

The Dragon



The magazine of Fantasy,
Swords & Sorcery and
Science Fiction Gaming

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Vol. 1, No. 2
August



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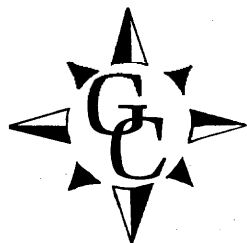
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DRAGON RUMBLES

Welcome to the pages of the fastest growing magazine in the hobby. Welcome back to those of you that were here last issue. I trust that you liked what you saw last time. I base this assumption on the fact that of the response we've had, the majority of the comments have been very favorable. The only problem is that we have had very little response directed solely at the editor. While it's very nice to glean all the fine things that have been said from the orders, letters to TSR, etc., it would be nice to address those comments directly to the magazine. This brings us to the topic of this editorial: reader response.

The increase in interest in Fantasy gaming in the past year has been nothing short of phenomenal. In fact, that sums up the attitude taken by much of the established gaming hobby when fantasy first started making inroads: "It's a phenomenon. Won't last long. . ." The evidence today suggests otherwise. There are many good fantasy games on the market today. Even the "big two" of gaming, Avalon Hill and SPI, have come around to the view that fantasy gaming is here to stay. This change in attitude is evidenced by the fact that both of them have produced fantasy games. It is important to remember that fantasy gaming differs from fantasy literature. Fantasy gaming encompasses fantasy, swords and sorcery, and science fiction.

One can hardly pick up a gaming 'zine nowadays and NOT see something dealing with fantasy. The single largest tournament at ORIGINS II was D&D, with a whopping 240 entrants!! GenCon, which has always had a good emphasis on fantasy the past few years, continues to get larger.

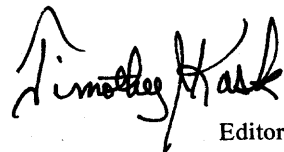
The increase in titles of fantasy games, as well as the proliferation of companies and/or people producing the games indicate that the market is also expanding.

To continue to please this ever-increasing number of gamers, I need the help of you, the reader. What do you want to see in these pages? All of us in this business would like to think that we have our finger squarely on the pulse of the public. Unfortunately, this just isn't so. I am not gifted with mass-telepathy or precognition. Alas, that it were so . . .

What do you want to see in the future? What did you like from #1 and #2? What did you dislike? For the cost of a stamp or postcard, you can influence the future course of this magazine. What do you want? Battle reports? Fiction? Reviews? Variants? Analyses? More Art?

Address your comments, letters, etc., to me, the editor, or to OUT ON A LIMB, the letters column. The most interesting letters, or the best written ones, or those that make the best points will be published in a cross-section, in OUT ON A LIMB. Nobody loves criticisms, but they are necessary, and I welcome them along with praise/good comments and the like. While I don't deny that economics play a part, I most of all want you, the readers, to be happy. It is my sincere desire to please as many gamers as I can with the contents of this magazine.

Dust off those quills, and let me know . . .


Editor

Publisher's Statement

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MONKISH COMBAT in the ARENA of PROMOTION

by John M. Seaton

*Playtested by the Missouri Mercenary Group,
a division of the McHenry Mercenary Group*

Since the conception of the Monk as a D&D character, I wondered about the promotional combat system for them. As I am a novice in the martial arts (Neisi GoJu Ryu) I figured that the Monkish advancement system would be something like the advancement system used today. Assuming that the only thing that Monks with appropriate points needed to advance had yet to do would be exhibit their prowess over the current "master," I devised a very simple combat system which is based on the "En Guard" rules. Some of the things in the system may seem strange or wrong to experienced karatakas but for a game system this is simple enough for everyone.

To "enter the arena" for combat, multiply strength and constitution then add 10 times your level to get Damage Points Taken (DPT). This is the number of damage points you can take.

Next, add strength, dexterity, and $\frac{1}{2}$ intelligence to get Damage Points Given (DPG). This is the amount of damage you inflict with a "normal" blow. When you have DPT and DPG then you are ready to approach the mat for combat.

The combat itself takes place in the ceremonial arena, under the supervision of the next highest "master." The contestants approach the sands from the opposite sides of the arena and bow twice, once to the past masters and once to their "sensi," or teacher. Then they advance to the center and stand about four feet away from each other. They bow to their opponents, assume their combat stance and, on signal, attack.

The combat consists of as many turns that it takes for one combatant to concede — or die. Each turn is 10 sets long, and each set is 6 units long. This represents the combinations that a monk would use in his initial attack. Thereafter, each stop period represents new plots and plans that are formed by each player after each combat.

Both players write 6 units of combat, then they execute. Then write and fight . . . etc. If, after a set it is found that a combatant is below $\frac{3}{4}$ DPT all his succeeding blows are at $\frac{1}{2}$ strength. At any time between blows a combatant may concede the battle. Combat immediately stops and the victor is then recognized as the new-or current "Master." Sometimes scrolls are given by the gamemaster.

After the battle, it takes some little time to recover. For each 10 DPT lost a player must cure for light wounds; for each 50 DPT a player must cure for serious wounds; for every 150 DPT lost a player must be wished to health. If the unfortunate one is unavailed of magic, he must spend DPT lost times 0.5 to determine the days needed for recovery. Monks will not make an advancement challenge to another while the challenge is recovering.

Combat is as follows:

If a player wishes to change an order after a unit has been read, he must make a % roll of dexterity to do so. After a good roll, for example, you could change a kick or strike to a block.

Kicks will not work within arms length, and obviously a strike can not connect outside of arms length. All matches start at

kicking distance so a player must jump forward to strike at the beginning. The gamemaster must keep track of the distances between the combatants.

After the initial set, at least one rest must be used in each remaining set.

Up to three of the same type kicks may be used in a row. When kicking, hands are used in 1 or 2 blocks. Note that the "X" blocks are two-handed. When striking, both feet are grounded. Except when employing an "X"-block, hands may both attack, or one may attack and one defend.

To find which player has "first strike," determine which has the highest DPT at the time. He who does strikes first. If the second player dies as the result of a "first-strike," he gets a return blow only if he beats his last DPT score on a %-ile roll.

The Actions:

To simplify things, I divided the body into three main areas and assigned strikes, blocks and kicks to cover those areas, although some strikes and kicks are used other places, also. First, the blocks;

- 1) High Block (HB): covers shoulders and head.
- 2) Middle Block (MB): covers shoulders to beltline.
- 3) Low Block (LB): covers beltline to knees.
- 4) X-Block, High (XBH): covers to head, user may try to grab attacker.

- 5) X-Block, Low (XBL): covers chest to thighs, and as above.

- 6) Knee Block (KB): covers beltline to knee.

The Strikes;

- 1) Reverse Punch (RP): strike to chest or face.
- 2) Back Fist (BF): strike to head or chest.
- 3) Knife Hand (KF): strike to side/abdomen or head.

The Kicks;

- 1) Front Kick (FK): to chest or abdomen.
- 2) Head Kick (HK): obvious.
- 3) Side Kick (SK): to abdomen or chest.
- 4) Sweep (SW): this is to trip an opponent. If it succeeds, the opponent cannot strike for three units — he gets up. However any blows struck do only "normal" damage.

- 5) Stamp (ST): this can be used after a successful sweep only, and has no effect otherwise.



Others;

1) Rest(R): must be used once each set after the first.

2) Jump Back (JB): moves user 1 leg length back. Can kick after it if opponent hasn't moved and they were arm's length before jumping.

3) Jump Forward (JF): moves user 1 leg length forward. Can only strike if this brings opponents within arms length.

4) Duck (D): brings body mostly below high and middle strikes and kicks.

Remember, the advancement combat is **not** designed to kill, but it can. Most combats are finally settled by concession.

Summary — you can kick and block once or twice, block 1, 2, or 3 times, one strike & one block, or use two strikes.

	HB	MB	LB	XBH	XBL	KB	R	JB	JF	D	RP	BF	KH	FK	HK	SK	SW	ST
RP	2	x	x	2	x	n	x	x	2	x	n	2	x	x	x	x	x	x
BF	x	n	2	*	2	n	x	x	2	x	2	n	n	x	x	x	x	x
KH	n	x	2	*	2	n	n	x	3	n	x	n	n	x	x	x	x	x
FK	2	x	n	2	*	x	n	x	x	2	x	x	x	x	x	3	n	n
HK	*	n	3	*	2	2	*	x	x	x	x	x	x	2	x	3	x	x
SK	2	*	n	3	x	x	n	x	x	x	x	x	x	2	2	x	2	x
SW	o	x	x	o	x	o	x	x	o	o	x	x	x	x	o	x	x	x
ST	n	n	2	*	*	n	3	-	-	-	n	n	n	n	n	n	2	n

*The attack is blocked, and the defender may attempt a grab. Use monk dexterity score and roll %-ile dice, or, if at ½ strength, beat DPT score with %-ile roll.

x: blocked, no effect.

n: normal damage, DPG.

2: double DPG.

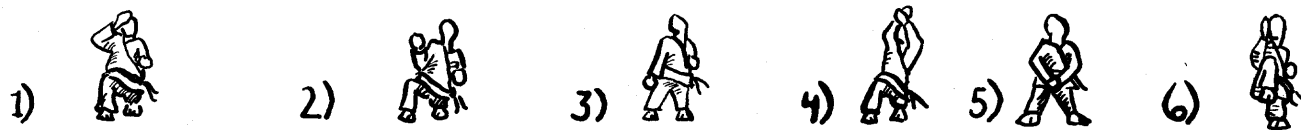
3: triple DPG.

o: sweep succeeds, opponent is on ground

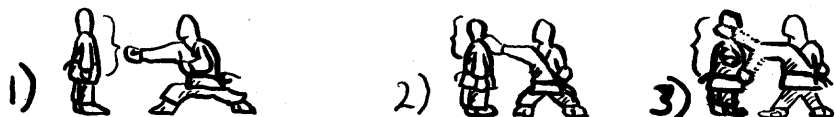
-: not applicable.

: grab (see). Your next three units of blows all tell at normal value, opponent cannot count strikes until the third unit. These blows may be blocked.

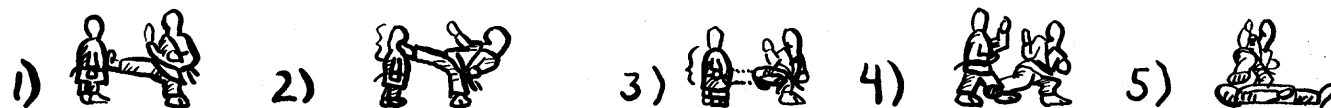
The Blocks;



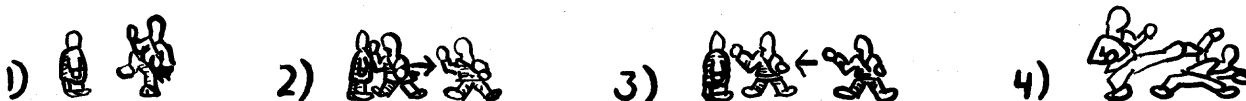
The Strikes;



The Kicks;



Others;



THE GNOME CACHE

Summary

Unable to resist the wanderlust any longer, Dunstan has robbed his father's strongbox and set forth on his quest of adventure and glory.

CHAPTER TWO

Balls! . . . The balls of his feet ached, his legs were numb, and Dunstan was generally fatigued all over. During the wee hours he covered the three leagues to the fork where Wild Road ran into the King's Way. The pale light revealed the shrine of Saint Cuthburt of the Cudgel just ahead. No one else was abroad as yet, so Dunstan trudged up to the shrine and threw himself down upon the sward, back resting against the rough stones of the altar, to await some passing cart and hitch a ride. Thinking how he must obtain a mount quickly, for such tramping about was unbecoming a gentleman adventurer and soon, esquire, Dunstan's head nodded, and despite himself he dozed. Voices floated into his stupor, and upon opening his eyes the young man was so disoriented that the plaster figure looming overhead seemed to be a brigand about to brain him with a great bludgeon.

Pulling himself erect with startled haste, Dunstan realized he had been gazing at Saint Cuthburt from a supine position wherein he had slipped as exhausted sleep gripped him. What had awakened him? Voices! They were raised again, quarrelsomely, and coming from somewhere in the thicket behind the shrine. This was something to investigate immediately, so gripping the pommel of his dagger, Dunstan poked his way somewhat cautiously into the brush. His quiet approach allowed him to view the scene unnoticed. Four or five sturdy fellows were ringed about a cloak, and the cloth was covered with an assortment of jewelry and coins.

"That chain is worth more than a few nobbs!" hissed a tall, lank rogue, and he disdainfully scattered the stack of the silver coins to emphasize his point.

"Yer arse," said the brawny man with red hair. "I am captain of this band, and I says that them nobbs is its worth. Take 'em or stick 'em . . ."

Here Dunstan's foot came down upon a rotten stick, and its loud cracking turned all heads towards him. Bravely the intruder tugged forth his blade, nearly lopping off his own leg as the hastily drawn weapon rebounded from a bough in the flourish. The circle scattered before the brandished dagger: "Hold, Villains!" Dunstan blushed as the roar turned into somewhat of a squeek. "Stand and face a valiant Champion of Justice!"

At that the red-haired leader stepped forth smiling: "Oh, most welcome words, brave sir. We feared that we had been set upon by the robbers who frequent this part of the road. But put away your blade, for we are honest men of gentle birth albeit in somewhat distressed staits at the present." At this he gave a sweeping gesture to include the returning men: "See. We are all disarmed and most shabbily attired."

"Do I read your words aright?" the puzzled Dunstan asked. "Your dress and your actions bespoke you as a pack of footpads, yet your words are most fair . . ." and he hesitantly sheathed his blade.

"Know, sir, that we are a company of righteous fellows, most evilly disposed in one way or another by the false-knight, Baron Teric whose castlewick at Edgewood on Wild Road is the bane of freemen and a nest of caitiffs. I am Theobald, once a great franklin of this district, and this man — indicating a burley blond of about Dunstan's age — is my good cousin Aloward who would have won his spurs by now but for the intrigues of vile Teric. Wat, once my verderer, now must also call himself masterless, and Hob and Bertram here were sergeants in the service of the same Baron until they could stand no more of his deviltry!"

With these introductions the whole crew laughed merrily while Dunstan stood amazed. To find such oppression on the first day of his errantry was indeed a sign that he had done aright, and Dunstan vowed to help these good men rigorously to right the wrongs done to them. Wat, Hob, and Bertram — the lank fellow with a slight cast to his eyes who had been disputing with Master Theobald when first he saw them — were beneath Dunstan's station and unworthy of consideration. The franklin was another matter, as was the Squire Aloward. He sympathised with them for their plight which forced them into company with servitors and men-at-arms. Still, loyalty was as admirable in gentlemen as in common servitors, and their situation evidently brought this chivalrous quality to the fore. But what of the booty upon the cloak . . .

"Certes, Master Theobald, right gladly met, and you Esquire Aloward, as well as Hob, Wat, and Bertram; yet, what of the division of spoils I witnessed?" Dunstan looked into the jolly blue eyes of the leader and saw nothing therein to dismay him.

"What honest champion would not be gulled by such a sight!" said the big man clapping him on the back: "Attend me while I relate the tale. Ho! Wat, my man, have we anything with which to cool our tonsils — all this talking demands an oiled throat." So saying, he took Dunstan by the arm a wineskin in the other hand and sought a grassy place to rest. "Hark to my story, for it ends not with my freehold being stolen from me. Along with my lands and manse, Baron Teric confiscated a small fortune in money and jewels, the fruits of much labor by myself and my forefathers. Although I escaped with my life, nothing else save the clothes on my back escaped the robbers!" Here Theobald gulped a hearty draught of wine and proffered the skin to Dunstan: "Have you a bite to eat there in that wallet, lad?" indicating the pouch at Dunstan's waist.

Dunstan hurriedly drew forth cheese and biscuits, passing them around to all, rueing how small his own portion turned out to be. Master Theobald continued: "We wandered about the countryside, but the simple peasants were afraid to help us, and we were near to starvation when Hob and Bertram joined. They told how the Baron often transported his ill-gotten wealth to bribe the Justiciars of the Overking. Thereafter, our company has never wanted for provisions — what you saw us dividing was spoil of a sort, but just reward. We have harried the retainers of the most-wicked Baron and relieved them of much of what they have stolen from others. Why this very chain — lifting the fine links so that they glistened brightly in the early sunlight — belonged to my own sweet mother, and there can be little doubt that most of these coins were once the grace of my strongbox." The youth nodded assent, finishing the last small bite of hard cheese while searching the wallet for any overlooked morsels.

"Why haven't you, sought the justice of the Overking?" inquired Dunstan, having found nothing else to eat.

"Are you daft! — no offense. Haven't I just told you of how the officials round about are all in the pay of Teric? If they so much as laid eyes (heh, heh!) on me, irons and the dungeon at Rauxes would be certain. But you must grow weary of my tale of misfortune; come, tell how came you to the Shrine at dawn.

Forgetting his ire at being called daft, Dunstan concocted an account of how he too was setting out in the world to seek justice, relating that his father — a knight and doughty warrior — was held captive in the strange land westwards beyond Far Pass. As certain noble friends of his father had refused the ransom demanded, he, Dunstan, had taken what little remained of the family fortune in order to free the poor man himself. "Surely," he concluded, "my sorrowing mother will die of grief unless my brave father soon returns."

"Why sprang you forth, blade in hand?" demanded Aloward.

Before Dunstan could open his mouth to give the obvious reply, Theobald interjected, "Hold your tongue, Al. Vex not this good warrior with suchlike questions. Ah — did you say that you set out with your remaining wealth to ransom your. . ."

"No, no, Master Theobald. Would I had enough to do such," Dunstan lied. "Naught but a few coins of any worth remained after so long a time as he has been prisoner. I have but a few scruples now, but ere I pass beyond the Rauxes I shall have made the fortune necessary." Displaying a handful of metal he gestured to indicate how the pittance would multiply then.

The expectant face of Master Theobald fell a trifle, but when he saw the questioning glance from his newfound associate, he said: "So. That being the case we shan't ask if you have any copper commons to spare. I'll trow there are many poor hereabouts that are in sore need, but our band shall continue to do what we can to help. What we take is carefully divided between us, for each must look to his own keep, but more than a mite goes from our purses to the deserving. . ."

"Innkeeper Krell and Meggin," Hob laughed.

"Of course," snapped the captain, "Now shut up and gather up our plu— poor gleanings, for your untutored tongue will surely give the young master the wrong ideas." Turning once again to Dunstan he explained: "We have found a friend of the oppressed, but the risks the good innkeeper takes in providing our comforts (Hob said something about Meggin taking worse risks still, but Theobald merely talked a bit louder) demands a considerable stipend in return. Perforce we are always short of alms to distribute to other good folks." Theobald considered for a moment and went on, "Yet without the good offices of Innkeeper Krell they'd receive nothing, for we'd not be here to serve."

"Well spoken, sir!" said Dunstan, envisioning the throngs of poor saved by the generosity of this good company of stalwarts. "But pray tell me how it is that your handful, without horses or stout arms, manage to wrest such wealth from the clutches of Baron Teric's trustees?"

Again the company dissolved in mirth, much to Dunstan's consternation. Theobald interjected, "Trouble yourself naught on that score, young master, for our misicordes and stout staves found aplenty here in the woods manage well enough. But come let us off to more comfortable — and safer — surroundings. Too many warders — those in the pay of the Baron, of course — are likely to be riding at this time of the morning. If you are as tired as I, and you appear most spent, then we shall all profit by some well-deserved rest." So steering him onto a narrow path as he talked, Theobald, Dunstan, and the others left the little clearing.

Conversation stopped almost as soon as they entered the wood, for although it was small, the growth was thick, and passage was only possible single-file. No wonder that their dress is so shabby, reflected Dunstan. This kind of travel was hard on apparel to be sure, and had he not worn a leathern jerkin the twigs and thorns would soon have made his shirt a tatters. The silence of the place was broken by occasional bird calls, the sound of their progress, and muttered oaths from behind as some member of the party stubbed a toe or caught the backlash from a low-hanging branch. He quickly tired of studying the back of the franklin's neck and became lost in speculation as to what he would do next.

No question that he could help this lot in some way, but upon reflection, it seemed far wiser to waste no time on the pursuits which Master Theobald followed. Why when he became a squire — here he digressed in thought to worry if the number of golden orbs in his girdle would be sufficient to buy the position. Indeed! Why is it that a true gentleman and brave champion such as he had already proven himself to be (hadn't he?) should need to resort to payment? Upon arrival at the Great City he'd present himself to one of the more important lords, and upon recounting his deeds he would be taken as an esquire without further ado! Of course, a few coins would be required in order to gain an audience . . .

Thawk! The bough struck him squarely across the forehead, knocking him back into Aloward who had been following close behind. "You stupid bastard!" gasped the surprised fellow as Dunstan's backward fall brought him down also. "Remove your churlish ass from my midsection, or I'll kick it up around your ears."

"Oh shall you, knave," snarled Dunstan in embarrassed anger: "Let us see if you can make good your bobance in the-face of my steel!" But he had scarce room to draw the weapon, and Aloward stuck a meaty fist squarely into the pit of his stomach, setting him once again most rudely upon the ground. Before things could go further, and the Esquire was readying his dagger, Theobald stepped in and ended the matter. Apologizing curtly for his own carelessness and for his nephew's discourteous — nay, boorish! — behavior, he jerked the dazed blade to his feet and hurried him along.

"Know you not that such a ruction could bring unwanted attention?"

When Dunstan only rubbed his head and stared stupidly at him the franklin nodded once. "Now mind where you're going and quarrel no more with the members of this good company you— valiant champion. Save such for more worthy opponents."

Thereafter Dunstan did just that, and within a few more minutes they stepped free of the foliage. A thorp of miserable cotts greeted their eyes, but Dunstan noted a more substantial building beyond. Progressing up the rutted track they came to the sign that announced arrival at their destination, the Inn of the Riven Oak.

To Be Continued

Watch for TD #4 — Dec. '76 Empire of the Petal Throne Issue

***Battle Report, Short Story, Current Events
& more!***

Do you have an EPT item you'd like to see in print? Art? Questions? Send 'em in!

SEARCH FOR THE FORBIDDEN CHAMBER

conclusion

by Jake Jaquet

Synopsis: A small band of explorers, RALPHEDELONAMIOUS (Ralph) the wizard, DIMWIT the dwarf and 'LUMBO the elf have become lost in the depths of an unexplored dungeon. Fighting their way past several obstacles, including the dreaded recyclesaurus, the trio happened upon a small onyx box containing a curiously shaped gold key. Ralph related a tale to the other two members of the party suggesting that the key may be the key to the first door of the Great Vault of the ancient KING GLUB VIII. According to the ancient lays, the vault contains the great Golden Dingus of Power of the long-forgotten race known as the Chutzpas. Just as Ralph completes his tale, 'Lumbo removes the key from its resting place. 'Lumbo's touch springs a trap and several wall panels slide open, disgorging a horde of half-blitzed winos.

"Quickly," urged the wizard, pushing open a large metal door beneath a glowing electric "Exit" sign, "through here!"

Dimwit and 'Lumbo hurried through the offered escape and Ralph followed on their heels, pulling the door shut behind them. After the door had latched with an echoing clang, the trio noticed there was no handle on their side.

"T'would appear the fates have urged us along a predestined path," mused Ralph.

"No kidding," grumbled Dimwit, lighting a cigar, "but what now?"

At that point, a sickly green gas issued from several small openings in the stone walls and the trio fell to the floor, dead.

Editor's note — After reading the first (and only) page of the manuscript for the conclusion of Search for the Forbidden Chamber, I was a bit disappointed with the rather sudden ending (not to mention several column-inches of space still to be filled). A quick consultation with the dice box (and three consecutive rolls of "00"), several long-distance phone calls to Mssr. Jaquet and some tricky juggling of printing schedules resulted in a more satisfactory conclusion. Any allegations by Mssr. Jaquet concerning brow-beating, blackmail and threats of physical violence are completely false.

"Wha' happened?" yawned 'Lumbo, pushing himself into a sitting position as the last vestiges of the gas dissipated.

"Beats me," said Dimwit thickly, shaking his head a few times, "but see if you can get a rise out of Sleeping Beauty over there."

The elf gently nudged the prone figure of the old wizard, to no avail. A more insistent shaking of the old mage's shoulder also produced no results.

"Oh, wow," said 'Lumbo in a soft voice, "do you think he's . . ." Just then the wizard emitted a loud snore and rolled over on his side. Dimwit gave Ralph a disgusted kick in the posterior.

"Just ten more minutes, dear," came Ralph's sleep-fogged voice.

Several more minutes of poking and prodding managed to awaken the sleeping wizard and Dimwit repeated his question that had been cut short by the sleep-gas earlier.

"Well, what now?"

The old magic-user looked in the direction of Dimwit's pointing cigar butt and noticed for the first time a staircase descending to unknown depths and a large black spot on the floor bearing the inscription "point of no return."

"Since we have no other recourse, let us proceed," the wizard said slowly, "but let us be cautious and move with the utmost care and stealth."

"10-4," said 'Lumbo swinging a leg over the stairway banister. "Last one to the bottom is a rotten balrog!" he shouted as he pushed off into space. Ralph and Dimwit exchanged pained looks as they listened to 'Lumbo's high-pitched giggles fade away into the darkness and with a sigh of resignation, started down the stairs.

"Long have been the years since last a human foot traced this passage," observed Ralph as every step raised a cloud of choking dust.

"This is true," coughed Dimwit as they rounded another landing and still the stairs led downward. "But perhaps that is a good omen, for . . ." Dimwit's speech was interrupted as several ten-foot steel bolts shot out from the walls, narrowly missing the pair, "perhaps there are no traps to worry about," he finished lamely.

Ralph and Dimwit continued their descent, pausing only to climb over some were-bear bones protruding from beneath a five-ton block of stone that had obviously fallen from the ceiling, and to ponder some enigmatic runes concerning someone known only by the initials A.S. and a journey to the center of the earth. At last the stairs ended. At the bottom the pair found fresh tracks that could have been made only by 'Lumbo's stumbling walk leading off down a passageway.

The dwarf and wizard followed the tracks for a short distance to a point where they ended in front of a massive wooden door. Of 'Lumbo there was no trace.

"That puny person must have passed this portal previously," pondered the perplexed magician.

"Yeah, and the writer's using too much alliteration, too," agreed Dimwit. "I suppose we have to open this bugger, too?"

"Either that or the story ends here," said Ralph, much to the editor's horror.

The pair tried the door, but to no avail. Ralph spoke several



magical incantations, but still the door refused to open. Finally Dimwit unshouldered his pack and shook the contents onto the floor. Kicking aside a 2-iron and a fly-casting rod, the dwarf finally came up with a four-foot wrecking bar. After fitting the bar into place, the two heaved mightily and the door gave way with a splintering crash. 'Lumbo's tracks continued on the other side and the pair followed them down the hall. The tracks ended in front of yet another door.

"Here we go again," muttered Dimwit as he retrieved his crowbar.

"Hold, Dimwit," cautioned the old mage. "Look at the lock. Is not that the key that was found by Master Elf, still within the keyhole? Methinks this sign may bode ill fate and a council of opinions might. . ."

"How come you talk so funny?" interrupted Dimwit.

"Makes for good copy," admitted the wizard. "At any rate, it's obvious the bad guys snatched 'Lumbo just as soon as he opened the door. What ya think?"

"Got ya," smiled Dimwit, pulling out his battle-axe and kicking open the door. The pair had been ready for nearly anything, but certainly not for the sight that greeted them behind the door. In the center of the large chamber lay the bodies of several horrible creatures, including a number of giant insects, snakes, and other creepy-crawlies, two medium-sized dragons, three life-insurance salesmen, a couple IRS investigators, and an undercover narcotics agent. 'Lumbo sat leaning against a wall, completely engrossed in a dog-eared copy of Playelf.

"'Lumbo!" shouted Dimwit, dropping his axe and hurrying towards the elf. "What . . . how . . . when . . .?"

'Lumbo looked up from his magazine. "Oh, far-out! You guys finally got here." With a last glance at the magazine's center-fold and a sigh, the elf stood up and dusted off the seat of his pants.

"But 'Lumbo!" cried Ralph. "How came you to defeat this ghastly company in single combat?"

"Yeah, . . . uh, . . . well, first I pulled out my trusty ol' sword like this." 'Lumbo drew forth his weapon, turned swiftly and tripped over his scabbard. "Well, not jus' exactly like that, but anyway, . . . uh, where was I? Oh, yeah, well, as I pulled out my sword, I decided to try to fool 'em. I looked over my shoulder and yelled, "Come on guys, let's get 'em! They didn't believe it. Then I told 'em I was a 27th level magic-user and if they'd leave me alone, I'd spare 'em. They didn't believe that, either. Then I called the dragons illegitimate sons of sand lizards, told the IRS

guys I hadn't paid taxes for ten years, said I wanted to buy \$25,000 worth of life insurance, and flashed my Legalize Pot button. Then I turned off the lights and jumped outside. In the confusion, with everyone trying to get me, I guess they tore each other up, 'cause when I came back in, they'd all snuffed each other, 'cept for that cockroach over there in the corner," 'Lumbo indicated a dark spot on the floor with a wave of his pipe, "and I squished it myself," he finished proudly.

Ralph and Dimwit looked at each other in amazement, partly in reaction to 'Lumbo's tale and partly because it was the longest coherent speech they had ever heard him make.

"At any rate," 'Lumbo continued, "there's a really neat lookin' door over there on the other side of the room. How's about a look-see?"

Indeed, on the other side of the chamber was a large bronze door, now green with the tarnish of the ages.

"Green door, what's that secret you're keepin'?" sang 'Lumbo as the trio approached the forboding portal. Ralph and Dimwit gritted their teeth in frustration and fell to examining the door.

"Say Dimwit," asked Ralph from his knees, "why do we always fall when we examine something?"

"Maybe you're just clumsy," offered a strange voice.

"What's that?" exclaimed Dimwit.

"I'm a strange voice, didn't you just read it?" came the answer.

"Boy, the acoustics in these dungeons are terrible," mumbled Dimwit. "I think I'm hearing things."

"Hey, guys, look at this!" 'Lumbo was pointing to a small white button set near the edge of the door. "I wonder what it does?" asked 'Lumbo to himself as he gave the button a poke.

"'Lumbo! Don't!" cried Ralph and Dimwit.

Chimes sounded and reverberated throughout the dungeon. Once, Twice. Three times. And with a loud groan, the door opened before the three explorers.

"Far out," said 'Lumbo shuffling into the chamber beyond.

The room behind the door was a startling change from all the three had seen thus far in their travels. All the walls, the floor and even the ceiling were of polished metal. Light blazed from an unseen source, gleaming off the metal and illuminating a single pedestal in the center of the room.

The trio continued forward slowly, hands at their weapons, and approached the pedestal. The block was smooth on all sides, about a foot square and perhaps four feet tall. As the group neared they could discern the top was inlaid with several round objects. A closer inspection showed the objects to be beer bottle tops.

"This is the lock to the Great Vault," whispered Ralph. "By pressing the right combination of bottle tops on the top of the pedestal, one can disarm the protective devices and open the gates to the Vault.

"And if not . . .?" questioned Dimwit.

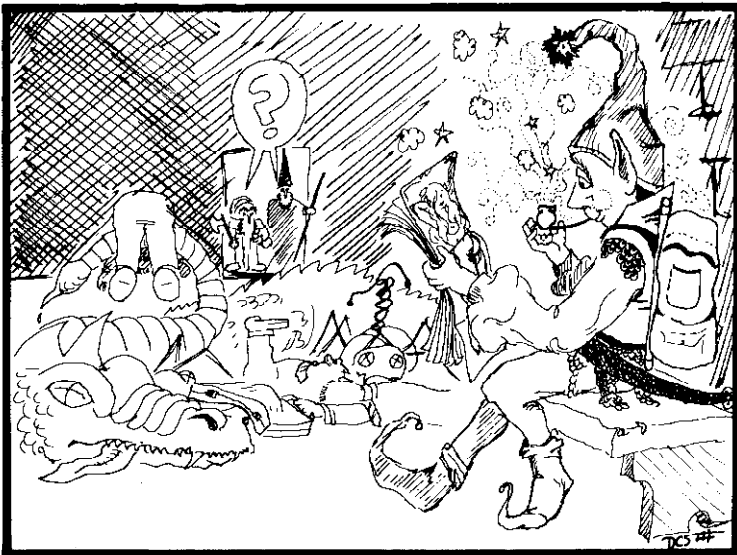
The wizard shook his head. "None have ever returned to tell." The mage, however, seemed drawn to the compelling device, and his arm stretched towards the top of the pedestal as if to touch one of the bottle cap buttons. 'Lumbo grabbed Ralph's arm and quickly pulled him back.

"Not this time, pea-brain!" reprimanded 'Lumbo. "We must make this decision on the basis of careful logic and thought. Otherwise. . ."

"Spoilsport," muttered Ralph, stepping back and folding his arms impatiently.

Amazed at the usually thoughtless elf's foresight, Dimwit's mouth dropped open in surprise. Unfortunately, the dwarf had forgotten the cigar butt clenched between his teeth. As the group

Continued on page 25



MAPPING THE DUNGEONS

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GenCon Update

The **Dungeons & Dragons** tournament planned for GenCon IX is different in some respects from past tournaments in scope and selection of winners.

The size of each group will be limited to five players, 'one each Fighter, Mage, Cleric, Elf-Mage, and Dwarf-Fighter. These characters will have pre-rolled abilities and come equipped with certain magical goodies. The Magi and Cleric will be able to select their own spells, however, and all players will be able to select their own equipment.

We will be prepared to handle 100 entrants, being broken down into 20 groups of five players. Each group will have the same pre-rolled characters, therefore each character will be run by 20 different entrants. Every endeavor has been made that each group will adventure thru the same course, face similar monsters, traps, etc.

These 20 groups will comprise the Preliminary Round. After all are finished, the top five players in each **class** will advance to the Final Round. Thus we will have five groups of five players each. Again, each group will be composed of one each of the five classes. Those who make the final round will play the same class they did in the Preliminaries, but a different character, again with pre-rolled abilities. As before, the Magi and Cleric will select their own spells, and all players will equip themselves.

At the end of the Final Round, **FIVE** winners will be selected, one in each class. Each will receive a \$10 certificate from TSR Hobbies.

"Rules" used will include material from **D & D Volumes I-III** and **Greyhawk**. Due to their relative newness, material from **Blackmoor** and **Eldritch Wizardry** will not be used.

Scoring will be handled differently from past tournaments. If it is not already obvious, players will be competing only against others in their **class**, not the entire field. It is therefore impossible, for example, to select the top five Clerics in the Preliminary Round by the normal subjective means used in **D & D** campaigns, as the same DM could not possibly fairly judge all entrants playing a Cleric. Thus a point system had to be devised to enable us to compare the performance of all entrants by class. Points will be awarded for monster kills, treasure accumulated, solving traps, and penetration from a starting point to a goal. Playtesting has shown that this system works very well, and gives an excellent picture of the performance of each entrant.

The Preliminary Round will be broken down into two sections, one on Saturday morning, the other Saturday afternoon. Results will be posted as soon as possible after the second Preliminary Section, as well as who will be advancing to the final round, which will be held Sunday morning.

If the gods smile upon this venture (and we get a few favorable die rolls), this tournament should prove to be an enjoyable experience for all concerned. DM's will be drawn from the Valparaiso University D & D Society, a loose organization of D2 freaks. We are looking forward to meeting you at Lake Geneva in August, and hope to show all tournament entrants a rousing good time.

The following is a shortened version of the scenario that will be used in the Preliminary Round.

" . . . The group of adventurers in question has offended the resident Wizard of the town in which they reside, having referred to him as a 'shriveled old nit.' He is about to end their miserable existences with a well-placed fireball, but stops short of uttering the final words of the incantation. Eyeing them speculatively, he

Continued on page 26

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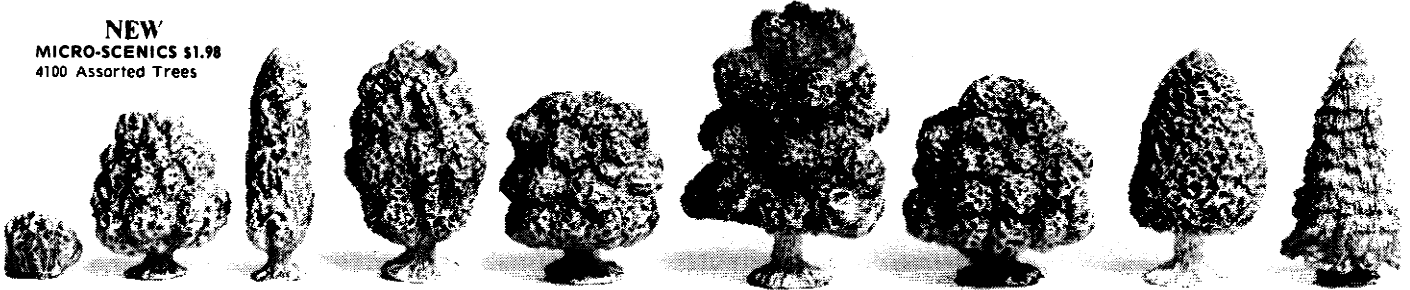
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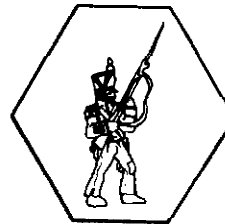
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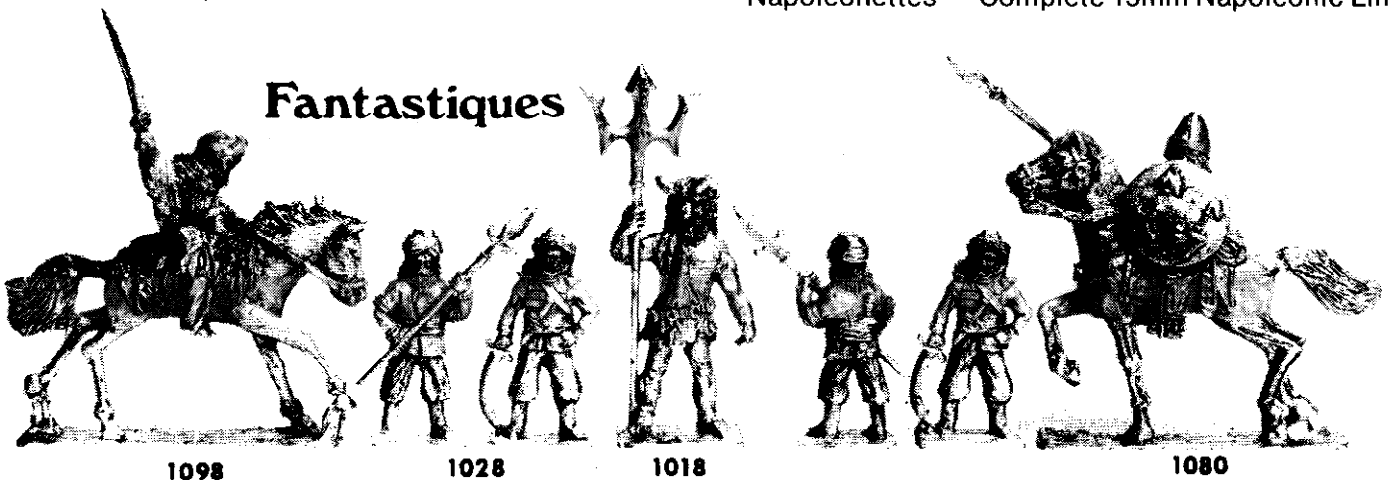
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Hints for D & D Judges

Part 3: The Dungeons

by Joe Fischer

For once it is the author, not the judges, having trouble getting started. For, when it comes to ideas for improving the dungeons, the possibilities are endless. So, in order, I will try to deal with the following areas: Entrances, Traps, Treasures, Mapping, and Monsters. Again I hope this article will help your judging improve; good castles are always in demand.

When judges of D & D, new and old alike, think of an entrance to the dungeons, the greater percentage think of an old ruined castle somewhere outside their town. And many of this same group have the mistaken impression that there is only one entrance to every dungeon. Both these ideas are wrong. True, the famous game of Gary Gygax and Rob Kuntz is built around and under Greyhawk Castle, but this is far from being the only entrance. Besides the castle, I have discovered an entrance through an old dry cistern and another entrance that is under a pool of quicksand, and even an entrance in a simple hole in the ground.

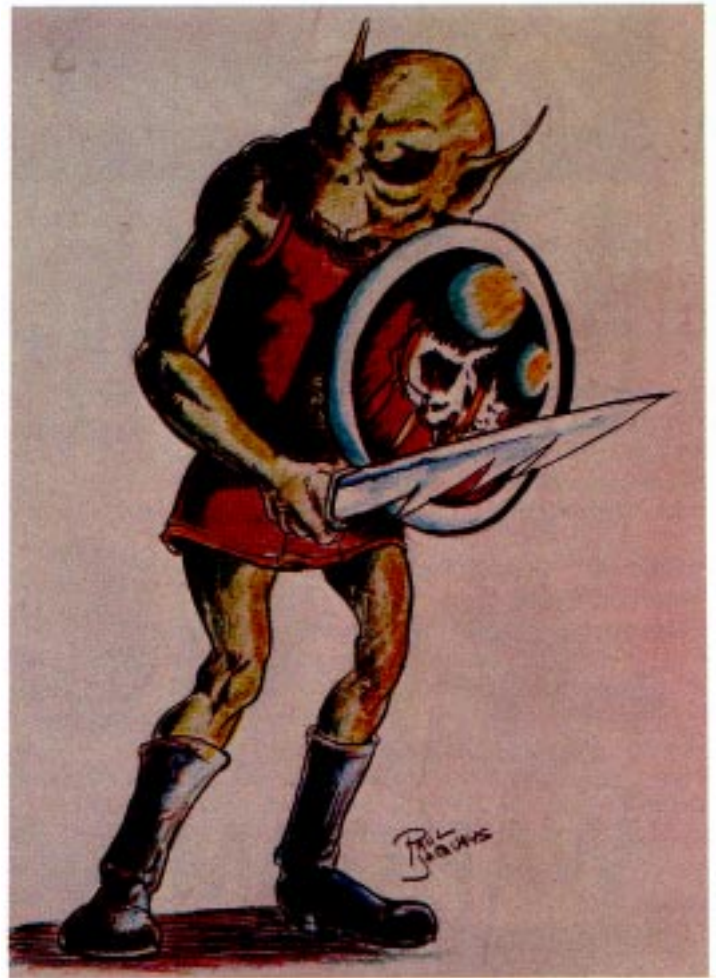
In other games I have discovered the dungeons were under the town, or under the town guards' barracks, and even under one of the peasant's hovels. So as far as entrances go, it makes no difference where you put it or how you disguise it, as long as the dungeons are good. But the entrances can make the castle even more interesting.

The most fun involved in planning a new level is laying out "friendly" little traps for the players to find. These should be evenly spread out in the dungeons, (if concentrated in one area, the players will eventually ignore that part of the dungeons, and good traps will go to waste) and not used too often: players tend to stop adventuring in games that have more traps than treasure.

Traps don't always have to be harmful. Sometimes it's possible for a trap to also be a treasure, depending on a die roll. A good example of this is a party, upon entering a room in the dungeons, finds a pile of bones in one corner. Discovering nothing else of interest, the leader decides to take the time to reconstruct the skeleton. Once put together, the skeleton can do one of four things; attack, serve the party until destroyed, lead to the nearest unguarded treasure, or lead to his master, who happens to be a high level magic-user. Or the skeleton can do nothing, except take up a lot of time, in which the judge can roll dice for more wandering monsters.

One of the most popular types of traps is where the treasure, or the chest it is in, is the trap. Various traps can be placed on the treasure so that when touched or removed from its chest the party can be transported, with or without the treasure, or take so many dice of damage (the number of dice depending on the amount of gold pieces, or the rarity of the magic) or have the item explode. Or the magic that is in the treasure can be intelligent so that it keeps on trying to get back to its real owner. And when it comes to treasure chests, the author uses the following table . . .

0-50	A normal chest
51-00	Trap on the chest, go to the following table
0-30	1-4 spring loaded daggers fire when chest is opened
31-50	Same as above, but the daggers are poisoned
51-65	Poisoned gas released when chest is opened
66-75	When chest is opened, it acts as a Mirror of Life Trapping



76-85	Exploding chest, if opened the chest explodes doing 2-7 dice
86-90	When chest is opened, an enraged spectre comes out
91-95	All members within 5' lose one level of experience
96-98	All members within 5' lose one magic item
99-00	Intelligent chest, act as if chest is a 2nd-9th level magic-user, including spells

16a

Other traps can be intelligent gold pieces; they have the nasty habit of screaming when taken from the room they were found in, which draws all sorts of monsters, or throwing themselves en masse at whoever makes the mistake of opening the chest they are in. The damage caused by the gold can vary. Or even more discouraging is finding out that after fighting a red dragon and losing half the party they have won 60,000 chocolate centered gold pieces; real value being about a copper piece each.

James Erdman of the S.L.W.G.A. came up with a very interesting trap. How would you like to be in a basically lawful party intent on doing some adventuring under the ruins of a castle only to find it guarded by a kingdom of dwarves? And when the leader of the party tries to parlay with the dwarvish leader he discovers that this dwarf kingdom happens to be chaotic, and willing to kill the whole party at the drop of a copper piece. In many castles you can find creatures that just don't seem to be of the right alignment. This makes for highly interesting playing, for it causes the player to be much more careful than they normally would have to be.

If you are having trouble finding new traps, go back to your Sword & Sorcery type books and you will be surprised at how much usable material there is when one looks closely. (For example see Clark Ashton Smith's story "*The Weira of Avoosl Wuthoqquan*" in his book Hyperborea).

It's always fun to create and use treasure that throws a party of adventurers into indecision. A personal favorite is Monster Gems. Monster Gems are magical gems worth 500 gold pieces each. They are magical in the fact that when commanded, the gem will turn into a monster. (Roll die as if rolling for a wandering dungeon monster.) The trouble is that the owner might get anything from a kobold to a red dragon. Now the player-character has to decide whether giving up 500 gold pieces is worth the chance of getting a kobold or goblin. (Which only stays a week, like all monsters created from Monster Gems. Also when the monster is killed, both monster and gem are destroyed.)

Thanks to members of the S.L.W.G.A., especially Marc Kurowski, whose magical item is next, I can offer the following magic to add to your list.

Hobbits' Pipe:

This seemingly ordinary clay pipe is really a wondrous magical item. When common "pipeweed" is smoked, the pipe will give the user the ability to blow multi-colored smoke rings at the rate of four per turn, and these smoke rings will go wherever ordered by their creator. (Moving at 4" per turn, though high winds will disperse them, and lasting 1-6 turns.) At first, this seems like a worthless ability. Consider: An Evil High Priest attacks a party of 3, one of which owns a Pipe. He lights it, and sends smoke rings around the E.H.P.'s head, blinding and confusing him so that he can't use his spells. (Which the party was all too happy not to catch on the chin.) Magic pipeweed (which is highly rare and only grown in the gardens of wizards) may be smoked in this pipe and certain advantages will accrue. These will be enumerated below. Usable 3 times a day.

Pipeweed of Tranquillity:

The smoke from this pipeweed will cause all hostile creatures to refrain from attacking, non-player characters of the smoker's party will have a plus one added to their morale. Range: 6" radius, duration: 3 turns plus 1-4 turns if used in a Hobbits' Pipe.

Pipeweed of Stoning:

The smoke from this weed will cause any creature within range to be turned to stone, saving throws allowed. Range: 6". Note however that on any given turn there is a 25% chance that the wind or something will be blowing the wrong way and the smoker will get stoned. A Hobbits' Pipe decreases this chance to 10%.

Pipeweed of Illusion:

The smoke from this pipeweed will act as a Phantasmal Force spell. Naturally this won't work in a high wind or drafty corridors. If used in a Hobbits' Pipe the spell will last 1-4 turns longer.

Pipeweed of Acapulco

It's easy to see all the fun a judge could have with a player-character who happens to accidentally smoke this: causes the smoker to treat everyone as his friend, stands around in a stupor, not attack and defend at minus 3. Lasts 2-12 turns. If smoked in a Hobbits' Pipe, allow saving throws.

Ring of Magic Missiles:

A magical ring that holds 10 Magic Missiles which can be fired two at a time. It can be recharged. It takes two magic

missile spells to replace every one in the ring.

Bag of Infinite Wealth

A magical bag that turns base metals into gold at the rate of 100 gold pieces/day.

Helm of Forgetfulness:

Appears to be a Helm of Teleportation but when it is worn, all things are forgotten. Saving throws are allowed; if saving throw is made then there is only a partial memory loss. Intelligences from 13-15 have a minus one on their saving throw, 16-18, minus two.

Ring of Infravision:

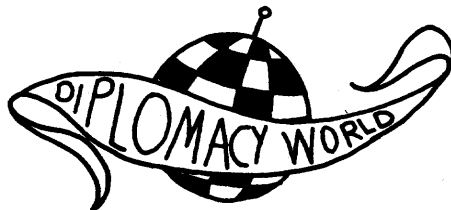
Same as an Infravision spell except it works as long as the ring is worn.

Other types of treasure that you can throw at your players are: the magic of a Staff of Wizardry put in a ring; an Unholy Sword, which is just the opposite of a Holy Sword; a Wand of Fireballs shaped to look like a dagger; an idol that answers Yes and No questions once a week; a monster that when killed turns into a pile of gold pieces (500-3000 G.P.); or an incense burner that when lit its smoke acts as a Crystal Ball (remember to only allow the players to use the incense burner in an area with no drafts, otherwise the smoke will be too dispersed to work).

I'm not going to describe how to map out a level, since this has been done already by the authors of D & D in their D & D Volume III entitled "Underworld and Wilderness Adventures." What I do plan to do in this section is give some ideas on areas, levels, etc.

One of the most interesting adventures I've ever had dealt mainly with the idea of what would happen if a knight in shining

Continued on page 26



DIPLOMACY WORLD is a quarterly magazine on Diplomacy, which is edited by Walter Buchanan, R. R. 3, Box 324, Lebanon, IN 46052. The purpose of each 40-page off-set issue is to present a broad overview of the postal Diplomacy hobby by printing articles on good play, carrying the Hoosier Archives Demonstration Game with expert analysis, listing rating systems, publishing letters to the editor, listing game openings and zine news, and printing a complete variant game and map with each issue. In short, anything of a general interest to the Diplomacy community is fair game for DIPLOMACY WORLD. Subscriptions sell for \$4.00 per year, (\$4.50 outside the U.S.). Checks should be in U.S. funds and made payable to "Walter Buchanan."

The Dragon is very pleased to welcome Gardner Fox and to introduce to you Niall of the Far Travels, a brand new hero of many talents. Relax, and join Niall on his troubled path through life. But remember that you, too, should fear the. . .

SHADOW OF A DEMON

© by Gardner F. Fox

He came into Angalore from the eastern deserts, a big man wearing a kaunake of spotted fur over his linkmail, his legs bare above warboots trimmed with miniver, with a sense of his own doom riding him. Niall of the Far Travels had not wanted to come to Angalore, for an old seeress had prophesied that he would be taken from this world by demons, should those warboots carry him into that ancient, brooding city.

Yet he had come here because his fate had so decreed.

He was a mercenary, a sell-sword, a barbarian out of the forested mountains of Norumbria. A wanderer by nature, he earned his keep wherever he went by the might of his sword-arm, by his skill with weapons. He feared no living thing, man or animal, though the thought of demons put a coldness down his spine.

Now he paused on the crest of a hill and stared at the city. Massive it was, and old, so old that some men said it had been here since men had first learned to walk upright. It lay between the river and the desert over which the caravans came from Sensanall to the south and Urgrik to the north. Ships lay in the little harbor that was formed by the river, riding easily to the lift and fall of its tides.

Angalore was the city of Maylok the magician.

An evil man, Maylok. Niall had heard tales about him, over campfires and in the taverns where men drank wine and watched dancing girls perform. Rumor had it that he used demons as men used pawns when they played their games of chance. Gossips also said that in the dungeons and stone labyrinths below his palace, Maylok had stored the treasures of his world, gold and silver, diamonds and rubies and emeralds, and golden vessels carved and fashioned by famous sculptors.

Niall moved his heavily muscled shoulders, uneasy as a wild animal might be, walking into strange country where it knew nothing of the dangers to be faced. Yet he had to go to Angalore. There was no way out, if he wanted to eat and drink. The desert had offered no oasis, no plant from which to pull the roots to allay his hunger. He had been offered employment by a captain of mercenaries, and was on his way to join up with the black eagle banner of Lurlyr Manakor of Urgrik when he had been attacked by a huge mountain lion out of the Styrethian Hills. He had killed the lion but not before it had broken the neck of his horse.

On foot, he could never reach Urgrik. He had known that, and so he had set his feet to the westward, to reach the river that ran through these lands. On the river he might find a boat to carry him to Urgrik.

His wandering had brought him to Angalore, instead.

Niall hitched at his swordbelt and gave the city a hard grin. There would be food in Angalore, and cold wine. Niall had a need for both, maybe even a wench if he could find an agreeable one.

His feet carried him down the slope toward the landward gate. Niall was not a fearful man, nothing frightened him; still, that threat of demons made him wary. He was not one to put

overmuch confidence in the babblings of soothsayers, but old Thallia was not your usual prophetess.

He had stumbled onto Thallia in Cassamunda, where he had met that mercenary captain. She was an old woman, clad in rags, but she carried a small bag that clinked as she moved, and two ruffians had tried to take it from her. Niall had been passing, had leaped to her protection, had buffeted the ruffians with his big fist and knocked them senseless.

Old Thallia had been grateful. Her bag held her wealth, such as it was, a few coins and some jewels which she kept by her to sell when she needed food. He had escorted her to the cheap little room above the tavern where she lived, and she had insisted on giving him some wine and a barleycake.

She had read his fortune, too.

'Beware of Angalore,' she had whispered, her rheumy eyes wide and fear-filled. 'There are demons there, who serve Maylok the wizard. They will snatch you away with them when they come. And — there is no return from a demon world.'

The landward gate was closed, at this time of day, with the late afternoon shadows black and ominous. No caravans were expected in before the morrow, and guards stood their watch on the walls, half drowsing in the sunset. Niall stopped before the wall and shouted upward that he was a stranger in need of food and drink, and desired also a cot on which to lay his body.

After a time, a small door inset in a larger one creaked open. Two warriors wearing the griffin insignia of Angalore scowled at him suspiciously. Niall grinned and moved forward.

"There is a fee to be paid," one of them said, "It is after the hour when we admit travelers."

Niall shrugged. He had no wish to remain outside these high stone walls, knowing that inside them he would find what his belly told him he so desperately needed. His big hand fumbled at his worn leather belt-pouch, extracted a few coins, and dribbled them into the outstretched palms. The stink of bribery was strong in his nostrils, but beggars had little choice.

He moved off along a cobbled street, his eyes hunting a sign that might tell him where a tavern waited with its warmth and merriment. These buildings past which he walked were warehouses where were stored the goods that came by caravan, with no hint of roasting meat nor smell of chilling wine.

Niall had never been in Angalore before and so he lost his way, moving down narrow little alleys and into cul-de-sacs, always aware that his hunger and his thirst were growing with the darkness. And then in a narrow passageway between buildings which seemed to lean their walls together, he saw the girl.

She was clad in leather rags that fluttered in the wind moving off the river. Her long legs were brown and shapely, and the hair that fell almost to her haunches was black as Corassian ebony. She was turning her head to stare back at him, shrinking against the wall behind her.

Niall grinned. "You seem as lost as I am."

Green eyes studied him. "I am not lost. I know my way." She added, almost ominously, "To where I want to go."

"There's no need for hurry." His gaze took her in, seeing the

tatterings of her worn leather tunic, its stains and spottings, the manner in which it failed to hide the curve of her breasts and revealed almost the complete length of a bare leg. "Come eat with me, I'll pay the fare. And I'll give you as much wine as you might care to drink."

The green eyes softened, but her voice was cold. "Go your way, barbarian. Let me go mine."

Niall shrugged. It mattered little to him whether she went with him or not, but she was pretty enough, with full lips and a tilted nose. She would have made a good bed-companion for the night. He might even have taken her to Urgrik with him and — if he could afford it — buy her some decent clothes.

He walked away, putting her from his mind.

And then he heard the clank of metal.

The Far-traveler turned his head. Behind him four men were moving out of a little alley toward the girl. She had seen them and was shrinking back, away from them. The men were grinning at her.

"Come along now," one said, putting out a hand to grasp her arm.

The barbarian turned and waited.

"No," she whispered. "I know you men. You serve Maylok."

"And Maylok needs female blood for his incantations."

They leaped, all four of them, and the girl disappeared behind their big bodies. Niall snarled and went on the run, not bothering to draw his sword. His big fist should be able to handle these carrion.

He caught a man, swung him about, drove knuckles against his face, pulping his nose. A second one he caught and rammed his head against the stone wall so that he went limp and crumpled.

The other two yanked out their blades, swung them at him. Niall laughed softly, put his own hand to sword-hilt and drew out Blood-drinker. The barbarian had little wealth, except for his sword, that had been forged long ago and far away and that Niall had found in a tomb which he had looted, early in his youth. He had been offered fortunes for that blade, he had always refused to part with it.

He fought swiftly and terribly, did Niall of the Far Travels. With parry and thrust and overhead blows he drove the two ruffians before him until their backs were to the building wall, and there he ran them through.

The girl had never moved, but stood erect and as coldly disdainful as ever. Niall felt surprise at sight of her, he was certain she would have run away when given the opportunity. He growled as he wiped his steel clean, "What are you waiting for? Why didn't you run?"

"You fool," she breathed. "You **fool!**"

She stamped her sandaled foot. Her cold anger beat out at him like a living entity, and the sell-sword stared. "Has Emelkartha the Evil stolen your wits? Or did you want to go with those men to be sucked dry of blood for Maylok's wizardries?"

Her eyes lidded over and she drew a deep breath. "You would not understand. You are only a common warrior. Besides, what do you know of Emelkartha?"

"She is the mother of demons, that one. I've heard it said that all demons regard her wishes as commands."

The girl shrugged. "I pray to her for vengeance."

"She ought to hear your prayers, then. She's malevolent, that one."

The green eyes glowed. "Is she, warrior? I hope so. Perhaps she will grant me my revenge on Maylok then."

He caught her bare arm, drew her with him. "Tell me about it. Mayhap I can help a little, though I've no fancy for wizards

myself, and usually I stay clear of them."

She went with him readily enough, but cast a look behind her where two men were stirring and two others lay in pools of their own blood. Was it only fancy, or did that face of hers mirror a faint regret?

"What's your name? Where are you from?" he asked.

The green eyes slid sideways at him from under long black lashes. "Call me — Lylthia. And — does it matter where I come from?"

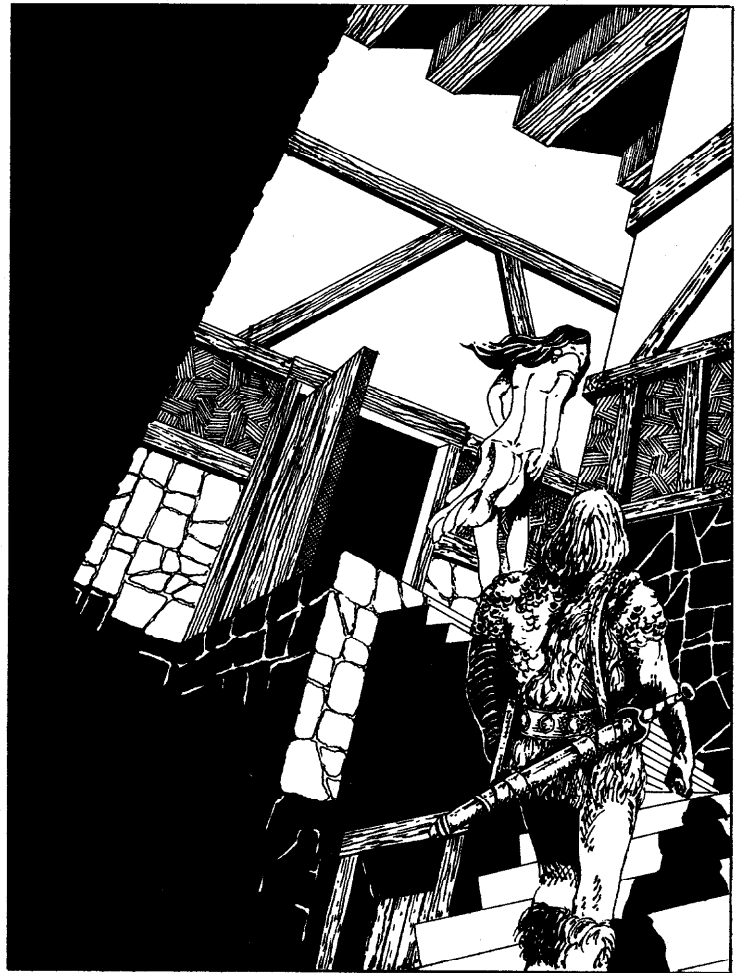
"Not to me," he chuckled. "Are you hungry? Thirsty?"

His eyes ran over the cheap leather tunic that barely hid her body. She carried no money pouch, the only thing on her besides the tunic and her tattered sandals was a rope belt about her slim middle. As the river-wind grew cooler, she began to shiver.

"We'll get you into a warm tavern and put some meat in you," he said. "Also some Kallarian wine."

"Little good it will do you," she muttered.

Niall grinned. He had a way with wenches like this. Yet as he walked with her along the torchlit streets, he failed to notice that while those torch flames cast his shadow, there was no shadow for the girl.



2.

The tavern was warm and noisy, filled with seafarers of the Aztallic Sea, with wanderers from the western lands, with mercenary warriors and with women who plied their ancient trade between the tables, to sit where they were welcomed and join in the feasting and the drinking. A great hearth held a huge log that blazed with a sullen roar and threw a scarlet hue across those nearest it.

Niall pushed Lylthia onto a bench and waved an arm at a servingmaid.

Continued on page 17

THE FEATHERED SERPENT

Article and Art by Lynn Harpold

QUETZALCOATL was the name given to one of the most universally worshipped and persevering gods in all of ancient Mexico. The word means bird — quetzal, serpent — coatl, or more exactly, Feathered Serpent.

Beginnings of the cult of Quetzalcoatl are unfortunately lost in antiquity, but some elements of snake worship appear even in early Olmec art and sculpture which date back to 400 B.C. and before. The Olmec peoples occupied hot, rainy forestlands on Mexico's eastern coast and were probably the first cultural group of the New World with a knowledge of pyramid building and stone carving, along with the ability to keep accurate calendars. However, little is actually known at this time of religious practices of the Olmecs.

At a later date, about 100 B.C., was founded the great urban center of Teotihuacan, the "City of the Gods." No one can be sure exactly who built Teotihuacan, but it is known to have been occupied until 750 A.D. by as many as 50,000 inhabitants. It is located about 30 miles northeast of present-day Mexico City. In addition to the enormous Pyramid to the Sun and Pyramid to the Moon, which may be seen there today, there are the ruins of the Temple of Quetzacoatl. Among the ornamentations on the stone walls of this structure are massive, carved rattlesnake heads.

After the mysterious fall of Teotihuacan, the Toltecs who next arrived on the scene recounted their mystical beginnings in legend. It was said that they had entered central Mexico from the west by 550 A.D. and that they had been led by their semi-historical ruler, Mixcoatl, meaning "Cloud Serpent," or in other words, "Milky Way." This warrior nation was established in central Mexico, where was founded their magnificent capital of Tula.



Stone carving of The Feathered Serpent, Temple of Quetzalcoatl Teotihuacan.

Ruins of this extensive population center, which contain many carved representations of the rattlesnake emblems of Quetzalcoatl, are well worth visiting today.

There is a written account from Tula dating from about 987 A.D. The priest-king, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, was described as having fair skin, long hair and a beard. This of course would have given him a radically different appearance from the indigenous Indians who comprised his following.

One night, he was induced by certain enemies to drink excessively, and in that condition he broke the vows of celibacy. Thus disgraced, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl and his assemblage were forced to leave Tula. There is a poem, translated from the original Nahuatl language, that reads as follows:

Then he fixes his eyes on Tula
And in that moment begins to weep
And he weeps sobbing
It is like two torrents of hail trickling down
His tears slip down his face;
His tears drop by drop perforate the stones.

After the gates of mighty Tula closed behind him forever, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl and his retinue travelled more than a thousand miles eastward over the most difficult terrain imaginable; snow-capped mountains barred their way, there were miles of swamps to be negotiated, along with nearly impassable tangles of jungle growth. Eventually, and after many hardships, they reached the Mayan city of Chichen Itza in Yucatan. There they settled to rebuild it as their new capital and to conquer the surrounding Mayan territory.

It was at this time that the Mayans chronicled the coming of Toltecs to Yucatan, bringing with them their cult of Kukulcan. Kukulcan translates exactly as Feathered Serpent in the Maya tongue. Chichen Itza was rebuilt, and stone carvings of Quetzalcoatl, depicted as a feathered rattlesnake, are everywhere.

There is, at Chichen Itza, the great pyramid called the Temple of Kukulcan, dedicated to the Sky God, with serpents carved in the balustrades, sculptured columns, and in murals. He is also variously portrayed in the Temple of the Warriors, as well as in many of the other surviving structures. And the architecture and decor are in exactly the same style as that of ancient Tula.

The more recent Aztecs took up the worship of Quetzalcoatl as they established their own capital of Tenochtitlan where Mexico City now stands. Worship of the Sky God, Quetzalcoatl, by then demanded human sacrifice, and hundreds of thousands of subjugated peoples, taken in battle by the warlike Aztecs, were immolated in tribute to his name.

Aztec religious legends stated that in the beginning of time, Quetzalcoatl turned himself into an ant to assure the sun's rising again. He then sacrificed himself in flames, and all the other gods followed his example. Aztecs believed the sun would continue to rise only if it were constantly given offerings of human blood as the gods demanded.

All the ancient Sun Kingdoms of Mexico and Central America practiced very complicated timekeeping, with at least three dating systems going at one time. Their 260-day year was divided into thirteen months of twenty days each. But there were also 365 days in a year of their civil calendar. Thus, each twenty-day month had a different double name in the intermeshing of the two cycles, repeating themselves exactly only once every fifty-two years. This period, then, was a katun, which corresponded to our century.

Aztecs believed that the sun died at the end of their "century," and that a new katun could not begin until human



Partial reconstruction of the central temple at Tula, showing two open-jawed rattlesnakes, fifteen feet high, which served as caryatids to support the lintel. These were models for similar pillars at Chicken Itza.

sacrifices were made to the gods. Then, if all went well, the sun would again rise and life would start anew.

Montezuma was the Aztec emperor in 1519, and it happened to be the end of a katun. Religious prophecies had it that the god Quetzalcoatl would return at such a time. Would it be this katun? The deity would, by definition, be a bearded, white god and he would come with his coterie from the east. Montezuma and his astrologer/advisors watched anxiously for portents and omens.

It was at this very time that Hernan Cortes and his Spanish conquistadores arrived on the eastern coast of Mexico near present-day Veracruz. He was white, bearded, and had come from the east at the appointed moment. He was thought to be Quetzalcoatl, incarnate, and Montezuma sent gifts to the god.

But as the conquerors advanced toward the capital city of Tenochtitlan, claiming all territory in the name of the king of Spain on the way, doubts grew among the Aztecs. However, by that time it was too late to repel the invaders and the Spaniards ultimately overthrew the mighty Aztec empire.

Evidence has been presented recently that astronauts from other planets had visited Earth in ancient times, and that many stone constructions surviving from the remote past were built with their advanced technological methods. And there are representations of white, bearded individuals in what appear to be space vehicles in various parts of the world, including Mexico. There is speculation that Quetzalcoatl was truly a sky god, a visitor from the Milky Way who came in a space ship and who later departed in a burst of flame out over the Atlantic, after promising to return someday (also as related in the old legends).

There is also speculation that white Europeans visited Mexico and Central America in a remote era, long before Colum-

Demon from page 15

"Thort steaks and Kallarian," he ordered, then turned his attention to the girl. She was staring around her with wide eyes, almost as though she had never been in such a hospice before.

"So you seek vengeance on Maylok," he murmured. "But why? What has Maylok done to you?"

The green eyes regarded him. "He has taken that which was mine. He has not offered to pay for it, nor will he."

"What could you own that's so valuable?"

Her leather tunic was stained and discolored, it hardly hid the swells of her breasts nor the lengths of her supple thighs. She was a poor girl, that much Niall would swear on the Wargod's sword.

She shrugged. "You would not understand."

Something about those green eyes made him murmur, "If I can help you, I shall. Though I don't fancy warlocks."

She smiled suddenly, and those eyes lost their coldness. "I need no help. Though I thank you."

Niall was not so sure that she could not use a blade like Blood-drinker to side her when she went hunting Maylok in his palace, and said so. "No man can take him by surprise, it's rumored. He has set spells and cantrips on all the doors and win-



Carved relief in the Chapel of Quetzalcoatl, Chicken Itza, with the head of a priest emerging from the jaws of a huge plumed serpent.

bus, and that they were in Peru even predating the founding of the incredible Inca empire.

Whatever the explanation, and there may be several, Quetzalcoatl remains an enigmatic figure in the history of the Mesoamerican Sun Kingdoms.

dows so nothing can catch him unawares. At least, so I've been told. Only by his will can a man or a woman enter his stronghold."

"That is true enough."

"Yet you think you can gain revenge on him? Unarmed and — well, practically naked? Without coins with which to bribe a way in?"

"I need neither sword nor gold. Here's your food. Eat it."

Niall glanced at her in surprise. There had been an imperiousness in the way she had spoken that indicated she expected to be obeyed. It was almost as if she were a princess in disguise. Niall felt uneasy at that, he had no experience with people of royal blood. Servingmaids and tavern wenches were more his familiars.

Still, he ate the savory meat, slicing it with his knife, using his fingers to wolf down the blood-dripping meat. He loaned his knife to Lylthia, watched how daintily she ate. He filled her leathern jack with wine, drank his own empty and then refilled it.

Lylthia drank sparingly, as if not quite trusting the Kallarian. There was suspicion in her, he knew; she expected him to take her into a bed and enjoy her body. Well, that was what he meant to do, all right; he didn't blame her for eyeing him so watchfully.

By the Wargod! She was a pretty thing. He liked her. And she had a body on her, he could tell that easily enough because of that scanty leather tunic. She would be fun when he got his arms around her. If she was enough fun, he would carry her to Ugrik.

An almost naked woman came into a cleared space and danced. Niall was torn between the dancer and watching the disdain that was so easy to read in Lylthia's pretty face. As applause rang out and the girl sniffed, Niall leaned close to her.

"You can do better, I suppose?"

"I would drive you mad were I to dance for you."

She said it calmly, but there was a ring of truth in her voice. Niall shifted uneasily on the bench. There was a mystery about this girl, he knew that much; she was not as other women he had met in his far travelings, willing to offer smiles and a soft body for a good meal and some glasses of wine, and a part of him regretted that. He thought of Lylthia in a warm bed with himself beside her, and stirred restlessly.

He asked, "Will you stay the night with me? It grows late, and Maylok may have other men searching the streets."

She nodded. "I will stay with you."

He paid for the meal with the last of his gold coins, accepting silver in change. Then he walked behind Lylthia's swinging hips along the narrow stairway to the upper rooms.

There was a bed and a washstand in the room he selected, and a single window that looked out on the stars and the glittering ring of matter which wise men said was the remains of the moon which had circled this world once, and had been shattered many eons ago, to be caught and held by gravity in the sky. Niall unbuckled his swordbelt and hung it over the back of a chair, slipped out of his linkmail shirt and kicked off his warboots.

He lay down on the bed and beckoned to the girl. "Come here, Lylthia. I want to taste the sweetness of your mouth."

To his surprise she walked toward him and sat on the edge of the bed. She leaned closer as if to kiss him, but his gaze was caught and held by her green eyes that seemed to swell and swell until they were all that existed in the room.

"Sleep, Niall of the Far Travels," those eyes commanded. "Sleep!"

And Niall slept, and Niall dreamed.

He sat on a stone throne in his dream in a great hall, dark except where tall torches glowed in sconces, forming a pool of light in which Lylthia danced. Naked she danced, and her body was a pallid white and disturbingly sensual. She was all the lusts, all the

sensuous dreams of man, every need he had for that which would satisfy his animal nature.

In that dream, Niall hungered for her flesh but he could not leave the stone throne which seemed almost to hold him back. His arms stretched out, he called to her to come to him. She was a dainty promise whispered in the ear, a shapely seduction with her white legs and quivering haunches. She turned and dipped, pranced and swirled, and always the need in him for her flesh grew more sharp.

Niall woke to the first pink rays of dawn, sitting up in bed and gasping. His dream was still strong upon him, his eyes went around the room hunting for the girl. She was not here, he was alone.

He shook himself as might a shaggy mountain bear roused from its winter sleep. Under his breath he muttered curses as he stumbled to the washbasin and poured cold water from the pitcher over his head. The water shocked him to full wakefulness and he lifted his head and stared out the window.

She was out there, in this city. He knew that. He thought he also knew where she had gone. He could not see Maylok's palace but he would find her there. He reached for his swordbelt and buckled it about his middle. A flash of light from the corners of his eyes caught his attention and he stared into a cracked mirror, seeing his face.

His skin was bronzed and his black hair hung uncut almost to his shoulders. A scar was white against the dark sun-darkened skin of his chin. A swordsman in the hire of the Great Kham had bloodied his face, and had paid with his life for scarring him. His shoulders were so wide they could scarcely fit between the lintels of a wide door, ridged with muscles standing out like ropes beneath his sun-burnt skin.

Niall was a mercenary, a sell-sword, but he had a code of sorts. Lylthia had made him a promise last night, or as good as. He would go find her and bring her back to this tavern and throw her down on that rumpled bed. The barbarian chuckled. But he must not gaze into her eyes. No. It might be best to blindfold that one.

Well, he was going after her. Now. No matter where his warboots took him.

He ate sausages and eggs in the common room, making plans in his head. She wanted vengeance on Maylok. The only place she could get that would be in his palace. He, Niall, would go also to that palace and find her and bring Lylthia out of it on a shoulder.

Uneasily, he remembered old Thallia and her prophecy. Demons would carry him off in Angalore, she had said. No matter. Maylok would have to cast a spell on him before he could summon up demons to take him away, and by that time, Maylok would be dead.

He went out into the sunlight and walked the streets of this ancient city, angling his feet always toward the huge pile of masonry standing close to the river's edge, that was the wizard's palace. It was built against the outer wall, and had a wall of its own, but smaller than the city wall, surrounding it and its gardens. Niall stood a long time studying that wall.

He could go over it easily enough. But what would he find when he dropped down onto the other side? He was no fool to go rushing into danger when there was a safe way out of it. Maylok would have guards posted. And, probably, big Commopore hounds trained to drag down any intruder and fang-slay him.

There was a huge oaken door set flush with the cobblestones of the street. Niall studied it for a moment, hitched at his swordbelt, then walked toward it. With the pommel of a dagger, he rapped on the plankings.

After a time the door swung open and two men with naked swords in their hands stood scowling at him. "What want you at the walls of Maylok, stranger?" asked the larger man.

"Money to put in my pouch." Niall grinned and rattled the little leather sack so they could hear his few coins clinking. "I'm told the wizard pays well." His eyes ran over their fleshy bodies. "Men say also that those who work for Maylok eat only thort steaks and pasties, and drink wine instead of water."

"Maylok has enough servants."

"None like me."

The man went to close the door but Niall put out his brawney arm and held the door open, using his eyes on the neat grass and carefully tended bushes that formed these outer gardens. He noted that the men grew angry, but he paid no heed to that, for he was noting the thickness of the walls and surmising that there would be rooms between outer and inner walls.

The other man came to add his muscles to the first, but Niall was a strong man whose full strength had never yet been tested, and he held that door open against both of them.

"Well, if he won't, he won't," he muttered, and released the door.

It banged shut and Niall grinned. He had seen enough. When darkness was upon Angalore he would return. Somehow, he would find a way inside that palace.

He walked around the walls and noted that a big tree grew outside a portion of those parapets. A nimble man could climb that tree, move out along a thick branch. It would be a good jump from the branch to reach the wall, but he could do it.

Whistling, he moved off toward the river gate and through it to the quays where a dozen ships were loading or unloading

cargoes. He watched them, savoring the hot sunlight on his back, and fell into converse with two seamen munching on some fruit.

"Your crew works hard," he commented.

"This is Angalore. The sooner out of it, the better."

Niall pondered that. He asked slyly, "Is it because of Maylok?"

"Aye. The mage is like a spider in its web, peering out and taking that which he covets, be it gold or silver or a man and a maid. Right now he may be listening to us."

"I tried to gain employment from him."

"Count yourself lucky you didn't. He'd offer you up as a sacrifice to his demon-gods, in time."

"I think I'll sail with you, then. I'm for Urgrik to the north."

"We lift anchor tomorrow, a little past dawn. Ask for the Hyssop, bound for the cold countries. We make a stop at Urgrik."

Niall ate at a seaside tavern, using his ears to feed on words as he did his mouth to savor the kama-fish flavored with leeks and spices. He heard one man tell how he had seen a pretty girl being pushed into the wall-door of Maylok's palace just before dawn, a girl in ragged leather tunic and with black hair almost to her haunches. Six men had hold of her, were forcing her along.

"She's dead by now," someone muttered.

"Too bad. She was a pretty thing."

Niall did not betray himself by the slightest quiver of flesh, but fury was alive inside him. He had liked Lylthia. By the Wargod! She had been a fool, but his flesh had lusted after her. If she'd been sensible and spent the night in his arms, she'd be alive, now. Aye, and happy!

It might be too late to save Lylthia, but maybe he could find a way to avenge her.

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He sat on a piling and watched the sun sink, telling himself that he was as much of a fool as Lylthia herself. Old Thallia had warned him that demons would carry him off in Angalore. If he were sensible, he'd walk over to the **Hyssop** right now and get himself a good sleep in a hammock belowdecks, and forget Lylthia.

Still, no one had ever praised his brains.

When the quays were in total darkness outside the faint starlight, Niall began his walk. He was in no hurry, indeed, he was rather reluctant to clamber onto that wall. He could think of better ways to die than to be captured by demons. Still! A man had to do what he felt was right.

The tree was big, but his muscles carried him up the thick bole and in between the heavy branches as though he were a monkey out of the jungles of Poranga. He ran out on the branch he had selected earlier in the day and paused.

The gardens were dark, the wall was empty. Lights were on in the palace, he could see flickering candles and torches through open windows, and once he thought to hear a scream of agony, dulled by distance and the palace walls. He trotted forward, swaying as the branch moved, and leaped.

For an instant he was in the air, then he was dropping down onto the parapet, clinging to its rough stone with both hands and swinging himself onto the wallwalk where he crouched, peering about and listening.

There was no one in sight, neither guards nor watchdogs, that he could discover. It might be a trap, but he had fought his way out of traps before. And if by any chance Lylthia were still alive, then he would bring her out of this pile of stones and carry her with him to Urgrik. His hand loosed Blood-drinker in its scabbard, made certain that his Orravian dagger was ready to his grip, and then slid forward between the merlon-shadows.

No sentinel walked these walls, as far as he could tell. Now why was that? Did some awesome fiend patrol these pathways after dark, lurking to attack and perhaps devour — or carry off — some luckless trespasser? It might be Maylok's whim to use demons as his watchdogs. His hand tightened on the daggerhilt as he moved.

At length he came to a doorway set into a tiny shed built against an inner wall. His hand opened that door, he stepped into Stygian darkness and down a flight of worn stone steps. His warboots made no sound, nor was there any clank of swordchain or linkmail, yet the hairs at the base of his neck bristled.

It was too easy!

There should have been an alarm, an attack, before this. The wizard was no simpleton, he must have known that the tales of his ill-gotten treasures would tempt thieves and footpads. They would be protected, by what grim guardian he had no way of knowing.

Men and hounds he did not fear. His steel could handle those. It was the thought of demons which bothered him. Sooner or later he would meet some snuffling cacodemon in this blackness and be forced to fight for his life.

Yet he strode on, down the ancient steps and along a narrow corridor which must run beneath the gardens. From far away he could hear the dripping of water and nearer at hand the click of rats' nails along a stonework floor. Rats? Or — devil imps?

He lifted out Blood-drinker and moved with the blade always before him, as a blind man uses a wooden stick. He saw nothing, the ebon gloom was everywhere, pressing in upon him. And yet — as he turned a corner of the passageway, he beheld a redness up ahead.

It was only a wink of light, shifting, quivering. It seemed like a tiny corner of the Eleven Hells of Emelkartha broken free of the

barriers that kept them from this world. Yet it served as a beacon to draw his footsteps forward.

He came into a low-ceilinged chamber, the walls of which were purplish in the radiance of flickering torchflames set into that stone. A carved and runed altar stood upon a dias reached by stonework steps, and on the flat surface of that shrine to devilry lay a naked woman.

Niall took a step forward, and another. He growled low in his throat. That lifeless body at which he stared belonged to —

Lylthia!

3.

Dead she lay, unmoving, with one arm flung limply over the edge of the altar, her eyes wide and staring upward at the low dome above that was marked with strange and alien signs and sigils. Her black hair was dark and wet, her skin the pallid hue of death itself. No! Even more! Her smooth skin was so white it almost hurt the eyes, as though every last drop of blood had been sucked from her flesh.

Niall glared about him, sword up and ready to thrust, to slay as Lylthia had been slain. Yet there was no foe, no enemy to cleave. It was quiet as a tomb, this charnel room, with only his own breathing to break the stillness.

His eyes went over that face, lovely even now in death. Her lips had lost their redness, her cheeks their tinting. But the traces of beauty lingered, and something inside the Sellsword sorrowed to its sight. They had reaved her tattered leather tunic from her, her body was nude. As she had come into the world so she had gone from it.

"He'll pay," Niall whispered. "Somehow, I'll find a way to make him pay."

He touched her hand, squeezing the cold flesh just once, then moved on, past the altar to an ironbound door that opened beyond it into another corridor. This passageway was lighted by torches at distant intervals, and as his eyes raked it, he saw that it was empty — or was it?

For as he walked he seemed almost to see a blackness in the darker shadows, a blackness that flitted ahead of him, that ran and curved and leaped, seemed almost to — beckon. Niall growled in his throat. He did not like such shadows, that went before him so enticingly.

He followed that shadow, dogged its fluttering steps, for the urge to slay Maylok was strong within him. He must pay the warlock with the same fate he had given little Lylthia. Nothing less would satisfy the barbaric urge to slay that rode him with his every heartbeat.

When he came to a curving stone staircase, he paused, but it seemed that the shadow was still before him, lifting an arm as if to urge him onward. With a grunt, the Sellsword raced up those steps, his blade ready for instant use —

— and burst into a vast chamber.

He slid to a stop at sight of the lighted bowls about the room, at sight of the pentagram glistening red in blood, within which stood a tall man cowed in purple robe on which were stitched in golden threads the secret symbols of the demon worlds. Rigid stood the necromancer, his face pale and almost skull-like under the cowl that covered his head, a grim smile upon his thin, cruel mouth.

"Welcome, Niall of the Far Travelings. I have waited for you, even since you came through the land gate, two days hence."

"You slew Lylthia. For that you die."

Maylok chuckled. "Do I, Far-traveler? Behold!"

From beyond the blazing bowls men came rushing, big men in chainmail and with swords and axes, maces and warhammers

Continued on page 22

CREATURE FEATURES

The Remorhaz

Move: 12"

Hit Dice: 6/10/14 (8 sided) dice

% in Lair: 20%

Type Treasure: F

Bite for 3-36 points

Breathe for 3, 5, or 7 dice of fire damage

Magical Resistance: 75%

Low intelligence

Neutral



Number Appearing: 1 (1-4 if in lair)

Description: 30' long. Blue Hued underneath, wings & head backed with red.

Armor Class: Underside: 4. Back: 0 plus special. Head: 2

The Remorhaz is probably the only Fire using creature that prefers the coldness of mountain areas, frozen wastes etc. These monsters come in three sizes (as noted) with these percent chances of encountering each separate size:

01-40% = 6 die

41-75% = 10 die

76-00= 14 die.

This creature's unusual characteristic is that its back (from tip of tail to head) has reddish circular protrusions (rock-like in appearance) that are heated to enormous temperatures, thus melting any non-magical weapon upon its striking the Remorhaz's back side.

The Remorhaz has a tendency to flap its "earth-borne" wings when it is close to prey. As noted it stalks the cool to cold extremities of the outdoors. For possible encounters it may be placed alongside the Silver Dragon on the Encounter Matrix in "Eldritch Wizardry."

in their hands. They rushed at Niall, and their weapons gleamed redly in the bowl-lights. Niall snarled and went to meet them.

This was why he had been born, to fight, to slay, to wield a sword as though it were a scythe of Death itself. Maybe he was allied to Death, for Death rode where Blood-drinker cut and slashed. With a roar, he fended off a blade and hewed his steel through a neck.

He was in the midst of his attackers, then, whirling, darting, dodging a blow from mace or axe, freeing Blood-drinker to this feast of flesh which had been provided for it. He did not fight as an ordinary man fights, with care and caution, as ready to ward off a blow as he might be to strike one.

Nay! When Niall fought, he sought only to kill. His eyes saw an opening, his arm controlled the sweep of his sword, and when that blade fell, it was already lifting to strike again.

Pantherish were his leaps, lionlike his bellowed challenges. Men fell away before the onslaught of his steel, men died where they faced him or backed away. Yet always the swords and maces hammered at him, though more often than not he avoided their blows.

From his eye-corners, he saw Maylok moving restlessly about the pentagram, crying out encouragement to his guards. Yet there was a palsied fear upon the wizard; never had he seen a man battle as Niall fought now, with a reckless disregard for his own safety, concerned only with slaying all those he could reach with that long blade.

More men rushed from behind the lighted bowls, they hemmed Niall in, they offered their flesh to his blade in order to bring him down. The flat of an axe took him across the side of his head, a mace thumped his swordarm, numbing it.

When he had no more room to swing Blood-drinker, he dropped it and clawed out his Orravian dagger and buried it in chest and throat and belly. His other hand he used to sink iron-strong fingers deep into throatflesh and choke out life from the man he held.

Even his massive muscles tired, after more than three hours of such battling. There were dead men on the floor, and pools of their blood on which his warboots slipped. Once more a mace thumped his arm, again the flat of a blade landed on his skull. He went to a knee, half-conscious, but still he fought. Not until hands caught his arms and held them and someone swung a war-hammer did he go down.

Half-dazed he lay there, held by bleeding, desperate men who panted and sobbed in their tiredness, seeing Maylok as through a rheumy veil approach, to stand above him.

"No man has ever fought like you, Far-traveller," whispered the exultant wizard. "Your blood shall be a strong elixir in my vials and alembics. Take him below to the dungeons and chain him there against my need."

They dragged and half-carried the still-struggling Niall out of the spell-chamber, down the worn steps and into the deep pits below the palace, where the stink of rotting flesh warred with the moans of men and women imprisoned here, kept for the torment and the blood-letting.

To huge chains inset in the stone walls they fastened Niall, his arms apart, so that they seemed almost to be torn from their sockets. He could stand only with difficulty, for those links suspended even his giant frame a little. And then they mocked him.

"The wizard will make you pay for what you've done," one said with a grin, blood running down his gashed face.

"He'll keep you alive a long time, torturing you from day to day, to test your ability to suffer."

"I've known him to cook a man alive, over two weeks, burning a little of him at a time."

"Another man he flayed over the period of a full month, to pay him for a slight."

They hit him with their fists and kicked him with their boots, but he stood stoically, with his eyes wide and glaring. One man carried his dagger and Blood-drinker in his hands, and these he thrust into his scabbards with a mocking laugh.

"I'll leave them here with you, but where you can't reach them. So near and yet out of reach. It may add to your torment, having them so close yet unable to use them."

They went away after a time and left him in the blackness where only a distant torch shed any light. His head drooped, he was feeling the cuts and slashes now, the batterings he had taken from mace and war-hammer. Pain was an agony along his flesh and veins, and a raging thirst dried his throat and tongue.

He tugged at the chains, but they were tight-set in stone, and massive. His arms were stretched to their fullest length so he could exert little or no strength. His legs were tired of standing, yet he could not sleep for the manacles about his thick wrists dug their steel into his flesh when he would have relaxed. He stared into the darkness and muttered curses beneath his breath.

He sought to doze but the rats came, grey monsters that stood on their hind legs and sought to bite his knees and thighs, bared above his warboots. These he kicked away, killing some by the force of those kicks, but they remained away for only a short time, being driven by starvation. He heard men scream, and women too, from somewhere off in these pits, and he knew that Maylok was supervising their torture.

His time for that would come, he supposed, and made a wry face. He did not mind a clean death, but torture was repugnant to him. Fury at the wizard burned inside him, and his body shook in his rage so that the chains rattled.

Something touched him, soft as thistledown, so that it seemed not so much a touching as a faint caress. And his tiredness welled up in him so that he hung in his chains and slept. No rats came now to nibble at him, he heard not the screams of dying men and women. Deep were his slumbers, and dreamless.

When he woke, he was refreshed. His wrists hurt him where the manacles had held his sagging body, but there was a renewed vitality in his great muscles and he stood defiantly, as though daring his captors to approach. He had no knowledge of the time, but that distant torch still glowed, though only fitfully, enabling him to see a little better around him.

Once more that thistledown softness touched him and now he glanced sideways, and his flesh crawled for a moment. The shadow was with him!

It was little more than a deeper darkness against the blackness of the dungeon, but he could make it out. Was this some fiend sent by Maylok to bring him some undreamed-of torment? But no. Or if it was, it did nothing but stare at him.

Niall stared back and now — but faintly — he could make out greenish eyes in that umbrageous shape. He shook himself, the chains rattled.

"What are you?" he rasped. "What?"

The shadow did not speak, but stretched out a slim arm at the end of which was a shadow-hand. And at the tips of slim fingers, greenish balls of fire began to glow.

His torture would begin now, the Far-traveler knew. Curse Maylok by all the eleven hells for —

The green balls touched a manacle, not his flesh.

And where the manacle had been was only — rusted powder. That powder fell away, the chain dropped and his mightily thewed left arm was free. Again those green balls moved, to touch the other manacle and Niall stepped away from the stone wall.

"My thanks," he growled. "Whoever you are."

The shadow danced before him as if to lead him away from

the dungeon wall. Niall put hands to his swordhilt and his dagger, lifting them half out of their scabbards, and then he went after that flitting shape.

It ran before him, dancing almost in its eagerness, luring him as once before it had beckoned him on. But there was a difference in the shadow-being now; it did not slink but cavorted, spiralled and swayed — more gracefully than any dancing girl he had ever seen. It reminded him almost of that dream he had had, in which Lylthia had danced for him.

The shadow moved and where it went, Niall followed. To a small chamber it led him, and touched the iron bars and locks of its vast oak door with the green balls at the tips of its fingers. Niall put a hand to those plankings and pushed the door inward.

Chests lay piled one atop the other here, with small coffers and caskets above and beside them. The shadow gestured and the Sell-sword lifted the cover of one and then another.

He saw diamonds piled high in one, emeralds in another, golden coins in yet a third. Again the shadow-being waved a hand and Niall filled his money pouch with jewels and golden coins until it overflowed. There were treasures here gathered during Maylok's lifetime and the lifetimes of his father and grandfather, who had been famous sorcerers in their own right. He would have liked to take it all, but knew it was beyond his power to carry.

At the far door, the shadow waited, and finally Niall went with it, running after it as it picked up speed. Through winding passageways and up dusty stairways long forgotten did the shadow-being take him, until they came at last to a walled-up doorway.

With the green balls, the shadow touched those stones and the stones melted to run in molten slag down onto the floor. Beyond the opening thus made was a dark drapery. This, Niall pushed aside.

He stood on the rim of the necromantic chamber where Maylok could be seen through the smoke of the flaming bowls, head flung back and arms raised high, as he chanted in some Forgotten, phylogenetic tongue. He was not aware that Niall was in his necromantic chamber, he was engrossed in his incantation. The shadow danced forward, pointing to Maylok and gesturing the Sell-sword forward.

Niall went at the run, yanking out the Orravian dagger. He would not bother to use his blade on the wizard, deeming him not worth the trouble of lifting Blood-drinker. As he ran, the shadow went with him and now he felt again that thistledown softness of its touch, where it clasped his wrist.

Maylok whipped around, startled by the faint sound of warboots on stone. His eyes opened wide, his lips parted to scream.

Then Niall was over the blood-wet pentagram and raising his dagger for the death stroke. But the shadow was ahead of him, reaching out with its dainty hands for Maylok and the wizard screamed indeed when he saw that graceful blackness reaching out to gather him into its embrace.

Niall could not move. He paused in midstroke, not wanting to harm the shadow — not even knowing if he could — but seeing that shadow now as that of a pretty girl.

"Lylthia," he whispered.

"Not Lylthia, no. But once I was — yes," hissed a voice.

Laughter rang out, cruel and mirthless.

The palace swirled about Niall as he swayed drunkenly inside that pentagram, feeling feeling the floor shift under his warboots, knowing a dizziness induced not by blow of weapon but by some demoniac spell. Faster the palace moved, faster, faster. He could not stand, but reeled and would have fallen but for the cool hand that caught and held him.

He stood in redness.

Beneath him the floor was of scarlet stone, faintly hot. Around him rose gargantuan walls of a brilliant carmine streaked with slashes of deepest ebony, on which were hung strange tapestries and golden vessels. Massive columns of black and vermilion rose upward toward a distant roof half-hidden by redly glowing mists.

A thin high squealing caught his ears. Maylok was groveling on the warm stone floor, beating at it with his fists and scratching with his nails. His purple cloak and cowl were already smoking, his body writhed as though he were in torment.

"Save me, Far-traveler," he mewled. "Save me and my treasure is yours. All the jewels, all the gold that my forefathers and I have gathered together, shall all be yours. And I — Maylok the Mighty, the wisest wizard in the world, shall be your slave!"

Niall growled, "I ought to kill you, you foul slug."

"Yes!" Maylok screamed, struggling upward to his knees and presenting his scrawney throat. "Slay me! Slay me and take my treasures. Only do me this favor, Niall of the Mighty Arms — kill me, kill me!"

Soft laughter floated through the vast room. It mocked and taunted and when it touched the necromancer he grovelled on the floor.

"Great Emelkartha — spare me," he bleated.

"Too late for mercy, Maylok. Nah, nah. You pay the price."

And Maylok screamed.

In the midst of that screaming, a woman came forward, clad in diaphanous robes of crimson streaked with jet through which Niall could see the flesh tints of her body. Long black hair floated down about her shoulders and her green eyes blazed with fury. On her full mouth was a cold, cruel smile.

"Lylthia," he whispered.

The green eyes slid sideways from the cringing necromancer to touch the Sell-sword, and it seemed to him they softened. "Not Lylthia, no. Not any more. Know me, barbarian, for Emelkartha herself."

Niall said boldly, "Too bad. I think I could have loved Lylthia."

Her mouth lost its cruelty, grew softly amorous. "The woman part of me knows that, Niall of the Far Travelings, and — thanks you.

"At first I was angry with you for saving me from Maylok's men. I wanted to be taken by them, to be drained of blood, so that I could become — a shadow being. Yet you did me a favor and for that I am not ungrateful.

"You could pass the pentagram. Not even I could do that, not as Lylthia nor as her shadow. Yet by touching you, your strength drew me along — to catch Maylok in my arms and bring him here to my eleven hells, as men name this domain over which I rule."

She was silent and Niall scanned her features, finding them more beautiful than ever, with broad brow and tiptilted nose and those full lips exerting a sensuous appeal that shook him to his marrow. He licked his lips. Old Thallia had been right. A demon-woman had carried him off the world and into her abode. He wondered if he would ever return.

The green eyes glanced at him slyly.

"Well, Niall? Would you stay with me and be my lover?"

He found himself nodding, and she smiled but shook her head. "Nah, nah, you may not — though a part of me would like to keep you here. This place is not made for — human flesh. It cannot endure the heat and mephitic vapors for very long — without pain."

Continued on page 25



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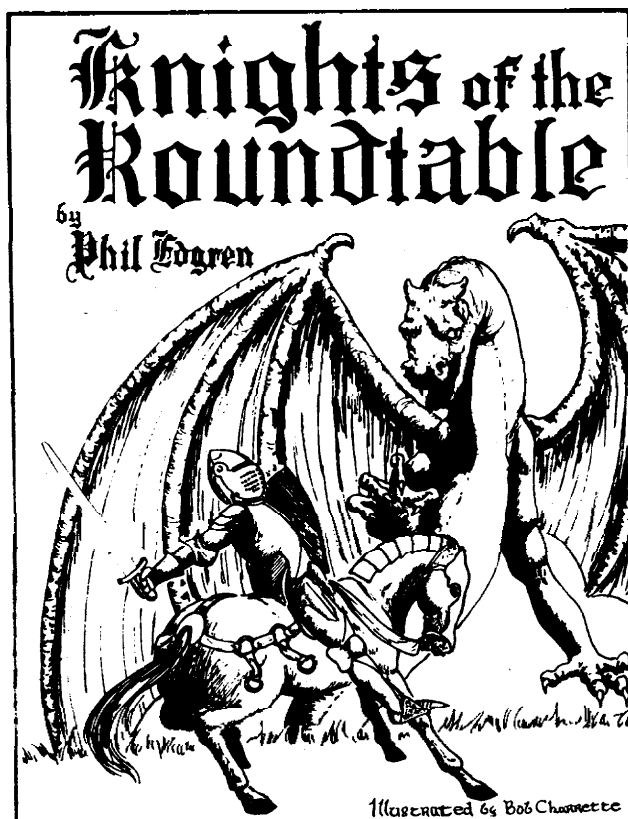
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Demon from page 23

Maylok screeched and banged his head against the hot floor.

Emelkartha whispered and now eerie shapes to which Niall could not put a name ran from the walls to lay tentacles upon Maylok and lift him to his feet. He was sweating, gasping for breath, trembling as with the ague.

"You made a mock of me, magician," whispered Emelkartha, and how her voice burned the eardrums with its rage. "For that you shall suffer. As you have made your fellow-man suffer, so now shall you, from the first to the last of my eleven hells. You shall be tortured to death, yet shall be reborn after each death so that you may suffer even worse torments. Eleven times shall you die, eleven times shall you be reborn, to begin anew — until the end of Time itself!"

Maylok screamed and screamed. His body contorted and twisted, but he was helpless in those rubbery tentacles that held him. In this manner he was dragged across that hot stone floor toward a distant doorway through which Niall could glimpse blazing fires and upreaching flames.

They drew the wizard through the doorway.

For an instant he seemed to come to a dead stop, with his sandals digging in at the stone floor. Peal after peal of agonized fear burst from his throat when he saw what lay before him. Then he was gone and steam rose up to blot out the sight of what was being done to him.

The demon-woman looked at Niall inquiringly. "You do not approve," she whispered. "Yet Maylok has sinned against the demon world for too long a time, holding us in thrall. Soon — he would have been too strong for me to act against him, for he intended summoning up megademons known to me who would have prevented my disposing of him. His incantations are in-

complete, and so my world — and yours — is safe from him, forever."

He nodded, he knew what wickednesses Maylok had done, of girls ravished and tormented, of brave men broken and tortured into mindless hulks, of treasures taken from rightful owners. Maylok deserved these eleven hells.

There was nothing he, Niall, could do about it, anyhow.

His eyes ran over her body, so much revealed in the black and scarlet transparencies she wore. He sighed, and with that sigh, the woman-demon floated closer, tilting up her head and lifting her bare arms.

Niall caught her in his embrace, held her a moment, and kissed her. He would never forget that kiss. It burned deep into him, seemed to lift him out of his flesh into another state of being where pleasure was almost unendurable. His arms held this lissom woman to him, and something inside him told him that no mortal woman could ever afterward affect him as did this one whom he had known as Lylthia.

"For now — farewell," her voice whispered . . .

She was gone and he stood alone inside the pentagram in the palace of the doomed wizard. A cold wind was blowing through the building, that chilled and refreshed him. He shook himself, touching his swordhilt for reassurance that he still lived, that he was back in his own world.

His heart still thudded with the excitement of that last embrace. Whatever else she was, Emelkartha was a woman, her mouth had whispered to him of indescribable delights in that kiss. He shook his head, telling himself that he had gained a rich treasure in the gold and diamonds in his money pouch, but had lost something worth much more.

"Lylthia," he whispered as he walked through the forsaken halls of the ancient palace. "Lylthia. . ."

Would Emelkartha ever appear to him again — in human form? As — Lylthia? She had the power, certainly, being a woman-demon. But would she? He did not know, all he could do was hope.

He walked out into the gathering dawn and made his way to the wall-gate, unmolested. It was as if, with the wizard's death, his servants had all fled away. Or — been destroyed.

A river breeze had sprung up. He moved along the street toward the **Hyssop**, which would carry him to Urgrik. Yet there was a sadness in him, despite the wealth in his pouch.

"Lylthia," he whispered once again.

But the seawind caught the name and carried it away.

Chamber from page 10

watched with horror, the offending El Ropo bounced once on a Pabst cap, rolled over a Schlitz Malt lid and came to rest on a Coors seal. Torches flared, unseen gongs pealed forth, and a section of one wall, undisturbed for unknown eons, slid open with a jerk and a loud rasp of rusted metal against metal.

"Such luck!" breathed Dimwit.

"The fates are kind," agreed Ralph.

"Shucks, fellas, it's 'cause I'm a Libra born on a cusp," said 'Lumbo modestly.

The group moved towards the new opening in the wall, slowly at first, then with increasing boldness as they sought the reward of the end of their quest. Inside the small chamber was a low dais covered with purple silk. Upon the silk rested a small but intricately carved gold box. Heedless of possible danger Dimwit snatched the box from the dais and opened the lid. The dwarf's face, bright with expectation, suddenly fell and with a blank stare he held out the box for the others' inspection. Inside was a note:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

FINDER'S KEEPER'S . . .

(signed)

F. BAGGINS

offers them a chance to redeem themselves. He tells them a tale of a highly magical staff that once belonged to him, but was stolen a few ages ago. He now believes it is in the dungeons of a nearby ruin, and says that if they find it and bring it back to him he may just see them in a different light, so to speak. The party is ecstatic, relatively, at the opportunity to save their skins, and readily agree to the adventure, thinking that they will be able to line their own pockets as well as retrieve the old fool's bit of magic kindling. As they neglect to ask him why he doesn't go with them, or why **he** hasn't recovered this bit of magic aforenow, he does not volunteer the information. Before sending them off, he takes the Mage aside and tells him they should begin their search off the Sixth Stairway, at the same time covertly slipping a curiously carved piece of amber into the Mage's hand. . ."

"Hints" from page 13

armour was suddenly transported aboard the "Santa Maria" on its way to discover America. To carry this idea further, you can create all sorts of strange areas; have a wizard suddenly find himself on the Normandy Beaches on D-Day, a Patriarch who finds himself as a stowaway on the nuclear powered U.S.S. Nautilus on its shakedown cruise, or even a Lord who finds himself on the banks of the Little Big Horn and sees a column of blueclad cavalry figures riding towards him.

One type of area I personally like to work with (and the players in my game shiver at) is underground rivers, lakes, seas, or a combination of the three. This also allows for islands where special monsters and treasures can be placed so they are hard to get at. (How many parties carry boats or rafts with them?)

Naturally, with an area as big as a lake, sea, or river, characters are not going to be able to journey across (or down) in one or two turns, so special monster tables will be needed:

- 1 Men (see sub-table 1)
- 2 Giant Fish (5-30) 6'-24'
- 3 Giant Serpent (1-4) 10'-60'
- 4 Crocodiles (4-24) 3'-18'
- 5 Flying Monsters (see sub-table 2)
- 6 Beach Monsters (see sub-table 3)
- 7 Giant Water Snakes (1-6) 6'-24'
- 8 Nixies (3-30)
- 9 Mermen (5-50)
- 10 Dragon Turtles (1-4)
- 11 Whirlpool (lasts 1-10 turns) 10'-120"
- 12 Wrecked Ship/Raft (see sub-table 1 for occupants, if any)

Sub-Table 1

- 1 Heroes
- 2 Thaumaturgists
- 3 Swashbucklers
- 4 Magicians
- 5 Evil Priests
- 6 Myrmidons
- 7 Enchanters
- 8 Superheroes
- 9 Sorcerers
- 10 Lords
- 11 Wizards
- 12 Evil High Priests

Sub-Table 2

- 1 Dragons
- 2 Balrogs
- 3 Wraiths
- 4 Gargoyles
- 5 Wyverns
- 6 Spectres
- 7 Chimeras
- 8 Vampires
- 9 Cockatrices
- 10 Manticores

Sub-Table 3

- 1 Giant Crabs
- 2 Giant Leeches
- 3 Men (see sub-table 1)
- 4 Giant Snakes
- 5 Dragon Turtles
- 6 Crocodiles

Then there are areas like the Pool of Endless Ogres, where one ogre comes out of the pool every turn that adventurers are in the cavern the pool is in. Or the Room of Gems, where three turns after the gems are taken out of the room 50% turn into orcs and immediately begin to attack the party.

The favorite books of the judge can be turned into parts of the castle, or worlds that adventurers can be transported to, like Larry Niven's **Ringworld**, Tolkien's **"Moria,"** Clark Aston Smith's **Hyperborea**, Arthur Conan Doyle's **Lost World**, or Fritz Leiber's **"Newhon."**

Certain parts of maps, or even single rooms and corridors, can give parties problems even though no monsters are present. Like a 10' x 10' room that shrinks people down so that they seem to be in a 200' x 200' room. Once they cross the room they are given back their true size. (This is designed to drive the map-makers in the party crazy.) Or a room maze that has transporters everywhere that transport the players back to the center of the maze. Or even a room that has seemingly unguarded treasures that when touched, activate secret doors that allow hordes of hobgoblins to attack the unsuspecting players.

Actually any sort of maze, whether room, corridor, or stair maze, is fun for the judge and a headache for the players. The major problem with mazes is getting the players into it. One suggestion is to simply transport the party into the middle of the maze. Or you can have an escaping orc with a valued magic item run through a one-way door. When the party follows, they find out that they are in one end of the maze, with the exit on the other side.

When it comes to ordinary monsters for guarding normal treasures, D & D, Greyhawk, Blackmoor, and the Creature Features in The Dragon have everything you need. But when it comes to those special treasures, then look to the fantasy writers like H.P. Lovecraft and his gods and demi-gods to help you. Or the terrible sand worms of Frank Herbert's **Dune**. And if you can't find enough in the field of fantasy, then check out the science-fiction writers of today. Like Larry Niven's "Puppeteers," Dickson's "Dorsai," H.G. Wells' Martians, or the creatures and peoples of the **Star Trek** Series. (How would you like to be walking down a corridor in the dungeons and be transported to another strange looking corridor, on the "Starship Enterprise"? With a tall humanoid with pointed ears saying "Highly illogical"? Or even worse is not using fiction at all, but fact. In other words your players could find the Bermuda Triangle and what causes it!



Questions concerning this article will be answered by author if accompanied by SSAE, and sent to: THE DRAGON "hints," POB 756, LAKE GENEVA, WI. 53147.

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"VENERABLE DESTRUCTION"

Venerable Destruction is a simple, fantasy boardgame "Parody." By this I mean that this game cannot be taken as a serious wargame. Nor can it be taken as a serious Fantasy game. What it is is a giant combat classic. It's fun, simple, quick and cannot be taken as a serious game in any context.

The rule book for Venerable Destruction is only four pages in length. Out of these four pages only two of them are devoted to the game itself. One of the other pages contains a drawing, which is the front cover of the game. While the other page deals with the "Introduction and Background History" of the planet Venerable. It is in this "Background History" page that you are given the entire premise for the game.

The rules that are given here contain on the necessities. There are a total of eight sections in the rules. Each of these sections is devoted to a different rule and is written in a simple, easy to follow style. These eight sections are: "Movement," "Combat," "Stacking," "Special Pieces," "How to Win," "Terrain," "Mercenary Troops" and "Order of Appearance." The "Special Pieces" rule is the longest rule in the game as it contains eight short sub-sections. Each of these sub-sections deals with a different unit that you use in your game. The different units covered in this section are "Archers," "Rhino Hordes," "The Magician Goodwin," "Scouts," "Barges and Junks," "Slaves," "The Court and the Khan." As you can see, even though the game is simple you do have a variety of units used in the game.

Venerable Destruction was designed to be just a "FUN" game and nothing more. For those of you who are always serious minded gamers or who only game with a purpose in mind stay away from this game. It was only meant to be fun and cause laughs and enjoyment. After all, with titles and the counters such as "Sycophant," "Rhino Hordes," "Lowest of the Low," "El Douce" and "El Touche" who can help but laugh?

Game comes wrapped in clear plastic with map, die-cut counters, rule book and is available from Excalibre Games, Inc., 5880 73rd Ave North Apt. 108, Minneapolis, MN 55429 and it retails for \$5.95.

STAR COMMAND

Star Command is a miniature Rule Book for fighting Tactical Space Combat in the 22nd Century. With the aid of this Rule Book, players can fight any type battles they wish, with the type units that are outlined in the book. The Rule Book begins with a short history of the events, that are occurring at this time in history. Here also, we are given the basis of the Spacecraft Technology, that is used in this game. All in all, the beginning section outlines the History and Tactics used by Mankind against the non-human race, the Shaanathra. In "Star Command," **one**

factor of acceleration is 10 gravities, one centimeter equals 18,000 KM and each turn of play is the equivalent to ten minutes of real time. This is the basis of the game, that we are going to play.

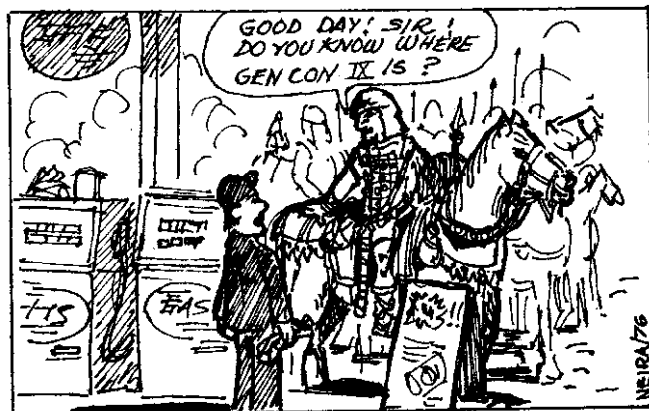
In the next section, we begin learning the rules that we are going to use in the game. First, we are given the "Sequence of Play." Each "Turn Sequence" consists of **four** phases, each of which is followed from turn to turn, until the end of the game. These "phases" are Writing orders, Moving Spacecraft, Measuring Range to Targets and then determining the "Hit Strengths and Recording Damage. Following this, we have the Movement Rules. There are basically "two" different types of Movement Systems used in this game. Each system is covered in its own section, with examples showing how the Movement System works. The "two" types of Movement Systems used are "Gravitic Drive" and "Hyperdrive Movement." Each type of Movement System has a different effect on the type of tactics, that players will use in the game.

Also, in the "Weapons Section," we cover "Weapon Placement." Here, we are told, that each player arms his own ship in any fashion that he wishes. The **only** restricting factor is, that the number of weapons that are chosen may not exceed the weapons factors listed on the ships characteristics chart. This means, that players can have a multitude of games, and, no two, will ever be the same, because, each player makes his own decisions, as to what the armament of his ship will be. In the **final** portions of the "Weapons Section," we discuss the use of "Screens," while playing our game. Here, we are told that screens "Reflect a Starships Capacity to Deflect Laser Fire." We are also told, how to incorporate this aspect of "Space Warfare" into our tactical battle.

The last two sections in the Rules Book are devoted to "Constructing Scenarios and Campaigns." In the "Constructing Scenarios" section, we are given the Rule Modifications, that are needed to change this game to a Strategic Level Miniature Game. These **two** sections are there **mostly** as an **aid**, to the gamer.

"Star Command" is an excellent set of miniature rules for the beginner, or, the avid Science Fiction buff. This is a set of rules that players should never get bored with. "Star Command" comes with "two" sheets of cutout ships, so, that players can begin gaming as soon as they read the rules, and get the necessary measuring equipment and dice. With the aid of these rules, and a little imagination, there is **no** limit to the different types of situations that players can dream up.

This set of rules is available from: Lou Zocchi, 7604R Newton Drive, Biloxi, MS 39532 and retails for \$4.00.



A NEW D & D CHARACTER CLASS: THE ALCHEMIST

by Jon Pickens

The prime requisite for the Alchemist is Wisdom, but both Wisdom and Intelligence scores must exceed 12. Their alignment is NEUTRAL. Since fighting is not their normal vocation, their maximum armor class is 5, they may use only one-handed weapons (excluding magical swords), and their attack levels advance as Clerics. They have the saving throws of Fighters with a bonus of plus 2 against poison and non-magical paralyzation. They may use any potion, but only those magical items employable by all classes (see exceptions below). Psionic ability is as Fighters, with **Body Weaponry** replaced by **Molecular Agitation**. The Alchemist rolls six-sided hit dice up to Level 9, gaining 1 point per level after that. Alchemists must be human.

EXPLANATION OF ABILITIES:

Detect Poison: Allows the Alchemist to tell by explanation whether or not an item or creature is poisonous, or whether a character has been poisoned.

Neutralization Poison: This will eliminate the effects of poison up to twice the Alchemist's own level. This may only be used once per character per time poisoned and will not revive a character killed by poison.

Neutralize Paralyzation: This cancels the effects of paralyzation caused by creatures up to twice the Alchemist's level. It will not work against paralyzation caused by devices (wands, staves, swords, or spells).

Identify Potion: This allows the Alchemist to correctly identify a potion. If a Potion of Delusion is not identified, check again to see if it is identified incorrectly. This may also be used to test for acids or similar compounds.

As the Alchemist advances, he gains the following special abilities:

LEVEL 1: Ability to Read Languages (80% chance, one attempt per week per item); Ability to prepare poisons and drugs; and Ability to prepare a Potion of Delusion

LEVEL 3: Ability to prepare potions and acids

LEVEL 5: Ability to prepare Blade Venom

LEVEL 7: Ability to Read Magic (and hence Scrolls) as

Name	Ex. Pts.	Detect Poison	Neut Pois.	Neut. Para.	Iden. Potion	Potions					
Student	0	20%	10%	15%	5%	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cleric	1500	25%	15%	20%	10%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scribe	3000	30%	20%	25%	20%	1	-	-	-	-	-
Pedant	6000	35%	25%	35%	25%	2	-	-	-	-	-
Savant	12000	45%	35%	40%	35%	2	1	-	-	-	-
Scholar	25000	55%	45%	45%	45%	2	2	-	-	-	-
Philosopher	50000	60%	50%	55%	50%	3	2	1	-	-	-
Magnus	100000	65%	55%	65%	60%	4	2	2	-	-	-
Alchemist	150000	75%	65%	75%	70%	4	3	2	1	-	-
Mstr. Alchem.	300000	85%	75%	85%	80%	5	3	3	2	-	-
Mstr. Alchem., 2nd	450000	95%	85%	95%	85%	5	4	3	2	1	-
Mstr. Alchem., 3rd	600000	100%	90%	100%	95%	6	4	4	2	2	-
Mstr. Alchem., 4th	750000		95%		100%	6	5	4	3	2	1
Mstr. Alchem., 5th	900000		100%			7	5	5	3	3	1
Mstr. Alchem., 6th	1050000					7	6	5	4	3	2
Mstr. Alchem., 7th	1200000					8	6	6	4	4	2
Mstr. Alchem., 8th	1350000					8	7	6	5	4	3
Mstr. Alchem., 9th	1500000					9	7	7	5	5	3
Mstr. Alchem., 10th	1650000					9	8	7	6	5	4
Mstr. Alchem., 11th	1800000					10	8	8	6	6	4

Thieves

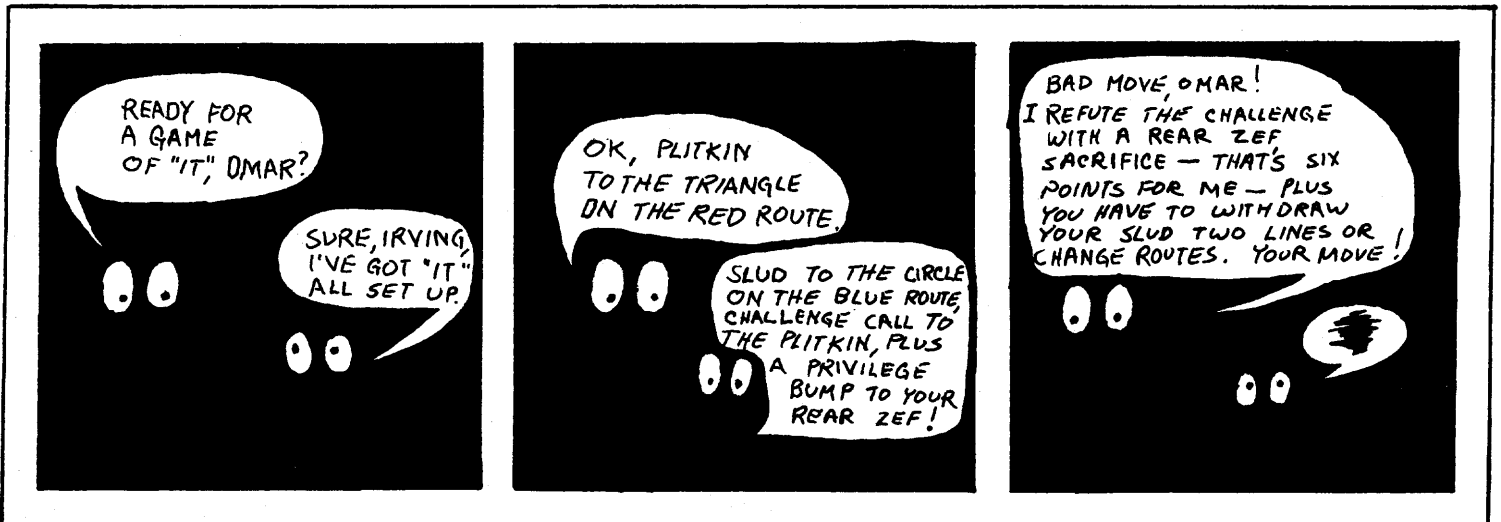
LEVEL 9: Ability to prepare potions from samples

EXPLANATION OF SPECIAL ABILITIES:

Poisons: Alchemists may brew potions of a strength level equal to their own experience levels. Each strength level costs 50GP and one day.

dirt

by jake



Drugs: As poisons, but double cost. Saving throw vs. Poison at -2. If failed, the victim is unconscious for 4 hours minimum. A successful constitution/resurrection throw is required to wake up (check each hour).

Potions: These require 200GP and 1 week per level to produce (see list). Research costs are the same as MUs for Spells, but having a sample allows 9th Level Alchemists to produce the potion even if the potion has not been developed. A sample allows an Alchemist able to research a potion add 40% to his chances of success. (Option: Raise production costs to 250GP and don't allow MUs potion production)

Acids: These are produced by the gallon and do 1 six-sided die damage per level strength. These cost 100GP and 1 day per level strength. Maximum strength equals Alchemist level. From the 3rd level the Alchemist has a 15% chance of neutralizing half acid damage, providing the victim survives. This chance increases 5% for each additional level.

ALCHEMIST POTIONS

LEVEL 1

1. Heroism
2. Giant Strength
3. Animal Control
4. Water Breathing
5. Healing
6. Purification Powder (10)
7. Flash Pellets (5)
8. Dust of Sneezing (10)
9. Oil of Slipperiness
10. Tanglefoot Pills (2)

LEVEL 2

1. Speed
2. Levitation
3. Growth
4. Diminution
5. Human Control
6. Plant Control
7. Dust of Appearance (10)
8. Dust of Paralyzation (10)

LEVEL 3

1. Superheroism
2. Polymorph**
3. Fire Resistance
4. Extra-Healing
5. Fly
6. Clairvoyance
7. Clairaudience
8. Dust of Sneezing and Choking (15)

LEVEL 4

1. Invulnerability
2. Undead Control
3. Giant Control**
4. Immunization from Lycanthropes
5. Invisibility
6. Homunculi Creation

LEVEL 5

1. Dragon Control**
2. Gaseous Form
3. Treasure Finding
4. Dust of Disappearance (20)
5. Oil of Etherealness
6. Cloning Culture

LEVEL 6

1. Longevity
2. Cure Disease
3. Regeneration
4. Mind Damp

() Number of units produced

**The exact type of creature turned into or controlled is specified when the potion is started.

EXPLANATIONS OF NEW POTIONS

LEVEL 1

Dust of Sneezing — Non-fatal variant of Dust of Sneezing and Choking. Saving Throws are at -2. Dust causes a coughing spell lasting 2-8 melee rounds. Makes 10 packets of dust.

Flash Pellets — A small pellet which explodes on hard contact with an unyielding substance. If not expecting it, the victims



have a 90% chance of being blinded for 2-8 melee rounds. Don't fall into a pit. Makes 5 pellets.

Purification Powder — When sprinkled on bad food or water makes them fit to consume. Will NOT neutralize poison or drugs. Serves 10.

Tanglefoot — Small synthetic fungoid which rapidly expands to fill a 10' X 10' area with rubbery tentacles. Men require 3 turns to force their way through, a giant takes one. The tendrils dissipate harmlessly in one hour. Makes 2.

LEVEL 2

Dust of Paralyzation — Similar to the Dust of Sneezing and Choking, but the effects of missing the saving throw are paralyzation for 1 hour. Makes 10.

LEVEL 4

Immunization from Lycanthropes — Protects user from contracting Lycanthropy for a period of one month. There is a 1% chance of contracting the disease from the serum.

LEVEL 6

Cure Disease — Act as the Clerical spell

Regeneration — Acts as a Ring of Regeneration with a duration of one day, with revitalization ability if the body is fresh (up to three days, with a constitution check needed after the first). If applied over an extended period (at least two weeks) to an inactive character, it can be used to regenerate a lost member of the body.

Mind Damp — This potion renders the user immune to psionic location or attack (including Crystal Ball, ESPing, etc.) for a period of one week. The user may not employ psionic powers during this period. It renders psionic devices inoperative for that period also (ESP Medallion, Amulet of Inescapable Locating).

Other ideas for activities for high level Alchemists:

Greek Fire	Flesh Golems	Transmutation
Gunpowder	Poison Cloaks	Hallucinogens

Alchemic Magical Items include:

Any device save Wands or Staves which can summon elementals.

Alchemists can control which liquids emerge from the Jug of

Alchemy and the **Beaker of Plentiful Potions**. For other types, these items disgorge their contents randomly when poured.

The Alchemist is able to use the **Manual of Golems**.

The **Grimoire of Archaic Alchemy** adds one experience level to Alchemists and 10,000 experience points to MUs. Clerics take 7000 experience points and 5-30 points losses. Other types lose 2-20 points.

For other books, the Alchemist takes damage as a Cleric, except the **Book of Infinite Spells** which does 5-20 points to him.

The **Philosopher's Stone** looks exactly like the Luckstone and Loadstone, but is valuable only in the hands of an Alchemist. The stone contains 2-8 charges. One charge may be used to add 20% to a research roll **or** to transmute 10,000 wt points of lead into gold or silver (50% chance of each). In addition, while the stone has any charges left, the Alchemist may use it to "Cure Disease" once per day, **free**. The Alchemist may not contact a disease while he carries the stone on his person. As the stone is immune to heat (even dragon breath) it may be tested by throwing into a vat of molten lead (which would of course destroy a Luckstone). The stone disintegrates when the last charge is used.

ON POISONS

Animal poison is usually one level strength per die. Trap poison is variable.

If the level of the poison is equal to or greater than the number of dice the victim has, the victim must save vs. poison or die in 3 melee rounds.

If the poison level is less than this but half the number of the victim's dice or more, the victim must save vs. poison or suffer the effects of the "slow" Spell (the effects last until a constitution/resurrection check is successful, rolling once each hour).

If the poison level is less than that, there is no effect, but the poison accumulates. Note: this penalty might have been removed without reducing the poison level in the body by the FTR making his Constitution check at the beginning of the next or subsequent hours.

EXAMPLE: A Level 7 FTR is bitten several times by a 3-die poisonous spider.

Assume two bites and one missed saving throw. The FTR is moving at "slow" speed (4½ out of 7). If he is bitten again and misses his saving throw he is dead; but in any case the fourth bite will kill him.

Assume a Level 1 Alchemist attempts to neutralize the poison after the FTR kills the spider. Since the maximum level a 1st level Alchemist can remove is two, and since one bite cannot be broken down, the Alchemist can only attempt to neutralize 1½ levels of poison. If he misses, he may not try again. A successful attempt removes the "slow" penalty from the FTR.

Blade Venom: This special poison for application to cutting weapons costs 200GP and 1 week to prepare. The victim struck must save vs. poison or die in 3 rounds. The venom is kept in vials which contain enough for three hits with a blade or three arrows. It loses potency rapidly, becoming useless 24 hours after the vial is opened. A batch yields one vial.

Belladonna: Treat this as a ½ level strength poison.

A large dose of most poisons is easily detectable, reduce the chance of ingestion by 20% for each dose over the basic one. (A rat will usually, 90%, gulp down a ration with level one poison, but only has a 70% chance of eating a ration with a double dose of Belladonna).

For natural elimination of poison, add 1 day to recuperation

time per ½ level poisoned, or require a daily roll vs. constitution to remove a level of poison. This is in addition to any time spent recovering from wounds.

Optionally, a cleric may be allowed to remove only as many levels of poison as levels of experience he has achieved. Unlike the Alchemist, these are subtracted immediately from the accumulated levels of poison in the body of the recipient.

D & D OPTION: WEAPON DAMAGE

by Jon Pickens

The following rules are designed to replace the damage system introduced in Greyhawk:

For every three levels a Fighter advances, or every four levels a Thief advances, he may master one additional weapon and score the increased damage shown on the Expert column. Thieves are limited to expertise in sword, dagger, a combination of these, or the sling.

Instead of increasing expertise in one weapon, a Fighter or Thief with a dexterity of 13 or better may take a combination of two one-handed weapons. Each combination is unique and must be clearly recorded. In melee the wielder may strike once with each weapon or once with either weapon **and** count as shielded. No expertise bonus is given when employing this option, even though the wielder may normally have it for either weapon.

Sword and Sword, or Flail & Morning Star combinations require a dexterity of 16, as these are especially difficult to master. Only one Morning Star and/or Flail may be used in a combination.

Weapon	Normal	Expert
Dagger	1-4 points	2-5 points
Hand Axe, Mace	1-4 points	1-6 points
Dwarf Hammer, Military Pick*	1-6 points	1-6 points
Battle Axe*	1-8 points	1-12 points
Sword	1-8 points	1-10 points
Flail***	1-8 points	1-10 points
Morning Star**	1-6 points	1-8 points
Spear, Thrown/Thrust	1-6 points	2-8 points
Spear, Thrust vs. Charge	1-8 points	2-12 points
Spear, Set vs. Charge	1-10 points	2-16 points
Pole Arms****	1-12 points	1-12 points
Halberd***	1-10 points	2-12 points
2-Handed Sword***	2-12 points	3-18 points
Mounted Lance	2-12 points	2-24 points
Pike****	1-12 points	1-12 points
Arrow or Quarrel	1-6 points	1-6 points
Sling Stone	1-4 points	1-6 points

* Weapon requires not less than 4' of space on each side of the user

** Weapon requires not less than 5' of space on each side of the user

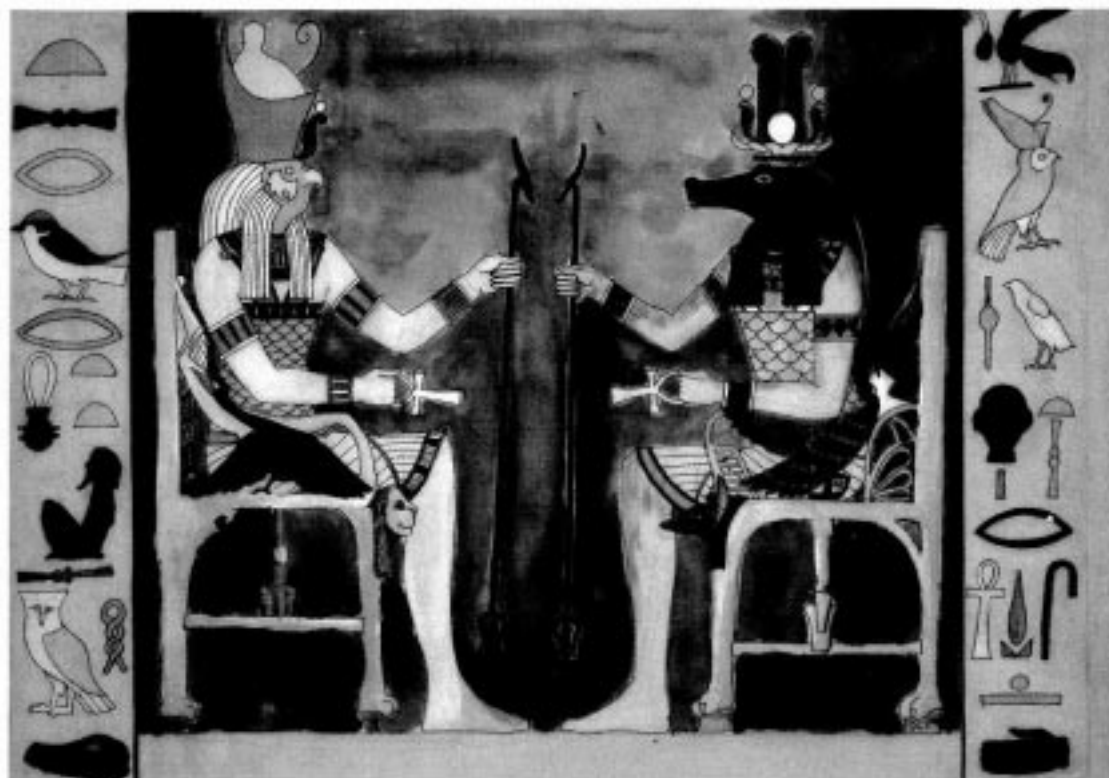
*** Weapon requires not less than 6' of space on each side of the user

**** Weapon not useable in dungeons as a general rule due to length

The 2-Handed sword requires a Strength of 16 and a dexterity of 9.

The Military Pick or the Battle Axe may be wielded in one hand if Strength is 16 and Dexterity is 9.

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