage place, but it can also dreary and bleak; and for a race sustained by imagination and dreams, the second is the greatest fear.

One thing I didn't like about *Changeling* was the way America was focused upon (natural, I suppose, for the larger American audience, but still annoying). America is the centre of the *Dreaming* on Earth, as well as a smelting pot of the world's cultures. This is a little hard to swallow. America seems to me to be an incredibly banal place, especially when compared to the incredible creativity of other, more "primitive" cultures. And urban Australia seems to me just as much a smelting pot of cultures as the United States.

Overall, though, I would rate *Changeling* as a worthwhile purchase. Whilst there are some gross generalisations (Oh, the Whole World was excited by the Moon Landing in 1969! Including millions of Chinese farmers?) but otherwise, lotsa good stuff here.

James, I think Changeling sits well in United States, a relatively young and vibrant nation still coming to terms with its dreams. Acknowledged, Australia could just as easily fit this vision, but how many Americans would buy it?

For mine, the interesting thing with the closure of the World of Darkness series is wither to now? Inphobia has closed down, Ars Magica was sold some time ago, Mark Rein-Hagen has moved on to other (related?) projects, what interesting goodies will White Wolf be producing next?

Garry Fay
Ferntree Gully, VIC

Dear Australian Realms,

Please find enclosed several entries for your Castle Falkenstein competition. I hope you find them interesting. I am looking forward to reading your CF supplement covering Australia and hope to be able to contribute some of my own ideas to you in the future.

The other reason for my writing is to clear up a slight discrepancy in the convention information for the Conquest '96 Games Convention. The correct address for information should be:

Conquest '96

PO Box 310

Knoxfield MDA

Victoria 3180

Phone/Fax (03) 9758 9097

Finally, as an avid enthusiastic organiser of gaming conventions for over the past decade I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of Australian role-playing.

Garry, we have passed the entry on to R.Talsorian Games for judging. By the way, it is they, not us, who are producing the Castle Falkenstein supplements, although I know for a fact that Lee would very much like to have a crack at doing the Australian sourcebook. He is an avid Castle Falkenstein fan! And thanks for the thanks, it really is our great pleasure.

Jody MacGregor
Mount Isa, QLD

Dear Realms Staff,

Issue 25 was great, I was glad to see the bonus stuff was free, unlike *Dargon* with its useless CD. The death of *Card Magic* was good, you don't give extra space to RPG-related computer games or books, why should card games be different? I had mixed feelings when I first heard of *SolSpace* (another *Unae*-like series of articles only useful if you need a setting?) but so far it's pretty darn good. Some adventures & no Cyberpunk-specific rules would be perfect. Keep up the good work.

Jody, I'm not sure if Card Magic is quite dead yet but certainly the reader poll responses thus far are telling us that people want Realms to stick with what it does better than ANY other RPG magazine - provide useful, informative and entertaining role-playing resource material.

SolSpace and Unae are both designed as complete settings that you can pick up and play, but you don't have to use them that way. Pick and choose what bits you like best, change or discard the rest. ■

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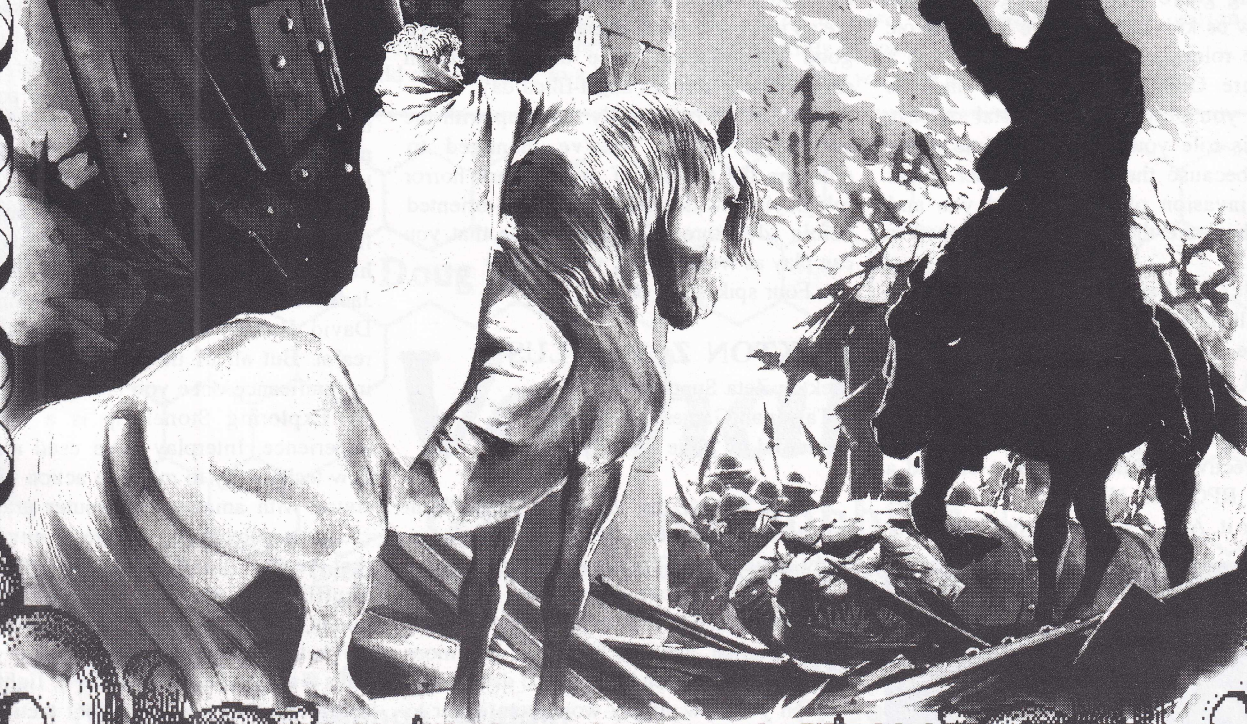
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RE VIEWS

NIGHTSPAWN

Dark Fantasy Horror RPG

Palladium Books, Inc

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

Yesterday you were like any other normal kid, doing school, Big Macs and squeezing your spots. Then the Dark Day dawned when the world took a sudden change for the worse, and so did you. You grew spikes and incredible powers. Today you are Nightspawn, a supernatural being from your own worse nightmares thrust into a dark, grim and gritty world that is besieged by 'relly relly' evil dudes. You are confused and frightened by this weird turn of events, but you don't have time to mope 'cause, although humanity don't see it that way, you're our only hope for dealing with the invasion of the intensely crabby Nightlords.

With **Nightspawn**, Palladium are buying into the angst-ridden horror storytelling genre whilst staying with what they know us kids-at-heart love best - heroic adventure roleplaying. Thus the world is a near future Gothic punk setting and the character you play is an immortal outcast, but in this role you don't have time to be maudlin because the world is under threat from an invasion of demons and you and your brethren are the only ones equipped to deal with it.

People familiar with Palladium's other games will have no trouble getting into this. The game mechanics are the same. Large chunks of text in this book have been lifted from the other core rulebooks (*Rifts* etc.) and many of the skills and equipment are the same. Effectively, Palladium have created a universal RPG and **Nightspawn** is another setting for it. And a very good one it is too.



C.J. Carella has created a dark gloomy world where gang's rule the streets and evil denizens from another dimension have taken control of the Government. Fighting this invasion is a number of underground organisations led by Nightspawn. Besides these warring protagonists, the Dark Day has awakened a whole array of nasties inspired by myth and legend - Wampyre's, Warlocks & Werewolves etc. Life is tough.

Beyond our thin veil of reality, and accessed via mirrors, exists a shadow world filled with horrors just waiting to feast on our P.P.E. (Palladium-speak for souls). Governed by the powerful and diabolical Nightlords, this place is a dark mirror of our own world populated by our doppelgangers (or are we doppelgangers of them?) and many creatures fell and foul. Their's is a twilight world where the streets are cobbled and vehicles pulled by slaves, where many characters from our reality and fiction have evil counterparts. In essence the Nightlands are an ideal setting for those of us who need a good old-fashioned dose of adventure in exotic places after an angst-filled day.

Palladium have really come up with the goods this time. They've managed to combine the flavour of month, dark horror roleplaying, with traditional action-oriented heroic adventure to create a game that you can play as well as read.

Four spikes out of five.

MEKTON ZETA PLUS

Mekton Zeta Supplement

R.Talsorian Games

Reviewed by Mike Bell

Zeta Plus, the technical supplement for the new edition of Mekton has been hotly anticipated. The new edition is much thicker, more detailed, includes new and modified rules that overcome the deficiencies of the original, and it is organised in a more logical and user friendly way. To design any mekton you now simply work from cover to cover and come out with the desired product.

The new rules allow for just about anything you may have seen in a Manga movie, comic book or sci-fi adventure including some of the more esoteric powers (I've always wondered were Optimus Prime sticks that trailer of his... see dimensional space in *Stupid Mekton Tricks*). The formalisation of rules to allow PC's with appropriate technical skills to design new or

improve existing technology is the number one improvement for mine. The assigning of a difficulty number and a total number of research points to a particular task and then using the excess by which the skill roll succeeds as the number of research points obtained per skill attempt is quite elegant. The changes to the design mechanica are too numerous to describe here, however they all seem to be the result of extensive play test modifications of the old supplement. On the whole most of the modifications I agree with (what happened to the autofire power??!!) and they do allow for a much more fluid design exercise.

As a package Mekton Zeta Plus is a useful and rewarding addition to the Mekton Zeta game rules and caters for those who want that extra detail or wish to play in a particular Amine universe.

See you Tech's amongst the blueprints.

STONEKEEP

Cinematic Roleplaying CD-Rom Game

Interplay

Reviewed by Nick Leaning

In issue 25 Andrew reviewed Interplay's *Dungeon Master II* and bemoaned the lack of "hi-res texture-mapped 3D objects, digitised speech and video images". Well here is a game by the same company that delivers all that and more. Apparently **Stonekeep** took nearly 30 man years to design and produce, and the effort certainly shows in both presentation and game play. The packaging is neat too, the box comes in two parts that mimic a crenellation, and features the holographic image of skeletal warriors attacking out of it. Inside the box, apart from the CD-Rom disk and rulebook there is hardback mini-novel written by Steve Jackson (of *Fighting Fantasy* fame) and David Pulver, set in Stonekeep's fantasy realm. But all of these trimmings pale into insignificance once you launch the game.

Exploring Stonekeep is a marvellous experience. Interplay have used innovative new technology to mix live action video and sound with animated computer graphics to create a convincing dungeon environment that really grabbed me by the throat. Shuffling or running through abandoned mines, dungeon corridors, flooded sewers ("What's that in the water!"), ice caverns ("It's s-s-so c-c-cold in here!"), fighting evil denizens whose chat, combat tactics, attack sequences and even deaths are so delightfully varied, and then solving puzzles and completing mini-quests along the way was more than enough to keep me entertained into the wee dark hours of the morning. My computer screen became a flickering gateway into another world. ("Come home, Nick!")

Stonekeep combines cinematic effects with interactive game play like no other game except maybe Mechwarrior II. My

favourite features: Full screen graphics - literally. Gorgeous spell effects. Monsters whose movements are based on live actors. Vibrant sound effects (scraping footsteps, sword swipes, crunching impacts, blood-curdling screams, creaky doors) that are crisp and real. Motion picture quality music which changes with each setting and really underscores the action. A journal that records your character sheet progress, clues to your quests, has an great autopmap function, and into which you can write your own notes. And a well-written storyline with plenty of atmosphere, humour and surprises.

Stonekeep has as good a role-playing feel to it as any computer game I've seen. The interaction with non-player characters, friend and foe, is very well-scripted. To begin with your alter ego Drake is alone but your party can be as large as four people. A series of allies join at various times to help you before going off to pursue their own goals. Even some of the "enemies" surprise you with unlooked for aid. It pays to ask questions first, bash later (hey, Peter?).

There are only a couple of minor things wrong with Stonekeep. The unlimited capacity of the inventory is both a blessing and a curse; after scrounging gear from scores of defeated opponents the inventory becomes so cluttered that retrieving the right item for the job at hand can be tedious. Plus the monsters, although intelligent enough, tend to lack aggression. Some would say this is a good thing as, coupled with relatively easy puzzles, steady progress is assured without the endless grind of combat featured in some other computer RPGs.

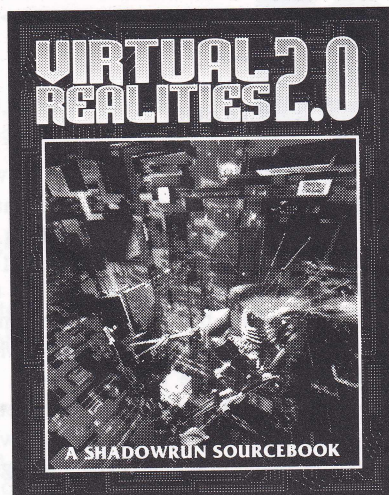
I am thoroughly enjoying this game. Stonekeep is the best computer adventure game I've ever seen or played. It's a 10!

VIRTUAL REALITIES 2.0

Shadowrun Sourcebook
FASA Corporation
Reviewed by John Pope

For a long time one of the curses of cyberpunk games, has been the impracticability of running the computer hacking side of them. Both R.Talsorian Games and FASA Corp put forward ideas which most of us considered to be completely unusable for player characters. You know the scene, it's time for the Decker to jack in and everyone else yawns and starts going to sleep. Well, FASA have apparently been listening to our cries of "This is drek!".

Virtual Realities 2.0 completely rewrites the rules for decking and the Matrix in Shadowrun. It radically simplifies the process of designing a system and in turn hacking that system. No longer does the GM have to map out every little sub section (you know those funky little maps with squares and circles, and assorted other shapes you



ignore in all the books). Now it is all covered by the System Rating (a number), Security Code (the colour) and the Sub-System Rating (numbers). The Sub-system Rating is divided into five parts each representing a different portion of the system (eg. Access and Files). Much better.

Apart from the massive re-write on the basic rules, this book offers three other very good ideas. The first is SOTA, or State of the Art. If you do not pay the SOTA cost, you are slowly overtaken, until your cutting edge program is useless drek. The second, is how to handle AI's in your Shadowrun game, and the last is the rules for running Otaku. Otaku are the Cyberadepts and Techno-shamans, children of the Matrix first mentioned rather cryptically in the Denver sourcebook.

If you want to include decking in your game then I recommend this book as well worth the money. Also, by adding 10 to various numbers, VR 2.0 gives you a very useful set of rules for R.Talsorian's *Cyberpunk* game.

COMME IL FAUT

Castle Falkenstein Sourcebook
R.Talsorian Games
Reviewed by Lee Sheppard

This is simply a *must have* for any potential players or hosts of the Castle Falkenstein RPG. **Comme Il Faut**, the players/hosts guide, is split into two sections. The first contains an alphabetic listing of all of those things that one should know if one intends to base a campaign in the Castle Falkenstein universe - how to behave, entertain, join a club, how long it takes to travel from place to place (with some nice illustrations of the interiors of a typical train carriage and passenger vessel), even a list of current events for the years 1869 to 1880. This section serves its purpose extremely well, removing much of the initial learning curve required to play in the world of 1870's New Europa (or at least wade through a number of encyclopedias).

The second section provides rules

updates, answers to frequently asked questions (and most of mine have now been answered), an alternative combat and feat resolution system (I may never use dice again), a much simpler magic system, how to play Falkenstein as a LARPG, various ideas on how to develop campaign themes, and perhaps this section's best feature, how to do away with practically all of the rules and simply *role-play* each situation. Easy to read, wonderfully humorous and just simply *innovative*.

OK, there *are* a few simple editorial errors, the most glaring for us down-under being the placement of Melbourne where Brisbane is on a map of the main sea routes. But at least they haven't left any tables out this time (one of the Lorebooks was left out of the original rule book - did anyone else notice?).

At first glance, the emphasis in *Comme Il Faut* seems to be squarely aimed at the typical "Boy's Own" type of swashbuckling adventure. Not that there's anything wrong with that. However, reading between the lines, you soon discover that there are so many other levels on which this game can be played, should that be your desire. Power gamers, fun-loving monster bashers, angst-ridden "Oh, God, I can't have a meaningful role-playing session unless I end up depressed" players, lovers of dark, violent horror (trust me, the Unseelie are *nasty* pieces of work) - all can be accommodated with an obliging and clever host. This game has everything.

By now, it should be fairly obvious how I feel about this game. It's the sort of game that I joined the role-playing hobby to find, even if it does come 18 years after I started. For me, the Castle Falkenstein RPG remains R.Talsorian Games' crowning achievement.

PARANOIA: Fifth Edition

Dark Humour Roleplaying Game
West End Games
Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

In the not too distant future Orwell's Big Brother predictions run full tilt into Huxley's "Brave New World", resulting in the nearly high tech world of Alpha Complex where everyone and everything is the product of the almost omnipotent Computer and where a clone's every move is under surveillance. On the surface all is as it should be, each vat-bred citizen has his or her allotted task (with appropriate Security Clearance) and thrives under the beneficent rule of the Computer. But there are rumours of dissent and discontent in Alpha Complex, aberrant citizens who are unhappy with their lot; enter the players. They are given the role of Troubleshooters, special agents of the Computer tasked with the job of rooting out these subversives. This is where the fun

really starts as it turns out that you might be just the sort of person you are looking for, and certainly the other members of your party are behaving like they are. Time to die!

Paranoia is a rarity in the gaming world, a game that's purely for fun. Any game in which, "players who want to survive must learn to sacrifice each other's characters to the bloody grip of the Gamesmaster," immediately has my vote (who said that I play that way normally?). Humour is the real arbiter in this game and if you can't stand the thought of cheating, backstabbing and the referee killing you off for the slightest infraction, then this may not be for you. The Computer appears to be at war with everyone and death can be instant and spectacular. The emphasis is on fast and furiously paced action and dark humour. Fortunately, Troubleshooters are equipped with six clones which parachute in to replace your fallen character, but don't expect these to last too long.

The game mechanics are simple, with a strict emphasis on ignoring rules that don't contribute to enjoyment. Characters are defined by standard statistics, agility, dexterity, endurance etc., plus a good selection of whacky skills. Experience levels are measured in Security Clearance, and promotion through the levels of Security Clearance in turn increases your access to information. Knowledge of information above your Security Clearance is strictly forbidden. Player characters get to join one of a number of highly treasonable Secret Societies. My favourite is the Seal Club which is for people who are tired of the metallic confines of the underground bunker and who are in love with the idea of the great outdoors. A club for the future-hippy, but more importantly, you get to call yourself a Seal Clubber. Ho! Ho! Ho! (Well I liked it!).

On top of this, characters are afflicted with Mutations. These range from the sublime of X-Ray vision to the ridiculous of being a Matter Eater. These must be kept secret however, as Mutations are illegal and totally treasonous (the Computer's vats simply are not programmed to create imperfect clones). They also quite often don't work, another good idea.

I must admit that **Paranoia** has me hooked. Once you get over the American humour ("A smile on your face beats a truncheon to the skull any daycycle." Well hit me with a dead fish!) the game is more than playable and, with a bunch of players willing to suspend disbelief and ignore the rulebook, a whole heap of fun.

Rates three out of five bowls of chips.

GURPS GREECE

GURPS Sourcebook

Steve Jackson Games

Reviewed by Mike Bell

This supplement provides a well researched trieste describing two major historical periods. The first is known as the "Heroic period" which runs from about 1600 BC to about 1150BC. The history of this period is generally based on Homeric myth and encompasses those heroic legends which we all know and love and Hollywood has done to death. Material in this section allows players to adventure in the time when the gods meddled in human events and great heroes like Hercules and Jason and his Argonauts were out forging their legendary reputations. The second or "Classical period" runs from about 800BC to 323BC and covers the rise of the Greek city states to the death of Alexander the Great. This well documented period involves players in the intrigues between Greek cities, the Peloponnesian Wars and Alexander's conquest of Persia. There is also a section on the every day life of a Greek citizen, their religious beliefs and the flora and fauna (both natural and mythical) of their world.

This supplement is extremely useful for players who wish to run a campaign based in Ancient Greece (I particularly like the side bars with brief descriptions of cities, events, famous people and so forth). And, as with all GURPS sourcebooks, the material is easily adapted to other game systems.

SKY POINT & VIVANE

Earthdawn Campaign Set

FASA Corporation

Reviewed by Lee Sheppard

Another nicely packaged Earthdawn product from FASA, this boxed set comes with two full colour maps (the city map especially useful), a set of player handouts (on really nice paper, almost too nice to break up) and three adventure books (72, 48 & 64 pages) all profusely illustrated.

The Theran Empire represents the bad guys of the Earthdawn setting (apart from the various monsters & horrors), an Empire with similar ideals to that of the Roman Empire in that they equate the taking of slaves with saving a culture from its own internal conflicts - nice argument if you're the *dominant* culture. **Sky Point & Vivane** details the Theran Empire's sole outpost in Barsaive (the starting area of the game).

The three books cover different areas of Vivane Province. Book One details the Theran Empire and Barsaivian Vivane, while Book Two provides background information on Theran Vivane (the city of Vivane houses both Barsaivians and Therans). Book Three covers the overall area known as Vivane

Province, with special sections on the slaver's town of Vrontok and Sky Point, which is actually a huge fortress raised on massive columns above the aforementioned slaver's town. Each book provides useful maps, interesting characters and adventure ideas aplenty, although many of these are the briefest shell of a plot. A supplement called **Sky Point Adventures** is due out soon, so lovers of campaign length adventures should have plenty to keep them interested in the various locations detailed throughout the boxed set.

A must for Earthdawn fans.

WAR AT SEA

Computer Wargame Collection

Quantum Quality Productions, Inc

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

War at Sea is a collection of three strategy games linked together by the common theme of the sea and the men who go to war on it.

First up there is **Grandest Fleet**, graphically, probably the nicest of the three games. This game revolves around taking a big fleet of ships and capturing cities. Each city gives you access to more resources so that you can build more and larger fleets and then go out and conquer more cities. The game reminded me a little of Simcity. You choose to build various options in your cities. Universities, for example, speed along your technological level allowing you to create early warning systems which become essential if your opponent attacks with submarines. You can also choose to attempt to bribe a city to fall into your grasping claws rather than risk an assault. There is a variety of generic ships to choose from which can be added to as you progress. Not a bad little strategy game, requiring you to balance a variety of resources as you control and increase your fleets.

Second of the three is **Lost Admiral**. This again is a strategy game which does little more than take a passing nod at reality in favour of exciting game play. The background to the story is rather tongue in cheek. You play a Rear Admiral who is discredited by his peers and loses his rank then later gets a job in his mate's Navy and has to work his way back to Admiral to exonerate himself. Happens all the time. So how's he going to achieve this? All he's gotta do is conquer the world. This is a game of geographic conquest. It reminds me a little of the excellent game Empire. Be prepared to put in a lot of hours as you work to conquer the globe. There are a number of scenarios which increase in difficulty and combine well into a campaign so that your Admiral can progress to his former rank.

The final game, is a direct simulation of war at sea. **WWII-Battles of the South**

Pacific allows you to engage in the major battles and missions of the American-Japanese conflicts of World War II. Early missions are easier, generic, usually allowing you to choose your own ships etc., but you soon move to actual re-creations of the major engagements of the campaign such as the Coral Sea and Midway. Ships and aircraft are accurate portrayals of the real thing and become available only when they actually did in history, and there are some neat graphics of the major sinkings.

This is an excellent collection. The games offer a variety of challenges which can be played against human or machine. Each game comes with a comprehensive manual and have varying difficulty levels that can be set to allow you to slide easily into them, gradually progressing as you get better. Granted there are no ray traced graphics, the sound is a little shaky, and you may have to squint to see some of the action, but for those of us who fell into the hobby through pushing little cardboard counters around coloured maps these games hold an endless fascination. Alone, each might be a little dodgy at full price, but together in **War At Sea** they represent top value for money.



INQUISITION

Doomtrooper CCG expansion set.
Heartbreaker Hobbies
Reviewed by
Chris Johnson

These cards are **NASTY!** Big numbers, big effects, very hard hitting. While I was opening the packs a friend, and Doomtrooper player, was making his own evaluation of the cards. He agreed that they were bad news to anyone content with the first set. He was very surprised, as was I, to find an Apostle in the set. In fact all the Apostles are in the set. Ouch.

When you look at it closer you see what makes it so intense. A new card type - Relic, and a new Art form - Summoning combine with new personalities to greatly enhance the original release. In my opinion, much of this class of stuff should have been included with the first release.

I play a (small) Brotherhood deck, and by God is it nastier now. As the name suggests, this expansion deals mainly with the Brotherhood and the Dark Legion. And while the Dark Legion do very well with new recruits, the new Summoning Art makes the brotherhood into a force to be feared. Indeed, where previously players may have taken the best from each of the Corporations, Brotherhood and Dark Legion, there are now substantial advantages in specialising in one faction. If the expansions continue in

this way, I can see some people specialising in one form of the Art, or one Apostle.

The artwork shows promise too. I wasn't a huge fan of the original artwork and, although it hasn't changed greatly, there is the odd hint of computer graphics.

However, it's not perfect. One of my major complaints still exists. Cards that are purely more powerful than other cards, for example, cards with the exact same wording but a higher number. A few cards of this type lurk in this expansion. Heartbreaker seem to be relying on Rarity to restrict the number of these cards any one person has. WoTC found out the problem with this.

All in all, this is a major re-work of a promising product. **Inquisition** has really revived my collection of, and my interest in Doomtrooper.

WETLANDS

Cinematic Action CD-Rom Game
New World Computing
Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

Wetlands is a fast paced cinematic action game set in the Earth's near future, where the testing of a doomsday weapon has radically altered the planet's climate, immersing most of it in water and drowning 90% of the population. The survivors cluster like scum in small underwater communities. The man responsible for this disaster has been broken out of a high security prison, and you, John Cole, bounty hunter, are just the man to bring him back to justice. Time to go hunting.

Wetlands is a combination of traditional lightning paced shoot 'em up spiced with ray traced graphics and some fantastic cell animation. On the arcade sequences the screens fairly flow by. The graphics are brilliant. From the moment you fling your stylishly drawn rear into the nearest aqua ship the game rockets along with you getting to shoot anything and everything that moves. Driven by a pumping soundtrack the game gives you loads of interesting stuff to shoot your guns and missiles at. The missions are progressively more difficult, featuring a variety of perspectives and weapons to stave of the feeling of sameness.

There are a number of puzzles to solve and each section is connected by a storyline which unfolds through the excellent animated sequences. The manual is sparse (two pages in the center of a comic book actually), but then what's to know? Options include a facility to calibrate your joystick, high scores and the choice of playing either the campaign (with story) or just get straight into shooting stuff. Simple, but interactive? Well not really. But then that's not what this game is about. This is a fast and furious shoot 'em up with a stylish setting, good music and exceptional graphics. Top notch.



CHANGELING THE DREAMING

Fantasy Storyteller RPG
White Wolf Games
Reviewed by Michael Butler

Changeling the Dreaming is the fifth and final instalment of White Wolf's World of Darkness series. It comes packaged in a big, colourful paperback, crammed with gorgeous full-colour art. In it, players take the roles of the Kithain (Faeries to the uninitiated) who have chosen to remain on earth after the Sundering with Arcadia. Struggling to maintain their Fae nature against the crushing weight of mankind's banal beliefs and a world view which disavows fairies and monsters as nonsense, the Kithain must constantly guard against being overcome by banality and forgetting their true nature. The game is thematically similar to *Mage*, in that both depict a struggle for individual belief and expression in the face of an overpowering consensual view of the world which has lost its capacity to dream and wonder. It also bears echoes of *Werewolf*, in that the Kithain too are caught between their two natures, unable to fully embrace either. And both species bear a special relationship to Luna.

There is much to recommend this game. It benefits from the lessons learned in its four predecessors (*Vampire*, *Werewolf*, *Mage* and *Wraith*) and uses the by-now familiar Storyteller system. Rules are included for Cantrips, a kind of Faerie magic which uses Glamour, the energy of creativity and imagination, to produce weird effects which boggle the mind. The effects of cold iron are covered, as are the dangers of bedlam (a kind of Faerie madness), oaths, courtly love, enchanted treasures, chimerical creatures and the enemies of the Kithain. Players may choose from nine kinds of Kithain, from steadfast Trolls and noble Sidhe to mysterious Sluagh and disgusting Redcaps.

But few things are perfect, and *Changeling* is no exception. I would have liked to see a lot more on the enemies of the

Kithain. The nature of the interactions between the Seelie and Unseelie courts, for example, could have been detailed in more depth. And it's a very demanding game. I'm not sure if this is a criticism or not, but it requires quite an effort to surrender totally to the mood of the game, to capture the seriousness of a child hard at play and the frivolity of an adult hard at work. For the Kithain are both playful and serious, ridiculous and profound. For any role player, this is a tough challenge.

But persevere, for this is a game which will make you dream again. You'll rediscover the importance of helping your four-year-old nephew (secretly a dragon warrior) banish his nasty next-door neighbour (the evil wizard) to the compost heap (actually the dragon's tomb) with an ostrich feather (the mighty feather-sword). If you yearn for the magical days of your childhood, when anything was possible and there was always time to rescue the kidnapped prince (or princess) one more time, then you need this game. After all, life would be pretty banal without it.

DRAGON DICE

Collectible Dice Game

TSR, Inc

Reviewed by Chris Johnson

As I opened the box, one thing was sure, this is no Magic rip-off and that's probably its attraction. While opening the packs, I had little idea what I would find. With several races, five colours of magic and dragons, the feel is not unlike that of M:TG. This could be TSR's collectable winner. The races in this release are Coral Elves, Dwarves, Goblins and Lava Elves. The game works with three armies from each side paired off against each other, trying to manoeuvre up and down a terrain in an effort to capture it or defeat the other forces. There are 60 units to choose from with each specialising in Melee, Manoeuvres, Missiles, or Magic. With the rare units having some specialised action.

The look of the dice is quite nice too. While the single colour dragons are a bit dull, the multicoloured races have a sort of plasma field mix of their colours, rather than alternating flat sides. Anyway, it makes a change to cardboard. Even so, there are problems. While it's almost right, it seems that Black Magic is somewhat overbalanced, and as the game progresses and the balance of power shifts, it tend to tip violently too quickly, making it obvious who's going to win quite quickly. Also a short, good run of luck can devastate your opponent in a small game.

In conclusion, this is a totally new, promising product. With a few bugs ironed out in the expansion, it should continue to build into a decent game.

D-DAY: AMERICA INVADES

Computerised World War II Board Game
Avalon Hill

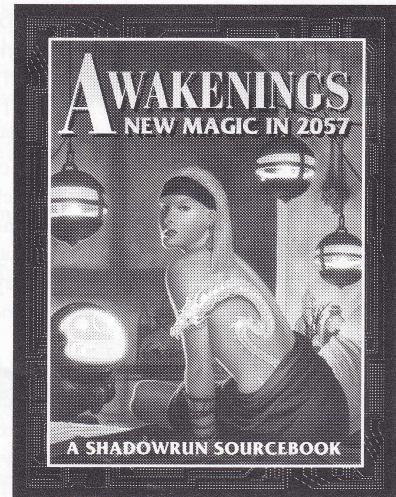
Reviewed by Graham Holman

D-Day: America Invades follows on from the highly rated *Stalingrad* game released last year. As the title suggests, it concentrates mainly on the American landings at Utah and Omaha beaches, and largely ignores the landings at Gold, Juno and Sword. Scenarios commence after the initial beach landings have been completed and include the first pushes to link both beach heads, or the survival of the SS counterattacks around Carentan. All scenarios can be weighted in favour of either the Allied or German forces, and provide plenty of variety for those players who are tired of trying to overcome the historical advantages given to either side.

The game is aimed at the serious board wargamer and has no annoying arcade sequences or video battle recreations to detract from the playability of the game. Rightly so, Avalon Hill have concentrated on what they know best; producing quality historical recreations, using the vast amount of board game experience they have accumulated over two decades. In converting their gaming systems over to the computer they have been able to incorporate all the great things true board gamers wish to have without the hassle of sorting thousands of counters and calculating hundreds of formulas to determine supply points and combat results. The only thing missing is the joy, or misery, of throwing your own dice. There is a comprehensive game guide and plenty of on screen advice to work out how to play the game. The system uses standard Avalon Hill rules which take into account Terrain, Armour Effects, Supply, Leadership, Fatigue etcetera. There is no air combat, as air superiority is factored into the ground support factors available.

As in *Stalingrad*, both sides move concurrently, so not all troop movements are guaranteed to occur, as enemy action and interdiction cause havoc with your best laid plans. Options such as enemy strength, air superiority, fog of war, hidden movement, weather are all variable. Tasks such as allocating supply, artillery, air support, naval support, movement and attacks can be handled individually or handed over to the computer. Be careful though, as these over eager subordinates will quite readily move all your unallocated troops and resources if you forget to give them your own orders.

If you want a top wargame to while away the hours, then grab a copy of this one. I just hope the British (and other Allies) half of *D-Day* turns up soon. I'm sure the Americans didn't do everything on the day.



AWAKENINGS: NEW MAGIC IN 2057

Shadowrun Supplement

FASA Corporation

Reviewed by John Pope

You remember that scene. From the movie "When Harry Met Sally". You know, the cafe scene. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Well, if you have a Shadowrun game with a lot of magic then this book is a definite must have. First it balances out the rules for Physical Adepts (if you think they have some sort of advantage over Street Sams and company. using just the basic rules, then you are not running something right). Second, or perhaps more importantly depending on your stance, it provides rules for creating your own magical Traditions, and Totems. It also includes Voodoo (if you know a lot about Voodoo then you will have to adjust your thinking a little), and Totems for para-animals.

But wait, there's more!

Yep this just covers the majority of the new rules. There are more rules that are mainly clarifications of existing rules, new spells, all the sort of things you expect in a good supplement for a game. As is standard for Shadowrun products this book is divided between the fictional section, where 'runners give out the good oil in entertaining text, and the rules section; roughly half for each section. In addition to being a good read and informative, the fiction section offers some really handy hints for how to run your spell casters, as both a Shadowrun player and referee.

All in all *Awakenings* has lots of really good stuff in it (even if the art is still lacking a bit, for mine. But someone out there must like it as this style has dominated the last three Shadowrun releases.)

Yes, in my opinion (and that of my fellow players) this book is a necessity for a Shadowrun player. In fact we rate it as one of the six most essential books for playing the Shadowrun game.

ANVIL OF DAWN

Epic Fantasy RPG CD-Rom Game

New World Computing

Reviewed by Nick Leaning

I came to this game with a *Stonekeep* hangover and initially found it wanting in comparison to that GREAT game. But after a few hours pottering around in its setting, pursuing a quest to save the known world from the evil and overpowering Warlord (were all these bad dudes dropped on their heads at birth?), I found myself quite at home and thoroughly enjoying playing *Anvil of Dawn*. In this game you control one of five available characters sent on the perilous quest; after a brief introduction to some of the people you're hoping to save you are sent out to explore the world of Tempest, picking up information, treasure, magic spells and items along the way as you strive to avert the end of civilisation as Tempest knows it (Tolkien really does have a lot to answer for - surely there are other plots!).

Anvil of Dawn has the classic *Dungeonmaster* interface with its first person perspective on the game world. Most things can be picked up, poked, spoken to, bashed, or have spell a cast on it. All of the "monsters" announce their presence with a perky challenge (digitised voices) before stepping up to be hacked, slashed and burned. There are plenty of these adversaries, beautifully drawn but with limited animation and fairly static combat routines, once you've worked them out they rarely lay a finger on you unless you're feeling too lazy to dodge and weave.

The world of Tempest consists of a

dozen or so underground complexes linked by a beautiful 3D rendered wilderness. The complexes contain many evil denizens, some simple and some not so simple puzzles (when in doubt pull all levers and depress all pressure plates), and several non-player characters with clues and aid to offer you as you pursue your quest to thwart the evil Warlord. These were varied and interesting enough in design and graphics to keep me exploring.

The graphics and sound are bright, colourful and appealing giving the game a just the right high fantasy tone and atmosphere. The game play is entertaining and progress reasonably swift, and I found enough novelty in *Anvil of Dawn* to keep my voracious appetite for new experiences whetted, and with five starting characters to choose from it has reasonable replay value.

A very satisfying fantasy adventure.

BLADES

Legacy War of Ages Supplement

Black Gate Publishing

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

The tavern is one of the oldest cliches in fantasy adventure gaming; the player characters sup a few brews whilst waiting for the plot hook to arrive and whisk them off to adventure. Hey, if it works, why fix it! That's obviously Black Gate's attitude, as they present this first supplement for their techno-gothic RPG (if you didn't catch our review of *Legacy* in issue 23 then think Highlander movies and you've got the full picture). *Blades* presents an exclusive club where all the best-dressed immortals go to

while away the eons.

Although limited to only the one location, the scope of this book is huge. Apart from prosaic details like floor plans and room descriptions, *Blades* presents the Legacy referee with a large roster of well-defined NPCs, three warring immortal factions, fourteen magic swords and some great adventure ideas and advice to get your campaign up and running. Each NPC and his/her blade is cleverly designed to spawn at least a couple of neat adventure ideas, and most of them interconnect. Players will not be sitting idle in this "tavern" for long.

The art has improved, the text is very reader friendly, and the whole sourcebook is rich in adventure hooks.

It seems that some cliché's really are immortal!

MECHWARRIOR COMPANION

Mechwarrior II Supplement

FASA Corporation

Reviewed by Mike Bell

Containing a lot of useful supplemental material for the Mechwarrior II RPG this release covers character generation for new archetypes, new creatures and equipment plus some optional rules for personal combat. Add to this some sound advice on how to integrate the Mechwarrior and Battletech games and a couple of less useful lists of BEM's (big evil monsters - watch out for the Mech-munching mega fauna!) and techno gismos and you have a reasonably useful but non-essential companion to a very under-rated roleplaying game. ■

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PIRATES OF THE MAROKLARA

by Paul Abersold & Colin Taber

The Pirates of the Maroklara?
Yes, they are something to be wary of, particularly the Human crews. Over time some have gathered into groups, in their own way they are building floating nations, something akin to what the war-like Ogre Clans have, but it is not them I fear so much (apart from Kara Barras of course), it is the independents I loathe, their lack of standards, and their willingness to kill you in a hundred horrid ways in an attempt to collect some infamy.

-Forwao, Elven Charlatan & Chronicler of Wair-Rae

The Maroklaran Sea has long been full of petty sea lords, pirates, smugglers and free agents who roamed the open sea. These ruthless crews have held fair trade hostage and travellers in terror, a matter only made worse by the discovery of a small island by a lone pirate vessel nearly a century ago.

HISTORY

Before the rise of the modern-day Pirate Lords, the seas of Dormetia were filled with numerous pirate ships and crews. Any pirate would attack any merchant ship if the chance of winning was high. A free-for-all of banditry, slavery and feuding made the seas doubly more hazardous than nature had already made them.

Eventually the situation became unworkable for merchants, they in turn lobbied their many states to establish regular patrols by the naval ships their taxes had helped build. Soon the most powerful states of the Heletian League had forced the major shipping lanes open, driving the pirates to hunt in more isolated areas. This time was known as the Pirate Wars.

During a routine patrol, just less than a hundred years ago, a navy frigate was giving chase to the pirate ship "Famine". It was

captained by Caid the Butcher (so called as he would cut out the tongues of all the captains whose ships he boarded). The Famine, being no match for a warship, fled and managed to lose the frigate in a storm. By storms end however, the Famine needed repairs and thus Caid looked for a safe cove to lay anchor. The lookout spotted a small island with a sheltered cove and so the ship made for her. While repairs were under way, Caid and some of the crew set off to explore the island in search of fresh water and fruit.

They found ruins of ancient design. The writings on the walls were of no language any of the pirates had ever seen, not to be bored with scholarly debate the pirates soon concentrated on the matter at hand, to loot the townsite of any valuables.

During their searching they discovered an intact temple to an unknown god. Finding a sealed room they soon broke down the door expecting fabulous wealth and treasures. Instead, they unleashed an entity not known to Unae for thousands of years. Behind the door was the very ancient spirit called Sharu.

Sharu was imprisoned by a long dead empire, and for good reason. Once the seal on the door had been broken, Sharu quickly possessed Caid and the crew with him. Absorbing all their memories, Sharu sized up the situation and took action. Using Caid's body, Sharu brought the rest of the crew on the ship to the temple and claimed them also.



Determined not to be imprisoned again, Sharu decided to use the pirates to protect the temple and island. From this base it would seek out its enemies and plan its vengeance.

Using Caid and his crew, Sharu set out on a plan of expansion. Gifted with Sharu's intellect the Famine soon captured other ships and their crews. The ships were sailed back to the island and the captains and crews possessed by Sharu. Slowly the fleet grew.

Sharu was freed in the first years following the Expulsion in the Heletian League (issue 13). So as the spirit was consolidating its power so to were many Cabalist refugees joining pirate crews. In time many would come to join with Sharu.

Of all the Pirate Lords however, none

holds quite the power that Sharu's fleet wields. With spies in many merchant houses and hundreds of ports the fleet was able to determine which ships would be carrying valuable cargo. With this information Sharu selectively targeted ships, grabbing what was needed for the island and for its numerous smaller bases. This information also reduced the need for large scale pirating which would have forced the naval powers to engage in escort operations and pirate hunting missions. By keeping the pirate operations small and selective, this huge force seemed to remain a small nuisance.

Despite Sharu's attempts to remain unknown, the spirits growing power base and the establishment of shrines by its followers has been noticed by those who can detect such events. Members of the Cabal have been sent to investigate, as have some members of the Church of Baimiopia. All wish to find out what is causing this disturbance and its origin.

The popular theory of those in certain organisations and high enough to know of Sharu hold one of two opinions. The majority feel that Sharu is a free spirit, somehow anchored to its base island. Others claim that the spirit is in fact yet another aspect of the horned God, suggesting that Sharu is but a twisted 'sea' aspect of this great evil.

The growth of Sharu's fleet and its network around Lucera was matched in other areas of the Maroklara by a handful of charismatic (or ruthless) leaders amongst the pirates. Soon, what had been a mosaic of a thousand pirate bands and ships was consolidating into a dozen strong pirate fleets and hundred smaller operators, these freelancers waiting to see which way the wind blew before throwing their lot in with the pirate fleets. Some of the other fleets were controlled by ruthless personalities that demanded respect, others by charisma. The majority of the new Pirate Lords were Cabalists, they blatantly used their magic to win every advantage.

One of the most infamous of these independents is Kara Barras, a female necromancer and captain of *the Reaver* a ship that travels with two other large ships and holds at least three other Cabalists amongst its crew (issue 14 page 8).

The entire pirate fleet culture is parasitic by nature. Although they produce minor foodstuffs on their island bases, most goods that the pirates use and consume have been stolen. The majority of their ships are captured.

FRIENDLY PORTS

No government is openly friendly with the Pirate Lords. Even those who try to be receptive have made little headway trying to

get a conference with the elusive pirate leaders. However, some ports are looser with their regulations and required ship documentation. This makes them a haven for those whose operations are not totally legitimate. The ports of Corium (Greater Baimiopia), Eamastou (Kramer Confederation), Karlamar (Burvoy), Mathou (Lucera) and Nerva (Evora) are all known to be ports where pirates and smugglers can land and not be troubled too much by the law. Although most of the pirate fleet is made up of captured ships, the building yard in Mathou is known not to ask difficult questions. Most other yards will be suspicious when an order for a military style vessel is made and no known naval power is making the purchase.

WHERE

Most pirate fleets concentrates there actions on the sea lanes between Greater Baimiopia, the Kramer Confederation, Evora and Lixus. Many smaller independent ships of course operate throughout Dormetia's waters, but the seas around the above nations belongs to the major pirate fleets, including the Fleet of Sharu.

The major pirate fleets concentrate on acquiring three kinds of goods. The first is foodstuffs. The second kind are bulk goods of some value. Items falling into these criteria include fine rugs, rare timber, wine, quality furniture and cloth. What isn't needed

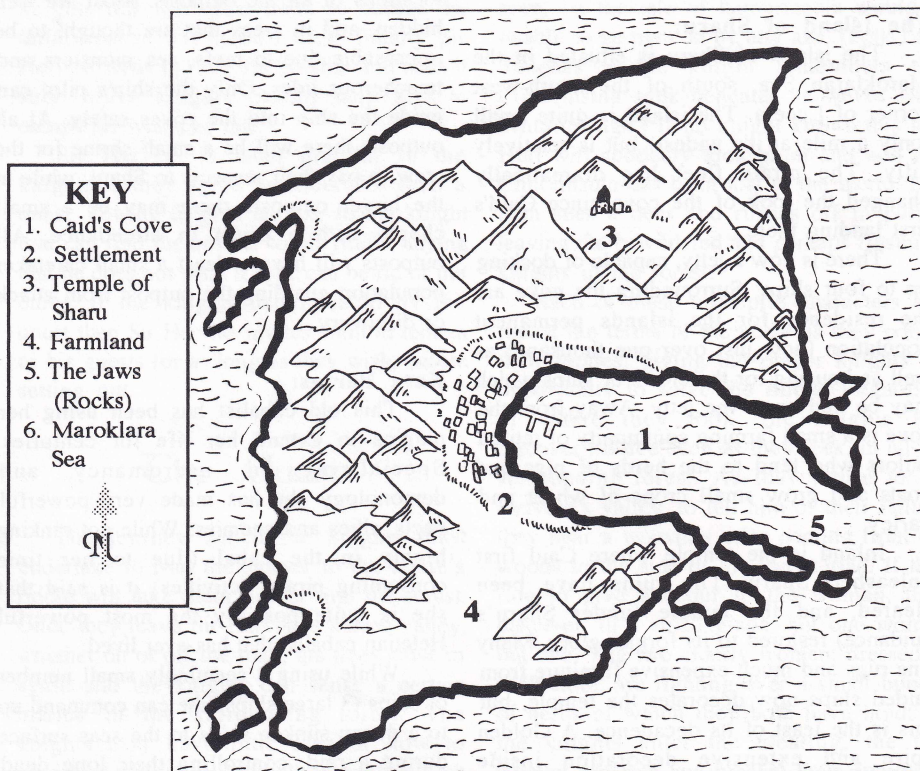
by the pirates is sold at any port where the buyer doesn't ask too many questions. The third thing that the pirates raid for is gold. While rarely transported by sea, and always well guarded, gold is a very tempting target. The shipments from Tessa (issues 10 & 11) in the Kramer Confederation have long been a favoured target.

As mentioned above, there are a few friendly ports that pirates may visit. Within these harbours the port officials are known to allow pirates to conduct their operations, provided that they are well compensated for their actions. With these officials out of the way, the pirate fleet can easily get repairs, off load stolen cargoes and resupply at any time of the year.

SHIPS AND TACTICS

The pirate fleets mainly use converted merchant ships for their operations. When a ship is captured, if it's in good condition and fast enough to make a good raider, it will be taken to Mathou (Lucera) to be modified and repaired.

Some of the pirate fleets do control a few warships, however most of these are old ships, which are easily outclassed by a modern warship. In many cases these old hulks are more a matter of prestige for the pirate fleets, or a mobile base and supply store than an active raiding vessel. All pirate ships have distinct names, colours and flags (used alongside the standard skull and



THE ISLAND OF SHARU

crossbones pirate flag). Many of the pirate fleets also use flags to signal each other in a similar manner and 'language' to what the professional navies of the Heletian League States and Evora use.

Since many Cabalists joined the pirate fleets after the Expulsion, standard ship to ship fighting has changed dramatically. The Cabal members amongst the fleet generally specialise in elemental magic. With such abilities it is a standard tactic to becalm the target ship using either air sprites or sea spirits. If the pirate vessel intend to capture the enemy vessel, only to board it, then the mage may use fire elementals to burn the sails. Once the enemy vessel is becalmed, the pirate crew will board the ship and kill any of the crew who do not surrender. When the crew has been subdued the pirates will take whatever cargo they want and leave. The pirate crews are not as bloodthirsty as many governments portray them to be. But, on the other hand, sadistic killings, rape and other heinous crimes are known to occur. If the boarded vessel is needed, then the crew will be held in the cargo holds or killed (generally made to walk the plank, or set adrift in a row boat) and a skeleton crew from the pirate ship will sail the captured vessel back to the captains base. In some cases members of the captured crew may be able to join the pirates, or may be sold as slaves.

PIRATE FLEETS & LOCATIONS

The Island of Sharu:

The island of Sharu is situated in the Maroklaran Sea, south of the south-west corner of Lucera. The island is quite small (only a mile at it's widest) but is relatively hilly. The pirate fleet has dramatically changed the look of the cove since Caid's first landing there.

There is now a jetty, capable of docking up to four ships. Surrounding the cove are the residence for the islands permanent population (now just over one thousand) as well as housing for the crews of ships which may be tied up at the jetty. Away from the cove is a small farming community of retired sailors who tend to the herds of pigs and goats and grow small crops of wheat and barley.

Inland is the temple where Caid first unleashed Sharu. The ruins have been cleared, and the temple (under Sharu's guidance) restored to its former glory. Many fine rugs and much expensive furniture from raided ships now decorates the temple, but this is the least of its decadence. A Golden spire and extensive decoration inside answers any question of what Sharu's pirates do with much of their spoils. In the centre of the temple is a large pool full of seawater that is changed daily. This is used in

initiation rituals for new followers who are baptised before the very presence of their deity while they vow to lay down their lives if necessary. At this ritual Sharu's followers voluntary give up their souls, something which marks them for the rest of their mortal days as they no longer hold a spirit. For this reason Sharu's followers are single minded in their service and purpose, and thus Sharu's power grows. Any follower of Sharu so touched by his god will make tests against the near divine *magic resistance* or *will power* of Sharu when *divine magic* is cast upon him, due to the strength of the link between Sharu and his followers.

Sharu's followers claim such a sacrifice is worthy due to the ecstasy felt while being in their god's presence during the baptism, and after the transfer of their soul to Sharu, and forever more.

Next to the temple is the priest's residence, which is shared with any who wield magic (Cabalist, members of the Sisterhood - see issue 25 - or other faith's priests) who are on the island. While Sharu is very secretive of its powers and past, it does tolerate other faiths on the island (all be it for only a short time).

Sharu's pirate fleet has many outposts throughout the south-eastern corner of the Maroklaran sea. At such outposts there is generally enough room for two ships to anchor and enough supplies for the crews if the ship is running low on provisions. Only the pilots of the pirate fleet know the locations of all the outposts. Most are well hidden, and in areas that are thought to be impassable due to reefs, sea monsters and treacherous tides. Only the ship's pilot can guide the ship into the coves safely. At all outposts there will be a small shrine for the crew to pay their respects to Sharu, while at the larger outposts there may be a small chapel with a priest in attendance. All outposts will have at least a small caretaker population guarding the outpost from attack or discovery.

Kara Barras:

This old cabalist has been using her magics to extend her life for centuries. Specialising in necromancy and demonology she has made very powerful pacts, allies and enemies. While not ranking highly in the cabal (due to her time consuming piracy activities) it is said that she is quite possibly the most powerful Heletian cabalist that has ever lived.

While using a seemingly small number of ships (3 large ships) she can command up to a dozen sunken ships to the seas surface during a raid, controlling their long dead crews. She can also call up to half a dozen ghost ships. The few survivors of her attacks have generally been so shattered that they are taken by a dark life of madness and

nightmares.

Barras has a loyal but sadistic crew who are based between Evora and Greater Baimiopia, using the many coves in the small islands to the north east of Aurelia as a staging point for there many raids.

Kara Barras is the most feared pirate in Dormetia.

The Reavers:

The elven pirates who operate along the southern coasts of Fletland and occasionally (but rarely) as far afield as Lixus and Evora mainly target Flet cargo and shipping. While there is no Pirate Lord controlling the elven pirates, it is rumoured that the dozen ships involved in raiding are but a tool of Wair-Rae, a method devised to push the Fletland population further afield without soiling the governing hands of Wair-Rae. Much has been made in the past of the genocidal campaign of the elves against the Flets (issue 16), much has also been said of the hidden plots that are unfolding even today. While the Reavers are not a typical pirate group, they are nonetheless dangerous and savage. With their increasing activity it seems that something is afoot. Something Fletland's people in power greatly fear.

Fears! What have the Flets to fear? Why should they be troubled? With Wair-Rae to the west, the Colonies and Kalraith to the North and Lae Ossard and Serhaem to the East. They have no reason to be frightened!

Forwao, Elven Charlatan & The Chronicle of Wair-Rae

The Folk:

The Saldaens, the Halflings of Unae are a timid and passive people. Piracy goes against the grain of their humble and content nature... So you would think! The Green Way (issue 22) has harnessed the fisher folk of Saldae and turned them into a marauding band of savage pike wielding pirates. Creating incredibly strong ships from specially grown and prepared oak they build huge rams on them which they use to sink Heletian military supply ships from Lixus. Any ship that approaches the coasts of Heletian Saldae is now fair game, with all that hold military reinforcements, intelligence or supplies being sent swiftly to the bottom of the Maroklara.

While these ships and their crews are labelled as pirates by the outraged Heletians of Lixus, to their own people they are heroes. This is not pillage for pleasure or reward, this is part of a bloody war.

Marco Meloni:

The Meloni family is well known throughout the Kramer Confederation for its unproven but seemingly unquestionable links with organised crime (see issue 11). This includes piracy.

Marco Meloni's leads a fleet of twelve large ships and a score of smaller craft that ply the waters between Burvoy, Greater Baimiopia and the Kramer Confederation.

The fleet discretely uses Eamastou as a base, often anchoring at nearby coves and sending a caravan into the city for supplies and to sell stolen goods. Occasionally when deemed safe to do so the fleets ships will tie up at the docks of the city.

Marco Meloni's most successful endeavours to date have been his involvement in raids on the gold & silver shipments from Tessa (issue 10 and 11), from which he is said to have become a very rich man.

The Cabal

There are a high proportion of magically capable people among the pirate fleet compared to the ordinary population. Most are Cabalists who fled to the pirate fleets during the Expulsion, or apprentices of those who did. There are also members of the Cabal acting as spies to try and discover

the history of Sharu and the spirits plans for the future. On board the pirate ships, the Cabal are often used as advisers to the captain, in many cases Cabalists have taken the captains post for themselves.

There is no honour amongst thieves.

The Future

With the increasing strength of the various pirate fleets it seems inevitable that another Pirate War will be fought across the waters of the Maroklara.

Rumours

There are rumours that the nation of Burvoy uses the Pirate Fleet of Sharu to supplement its own. How this link between Burvoy and the spirit was established is unknown, but some point to the troubles in the Burvois city of Karlamar (issue 18). The only other nation that is said to share involvement with pirate fleets is said to be Lucera (issue 22), but that is thought to be something based on mutual greed and corruption, little else.

Any other nation that has tried to establish a dialogue with the Pirate Lords has met only cold silence.

THE KULT OF SHARU

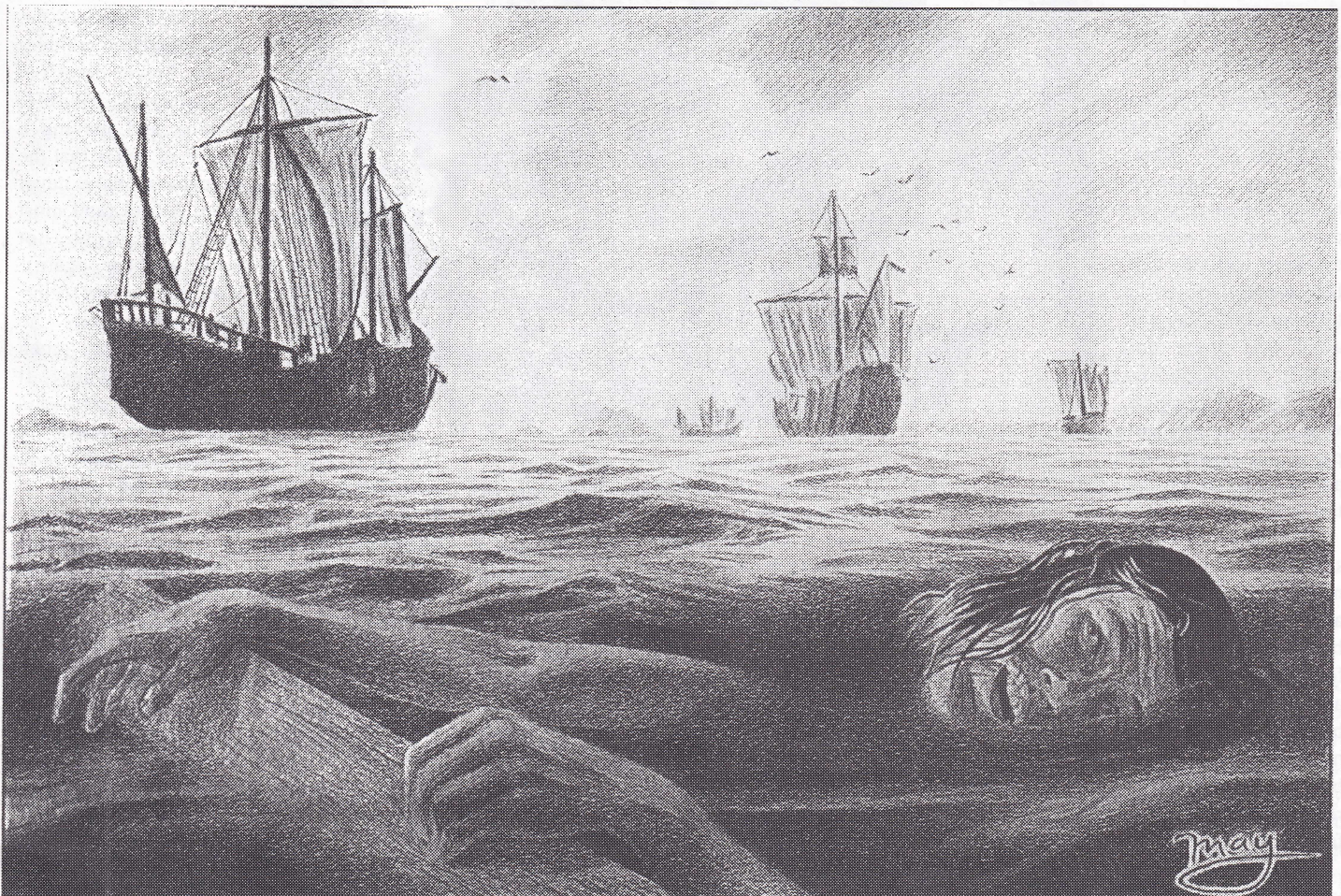
Little is known of Sharu. Only Sharu's inner most circle of priests know some of the truth of what Sharu is, and not even they know much of the spirits history.

What is known is summarised below; a millennium ago Sharu was imprisoned in the temple on the island now known as Sharu Island. Who ever did this, and how, is unknown. The method of magical imprisonment was said to hold the marks of the Sisterhood.

The strangest aspect of the Kult of Sharu is the annual sacrifice of a ship with a complete crew of sailors. For a week the head priests are involved with the ceremony to send the ship with its crew to the bottom of the ocean. The purpose of this is unknown. Perhaps Sharu wishes for a spectral fleet that will obey his every order, a last line of defence surrounding the island or perhaps this is the explanation to the mysterious ghost ships rarely sighted.

Nonetheless it is regarded as a very high honour to be one of the few accepted as a crewman for the doomed ship from amongst the hundreds of volunteers.

It is 516 EK, and spring is upon us ☼



Trevor's Terrible Teapot

A fantasy mini-adventure by Andrew Boswell

This is the tale of Trevor and his cantankerous teapot. It is a simple, short adventure which can be used as a diversion in any fantasy campaign. The emphasis is on a fun, non-lethal little plot line, which will allow players good opportunities to role play without the fate of the world depending on their actions.

Trevor Olthwaite is a travelling tinker, offering his services to the scattered farms and villages of this vast continent. He walks the long distances beside his simple cart pulled by an ancient donkey called Jeb. Hammers, tongs, a tiny portable forge and anvil and spare soft metals are all packed into this cart which, when completely unpacked, converts into an average sized marquee by using the tarpaulin covers and long wooden poles.

Setting up in a field near a town or farm settlement Trevor works for a few days mending pots and pans, sharpening knives, and trading what he has made or acquired before packing up and heading off. In return for these services his usual payment is food and fodder for himself and Jeb, and this has been all that is necessary to keep them happy for many years. Occasionally he will be paid in coin or in goods which he then retrades in other, distant parts. It was in this fashion that he came to own 'The Teapot'.

The Teapot is a glazed green porcelain vessel which holds six average-sized cups of



tea. It is well made, though unadorned, and radiates magic. In reality it is a kind of imp known as Chanoyu; spending its days as a teapot and its nights wandering around its owners possessions as a diminutive green humanoid. Though not evil, the Chanoyu is inquisitive, mischievous and vengeful. If given what it considers is 'correct respect' it makes the most magnificent tea. If offended it makes life for its owners difficult. Trevor has tried and failed to get rid of the teapot. Through trial and error he learnt the 'way of tea' and is hassled less as a result. Nonetheless he'd rather be without the imp.

Trevor and his shop can either be found on the road or already set up. In either case he

stops and shares an evening meal around the campfire with the adventurers. He is a small man, obviously used to life on the road and hard work, as honest as anyone who has to earn a living by the sweat of his brow. His much patched and stained clothes smell a story of far away spicy places, of sweaty roads and tea.

After a meal and the usual rounds of tall tales begin, Trevor drags out a battered ukulele; singing and playing a couple of songs that the adventurers have never heard before (and most probably might not want to hear again). Warming to his camp fire companions he pulls out a jade green teapot, brushes it thoughtfully with his sleeve, and starts an elaborate tea ceremony.

Referees should play up this scene to their heart's content adding layer after layer of ceremony before the tea can be poured. Some examples of the ritual could be; showing the teapot the four directions of the compass, whistling a few bars to an old tune while holding the pot over the head, kissing the pot, whispering loving things to the pot, knocking the table three times before every step of adding the tea leaves and the water, and so on. If questioned Trevor will simply comment that ritual is always very important (and will follow it with some spiritual mumbo jumbo). Most importantly he will not mention the imp Chanoyu or the consequences of not observing this ritual.

The upshot of this often comical rigmarole is that the tea produced is easily the most magnificent tasting drink the adventurers have ever known. Not only does it taste good, it also has the following benefits. Wizards will find their thoughts clearer and the night's sleep more refreshing thus enhancing their magical rejuvenation. Holy Men will find themselves more meditative and thus more in tune with their god's demands, and rewards. Warriors will gain focus, and Thieves will be steadier of hand. Everyone will have a good, deep, peaceful and recuperative night's sleep.

Naturally the adventurers may wish to possess this useful magical artifact. Trevor proves a tough negotiating adversary, requiring the equivalent of a week's wages in the form of things he cannot make. Like good boots and new clothes, or new hammers, or a new blanket for Jeb, and so on. When this price is reached he will hand over the pot with a look which oscillates between regret and elation, pack up, and go.

That night, as the adventurers settle down to camp and pull out the teapot, they find that the tea is not quite as good as they remember it the previous evening. It is impossible to fully remember the ritual Trevor performed, but the more they remember and repeat, the better the tea. If the pot was stolen from Trevor it is simply not to be found having magically made its way

back to his cart.

Next morning the teapot's new owners discover Chanoyu's displeasure. The pages of books will be moist with tea (not all, just some), boots and hats will have little tea puddles in them, sword scabbards will be damp with tea etc. Results of this will range from harmless practical joke to catastrophe; spells could be washed away, unoled swords will rust, undried clothes will chafe in uncomfortable places etc. Every time tea is made without the full correct ritual (and it took Trevor years to learn it), events like this occur during the night. Similarly the full benefits of the magical tea only occur when Chanoyu feels correctly flattered.

By staying up all night and closely watching the pot the adventurers may see the imp's transformation and activity if they can remain awake; use some kind of saving throw versus a sleep spell. Once transformed into a 1 foot tall humanoid Chanoyu moves about the adventurer's possessions, leafing through books, sliding swords from their scabbards, peering into boots and then urinating tea into them!

The pot cannot be broken or thrown away; always magically returning to the pack of the person who closed the deal with Trevor. He cannot be caught or harmed and is immune to all spells. If cornered he reassumes his teapot form. The only way the adventurers can be rid of the pot is to fairly

trade it away to someone who truly wants it.

Finding Trevor again, the adventurers will discover that he only offers to trade old or broken goods, still based on a week's average income, but hardly anything that the adventurers want. Even so he is reluctant to close the deal unless the adventurers include certain other 'gifts' (completely unrelated to the sale of the teapot of course) composed of obscure or hard to come by goods; such as an ounce of Tsing Tao Tobacco (available only in the Southern Princedoms of Yeng), or a small hammer made by the reputed Dwarven smith Igor Ironsmelter, or a bar of soap moulded by the Love Priestesses of Seducia, or some such similar. If given something like this he happily trades for the teapot and heads off into the dusty sunset.

Threatening or even killing Trevor outright will not help since the pot must be traded to someone who genuinely wants it, and if compelled (or dead in a ditch) Trevor would not fit the bill. Many other people may be interested in purchasing the teapot if Trevor's price seems too great. The final agreed price must always be exactly that of the average weekly income however; any more or less and Chanoyu finds his way back each night. Trevor learnt this the hard way trying to trade away the terrible teapot. It could take the adventurers months to discover this, months of damp trousers and running ink...

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TIMES, THEY ARE A CHANGING

Adding The Constant Of Change To Your Campaign

By Jonathan A. Spear

Player 1: *Okay, let's recap. We've killed the evil prince, defeated the undead horde, prevented the plague from spreading, and slain the evil dragon...*

Player 2: *Wait, don't forget we also prevented ecological disaster by stopping the loggers from destroying the forest!*

Player 1: *Oh yeah!*

Player 3: *Remember we also persuaded the king to abolish serfdom and slavery, that was a pretty major achievement! So was rooting out corruption in the Church and exposing the Regent's evil scheme to take over the kingdom.*

Player 2: *Uh, guys? I was thinking...*

Player 1: *What? You think those were insignificant achievements! I thought our persuasion of the King was a masterful example of persuasion! It took me ages to work out that scheme!*

Player 2: *No, no, it's nothing like that. I was just thinking, how come nothing ever changes in this campaign? We've achieved all these goals, yet the world seems no better! The government of the kingdom never changes, the peasants still live in squalid conditions, nobody ever invents anything new, the same evil dudes keep turning up to threaten the world, and the plague seemed to have no effect on society whatsoever!*

Player 3: *Hey, yeah, you're right! Nothing ever seems to change! Why is that Omniscient One?*

Omniscient One: *Well, umm... You see, er ... umm... <sigh>*

Have you ever been a player or referee, and wondered why nothing ever seems to change within your campaign world? Such a static setting may quickly lead to boredom, as players find that their heroic actions never seem to make a difference. Surely a campaign world, whether based on fantasy, science fiction, horror, cyberpunk or anything in between, must change and evolve (for better or worse) over time. Just as our real world is constantly changing, so too must a credible campaign world if it is to maintain some semblance of "realistic" fantasy!

Player Character Impact

As the opening dialogue hopefully demonstrates, players may find it extremely frustrating if their heroic adventures and dramatic deeds have no impact upon the campaign world in which they dwell. Depending upon the flavour of the campaign, the status of the characters, the achievements they attain, and the whim of the gamesmaster, the player characters' impact upon their world may be of greater or lesser magnitude. For example, in *Warhammer FRP*

it is unlikely (but not impossible!) that a humble Ratcatcher will bring about the downfall of the Emperor. Conversely, a great Mage, an influential Duke, or a cunning and experienced Assassin may all have the means to affect the life (and death!) of an Emperor! Whilst the actions of the Ratcatcher may be important in changing the way a small urban area is controlled, the Mage, Duke or Assassin may influence the fate of the whole Empire.

The magnitude of the changes wrought by the players is not what is most important, however. What is vital is that their actions will almost inevitably cause changes of some sort, and these changes should be reflected in the events, nature and conditions of the campaign world. If the players kill someone, blow up a building, ravage a corporation's computer system, defeat a horde of ogres, sabotage a spaceship, insult a foreign ambassador, or get themselves killed (an all too common occurrence!), this may have dramatic effects upon the campaign world.

Once the referee has assessed what these effects are, and how they will change the campaign setting, it is important that these changes are brought to the attention of the players. Okay, so the players have succeeded in driving off the ogre hordes and slaying their chieftain in single combat. Well done! In some campaigns, that would be the end of that - time to bicker over who gets the best loot, and boast about which player character was the most influential in achieving their glorious victory! Doesn't this seem a little too neat and simple? The repulse of an ogre invasion should probably be something that will change the world! How will this change be brought to the attention of the players? Were the ogres absolutely defeated? If so, who will fill the power vacuum left after the collapse of such a major power? Such a struggle to fill this power vacuum be just as adventure-filled and world-changing as the initial defeat of the ogres. If the ogres were not absolutely vanquished, perhaps they will seek revenge upon the player characters for their role in preventing the invasion? Whatever the case, the player characters should change and effect the campaign world, just as the campaign world changes and effects them!

Technological Innovations

Technological innovations may result in profound changes in the society of a campaign world, just as they have in our real world. Consider, for example, the effects that the invention and refinement of the computer has had upon our world, or the global effect of rapid forms of transport such as aircraft and automobiles. Can you imagine a *Cyberpunk* campaign without cyberware and the Net? Can you imagine *Star Wars* without spaceships and laser



blasters? Such technological wonders greatly contribute to the very substance of the fantastic world! Even inventions that we sometimes take for granted and consider rather insignificant, such as the printing press, may have a dramatic effect upon a medieval campaign world (see Brad Martin's "The Word" in *Australian Realms* #23). Such inventions may greatly change social, political, military, religious, and philosophical aspects of the world, to name a few major foci of most campaigns. The effects of technological advances may be even more profound if its secrets are held by only one faction, leading to a distinct advantage in the favour of that group, or if the new technology radically effects the manner in which society functions, leading to various forms of techno-shock and rebellion against innovation.

Advances in military technology have led to dramatic changes in the manner war is waged in our real world. The Hundred Years War between the French and the English brutally demonstrated the profound effects that new military technology and innovative tactics may have against an unprepared and tradition-bound enemy. The relatively radical use of massed ranks of English longbowmen against the armoured cavalry based French army proved decisive in determining English victories at Crecy and Agincourt. Clinging to tradition in the form of the chivalric code and massed armoured cavalry charges, the warlike French aristocracy found its ranks massacred in the face of the innovative use of English longbowmen.

Similarly, during the American Civil War combat tactics were largely based around massed infantry charges, following the doctrines of Clausewitz. Unfortunately, technological developments had recently led to a dramatic improvement in rifle accuracy, range and stopping power, leading to massive casualties on the part of the attacking regiments. Thus, whilst technologies had advanced in both cases, military doctrine had not changed so rapidly, leading to distinct advantages on the part of one side to the detriment of the other.

Such situations may arise readily in the course of a campaign, whatever the genre, providing some nasty surprises or useful advantages to the player characters. Whenever a new weapon, tactic, spell or other discovery is introduced into the game, the

implications of this change should be considered and implemented. Such changes may have a multitude of effects which may be relevant and exciting if introduced into the lives of the player characters... especially if the new technology falls into the hands of their worst enemy!

Adventure Hooks

Military Intelligence: Living up to their spectacularly inappropriate title, the Military Intelligence Corps have failed to verify the effects of the Enemy's latest devastating weapon. It is now up to the player characters to remedy the (un)Intelligence Corps' failure, by infiltrating enemy military bases and either stealing one of the devices, getting a copy of the blueprints, or providing an accurate intelligence report of the weapon's effects. If the nation's military are unable to keep pace with changes in Enemy technology, and develop a way to counter it, the country may be overrun by these evil fiends!

Techno-Shock!: The latest technological marvel has proved too much for a group of the populace. Having changed the way society, industry, communication or family life operates, the new technology has led to a form of "techno-shock" in some people. Unwilling or unable to cope with these dramatic changes, those suffering from techno-shock have engaged in activities similar to those of the English Luddites - destroying the new technology wherever it is encountered, attacking the sources of its manufacture, and threatening its inventors! The player characters may be employed by the government, industry leaders or a worried inventor to prevent the dangerous and expensive activities of the Luddites. Alternatively, the player characters may themselves be suffering from techno-shock, and join the cause of the Luddites as sympathisers!

Intellectual Innovations

Changes in the intellectual body of knowledge of the campaign world may also have profound effects upon the exploits of the player characters. Whilst military muscle is deemed important in many campaigns, with careful and cunning roleplaying, the players may well find that the pen (or the thought) can be mightier than the sword! The manner in which the populace of a campaign world views religion, philosophy, politics, language, the sciences, and (if applicable) magic or psionics, may have a great effect upon the player characters within that world. The referee must consider what effect an intellectual innovation will have on the campaign world, and how this change may be brought to the attention of the players in the events of the game. The players may even feel compelled to work towards a change in attitude with regard to an intellectual element of the campaign world - possibly a welcome relief to waging war, bashing bad guys and making money!

An example of intellectual thought influencing and being influenced by current events may be found in the works of Niccolo Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini, two Florentine scholars who wrote in the early sixteenth century. In a time of great change, uncertainty and threat to their native republic of Florence, Machiavelli and Guicciardini took innovative and similar (though not identical) approaches to the manner in which politics and human relations should be approached. Whilst Machiavelli is often misquoted as having argued that "the ends justifies the means", this was very broadly his final thesis with regard to political action.

Guicciardini's approach was more humanitarian and less ruthless, but both new approaches to political action were notable due to their pragmatism, utility, and influence upon the world then and now. What would happen in a campaign world in which politics was traditionally based upon honour and honesty, if an intellectual innovation such as Machiavelli's ruthless approach to politics was suddenly implemented? The results of such an intellectual change may be ugly (and provide hours of gaming excitement) indeed!

Changes in the state of magical knowledge may also provide an interesting stimulus in fantasy-based campaign worlds. If discoveries are made that resulted in the formulation of new spells or magic items, this is likely to have significant ramifications for the inhabitants of a campaign world - particularly those who wield magic or rely upon it. If magical research uncovers a long-lost spell of great power, everyone is going to want it, whilst the discoverer is likely to restrict access to the secrets of the new marvel. Such competition could lead to magical feuds (or full-scale wars!), or races to research and develop new magical knowledge - all of which the player characters could take part in!

In addition, the attitude taken by the general populace towards magic wielders may be of great import to the player characters. In *Unae*, for example, the use of magic is viewed as a crime in the Heletian League, whilst in areas such as Evora or Wair-Rae magic users are able to flourish (see "*Magic In Unae*" in *Australian Realms* #21). Attempts to change the public and official view of the magical arts, in either a positive or negative manner, could provide the basis of many adventures (and dangers for player character magicians!).



Adventure Hooks

Where No Mind Has Gone Before: The player characters are hired by a scientist or sorceress to aid her in a research expedition: "I'm sending you to the Mines of Destu to recover the lost secrets of Philosopher's Stone."

The objectives of this expedition may vary greatly according to the researcher, but are likely to involve searches for bizarre items, the capture of vicious beasts, long treks in the wilderness or underground, and the repulsion of jealous competitors. But that is just the beginning! If the researcher is successful, the effects of their new contribution to body of intellectual knowledge in the campaign world may result in startling changes and side-effects!...

"See Igor! It moves..."

Dangerous Knowledge: The player characters are hired by an intellectual as bodyguards, in response to a number of threats to their employer's life. The intellectual has made a startling new magical or scientific discovery, written a critical treatise inflaming revolt, or expressed opinions that run contrary to official doctrine. Such intellectual changes are viewed as dangerous by one or more powers, who are intent upon terminating the author of these changes with extreme prejudice! Can the player characters keep their employer alive long enough for him to finish his work, or will the world be doomed to ignorance?

As an interesting alternative, the player characters may be selected to kill the intellectual. Will they suffer from a uneasy conscience, knowing that their target is attempting to make an intellectual statement that may be of great importance? Or will they sell-out and terminate their target for something as crass as monetary reward?

"Down with book burners!"

Environmental Changes

As we know too well, our real world is often subject to environmental changes which may dramatically effect whole populations. Apart from the infamous "greenhouse effect", environmental changes such as droughts, floods, earthquakes, deforestation, erosion and pollution may all have adverse effects which change the world we live in. Why shouldn't such environmental changes occur in campaign worlds? Pollution may cause some horrific and interesting side-effects, particularly in campaigns that involve high-technology research and development. Remember the sludge that transformed the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* into their enhanced (and bizarre!) state? Pollution may even occur in a medieval or renaissance based world, however, as the inhabitants of great cities such as renaissance Florence found to their disgust! The consequences could be rather disturbing if the side-effects of magical research were released as pollution into an unsuspecting medieval campaign world!

The threat of deforestation may be of great concern today, but this phenomenon was already affecting the woodlands of Europe near great cities by the renaissance period. Therefore, "politically correct" referees (or those looking for a new challenge for their players) may wish to introduce such a threat to the ecology of their campaign world. Apart from "greenie" notions of saving the environment, player characters may be driven by a desire to aid woodland dwelling creatures such as Elves, Treemen or Quirius (see *The Forest Aus Realms* # 8), who may require help in driving out the destroyers of their homeland. On the other hand, those seeking to prevent a change in the ecology of a campaign world may do so for far more selfish reasons. The Biotechnica Corporation in the Cyberpunk world serves as an example of this selfish motivation. Rather than wishing to preserve the Amazon rain forests for conservation reasons, Biotechnica works to preserve the rain forests because they serve as a living laboratory from which they can plunder source material for their chemical and biological research - leading to even vaster profits!

A far more deadly change in the environment of a campaign world is the introduction of new plagues and viruses such as the Black Death (see Brad Martin's "*The Black Death*" in issue 19), AIDS, or the Carbon Plague of the *Cybergeneration* setting. With the capacity to kill millions, such changes to the environment of the campaign world may serve to alter economic, social, religious and demographic patterns, with the appropriate ramifications for the exploits of the player characters. What if the enemy hordes are infected with the Black Death? Who will fill the power vacuum left by those who have died from the plague? Wouldn't it be a pity if one of the player characters contracted the plague? Heh, heh...

Adventure Hook

Sorcerous Sludge: A strange purple sludge has been found drifting in the waterways of the local area. Unfortunately, young Johnny Malone was stupid enough to eat some of the sludge... a slow and agonising death ensued. Others who have been exposed to the sludge have suffered varying, but universally unpleasant, fates! What is this stuff? Where is it from? The player characters are hired by the local powers-that-be to discover the origin of the purple sludge and put a stop to it. Is the sludge a by-product from some mad wizard's research? Is it a leaking chemical from a scientist's secret lab? Is it a failed experiment by the government, aimed at controlling the minds of the populace by introducing drugs into the water supply? Is it a new lifeform? Only the players can find out!

Economic Fluctuations

Don't you just hate it when the price of petrol goes up again? Do you get really annoyed when new taxes are introduced? Sure you do! Why shouldn't the player characters in your campaign world "enjoy" the same frustrations as economic factors fluctuate. Do your player characters pay tax? If not, why the hell not?! Do your player characters use ammunition? If they behave like any decent, adventure loving maniac, they probably burn thousands of rounds per adventure! What would happen if the price of ammo jumped dramatically? Either the player characters would be very poor, or they'd have to use less ammunition (yeah, right!). Whatever the case, such economic changes may result in some interesting dilemmas for the players.

What if there is a drought in one area of the campaign world? This would probably result in an inflation of the value of food and water in the area. Enterprising players may see an opportunity for a quick profit. Perhaps they could import food and water from more fertile areas, then sell it in the drought stricken area at great profit! Such a venture shouldn't be easy, of course, with challenges such as bandits, hungry mobs, fierce competitors and corrupt officials. Therefore, simply by initiating a small change in the environment of the campaign world, which leads to an economic fluctuation, the referee may create hours of adventure!

Adventure Hooks

Tax Time!: Hold on! Wait a minute! Excuse me Ms Adventurer, where do you think you are going with those piles of money, jewellery and gems? What do you mean you're going to spend them? I don't think so! Have you paid Finder's Tax, Conversion Tax, Transport Tax, Looter's Tax, Adventurer's Tax, or Defender of the Weak and Slayer of Evil Tax yet? No? Have you lodged an Income Tax return this year? No? I think our Taxation Department would like a quiet word with you...

Inflation Blues: Having returned from their perilous quest and picked up many valuable items along the way, the player characters will probably want to convert this loot into cold, hard cash. Unfortunately, there has been a spate of adventuring groups through town recently, flooding the local market with valuables and diminishing their price. Will the player characters settle for a lesser price in exchange for their hard-won riches? Or will they travel to another, more distant area in the hope of achieving a greater profit? What if the player characters don't have the time or the experience to travel such long distances? Perhaps the black market will give a better deal... or perhaps not!

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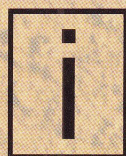
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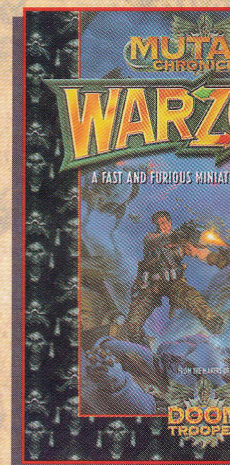
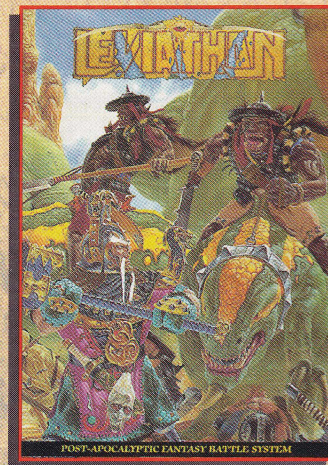
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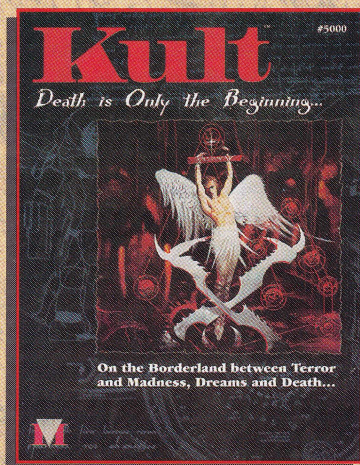
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ll of these figure designers are best known from White Dwarf Magazine as ex-members of the Games Workshop creative team. Newcomer Mark Kay rounds out our 'stable' of sculptors and is sure to excite, with the flair and style he puts into every model he designs.

The Mutant Chronicles range consists of the Mutant Chronicles role playing game and accessories, the Warzone miniatures game and miniatures, The Blood Berets and Fury of the Clansmen boardgames and The Doom Trooper collectable card game and expansions. Scheduled for release in late 1995 from Playmates Interactive Entertainment is the Doom Trooper video game for SNES and SEGA and the first person CD Rom game, Mutant Chronicles Mortificator. Jan 1996 will see the release of The Mutant Chronicles comic series for Acclaim Comics, and in early 1996 the filming will begin for The Mutant Chronicles movie.

The Mutant Chronicles movie is being produced by Ed Pressman, whose prior work includes Conan, The Crow, and Wall Street. This big budget flic is scheduled to hit the screen in late 1996.

Besides our impressive Mutant Chronicles range we also produce a superior line of fantasy metal miniatures and a large selection of collectable card games: Doomtrooper, The Crow, Super Nova and James Bond 007 (Golden Eye). We are also the exclusive distributor of Metropolis Ltd's range of modern horror role playing games and accessories, KULT, as well as their KULT collectable card game.

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magazine subscriptions

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AUSTRALIAN REALMS

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. etc.

\$27.00 for 6 issues ☐

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BATTLETECHNOLOGY

A bimonthly publication that exclusively covers the universe of Battletech & Mechwarrior. Regular departments include: News Service - historical type stuff; Unit Update - a regimental guide; Battle Tac - analysis of campaigns & tactics; plus BattleMechanics - new weapons tech data. Feature articles include short stories, in depth studies of Inner Sphere politics or military prowess, and other such related matters. Indispensable to all diehard 'Mechheads'!

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

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DRAGON

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

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

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GENERAL

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

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PROTOCOLCULTURE ADDICTS

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.

\$45.00 for 6 issues ☐

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\$105.00 for 6 issues ☐

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?

\$49.00 for 6 issues ☐

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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 *Jyhad*, the rules for *Galactic Empires* - need I go on?

\$35.00 for 6 issues ☐

\$63.00 for 12 issues ☐

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.

\$24.00 for 4 issues ☐

\$39.00 for 8 issues ☐

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.

\$30.00 for 4 issues ☐

WHITE DWARF

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

\$36.00 for 6 issues ☐

\$72.00 for 12 issues ☐

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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BLOOD RED

MORE FACTS & SECRETS OF THE BIG RED ONE REVEALED

BY PAUL MITTING, LEE SHEPPARD & COLIN TABER

"I'm telling you, Johan, this sort of growth just isn't possible in the time frame we've allowed.

I mean, look at these latest bio-readouts. The figures just don't make any sense. The growth to nutrient quotient is more than 12%, and what's this anomaly here?

Hang on....Oh, Jesus Christ! I know what it is, I know what it is!

Get me Doctor Muir - NOW!

And damn scientific protocol, Johan, turn that FRACKING recorder off..."

- Segment of what is believed to be an illegally intercepted standard scientific log recording, found on the body of a suspected Red Storm activist.

Last issue we provided the first hunk of background info on Mars for our approved Cyberpunk SolSpace campaign. Concentrating on Olympus, the largest colony on the big red one, we also served up a number of exciting adventure and campaign hooks to help kick start your campaign.

In this issue's instalment of SolSpace we take a gander at the other Martian colonies, and reveal some of the causes of the current "unrest" on this troubled planet.

A GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND...

Mars has played host to humanity now for over 20 years. In that time a growing multi-cultural population has taken advantage of the red planet's massive mineral reserves. In a wave of pioneering and exploration not seen since the nineteenth century of Earth, humanity grabbed the Martian opportunity with both hands and beat it into shape.

It has been agreed by the United Nations (and thus a majority of Terran governments) and the

Martian Assembly to terraform the red planet. So far this has occurred in a haphazard way that has seen duplication of projects, methods and waste. Slowly a consensus is being formed between Terran governments, one that the UN will soon present to the Martian Assembly for approval.

The major stumbling block to this coordinated terraforming plan has been the efforts of Red Storm and, to a lesser extent, those of the radical splinter group, Red Sword. Until recently however, the targets of these two eco-terrorist groups have usually been restricted to attacks on mining, terraforming and industrial complexes and personnel. As last issue's events so graphically showed, however, this policy seems to have changed. Following an all-media announcement attributed to Amanda Jacobs, terrorist attacks were made on a number of "civilian" locations within the boundaries of Olympus Base.

While some of these attacks can be directly linked to the two major eco-terrorist groups, many others are in fact the work of some of the lunatic fringe groups that also exist within the Olympus Colony. Whether those groups are politically motivated (Independent Mars) or just a ragtag collection of vicious thugs and punks (The Cult of Mars), all have chosen the current confusion to make their own plays for power, thereby adding to the chaos. Many of the so-called "innocent" victims of the unrest have since actually turned out to be rival gang members, or fixers with a less tolerant loan repayment plan. More than ever, it is getting harder and harder to know who you can trust on this frontier world.

This is something that Amanda Jacobs found out for herself only recently, after she came into possession of some information that was soon to have major repercussions.

A SPANNER IN THE WORKS

Amanda Jacobs knew that Dawn Attenborough had begun to have phenomenal success with her work in Sherwood Canyon. Although tight security blankets the entire project (the very best that Corporate funding can supply), it soon became obvious that something big was happening in the valley. The simple fact that the number of secure transmissions between "The Canyon" and Olympus had increased ten-fold was enough incentive for Amanda to try and insert a spy into the project.

While the insertion was successful, the extraction was far from perfect. The spy was detected during the escape attempt and gunned down before he could pass on the information he'd uncovered. His death only served to confirm Amanda's suspicions though, and inspired an act of desperation that she is sure to regret for a very long

time to come. She contacted Mario Vokturi and asked him for help.

Amanda Jacobs, Tech (INT 9, EMP 8)
Geology 5, Leadership 6, Martian Survival 4

Popular rumour has it that Amanda and Mario Vokturi were once lovers, but split when their mutual desire to see Mars kept as natural as possible took widely divergent paths. A documentary made last year by Kumi Kazamuri (see issue 26 for her details) even claimed that Jacobs had given birth to a child by Vokturi, and that the child lives with a guardian somewhere in Olympus. Like most of Kumi's documentaries, however, this appears to have been 10% hard fact, 40% conjecture and 50% pure media hype.

Mario Vokturi, Nomad (COOL 6, REF 8)
Endurance 7, Intimidate 5, Zero-G Combat 6

Nevertheless, when Amanda Jacobs finally approached Mario Vokturi with her suspicions about Sherwood Canyon, in the hope that the Red Sword leader might have his own information sources, he decided to use his own tried and true methods to obtain some answers - kidnapping, torture and murder. Once the right communications officer had been taken, and the right amount of physical persuasion applied, the general thrust of what was going on in The Canyon was no longer restricted to official channels.

YOU SCRATCH OUR BACK...

The information Mario was able to extract suggests that Dawn Attenborough's project team may have found something in the Martian soil (full details are not available) that significantly speeds up the terraforming process. So much so that a terraformed Mars now comes within what could only be described (in Corporate-speak) as a "short to mid-term investment window". In other words, if the successes of the Sherwood Canyon project can be maintained and then duplicated elsewhere on the planet, it *may* be possible to terraform Mars within 25 to 30 years, instead of the original projections of 70 to 90 years.

While this news was certainly upsetting to the eco-terrorist leaders, there was worse to come. It appears that some members of the Martian Assembly have subsequently struck deals with a number of powerful Earth-bound Corporations. In return for their support of the Martian Independence move (ie. a word in the right ear when it comes to the crucial UN vote), certain Corporations are to be granted exclusive rights to develop their own sections of the planet, once the

terraforming process is completed. Given the heavy profit incentive to be gained from the acceptance of these conditions, most Corporations invited to show their support have eagerly complied.

This, in some way, helps to explain the change in tactics that the two eco-terrorist groups have now undertaken. If the terrorists can cause enough disruption, the Martian Assembly will be forced to call on the UN for help. And while UN forces remain on the planet, it is highly unlikely that Mars will be granted its independence (even with the support of the Corps); if the Martian Assembly alone cannot control troublemakers in Olympus, how can it guarantee the safety of colonists over the entire planet?

THE BATTLEGROUND

The Green Valley: Mars is an old world, as old as Earth. Such a world has its own myths and legends, even though they may have only come into the telling in the past few decades. One of these myths tells of a place amidst the north polar ice cap, a

valley full of abundant living green, filled by agents of a druidic society from the RUK who have been creating their own piece of Eden under the guise of terraforming and biotechnology experiments. The truth according to the stories is that they found a series of thermal springs only a few short kilometres from the polar cap's edge, and at a depth that put them less than a hundred meters under the ice. A series of small fractures and vapour chimneys is what gave a RUK terraforming working group the idea of using the area as a base, lab and nursery for the much larger terraforming projects that are envisaged for the red planet.

The original program was headed by Dawn Attenborough, but has since been taken over by a school of scientists with druidic connections. They have, over the past decade, changed what was originally a lab with a series of interconnected domes into a truly wondrous place, now known across Mars as "The Green Valley". The Valley is both hard to get to and very secretive. Its location and research has the highest classification.

Today the Valley is the first self-supporting environment on Mars. The thing that nurses this

fragile ecosystem is the domes. Even should they collapse, however, it is estimated that ten percent of plant life in the valley would still survive in the bitter conditions, mainly the hardy varieties of oaks, lavenders, elderberry and a thousand types of algae that have adapted to the harsh environment.

The valley is a prime target of the eco-terrorists faction. Red Storm has covertly tried to completely destroy the valley on at least one occasion. But this amazing place is the stuff of legends. You can't kill a legend.

Sherwood Canyon: When Dawn Attenborough was stripped of her office in the Green Valley project she moved on with those who would follow her to establish and head a corporately funded terraforming centre. While this project initially failed to produce the outright success of the Green Valley project, its nature, history and recent successes now make it look far more relevant to the future of the red planet. While the druids in the Green Valley worship the Mother on Mars, in the place known as "the Canyon" an alliance of multinationals sponsor the emergence of dome covered wonderlands of greenery and a truly determined group of people willing to die for the cause of greening Mars. The talk might all be of Red Storm, but that's because no one has noticed the Green Cyclone arriving.

Dawn Attenborough, MedTech (INT 10, TECH 6)
Botany 7, Expert (Planetology) 5, First Aid 4

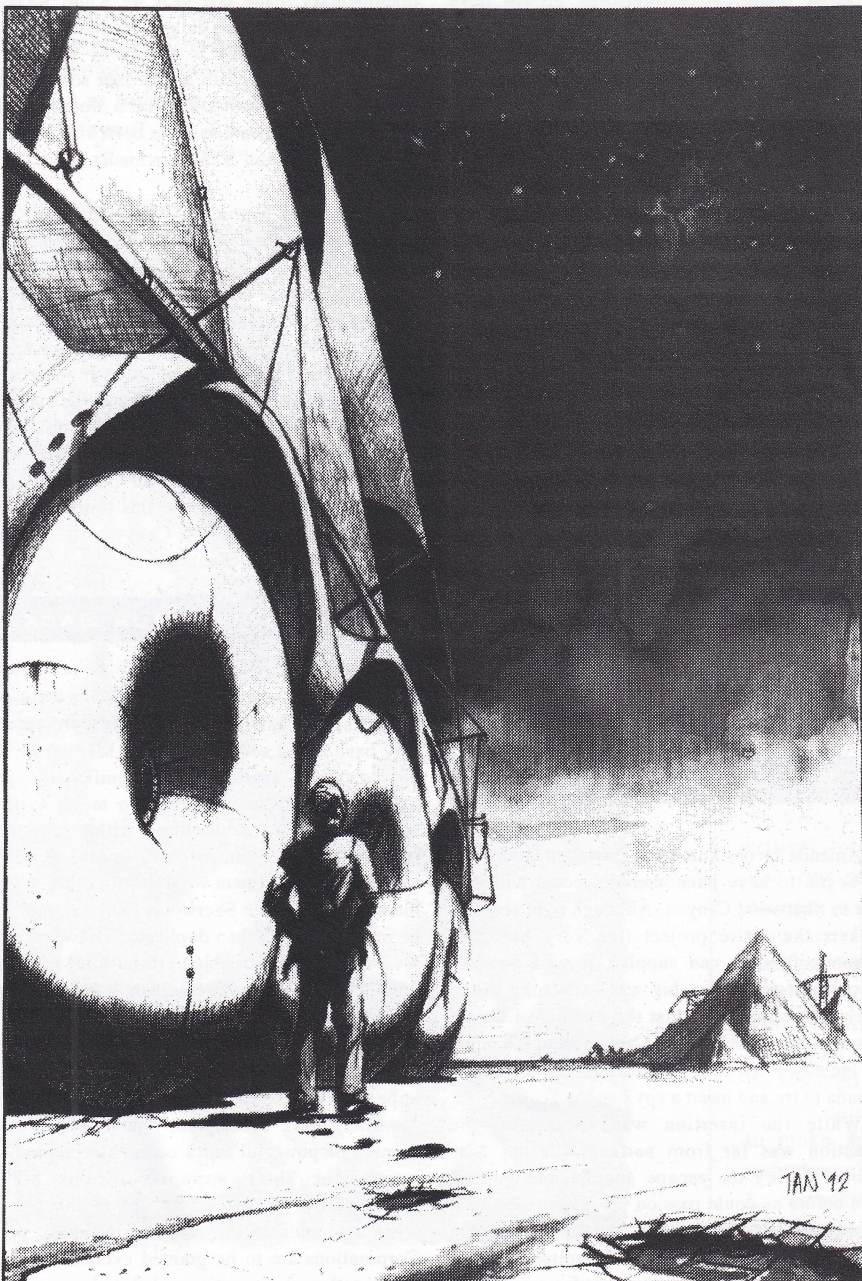
This group holds over five hundred people in its tented canyons. Here can be found a series of specialised communities of scientists who are working on establishing and releasing varieties of flora that can survive the rigours of Mars. From algae, to fungi and small colonising shrubs for the half Mars, half Earth environments that make up the Canyon. They are, like Green Valley, reasonably self-sufficient, although the canyon does still require an artificial water supply.

Red Storm is particularly active in trying to gather further information on the base and its projects. Consequently, the Canyon is very heavily defended by corporate security.

Moria: Moria is but a nickname for BHP-Utah mine site 270-East, the solar system's biggest (ever) platinum mine. The nickname was originally a handy media label (inspired by the incredible worth of the mine), but the label has stuck and is now in common use. According to popular rumour, BHP-Utah has discovered a deposit of such size that they have been forced to ration its release and sale so as not to cause a veritable collapse in the mineral's price throughout SolSpace.

The mine at the south-eastern exit of Valles Marineris reputedly holds the best working conditions to be found on Mars, the site also enjoys the highest morale of any mine in the solar system with the possible exception of Earth. All indicators point to the mine being a very rich deposit. Although the mine is very well guarded by a private security force, it has still been the target of three successful Red Storm actions.

In addition, the very first recorded action of the highly radical fringe group Red Sword was targeted at the living quarters and dome of the work site, resulting in 58 deaths four years ago. To date this anti-settlement operation has been the most successful directly attributed to Red Sword.



THE OTHER MARTIAN COLONIES.

New London

Location: Phobos (moon)

Founded: 2028

Population: 750 Full time personnel with capacity for 500 more.

Industries: Ship building and repair.

RUK Naval Base. It is the largest Naval facility out of Earth orbit. It has a large garrison and incorporates a UN contingent.

"Oh yeah, I love the place. We call it the Rock. No gravity, no bars, no fun. I'll swap you a tour at Yorkshire anytime. At least in the Belt they have a decent night life. Maybe get some Rover action once in a while."

- Sergeant William "Bonedome" Harris, 23rd RUK Strike Force, New London Garrison.

Chryse Base

Location: Chryse Planitia

Founded: 2021

Population: 27,500

Industries: Mineral Processing. Water.

This base was originally built as a joint US-Japanese venture, using nano-technology to fuse the Martian sand into structure walls, giving the original city a unique organic look. From a distance the domes and arcs of the city has a vague Giger-like appearance. A major industry of the city is the manufacture of nano-tech building factories, which can be air-shipped to the required site and commenced operations within 48 hours. These factories are always rented out with a tech crew, never sold.

Isidis Base

Location: Isidis Planitia

Founded: 2022

Population: 45,000

Industries: Medical Research and Manufacture, Genetic Research.

Isidis Base was built and managed by the ESA. In 2025, early in its development, there was an attempted revolution by the colonists against ESA control. This was thwarted by local security forces and ever since Isidis has had a reputation as the most secure colony on Mars. The largely European occupants are industrious and on the surface happy with their lives. However, popular rumour has it that the revolution just went deeper underground and a day of reckoning will come soon.

Isidis is also well known around Mars for its ground breaking work in developing viable flora and fauna for the Martian environment. Many of these still need partially controlled environments for survival, yet they are showing the way to other research teams. Rumours also abound since 2025 of the Isidis involvement in human genetic research and modification. This is of course denied, but why are there so many high security and concealed sections to Isidis?

New Tokyo

Location: Valles Marineris

Founded: 2034

Population: 35,000

Industries: Agriculture, Electronics, Plastics.

Similar to Polar City, New Tokyo is owned by a consortium of four major Japanese corps. Principal among these is Arasaka, who use the city as their prime off-Earth training centre and HQ. Also based here are some of their weapons and equipment manufacturing sites. The city has strict laws, enforced of course by Arasaka security troops. Although sited in a canal, with the city itself arrayed along both sides of the canal walls, there is also a substantial part of the city above ground on the land to either side. Located here are the huge agriculture domes, factory modules and landing pads. Topside is where the well known theme park "MarsWorld" is situated. Here the more fanciful images of Mars, past and present, fact and fiction, are presented in a mind-boggling display. Tourism at the centre accounts for nearly 15% of New Tokyo income.

"Marsworld? I hate the place. I went there once - damn thing is a

glorification of terraforming and the so-called vision of the Martian future. It's on our list, friend, it's on our list. And when we blow it, I'm gonna be punching the detonator meself"

- Skippy Johansen, Red Sword Activist

Polar City

Location: Chasma Boreale, Northern Ice Cap

Founded: 2031

Population: 68,000

Industries: Water. Fuel. Agriculture. Textiles.

Founded by a consortium of Japanese interests, principally JAB, this base was founded in the polar ice cap to ensure they had a lead in the mining and selling of water and fuel to Mars colonies. The colony has expanded substantially over the six years it has been in existence, and is considered the principal seat of off-Earth Japanese government and corporate control. Headquartered here are the offices for JAB and Mitsubishi / Koridansu, as well as a number of smaller corps. Access to Polar City for gaign (outsiders to Nipponese culture) is restricted to the central city area and the landing port.

Avalon

Location: Valles Marineris

Founded: 2032

Population: 42,000

Industries: Ship components. Vehicle manufacture. Agriculture.

This is a RUK colony based deep in one of the canals. It has a surface base also which encompasses a spaceport and support facilities for New London base. Avalon is the primary home city for Re-United Kingdom people on Mars, other than the multi-cultural Olympus. It boasts a Marine training camp and Pilot School.

Carter Colony

Location: Valles Marineris

Founded: 2027

Population: 850,000 + 40,000 transients

Industries: Tourism. Aquiculture. Agriculture

Another deep-sited canal base in the Marineris system. ISA interests helped establish the base in an effort to keep Mars for themselves. It was planned to be the showcase colony for Mars, and still has many features which make it the premier living environment on the planet. The walls of the canal are lined with luxury apartments, and the canal base is water filled. Here programs are in place to enhance the already famous Carter fish farms, which accounts for 20% of their income. Entertainments available include swimming, water skiing and scuba diving. It is worth noting that another 30-50% of the city's income is generated from tourism. Carter Colony prides itself on its liberal laws, which allow many drugs and cyberware for recreational use that other cities ban. Nonetheless, they maintain a sizable security force "just in case".

"Mars. Home to two and a half million people, all working together to build a new home, on a new world, for humanity. What they have achieved in the past decade is enough to bring a smile to any conservationist's lips. If this is a taste of our destiny, then the future is a nation we will all want to call home. March on Humanis, Welcome Pax Terriana!"

- From the foreword to the 2037 CIEC (Commission for Interplanetary Environmental Control) Annual Report.

"More like four million rats living in two score holes that also serve as sewers and worse. This is no future, and it's certainly no better than any of humanity's bitter pasts."

- Mario Vokturi, Red Sword

they will probably soon develop a view of events similar to hers, in that she wishes to ensure that the terraforming process does not allow the same mistakes that were made on Earth to be repeated on Mars. In this situation, the players are not only going to have to deal with overt terrorist attacks, but pressure of a more "Corporate" kind. It's up to the cyberpunks and their associates to ensure that the terraforming target dates are not constantly being brought forward, or that key (and loyal) personnel aren't suddenly replaced with corporate lap dogs. It pays to be mindful of that popular corporate slogan - "Profit Before Perfection."

Terrorist: If, on the other hand, your players are more likely to fall in with Amanda Jacobs (or, by crikey, Mario Vokturi and his gang of crazies!) then their role is also clear - Purity or Death!

The PCs will soon be involved in various acts of terrorism (completely indiscriminate if working for Red Sword) in their efforts to upset the terraforming projects. Remember though, not all terrorist acts have to be of the "large explosion in the face" kind. 'Runners holding up staff wages through the Net, or infiltrating a laboratory simply to alter important test results can also have a major effect on critical project target dates.

Conversely, the players might also use their time and skills by trying to set up some of the Corporations that are actively supporting the terraforming project. Perhaps they could pit one Corporation against another by spreading rumours of planned hostile takeovers? Try to encourage your players to think a bit more laterally than pumping bullets into the back of the head.

Propaganda also has a strong role to play in this battle, for both sides. While Mario Vokturi probably doesn't really care what *anyone* thinks of his tactics, Amanda Jacobs is well aware of what negative publicity can do both for and against her movement. Too many holo-vids of innocent children injured by Red Swords indiscriminate bombings (Amanda just wants everyone to leave Mars *alone*, she doesn't necessarily want everyone to leave in a body bag...) and it won't be long before the UN is forced to send in the heavy firepower in retaliation. Amanda knows that she is playing a very fine line here. Her initial goal is to delay (but preferably stop altogether) the Martian Independence movement. A united Mars is a united terraforming process - something that she just can't allow to happen.

Directly related to this propaganda issue is another important scenario hook. The all-media announcement that has subsequently lead to Amanda Jacobs placed being on the UN's "most-wanted" list, was *not* her doing. Logic suggests that it was Mario Vokturi that used her name, as Amanda does seem to have more popular support than the Red Sword leader. Mario has denied this of course, but Amanda would look well on any individual or group that could determine the real truth behind this matter. Enterprising PCs might find themselves with a scoop to sell to Kumi Kazamuri.

Vested Interests: It may be that the PCs don't end up taking either side directly. Even so, players can still get very much involved in the many events unfolding on the Red Planet. As in all Cyberpunk campaigns, information is power in SolSpace, and power is a very profitable commodity. It may be that, during the course of an unrelated adventure hook, the PCs end up coming across some important information relating to the discoveries of the

Sherwood Canyon Project and offer it to a Corporation that hasn't yet got a stake in the red planet. The Corporations that *do* have a stake in a terraformed Mars are not going to like a new player entering the scene, and the PCs can expect a bit of aggravation in return for their indiscretions.

The PCs don't even have to get involved with the big Corporations to make a few good EBs out of the enterprise. Player character Fixers stand to make a killing if they can edge out a few competitors when bidding for lucrative supply contracts. If the PCs have *enough* resources at their disposal, they might even try their hand at a few development projects of their own. A bit of clever netrunning here and there, the odd accident when important documents are being lodged, and the PCs could soon end up owning their *own* little bit Mars. Holding on to it for any length of time though is going to be another adventure in itself.

The Official Line: and finally, although many referees may think that this last option is well beyond their players, the PCs may not be in it for themselves at all, but actually serve the forces of law and order! The player characters may be UN Marshals under deep cover, Interpol agents, RUK (or even other Governments!!!) black-ops hit teams, Olympus Security staff, or a Corporately-funded anti-terrorist unit. The detection, prevention and/or extermination of terrorist groups (not just Red Storm and Red Sword, mind you) will probably be the group's initial briefing, but hey, why stop there when you're on a roll? Mars is full of bad dudes of all levels of notoriety, be they terrorists, arms dealers, drug smugglers, assassins. You name them, Mars has got them, and someone has got to look out for Honest Joanne... (referees might want to do themselves a favour and have another look at the Sean Connery film *Outland* before running these types of adventures - now *that's* a SolSpace campaign).

Whatever your players *do* get up to on Mars though, please write and let us know. Like our other popular campaign setting, *Unae*, SolSpace will continue to grow and develop as a *direct* result of your input. So, if you have any questions about anything that you have read so far, or would like the magazine to cover any particular area in greater detail, just drop us a line - we'd love to hear from you. And now, it's outrageous plug time...

THE RED AND THE GREEN

These adventure seeds are broken into which side of the argument your players decide to support - are they followers of the Green Path or the Red Storm, or are they just in it for themselves (or another interested party)?

Terraform: For supporters of the plan to terraform the Martian landscape (regardless of whether that be the careful, gradual method or the "stuff the consequences, I want this place green within the decade" method), there is really only one task that oversees all others in the early stages - interdicting Red Storm and Red Sword before they can seriously sabotage those plans.

The PCs have a number of roles to play, making full use of their particular skills. Solos can act as either simple muscle (guarding successfully terraformed locations or laboratories), or as counter-terrorist troops (seek, locate and destroy). Fixers and Net-Runners can help locate and provide equipment, personnel and set up secure communications grids. Techies will be so busy fixing and installing equipment that they won't know what day of the week it is.

If the PCs have managed to become close associates of Dawn Attenborough (and we'll leave it up to referees and players to work this one out...),

NEXT ISSUE...

We leave the Red Planet behind us for a while, and make our way out into the Asteroid Belt.

It's time to pack your goop balls, extra tanks of oxygen and your gyrojet pistol, s choombas, 'cause you never know when the next asteroid's going to be hiding a rover, a pirate or, if the rumours are true, a cyborg assassin.

It's a whole new attitude out there in the dark...

The Adventure of the Forester Knight

By Ben Chessell

The Forester Knight is an adventure for Chaosium's **Pendragon** roleplaying game. It is suitable for any group of player-knights as the outcome does not greatly depend on skill at arms, nor rely solely upon knightly virtue. It is a sad tale, but may have a happy resolution. It can take place at any time in the Pendragon campaign, but is best suited to the adventurous phases. In the tradition of many of the Mallory tales, it's set in one of the realm's great forests - The Wildwood.

With a few minor changes, this adventure could also be played in any high fantasy gaming campaign setting, such as **AD&D's Forgotten Realms**, **GURPS Fantasy's Yrth**, **Palladium Fantasy's Palladium World**, and **Unae's Burvoy**.

Introduction

The Wildwood was a primal and magical place, the home of faeries, monsters and primitive Stone-Age peoples. Beech, Oak, Ash, Elm and Alder comprised its thick and leafy canopy, the understorey consisting of brambles and briars. Travel through the forest was difficult and slow, except on the forest roads, tracks which often cut through the densest woods. Occasionally, in the space left by a fallen tree, a glade would open and for a brief time the forest floor would be bathed in sunlight and flowers could grow. Such places are the focus for magical or mystical happenings in the ancient forests.

In the Britain of Pendragon, much of this forest remains. The Forest Sauvage and the Forest Adventurous are examples of islands of the former Wildwood. Such places are deep and forbidding and remember the days when they were but part of the larger forest, stretching proudly from coast to coast. Knights who ride under their boughs can expect to meet adventure, and many ride the forest roads in search of just such an encounter.

The Adventure of the Forester Knight takes the player-knights into a forest. It can take place in any woods, deep in the heart of the trees, and begins in a valley that stretches out on either side of the forest road.

The Tale of the Forester Knight

Sir Hervise, as a young knight, rode errant in all the lands of Britain. He was a lover of wood and woodcraft, and a master axeman. Although a brave and able knight, Sir Hervise never achieved great notoriety. Perhaps this was due to his habit of simply wandering the forests, marvelling at their majesty, learning their secrets and waiting for some adventure to overtake him.

While on one such quest, deep in the ancient Wildwood, he met and fell in love with Ulwen, a faerie, and determined to live with her in her forest home. She returned the love of the knight, and consented to marry him. Sir Hervise, who had come to the attention of the King, received Arthur's blessing and was declared a Royal Forester.

The marriage plans of the pair did not please Ulwen's mother Morgwyn, a faerie of considerable power and influence. She assented, however, and gifted Sir Hervise with an axe, the haft of which was fashioned from a tree in her own nursery and whose blade was beaten in enchanted faerie silver. Sir Hervise, she promised, would find no tree strong enough to withstand the axe's blows, and would be able to fashion many fair things of wood for his new home. So saying she blessed the couple and departed. Morgwyn had also bequeathed a beautiful wooded valley in which the couple might dwell. Taking Sir Hervise aside, she made the knight swear a bargain never to fell a tree of the valley, lest he be cursed as ungrateful and an oath-breaker. To this the knight swore.

Sir Hervise and Ulwen built a castle in the valley and furnished it with many fair chairs and tables, the wood always cut from outside the valley by Sir Hervise, and fashioned into furniture by Ulwen. Ulwen's mother remained jealous that her faerie daughter could be happy with a mortal knight and determined to trap Sir Hervise. Knowing that he would not willingly break the vow he had made, she conceived of a plan to trick him by means of his two weaknesses

- beautiful trees and her daughter, Ulwen. Secretly, Morgwyn planted a seed from her own nursery in the valley, which grew quickly into a beautiful cherry tree, burdened with many ripe, black cherries. The knight came upon the tree and, knowing Ulwen's passion for the dark fruit, determined to gather some for her. He took his knife and reached to cut down a bunch of cherries, not believing that a such small harvest would betray his vow, but the tree, being a faerie tree and unpredictable in nature, withstood the blade. Acting on instinct, Sir Hervise took his axe and cut a small branch, laden with fruit, from the bough. As the branch fell to the ground, Hervise realised with a chill what he had done.

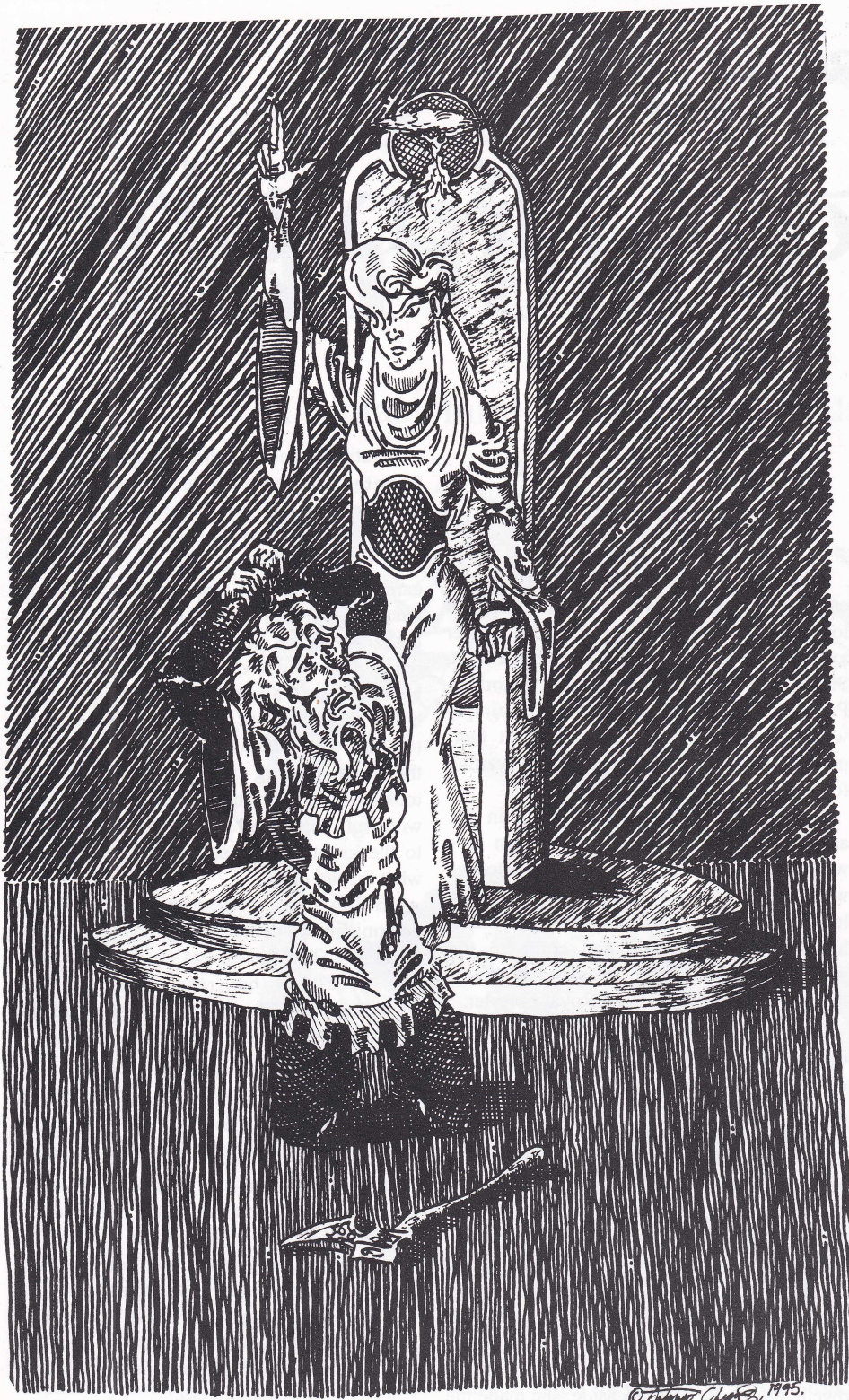
Being an honourable knight he determined to approach Morgwyn and to beg clemency. The faerie was so delighted with the success of her ruse, however, that, triumphant and gleeful, she pronounced the curse that was to be Sir Hervise's sentence.

The Curse

The curse laid upon Sir Hervise is this:
"Miserable knight, ungrateful oath-breaker Sir Hervise, everyday you must rise with the sun, take your axe, my gift to you, and descend into the forest. There you must fell trees until the sun sets, leaving the wood to rot upon the ground. This curse shall never be broken until such a time as you can lay your axe to the bole of a tree, whose bough it cannot cut."

Encounters on the Road

The forest road is a wide, chalk-covered trail, leading straight through the heart of the trees. At times it dwindles to little more than a cart track, while under the eaves of the wood it widens to become a proud highway, maintained by the King's foresters. Knights riding the forest road invariably hear strange noises from the trees to either side. Deep grunts and snorts, loud rustles and soft



hooting assail the ears of the traveller. Other signs of animals are more subtle; sometimes a traveller will discover the trail of some unknown beast crossing the path on some errand of its own. Horses are skittish in the forest and even the bravest knight will be on his guard.

The forests of Pendragon's Britain are populated with all manner of beasts. Many are dangerous, some merely strange and others are but normal creatures, known to all the inhabitants of the forests. It is not unknown for a traveller to spy a lion moving

between the trees away from the road. Wild boar, bears, and wolves are among the other denizens of the deep forests.

Few people make their homes in the wilder parts of the woods, but there are those that do manage to live in secluded glades and copses. Hermits and Monks maintain abbeys or small chapels, far from any path. In areas even more remote dwell the dark folk, the original Stone-Age inhabitants of Britain. They eke out their existence, hunting the forest's animals with weapons of wood and

flint, shunning contact with the more civilised folk of the world.

Any of these groups, man or beast, could serve as a good beginning encounter for this adventure. It need not result in a combat, but should set the tone of the deep woods and make the player-knights grow wary, sensing that they are in a strange and adventurous place.

The Desolate Glade

After travelling the forest road for most of a long day, the player-knights ride out from under the thick cover of the trees into a bright sunset. Blinking, and perhaps believing that they have reached the end of the woods, they see a valley lying before them, bereft of foliage. The slopes of the valley are carpeted with the stumps of trees. Lying beside these stumps are the felled trunks which formerly stood upon them, left to rot on the ground. Atop a hill overlooking the valley there is a small castle, also surrounded by fallen trees. The entire view is drenched in desolation and decay.

The knights' nostrils are assailed by the smell of rotting wood and there is no sound of bird or beast. At the other side of the valley, where the trees resume, keen-eyed knights might be able to make out a man. [Awareness: Success = they see a tall man, dressed in green and swinging a huge axe at the trunk of a large oak. Critical = they can make out the man's coat of arms and recognise that he is a knight.]

It will take some time to ride across the valley to reach the axe wielder.

The Forester Knight

Sir Hervise is engaged in his daily routine, following to the letter the terms of the curse (See "The Tale of the Forester Knight" above). He is unarmoured and unarmed save for his axe. His shield lies against a tree stump close by. [Heraldry: Success = the player-knight has not heard of Sir Hervise (he is an obscure knight) but recognises the crest as that of a King's Forester. Critical = the player-knight recognises Sir Hervise and his office.]

Sir Hervise will be courteous to the player-knights and will see them as a chance for him to escape his awful situation.

As the knights approach, a huge beech tree crashes to the ground. The terrible sound will reverberate throughout the valley, scaring the horses. [Horsemanship: Failure = lose control and fall from horse. Horse bolts. Fumble = as above and suffer 1d6 damage regardless of armour.]

Sir Hervise lays down his axe and hails the knights. He is a tall man, broad shouldered with a large brown beard which

frames a care-worn face. If the knights possess more than 2000 Glory then he will know them by name, and be able to recount somewhat exaggerated tales about their deeds. If any have fallen from their horses Sir Hervise helps them to their feet before the knights' squires have even dismounted. In response to any questions about his activities he responds sadly that he will relate the entire tale to the knights, if they would do him the honour of lodging at his castle that evening. If the players insist on immediate explanation then Sir Hervise will sit resignedly on a tree-stump and tell his story, offering them no further hospitality.

If, for some reason, the player-knights attack Sir Hervise, or attempt to use force to curtail his wood-cutting, he will not defend himself, saying that he has no longer any great desire to live the accursed life that God has bequeathed him. If the knights persist in their attack upon the unarmed Sir Hervise, they will almost certainly slay him and should lose appropriate Glory and gain a check on their Cruel Trait. Sir Hervise's axe will remain firmly embedded in a tree stump, unable to be withdrawn by even the strongest knight (or perhaps the first knight to pick up the magical weapon inherits Sir Hervise's curse) and the King will not be pleased when he discovers that one of his foresters has been slain, especially in a cruel and cowardly manner. It is to be hoped that the knights will have enough chivalry and honour not to take any such course.

Sir Hervise's Plight

Sir Hervise, the Forester Knight, is trapped by the faerie's curse. He must spend every day, between dawn and dusk, felling the trees of the valley and beyond. With his immense strength and enchanted axe he can cut down many trees in a single day's work. At night he sometimes makes sorties in search of the answer to the faerie's riddle but, as he must return to the castle by sunrise, he has found no help for his predicament. Even if the correct tree were found, it would have to be within one night's ride from Sir Hervise's castle. As he and his wife live in a remote part of the forest, few people pass through their valley. The player-knights are therefore extremely important to Sir Hervise, and he will go to great trouble to make them feel welcome.

The Castle of Ulwen and Sir Hervise

If the player-knights agree to lodge in Hervise's castle they are met at the gates by the tousled stable boy, Aaron. After seeing to their beasts, Aaron returns to lead them to the hall. There they are met by Ulwen, a

beautiful and sad woman with green eyes and russet-brown hair, which falls to just below her shoulders. Small but not frail, she is clad entirely in green. The knights are struck immediately by her great sorrow and any knight with a Merciful Trait of 15 or more will develop a Love Passion for Ulwen of intensity 2d6. Ulwen is a woman who has had all that she loves destroyed or ruined. As a faerie she understands the power of her mother's curse and its secret but also knows that her husband must solve the riddle for himself if their love is to survive her mother's jealousy.

Greeting each of the knights by name, she bids them to sit at the table and promises to join them shortly. Courteous knights will realise that she is in no way interested in flirting or amor, but brasher suitors might ignore this and should lose 10 Glory for flirting with the sorrowful woman if they continue after Sir Hervise has joined them.

Dinner is a solemn affair, with both the hosts eating simple woodland fare - rabbit, pheasant, berries and fruits - in silence. There is no lack of food or drink, however, and the cooking is excellent. Sir Hervise declines to discuss anything until after the meal. When all have finished eating, Ulwen rises and excuses herself, after which time Sir Hervise relates his sorrowful tale in full. He is a skilful storyteller and kind-hearted knights may be moved by the tragedy of which he eloquently speaks. If no knight volunteers to undertake a quest to find the answer to Hervise's curse, have all player-knights roll their Just traits to realise the unfairness of the faerie's trick. Finally Sir Hervise turns to face the knights and asks if such brave knights cannot help him to escape his wretched fate.

Sir Hervise is most grateful to the knights if they agree to undertake such a quest, vowing to give his axe to the knight that can find the answer to his riddle, saying that he does not want it if he can be rid of the curse. If the knights determine to try the quest then Sir Hervise invites them to remain as his guests for as long as they wish, before setting out.

The Quest

The journey which the knights must undertake to find the answer to the faerie's riddle will take them further into the forest. Once they leave Sir Hervise's barren valley, whether on or off the road, the trees close in again and the knights can sense a certain malice in the surrounding forest. The knights may have little idea of how to complete their quest but will probably search for news of some magical tree whose boughs could withstand the blows of Sir Hervise's axe. Some of the people whom they encounter and may ask about the tree are:

Phillipe, a friar: Phillipe is a very short man, with pointed ears. He has balding brown hair and small, squinting eyes. The knights will meet him as he tills his meagre plot by the side of the forest road. He will tell the knights that the only tree able to withstand such an axe as they describe is the tree of the Garden of Eden, from which Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. If asked for directions Phillipe will only smile and say that he is spending a hard life in contemplation to discover just that. The knights will have to look elsewhere.

Harold, a Saxon mercenary: Harold, a tall man with greying red hair and a large axe (not unlike that used by Sir Hervise), is encountered marching quickly along the forest road. He will be courteous to the knights but will not wish to converse for long as he is late for a mustering on the other side of the forest. The only tree, he says, that might withstand the blows of a magical axe is Yggdrasill, the World Tree. But since the laying of an axe to the trunk of Yggdrasill would cause the world to shake for a year and a day, he will not tell the knights how to find it. Harold does not have the answer to their quest either.

Hult, a pagan huntsman: Hult is a youngish man with a bright face and will be happy to assist the knights in their quest if he can. They might meet Hult off the road, as he hunts deer with his bow and spear. If asked about the tree which the knights seek he will think for a moment and then declare that he has the answer. The druid's grove, he says, on the isle of Cimbrinsula would be unable to be harmed by any axe. [Folk Lore: Success = the knight remembers that Cimbrinsula sank beneath the waves many centuries ago.] If no knight knows this then Hult will suddenly look glum and add that Cimbrinsula has been lost to the world. Hult then sees a deer and rushes off in pursuit leaving the bewildered and perhaps frustrated knights in the forest.

Each of these unhelpful characters will repeat the terms of the curse as they ponder their replies, giving the player knights the opportunity to solve the riddle. Regardless of where they look, the knights will discover no tree such as they seek, in all the surrounding forest. As they return to Sir Hervise's valley, to tell him of their failure, they hear a woman's cries coming from the woods to the side of the forest road. If they ride to give succour to the woman, they discover, in a small glade, not one woman but two. The two elderly women, dressed in sack-cloth, are fighting over a small bundle of herbs of which they both have hold. As the knights enter the clearing, the two women separate and present their quarrel to the knights. One woman, Dame Blackleaf, owned the seed from which the herb was grown and therefore, she says, the herb is hers. The other woman, Dame Greystick,

nurtured the seed and made it grow into a plant, therefore, she says, the herb is hers. They turn to the knights and ask for them to resolve their dispute.

The two women are really Ulwen (Dame Greystick) and her mother (Dame Blackleaf), disguised as old women with faerie magic. They will listen to the knights' resolution and the aggrieved woman will depart, cursing the knights and their high ideas. Depending on how the player-knights arbitrate the argument they might deserve a check on their Just or Arbitrary traits. Whichever woman they choose to award the herbs to will gather them, cackling with glee, and ask them if there is anything she might do in return. If the knights ask her the riddle of the curse she will laugh and hiss the answer at them between her missing teeth.

"The bough which the good knight cannot cut with his enchanted axe is the haft of the weapon itself. Find the tree from whence it came and you will have ended the curse." So saying, she trots into the forest.

The Journey to Faerie

When the knights return and tell Sir Hervise of the answer to the riddle he puts down his axe, and the lines of care on his face are replaced by a self-effacing smile. Unable to make the journey to the faerie's nursery, where the tree grows, until nightfall he invites the knights to rest in his castle until he has finished his day's labour. If the knights awarded the herbs to Dame Greystick, then they will notice the same herbs hanging on Ulwen's girdle. She is noticeably happier than when they last saw her but will not answer any questions about the herbs which she carries. She does, however, offer to show them the way to her mother's nursery that night. Meanwhile she bids them to be welcome and guides them to soft couches of velvet where they can rest.

If the knights awarded the herbs to Dame Blackleaf then Ulwen will greet them sullenly and after showing them to a cold chamber and remarking cryptically about the knights' lack of judgement and justice, will have nothing further to do with them.

After night has fallen Sir Hervise returns and arms himself. He gives the knights anything they might need for the journey and bids them ride with him quickly, pointing out that they must succeed by dawn or break the terms of the curse and incur whatever misery Morgwyn might desire. If Ulwen has agreed to go with them then the journey to the border of the faerie nursery is swift. Ulwen stops at the border, marked by a line of ancient, moss covered stone pillars, saying that she would only hinder their task and will wait for them here.

If Ulwen does not accompany Sir Hervise and the knights (because the knights awarded

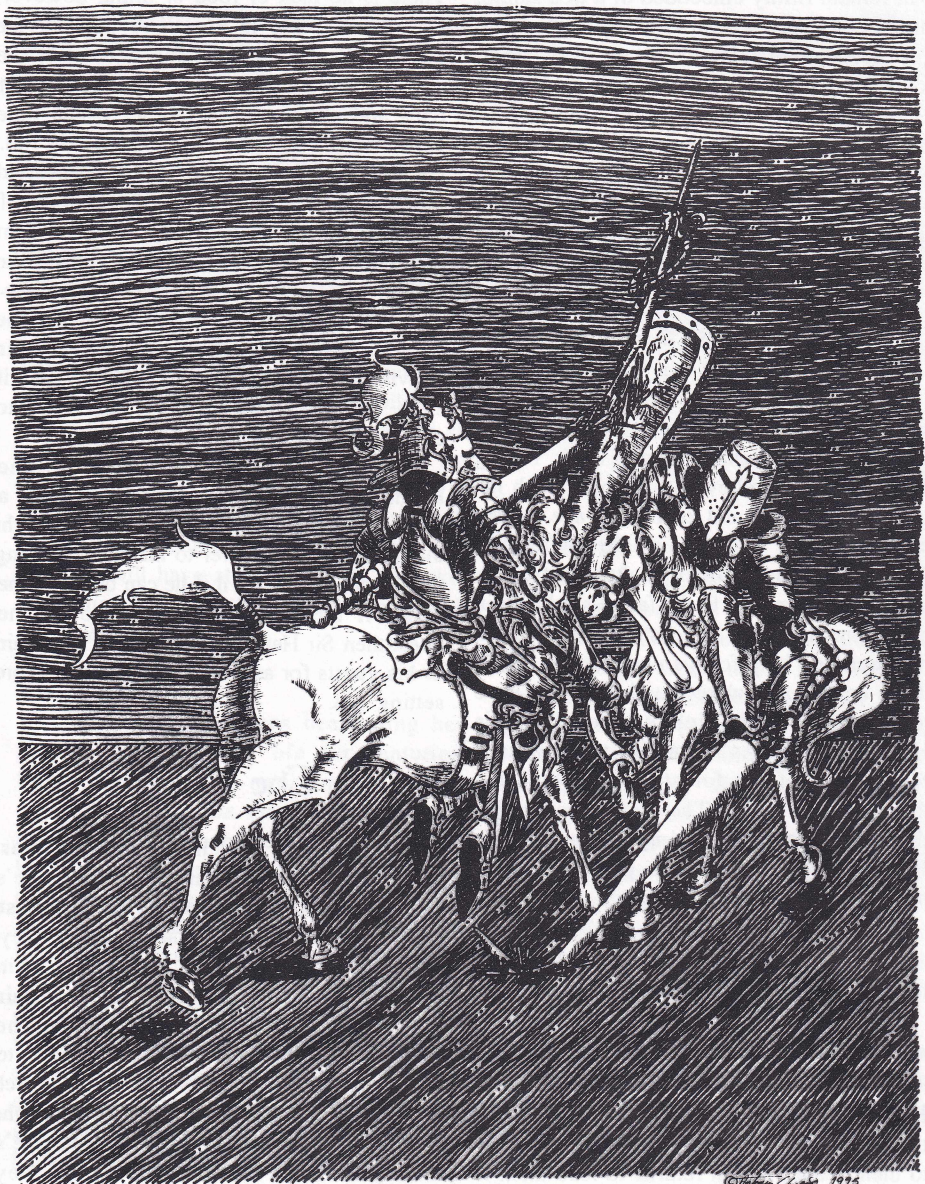
the herbs to her mother, Dame Blackleaf) then finding the faerie nursery will be considerably more difficult. Any knight must succeed Awareness, and Hunting to find and follow the faint trail that leads through the thick forest to the line of stones at the border of the faerie nursery. Only Pagan knights can enter the nursery freely. Christian and other knights must succeed a roll against their Worldly traits to be able to enter the faerie's glade. Otherwise they will ride between the stones and merely see more forest as their companions disappear from around them. Sir Hervise, having married a faerie, is a Pagan knight.

The Knights of the Nursery

The faerie nursery is a small area, where the trees are particularly large and vibrant. Observant knights will notice that one of every type of tree they have ever seen, and many which they have not, grow here. As Sir

Hervise and the knights ride between the pillars they are aware of a distinct change in the air. It is warmer here, and although night, brightly illuminated by the yellow moon. From behind the larger trees ride knights on large, brown chargers. The Nursery is guarded by faerie knights. There is one faerie knight for each player-knight and one for Sir Hervise. Each faerie knight is connected with a particular tree which stands in the garden. There is the knight of oak, of beech, of pine etc. They are garlanded in their particular tree and clad in faerie mail with full helms hiding their features. The knight of oak, for example wears sprigs of acorns and oak leaves in a crown around his helm, and his lance is made of oaken wood. The faerie knights give the player-knights time to collect their lances and then charge.

If a knight is unhorsed in this battle then his faerie opponent will offer to conduct the defeated knight beyond the boundary. If the knight accepts then the faerie will be as good as his word and the knight will be led outside the ring of stones, unable to enter



© Thomas C. Kunkin 1975

the nursery again that night. Alternatively, the defeated knight can swear never to harm the tree that the particular faerie represents (oak, elm etc.) or incur a curse such as the one which has afflicted Sir Hervise. If the knight accepts this offer then the faerie will withdraw, after reminding the knight again of the terms of his bargain. If the fallen knight refuses both offers then the faerie will remain mounted and fight the dismounted knight, attempting to drive him to unconsciousness. If the faerie is again victorious then the player knight will come to in the cold, dew-laden grass of the forest at dawn. If the player-knight unhorses the faerie, then the defeated knight politely bows and allows the player-knight to ride on into the nursery. If the player-knights are all defeated then they may return another night to challenge the faeries, or the referee may rule that Sir Hervise is victorious in his contest and all may proceed into the heart of the nursery.

The Resolution

As the knights ride deeper into the nursery they see Morgwyn, a tall and willowy woman, clad all in brown, standing under the trees. If the knights awarded Dame Blackleaf with the herbs, then they can see the bundle, hanging from Morgwyn's girdle. She will greet them all by name, Sir Hervise last, and will point with a long, slender finger to the tree which they seek.

If the knights awarded the herbs to Dame Greystick then the faerie will greet them coldly. She will admonish the player-knights for their lack of judgement and justice and say that though they have found their way to her nursery, they will not be able to find the tree which they seek. She demonstrates with a large sweep of her hand the number of trees which stand in her nursery, many of which have had boughs cut from them. The knights and Sir Hervise will be able to make a guess at the kind of tree which would make a good axe-haft. They will still have to guess at the actual tree.

To determine if the knights have chosen the right tree roll 1d6. If the roll is a 6 then they find the tree which they seek and can end the curse. If not, then Sir Hervise swings his axe into the trunk of a similar tree. The axe bites and the tree groans but does not fall. From behind the tree steps a knight, similar to those whom the knights have already fought. He demands to duel with one of the knights who have attacked his tree. Any of the knights may duel with this faerie knight, who fights with sword and shield, and is not mounted. After the combat the knights may pick another tree to cut. Increase their chance by one for every successive choice (ie. the second time the die roll must result in a 5 or 6).

When the knights finally discover the correct tree and Sir Hervise swings his axe into its trunk, the tree begins to shudder and the branches shake violently. Seeds, like large acorns, rain down on the assembled knights. Sir Hervise falls into a dead faint. When he awakes the curse will be broken. If the knights gather the seeds of the faerie tree, and they are scattered in Sir Hervise's valley, a beautiful forest will spring up overnight.

Rewards

Sir Hervise will willingly give his axe to the knights, having no wish ever to fell a tree again. He warns the knight who receives it to have a care where he uses it. Also, the knights receive 250 Glory for their part in the adventure and the rescue of one of the King's foresters. They will have earned the enmity of a powerful faerie, Morgwyn, who could cause mischief for them in the future.

Pendragon Statistics

Sir Hervise the Forester Knight

SIZ 18	Move 4	Major Wound 16
DEX 15	Damage 6d6	Unconscious 9
STR 20	Heal Rate 4	Knock Down 18
CON 16	Hit Points 34	Armour 10+Shield
APP 15	Age 39	Glory 2500

Attacks: Great Axe 25

Significant Traits: Energetic 16

Significant Passions: Hate (Faerie Queen) 15, Love (Ulwen) 16, Loyalty (Pendragon) 12

Significant Skills: Hunting 15, Faerie Lore 12

Ulwen

SIZ 12	Move 3	Major Wound 10
DEX 16	Damage 4d6	Unconscious 6
STR 13	Heal Rate 2	Knock Down 12
CON 10	Hit Points 22	Armour None
APP 19	Age 35	Glory 1450

Attacks: None

Significant Traits: Worldly 15

Significant Passions: Love (Sir Hervise) 18

Significant Skills: Faerie Lore 19, Stewardship 15

Morgwyn

SIZ 15	Move 4	Major Wound 18
DEX 21	Damage 5d6	Unconscious 8
STR 15	Heal Rate 3	Knock Down 15
CON 18	Hit Points 33	Armour None
APP 24	Age 60	Glory 5000

Attacks: None

Significant Traits: Arbitrary 15, Vengeful 15, Worldly 13

Significant Passions: Love (Ulwen) 14, Hate (Sir Hervise) 16,

Significant Skills:

The Faerie Knights of Oak, Beech, Birch etc.

SIZ 15	Move 4	Major Wound 15
DEX 18	Damage 6d6	Unconscious 8
STR 18	Heal Rate 3	Knock Down 15
CON 15	Hit Points 30	Armour 15 point Faerie Chain
APP 19	Age Varied	Glory 1500

Attacks: Lance 20 (Damage 7d6), Sword 20

Significant Traits: Honest 12, Valorous 15

Significant Passions: Loyalty (Morgwyn) 18

Significant Skills: Heraldry 14

Sir Hervise's Faerie Axe

The axe made for Sir Hervise by Morgwyn is an enchanted weapon. The queen's boast that the axe will cut any living tree is true, although the player-knights will have discovered that even such magical truths have loop-holes. Furthermore the axe is a formidable weapon in combat. It adds 1d6 to the damage of the wielder and destroys wooden shields on contact (if the opponent made a successful weapon skill roll and was allowed to use his shield).

THE UNITED CATHOLIC CHURCH

UNOFFICIAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR SHADOWRUN

By John Pope

"Most organized religions make a mockery of humanity..." - Axle W. Rose "Garden of Eden" 1991

>>>>>(The Roman Catholic church is one of the world's most powerful organizations. It has survived the Awakening and is rebuilding its power base from the ground up. All those old spells and rituals that it has recorded are now meaningful, perhaps the men who recorded them had more insight than they were credited with in the late 20th century. The Jesuits are once again a highly active arm of the church, highly educated soldiers of Christ that a smart chummer won't mess with.

The Church is found every where, even in places it is not supposed to be, even in the shadows.)<<<<<

- Judge Theo(16:34:48/21-Feb-55)

THE NEW CATHOLIC CHURCH

On December 24 2011, as we all know, the world changed. On that day the Awakening began, an event that the Catholic church was completely unprepared for, even though the seers of Medjugorje apparently predicted it. The Papacy was not prepared to accept the return of magic, even though in the following years the number of miracles reported would rise as would the number of reports of magical phenomena.

The Awakening brought with it many elements that the Church of the time was not prepared to accept, the first UGE children, the appearance of Dragons and other mythical creatures. Pope John Paul IV proclaimed in March of 2012 that these new creatures and children were abominations in the eyes of God in a Papal Bull. Within two years he died quietly in his sleep at the age of 61.

>>>>>(OK. I know this is old hack but *died quietly in his sleep?*)<<<<<

- Monolith (20:12:08/27-Feb-55)

>>>>>(I remember that it was rumored he died screaming at the hands of some devil worshipping sorcerer's sending.)<<<<<

- Carousel(14:10:43/08-Mar-55)

>>>>>(Pope John Paul IV died from a heart attack in his sleep after surviving the sending. Curiously he died exactly 3 days before the miracle of Garabandal.)<<<<<

- Malachy (13:30:12/15-May-55)

With the death of the Pope the church's international power began to crumble. The first sign of this decay was the withdrawal of several Irish Bishops, who allied themselves with the Church of Ireland. It would take six months before the conclave would elect a new pope.

Pope John XXIV was elected to the Pontificate on February 14 2014. For the next eight years he would prove to be a well meaning but ineffectual man. His reign was spent largely on damage control as the church faced continuing scandals, often organized by the new governments around the world to consolidate their own power. The unofficial acceptance of magic by him would see the diocese of Munster in Germany split in 2014. His only Papal Bull, in 2015, overturned his predecessor's one against metahumans, but it would prove to be too little too late.

>>>>>(That's an understatement with 41% of children born in Ireland being elves. The Irish really didn't like the fact that the church even allowed the original Bull. Combined with Liam O'Conner's manipulation of the media in Ireland pro-elves, it was definitely too little.)<<<<<

- Professor Keel (08:45:19/09-Feb-55)

His weak action would come to be interpreted as the reason Liam O'Conner succeeded in his entrapment of the Bishops of Cork, Galaway, Dublin, and Derry along with many ordinary priests in sexual scandals in Ireland between 2018 and 2024. In his struggle to keep the church in power he neglected many of the seers' portents from Medjugorje, and was like his predecessor unprepared for the next upheaval in the world.

In 2021, what we now call Goblinization began. The church's initial response was unfortunately misdirected and in some cases tragically so. The priests attempted to heal the afflicted, but to no avail. But this was not the major trial of 2021, late in the year VITAS would return again. Here the church had the occasional success with healing people.

>>>>>(What! The Catholics cured some VITAS cases?)<<<<<

- Harvest(01:12:30/01-Mar-55)

>>>>>(Yes. Mainly in California under the guidance of one Bishop Joshua Goldstein.)<<<<<

- Raphael (01:01:01/01-Apr-55)

Tragically in 2022 the world witnessed the first of the new race riots. It was on October 10 of this year that Pope John XXIV was assassinated, through a combination of magical and conventional

means, on the public balcony overlooking the piazza of St. Peter's during mass.

>>>>>(They shot him with a 90mm Recoilless that some trog smuggled in.)<<<<<
- Damien (00:13:32/02-???-??)

Exactly 11 days after the death of Pope John XXIV the election of Bishop Joshua Goldstein to the Papacy was announced. This event was significant for many reasons. Not only had the decision been arrived at by acclamation, but the new Pope was a Bishop. The first non-Cardinal since the 14th century, and he was also of African-American descent, the first non-European Pope since the 1st century. On accepting the Papacy Joshua Goldstien took the name of Peter. Becoming Pope Peter II.

>>>>>(You mean to say in all the time since Christ's resurrection there was only one Pope Peter until now.)<<<<<
- Evenstar (08:32:14/28-Apr-55)

>>>>>(Yes, Evenstar. For Peter is the Rock on which the Lord built his church.)<<<<<
- Raphael (01:01:01/01-Apr-55)

The new Pope quickly made several decisive moves to strengthen the church's position throughout the world. Yet even this would not prevent the scandal of 2025 in Ireland, where a prostitution network was revealed to the public by the politicians of the time. However Peter II took this blow without a second glance, effectively sacrificing the church's power in Ireland. On November 1, 2025, (All Saints Day) Peter II proclaimed his first Papal Bull; this bull allowed any recognized sentient being to enter the clergy. This bull also further embraced magic in the church, though it spoke strongly against the conjuration and binding of spirits and the use of magic for purely offensive purposes, without prohibiting these uses.

2030 would see the Reunification of the Anglican and Roman churches, and then the Uniting church would join the new Catholic church shortly after this. Peter was once again apparently guided by the prophecies of Medjugorje, paving the way for the achievement of a goal that was first seriously approached in the late 20th century.

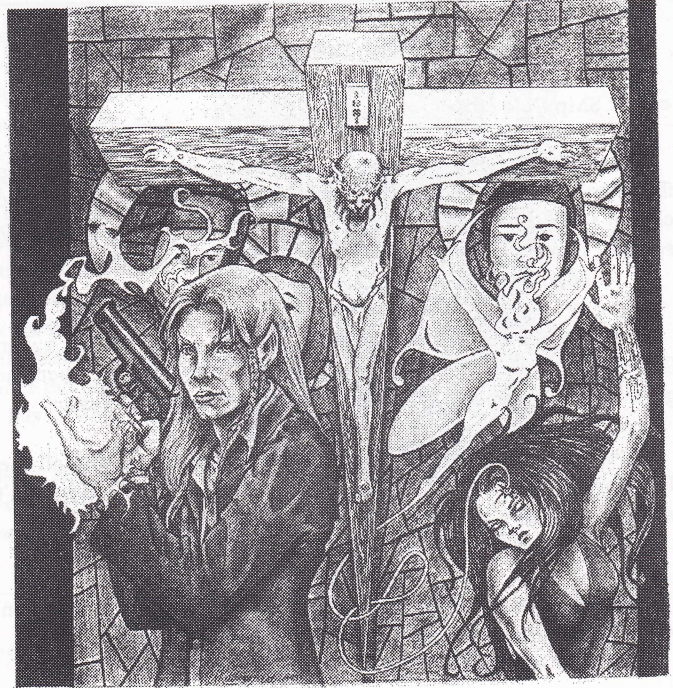
>>>>>(The Anglican church approached the Roman church prepared to make several significant concessions to maintain their temporal power which was seriously undermined by the ascension of the neo-druids to power in England through the Lord Protector.)<<<<<
- Spike (19:50:01/02-Mar-55)

Following the Reunification, Peter made the second of his Papal Bulls in 2031. This allowed married priests,

>>>>>(Something allowed in African nations since the late 20th century.)<<<<<
- Malachy (14:09:45/15-May-55)

women priests, and at last contraception. While the Papal Bull would allow these, the Encyclical would speak strongly against divorce and abortion. The Encyclical pointed to the Bible saying that many of the Apostles had been married, Mary was held up as the example of a woman priest in the Bible. It would then go on to say that contraception was preferable to abortion. The combination of these two documents would shore up the Church through the following 20 years.

<<<<<4Mp Deleted>>>>>



>>>>>(At this point there is a lot of drek praising His Holiness for all the wonderful things he has done.)<<<<<
- Judge Theo (16:50:03/21-Feb-55)

The beginning of the Euro-War saw His Holiness involve the church for the first time directly in temporal matters since his ascendancy. As the Euro-war started he took action to secure Medjugorje, Kibeho and several other sites where apparitions of Mary had occurred.

>>>>>(OK, where are these places?)<<<<<
- Tiger (21:19:00/30-Mar-55)

>>>>>(Don't you have an atlas, Tiger? But for convenience sake - Medjugorje is in what was Yugoslavia (at the time of the apparitions). Kibeho is in what was Romania, OK?)<<<<<
- Malachy(15:10:11/15-May-55)

To do this Peter II re-constituted the holy knighthoods. Specifically the Templars at this time, later as the war progressed he would include the Hospitallers.

>>>>>(These are really nasty fraggers to mess with.)<<<<<
- Scorpion (08:12:37/26-Feb-55)

The Templars would see the brunt of the church's action in the Euro-Wars. Though they did not interfere with the acquisition of territory by either side, they only maintained the sanctity of the sites they were assigned to protect.

>>>>>(Yeah, and that was every little church, every so called holy site and so on.)<<<<<
- Hern (00:00:00/31-Oct-55)

>>>>>(Yes, Hern. But if you didn't mess with those sites they left us alone.)<<<<<
- Minx (09:03:11/21-Mar-55)

>>>>>(Yeah right, Minx. They included any collateral damage to these sites. I saw 'em scrag a whole unit of Allah's soldiers because some shrapnel hit the church for frag's sake. Not that we minded though.)<<<<<
- Hern (00:00:00/31-Oct-55)

>>>>>(Like I said. Nasty fraggers)<<<<<
- Scorpion (12:30:50/01-Jun-55)

<<<<< 8Mp Deleted>>>>>

>>>>>(Once again they carry on praising Peter II's actions in the Euro-Wars. Let's just say that he didn't sacrifice any of the church's interests, and is responsible for all those lovely little hot spots in Europe. Though he also keeps them cool.)<<<<<
- Judge Theo (17:05:41/21-Feb-55)

The presence of the Templars at Guadalupe prevented the Aztlan Government's destruction of this important site in 2041 when the government prohibited the church from functioning in Aztlan.

>>>>>(That's not how I understand it. I understand that all the Templars died but when the Azies tried to blow the place it didn't work. Any ideas why?)<<<<<
- Matador (13:27:56/12-Mar-55)

>>>>>(Might it have something to do with the 10 million visitors the place got a year perhaps, Matador.)<<<<<
- Raphael(010101/01-Apr-55)

As they were unable to evict the church from that site they have encircled it and allow no access.

>>>>>(Why do the Azies want this spot so bad?)<<<<<
- Tribune(08:30:43/12-May-55)

>>>>>(Well there is the fact it's pretty close to the middle of old Mexico, and only just outside Tenochtitlan. Then it seems to have been the location of some sort of Aztec ruins.)<<<<<
- Malachy (15:40:20/15-May-55)

>>>>>(Typical. Church builds on yet another power site.)<<<<<
- Crystal (02:28:08/07-Jun-55)

Even in the face of persucutions such as in Tir Na Nog and Aztlan the church contiues its mission of evangelism. Striving to spread the light of the Lord throughout the world. Today's message is one of acceptance and help for your fellow sapients.

>>>>>(Yeah but the message is backed by big guns.)<<<<<
- Damien (00:13:32/02-??-??)

THE HOUSE OF GOD

>>>>>(This section has been compiled by one Brother Marcus Tarn. I'm not sure what order he belongs to but when I started poking around on the church he came forward and was very helpful. Just how good his data is you can decide for yourselves.)<<<<<
- Judge Theo (17:25:40/21-Feb-55)

The modern church is a roughly semi-circular building designed to hold between one and two thousand parishioners. The parishioners sit facing the altar in that semi-circular pattern. The altar typically contains the "table of the lord", a seat for the priest, the tabernacle and one or two lecterns. Older churches vary widely in pattern ranging back to the old crucifix shaped churches, to a selection of random shapes having more in common with a Dali than architecture. But the altar in all of them follows the same general pattern.

>>>>>(So?)<<<<<
- Scorpion (08:39:25/26-Feb-55)

>>>>>(Well now you know that when you leave your little street hangout you can expect the same basic things to be in the church. You also know that if the church is roughly semi-circular then it's fairly new. Fairly new means fairly modern defense systems. Use your brain, Scorpion, or you'll be crushed underfoot.)<<<<<
- Spike (20:09:45/02-Mar-55)

The meaning of sanctuary in a church has returned, and once given you better not frag with the place. The modern church has at least a powerful magical barrier of either a hermetic or medicine lodge nature.

>>>>>(Medicine lodges? Ain't the church against shamanism and totems on principle?)<<<<<
- Chisel (23:58:00/15-Apr-55)

>>>>>(No, berk. The Church's totems are the Saints and Angels.)<<<<<
- Tuck (16:54:54/29-Apr-55)

>>>>>(Places of Faith often become Medicine lodges when considered to be magically active. Regardless of whether the priest is hermetic or a shaman, or even active.)<<<<<
- Shotgun Mary(05:09:01/30-Apr-55)

>>>>>(Even active? What are you saying? Are you trying to imply that a whole lot of drek heads in a church fraggin prayin have magical power?)<<<<<
- Tribune(08:55:43/12-May-55)

>>>>>(Yes.)<<<<<
- HedgeRow(15:34:00/14-May-55)

>>>>>(If they believe.)<<<<<
- Damien(13:32:00/02-??-??)

>>>>>(Shotgun Mary neglects to mention this is why the various apparition sites mentioned in the previous section are so powerful. This is why Aztlan cannot take Guadalupe, 10 mil Faithful a year by 30 years once magic was happening, let alone before that. Remember this place was powerful before magic came back, as were many other church sites.)<<<<<
- Rook(23:50:13/01-Jun-55)

With the cathedrals and larger parish churches having spirit or elemental guards as well as mundane defenses.

>>>>>(Hey isn't the church supposed to be against the binding of spirit beings?)<<<<<
- Evenstar(09:10:14/28-Apr-55)

>>>>>(The beings in question are not bound they are free spirits.)<<<<<
- Shotgun Mary (05:09:41/30-Apr-55)

In large cities, parishes often have at least one magically active priest. (Just why the church has so many magically active people is unknown. Perhaps it's a miracle). This priest is usually hermetic or a physical adept but some are shamans. Remember, as Peter II pushes, that faith in the Lord and the display of that faith is what really matters, your power source doesn't really count.

>>>>>(But it does.)<<<<<
- Damien (00:13:32/02-??-??)

>>>>>(Hey what is it with this guy's sig.)<<<<<
- Curious(08:40:36/01-Jun-55)

>>>>>(I think he's referencing Revelations.)<<<<<

- Rook (23:50:54/01-Jun-55)

>>>>>(The answer is - 10,314,424,798,490,535,546,171,949, 056. You just need the right question, Damien.)<<<<<

- Deety (21:23:32/02-Jun-55)

>>>>>(I'm even more confused now.)<<<<<

- Confused not Curious (04:14:06/03-Jun-55)

>>>>>(Deety has referenced the 20th century author R.A. Heinlein. He proposes that 666 is not the right number rather Deety's is.)<<<<<

- The Librarian (15:48:54/03-Jun-55)

These priests are usually the parish priest with the mundanes as the assistants. These priests can often be found out on the streets, particularly if they belong to one of the many orders, helping the poor (or if they happen on a scene of violence, then the injured also). The Church represents a considerable problem to both the shadowrunner and his corporate foe. If the person you're after makes it into a church it is wise not to go in after him guns blazing. If the defenses don't get you the lawyers will. (Of course you are allowed to go in and talk to them and the priest, but don't mess with it if they give sanctuary).

>>>>>(Heed the bro's words, chummers. I know this real wiz chummer who messed with the sanctuary of a sleazy corp. He figured the corp was closer to the Inferno than he was so the Lord would see his point. He busted the barrier, and put the priest down for the count. He's heading out with the corp on one shoulder when the building shudders. The doors slam in his face then there's silence. A little while latter the priest comes out and throws his hands to us. They've got these 20cm nails through em.)<<<<<

- Uriah (07:26:29/24-Feb-55)

>>>>>(The Lord is merciful, but prone to a quick temper.)<<<<<

- Raphael (01:01:01/01-Apr-55)

For magicians the local church represents another problem. They all have an elevated background count. The problem represented by churches outside of Europe is rarely particularly large. In Europe, however, where the early churches were regularly built on power sites mages occasionally face the problem of extremely high background counts near them. In Europe and any location where there is a holy site, or even significant temporal trouble, you can expect to find Knights Templar. They'll be guarding the church in addition to anything else that the Church may have may have an interest in there.

<<<<<5Mp Deleted>>>>>

>>>>>(I deleted a whole lot of stuff on the Templars at this point to save repetition, as I am currently compiling a whole wad of stuff on the Orders. I will post it ASAP*. Oh, and by the way the word temporal means of worldly rather than spiritual (with regards belief in God) affairs.)<<<<<

- Judge Theo (17:30:14/21-Feb-55)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: In presenting this history of the major Christian faiths I have tried to stay consistent with the published Shadowrun books. These books, however, have tip-toed around the Church and dealt it a weak hand. Not a particularly convincing vision when you consider the power and history of the Catholic Church. This is why I altered the current pope.

* To be published in issue 28 of *Australian Realms*. ■

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Role-Playing In 3D

How To Add Colour & Variety to Your Role-Playing Descriptions

by Paul Aebersold

GM: *"Ahead four men block the road through the forest. They seem to be waiting for you to act. What do you do?"*

Presented with the above passage, many players would have difficulty in deciding what action to take. There is simply not enough information. For a referee to expect their players to act reasonably, they must be given information that allows them to do so. What follows are some basic tips for GMs to add colour and variety to your roleplaying sessions.

What's Behind the Door?

When describing a location, the detail doesn't need to be suffocating, but it must be adequate to give the players the general atmosphere and feel of their surroundings. There is no need to be overly artistic or dramatic. Just tell the players what their characters can see, and impart the associated feelings. This is what any good writer does when describing a location in a novel. A pile of papers should be described as just that, not a pile containing 54 A4 sheets with ruled margins. Care must also be taken to only include descriptions of what the players' characters can actually see at that time. It is very easy to get carried away when describing a location and mistakenly reveal things the players shouldn't know yet. A wall hanging should be described just as that, not as "a wall hanging of the size to cover a door". Also, try to avoid making the odd Freudian slip. If there is a secret door in a room, don't say "The room has three visible exits". If you do, the players may then assume there must be a non-visible exit as well.

Indoor location descriptions should include furniture, ornaments, wall decoration etc., and most of all, inhabitants. The articles in the room should reflect the inhabitant's taste, racial and political trends, and the function of the room. For example, a war room in a castle will usually include a map of the surrounding area, ledgers of the current stock of food in the keep, and so on. Look around the places you live and work. At your work desk there will be all the materials that you work with, and possibly some mementoes of friends and family. At your home desk, there could be books, magazines, letters to be replied to and a fair degree of junk. Although each desk has the same basic purpose, their different locations mean they are used in different ways.

The key is to describe more than just "active" objects, but not everything in the area. By active I mean objects that have some function in the adventure. Describing nearly every item in a location is tedious. However, if only one object is described in a room, most players will assume that this is the important object and concentrate on it. It can also result in the players missing essential items. By receiving a description of a room containing only one item, and that item proving to be non-essential, some players will not search the room further. The item the players may be looking for could be in the cupboard next to them, but since the cupboard wasn't initially included in the room description, that and the wanted item are missed. You will soon discover the level of detail your players like; if there isn't enough detail given the players will be asking for clarification, if the players are getting bored with your location descriptions, cut them down.

Let's Step Outside

Outdoor locations are described in a similar manner to indoor locations, but with some simple additions. Firstly, the fauna and flora of the area obviously need to be described. In most cases it should be native to the area and fit the geography of the land (there won't be many pine trees in a swamp - if there are, be ready to explain why). Consider what the season is. Almost all detailed campaign worlds give more than adequate information on weather, seasons, prevailing weather conditions. Using the guidelines of the game system you are using there will be no problem in deciding what season it is and the current weather.

When the season has been decided, think about what impact this will have on the plants and animals of the region. If it is winter animals will be hungry and most plants will have shed their leaves. During spring the plants will be flowering and farmers will be planting their crops. Animals must also be in an area that has sufficient food to support their needs, and the land must be of the type that the animal would normally inhabit. Most role-playing games will give an adequate description of its creatures' habitats, food sources and other living requirements. With both these sources of information (season and habitat) a realistic picture of the players' surroundings can now be constructed.

With both types of locations (indoor and outdoor), a fair bit of variety is still needed, as players will soon become tired with endless descriptions of taverns with a fat, jolly barman, buxom waitresses and a pig-on-a-spit over the open fireplace. Players will pretty much ignore your descriptions if they become too repetitive. ACME generic characters are fine for the A-Team (which is intentionally stereotyped), but elsewhere they can become boring.

Perhaps most importantly though, the description of a location should also convey the atmosphere of that location. This is the ultimate goal that the referee should be trying to achieve. If a massacre just occurred the players should feel a sense of dread and horror, whereas if there is a wedding the players should usually feel happy, relaxed. If done successfully, all of these emotions can be conveyed in the presentation of the players' surroundings.

Meaningful Meetings

A good description of a NPC (non-player character) includes three features; the NPC's dress, their attitude, and their actions.

The dress of a person should be in line with their wealth, personality, trends and their current actions, unless the NPC is deliberately trying to deceive, or their circumstances have recently changed (eg. the prince to pauper situation). The noble may be dressed like a king, but if the style and cut belong to a period a hundred years ago and that of an enemy country, then the noble's sentimentality (or poverty) and political persuasion is quickly revealed. The condition of clothing should not be forgotten either. If someone just came in from a rain storm they should look wet.

A NPC's attitude is the best way for a referee to give a description of that NPC to the players. What the person's bearing, posture, tone of voice and general attitude are will reveal much

about themselves and their possible motives. Look at any good actor. With very simple actions and inflections of voice, an actor can portray a wide array of characters and emotions. You need not physically act out an NPC's role but simply inform the players of the NPC's body movements and voice inflections. For example, the lord of the manor will be standing tall and self-assured while in his keep, while the peasant farmer who has been driven into the ground by 30 years of hard labour will be stooped and weary. A woman about to lead the characters into a trap against her wishes would most probably look frightened, nervous and not able to look the characters in the eye without showing pity and regret. Language is also extremely important. The Lord of the Manor won't use the same language as the village baker. Unless you're a good actor though, try to stay away from strong accents. They're hard to maintain and players are always looking for an excuse to do a bad Scotty (Star Trek) impersonation.

The final feature is the NPC's actions. How does the person hold their weapon, how do they treat their tools? An inexperienced mechanic would be clumsy and unsure of her procedure. On the other hand, an experienced field surgeon would have no qualms about operating in the dust with a pocket knife if he thought he could save a life. The energy that an NPC puts into their actions is also a good descriptive tool. Are they forceful, gentle, hurried? The man just returned from two days forced march will be less energetic than the man who is loaded with stamina enhancing drugs.

Although stereotypes are nice to use, try to avoid using them repeatedly. Players usually prefer something fresh, even if it is rough compared to a polished and much used oldie. Using the same character profiles for NPCs is a bad idea as players will soon know how to react to that type of NPC. Each NPC that appears in your campaign should try to be in some way unique. Using the same type of personality for every merchant the characters encounter only shows that you (the referee) are too lazy to think of anything new. Even something as small as the way they talk, what words they use or their hand actions when talking will add memorability to a NPC.

Creature Features

What can be applied to people can also be equally applied to monsters and such. The combat droid that is in constant battle but has a caring owner will have numerous patches applied in order to keep it in top condition. The orc raiding party that just ambushed the merchant train will be covered in the stolen booty and, if there were guards, may also be sporting some injuries.

Attitudes and actions will also present the players with important clues. Animals have a highly developed body language in response to various situations. Take a dog. When it is alert, and trying to sense something, a dog's ears will be erect and it's body stiff. When a dog is scared, its head will be in a lowered position and it will be cringing and whining.

Don't forget the importance of other indicators like tracks, spoor and the condition of the surrounding habitat. Characters may not even have to see the nearby creature to know that they could be in for a fair bit of trouble. PCs with some sort of tracking skill should be able to pick up on some of these indicators (Is the creature possibly wounded and hence in a more violent state of mind?), but even player characters devoid of these skills can be given some fairly obvious clues. Have a number of trees been pushed over by some large creature? Do the characters notice a number of discarded weapons, crushed helmets and/or torn suits of armour, sprays of blood on the nearby trees?

OK, now let's try our initial description once again...

GM: *"The dirt road you are following through the forest is wide and well used. Fresh cart trails are visible in the dirt and rotting leaves. The forest is quiet and undisturbed. Up ahead, you notice that the road is blocked by four men. They each wear similar garb, consisting of a leather jerkin over rough, unwashed clothing. Battered weapons hang at their sides. All are unkempt and show signs of disease. When within hailing distance one leers sardonically at you."*

"What do you wish to do?"



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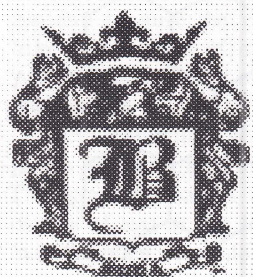
The Last Act of Defiance



- My ! What Big teeth you have Grandma
 - Knew I should have gone for the Tower Shield !!
 - It might help if my weapon was facing the enemy
 - Run Awaaaaaaaay
- you - Gee. Sarkers have those funny things that no body knows the name of at the back of their throat too.
- Wax on. Wax off

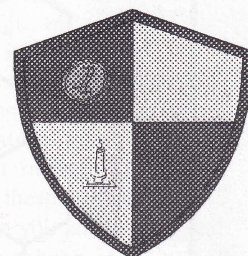


- Knew I should have been a &#^\$ Archer
- Can you get Pikes in XXXXXXL size?
- Ouch
- If you strike me down I shall become more powerful than could possibly imagine.
- My brains, his Steel and your strength against 60 Elephants and you think a little head jiggle is supposed to make me happy. Hmm



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city, generate a few taxes to help finance some other operations and all of a sudden people seem to be a little too keen to get into your city. (The axes give it away). Things would be a lot easier if there were not all those other irritating people (mostly from Queensland) getting in the way. Oh well

Midgard

Midgard is a mixed moderated Play by Mail game of medieval factions that currently has about 430 positions played by players all over Australia and a few from around the world. The Midgard rule book, set up and 2 turns costs \$15 with turn costs set at \$7 per turn. Ask for a copy of the Free House Magazine

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Lethal Heritage, by Michael A. Stackpole is the first book in the Blood of Kerensky Trilogy which was first released in 1989. Due to the success of the Battletech animated television series, which uses the trilogy as its source, this classic trio of novels has now been re-published.

Authored by Battletech favourite, Michael A. Stackpole, *Lethal Heritage* covers the early history of the Clans first major incursion into the Inner Sphere. Set in the period 3030 to 3051, it captures the embryonic career beginnings of several of the major characters that Battletech readers have become so familiar with in the later novels. Ever wondered how Phelan Kell became a stalwart of the Clans and how Kai Allard started his career as a Mechwarrior, then this trilogy is for you.

The Phelan Kell story gives us our first real insight into the mores and customs of Clan society. These descendants of the Star League bring a society and technology that threatens the core of the Inner Sphere. With Victor Davion a green untried leader, and with Clan technology years in advance of its intended victims, there seems no stopping the military might of the invading Clans. The "honour" of the Clans, and the callousness of Clan societal behaviour are the basis of their great military strength, but are also route to some of their vital weaknesses. In *Lethal Heritage* we are taken on a roller coaster ride of superb battles, political intrigue, and human courage and sacrifice. Will you ever be able to trust a Comstar agent again? Michael Stackpole wrings every last ounce of entertainment out of these tremendous string of events, as we find out how the Inner League is going to survive. (As any of you who have read the later novels know it must).

Whilst this novel still employs the sometimes irritating style of jumping from storyline to storyline, the fact that it is part of a trilogy allows the author more scope to expand each story and give each part sufficient depth to provide entertainment for the reader. The storylines are interwoven to bring the whole to a logical conclusion. There is none of the soap opera shenanigans of the later Battletech stories, only stirring personal feats of daring and adventure. Without doubt book one is a jewel and if the other two books are anywhere near the same quality, this trilogy will rate as an absolutely essential buy for the Battletech player and aficionado.

John Vornholt's *Blood Oath*, is book 3 in the series spin-off from TV's Babylon 5. Vornholt's return to the series, coinciding with the release of the soundtrack music to the show, created by none other than ex-Tangerine Dream member Christopher Franke gives me the feeling that there is a determined marketing effort to try and crank the TV show up a few notches.

Blood Oath certainly doesn't do any harm

Book Reviews

by Graham Holman & Adam Whitt

to this push as it takes the two stars of the show - Garibaldi and Ivanova - and puts them through their paces on the Narn Homeworld. Investigating the apparent death of Ambassador G'Kar, Security Chief Garibaldi and Commander Ivanova are accompanied by G'Kar's aide Na'Toth on journey through the various stratus of Narn society. Paralleled by the inequitable societal structures which have bloomed on Babylon 5, Homeworld is the platform on which mankind's foibles are seen to be repeated in all the differing races of the universe. Garibaldi and Ivanova are given plenty of opportunity to develop the pseudo-sexual interplay that long time buddies of an orbiting space station seem to develop. It certainly seems that these two are given much more personal interaction in the novels than ever appears in their rather wooden TV characters. As with the second novel, Captain Sheridan is hardly sighted and has little impact on the outcome of the story. Maybe his agent is still negotiating his acting contract renewals?

The emphasis in these stories is social and cultural interaction, with minimal reliance on special effects or technological gadgetry. In dealing with the Narn customs of Shon'Kar, and the Circles of Narn, John Vornholt has ample fuel to fire up the action in *Blood Oath*. There is plenty of action and enough of an entertaining storyline for this book to rate three stars on any rating guide.

Novels based on TV series are not expected to be literary classics and this one is no exception. Even so it has enough going for it to make it worth your time.

Robert Rankin has two books due out this month, a paperback edition of *The Most Amazing Man Who Ever Lived* (Corgi, \$11.95), and a new hardback, *The Garden Of Unearthly Delights* (Doubleday, \$29.95). Rated below Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett but well ahead of Craig Shaw Gardner, Rankin writes whacky humour that borrows from many genres but can be loosely described as a spoof of contemporary science/fantasy. In this tradition, the lunatic plots of both these books virtually defy description.

In *The Most Amazing Man Who Ever Lived*, Rankin continues the adventures of

his unlikely hero, Cornelius Murphy, and his stunted sidekick, Tuppe (see *Raiders of the Lost Carpark*, *The Book of Ultimate Truths* and *The Greatest Show Off Earth*). This time around the lads from Brentford must thwart the evil plot of Cornelius' father (the most amazing man etc.) before he can end the universe as we know it. Hugo Rune plans to extract all the gold that is in solution in the world's oceans by powering a massive electrolysis machine with all the lost souls that God has put on hold since he decided Hell was a "bad idea". Set mostly in the south of England and in the afterlife, the story rollicks along at a terrific pace with plenty of giggles along the way.

The Garden of Unearthly Delights begins when the Age of Technology suddenly ends and the Age of Myth & Magic reasserts itself. Maxwell Karrien, renamed Max Carrion and thrust into the role of Imagineer ("A kind of cross between Bladerunner, Terminator, Darkman and Doctor Strange") finds himself transported into another version of reality where worshippers wait for decades in Queues at bus stops for the next coming of Reg Varney, and where a truly evil wizard named MacGuffin has all sorts of bad experiences lined up him. There are a lot of sly pokes at fantasy literature in this romp.

In both books Rankin tries to squeeze a laugh out of every last paragraph, and his humour does tend to have something of the Sixth Form English school boy about it. But if you're ready for a good laugh, and not too fussy about plausibility - hey, you're into fantasy, aren't you? - then both of these books are well worth a read.

From Christos Kondeatis and Sara Maitland comes a remarkable collectible for all lovers of mythology - *Pandora's Box* (Penguin, \$45.00). This is a large format, 3-dimensional box/book containing lots of beautiful illustrations (pop-ups), delightful text (Greek mythology for beginners) and some neat bits and bobs like a map of the Greek world, die-cut masks of Zeus and Aphrodite, and a board game based on a game played in Ancient Greece. This gorgeous offering explores the marvels of Greek myth, poetry, drama, art and architecture in a uniquely entertaining way. Good gear.

Made In Goatswood (Chaosium, \$19.95) is a chirpy collection of 18 short stories sharing Ramsey Campbell's Cthulhu-esque setting, Goatswood. *The Horror Under Warrendown* comes from the great master himself; not his best, nor even the best in this collection. Also featured are two of Australia's contributors to Cthulhu lore, Richard Watts and Penelope Love. There are one or two terrifying moments, particularly the well in Sumpter's *The Awakening*, plus some macabre humour as in Watt's *Growing Pains* and Henderson's *Free The Old Ones*. A good fun read for fans of the mythos. ■

Competition Winners

Back in Issue 25 we announced a number of competitions that you, the readers, could enter and win great prizes. Well, all but one of those competitions have now been decided (sorry Castle Falkenstein entrants - but RTG staff *are* looking over your entries as you read this...). Once again, we must offer special thanks to the many gaming companies who provided all the wonderful prizes. And here are the winners...

Earthdawn - Corey Swallow
Call of Cthulhu - Patrick Williamson
Unae Short Story - Michael Wolfenden
Quest PBM - James O'Rance
Lords of Midnight - Charles Howard,
 Scott Muir, Elaine Martin, Andrew Ng,
 Dennis Chantler, Barbara White.

Congratulations and/or commiserations to all who entered the competitions. Prizes will be forwarded to the lucky winners, just as soon as we find out where Nick's dog has buried them all.

Conventions

Once again, we only have one convention flyer waiting in our in-tray.

DwarfCon I will be held Friday 8th to Monday 11th March at the Lyndale Secondary College, Gladstone Road, Dandenong, Victoria. Role-playing games, Warhammer miniatures battles, Bridge Crew, the inevitable Magic: the Gathering tournaments and other events will be featured. As for us, well we just want to see photos of the Lego Wars tournament (for Lego Space figures - classic). Contact DwarfCon I at 7 Leslie Street, Dandenong VIC 3175 for more information.

WotC Sell M:TG!

Ha! Ha! - made you look!!! Seriously though, there *was* an important message from WotC on the Internet the other week that we thought you might find interesting. Basically, it stated that WotC are downsizing much of their interest in alternate products, thereby concentrating their efforts on their flagship items - Magic: The Gathering and similar collectible trading card games.

Although no firm decisions have been made as yet, it's highly likely that we will see less novels, no new board games

(although support will apparently continue for existing products) and the sale and/or dropping of nearly all of WotC's interests in the role-playing game market. Indications are that some of these RPG products (Ars Magica, SLA Industries, Everway) could be picked up by other gaming companies or even *former* employees of WotC, so we'll just have to wait and see...

Travellers No More...

Another recent message on the Internet had a far more startling effect on us here at the Realms offices. The sobering news is that one of the longest standing gaming companies in the business, *Game Designers Workshop* is now *out* of business. Actual details as to why and when are still sketchy, but it definitely appears as though the company that gave us *Traveller* (the first non-fantasy game than some of us veterans ever played), *Space 1889*, *Twilight 2000*, and the *Dark Conspiracy* RPGs has ceased production.

Whatever the reason, be it lack of support from customers, the onslaught of the card-craze, the ill-fated Dangerous Journeys project, or simply the inability to keep up with a constantly changing hobby, we think it's a terribly sad loss for the gaming industry. We just wonder who'll be next...

Unae Sourcebooks

OK - you've asked for it, and now you're going to get it! We can now reveal that the first Unae sourcebook will be **Wair-Rae**, detailing the as yet unexplored (at least in the pages of *Australian Realms*) homelands of the elves. Due to be released this Autumn, Wair-Rae will be written by Colin Taber and illustrated by Danny May. At 64 pages and priced around \$15, we expect this to be a real big seller, especially given that this sourcebook will be nearly all completely new Unae material.

Since we started the Unae campaign setting some three years ago, we have teased and enticed you with hints and portents of what the elves of Unae have been up to - now much of that will finally be revealed. But be warned, for each question about the elves that you have answered, so many more secrets still remain to be revealed.

Our second release (due Winter/Spring 1996) is sure to be popular with fans of both Unae and our current How To/Scenario series (Hra Kurban etc). **The Journal of Naldin Three Fingers** tells the inside story of

Unae's most infamous tomb robber. Expect this sourcebook to reveal much about the "other side" of Unae - supernatural forces and deadly creatures, Horned God cults and powerful magics, ancient secrets and hidden fortunes - just waiting for your hardy group of adventurers to get their grubby little hands on. If they live...

New Releases

February 14th. Our thoughts naturally turn to incredibly expensive and yet only mildly erotic Valentines Day cards, when they should be on these new releases...

FASA Corp: have *Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets* for the *Earthdawn* RPG. *Battletech* fans have a swag of novels and *The Periphery* sourcebook. Shadowrun followers can pick up the *California Free State* sourcebook and *Super Tuesday*, an adventure pack with five related adventures.

R.Talsorian Games: Castle Falkenstein - *The Book of Sigils, Sixguns and Sorcery, From Prussia With Love* (a novel); Cyberpunk - *Eurosource Plus, Live and Direct*; Cybergeneration - *Generation Gap*; Mekton Z - *Mekton Wars Vol 1, Mecha Manual Vol 2*.

Palladium: *Nightspawn*, Palladium's wicked RPG of the supernatural, has been renamed *Nightbane*. *Between the Shadows* is the first *Nightbane* sourcebook. *Rifts Index Vol 1* should be out now. One for all you Rifts techno-rules-junkies.

Steve Jackson Games: *GURPS Celtic Myth* (very, very nice!!), *GURPS Martial Arts 2nd Edition* and the *Car Wars Compendium* will surely tempt all you SJG punters out there.

TSR Inc: In the first 2-3 months of 1996 TSR will already have released the *Dark Sun 2nd Edition*; *Uncaged: Faces of Sigil* a sourcebook for Planescape; *Bleak House*, apparently the "ultimate haunted house adventure" - a boxed set for Ravenloft setting; *The Book of Magecraft* for the Birthright campaign; and *Silver Key, Den of Thieves and Treasure Tales* - adventure books tied into the core AD&D products (DMs Guide, Players Handbook, Complete Handbooks) ... Crikey! - don't these guys just make you green with envy?

...see you 'round like a D100!

THAT WAS THE NEWS

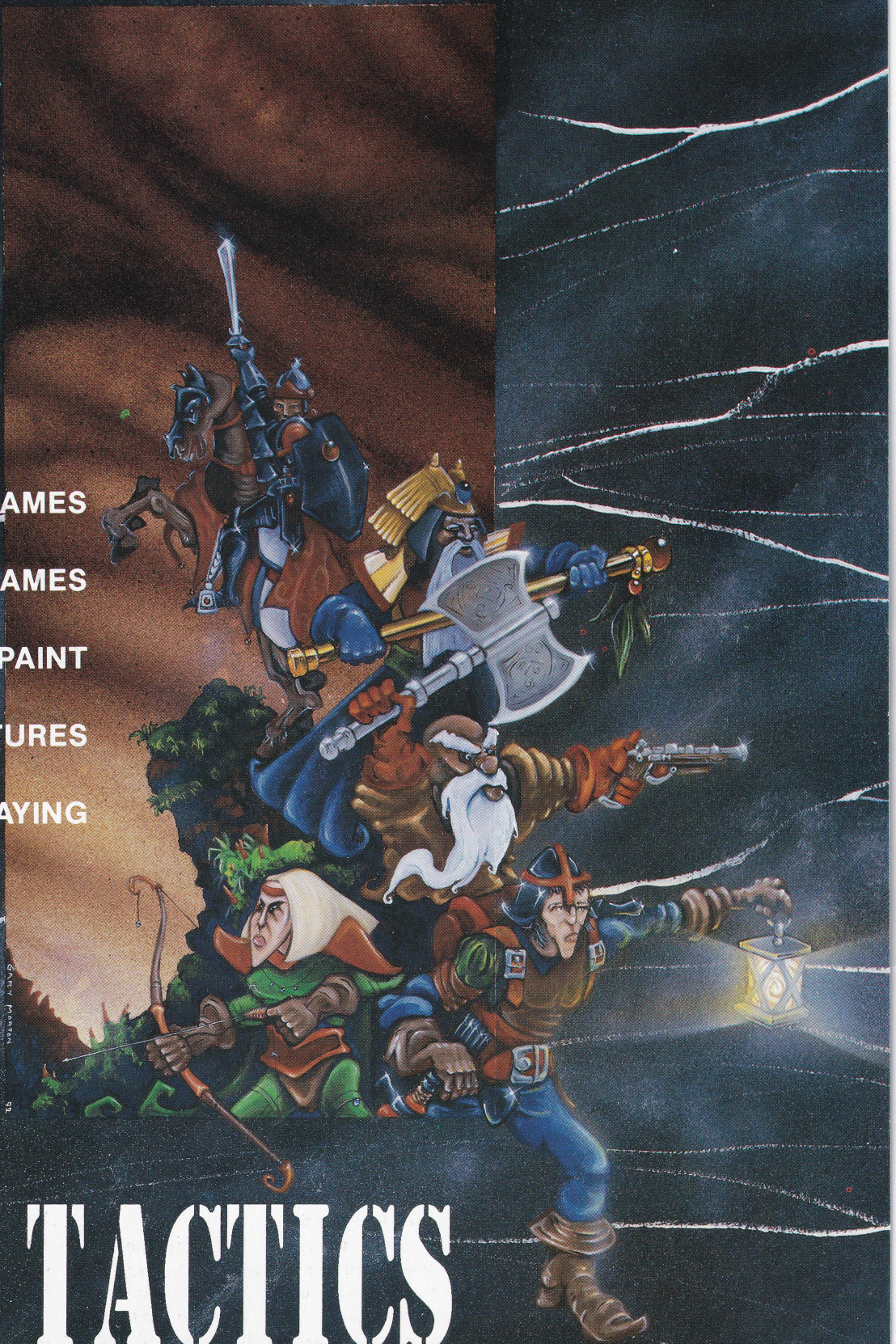
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