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DRAGON® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly for a subscription price of \$24 per year by Dragon Publishing, a division of TSR, Inc. The mailing address of Dragon Publishing for all material except subscription orders is P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147; the business telephone number is (414) 248-8044

DRAGON Magazine is available at hobby stores and bookstores throughout the United States and Canada, and through a limited number of overseas outlets. Subscription rates are as follows: \$24 for 12 issues sent to an address in the U.S., \$30 in Canada; \$50 U.S. for 12 issues sent via surface mail or \$95 for 12 issues sent via air mail to any other country. All subscription payments must be in advance, and should be sent to Dragon Publishing, P.O. Box 72089, Chicago IL 60690.

A limited quantity of certain back issues of DRAGON Magazine can be purchased from the Dungeon Hobby Shop. (See the list of available issues printed elsewhere in each magazine.) Payment in advance by check or money order must accompany all orders. Payments cannot be made through a credit card, and orders cannot be taken nor merchandise reserved by telephone. Neither an individual customer nor an institution can be billed for a subscription order or a back-issue purchase unless prior arrangements are made.

The issue of expiration for each subscription is printed on the mailing label for each subscriber's copy of the magazine. Changes of address for the delivery of subscription copies must be received at least six weeks prior to the effective date of the change in order to insure uninterrupted delivery.

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Second-class postage paid at Lake Geneva, Wis., and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Dragon Publishing, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147, USPS 318-790, ISSN 0279-6848.

## It's a big world

I guess it's time to talk about reviews, and this is as good a place as any, because it's the only other spot in the magazine where we usually deal in pure opinion.

We came in for some well-deserved criticism following the publication of a review about "One-of-a-kind game aids" in issue #82. A man named Don Haywood from a company called Hco wrote to inform us that "We have sold by mail a compact electronic dice substitute for nearly three years." Benjamin Jones, the owner of Britton Designs, sent a letter about two weeks after that to refute the reviewer's claim that his (the reviewer's) conception of the ideal game board was "not commercially available" (the reviewer's words). His company markets a product which, in Mr. Jones's estimation, fulfills all the criteria the reviewer described.

If you're keeping score, give us two demerits. We never should have published *anything* that carried the label "one-of-a-kind," and we never should have allowed a blanket statement like "not commercially available" to be printed, because (at least in this case) we had no way of knowing for sure that those statements were accurate. The world of the gaming industry, as small as it may be compared to other "universes," is still way too big for any writer or any magazine to cover in maximum depth and detail.

Well, we've learned our lesson. If and when we have an opportunity to purchase and publish a review of this sort again, we either *won't* print it at all, or we'll make sure that it's worded to allow for the possibility that we (and the writer) don't have all the facts at our disposal.

Companies can do what they want in advertising their products. They have a right and a responsibility — within the bounds of truthfulness — to make their merchandise sound as attractive as they can. (I cringe every time I see the phrase "most unique," but that isn't going to stop people from using it.) But this is a magazine that tries to be even-handed and objective, and one that — except for an occasional slip-up — demands the same qualities in the articles it prints. An opinion is, by definition, subjective. But that doesn't mean it can't, and shouldn't, be fair.

Anyone who wants to know more about Hco's electronic dice substitute can write to Mr. Haywood at Box 455, Sandy UT 84091. For information about the Elysian Field grid board, contact Britton Designs, 5131 Blackstone Ave., Chicago IL 60615. And just for the heck of it, tell 'em you read about it in DRAGON® Magazine, that one-of-a-kind gaming publication.





Some people don't like to read a trilogy of novels until all of them have been printed. If you're that kind of a person, then you now have all you need to embark on the search for *The Two-fold Talisman*. The second and final installment of this AD&D® game tournament adventure, entitled "The Ebon Stone," is this issue's special inclusion.

This month's cover painting comes to you through the imagination and coordination of Susan Collins. She calls it "The Innocent Power," and it's a remarkable change from her last cover painting, which appeared exactly a year ago.

At the start of our feature section is "The cleric collection." We decided it was time to spend some space on those poor people who have to lug around holy symbols and always have someone (or some thing) looking over their shoulders. Roger Moore and yours truly put together two of the pieces, and Fraser Sherman contributed a thought-provoking treatise that we call "Clerics must be deity-bound."

It's possible for more than one writer to successfully execute the same idea. As proof of that phenomenon, we offer "Three cheers for Beowulf." The legendary hero is described in *essentially* the same terms by three different authors, all of whom worked independently of each other and turned in their manuscripts within a short time span.

And as further proof, turn to the review section to see how our two newest contributing editors evaluated the new game *Warhammer*. In the context of the topic of his column (combat in fantasy games), Ken Rolston gave it a pretty favorable analysis. Katherine Kerr, viewing it as a new entry in the role-playing game market, had some less laudatory things to say.

Ed Greenwood, the veteran among our contributing editors, adds to his output of ecology articles with this issue's examination of the *ixtchahitl* — a critter that makes the piranha look like a nice guy. Mike Gray, our expert on the play-by-mail scene, suggests that all too often, the "P" in PBM stands for "problems" — and then proceeds to tell what's being done to change that fact.

The two pieces of fiction in this issue — "Valkyrie Settlement" and "A Stone's Throw Away" — are about as different from each other as different can be, but they both portray characters who find themselves victimized by circumstances — and, like good characters tend to do, they end up making the best of things.

The leadoff article in this month's ARES™ section marks the first appearance in this magazine of a feature on the STAR TREK™ role-playing game, a logical deduction by designer Dale Kemper of what the moon would be like in that gaming environment. We're sure that even Mr. Spock would find it . . . fascinating. — KM



## Copyright questions

Dear Dragon,

I have a question on the copyrights of your magazine and AD&D materials in general. There have been several articles in DRAGON Magazine that can be used in conjunction with other articles or parts of the AD&D rule books. I would like to know if I can take such materials and combine them into tables of my own creation for my own use. This would save wear and tear on my magazines.

Also, can I use the material in the magazine or rule books to write my own computer programs? A computer can take a lot of the dice rolling out of creating a dungeon. I would appreciate an answer so I do not infringe on your rights.

Howard Hill  
Akron, Ohio

*First of all, Howard, thanks for asking. Second of all, I don't think there's any reason why you can't do what you're asking to do. The important phrase in each of your requests is "my own," and here's why:*

*You are not in violation of copyright laws as long as what you do with copyrighted information is for your personal use. You can rearrange charts and tables or other material and keep it in a different form, as long as you don't give those tables and notes to someone else or (worse yet) try to sell them for your own benefit. You can use the information from the game or the magazine in a computer program of your own devising, as long as you abide by the same rules. — KM*

## Monks and wimps

Dear Editor:

I have a question about "How to finish fights faster" (issue #83). On the kicking table, it says that fighters can kick twice per round and other classes can kick once. My question is, what about monks? Since monks have trained themselves to use their body as a weapon (their hand attacks), wouldn't they get multiple attacks with kicks?

Kenneth Guge  
Shell Beach, Calif.

Dear Folks:

My DM and I welcome the unarmed combat rules in issue #83; however, there is one aspect which I believe to be an unintentional advantage for weaker characters. Under the kicking rules, a Knockdown occurs "any time the maximum possible damage is rolled on an attack." This means that an attacker with strength 3-5 who kicks will always roll maximum damage (1 point, with possible additions) and an attacker with strength 18-24 who kicks will only roll maximum damage 25% of the time (on a d4). There are several ways to deal with the situation (such as always using a d4 for knockdown chance), but it seemed appropriate to write this letter in the public interest of characters with 18+ strength who

don't like their faces kicked in the sand by wimps.

Wayland B. Augur  
Chico, Calif.

*Show me a set of rules that aren't in need of some fine tuning after publication, and I'll show you a set of rules that haven't been published yet. Roger Moore, who designed the unarmed combat system described in the article, offers these comments and alterations.*

*On the monk question: "I've usually assumed that monks could interchange hand and foot attacks. Maybe they can divide up to half their weaponless attacks per round for foot attacks; add +1 to damage for kick attacks. Monks don't get a -1 penalty to hit for barefoot kicks, but must use armor class modifiers like everyone else."*

*And, try this for a new, improved knockdown rule: "A character with strength of 18 or above will automatically knock down an opponent if maximum damage is scored on a kicking attack. A character with strength 16 or 17 has a 50% chance of making a knockdown on a maximum-damage (3 hp) kick attack. A character with strength of 6 through 15 has a 25% chance of making a knockdown on a maximum-damage (2 hp) kick attack, and a character with strength of less than 6 cannot score a knockdown."*

## Missing material

Dear Editor,

"Living in a material world" (issue #81) is great. One problem, though: Footnote #13 mentions "a pineal gland from a human" but looking back through the list of materials I could not find the pineal gland listed. What listing is this supposed to refer to?

Alan Brown  
Farmington Hills, Mich.

*We goofed — somehow, the listing for the pineal gland component was deleted from the printed version of the article. To fix the mistake, insert this text between "Pine tar" and "Pins, silver" on page 63:*

*Pineal gland from human or humanoid creature" (Rare, 250 gp/ea.): Alchemist, magic shop, physician.*

*For the record, this is the material component for the 3rd-level M-U spell clairvoyance. — KM*

## Hut, two, three

Dear Dragon,

I was impressed with "The Dancing Hut" (issue #83), but was left with a few questions after reading it.

Where is the descriptive paragraph in the key regarding room E in area 15? And, on the map to area 21, where do G and H belong? For purposes of determining the existence of the "chicken

track" brand, is a gem of seeing considered a divinatory spell?

Rick Hartley  
Bordentown, N.J.

*In room 21, the area of G is centered in the 20x20 space containing the staircase leading to room 30. The space that should be marked H is the other 20x20 area near door D. These letters were mistakenly left off the map. In room 15, area E was purposely not detailed; there are several other such places in the complex (in rooms 17 and 24, for instance), where spaces are letter-keyed but not developed. These can be "customized" by individual DMs, if so desired. And yes, using a gem of seeing will brand a character just like any other form of divinatory magic. - K M*

## Character change

Dear Editor:

In "The Twofold Talisman" tournament module (#84), a half-elf cleric/ranger is listed as a 6th level cleric. In the Players Handbook, it says a half-elf can only get to 5th level as a cleric. Is this a misprint?

Peter T. Brown  
Joseph City, Ariz.

*Yep, it sure was. The mistake has been fixed in the character sheets, which are published again in this issue with the second part of the adventure. To bring character #2 into accordance with the rules, we made it a 5th-level cleric, dropped the number of 3rd-level spells from 3 to 2, and altered the "turn undead" scores to correspond to those of a 5th-level cleric. — KM*

## Up on a limb?

Dear Dragon,

Number 36 on the list of new familiars to find (issue #84) lists the squirrel as having a movement of 12". Where is the movement rate for traveling in trees? Also, the Monster Manual II lists the squirrel as having no movement rate in trees. Why not?

Scott Ziegler  
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

*Only one reason we can think of: The squirrel travels at the same speed whether it's in a tree or not, so there's no reason to make a distinction between the two movement modes. — KM*

## Stamp substitute

Dear Editor:

How can those of us who live in Canada obtain articles or information which require a stamped self-addressed envelope? How should these be mailed from the United States with Canadian stamps? Is there an alternative we can use to receive this information? I would appreciate getting a copy of the guidelines for submitting an article, but how do I get it without a U.S. stamped self-addressed envelope?

Donald R. Hoffman  
Vernon, B.C., Canada

*As far as we know, every post office in Canada and the U.S. offers for sale something called an International Reply Coupon — a certificate you can buy for the price of a stamp and then enclose in your letter to us. Then we redeem the coupon*

*in this country slap a U.S. stamp on the letter back to you, and everybody's even. — KM*

## Random familiars

Dear Editor:

The article on familiars (issue #84) contains a simple but serious mistake. In presenting the table, the author suggested that the player roll 2d20 to choose his familiar. But he placed the creatures in alphabetical order; in other words, he expected the player to have an equal chance to get any familiar on the list. This is not true. The creatures toward the middle of the list have a higher likelihood of being chosen by a roll of 2d20, making the kinkajou the most common familiar in the group.

This can be solved by rolling a d4 to determine the tens column and then rolling a d10 for the ones column. This will give you a purely random result between 1 and 40.

Kevin Hasker  
Huntington, Ind.

*I like it when people not only point out a mistake but also offer a solution for the problem; it saves me the trouble of thinking it up and writing it out. Thanks, Kevin.*

*But I can't help thinking of another way to deal with the difficulty. The animals don't have to be in alphabetical order; a DM could arrange potential familiars in any order designed to give a higher probability to certain animals, and then still roll 2d20 for the determination. And, by the way, Kevin's d4/d10 method won't work in all cases, unless you rearrange the table slightly so that there's an entry that corresponds to a dice-roll result of 1. — KM*

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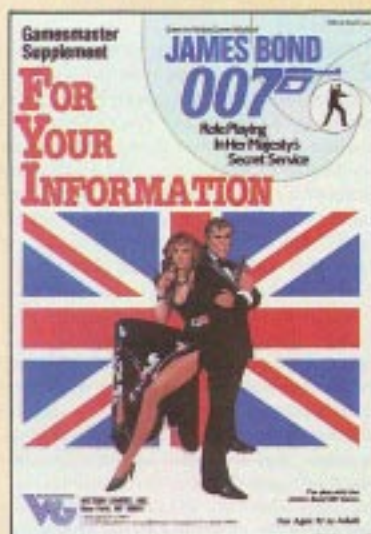
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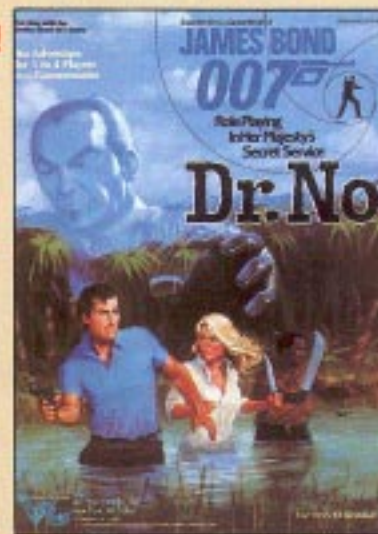
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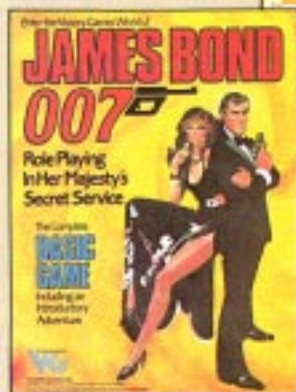
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# The forum

## Opinions and observations

Issue #81 was great, but I take exception to an article that I have always considered my favorite: the game reviews. Ken Rolston is generally a very good reviewer, but here I think he gave too much away concerning the scenarios.

"Call of Cthulhu" is a game which must have almost complete secrecy. Things such as revealing the deity (Cthulhu) or telling that there is an exploding door and a shoggoth in scenario two does not work well in this game system (or any other, for that matter). Giving away important facts takes away the horror from the scenarios.

"Ravenloft" was not such a giveaway, but I still think some fun will be taken out of the scenario. I know I won't have as much fun as I would have now that I've read the review.

In further issues, review either new games or supplements — but please don't give away hints like shoggoths and death traps. Reviews are needed to express a writer's opinion (a well valued one); however, reviews should not give away plots or hints. Ken Rolston is an excellent writer — but this time maybe he wrote just a bit too much.

Jon Paulson  
River Falls, Wis.

### Mr. Rolston's response:

Jon,

It's difficult to make public judgments without citing specific examples. I have to balance the damage of revealing one or two plot elements against the virtue of communicating and substantiating my judgment for the reader.

I agree with you that where the element of suspense is critical, details should not be revealed. I even agree that the specific references in the review of *Shadows of Yog-Sothoth* should have been less explicit.

I propose one possible solution to this problem, subject to the editor's approval. In future adventure reviews I will warn readers when I'm about to discuss specific adventure details. ("Warning: The following explicit discussion of plot elements may diminish a player's pleasure if he anticipates participating in this adventure.") I also suggest that such explicit discussions of plot elements be printed in italics, to make it easier for the reader to skip sections that he wants to avoid. [Editor's note: Sounds like it's worth a try]

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. Review readers should regularly give reviewers feedback on the usefulness of their reviews. Writers address an invisible and inaudible audience as they sit typing their articles. To see and hear what you have to say helps us directly address the needs of our reading audience.

Ken Rolston  
Tabor, N. J.

\* \* \*

In February's *Forum*, Nicki Perdue wrote to disagree with some of the facts presented in my article, "Who Lives in That Castle?" She made the surprising claim that rather than living on the edge of starvation, medieval serfs were very well-fed. Where, I wonder, did she find such information, which runs counter to all accepted historical research? Readers who want the truth of the matter can refer to the sources listed at the end of my article or to any textbook of medieval life.

Perhaps she is confusing the serfs, carefully defined in my article as peasant farmers tied to the land, with the free farmers — the English yeomen or the allod-holders of Germany and south France. Even those people, however, lived much hungrier than we like to imagine. As late as the 18th century, the peasants were always short of food. The historian Robert Darnton remarked in a recent essay: "To eat one's fill, eat until the exhaustion of the appetite, was the principal pleasure that the peasants dangled before their imagination, and one that they rarely realized in their lives."

I realize that it's painful for us modern Americans to think of a world where the great did mighty deeds and the poor paid for them with back-breaking work and hunger. It rather takes the bloom off the romantic and glorious Middle Ages. In our fantasy gaming worlds, there's no reason why every peasant can't be a free farmer, lightly taxed and well-fed. They certainly are in mine! We must, however, separate our fantasies from historical fact.

Katharine Kerr  
San Francisco, Calif.

\* \* \*

Edward Masters' recent letter on the elemental planes (*Forum*, issue #84) is based on some very fundamental misconceptions about physics as well as other things.

First of all, the elemental planes can be *infinite* while still remaining *bounded*. An analogy for this would be in mathematics, where an interval between two points contains an infinite number of points. Thus, while one elemental plane is bounded by its bordering neighbors, it is still infinite in scope. Such is probably the case with our own infinite universe, which most cosmologists believe to be bounded.

Second, there is no such thing as a "center of gravity" as Mr. Masters tries to apply the term. Gravity is a warp in space caused by mass. Thus, as has been experimentally proven, any object with mass tends to warp space around it. For example, if you were in an ideal environment where you were the only mass around and some object of less mass, say a toothpick, were brought into that environment, it would immediately be drawn toward you due to your gravitational field. The only reason that things like this don't occur on earth is that the earth's own mass far surpasses that of anything on it. Mr. Masters' example of water forming into spheres is due to the very fact that water molecules, which possess mass, warp the space around them so that other molecules are "pulled" toward them. These molecules form spheres as opposed to other shapes because a sphere is the most economical shape possible, as all points on its surface are equidistant from its center. Thus, a plane consisting almost exclusively of water would not be "an endless expanse of water spheres floating around" but rather one huge sphere of water. Of course, anyone on the plane could not possibly appreciate the plane's spherical shape, just as one walking down the street tends not to notice the curvature of the earth. (If he did, Columbus wouldn't have had to leave his home port to prove anything.)

Also, a traveler on the elemental planes would not be crushed by infinite amounts of water or

air. First of all, a large mass of gas or liquid under pressure becomes more dense. Thus, near the center of a plane, the "elements" (water and air, in this case) would condense into a substance adequate to stand on, as is probably the case in gas giant planets like Jupiter. Further, near infinite amounts of mass and great pressure might even create a fusion reaction at the very center of a plane, thus making a sun to warm and light the entire plane.

While it is true that the pressure this close to the center of a plane might be too much for an ordinary human to take, there is no reason why anyone need fall that far. The elemental planes obviously contain other things besides their elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Why, the planes of air and fire alone must be littered with chunks of djinn and efreet metals. A relatively small chunk of rock, say the size of the earth (remember we're dealing with entire universes here, so we must think big), would function in about the same manner as a planet on the planes of water or air. It would orbit around the bright center of the plane, making one revolution every few billion years or so. In fact, it might even have an adequate air envelope around it that would function as an atmosphere. Of course, instead of an airless void as a space between planets, there would be water or air or fire or earth.

Finally, while Mr. Masters condemns DMs who assign the elemental planes spatial value as using the faulty argument that these planes don't have to make sense, he is guilty of the same practice. A non-spatial concept of the elemental planes may allow for creatures like elementals, but it certainly rules out positively spatial beings like the efreet, the djinn, and the host of others in the *Monster Manual II*. If the elemental plane of fire has no space, then the existence of the aforementioned entities is ruled out, as well as the existence of places like the City of Brass. Mr. Masters makes a mistake all too common to DMs: he revokes rules that at first glance don't please him, instead of reasoning things out *within* the official AD&D rules. To do so is to throw out the baby with the bath water, or, more appropriately, to throw the efreet out with the elemental plane of fire.

Jeffrey Carey  
Chicago, Ill.

\* \* \*

In response to John Lester's letter (*Forum*, #83), I think we should remember that there are substances that human skin offers almost no resistance to. The most famous one was described on "60 Minutes" about a year ago — the wonder substance DMSO. This is a liquid that not only enters the skin without any feeling, but also will carry with it any other substance that is on the skin or suspended in the DMSO.

Another thing that enters the skin and cannot be felt is nitric acid. This substance eats the nerve endings so that there is no feeling where it entered; it is noticeable, though, because it leaves a yellow stain on the skin.

Not only is it possible for certain liquids to enter the skin, it has happened and will continue to happen, without even considering magic.

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# The cleric collection



*Three ways to give the class more flash*



# Here's to your health

## Second thoughts on first aid in the AD&D® game

by Kim Mohan

*Cure* spells are the most important form of magic in the AD&D® game universe. Now, any character who disagrees with that can hold up his hand, if he has the strength — and if he still has a hand.

It's hard to imagine an adventuring character who has never needed and received some sort of healing or curing spell. Many adventurers wouldn't be alive today but for the grace of a friendly cleric who literally lent a helping hand at the right time. That doesn't necessarily make clerics more important than any other character class (I won't dare try to tackle *that* subject), but it does make clerics and druids special and distinctive because of their ability to offset the ravages of damage.

Unfortunately, it's human nature (or demi-human nature, if you prefer) for characters and players to take important things for granted. (Need a cure? Sure!) And that's not necessarily *bad* — for the sake of the game, things ought to proceed simply and smoothly. You don't have to know how a *cure* spell works in order for your character to give or receive one. But a little bit of understanding, served up as a side dish instead of a main course, may make the whole concept easier to digest. And that's what this article is all about — examining the *cure* spells so that we can get a clearer picture of the ideas and forces that shape the fantasy world that we all spend so much time in.

### How cure magic works

Why does curing and healing magic work the way it does? If the magical universe is governed by “laws of nature” just as the non-magical universe is, then what are the processes that influence the operation of the *cure wounds* spells, *heal*, *restoration*, *regenerate*, and their two cousins, *cure disease* and *cure blindness*?

All except the latter two are classified as necromantic spells. The dictionary defines “necromancy” as “conjuration of the spirits of the dead for the purpose of. . . influencing the course of events.” In the case of the necromantic *cure* spells, “dead” doesn't mean dead bodies, but rather dead *parts* of bodies — as represented (in game terms) by lost hit points. Maybe there's some sort of cosmic “hit point bank” where lost points are stored, later to be withdrawn by the caster of a *cure* spell and applied to the recipient. This bank would also include life energy that could be drawn upon for the casting of *restoration*, and energy used by the *regenerate* spell for the replenishment and revival of lost body parts.

When a character or creature takes dam-

age or dies, his “life energy” is deposited in the bank. When someone or something is cured, healed, or resurrected, the spell caster (through his magic) makes a withdrawal from the bank and is able to resupply the recipient with some of his lost energy — or perhaps all of it, up to the point where the recipient has regained full strength and health and has reached equilibrium. When this state of equilibrium is attained, the recipient can't gain any more energy until and unless his level or hit dice goes up (which is sort of like improving your credit rating). This is why a *cure* spell can never bestow more hit points upon a recipient than he had to begin with.

The *cure light wounds* spell description specifically excludes certain types of creatures from being affected by the spell (or its reverse), and the reasons for these exceptions are fairly easy to fathom. Non-corporeal creatures can't be cured of wounds because they can't be touched, and the touch is obviously necessary in order for the transfer of energy to take place. Creatures that are already dead can't be cured simply because the magic isn't strong enough; the energy needed to bring someone back from death is much more potent than, and perhaps even different in nature from, the energy needed to heal a still-living body.

Creatures that can be harmed only by iron, silver, and/or magical weapons can't be cured because of their magical nature; it seems that the life energy of magical creatures is different from the life energy of normal creatures (such as characters) and isn't drawn from the same “bank.” Obviously, though, the necromantic *cure* spells can offset damage caused by magical means — what matters is the being that was wounded, not the way the wounds were administered.

As the *cure* spells rise in level, they increase in the amount of damage and the type of damage they can negate. The three *cure wounds* spells are good against “normal” damage. They may also be useful for certain specific applications; for instance, *cure serious wounds* will restore the recipient's skin to normal after he has suffered the “slime attack” of an aboleth's tentacles. (And, presumably, *cure critical wounds* would work as well.) The *heal* spell also fixes disease, blindness, and certain kinds of mental disorders (such as many types of *insanity*, the *idiocy* that can result from defeat in psionic combat, and the effects of spells like *feeblemind* and *forget*). The *restoration* spell cures “any and all forms of insanity” (according to the DMG) in addi-

tion to its primary function of restoring (hence the name) lost life energy levels. The *regenerate* spell, although it doesn't specifically replenish lost hit points or life energy, allows the recipient to become whole again (bringing him closer to his personal state of equilibrium) by reattaching or regrowing severed extremities.

One of the biggest differences between *restoration* and the lower-level necromantic *cure* spells is that *restoration* can work on a recipient who has been reduced to a negative experience-point total, as noted in the DMG description of the *book of exalted deeds*. In contrast, a *cure wounds* spell doesn't have its normal effect on a recipient with zero or negative hit points; all it can do is stop the unconscious recipient from losing any more hit points from the effects of his present condition. A character who is brought back from the brink of death by a *cure wounds* spell can't regain any hit points from *cure wounds* for at least a week thereafter — but a *heal* spell is powerful enough to work in its usual manner once the character regains consciousness.

The point of all that is this: It is certainly worthwhile for a cure-minded cleric to pray for the higher-level *cure* spells (*heal*, in particular) when he is eligible to receive them, because the difference in what they can do is more than just a difference in quantity. An 11th-level cleric with a wisdom of 17 who's being counted on as the party's first-aid kit could carry as many as seven *cure light wounds* spells at once (if his deity will allow it), giving him the ability to heal a whole lot of hit points — but he'd be well advised to pray for *heal*, too, because it can do a lot of things besides “just” restore hit points, and in some cases that might mean the difference between life and death.

### The “other” cures

*Cure blindness* and *cure disease* are obviously related to the necromantic *cure* spells, but they are properly classed as abjuration magic because of what they do and how they do it. The word “abjure” means “reject” or “avoid,” so that abjuration spells are those that allow the beneficiary to avoid something (as in a *protection* spell) or to expel or counteract something, as in *cure disease* and *cure blindness*.

Neither of these latter two spells is used to make a withdrawal from the “life energy bank,” because the effects of blindness and disease are not defined in concrete terms that can be equated to hit points and energy levels. They don't necessarily heal physical damage, and this is particularly true of *cure blindness*: the spell “will not restore lost

visual organs," according to the DMG. A character whose eyes are injured or lost would probably need *regenerate*, *heal*, or a *cure wounds* spell (depending on the severity of the injury), followed in most cases by a *cure blindness* to enable the repaired or replaced organs to function properly again.

The *cure disease* spell seems to have fewer restrictions on its use than *cure blindness*. The spell description says it's good against "most diseases" but doesn't specify which diseases it can't cure. Because it's only a third-level spell, we can assume it's no good against the "disease" of insanity, which isn't curable by anything less than a *heal* or *restoration*. Its use seems to be limited to physiological diseases rather than psychological ones, but within that realm, there's little that *cure disease* won't cure. In addition to the "normal" diseases listed in the DMG, it removes or negates the disease-causing effects of monsters, with a few specifically noted exceptions such as the lignification effect caused by a barkburr and the fatal disease caused by the touch of the oinodaemon Anthraxus. Also worth noting is the fact that *cure disease* will not restore ability-score points that were lost from the effects of a disease; a *heal* spell may serve to do this in some cases, or even stronger magic (like a *wish*) might be necessary.

#### Deity's discretion

The Dungeon Master has a lot of responsibility when it comes to moderating and guiding the actions of cleric player-characters, because the DM must play the role of the cleric's deity. Concerning the acquisition and use of *cure* spells, the DM must deal with two important issues: How many *cure* spells can the cleric carry at one time, and *exactly* how do those spells work? The resolutions of both issues are matters of judgment — there are not, and shouldn't be, any rules to govern the situations.

Technically, a cleric can pray for as many *cure* spells, including duplicates, as the character is entitled to carry based on his level and his wisdom score. How many he actually obtains at any given time depends on the character's (and player's) preference, coupled with the deity's (DM's) assessment of whether his worshiper's request is reason-

able. A deity whose sphere of influence is healing and curing will probably give a cleric as many curative spells as he asks for — or more! — and might even require that the cleric overload his spell selections with cures. At the other extreme, a deity who disdains healing and favors aggressive action from his worshipers might forbid a cleric to carry cure spells at all, even if they were intended for the cleric's personal use. The DM's judgment might also be tempered by his foreknowledge of what awaits the cleric and the cleric's party in the upcoming adventure: If it's going to be necessary for the party to take on one or more powerful adversaries in combat, the cleric might be tipped off by getting an abundance of healing and curing magic. If the mission is more of a mental exercise than a physical test, and combat is unlikely or inadvisable, the cleric might not get all the *cure* spells he asks for. The circumstances, and the DM's evaluation of them, will dictate what judgments the deity makes.

Each casting of a *cure wounds* spell or a *heal* spell will enable the recipient to recover a variable number of lost hit points. Should the caster or the recipient, or both, be able to know immediately how many points were regained? (In other words, who rolls the dice — the player of the cleric, or the DM?)

Again, it's a matter of judgment or circumstance. In some campaigns, the players may not be entitled to know exactly how many hit points their characters have at any

point while the adventure is going on, so obviously any "cure rolls" will be made in secret by the DM. This makes things tougher on a cleric who's carrying multiple *cure* spells: Will one, or two, be enough, or should he dash off three or four in rapid-fire fashion to get the party's best fighter back to peak condition? And what if one *was* enough after all, meaning that the others were wasted?

The DM can take a middle-ground approach, not revealing how many points were cured until after the player of the cleric indicates that he won't use any more *cure* spells for the time being. And if the player then goes back on his word after finding out that his cure(s) didn't work as well as he would have liked, the DM could rule that any *cure* cast after that time and before any party member takes more damage will be penalized by (for instance) a -1 or -2 modifier to the die roll for a *cure light wounds* spell, so that it might not work at all!

#### The careful cure shopper

The various curing/healing magics are among the cleric spells listed in the DMG with suggested costs to a purchaser for having them cast by a non-player character cleric. An examination of the prices reveals no great surprises, but at least one fact that's interesting: If the DM adheres to the suggested costs, a *cure critical wounds* spell is a pretty good bargain compared to *cure serious wounds*.

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There's a substantial difference in the cost-per-point-cured figures of *cure light wounds* and *cure serious wounds*. The lower-level spell costs 100 gp and cures 4½ hit points, on the average, for a CPPC of just over 22 gp. *Cure serious wounds* costs 350 gp and heals an average of 10 hit points per casting, or 35 gp per point. But *cure critical wounds* can be had for a mere 600 gp, and it heals an average of 16½ points for a cost of about 36½ gp per point — not increasing in cost nearly as much as one might expect. If a single casting of either spell is available for the suggested price, a mid-level character who can afford the more expensive *cure critical wounds* should take it; the difference in price is minimal — and compared to the potential benefit, *cure critical* might even be a bargain. But if the same character can line up two castings of *cure serious* for 700 gp, then that's probably the way to go, assuming that he needs at least 15 hit points or so to get back to full strength.

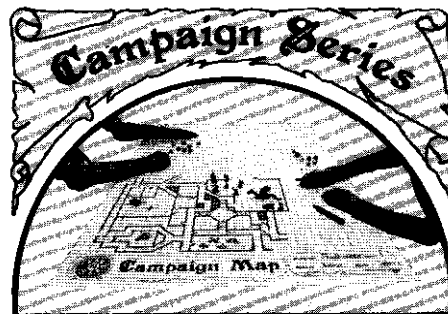
No matter how you look at it, a *heal* spell is terribly expensive at 200 gp per hit point healed. But if one is available, it may be the only option for a moderately high-level character if multiple *cure wounds* spells of any strength are not also available. Magic items that cure or heal are generally much more expensive on a points-healed-per-use basis, unless a character is somehow able to pick one up at a fraction of the recommended gold piece sale value (although

potions of *healing* and *extra-healing* would probably be fairly easy to afford); the big advantage of magic items, of course, is that they're portable and don't have to be used right away.

#### Better than bandages

Magic isn't the only way to heal or cure characters' ailments; the rules of the AD&D® game contain several references to non-magical methods of getting patched up — binding wounds and simply resting to regain lost hit points are two of the more obvious. In a sophisticated and detailed campaign, other avenues are open, such as the use of plants and herbs that help healing (as described in "Wounds and weeds," DRAGON® issue #82).

But the game sure wouldn't be the same if healing and curing magic didn't exist: What character in his right mind would risk life, limb, and the pursuit of wealthiness without the opportunity to get promptly paid back for the hit points he devoted to the cause? Adventuring would become an occupation for the cautious, and for those with more hit points than hairs on their heads — and how would someone get that many hit points without going on frequent and perilous adventures so as to rise quickly in experience levels? It is said that the meek will inherit the earth, and quite possibly that will happen. But if the meek ever inherit the AD&D universe, the game will die a lot sooner than they will.



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# Special skills, special thrills

## Varying powers helps avoid cleric stereotypes

by Roger E. Moore

Clerics make a rather bland bunch in AD&D® game campaigns. Regardless of the religions they practice, they all get the same spells and have the same abilities. A cleric of Thor has little to distinguish him, in game terms, from a cleric of Set or from a cleric of Zeus. True, the Clerical Quick Reference Charts in the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopedia add some usable material, for clerics who worship those deities. But why stop there? Why, for instance, can't the priests of a god of fire use more fire spells?

In Gary Gyga's articles on the deities of Greyhawk (printed in DRAGON® Magazines #67-71 and in the new WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ Fantasy Game Setting), special powers and abilities that clerics of certain gods received as a result of their worship were introduced. Some clerics were given new spell powers or offensive abilities, while others were able to borrow magical or technical skills usually associated with other character classes due to the spheres of influence their gods controlled. For instance:

At 11th level, clerics of Heironeous gain one *bolt of energy* per week. The bolt itself is not magical, although some special power is involved in drawing the energy from the Positive Material Plane. The bolt does 5d6 damage to natives of the Prime Material Plane; 5d4 to beings from the Elemental Planes, Limbo, or Nirvana; 10d6 to undead or those from the Lower (evil-aligned) Planes; 15d6 to other creatures (not including undead) from the Negative Material Plane; and no damage to those from the Upper (good-aligned) Planes or the Positive Material Plane. The bolt has a range of 70 feet, takes one segment to aim and discharge, and always hits its target.

At 6th level, clerics of Hextor gain the abilities of a 1st level assassin, and then improve one level of assassin's ability for every two levels gained as a cleric thereafter until 16th level, when they reach the maximum of 6th-level assassin ability.

Each cleric who worships St. Cuthbert is a member of one of three sects. One group can cast a *friends* spell once per day starting at 2nd level; the second can use a *shillelagh* spell starting at 3rd level; and the third can cast *ESP* once per day starting at 4th level.

Clerics of Celestian can gain up to seven special spells gradually between 1st and 16th level, starting with *feather fall* and continuing with *jump*, *levitate*, *spider climb*, *fly*, *dimension door*, and *teleport*.

Clerics of Olidammara can hide in shadows as well as a thief of one level lower in ability. (Presumably, this ability is gained starting at 2nd level.) They also get the

musical skills of a bard at various levels, and may use *change self* at 8th and higher levels as an illusionist of equal level.

In the new WORLD OF GREYHAWK Glossography, some of the powers given to clerics were modified from the way they were stated in the magazine articles. In these modified versions, clerics are required to "pay" an experience-point penalty, ranging from 5% to 15% of the total XPs needed to go from one level to the next, to acquire the special powers.

This is one possible way to balance the effect of giving clerics access to such powers, though one may argue that some of the penalties are too severe or not severe enough. However, the idea of having special powers granted to a deity's clerics is very appealing. It makes every cleric different and special in some way, and adds more meaning to the role of clerics in general.

The awarding of special abilities may be balanced by means other than increasing the number of experience points required for advancement. Some religions may restrict the number and types of clerical spells their priests may receive, while some might require tithes, quests, sacrifices, or services of a special nature. The armor, weapons, and equipment that a cleric is permitted to carry or use may also be restricted or modified; in many cases such restrictions already exist and are noted in the game books, particularly the DDG book.

A list of suggested clerical powers, along with restrictions that can be used to balance them, is presented below. If this material is adopted into a campaign, the DM may create a series of adventures in which the clerics of his world learn that the gods are about to gift them with special abilities not before available. However, clerics may be required to perform quests in order to prove themselves worthy of these new powers. Great power struggles may develop across the land as the gods take a larger hand in the affairs of mortal beings.

Only a few of the pantheons from the DDG are dealt with here, and not all the deities from each of those pantheons are included. Druidic and neutral deities are not mentioned; there is still some uncertainty and disagreement as to whether or not neutral clerics can exist (but, after all, *someone* has to worship neutral gods . . . ).

Also included is material on the gods of the elven, orcish, and ogrish religions from the DDG book and from the Best of DRAGON® Magazine Anthology, Volume III, because player-character clerics may be half-elves, half-orcs, or (using the variant

published in DRAGON Magazine #73) half-ogres. Members of such races would not be restricted to any racial religion, though a non-human cleric would be equally likely to follow a non-human religion as a human one.

### Egyptian mythos

Ra: Clerics of this deity cannot use any *darkness* spells, but upon reaching the 11th level they gain the power to cast a *sunbeam* from their hands once per week. A *sunbeam* has a range of 1" per level of the cleric, a one-segment casting time and instantaneous duration. Only a verbal component is required. The *sunbeam* affects only one creature and does 4d10 points damage (save vs. spells for half damage).

Anhur: Clerics of Anhur are often dual-classed, with initial experience as a fighter or ranger. All clerics of this god are permitted to use edged weapons of any sort upon achieving the 9th level of experience; however, they can never gain proficiency with such weapons and must always use them at a -3 penalty "to hit" (unless proficiency with the weapon was gained earlier when the cleric was a fighter or ranger). These clerics are further restricted to wearing only leather armor.

Anubis: In this sect, clerics are forbidden to use a *raise dead* or *resurrection* spell without consulting their deity through a *commune* spell first (and getting an affirmative answer). They can wear no armor, but magical defenses and devices may be used. In return, these clerics gain a base 5% chance to recognize thieves and assassins on sight. This chance increases by 5% per level after the 1st level. In addition, they receive a +1 to hit and damage those they recognize as thieves or assassins, from their righteous rage.

Bast: As noted in the DDG book, all clerics of Bast gain a +1 bonus to hit and damage when battling snakes. They will also not be attacked by cats of any sort, unless they transgress against their religion or attack the cats first (which is a transgression in itself).

Isis: Clerics of this goddess may use all magical wands, staves, and rods as a magic-user or cleric (whichever is more favorable) upon reaching 9th level. They can wear no armor at all, however, and can't use shields.

Seker: Clerics of Seker have increased powers to turn or destroy undead; count 5-12 (d8 + 4) undead turned instead of 1-12 on the "turn-away" table, or 9-12 instead of 7-12 (where applicable). At 11th level, these clerics also gain the power to cast a *lightbolt* from their hands once per day. This magical



bolt has a range of 6", takes one segment to cast, and affects only a single undead creature per casting. The undead being takes 3-30 points of damage with no saving throw allowed; magic resistance will help, however. Only verbal and somatic components are needed.

#### Elven mythos

Half-elf player-character clerics, either single-classed or multi-classed, generally gain special powers when they achieve the maximum level(s) possible in the class(es) they operate in. The special powers are balanced by the prohibition on any further progression. These powers are still fairly limited and tend to vary depending on what alternate classes (if any) the cleric has.

**Corellon Larethian:** Half-elves who follow Corellon's ways are almost always multi-classed, most of them as cleric/rangers. They must take the longbow and longsword as weapons if they have a fighter-type alternate class. Cleric/rangers and cleric/fighters gain the power to cast an *enchanted weapon* spell once per day when they reach the maximum level of ability in both classes; the spell will function as if cast by a magic-user of 7th level. Cleric/magic-users and "pure" clerics can learn to use the longsword when they reach maximum level(s). Cleric/fighter/magic-users who achieve maximum levels in all classes obtain the ability to track as a ranger.

**Aerdrie Faenya:** Clerical followers of the goddess of the air are usually cleric/fighters or cleric/magic-users. Cleric/fighters, cleric/rangers, and "pure" clerics gain the ability to cast a *feather fall* spell once per day when they attain 5th level as a cleric. When a cleric/fighter, cleric/ranger, or "pure" cleric attains maximum levels in all classes, the character receives the power to cast a *fly* or *gust of wind* spell once per week (character's choice, one or the other gained permanently). Cleric/magic-users will get an improved version of the *fly* spell upon reaching maximum levels, without checking for their chance to know it (according to intelligence). With this special spell, they will always get an extra 6 turns (instead of 1-6) on the spell's duration. This special *fly* spell will replace the regular version of the spell in the character's repertoire if the character already had already learned it; otherwise, it counts as an "extra" spell, over and above the usual limit specified for the character's intelligence. Cleric/fighter/magic-users will gain both the *feather fall* spell (if it is not already known) and the special *fly* spell when appropriate.

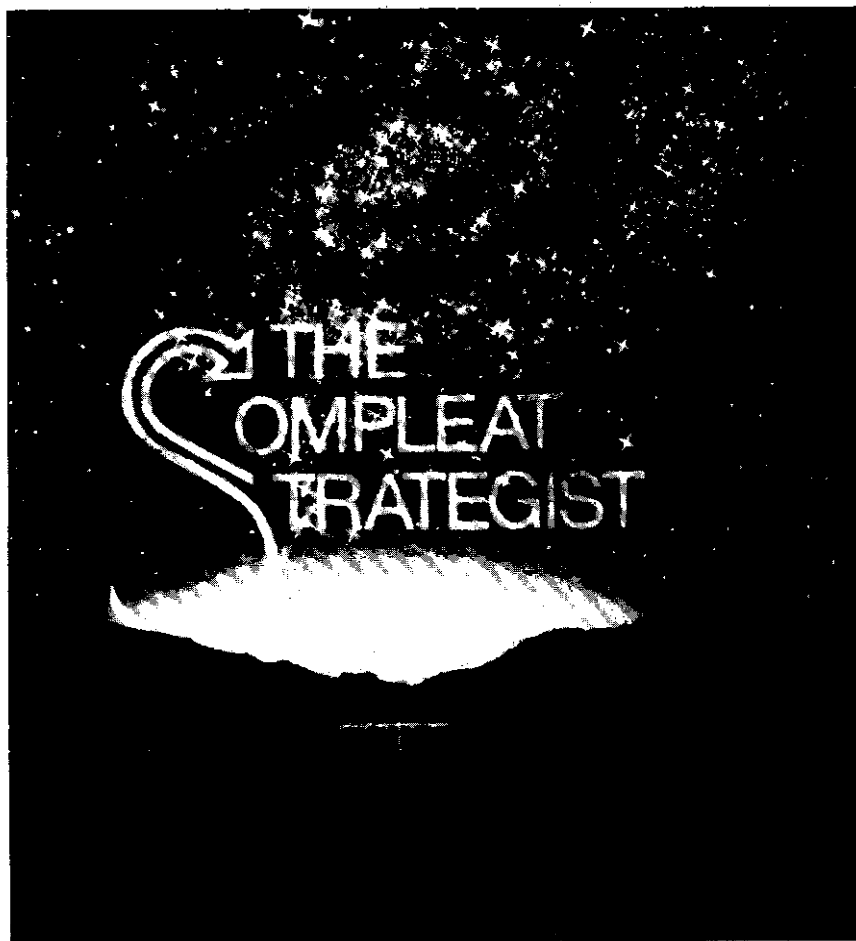
**Erevan Ilesere:** Half-elf cleric PCs who worship this god gain the ability to pick pockets as a thief of a level equal to their cleric level (all dexterity and racial bonuses applicable). NPC elves who worship Erevan may become multi-classed cleric/thieves or cleric/fighter/thieves, but player-character elves cannot (the addition of an infinite-

progression class to the cleric class is too unbalancing a special power compared to the others given here).

**Hanali Celanil:** Half-elves of this cult (usually clerics or cleric/magic-users) may receive the same 5% chance of gaining 2 points of charisma with respect to members of the opposite sex, as elven clerics receive. In addition, they receive a +10% bonus on their reaction rolls against all human or elven NPCs, regardless of the other character's alignment, because of their appearance and aura.

**Labelas Enoreth:** Half-elf clerics who worship the elven deity of time and longevity have the same chance (1%) to have the effects of aging undone by their deity as elven clerics receive. They also gain a saving throw against slow spells once they attain the maximum level of ability in all the classes they possess. Most half-elves are either clerics or cleric/magic-users in this religion.

**Solonor Thelandira:** Nearly all half-elven clerics of this deity are cleric/rangers or cleric/fighters; a few are cleric/fighter/magic-users, and almost none are "pure" clerics or cleric/magic-users. Those with a fighter or ranger mixed class will always take the longbow as a weapon of proficiency at first level, and they receive the power to cast *enchanted weapon* once per day when they have reached the maximum level in all classes they possess. Half-elf clerics without a fighter or ranger mixed class will receive



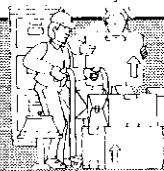
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the ability to use a longbow normally (attacking on the cleric's "to hit" table) when they reach maximum level in all their classes.

### Norse mythos

**Odin:** Clerics of the "All Father" gain the use of the spear at 5th level (in place of a regular cleric's weapon), and at 9th level and above they can will themselves to go berserk in combat once per day for a maximum of as many rounds as they have levels of cleric ability. While berserk, these clerics attack at a +2 bonus "to hit." To balance these powers, clerics of Odin are limited to ringmail armor only (shield permitted), and are limited to having only one of each sort of necromantic-type healing spell per day (e.g., no more than, one *cure light wounds* and *slow poison* spell for 3rd and 4th level clerics per day).

**Aegir:** Starting at 5th level, clerics of Aegir may pray for and gain the spell *water breathing* and can cast it as a magic-user of equal level. All clerics of this deity know how to swim; they can wear no armor heavier than leather, but may use shields.

**Balder:** Clerics of the Norse god of beauty and charisma gain the spell *friends* upon reaching 3rd level as a bonus spell, in addition to all others they have. The spell effect is as if cast by a magic-user of level equal to the cleric. Balder's clerics are limited to ring mail armor at best, and must have a minimum charisma of 13.

**Bragi:** Clerics of the god of poetry and song all know how to play at least one musical instrument. Upon attaining 7th level, they gain the power to raise morale and inspire ferocity in listeners while playing music (as per the bardic power). This musical ability also stills shriekers and negates song attacks by various monsters, but has no *charm* ability. Clerics of Bragi wear only leather armor at best, since metallic armor interferes with musical ability (it's too noisy). They also refuse to use shields.

**Forseti:** Clerics of the deity of justice gain the innate ability to *detect lie*. This ability starts at 1st level with a base success chance of 20%, which increases by 10% per level thereafter until the 9th level of experience is reached (100% chance of success). They may still take *detect lie* as a regular spell if they wish, but never the spell's reverse (*undetected lie*). The innate power may be used any number of times per day. However, if a cleric of Forseti ever tells a lie, or hedges the truth so as to give a false impression, the cleric loses all the powers of that class and becomes a fighter (with 8-sided hit dice) forever more. These clerics are also restricted to ringmail armor, with shield.

**Frey:** Clerics of the god of fairyland automatically learn to speak the elven tongue at their 1st level of experience and have the duration of their *light* spells doubled. They can only wear leather armor, however, but may use shields.

**Frigga:** Only women can become clerics of Frigga, and they cannot wear armor (though they may use other magical devices to help their armor class). Frigga grants her clerics the power to use *gust of wind* as a 3rd-level cleric spell (as if cast by a magic-user of the same level as the cleric), and *control weather* spells cast by her clerics will override, or persevere against, all such spells cast by clerics or druid's of lower level than the cleric in question.

**Heimdall:** Only human males may serve "the bright god" as clerics. They are only surprised 1 time in 6 until they reach 9th level, when the chance falls to 1 in 12.

However, they cannot use shields, must wear plate armor even on sea voyages, and must strive to be the first member of their party to attack an enemy force in battle (in their function of protecting the group).

**Thor:** Those who follow the god of thunder must take the hammer as a weapon at 1st level, and can wear only ringmail armor (shields are permitted). At each level at which the cleric would normally gain another weapon, the cleric may opt to gain an additional +1 bonus "to hit" with the warhammer (at levels 5, 9, 13, etc.); doing this prevents the cleric from gaining a new weapon at that level, however.

### Ogrish mythos

**Vaprak:** The DDG book notes that ogre and troll shamans of Vaprak have a 2% chance to gain a *berserk rage* in combat if they pray for it. This power gives the shaman a +2 "to hit" and damage bonus, though with a penalty of -2 on the shaman's

armor class. *Berserk rage* lasts for 12-30 rounds (2d10+10), and the shaman must pray for a full round beforehand in order to have a chance of receiving this ability. Half-ogre shamans of Vaprak may also receive this benefit and are especially feared because they tend to use magical armor and weapons in addition. Since half-ogres can only attain 4th level at best, this power is not ruinous to game balance.

### Orcish mythos

**Gruumsh:** Half-orc clerics of Gruumsh must tear out their own left eye, which gives them a -2 penalty "to hit" on all missile or thrown weapon attacks. In return, they gain the ability to use a spear when they reach maximum level (4th). If multi-classed as a fighter or assassin, the cleric must take the spear as a weapon at first level, and once the multi-classed cleric reaches maximum levels, he can *paralyze* a foe by touch, once per week. This power takes one segment to activate and is magical in nature.

**Bahgtru:** Clerics of this deity cannot wear armor and must have a minimum strength of 16, but upon attaining maximum level(s) they may gain a *strength* spell once per day. The spell has a duration of 24 turns.


**Shargaas:** Half-orcs who are clerics of Shargaas are almost always multi-classed as thieves or assassins. All of this deity's clerics are restricted to leather armor. Once they reach their maximum level of cleric ability, all clerics (multi-classed or not) have their infravision range extended to 90 feet; at the same time, they must take a -2 penalty "to hit" against all targets when in full daylight or in the area of effect of a *continual light* spell. Upon attaining maximum cleric level, they can also cast one extra *darkness* spell per day, in addition to their usual spells.

**Ilneval:** Clerics of this deity are almost always cleric/fighters. When they achieve their maximum level of clerical ability, they gain an additional point of charisma with respect to orcs and half-orcs only.

**Yurtrus:** Clerics who worship Yurtrus can wear only cloth armor (as detailed in the Best of DRAGON Magazine Anthology, Volume III), but are immune to the effects of normal diseases (they serve as disease carriers, instead). They also gain a +4 bonus to their saving throw against *cause disease* spells and similar disease-causing magics.

**Luthic:** Clerics of Luthic gain improved healing powers, amounting to +1 HP per die of healing done by the shell (no more than 8 points per die, however). They can only wear leather armor.

Dungeon Masters may wish to modify, add to, or subtract from these special abilities to fit them to their own concepts of what these religions represent. The campaign balance should also be kept in mind, though the addition of minor powers to characters can be done without serious damage. DMs should be prepared to modify or retract powers given to clerics as the game progresses, if such powers cause more problems than they solve.



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# Clerics must be deity-bound

## How one acts depends on who one worships

by Fraser Sherman

"There's two dozen barbarians outside!" shouted the guard by the door.

"Wonderful!" cried the cleric of Thor.

"That's only six apiece! Charge!"

"Not yet, fool!" The cleric of Tyr grabbed him by the shoulder before he could break for the door. "Defeating them requires a well-organized plan. You move when I command, and not before!"

"I'm not moving, whatever you command," the cleric of Diancecht said firmly. "There's a half-dozen injured men in here, and I'm staying to protect them."

"I don't know why you're all making such a fuss." The priestess of Aphrodite smiled as she loosened the neckline of her robe. "Why don't I go out first and see if I can offer them . . . something in return for our safety?"

Arguments like this don't happen too often in AD&D® game campaigns; in a way, that's a pity. All too often, role-playing a cleric is seen primarily as a matter of role-playing an alignment; if a character follows his god's alignment and preaches adherence to that alignment at every opportunity, that's role-playing a cleric, right?

Not entirely. True, alignment is part of a cleric's role, but there's a great deal more to consider. For one thing, not everyone who shares alignment thinks the same way. Put a military dictator and a royal tyrant together and see how heated the disputes become! Each may be lawful evil, but each could have a different view of how his alignment should be served.

The same thing applies to gods and, by extension, to their clerics. Two gods may share the same alignment, but that doesn't mean they share the same outlook. Each lawful good sect will have its own idea of how to serve the lawful good ethos best; role-playing a cleric not only requires characters to follow an alignment, but to decide how to follow it.

Let's consider the lawful good alignment. The DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopeda describes the Norse god Tyr as both a war-god and the god of law and trust. With an outlook like that, his clerics might be expected to battle any evil that threatens the existing order (evil gods and their clerical minions, humanoids, rogue humans, and so forth).

On the other hand, there's Diancecht, the lawful good Celtic healer-god. The DDG book emphasizes that he never fights in large battles, and that even those who heal characters of evil alignment may serve him — hardly the same as the qualities of a god devoted to fighting and slaying evil types.

Diancecht is not any less good than Tyr, or any less lawful, but his clerics would more likely be charged to "heal the sick, protect the weak, and let no harm come to the helpless." Both gods have lawful good creeds, but each creed is very different in practice.

Consider, too, chaotic good gods like the elven deity Corellon Larethian and the Norse thunder-god Thor. Corellon is an elven ideal, a mighty warrior but genteel and cultured; Thor is a hot-headed, violent deity with a passion for hammering the nearest giant into a pulp. It's doubtful that they, or their clerics, would have the same outlook on the world.

A cleric's mission in life entails a great deal more than just following his alignment. This concept can be elaborated upon still further. For example, if your cleric's deity is a god of war, what sub-topic of that subject does he focus on? Ares glories in bloodlust and destruction; Athena is devoted to fighting skill and battle art; Thor loves nothing so much as a good brawl; Tyr may see fighting as the tool by which good dominates evil.

What methods do gods want their clerics to use? To some extent, the Dungeon Master is on his own in deciding this. Would clerics see Tyr as a god of army commanders, favoring harsh discipline, clear chains of command, and military order? Or is his ideal servant a loner, a man standing on his own against chaos and evil?

In a tight situation, Hermes might expect his clerics to rely on trickery or cunning, his own great gifts. A god of bards (Oghma, Bragi, or Apollo) presumably values eloquence; the clerics of such a god might be expected to talk their way out of tough situations. War gods like Ishtar and Ares might want their clerics to use force and fighting prowess.

These guidelines are certainly not absolute — to say that clerics of Hermes would never fight, or that clerics of war-gods would never negotiate, would be absurd. But in a pinch, it seems reasonable that a cleric would usually use tactics similar to those used by his god. And certainly he should win great favor with his deity for doing so.

Who is your cleric supposed to be fighting? Does his sect have any particular foes or enemies? Thor's hatred of giant-kind is well known; his clerics might be dedicated to making war on giant-class humanoids, particularly frost giants and fire giants. Anubis, on the other hand, is a lawful good god of death; as such, undead must appear to be the ultimate blasphemy. His clerics

would seek out and destroy undead in preference to other foes, even opting to engage and slay undead rather than play it safe and try to turn them away. Of course, reason and sanity should prevail — third-level clerics of Thor don't take on fire giants, and a low-level cleric of Anubis wouldn't be expected to stand alone against a vampire.

Beyond these mortal struggles, there is the cosmic struggle, the wars of the gods. Who are the special enemies or friends in this sphere of activity? Anubis may hate all demonkind, but his greatest hostility would surely be reserved for Orcus, master of the undead. Clerics of Anubis might be required to do more in opposing a scheme of Orcus than against the schemes of Demogorgon or Lolth. Aphrodite and the elven love-goddess Hanali Celanil are not active allies, but they accept each other's presence. Clerics of either goddess would probably oppose the demon lord that rules succubi, which are the embodiment of debased, corrupted love and sexuality. (No such demon lord is given in the Monster Manuals, but a DM could create one for his own world.)

Beyond the obvious assumptions we can make, relationships among and between gods are the province of the Dungeon Master. Do the sky-gods Zeus, Enlil, and Anu see each other as allies, dangerous competitors, or respectful rivals?

Keep in mind that relationships among gods, like clerical codes, are based upon more than alignment — the relations between the quarrelsome Greek deities are good examples of this. Pan and Apollo, and members of their respective sects, were rivals because the two gods unwillingly shared dominion over music. Aphrodite resented Hephaestus, her husband, because she hated being married to a club-footed cripple; Hephaestus, in turn, resented Ares for sharing Aphrodite's bed. Athena and Ares were opponents, while Apollo and Artemis were loving brother and sister. Again, it is up to the DM to decide how much these relationships influence the deities' sects and their clerics.

What about those activities that are part of every cleric's duties, like converting non-believers? In the first place, are a god's worshipers only found among a certain character class or social group, or are they from all walks of life? Are only humans allowed to be worshipers, or do their clerics recruit from among demi-humankind? Does the god demand exclusive worship, or can someone worship several gods at once? What methods are acceptable in attempting to win followers? Ishtar's clerics might force

conversion from those they defeat in battle ("Serve me!"). Ares, an evil war-god, might have his clerics force conversion from anyone they can ("Serve me — or die!"). Loviatar, mistress of pain, might consider torture a good means by which to instill faith ("Serve me or die — slowly!"). Clerics of Aphrodite, goddess of love, might persuade unbelievers by well, I'm sure you can figure that one out.

Another thing to consider is that lesser gods and demigods may be far more anxious to win followers than greater gods would be. Clerics of Zeus may feel secure in their god's supremacy, but clerics of minor deities like Hephaestus or Tyche would have more reason to seek new worshipers to improve their god's status.

An important task of clerics is prayer. It's always struck me as odd that the rules of the AD&D® game give clerics no more of a chance to summon aid through prayer than common mortals have. In my campaigns, clerics get a percentage bonus to their chance of calling for divine assistance. This bonus is 15% per level of the cleric, but since I only give a 1% base chance for receiving divine aid (as opposed to the "official" 10% base chance), it evens out. In addition, I take the god's own purposes into account, for an added bonus of perhaps 1% or 2%; Anubis may be more inclined to aid his clerics against a lich or a ghost, Thor against an army of hill giants, Thor if a book of ancient lore was at stake.

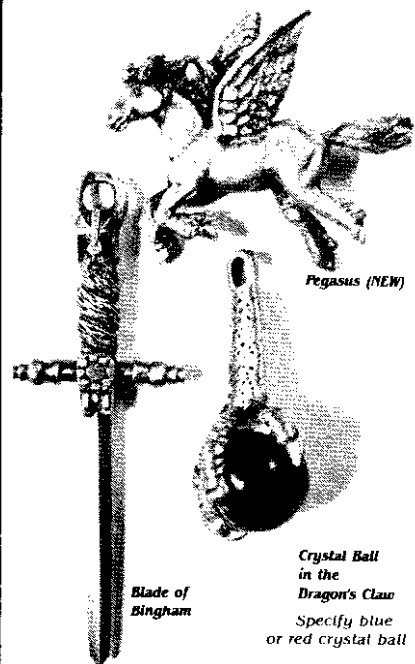
In addition, some gods may teach special knowledge to their sects. Clerics of Dian-cecht might know basic first aid (no small achievement in a world where non-magical medical knowledge is largely nonexistent); a priest of Poseidon might have some knowledge of sailing; a priest of Apollo ought to be a competent musician.

Finally, the cleric's personal life should be brought into consideration. Does his creed view life as a grim, bloody struggle (as the Aesir seem to perceive it), or as something of a party affair (as most of the Olympians apparently felt)? Are the gods serious, reckless, helpful, or selfish? Do their sects have rules on love and marriage, and if so, what are they? Clerics of Aphrodite might be as amorous as their mistress; Artemis, on the other hand, was a virgin goddess ready to kill anyone who saw her unclothed, so her clerics might be bidden to remain celibate. Druids might see their fertility as linked with that of the earth, so they would remain celibate except during religious rituals celebrating planting or harvesting.

A cleric's duties to his god or goddess require a great deal more than merely being lawful or neutral, good or evil. They will influence his thoughts, his actions, and his very outlook on the world. Handled correctly, guidelines like these should help players and DMs define their clerics and choose their actions without eliminating the all-important personal touch.

Here's praying at you, kid.

8



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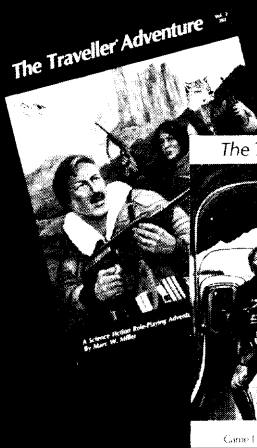
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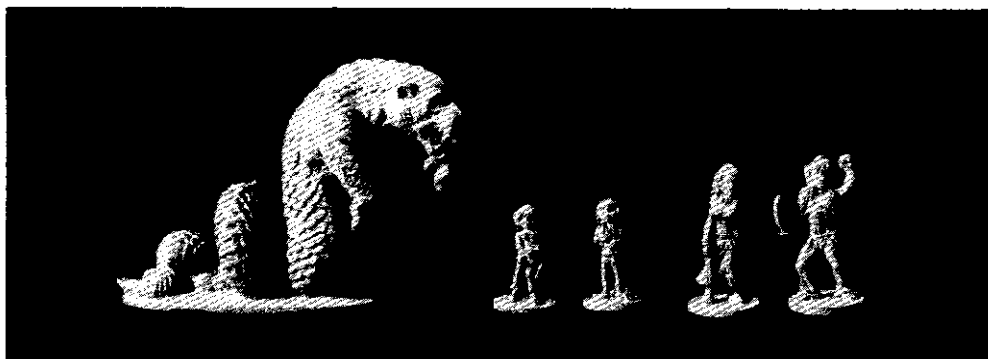
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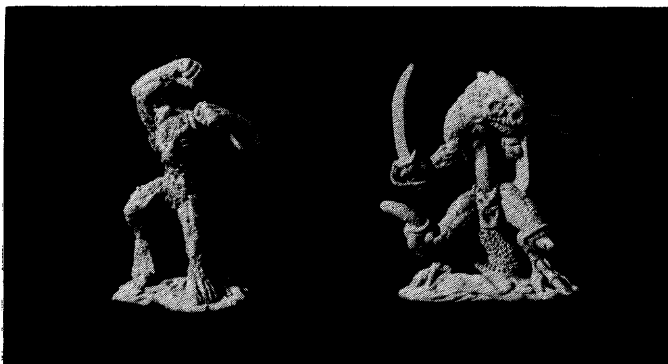


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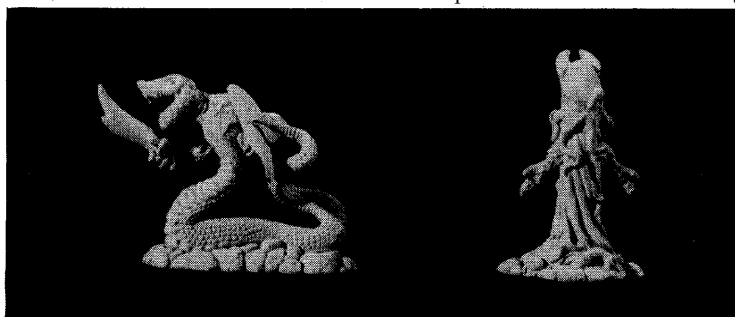
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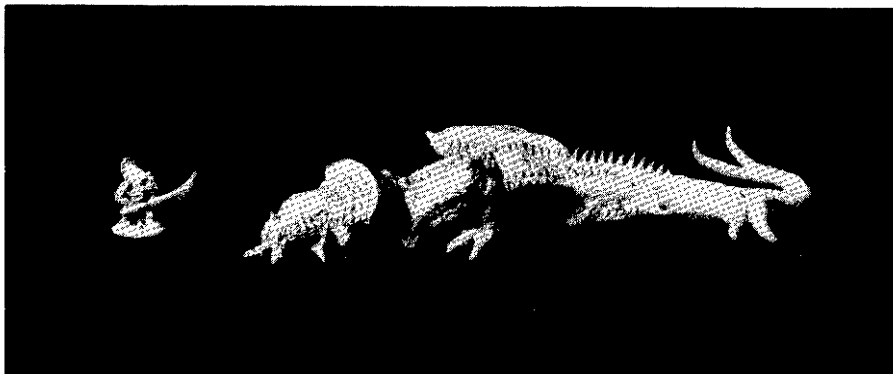


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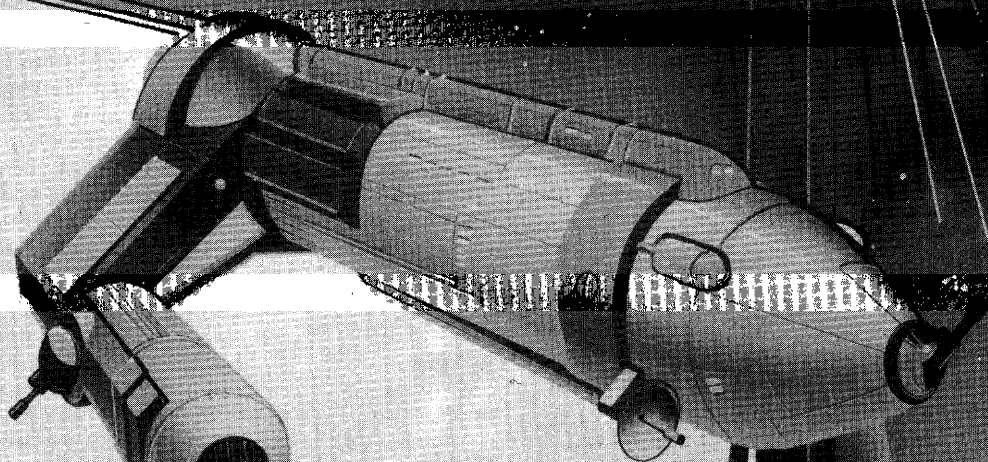
Original monsters are always fun to collect, but are hard to find. For those miniaturists who love the unusual, TAG has created some fascinating creatures. The short figure with the polearm is a bipedal creature which looks like it evolved from a dinosaur — sort of a toy Protoceratops. The seven-inch figure being intimidated is one of the longest Land Dragons ever seen in a single piece. A particularly nice touch is the crawling, lizardlike appearance of the Dragon, reminiscent of the old *Lost World* -type movies. Suggested retail prices: Rex (pack of 2), \$1.50; Land Dragon, \$15.00.





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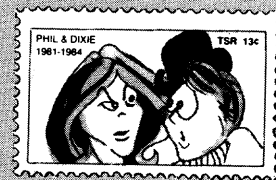


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By  
Michael  
Gray

# PBM: Problems by mail



Some time ago, in late 1983, a friend wrote me the following letter:

Dear Mike,

I am having difficulty finding a PBM campaign that operates responsibly. Perhaps this experience is unique, but so far I have the following fiascoes. After sending \$22.50 to Empire Games in July for the *Realms of Sword and Thunder* newsletter and turn fees, I have received nothing. Repeated attempts to reach them by mail have proven fruitless. In my last letter I simply asked for a refund.

In addition, I sent a request to GSI for rules to their *Earthwood* game on September 19th with a \$5.00 money order and have not received a reply. Finally, I sent \$10.00 to ECI for rules and set-up in their new *Starquest* campaign on August 15th and have received nothing. Needless to say, I can't afford to try again. I certainly don't expect you to solve my problems, but I thought you might be interested in my experience. I am ready now to give up on PBM as a viable gaming option. If you have any encouraging suggestions, I'd like to hear them.

\* \* \*

I have received several letters of this nature and have had similar experiences myself. I'm one of the suckers who sent in \$25 to play *Lords of Valetia* in 1980. They still have my money! I also answered a full page ad in 1980 and sent \$10 to play *Pro-consul*. They still have my money, too.

Recently I sent for the rules to *World of Velgor*. I got the rules, and they were very interesting. They came in a tube like a scroll. The presentation was excellent. I compiled a list of about 50 questions about the game, called the moderator, and got the answers to my questions during a nice chat. A month later, the moderator called me back to tell me that it will be several months before the game will start because he has decided to change the game design. It was

considerate of him to call me, although I'm sure that my being a reviewer had something to do with his decision to call. His mistake was that he had designed a game that had too much human moderation in it. This is a common mistake that most new PBM companies make. They forget that they are in business to make money as well as to have fun. I look forward to playing *World of Velgor* — if and when it is ready.

In a previous article I mentioned that I was looking forward to playing *Realms of Sword and Thunder* by Empire Games. Again, the rules looked great and after talking to the moderator on the phone I was anxious to play. But after waiting nine weeks for my second turn to get back to me, I started to wonder about Empire Games. Friends of mine sent in entry fees in May 1983 and didn't hear from the company until November. This is inexcusable. After calling the company, I learned that they only process 15 turns a day. Why? Because they spend a lot of man-hours working on each player's handwritten turn. Now, don't get me wrong — players were getting a lot for their three dollars. The game background is very well thought out, and the game can be a lot of fun, but as is, it isn't going to be a moneymaker. Some time after my phone call, I received a flyer from Empire Games stating that the company has realized its problems and is encouraging players to change their situations from characters to cities. That is, instead of playing an individual character, a player could control a city. Character turns will cost \$6 (very high priced), whereas city turns would still cost \$3 (an average price). The company has to do this sort of thing — because, after all, it's a business. Time will tell if people feel they are getting their money's worth.

Regarding my friend's letter, I called all three of the companies and everything has been cleared up. As described above, Empire was way behind in answering its mail. Game Systems, Inc., said the company's records showed that he was sent a copy of

the *Earthwood* rules in September; he was sent another one. Entertainment Concepts, Inc., said that the printing of rules and the starting of *Starquest* had been delayed for various reasons, and now all was fine. But what *isn't* fine is that this sort of thing seems to be the norm rather than the exception in the play-by-mail gaming industry.

## And now, some good news

Rick Loomis of Flying Buffalo Inc., who has always been the driving force behind the PBM hobby and industry, is putting together a "PBM Moderators Association." FBI has been in the PBM business for 13 years and offers such classics as *Starweb*, *Nuclear Destruction*, *Heroic Fantasy*, *Starlord*, and *Feudal Lords*.

The PMA (or is it PBMMA?) will perform a number of functions. Any company that has had a game running for at least a year will be rated as a professional member. Newer companies can be amateur members. The general public can also join to support the cause and get information.

The PMA will run advertisements and notices listing the professional members. New players can write to the PMA and get information and catalogs for most of the PBM games available. If you play a game that is run by a professional member of the PMA, you can be fairly sure that you will get your money's worth.

There will also be a grievance system set up. Disgruntled players can send their complaints to the PMA, which would then act as a sort of Better Business Bureau for the PBM industry.

If all of this comes to pass, it will benefit everyone. New companies will have to meet acceptable standards to be accredited as "professionals," while old companies will no longer have to put up with all the bad press relating to the behavior of the amateur companies. Hopefully, everyone will join and support the cause. If you've been burned even once, you can see the benefit of this organization. In the future, you can be sure that you won't get the runaround

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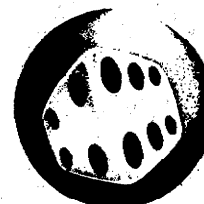
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from a "professional" member of the PMA. When such a company advertises a new game, it should be ready to go, rather than still "in development."

Two new magazines are now available, both dedicated mostly to play-by-mail games:

*Flagship* is published in England by Nicholas Palmer, who has written articles for several game publications in the past and has also written two books on board wargaming. *Flagship* is being distributed in the U.S. by Flying Buffalo Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale AZ 85252. The subscription rate is \$11 per year for 4 issues.

*Gaming Universal* is published in Pennsylvania by Bob McLain (P.O. Box 437, Hawley PA 18428), another of a growing number of enthusiasts who have made PBM gaming more than a hobby. I was Bob's ally in a game recently, and I can testify that he really knows his stuff. The subscription rate for *Gaming Universal* is \$15 per year for 6 issues.

#### Four games worth getting into

Following are capsule descriptions of some PBM games I have enjoyed — each for different reasons:

*Moneylender* (Rick Barr, P.O. Box 1873, Cave Creek AZ 85331) is a computer-moderated game set in 14th-century Italy. This game offers a change from the starships and barbarian hordes that are found in most PBM games. Up to ten players try to be the first to earn a set amount of victory points. Points are scored each turn for controlling wealth, cities, and factories.

Each player starts with a small treasury, some raw materials and finished goods, and five spies. It would be an easy matter to lend one's money out at 25% interest and sell finished goods to make money. However, the game has several interesting features that make *Moneylender* real test of strategy and diplomacy. The game is played over "terrain" consisting of thirty interconnected Italian cities. Twenty bands of mercenaries prowl the countryside, conquering cities and wiping out investments.

What appears to be a game of conquest is actually a game of finance and negotiation. Discretion and restraint are necessary to succeed. Each player must decide how to spend his funds. New wealth comes from selling and investing, yet one must spend money to protect his investments.

Elements of play include assassinations, controlling the pope, taking control of other players' factories and cities, sending spies out to gather detailed information, and best of all, building up the Italian economy.

*Moneylender* is well-designed and well-run. The rules cost \$1, set-up is \$2, and each turn costs \$3. Most games last for 8-12 turns, which is a very appealing feature, because you can finish a game in less than 6 months. I recommend it highly.

*Crisis* (also by Rick Barr) has the flavor of Parker Brothers' *Risk* boardgame and Flying Buffalo's *Nuclear Destruction*. The

world is divided into territories (usually countries). Each player starts with his own country, 30 factories, 30 armies, no nuclear missiles (ICBMs), no anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs), and a population of 200 million people. Non-player countries start with 10 factories, 10 armies, and 50 million people. The object of the game is to be the final survivor.

In each turn, a player can build factories, armies, or missiles; move his armies, fire his missiles, and send his three spies to other countries. Each spy report details another country's inventory (dollars, factories, army divisions, ICBMs, ABMs and population). Armies are sent out to conquer other territories. Conquered territory yields more factory output — dollars that are subsequently spent on building. An ICBM destroys one factory and one million people. An ABM cancels out one ICBM — the missiles are destroyed but the factory and people are saved.

A player is knocked out of the game when all 200 million of his people are eliminated by ICBMs or his country is conquered. *Crisis* is simple and fun — a great game for beginners. Diplomacy abounds; it can be easy to remove another player from the game when two players work together — unless the other player also has an ally.

The rules for *Crisis* cost \$1, set-up is \$2, and each turn costs \$1.75 — one of the lowest-priced turn fees I've seen. Turns are processed twice a month, and most games last for 12-20 turns.

*Warboid World* (Adventures by Mail, P.O. Box 436, Cohoes NY 12047) is a game of warring robots. Sixteen players each start with a damaged, underground robot factory and a few robots. The play of the game consists of repairing one's factory, building new robots, and attacking enemy robots. The object is to destroy as many enemy robots as possible by the end of the game.

This game has a totally different "feel" to it. Most PBM games encourage diplomacy and communication — but *Warboid World* prohibits these things. You never know who your neighbors are. And since the object is to destroy enemy robots, the lack of communication makes everyone an enemy.

Robots can be built in 25 different configurations. Most robots (called "boids") are composed of different combinations of attack, defense, and reserve ("unused") energy. Movement rates vary from zero to three spaces per turn. Some of the 'boids have special powers: Sensoids can plant and destroy sensors; energyboids transfer their energy to other 'boids; bomboids blow up sensors and tunnel entrances; seismoids detect tunnel digging, and so on.

I found *Warboid World* to be like a solitaire puzzle. I got my results in the mail, added new information to my own "master" map, and reacted to any enemy 'boids that had entered my sensor-bounded area. After a dozen turns, I decided to attack another player's factory. I was successful, and so I had eliminated a nameless opponent from the game. My reward was several

hundred victory points. But I never found out what 'boids I had destroyed.

Playing *Warboid World* is like playing chess against a computer, in the sense that your enemy is nameless and (for game purposes, anyway) without emotion. The game mechanics are interesting. The results printout is very readable and well organized. However, I still feel that something is missing. Perhaps my problem is just with the lack of diplomacy. Or maybe it's the fact that after 15 turns, no one had come marching across my borders. I bet most players spend the first dozen turns building up their forces.

To eliminate another player, you must destroy his factory. There are two ways to do this. The first way is to find a tunnel entrance to an enemy factory and destroy all defenders in the factory at the other end of the tunnel. The other is to order three controloids to shut the factory down from the hex above the factory.

*Warboid World* offers a very different type of PBM experience. If a non-diplomatic game interests you, this is one to try. The rules cost \$1, set-up is \$3.50, and each turn costs \$3.50.

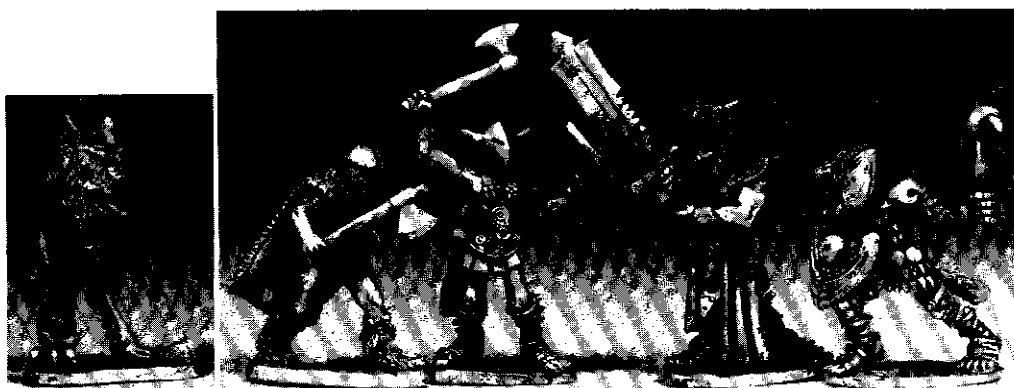
*Starlord* (Flying Buffalo Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale AZ 85252) is a computer-moderated game of stellar conquest. The galaxy is roughly 128 astrals (spaces) in diameter. Near the center of the galaxy sits the well-guarded Throne Star. All the players (as many as 50 in one game) try to locate and conquer the Throne, then try to hold it as long as possible. He who conquers the Throne Star becomes the Starlord, gets a color map of the entire galaxy, and plays for free from then on.

Conquering the Throne is not easy, especially when the Starlord is sitting there with a huge fleet. Players have to build up their own little empires and amass a large number of starships. As the game progresses, players move slowly toward the center of the galaxy, where large battles take place. *Starlord* is not a game of diplomacy. Other than to establish boundaries, there is not much reason to communicate. New ships are generated at City Stars and Base Stars, which are thus in high demand.

Each player's turn is focused around his Command Ship. Visual data and fleet control extends 7 astrals from the Command Ship. Printouts are in color — a nice touch that is also very functional, since each player shows up as a different color on the printout. There are over a dozen different types of stars, each with their own abilities: Battle Stars double offensive attacks, Fort Stars double defense, Data Stars give full information on other stars in range, Lotus Stars "capture" ships, and so forth.

This is one of the easiest, most colorful games I've ever played. The turnsheet format is so simple to fill out that it takes only a few minutes to write your orders. The rules cost \$2, set-up is \$5, and each turn is \$2.50. And remember, once you become Starlord, you play for free — for as long as you can hold the Throne!

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# The ecology of the ixitxachitl

by Ed Greenwood

From the *Ramblings, Volume V*, of the sage Nenemith:

A curious creature indeed, the ixitxachitl. Found in colonies of sometimes as many as a hundred or more in shallow, tropical seas, ixitxachitl typically lair in well-concealed grottos or tunnels in the midst of coral reefs. They worship the Prince of Demons, Demogorgon, and from him gain the use of clerical spells, with some creatures rising in ability to the equal of a Patriarch.<sup>1</sup>

Although they are very seldom encountered by humans and humanoids who travel in or on the seas, the ixitxachitl are a numerous race and rule large areas of the coastal salt waters of our world, relying on their aggressive nature and their magical powers to build an undersea empire of sorts.

Ixitxachitl are carnivorous and prey on all marine life that they can kill and devour, this even extending at times (when they attack in huge hunting packs) to giant octopi, whales, and — on at least one documented occasion — a dragon turtle. The creatures range far from their lairs in search of food, and often battle sahuagin, locathah, and especially tritons and mermen. The superior organization and tactics of these opponents have earned them victory over the ixitxachitl often enough to keep these magically endowed rays from destroying all resistance and mastering the oceans. But, at the same time, the ixitxachitl have certainly made their presence felt; in some areas of our world, they have all but eradicated aquatic elves in warm seas, and the tritons have largely found it easier to make their abodes in deeper waters, and only venture in armed bands into shallower areas as a result of ixitxachitl activities therein.

Because of the enmity between Orcus and Demogorgon, intelligent marine undead (lacedons, juju zombies, and so forth) will not aid — and sometimes will actively oppose — the rays. Ixitxachitl, for their part, devour such prey whenever it can be found, and so the undead largely avoid ixitxachitl. Those rays with especially powerful cleric abilities can raise additional "recruits" for their armies<sup>2</sup> by use of the *animate dead* spell, but are unable to magically control or influence undead because the influence of Orcus against them offers too much resistance.

In battle, ixitxachitl swoop rapidly at opponents from opposing directions and levels, seeking to confuse prey by striking at it from two or more sides at once. In this maneuver, they are often led by any ixitxachitl present of the so-called "vampire" variety, which are envied and personally powerful war leaders and influential individuals in ixitxachitl society.<sup>3</sup> The most



powerfully endowed of the servants of Demogorgon (which are the social leaders of ixitxachtli society) hang back until the single most powerful opponents are identified, whereupon they attack with spells.<sup>4</sup> These powerful spell-users typically swoop together with two or more other ixitxachtli, so that the target will find it difficult to escape their attacks.

Sometimes ixitxachtli burrow into bottom-sand, leaving only their eyes uncovered, to escape dangerous foes; but more often they do this to lie in wait for speedy prey, which they then ambush.

In a manner similar to the way that sharks do, ixitxachtli can sense vibrations for great distances underwater, by means of receptors on their backs and tails — the shock waves of explosions, for instance, they can “hear” from miles away.<sup>5</sup> They have a form of speech by which they can communicate openly with one another, and with some sahuagin that have learned at least the rudiments of their strange tongue, and those ixitxachtli with access to the proper spells can also communicate magically with other creatures. Ixitxachtli have a second form of language that they use among themselves (and with some other marine creatures, such as sahuagin), which is best described as “touch-telepathy.” This is a form of limited mental exchange possible only between creatures the ixitxachtli are actually touching, usually with their tails. Groups of ixitxachtli sometimes swim in “stacks,” fins beating in unison, one atop another, belly to back. This is believed to be a form of this mental communication (transmitting emotions or general thoughts), and not mating or courting behavior.

The “devil rays” (as they are sometimes mistakenly called) all appear externally identical to other creatures, but ixitxachtli can apparently distinguish sexes and individuals readily at a distance. Each creature mates once a year, at varying times (there are no “seasons” as we know them beneath the surface of the tropical seas). The process is initiated by a female, which chooses — sometimes aggressively — a male partner. By this method, some sages argue, the females deliberately attempt to breed to improve the race.<sup>6</sup>

Certain ixitxachtli continue to grow in strength and power upon becoming adults. It is from this group that a colony’s leaders and decision-makers come — but only those that are accepted by their fellows are allowed to live long enough to attain this status. Potential leaders that are deemed unsatisfactory, by whatever standards the ixitxachtli use (perhaps disrespect or disloyalty for Demogorgon is a factor), are set upon by the group and slain before they have a chance to force themselves into positions of influence and power. This “weeding-out” process that destroys many of these special ixitxachtli helps to explain why the creatures have not risen to a position of absolute domination of the seas. At the same time, this process seems to help insure the unity of purpose that binds

the members of an ixitxachtli colony together and keeps them, as a group, strongly loyal to Demogorgon. In fact, it is said (by those who should know) that ixitxachtli as a species are more fervently attached to Demogorgon’s wishes and aims than any other species of creature on this plane of existence we occupy.<sup>7</sup>

Vampiric ixitxachtli are more feared by other creatures than even the most powerful of the non-vampiric ixitxachtli leaders, because of their lethal bite which saps a victim’s very life force, and because of their ability to heal wounds that they suffer. On very rare occasions, vampiric ixitxachtli become leaders or lieutenants of a colony, and such creatures are said by many to be the most dangerous undersea denizens of their size.<sup>8</sup>

Fiercely independent, ixitxachtli cannot be subdued and will fight to the death if not stunned or otherwise immobilized. They are fearless in behavior (but not reckless or imprudent), cunning in battle, and prone to collect treasure of all sorts, to bargain with and in hopes of finding items of magic, which the leaders take possession of. They value most highly those magic items which they can employ; ixitxachtli have been seen wearing rings on their tails and wielding rods, staves, and the like that they hold in their clenched jaws. If they come across items of magic that they cannot themselves use, they will hide them away, to keep them from the grasp of other creatures and possibly to use as a bargaining tool.

Sometimes ixitxachtli will cooperate with other aquatic creatures such as sea hags, or even sahuagin or locathah, for mutual gain, and have been known to hire or train creatures (such as sea lions) to work for them. Sharks can seldom be thus used by their cousins the ixitxachtli, for sahuagin have long employed sharks in their battles against the rays, and sharks seem to have acquired a dislike for the “dark rays” — or perhaps they merely recall ixitxachtli flesh as tasty.

More details of ixitxachtli life are few, not well documented, and understandably difficult to augment, but research on this subject, notably by my esteemed colleagues Ramazith, of Baldur’s Gate, and Alauthym, of the Moonshae Isles, continues.

#### Notes

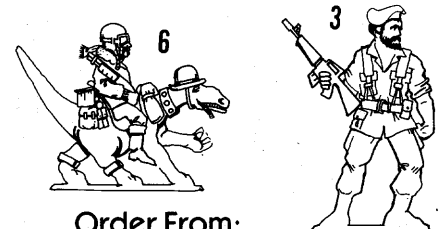
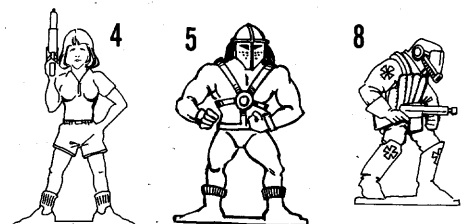
1. Ixitxachtli gain spell bonuses for wisdom just as clerical spell-casters of other races do, and can use any magic items not specifically prohibited to clerics that can be worn and operated without hands. Most such items either have, or can be modified to operate through, mental commands rather than audible command words. An opponent using ESP could learn such commands from the mind of an ixitxachtli while the commands were actually being made, but not at any other time, since the commands would not then be part of the conscious surface thoughts of the creature. Note also that ixitxachtli can employ their clerical spell powers without components of



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any sort (although verbal and/or somatic components may well be part of some rituals); these spell powers are considered innate once they are bestowed by Demogorgon, and do not need to be triggered by an external object or force. However, "innate" does not mean unlimited; as with normal clerics, ixitxachitl can use each of their spells no more frequently than once per day.

2. Any ixitxachitl with the spell ability of a 5th-level cleric (or higher) can use *animate dead* and will prefer to do so upon creatures of its own type. Ixitxachitl do not have skeletons like humans, humanoids, and other higher vertebrates do; their "bones" are unconnected pieces of cartilage that cannot be animated like a human skeleton can be. The bodies of dead ixitxachitl can be animated as zombies, however; these creatures have AC 7, MV 6", 2 HD, and the normal 3-12 bite damage. These zombies do not have cleric spell ability and cannot employ magic items or take independent action of any sort; their principal function is to add numbers to an ixitxachitl attacking force. As specified in the *animate dead* spell description, these zombies are subject to the commands of the ixitxachitl that cast the spell — but ixitxachitl do not have any other power over undead of any sort. Ixitxachitl zombies can be turned or destroyed by other clerics as usual, and any cleric attempting to affect them gets a +1 bonus to the die roll for turning.

3. Nenemith refers to them as "so-called" vampires because this variety of ixitxachitl does not have all the attributes commonly associated with vampires; for one thing, vampiric ixitxachitl are obviously not harmed by immersion in running water. Their only similarities to true vampires are the characteristics mentioned in the *Monster Manual*: level draining and regeneration. They do not assume gaseous (or any other) form, and they do not infect their victims with vampirism. In an environment that is already watery, it is reasonable to assume that they are not affected by holy water, since the holy water cannot be "splashed" on them; if an attacker releases holy water in the vicinity of a vampiric ixitxachitl, the fluid would disperse into the surrounding sea water and be diluted immediately anyway.

4. If an attacking ixitxachitl employs a touch-effect spell (such as *cause light wounds*), the spell will only take effect if a normal bite attack succeeds. If the bite attack does not hit, the *cause wounds* spell (or whatever) is not dissipated and remains "stored up" until a hit is scored. Once an ixitxachitl has decided to use such a spell, its effects will be felt by the first eligible victim; the creature cannot withhold the spell when it does score a hit, with the intent of using it against a different target in a later attack.

5. Ixitxachitl also have 9" infravision

and seem to be able to smell other creatures at a distance of 1" or less. They can smell blood, lamp oil, or other foreign substances released into the water at up to 4" distant from the source, depending upon water currents. The normal, color-sensitive vision of an ixitxachitl extends to the limit of comparable (average) human vision in the same circumstances, being governed by water conditions — in pitch darkness, or the murk of disturbed sediments, visibility can be reduced to zero, and it can range up to half a mile or more in clear, calm water lit by a bright sun.

6. The life cycle of ixitxachitl is still poorly understood, but can be summarized as follows: Six months after mating, a female gives birth to a single young, of 1-1 HD. It is born in full control of its physical faculties (including regeneration, if it is vampiric), but does not acquire spell ability (or level-draining ability, if vampiric) until reaching adult size in 1-3 months thereafter. The speed with which it grows to maturity depends upon available food; a young ixitxachitl in a relatively small colony with an adequate food supply will mature (1+1 or 2+2 HD and full powers) in 1 month. Increases in spell capability and hit dice, for those rare individuals able to attain them, come at the rate of 1 level of spell use every six months and/or 1 hit die every year thereafter, so that it takes an additional three years for a leader type (8th level spell ability, 4+4 HD) to reach full maturity. The

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characteristics that produce vampiric or leader-type ixitxachitl are apparently not hereditary (else there would be a greater abundance of such creatures), but are passed on randomly and infrequently. Most ixitxachitl live for 30 years or so, but some are known to have lived for 10 times that long.

7. All ixitxachitl have an appreciation (partly inborn, partly learned) for their race's allegiance to Demogorgon. Each of them has at least the spell ability of a 1st-level cleric, and they give Demogorgon full credit for endowing them with this special power. Their actions will be governed by Demogorgon's wishes and orders — or what the ixitxachitl believe these to be. They are oblivious to fear (of the non-magical sort) and fanatical, but not personally foolhardy. Those that attain higher levels of spell ability prefer to let lesser ixitxachitl do the dirty work — and perish, should matters come to that — instead of themselves. These special types will always "run away to fight another day" rather than impetuously put their lives on the line, and they often pass grudges on to young members of a colony, so that certain individuals, heraldic devices, and types of creatures will be recognized and attacked with particular savagery, or pursued tirelessly, by encountered ixitxachitl.

8. Whenever a colony of ixitxachitl contains 100 or more individuals, one of them will be a leader type with vampiric powers

(8+8 HD, 8th-level cleric spell ability, and usually wearing or possessing at least one type U magic item, as per the Monster Manual). If a colony contains at least 80 individuals, one or two of them will be guard types with vampiric powers (6+6 HD, 6th-level cleric spell ability), but the leader of the group will still be "only" a normal (non-vampiric) ixitxachitl with 4+4 HD and 8th-level spell ability.

#### Appendix

A. The suggested experience point values for ixitxachitl, as given in Appendix E of the Dungeon Masters Guide, can be amended and expanded as follows if more detail is desired or needed. In these calculations, the use of minor spells (1st, 2nd, or 3rd level cleric ability) and the ability of regeneration are counted as *special abilities*. The use of major spells (5th, 6th, or 8th level cleric ability) and the ability of energy level drain are *exceptional abilities*.

HD	Max. cleric spell ability	XP value
Normal ixitxachitl:		
1+1	1st	28 + 2/hp
1+1	2nd	28 + 2/hp
1+1	3rd	28 + 2/hp
1+1	5th	65 + 2/hp
Leader types:		
3+3	6th	125 + 4/hp
4+4	8th	165 + 5/hp
Vampiric ixitxachitl:		
2+2	1st	105 + 3/hp
2+2	2nd	120 + 3/hp
2+2	3rd	120 + 3/hp
2+2	5th	160 + 3/hp
6+6	6th	700 + 8/hp
8+8	8th	1700 + 12/hp

B. As put forth in Note 1 above, ixitxachitl with exceptional wisdom are entitled to bonuses in the number of cleric spells they can acquire and use. Those members of a colony that have high intelligence will possess wisdom scores ranging from 4-16 (DMG, p.79), and any creature with wisdom of 13 or higher will get at least one bonus spell (PH, p. 11). Thus, a leader type with 8th level cleric spell ability and wisdom of 16 would have spells usable amounting to five 1st level, five 2nd level, three 3rd level, and two 4th level spells.

C. As noted in the Monster Manual, ixitxachitl use "evil clerical spells." Following is a suggested list of spells from which to choose, including some which are reversed forms of "good" spells:

1st level	2nd level
1 <i>Cause fear</i>	<i>Chant</i>
2 <i>Cause 1. w.</i>	<i>Find traps</i>
3 <i>Curse</i>	<i>Hold person</i>
4 <i>Darkness</i>	<i>Silence 15' r.</i>
5 <i>Detect good</i>	<i>Speak w/animals</i>
6 <i>Detect magic</i>	<i>Spiritual hammer</i>
7 <i>Prot. from good</i>	
8 <i>Putrefy food &amp; drink</i>	
3rd level	4th level
1 <i>Animate dead</i>	<i>Cause s. w.</i>
2 <i>Bestow curse</i>	<i>Poison</i>
3 <i>Cause blindness</i>	<i>Prot. f. good 10' r.</i>
4 <i>Cause disease</i>	<i>Tongues</i>
5 <i>Continual darkness</i>	
6 <i>Dispel magic</i>	

D. In the vast majority of cases, ixitxachitl make saving throws as clerics. The only exceptions to this are for creatures of 4+4 HD or more, when a save vs. breath weapon is called for — and that doesn't happen very often underwater. In those instances, the creatures save as fighters, since the saving throw vs. that attack form at the level in question is lower for fighters than for clerics. The appropriate saving throws are as follows:

HD	Level for s.t.	Saving throws					
1+1	2nd	10	13	14	16	15	
2+2	3rd	10	13	14	16	15	
3+3	4th	9	12	13	15	14	
4+4	5th	9	12	13	13	14	
6+6	8th	7	10	11	12	12	
8+8	10th	6	9	10	9	11	

E. Ixitxachitl cannot function or survive in a waterless environment. As with other aquatic creatures, they can be effectively kept at bay by an *airy water* spell or similar magic. Except under the conditions outlined on page 75 of the DMG, they cannot hit characters or creatures able to be struck only by magic weapons.

F. The generally accepted pronunciation of the name is "ick- zit -sah-chittle."

8

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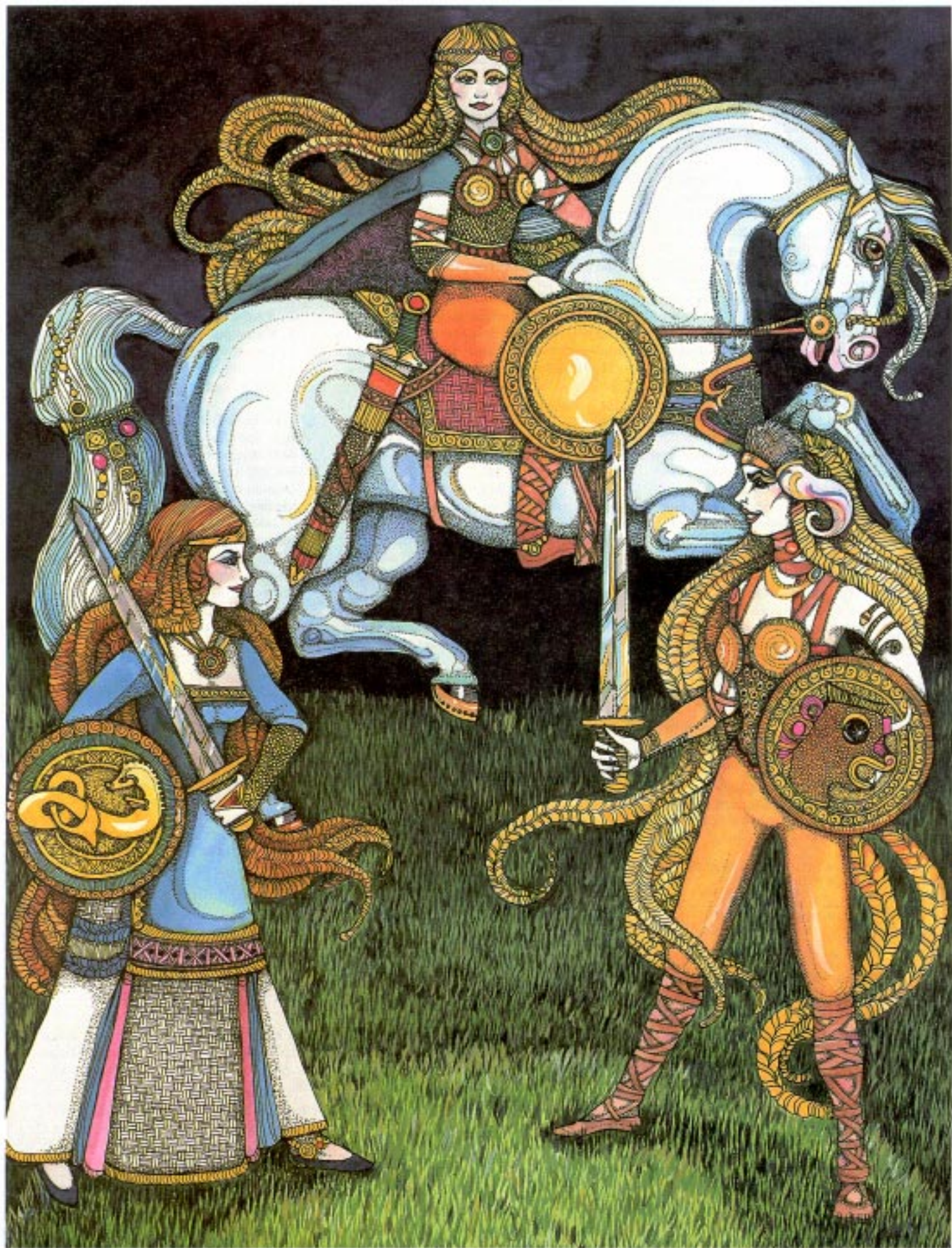
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**HAT MADNESS HAD CAUSED KING**

Finn of Frisia to allow her brother and his men to winter in his hall?

Queen Hildeburh wondered. If twenty years of marriage had not taught her better, she would have sworn he was fey, was deliberately

tempting Wyrd. Seated between her husband and her brother, Hnaef of Denmark, Hildeburh forced herself to smile and to sip mead. *Too sweet to be wholesome, she judged. Just like the mood in hall.*

The skald harped and sang, but no one listened to him. The fire leapt in the central hearth and cast enormous shadows throughout the hall. As the sap in the burning branches exploded, the feasting warriors — Danes and Frisians alike — started, reached for weapons, and then relaxed. The feast dragged on.

As Hildeburh grew tenser, her smile brightened. It was her form of courage. *Twenty years of practicing my smile when I should have been practicing sword-play*, she thought ruefully as she had thought that every day since her marriage. Certainly, the past twenty years had seen peace between Denmark and Frisia, assuming one could call the absence of all-out war peace. A few raids, an ambush or two — these were nothing much. But the long winter, which had been a time for enforcing false fellowship between Frisians and Danes, had strained the fabric of peace Hildeburh had spent the past twenty years trying to weave, strained it past endurance.

Hadn't she warned Finn what might happen? Though he was willing to hear her out on lands, livestock, gifts, even on justice, he had refused to listen to her talk of warfare. She was queen now, not a battle-maiden. As one of the terms of her marriage, she had laid her sword aside for the spindle of the peace-weaver. She sipped more mead and smiled. She was good at smiling now, even if her courage was not — could not possibly be — what it had been.

A Dane strode up before Hildeburh's brother, this man's lord, and pointed at one of her husband's men who lounged on a nearby bench. "He wears my father's sword!" shouted the Dane.

"What of it! He won it in fair fight!" snapped King Finn. Hildeburh reached out to lay a hand on her husband's arm, then drew back. What made her think he would heed her this time? Her sons drew near their father and glowered at their uncle and histhane. *His own sister's sons, and they hate him*, she thought with regret.

She glanced at the very blade the Dane glared at. His father must have lost it in the battle that had almost wiped out both lands over twenty years ago. Only lavish gifts, including herself as queen, had healed the blood feud between the two lands — at least as much as anything else could have. But it had healed badly — the way a deep wound heals with scar tissue that a sudden shock might tear open, shedding blood once more.

So much for Hildeburh's pride in her skill at peace-weaving. She had sworn never to regret her decision to

# Valkyrie Settlement

by Susan Shwartz

Illustrations by Lora Louise Freeland



renounce sword for royal circlet, and she had kept her vow adequately — until now. Her marriage vow “I shall let this hall be my battlefield” took on a new, ironic meaning. Her crown pressed against her brow and made her head ache. She sipped more mead and nodded, this time in the direction of her brother’s most favored thanes.

“In one way, you still resemble the girl who left Denmark as a bride,” said the man seated beside her. That was Hengist, her brother’s second-in-command. There had always been rivalry between Hengist and Hildeburh. The only time Hengist had ever praised her was the night he learned that she planned to leave Denmark. Of course, once safely wed in Frisia, she could hardly challenge Hengist’s growing influence with her brother Hnaef. “The man grieves for his father’s name and his lost sword. You think only of the properties of a king’s hall. You still do not understand men’s honor, do you?”

For the first time since she had heard the skald play, his harp twanged a false, discordant note that echoed the tension in the hall. Someone dared to laugh and went unrebuked. The offended skald rose and went outside. Hildeburh realized she had best act quickly.

“I have my own honor,” she said to Hengist. Then Hildeburh rose from her chair and took up the glistening mead cup. With the firelight gleaming on her gems, she knew she was the sight that drew the eyes of Frisians and Danes alike as she walked forth and poured for the feasters. She walked from man to man, praising this Dane’s strength, that Frisian’s loyalty, her sons’ obedience. *Let your anger die*, she begged them all silently. Hadn’t she always conquered hers? Graciously, as queens must school themselves to be gracious, she forced herself to circle the hall until she returned at last to her husband and brother.

As she approached them, her brother Hnaef sprang up and his chair crashed backward.

“Am I too drunk for vengeance too, graybeard?” he shouted. Then he dashed mead in King Finn’s face.

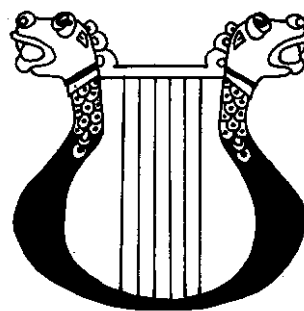
*Odin Allfather protect us all!* Hildeburh shut her eyes. The golden cup fell from her ringed hands and clattered on the floor. She had feared that such an outburst would shatter the fragile peace of her hall. The Frisians and Danes drew their swords on one another. Her sons — youths too tall to be called boys — leapt before their father to guard him. With them was their sister Kara.

“Get back!” Hildeburh screamed. Her daughter Kara had never learned weaponry — at least not from Hildeburh. But battle cries and roars of pain drowned her words. Someone shoved her roughly aside. She staggered against the feasting board. What could *she* do? She was a queen, not a warrior. And besides, against whom would she fight?

As she struggled back to her feet, she saw her younger son Ari clutch his belly and crumple. Kara charged his killer, a man head and shoulders taller than she, and struck through his guard. Bellowing at the unexpected pain, he slashed his sword in a wild, wide arc and caught the girl in the side. That decided

it. Hildeburh seized a sword from a dying man and tried to cut her way through the fighters. The sword felt strange in her hand. But if the peace were broken, so was her oath. Her daughter’s killer owed her his life! She had all but reached the man when he swung at her. *Too slow to fight!* A blow from a shield rim crashed down upon her and knocked her senseless.

**C** REEPING BACK INTO THE HALL AFTER the screaming died down, her maids found Hildeburh sitting with Kara’s head on her lap . . . and the royalty of Denmark and Frisia lying dead around her.



Hengist marched up to her. *Of course he would have survived*, she thought dully. “At least my lord’s death is avenged by this victory,” he declared. “I claim this hall.”

“And I challenge your claim!” at least she could die in battle that

way. But Hengist refused to meet her blade to blade. Instead, he gestured her women forward, feigning appropriate concern for a distraught and gentle lady.

“You are a queen, not a warrior. Your role is to mourn tonight. Tomorrow, you will prepare to return to Denmark.”

**A** T MOONRISE, HENGIST DULY LED Queen Hildeburh past the mead hall to the shore. Dark waters reflected the cliffs which loomed over the battered town. The ship that the Danes had beached upon the sand as well as the torches that they carried were mirrored by these same waters. Over the boat’s sides, the Danes had hung bright shields. Arms and gold lay heaped on the deck around the cloaked bodies of Hildeburh’s sons, her husband, and her brother.

Fire meant mourning and celebration alike to the Danes. Tonight they would kindle the funeral pyre; tomorrow they would celebrate victory by setting fire to Finn’s hall. No trace of his rule would survive; all of Hildeburh’s long labors would lie in ashes, too. And she — a prize of victory — would travel back to Denmark with Hengist and in his own ship.

Hildeburh had not loved Finn. She had not expected to. But she had found satisfaction in knowing how her marriage had healed her people. At least she and Finn had lived together in mutual respect. Now even that was gone.

“How fares your daughter?” asked Hengist. His voice seemed excessively loud in the stillness.

“The healer Skilfing tells me she will not last the night.”

“I am sorry,” he said. “She fought well — for a girl. Of your teaching?”

“How could she be? I, at least, honored my oath of peace.”

"Would you have had me betray your brother for your husband? I banished the man who struck down your daughter and who would have struck you, too. You might thank me for that."

Hildeburh raised her chin and refused to answer. Hengist was probably right: She never would understand men's honor. But it didn't really matter anymore. Nothing did.

Hengist escorted her to the funeral boat, then stood back. Hildeburh unbound her hair and flung her cloak aside. Onto the pyre she flung her own farewell gifts: bracelets rich with garnets, cloth, and her spindle. She would be a peace-weaver no more. Hengist, hands locked on his swordhilt, stood watching. *Defy me*, he seemed to say. *Go ahead and try*.

Slowly, twelve Danes rode horses around the beached ship. Then they hurled torches into it. Hildeburh forced herself to stand straight, motionless, as the flames leapt over the painted shields and cast deadly splendor over the torques, the armlets, and the mail that the dead men wore. The fire touched her sons' pale hair, then swirled about them. Sparks smouldered on Hildeburh's garments, yet she pressed nearer, closing her nostrils to the smell. And as the flames hid the bodies from her sight, she began to chant.

For hours the pyre burned and she sang. When the ship finally collapsed and spewed forth a cloud of sparks resembling deadly fireflies, she fell to her knees. Hengist offered her his arm so that she could support herself in her weakness. She jerked away from his touch. When her women brought her mead to soothe her throat — or, just possibly, to drug her — she dashed it onto the ashes. They hissed and sent up acrid, eye-watering smoke.

Before she could protest, Skilfing, the gray healer, assisted her to her feet.

"How is Kara?" A foolish question; she already knew the answer.

"Let us go to her," said Skilfing.

"Lady, lady, why did she have to fight?" wailed Fulla, one of Hildeburh's maids.

"She listened too much to stories of my girlhood," Hildeburh said in a voice as gray as Skilfing's cloak. "If I had dreamt that those stories would. . . or if, if only I had trained her properly, despite my oath — gods, she was my youngest."

She entered the small bower she used to share with Finn and knelt at Kara's side. With a loving hand, she smoothed back her daughter's fair hair. But the sound of harp strings in a corner made Hildeburh raise her head in quick anger.

Deor the skald sat hunched over his harp.

"My daughter lies dying and you play the harp?" Hildeburh demanded. "What do you find to sing about? Honor? Glorious battles and eagles eager for slaughter?"

"Lady, it was a lullaby."

Hildeburh held out her hand to him in apology. There was ash upon it.

"I would dare Hell, storm Niflheim itself," she whispered, "if only I might avenge my children." She

turned to the healer, who was stowing away the last of his herbs. "Can you do nothing more?"

Skilfing's hood fell so far over his face that Hildeburh saw only the glint of his one eye. "If it is her fate to die, no one can withstand Wyrð. Not even I."

He flung back his hood. Hildeburh gasped and was immediately sorry. No need to make the man ashamed of an honorable wound. Though Skilfing's face was wise with experience, a hideous scar along one temple showed the track of a blow which had cost him an eye. Though she had seen this scar before, Hildeburh still shuddered each time she saw how it disfigured his face. She was ashamed. Her boast had been overly bold. Deor would doubtless remind her how the wise man was never hot of heart, never too ready to make boasts — oh, he was full of maxims.

"No need, lady," said Skilfing as if he sensed her thoughts. "Even the Valkyries fight no more bravely than Kara did, my lady. Had I known she would fight — but I cannot heal her. Yet, if it is vengeance you want, as you have sworn —"

"Tell me what to do!" Hildeburh extended her hands.

"It may take more strength than you have."

She had, she realized, pathetically little strength. *I did not think I could endure this long night of mourning, yet I did. Many times I felt as if I would collapse, but I did not. Perhaps I can find the strength.*

"Choose a companion you can trust," instructed Skilfing, "and climb the headlands — to the highest cliff — tonight. There you will meet the Valkyries as they gather to return to Valhalla with a rich harvest. Tell them that Skilfing sent you. They will grant you whatever your courage can earn. Wyrð favor you, Hildeburh."

The path to the headlands was steep and wound through a forest of dark, stunted trees. Rumor had it that evil wights prowled there. Had Hildeburh any courage left? Or had it all been crushed into resignation and ashes? Well, she had bound herself with a rash oath. She nodded at Skilfing, who pulled his hood over his face and walked to the doorway.

Gerda, bravest of Hildeburh's women, claimed the right to accompany her. Hildeburh went to a chest and drew out her old sword. It was scarred with much use — from twenty years past. The protective runes on it were almost erased by old blows.

As Hildeburh started on her path, she looked back at the cloaked figure of Skilfing, who waved one hand — in farewell or in blessing. Two ravens left their perches on the bower's roof-tree and flew high above the town. As Hengist's guards turned to look up at them and made signs against ill omens, Hildeburh slipped away unnoticed.

**H**ER SWORD FELT STRANGE, UNUSED to her hand. The wires that wound about its hilt tingled against her palm. She remembered a time when that palm had been callused, when sweat had glued that hilt to her hand, when she and her blade had seemed like one creature.

Wind soughed in the branches of the stunted pines. From the height of a man down to the rough ground, the branches were torn and twisted as if some rough beast had passed there.

"Stay behind me," she told Gerda.

Peace-weaver, lady to bind alliances — for years, that had been the life she had known. She did not know if she could still wield her sword. A wolf howled, and she forced herself to ignore the ice that fear sent stabbing through her heart. She grasped her sword more firmly and walked on.

After a time, Hildeburh saw the forest thinning out. *Surely, surely whatever stalks through this place will not confront us now*, she thought, bitterly ashamed of the relief she felt. The ground grew barer. High above them, the sickle moon lit their way.

Then their path leveled out. Hildeburh stood on the headland overlooking the fjord. *This is too easy*, she thought. Far below lay the high-prowed Danish ships and the blackened sand where Hildeburh had lamented by a pyre; the town seemed to huddle close against the rocks. From the hall to the ships, torches moved back and forth: Hengist's men were loading their plunder.

For hundreds of feet the cliff plummeted to the shore. Hildeburh walked forward until she stood at its edge. With her head flung back and her arms outstretched — just as she had stood when she chanted before her kinsmen's balefire — she called on the Valkyries.

"Odin's daughters, hear me! Skilfing the healer has sent me, Hildeburh, princess of Denmark, queen of Frisia, to speak with you."

Only the winds, driving clouds before them, did answer her.

"How many men did you claim this night?" she shouted. Her voice shook but did not break. "Some of them were mine! I have a right to know!"

Hildeburh imagined that she could hear noises in the freshening wind: harnesses jingling, hoofbeats pounding closer and closer. She drew her sword up in salute.

Riding down over the clouds on pale horses came the Valkyries, nine warriors in glittering armor studded with white gems. They wore no helms; their shields hung gleaming on their saddles. Long, braided hair lay on their shoulders. Their weapons were as keen as their eyes. And they laughed as they rode, a music without pity or warmth. A light brighter than the sheen of moonlight on iron mail surrounded them.

Hildeburh stood firm, watching the Valkyries' horses send forth sparks as their hooves touched the rocks. The Valkyrie riding foremost reined in and dismounted.

"I am Brunnhilde. Why do you seek us?"

"This is Hildeburh, the one who renounced her sword for a crown," a second Valkyrie said. "What gives her the right to question us?"

"Let her answer, Svava," Brunnhilde ordered. But her eyes held no warmth. The other Valkyries drew near to listen with the slightly malicious curiosity that Hildeburh had noticed seasoned warriors use around a

boastful youth. Once — for a brief season — she had stood up under it, too.

"For vengeance."

"Against whom?" asked Brunnhilde. "The Danes, your blood kin, or against your husband's people? You cannot take vengeance without betraying someone."

"Already, you have betrayed us," Svava broke in. "You gave up your sword. Your daughter died because you denied her proper training. How can you call yourself fit to take revenge?"

"I swore an oath that shaped my life," Hildeburh protested. But there was no point in being abject. She drew herself up. She had made what seemed like the only honorable choice at the time; not even Valkyries had the right to besmirch it.

"Go back to Denmark," taunted Svava. "Let the man who served your brother protect you."

The other Valkyries laughed. Hildeburh fought against despair. If her courage earned help, Skilfing had said, then the Valkyries would help her. Was that the truth? Or was she trusting Skilfing because, all her life, she had trusted men and their word? That could not matter. Since the Valkyries were at least willing to speak with her, she would have to convince them.

"Before I let Hengist touch me, I would leap from that cliff," she said calmly. She knew that he was counting on her helplessness and her grief. Once Hengist returned her to Denmark, he knew that Hildeburh would have no other choice than to accept the marriage that would seal his hold on the Danish crown. "I challenged him to fight."

Glaring contemptuously at Hildeburh, the Valkyrie questioned, "You challenged him?"

"Yes," she answered. She did not like Svava's attitude, Valkyrie or not, she decided. "And I challenge you."

She could feel shock ripple through the Valkyries' closed ranks.

Brunnhilde stepped forward. "So," she said. "So you would dare. Well enough."

The Valkyries formed a circle about Hildeburh and Svava. The silvery eyes of the Valkyries were bright with anticipation. Brunnhilde waved her sisters further back. "Set up a fighting ring by the cliff," she ordered. "You will fight Svava there. Our rules are simple: Leave the ring by even so much as a foot's trim — and lose. Stay within the ring until moonset, and conquer."

*I have to hold on!* Hildeburh told herself. But did she have the endurance?

"One last thing," Brunnhilde said. "Will you fight in human form or as a *fylgja*?"

If Hildeburh left her body and became a fetch, a disembodied spirit, she would be fighting an immortal on her own plane of being. But to fight a Valkyrie in a body that had known age, childbearing, and grief was to throw away any chance she had of enduring until moonset.

"As a *fylgja*," Gerda would tend her body until she returned to claim it. She would not permit herself to imagine failure.



"So be it," said Brunnhilde.

With the transition from flesh to spirit came the feeling that she had shed a cumbersome husk. She felt as if the body of the warrior-maid she had been years ago — vibrant, taut, bursting with energy — had been restored to her. Once again, her skin was smooth, her breasts and belly firm. Once again, she felt as if the entire fair world lay before her to love and explore. She looked down at her *fylgja* form. Like the Valkyries, it wore gleaming armor.

Svava attacked fast and hard. She drove Hildeburh almost to the cliff's edge before Hildeburh was able to recover and weave a strong defense.

"Fight me, coward!" Svava hissed. Her blade licked in and slashed Hildeburh's wrist below the mail. Strength drained from her and she staggered. Daring a glance over at her body, she saw Gerda staunch the blood with her own cloak.

*Coward*, she goaded herself and fell into a fighting trance. As she slashed and parried, she remembered all the condemnations of her fighting she had ever known. *You can't fight*, Hengist had said. *Girls aren't warriors*, Hnaef had told her. *My queen may not fight*, Finn had informed her on their wedding night. *Swear not to*. For the sake of peace, she had sworn. Now she had to fight. And she was enduring, wasn't she? All those years. *I wasn't so bad*, she thought. *And I'm holding on*.

Despite her newly kindled pride, despite the *fylgja* form, she was tiring. She was too slow, had been too slow in the hall to react, to save Kara, or to avenge her. Anger at her slowness fueled her, and she lunged at Svava. There was nothing slow about that lunge.

The moon moved lower in the sky. *You denied Kara proper training*, Svava had reproached her. That was true, and it hurt. But she had lived with other pains, had lived so all her life. *At least*, she thought, *Kara had a mother who kept her oaths*. There was pride in that.

Hoofbeats rang behind her, and a cry of welcome, but Hildeburh ignored them.

"Coward," Svava crooned again, and Hildeburh

attacked. Rage flowed from her mind down her arm, and she drove forward. For a little while she mustered the speed she had once had.

Svava brought up her sword to parry Hildeburh's frantic attack. Hildeburh's blade snapped against the work of Weland the Smith. She staggered back, then was falling.

"Hold!" Brunnhilde commanded. Hildeburh looked down. One of her feet had crossed the fighting circle. Then she was falling back into that ponderous mortal body of hers — a fall into despair.

**H**ILDEBURH LAY WITH HER HEAD ON Gerda's lap, the Valkyries about her. Her arm hurt, but the respect in Brunnhilde's eyes made her forget the pain.

"How shall we assist you?"

"I lost." Hildeburh would have to live with her defeat.

"You have too much pride," said Brunnhilde. "Did you really think to defeat a goddess? We honor you for the attempt."

So, what would she choose? The Danish fleet in flames? Hengist's head on a stake? More death would not bring back her children. Her desire for vengeance had burnt itself out like that pyre on the beach. But she still had earned the Valkyries' aid, and she suddenly realized what she wanted.

"I would stay here and not go into exile in Denmark. This is my home now. But I have no army, and my sword has snapped."

"Go home, Hildeburh," Brunnhilde told her. "Tell Hengist that you will stay here and be queen. Gather your women, and whatever men wish to stand beside you, and refuse to be carried off. I will not forsake you. And as for your sword . . ."

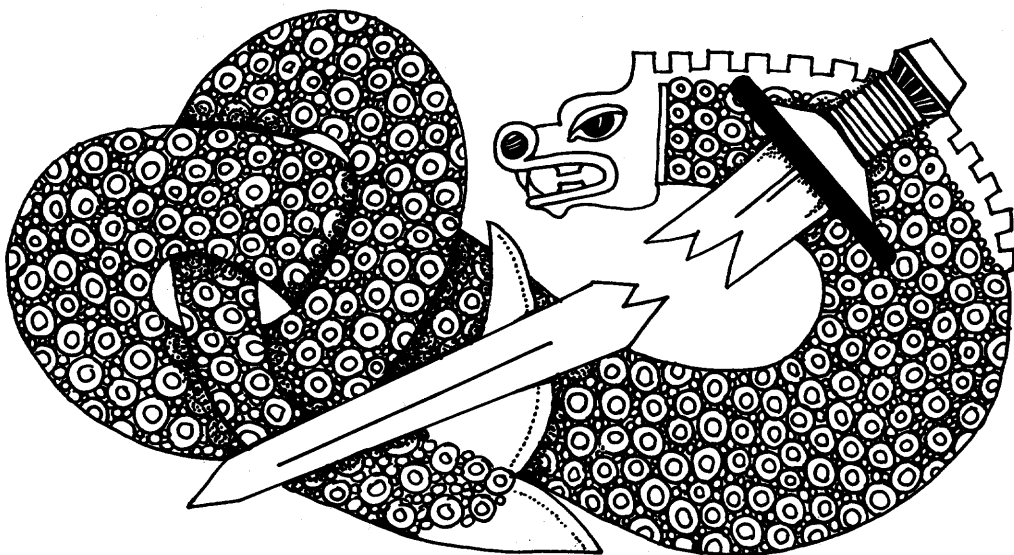
Brunnhilde picked up the shattered blade. Light flared from her fingers, and then the sword was whole.

"Don't expect it to have any powers," Brunnhilde warned, her eyes flashing with a faint touch of malice at the sign of hope which had flushed Hildeburh's

face. "It will not break. But its strength depends upon the strength of the hand wielding it." She held out her hand; afterwards, queen and Valkyrie clasped arms.

**O**NCE AGAIN Hildeburh and Gerda passed through the woods. With the moon set, their path was dark. Yet Hildeburh pushed onward. She was eager to be well out of the place.

She was not as tired as she thought a woman her age should be after a



battle, and her wrist barely hurt at all. At least the battle with Svava had convinced her that her endurance held. Speed? *Well*, she contemplated, *at my age, I couldn't expect it, could I?*

"Look!" Gerda cried softly. "The poor little ones!" Dead creatures lay on the ground: birds with feathers torn off, a rabbit with its breast fur bloodied.

"Just pray we do not meet whatever slew them," said Hildeburh.

They passed a rock face made chill and slimy by black moss that gleamed as water cascaded over it and into a pool far below. Astonishingly, Gerda chuckled. "Lady, this is a place better to sing about than to walk through."

"We will tell Deor about it, and he can remember it in his next song," said Hildeburh. "I have heard that a stag would rather let hunters slay it than swim through . . ." Panic squeezed her throat hard, and she gasped, then fell silent.

The rumors about this place were true.

Before her stood the Dane she had tried to kill. Glamr was his name; he was the man Hengist had exiled. The wound Kara dealt him was dry now, and a black crust told of ichor that had oozed through the rags that bound it. But in the short time since he had been banished, one of the creatures stalking the forests had seized him. Draining his life, it had filled Glamr with an unholy vitality that compelled him to snatch life and blood from birds and rabbits — assuming he found neither men nor women to slay. From Glamr's brow to his thickened, groping fingers, his flesh had turned the same blue-black color that meat turns when it is left to freeze through a long winter.

Hildeburh had longed for his death. But she would far rather have slain him herself.

Against the corrupted darkness of Glamr's flesh, his wolf-gray hair glinted. But his eyes — Hildeburh looked away from them — simultaneously repelled and ensorcelled. They were the blue of poison berries, and they shone with a feral luster.

As Hildeburh raised her sword, her wrist suddenly twinged. She had fought and lost. But the Valkyries had not sent her away in disgrace. And behind her was Gerda, who had a right to her protection. Hildeburh walked toward the grisly creature. Perhaps the dim memories of a queen and a bright blade quickened in the revenant's consciousness, for it staggered back a step or two.

Then it screamed and charged so rapidly that she barely had time to bring up her blade. By some good chance, her stroke was a heart-thrust. Black blood spurted from the wound to befoul the clean rocks. Glamr shrieked, a hideous ululating sound which all but paralyzed Hildeburh. Horrified, she watched the wound, which was damaging enough to stop all but a berserker or a walking dead, close into a puckered scar. Behind her, Gerda gabbled prayers to Odin, Frigg, and all the rest of the Aesir.

Again Hildeburh struck, this time at the thing's belly. She leapt aside almost in time to escape the foul-smelling gush of blood her blow released. Again the

wound closed, and Glamr advanced.

*How can I kill what is already dead?* Yet she must kill to avenge her children's deaths and, yes, to avenge Glamr, too. She might hate him, but no one could wish living death on a man and call herself human thereafter, least of all a woman who wished to rule wisely. She had to kill this thing if she were ever to accomplish that!

The stench of blood and unnaturally animated flesh made bile surge into her mouth. She spat it out, raised her sword, and looked up.

"Beware its eyes!" shouted Gerda. But Hildeburh's gaze had already been held and trapped by the fell, mindless hate in the creature's eyes.

"Lady, lady," Gerda cried again, "defend yourself!"

*I cannot.* She had been too slow to evade its glance. For all those years, she had been slow — slow to react, slow to anger. She had been a ring-giver to warriors, not a warrior herself, and it had slowed her. Also, she had already fought one battle this night. Granted, she could not have hoped to conquer a Valkyrie, but could she conquer a wight? *Lost, lost*, something cowardly keened in her mind. Then another thought routed it: Brunnhilde's face as she healed Hildeburh's sword. The creature was slow, slower than she. She could parry its blows and, if she must, shout to Gerda to fetch help. And help of some kind — perhaps even the Valkyries — would come. She could hold out. The only thing she feared now was to meet the revenant's glance again.

Two ravens dropped out of the sky and dug their sharp claws into Glamr's shoulders and hair. One, then the second, pecked at the creature's eyes. Glamr bellowed and brought his huge fists up to crush and grind at them. The birds, eluding him, attacked again. That broke the spell which bound Hildeburh, and she forced herself forward.

The ravens had given her a clear opening to smite Glamr's neck. Such gifts were only given once. She raised her sword high over her head and brought it down with all her strength. Head and body dropped to the ground. The body twitched briefly, then lay still. Light sprang from its wounds, then spread to engulf all of the hideous form in a pale fire which devoured head and trunk, leaving a sere outline on the bare rock.

*I slew a monster*, Hildeburh thought. *Just like the heroes I used to hear of.* The Valkyries would nod at her with chill respect, perhaps. But she was too weary for pride.

"How do you fare, lady?" Gerda called.

"Well enough. Let us go home." There was yet one more battle to fight, and then she could rest.

**I**T WAS THE UHT, THE DARKEST PART OF the night right before dawn, the moment when the tide changes and the dying surrender. Throughout the night, the dragon-prowed ships of Hengist awaited only their lord's most honored prize of war, the lady Hildeburh.

When Hengist came to fetch her, she was standing at the doors of her battered hall, hands clasped on an old

sword.

"Clear that brush from the eaves," she ordered her tallest women. "All you others, help carry the wounded into the hall." The walls were still standing; with luck, they would have the roof repaired before the first snows. Once some of the wounded men were healed enough to lend strength, the rebuilding would go even more rapidly.

It would have been folly to burn the hall merely for the sake of a warrior's pride, especially when that warrior was Hengist. This was her hall, and she would fight to protect it. If Hengist would not meet her blade to blade, she had other weapons: her pride, her dignity, her rekindled self-respect.

The rings of Hengist's mail chimed together faintly from the speed of his arrogant walk and his abrupt halt. "My ship awaits you, and the men prepare to fire this hulk. What means this, lady?"

"You shall not burn my home, sir," Hildeburh said.

Hengist stared at her. Hildeburh could practically watch his thoughts chase across his stern face as he made allowances for a distracted woman whose daughter had died during the night. "Your home is in Denmark."

"Denmark sent me forth and I made a life here. So here I am, and here I remain."

"You do, do you?" Hengist stepped forward as if to compel her to accompany him, but she brought up her sword. In the dawn's light, it had a faint sparkle she had not seen before. *A trick of the light*, she decided, mindful of Brunnhilde's warning.

"Challenge me," she threatened, "or force me to accompany you, and you will be remembered in song as the warrior who battled a mourning queen." In a much softer voice she added, "And if you do meet me blade to blade, I may just best you, too."

Hengist stepped back. "You cannot hold this land alone."

"Not so." Hildeburh gestured at the line of women forming at her back. Each held a bill or blade; Gerda

bore a scythe. "Here are my sisters who have pledged to rebuild our home. We shall live here together and forget whether a man or woman among us was born Frisian or Dane. Remember, lord, there are wounded men in this hall. Helpless as they are to resist you, surely you would not burn them?"

"And what of the walking dead, the wights of the forests?"

"Last night I slew one of them with this blade. Let Wyrð favor me, and I shall deal thus with any other enemy of my people."

Above Hildeburh's head cawed two ravens. Then they fluttered away, darting and circling one another as if in exultation. She thought she knew whose they were. She smiled secretly. "As for raiders, just let them come! My kinswomen and I will guard my people from them!"

She raised the sword Brunnhilde had mended. From high overhead, as if returning her salute, came the jangle of harnesses, the dance of hooves, and the cool laughter of the Valkyries.

Now there seemed to be ten of them.

*Ride well, my heart*, Hildeburh spoke inwardly to that tenth Valkyrie. Kara would feel at home among them.

"Your men become impatient at your delay," Hildeburh told Hengist. "Now, my lord, your crew may await you, but will the tide be so obedient?"

Hengist's lips tightened in anger. Then he forced a smile. "So a Danish warrior rules here after all."

*He means that as praise*, Hildeburh reminded herself. "I rule here," she said. "Remember that."

"I will remember," he said. That was all the tribute she would get from him — and all she needed. She doubted he would be back.

The ships sailed out the fjord and out onto the swan's road. When she was sure they were gone, she turned back toward the hall she had won. Once again, the Valkyries circled, dropping low to wave over the gabled roof, then vanished into the light of dawn.

8

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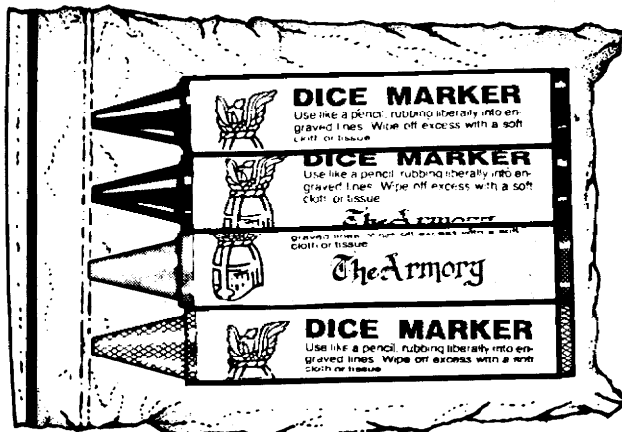
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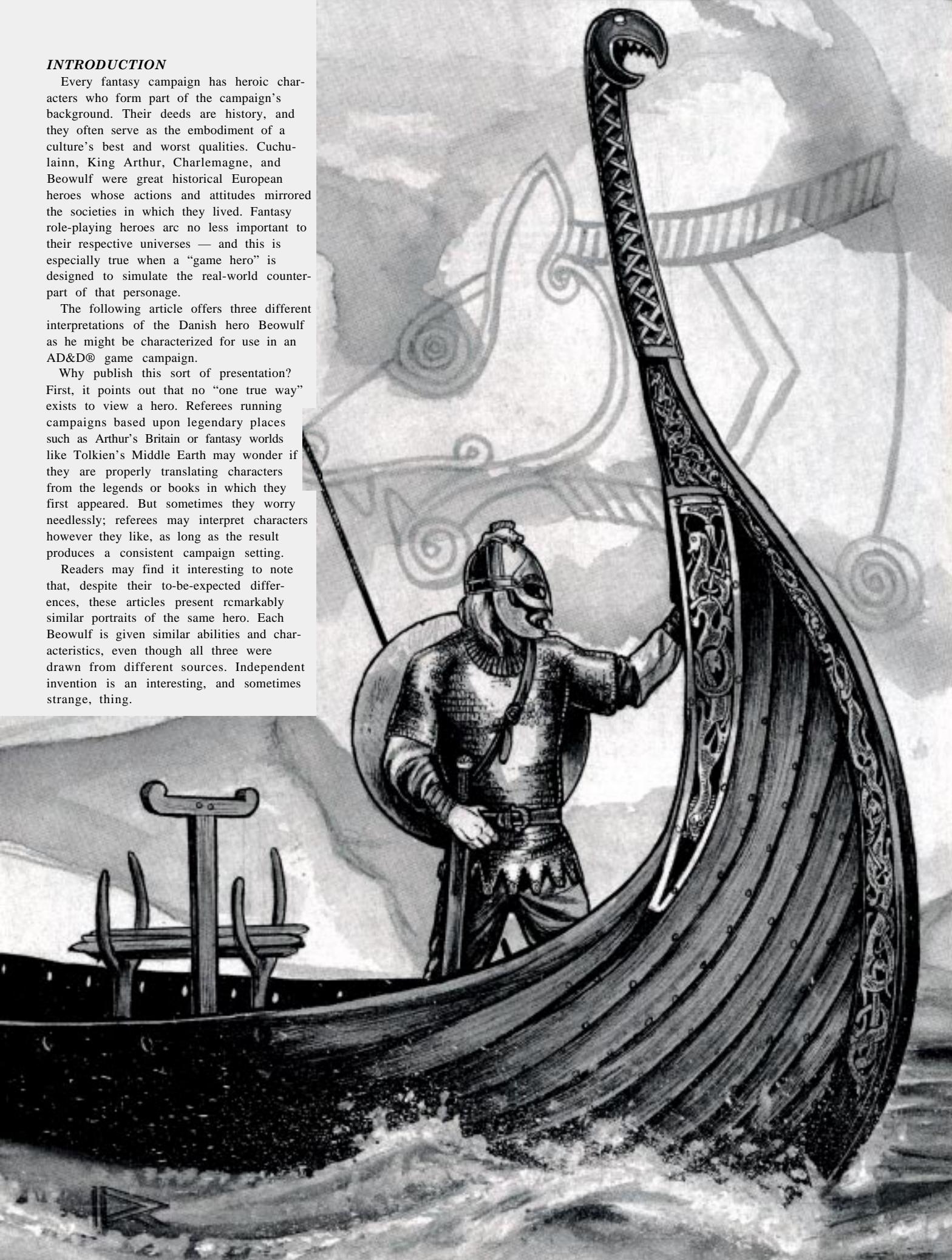
## INTRODUCTION

Every fantasy campaign has heroic characters who form part of the campaign's background. Their deeds are history, and they often serve as the embodiment of a culture's best and worst qualities. Cuchulainn, King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Beowulf were great historical European heroes whose actions and attitudes mirrored the societies in which they lived. Fantasy role-playing heroes are no less important to their respective universes — and this is especially true when a “game hero” is designed to simulate the real-world counterpart of that personage.

The following article offers three different interpretations of the Danish hero Beowulf as he might be characterized for use in an AD&D® game campaign.

Why publish this sort of presentation? First, it points out that no “one true way” exists to view a hero. Referees running campaigns based upon legendary places such as Arthur's Britain or fantasy worlds like Tolkien's Middle Earth may wonder if they are properly translating characters from the legends or books in which they first appeared. But sometimes they worry needlessly; referees may interpret characters however they like, as long as the result produces a consistent campaign setting.

Readers may find it interesting to note that, despite their to-be-expected differences, these articles present remarkably similar portraits of the same hero. Each Beowulf is given similar abilities and characteristics, even though all three were drawn from different sources. Independent invention is an interesting, and sometimes strange, thing.



# Three cheers for Beowulf

## Different portraits of the legendary hero

### Beowulf I

by Robert Cooke

#### 12th-level fighter

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful good*

HIT POINTS: 104

ARMOR CLASS: -4

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-8 or 2-16 (+10)

MOVE: 12"

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

STRENGTH: 22 (+4, +10)

INTELLIGENCE: 11

WISDOM: 15

DEXTERITY: 18

CONSTITUTION: 19

CHARISMA: 12

In many ways Beowulf is the greatest hero whose name has come down through the Old English poetic tradition. His fame lies not only in his strength and courage but also in his personality, which blended heroism with wisdom and responsibility. Much of our knowledge about Beowulf comes from an epic poem which was probably composed in the late seventh or early eighth century. According to the poet, Beowulf's arms and hands contained the strength of thirty men. His stamina was so great that he could swim in freezing sea waters for seven days. Yet, the poet remembers Beowulf as much for his wisdom, kindness, humility, and courage as for his physical strength. Though he had no desire to rule, Beowulf did reign as king of the Geats for a fifty-year period, a time during which peace was prevalent in the land.

Beowulf was the grandson of Hrethel, king of the Geats, and was apparently the only child of Hrethel's daughter. Though raised from the age of seven at the king's court and educated as if he were Hrethel's own son, Beowulf had an unexceptional childhood.

Shortly after his uncle Hygelac took the throne, Beowulf became a man and found his purpose in life. He first made a name for himself in a long, foolish swimming match with another young hero named Breca; they both swore they would risk their lives in the ocean in winter. Though Beowulf was the faster swimmer, he refused to leave Breca behind, alone on the waves. A storm finally separated them after five days into the match. Breca was washed safely ashore on the west coast of Norway; Beowulf, however, was attacked by sea monsters. He killed nine monsters with his sword that night; after two more days in the water, he came ashore on an uncharted part of the Finnish coast, farther north than

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***Beowulf speaks courteously and angers slowly. He is generous and gives treasure freely to those who have performed even a small service for him. He rewards men who do their jobs well.***

---

where Breca had emerged from the sea. This tale is the original source of Beowulf's fame.

Later in his life, when he heard of the ravages of the monster Grendel, Beowulf gained permission from his king to seek out Grendel, gathered fourteen companions for the adventure, and sailed south to offer his services to Hrothgar, the king of the Danes. Hrothgar had built a great hall called Heorot, meaning "The Hall of the Hart." Skillful craftsmen constructed Heorot from fine woods and solid stone. Its benches and gables were plated with gold. It was the finest hall that had ever been seen in the north, but its beauty had been tarnished by the coming of Grendel.

For twelve years this creature had invaded the hall at night and killed any man it found there. No one had been able to meet the monster in battle because of its strength, speed, and ferocity, and because of a magical protection that prevented swords from striking Grendel.

Hrothgar welcomed Beowulf and his men warmly, and gladly gave them permission to stand watch in Heorot the same night they arrived. In the middle of the night, Grendel appeared. The monster attacked so swiftly that before Beowulf could react, it had torn apart one of his men. When Grendel turned to attack Beowulf, the hero grappled with the monster. His strength was so great that Grendel attempted to flee, but Beowulf gripped it strongly and tore Grendel's arm and shoulder away from its body. Then Grendel fled, dying even as it ran.

The following night, Grendel's mother appeared to avenge the death of her offspring. She attacked as Grendel had in the

past, killing a good and loyal thane of Hrothgar. Beowulf tracked her the next morning to a nearby fen, the spot where she laired beneath the surface of a pool. When Beowulf dived into the pool, Grendel's mother seized him and dragged him into an air-filled cavern. They fought there in the cave, but Grendel's mother was protected in the same way as her offspring, and Beowulf's sword could not harm the creature. Then, while looking about for another weapon, Beowulf spied in the cavern a huge two-handed sword that no other man could have lifted. He gripped and swung the sword — severing the monster's head from her shoulders, because this weapon was powerful enough to break through the monster's protection.

Hrothgar rewarded Beowulf richly for his feats, but Beowulf kept very little treasure for himself. He gave most of the reward to Hygelac, his king.

Hygelac fell in battle some years later, and his only son was still a child. Beowulf refused the throne when it was offered to him. Instead, he acted as protector and advisor to Prince Heardred. Only when the Prince also died in battle, leaving no heir, did Beowulf agree to become king. He ruled the Geats wisely and well for fifty peaceful years.

Beowulf's strength declined as he grew older, but his courage remained the same. When a dragon attacked the Geats, Beowulf went out to meet the monster just as he would have done in his youth, though he felt death was waiting for him in that battle. His companions retreated when the monster appeared, leaving Beowulf to face it alone. Only one warrior, Beowulf's cousin Wiglaf, had the courage to return and help the king in his last struggle. Together they defeated the dragon, but the monster's venom ended Beowulf's life.

If Beowulf were to be encountered in an AD&D® game setting, it would be at a point in his life either soon after his battle with Grendel or just before his fight with the dragon. If encountered in his old age, Beowulf will have strength 19, wisdom 17, dexterity 16, and constitution 17. Whenever he is encountered, Beowulf speaks courteously and angers slowly. He is generous and gives treasure freely to those who have performed even a small service for him. With both treasure and praise, he also rewards men who do their jobs well. Loyal to his king and his king's son, Beowulf has never completely stopped grieving for Hygelac's death. Beowulf is not boastful, but will speak of his adventures if asked or



challenged. Even then, he does not dwell on details of combat.

Beowulf wears +5 chainmail, forged by the god Weland (a god of smiths similar to Goibhnie in the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopedica). According to legend, the armor gives Beowulf immunity to all rending attacks, because sharp weapons cannot penetrate it. (In game terms, Beowulf takes only half damage from sharp weapons, but full damage from blunt ones.) At the DM's option, Beowulf's chainmail can also negate the effects of *girdles of giant strength*, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *potions of giant strength*, and other similar devices and magics that give fighters additional strength.

Beowulf ordinarily uses a normal bastard sword that he swings one-handed (damage 2-8 plus his strength bonus). If he uses a magic sword, it will be the god-forged, two-handed *vorpel blade* he found when fighting Grendel's mother. This sword is +5 to hit and does a base damage of 2-16 points, but a strength of at least 20 is required to wield it. Beowulf will not ordinarily use this sword against a normal human.

When Beowulf uses any sword not forged by a deity (or any sword of less than +3 enchantment), the weapon must save vs. crushing blow (as hard metal) every time he scores a hit with it in melee, or else the sword will break because of Beowulf's great strength. If he loses the use of his weapon when fighting a humanoid opponent of up

***When Beowulf uses any sword not forged by a deity, the weapon must save vs. crushing blow or break because of Beowulf's great strength.***

to 9' in height, he will attack that opponent with his fists (3 attacks per round, 9-12 damage per attack). He also likes to grapple opponents, going for a bear hug. If he hits with two fist attacks in a single round, each on a roll of 2 or more greater than the number needed to hit, he has grabbed his opponent in a bear hug and will automatically do 11-14 points of damage from the bear hug in each round thereafter. An opponent held in this manner is -4 to hit and gets only one attack per round. Beowulf will release the bear hug only if an opponent (the one being held, or another one who comes to help out) scores a hit on him and does at least 4

points of damage with that attack.

These rules are generally compatible with the variant system for unarmed combat described in issue #83 of DRAGON® Magazine. However, Beowulf's strength and training will enable him to kill opponents with his unarmed attacks if he so desires, rather than just rendering them unconscious. If he kills an opponent, Beowulf will take up the victim's weapon and use it to continue combat if any other foes remain to be dealt with.

When attacking a dragon, Beowulf uses a great iron shield firmly planted against the ground, for protection against the dragon's breath weapon. Beowulf takes only one-quarter damage from a dragon's breath weapon as long as the shield makes its saving throw, but he is still able to strike around or over the shield with his normal attacks. When the shield fails its saving throw, Beowulf must also save vs. the attack or take full damage from its effects.

Beowulf is ordinarily accompanied by 11-14 companions of third to sixth level. They wear banded armor and carry shields (AC 3), and are armed with swords and spears. If mounted, they ride medium warhorses with leather barding. Beowulf is loyal to his men, but is not foolhardy. If the group is outnumbered or in a bad situation, Beowulf will order a retreat and then return later for vengeance.

Beowulf is an expert horseman and swimmer. If mounted, he rides a heavy warhorse with chainmail barding. This horse is as fast as a medium warhorse. Beowulf can swim for up to seven days in cold seas and for up to fourteen days in warmer waters at a movement rate of 12". He can hold his breath for 19-24 (d6 + 18) turns. Beowulf's special chainmail is not cumbersome in the water, and he can wear it while swimming.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Beowulf Is My Name*, translated by Frederick R. Rebsamen, Rinehart Press, paperback.



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## Beowulf II *by Roger E. Moore*

15th-level fighter

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*

HIT POINTS: 106

ARMOR CLASS: -5

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-8 (+5)

MOVE: 9"

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

STRENGTH: 18/98 (+2, +5)

INTELLIGENCE: 13

WISDOM: 14

DEXTERITY: 18

CONSTITUTION: 17

CHARISMA: 17

Beowulf was a Geatish prince; after his father's death he became king and ruled well for many years, his nation prospering all the while. During his career, Beowulf engaged in combat many times with human raiders, giants, and sea monsters that

plagued the Geatish coastlines. It was in Daneland at Heorot, a great banqueting hall built by a chieftain named Hrothgar, that Beowulf performed his greatest feats against the forces of evil.

A powerful ogre-like creature, invulnerable to normal weapons, came up out of a swampy lake and heard the men of Heorot celebrating. When night came the monster, named Grendel, crept up to the manor and slew many of the men-at-arms there. For years afterward, Grendel attacked the hall by night, and no one could stand against the beast. Beowulf heard of this and took a company of men by ship to Heorot to relieve the hall's curse. Once at Heorot, Beowulf and his men laid down in the hall as if asleep; Beowulf, however, remained awake and awaited his foe's arrival.

It wasn't long in coming. Grendel burst the doors of the hall open, entered, and seized one of the sleeping men. In a few moments, the man was slain and devoured. Then Grendel reached for the next man — Beowulf — who reached out and seized the monster's wrist. Since Beowulf reasoned that no weapon could pierce the monster's hide, unarmed combat was the only answer. Their battle was long and terrible, yet Beowulf's strength was so great that the creature fought in vain to be free. Beowulf tore Grendel's arm off at the shoulder, and the dying monster fled back into the swamp and plunged into the black lake.

While the men of the hall celebrated the defeat of the monster, Grendel's mother discovered what had happened to her son and came out of the waters herself to seek vengeance. She slew several armed men and escaped back into the lake. Beowulf took his men to the lake where he leaped into the water after her. They fought underwater for a time, then entered her air-filled lair. There, Beowulf found an ancient sword manufactured by titans; with this sword, he cut off the head of Grendel's mother. The blade, however, was eaten away by the monster's blood. Beowulf took the creature's head and the sword's hilt back to the shore as proof that the monster was dead.

If encountered, Beowulf appears as a handsome Scandinavian warrior wearing gold-colored chainmail and bearing a shield. Though these items are actually made of steel and non-magical, the chain and shield each count as +3 armor for protection purposes. Heavily bejeweled, they are worth thousands of gold pieces. Beowulf's longsword is of the finest manufacture; though it is also non-magical, it counts as a +2 weapon to hit and damage.

Beowulf is proud, courageous, and hardly seems to know the meaning of fear. When describing his previous adventures, he may sound rather boastful, but he is simply stating the truth. In underwater combat, Beowulf can hold his breath for a full turn (10 rounds) before requiring air. He is a superb swimmer and can carry a small sword with him, using it as a stabbing and thrusting weapon at normal "to hit" odds if attacked. If using the pummeling and grap-

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***Beowulf is proud, courageous, and hardly seems to know the meaning of fear.***

***When describing his adventures, he may sound boastful, but he is simply stating the truth.***

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pling tables in the DMG, add +20% to the former and +30% to the latter results to determine the effects of his attacks on an opponent. Beowulf frequently roams high seas and could possibly enter an AD&D® game world while on a sea voyage.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Beowulf*, translated by David Wright, Penguin Books.

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## Beowulf III by Kyle Gray

### 20th-level fighter

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful neutral*

HIT POINTS: 130

ARMOR CLASS: -3

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-8 (+6)

MOVE: 15"

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

STRENGTH: 18/00 (+3, +6)

INTELLIGENCE: 15

WISDOM: 14

DEXTERITY: 18

CONSTITUTION: 18

CHARISMA: 15

Beowulf, the monster-slaying king of the Geats, is an overwhelmingly powerful warrior. As a youth, Beowulf engaged in a contest with another young warrior in which he swam in the ocean for five days, sword in hand, and killed nine sea monsters. Before reaching the age of twenty, Beowulf defended the Danish Heorot Hall against the monster Grendel. This monster, impervious to all weapons, attempted to crush Beowulf, who then rectified the situation by ripping off Grendel's arm, sending him scampering back to his home in the swamp to die of blood loss. Later, Beowulf dove down into the swamp to kill Grendel's mother, another horrible monster. Beowulf then made his way back to his homeland, engaging in many battles along the way, and eventually became the king of the Geats. He had a long and successful reign; and, as an old man, Beowulf fittingly met his death in battle, slaying a marauding dragon with his last sword stroke.

Beowulf is a large, blond-haired man, wearing +2 chainmail and carrying a +1 sword. He fights with one of his two magic swords: Naegling, a +1 broad sword, +4 vs. reptiles; or Hrunting, a bastard sword of sharpness. There is a 75% chance that Beowulf will be encountered when in his twenties, young and adventurous, and willing to undertake any mission offering a chance of great glory. There is a 25% chance that Beowulf will agree to accompany a party for a while, but while doing so he will attack every evil monster in sight, expecting help from his new companions. If this help is not given, there is a 60% chance that Beowulf will challenge the highest-level fighter in the party to prove his courage in single combat.

If not encountered as a young man, Beowulf will appear as the older king of the Geats. In this instance, he will be accompanied by 10-30 Geatish warriors, ranging from 1st to 12th level, all outfitted with swords, chainmail, and shield. As the older king, Beowulf will never accompany a party, but he might agree to help slay a particularly odious monster — an evil dragon, for example — if the price and the reasons are right.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Beowulf* is an Anglo-Saxon epic available in paperback English translations from many publishers. An excellent edition is printed by Doubleday, with the modern English and Anglo-Saxon texts on opposite pages.

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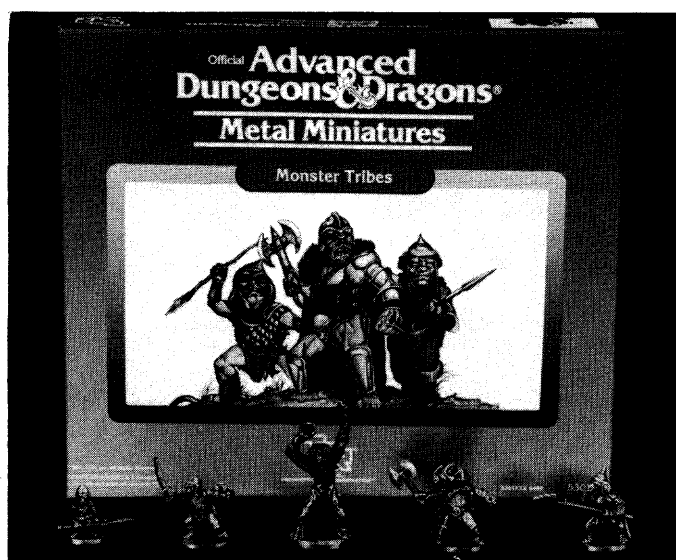
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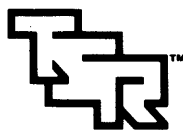
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# *The Twofold Talisman*

## *Adventure Two: The Ebon Stone*



*A tournament adventure for the AD&D® game*



# The Twofold Talisman

by Roger Moore, Philip Taterczynski, Douglas Niles, & Georgia Moore

*The Twofold Talisman* is an RPGA™ tournament module for the AD&D® game. It is played in two parts; the first half of the adventure, *The Heart of Light*, appeared in last month's issue of DRAGON® Magazine. This issue contains the second half, *The Ebon Stone*. In tournament competition, players must complete each adventure in four hours (real time), using the eight pregenerated characters provided with the text. During the adventure, players may only consult the Players Handbook; tournament rules permit no other references.

Optionally, Dungeon Masters may adapt these scenarios into their campaigns and play them without time restrictions. This adventure, and its predecessor *The Heart of Light*, may also be used as general guidelines for creating other tournament adventures for the AD&D game.

Each of these two adventures stands alone, yet they both concern the same quest: to restore the gems of the Twofold Talisman. The performance of player-character parties in tournament play is evaluated according to the standard RPGA

Network Player Ranking System, a summary of which was presented in last month's DRAGON Magazine with *The Heart of Light* adventure. (Included with this month's adventure is the other half of the ranking system, for players to evaluate the judge who ran the adventure for their group.) *The Twofold Talisman* was run at the GEN CON® XVI Game Convention in August 1983. The comments and suggestions made by the DMs and players involved at the convention are gratefully acknowledged.

## Adventure Two: The Ebon Stone

### Players' introduction

Safely back in Jalkive after your harrowing experience at the mansion of Mekkari, you meet once more with the wizard's servant. In a deserted inn, you give him the Heart of Light. He thanks you profusely and hides the gem.

"And now," the servant says, "one mission remains for you to accomplish. Someone stole the Ebon Stone, the other half of the talisman, while a guardian was taking it to a hiding place. The evil guildmasters of Jalkive now keep it in a small but heavily guarded fortress in the mountains nearby. There they'll keep it until they can find a way to release the terrible powers within it. You must make all haste to get to that fortress and take the Ebon Stone away from them. The fate of our kingdom rests with you and your abilities."

The servant hands you a map showing the way to the fortress you must penetrate. Unfortunately, the servant knows nothing of the traps or guardians you will find, but he believes you'll encounter many. Once again he asks you to leave at dawn and provides some equipment. (See the character sheets in the center of this magazine.) Treasure taken in the last adventure will not be used on this trip; it is assumed to be safely hidden away in town somewhere.

### DM's introduction

Hand out the spell lists (see the end of text) to the players who need them for their characters, and let them choose which spells they wish to take on the trip. Note that players don't have to play the same characters that they did in *The Heart of Light* adventure; they can choose different ones in tournament play, as long as the group reaches mutual agreement.

The players should be told that the saving throws on their characters' sheets reflect all bonuses for constitution and magic items.

However, the "to hit" information shows only the characters' base scores; bonuses for strength and magic must be added when appropriate.

All player characters are fully healed at the start of this adventure.

The adventure ends when four hours of play have elapsed, or when the characters escape from the fortress with what they believe is the Ebon Stone.

### The approach

The following text should be read aloud to the players to start the adventure:

"You head toward the sun as it rises over the mountains near Jalkive. The servant's map directs your party to a secret footpath which lies in the rockier ground. It leads to a barren plain on a mountainside where nothing stirs but the wind. The climb up the mountain takes its toll, and you rest that night in the cold.

"After continuing the climb the next morning, you see a building in the distance. The structure lies exactly where the map locates the fortress, but the building is no fortress at all. Rather, you see a sprawling structure made of timber and stone, with a scraggly path leading toward it. On the path in front of the building, four humans stand guard. You hide and watch them from 100 yards away, but cannot discover any further details about them. The building lies on a flat area of ground. Rocky terrain surrounds it, extending 100 yards in all directions."

### THE BUILDING: UPPER LEVEL

All ceilings in the building are 10 feet high. Doors require a strength roll to open, unless otherwise stated; this applies only to characters, since the monsters (even the weak ones) know how to open "jammed" doors easily. A *locate object* spell will not find the Ebon Stone, but will otherwise

work normally. Characters should not be allowed to cut, chop, or saw through walls or floors in the building in tournament play.

### 1: The guardians

The four guards in front are 4th-level monks, of lawful evil alignment. They are dressed in white trousers, sandals, and pink-and-green striped shirts. From close up, the characters will notice that there are small green alligators on the left side of each of the guardians' shirts.

If attacked at long range, the "preppies" will run for the building, entering at the door to area 16 where they'll sound an alert. They will not notice the PCs automatically if the party tries to sneak up on them (see below). If approached, the monks will look nonchalantly at the party and ask about their business. The "preppies" will also make rude comments. ("Oh, tacky platemail you're wearing; last year's style?" "You really haven't had a bath for awhile, have you?") If the party attacks the "preppies," suddenly four more 4th-level monks in preppie garb will join them (they are hidden in the rocks nearby) and attack with surprise on a roll of 1-4 on d6 (allow automatic surprise for the monks in tournament play if desired).

If the party doesn't attack and asks to go inside the building, the monks will go with them to the door at area 2, explaining that the doors to area 16 lead to the bureaucrats, "and you know how dull they are." Once at area 2, two monks will unbolt the stable doors, open them, and scream "Go get 'em!" The two giant lizards kept inside (see description of area 2) will leap out at once and attack the party, while all eight monks join in the fray as well. The giant lizards are AC 5; MV 15"; HD 3+1; HP 15 each; D/Att 1-8 (or 2-16 on a roll of 20 "to hit"). They will never attack the monks.

The monks are AC 7; MV 18"; 4th level;

and have 15 HP each. They do 1-6 HP per attack, getting 5 attacks/4 rounds (2 on the 4th round of combat). They can also  *speak with animals*  at will, evade normal missiles if they save vs. petrification (needing a 12 or better), and will take no damage vs. certain attack forms if they save vs. spell, as per the Players Handbook.

The monks will continue to fight until half of them have been slain or incapacitated. The rest will break off the fight and flee into area 2 to get to area 3. The party may be allowed one free round of spells or missile combat as the monks leave, since the party won't be able to catch them without using  *haste*  spells on themselves or  *slow*  spells on the monks.

Any monks who escape to inside the building will sound an alert, either to area 3 if escaping from area 2, or to areas 15 and 17 from area 16 (if they happen to head in that direction). The alert will spread no further in tournament play, and no one will retreat from the alerted areas. The alert may be carried as far as the DM likes in regular campaign play.

If the party, upon first seeing the "preppies," decides to creep up on them, roll for the monks' chance to notice the party when the characters get to within 60 yards. There is a 28% chance that the monks will not notice the intruders, and will be surprised when the party gets close enough for combat. The party has no chance to find the four hidden monks until the visible monks attack or are attacked. The party can successfully creep around to the rear of the building if they don't come within 60 yards of the monks. The building has no windows, so no one will see the party from inside.

Also, any noise heard from outside will be ignored by those inside the building. "It's just those guards cutting up again," they'll say.

## 2: Lizard stables

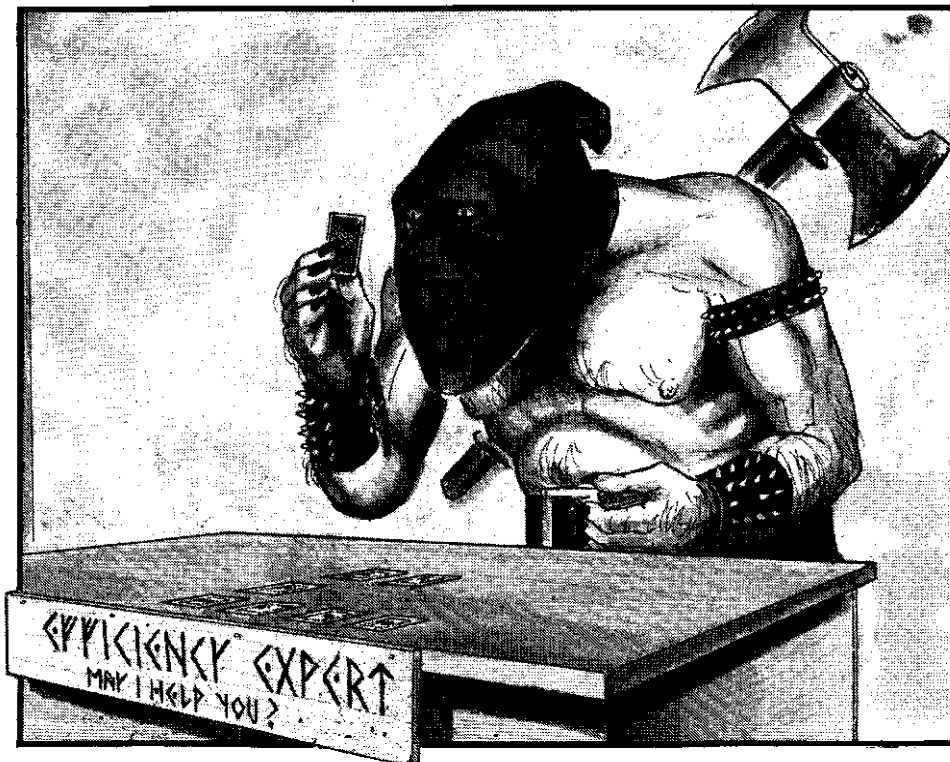
30' x 30'; 3 doors; earth floor.

Two giant lizards (at A and B) are curled up here. They are pets of the monks and only know one command: "Go get 'em!" Anyone who opens the stable doors and is not a monk, an orc, or a half-orc will be attacked and (possibly) eaten. The stables are dark and unlit; some barrels of wine and crates of horsemeat are in the northwest stall. The other stalls are empty. See the area 1 description for the giant lizards' statistics.

## 3: Supply room

20' x 30'; 3 doors; hardwood floor.

A lone torch burns on the west wall. The supply room has four ogrillon guards who, unless they have been alerted by the monks, will be arm-wrestling. The ogrillons look like orcs except for being slightly bigger and wartier, and are 90% likely to be mistaken for orcs by the party. The "orcs" have no weapons. They wear black leather jackets with the words "Mess with the Best, Die like the Rest" written on their backs. The



ogrillons will attack anyone who is "preppie" monk or an orc, half-orc, ogre, or ogrillon. They refuse to go for help even if outnumbered. Any monks who fled here from area 2 will be found here as well (prevented from escaping by the ogrillons) and will fight to the death. If alerted, the ogrillons cannot be surprised.

The ogrillons are AC 6; MV 12"; HD 2; HP 10 each; and attack twice per round for 2-7 points per attack. Rangers get all bonuses to damage vs. "giant class" humanoid monsters when fighting ogrillons.

The supply room contains 300 new white preppie suits on racks, 40 black leather jackets in boxes, 150 pairs of sandals, and two cartons of Dr. Denton sleepwear with footsies. Also found will be a memo from one bureaucrat to another in Common, saying, "Why are we getting all these clothes and no weapons? Who's in charge around here?" If any PCs search for 10 minutes through the clothes (any batch), a pearly-white, spindle-shaped *ioun stone* will be found. If it is tossed into the air or otherwise set in motion, the stone will circle the PC's head and will regenerate 1 HP turn for as long as it remains in place.

The door to area 4 has a sign reading "Knock before entering, please" in the common tongue.

## 4: Efficiency expert's office

20' x 10'; 2 doors; hardwood floor.

A lone torch burns on the south wall. This whitewashed room has a desk in the northern end with an enormous ogre seated behind it, playing solitaire poker. The ogre wears a black executioner's mask, and a huge axe rests on a rack behind him. A sign on the desk says: "Efficiency Expert — May I Help You?" The wood floor is splattered with dried blood.

The ogre says nothing if the party enters,

but will stare at the intruders through his mask (conduct surprise rolls normally unless the PC party knocked before entering, in which case surprise is not possible). If the ogre is able to react first, he will drop his cards, snatch the axe, and step over the desk to reach the party; otherwise he will fight from behind the desk (improving his AC by 1). He will never retreat or surrender. The ogre is 10' tall (AC 7; MV 9"; HD 7 [leader type]; HP 30) and attacks once per round for 3-12 points damage.

A search of the desk drawers reveals 140 gp, five gems worth 50 gp each, and a note written in orcish (anyone who speaks the language can translate it) that says: "The Guildmasters are pleased with your performance. Maintain your high standards and you will be well rewarded. (Signed) D.V." Also found will be a drawing of a black gem, crudely done, with the comment (in orcish) "Kept downstairs." Nothing else is in the room.

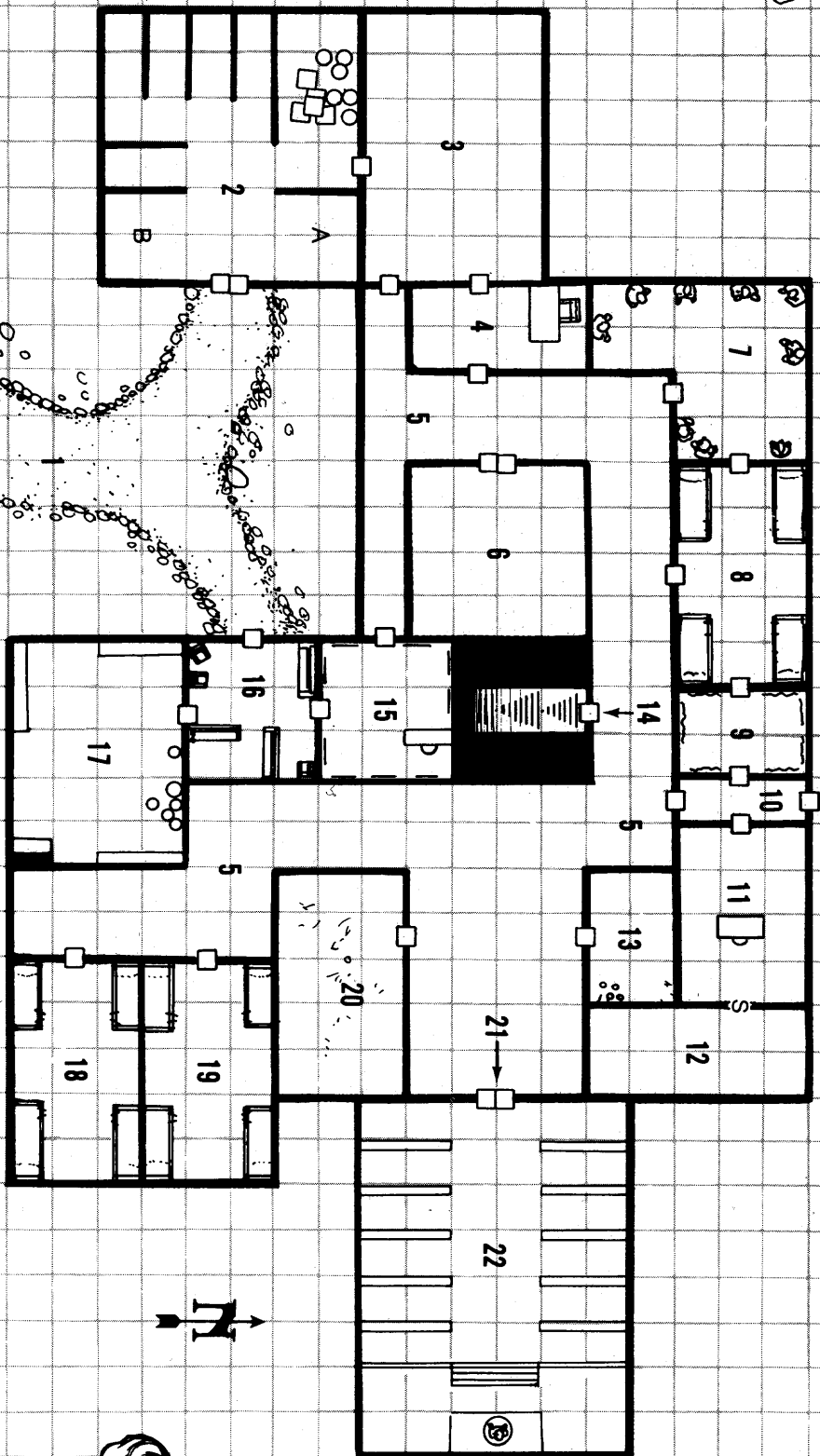
## 5: Main hall

Extends around the central part of the building.

The hall is unlit and will be empty most of the time. On a roll of 1 on d4 (checked each turn), a kobold (AC 7; MV 6"; HP 1; LE; no attacks) will walk around a corner on an errand. If the kobold is surprised it will instantly faint for 2-12 rounds. If not surprised, it will run at the nearest party member before anyone can react and grab the character's leg (no "to hit" roll needed) and hang on, whining "Spare me! Spare me! I'm just a wimp! I'll do anything, just spare me!" in the common tongue.

Prying the kobold loose requires a roll to open doors (one attempt per round); otherwise the grasped character cannot move. The kobold will not attack and will beg that it be taken out and set free because

# Exterior and ground level



everyone here has been mean to it. If the kobold is pulled loose, it will run away to area 4, knock on the door, and get the Efficiency Expert to stomp the PCs; if the Efficiency Expert is no longer there, the kobold will pass out for 1-4 hours, then flee the building.

#### **6: Recreation room**

##### **20' x 20'; 2 doors; hardwood floor.**

Two torches burn on the north and south walls. A 10-foot-square mat lies in the center of the room. Two 6th-level monks (LE; AC 6; MV 20"; HP 20 each; 3 attacks/2 rounds for 2-8/Att; immune to *haste* and *slow*; evade nonmagical missiles on d20 roll of 11 or better; may *speak with animals*) are practicing hand-to-hand combat here. If surprised (24% chance), they may be attacked for one free melee round. Otherwise they will turn, bow to any intruders, and leap to the attack. Neither will surrender or go for help. Both monks are dressed in "preppie" white pants, shirt, etc. Nothing else is in the room.

#### **7: Hall of orcish heroes**

##### **L-shaped room, 25' x 20' ; 2 doors; hardwood floor.**

This room is unlit. Lining the walls of this room are the stuffed remains of 12 famous orc heroes who were preserved for posterity. The air in the room smells so bad that any character who opens the door or steps inside the room must save vs. poison; failure results in a loss of 2-8 strength points for 10 rounds. (Inhabitants of the building are immune to this effect.) The stuffed bodies are ugly and disgusting. Each has a sign on the floor before it reading in orcish, "This orc was a great hero. Someday you will be great like him, too." Nothing else is of interest here.

#### **8: Monks' bunks**

##### **15' x 25' ; 3 doors; hardwood floor.**

This is the bunkroom for the eight 4th-level monks who are encountered outside on guard duty. Four double bunks are here, one in each corner of the room, and trunks under each pair of beds are full of "preppie" clothing and nothing else. On the center of the north wall is a poster beneath a burning lantern on a peg. The poster depicts a huge man wearing full-length black platemail, with a strangely rounded shiny black helm. He holds a red-glowing two-handed sword, and a black robe hangs from his shoulders. The picture is unlabelled.

The door leading to area 9 contains a message: "Remember, grasshoppers, the wisdom of the owl is like the dew on the grass at dawn before the first bird sings. Master Po has spoken."

#### **9: Master Po's room**

##### **15' x 10' ; 2 doors; hardwood floor.**

Both of the doors to this room open very easily; anyone who charges forth to smash one will fall into the room, losing all attacks that round and doing 1-4 HP of damage to himself. Inside the room, incense burns and

beautiful wall hangings abound. On a floor mat in the southeast corner of the room sits an old man wearing a kimono, apparently meditating. He does not react if the players enter and will not even open his eyes.

Unseen by the characters at first are two huge tigers perched on ledges 8' above the floor (AC 6; MV 12"; HD 5+5; HP 30 each; D/Att 2-5/2-5/1-10 plus 2-8/2-8 if first two attacks (claws) connect; surprised 1 in 6, or not at all in tournament play). These pets of the old man will leap on intruders, surprising them on a roll of 1-5 on d6.

As the tigers attack, the old man will awaken from his meditation, sigh, get up, and join the fray. This is Master Po, who looks very frail and sickly — but he isn't (9th-level monk; LE; AC 3; MV 23"; HP 30; 2 attacks/round for 3-12 damage). He is immune to *haste* and *slow*, can *speak to animals*, can *heal* himself once per day for 4-7 points, is 50% resistant to *charm*, *hypnosis*, and *suggestion*, takes half damage at most from spells that he fails to save against (no damage if he does save), and evades nonmagical missiles on a roll of 10 or better on d20. When he attacks, he will *stun* opponents when rolling 5 or more over his base "to hit" score; a *stunned* opponent cannot attack for 1-6 rounds. Master Po can kill a *stunned* opponent on a percentage roll equal to the opponent's armor class plus 2. If Master Po is reduced to half of his hit points or less at the end of a round of combat, he will spend the following round trying to move away from his opponents so he can use his ability to *heal* himself. If he is attacked during the round in which he is healing himself, he will not gain the 4-7 HP and won't be able to heal himself again for the rest of the day.

A search of the room will reveal a message in common on a piece of parchment under the monk's floormat: "The Dark One is safe below, don't worry — D.V."

#### **10: Back entry hall**

##### **15' x 5'; 4 doors; hardwood floor.**

This hall is empty. The floorboards squeak horribly, so only a thief with a successful "move silently" roll will get past without alerting Master Po in room 9 or the guards in room 11. Above the doorway to area 9 is a sign that reads: "The way to enlightenment is the grasshopper's path along the riverside of the summer's fulfillment. Master Po has spoken."

Above the door to area 11 is a sign that reads: "Mess with the Best, Die like the Rest" with a flaming skull painted on the door itself.

#### **11: Office of the Guildmaster**

##### **15' x 20' ; 1 door, 1 secret door; hardwood floor.**

This room is the office of Skrunge, one of the Guildmasters of Jalkive. He is a half-orc cleric/fighter (4th/9th level; LE; AC 3; MV 6"; HP 40; 60' infravision; 3 attacks/2 rounds with +2 broadsword for 4-10 damage; spells: *silence 15' radius*, *hold person*, *protection from good*, *command* (x2)).

If Skrunge is surprised, he will be writing at his desk, cancelling leave orders for all his troops (because he feels like it, and because he's a scummy guy). His assistants stand on either side of the door, far enough away that they won't be hit if the door opens suddenly.

If he has advance warning of the party's approach, Skrunge will have his two half-orc assistants (4/4 fighter/thieves; LE; AC 8; MV 9"; HP 20 each; 60' infravision; leather armor; armed with broadswords) stay on either side of the door while he stands across the room and casts *protection from good* on himself.

Anyone who opens the door will immediately see Skrunge, who will promptly cast *hold person* (save at -2) at the intruder. Anyone who charges Skrunge may be surprised (1-4 on d6) by the two fighter/thieves, who (if they get surprise) gain +4 "to hit" and double damage on a strike from behind. In such a case, both will strike at the same target. Skrunge will then cast *silence, 15' radius* centered on the square just outside the doorway if he has time after the first attacks, to cause problems for spellcasters (note that he stands just outside the spell's area of effect).

Skrunge will use a command ("Die!" in the common tongue) on anyone in melee with him who is also outside the *silence* spell. He will then move to slay anyone who succumbs to the *command* (see text for *command* and *sleep* spells in the Players Handbook).

Once his spells have run out, or if he has no opportunity to use them, Skrunge will whip out his +2 broadsword and hack away. He wears black platemail with a huge red eye in the center of it. (If anyone asks, this is not the same black armor as seen in the picture in area 8, and Skrunge's swords glows white, not red.) Skrunge and his assistants will fight to the death and will pursue all who attempt to escape.

In Skrunge's desk is a paper saying "I have the stone downstairs for security. — D.V."

#### **12: Gem room**

##### **25' x 10' ; 1 secret door; hardwood floor.**

Behind a secret door in the east wall of room 11 (easily opened by anyone after it is detected) is a room whose floor is covered in black gems, all of them identical to the Ebon Stone. There are 10,825 of these stones, but *detect magic* will show none of them to be magical. Each is worth 10 gp (they are cheap copies). Tacked on the north wall is a requisition form for another several thousand of them. A note may be found that indicates the gems will be distributed to seedy merchants in Jalkive, where they'll be sold as "real" Ebon Stones. The stones have an encumbrance value of 1 gp each.

#### **13: Broom closet**

##### **10' x 15' ; 1 door; hardwood floor.**

Among the assorted mops and buckets in this room is a single broom — a *broom of animated attack* (AC 7; HD 4; HP 18;



**Gnome illusionist/thief 5th/5th level****HP 24 AC 3 front, 6 rear Armor: +2 leather****Str 11 Int 15 Wis 10 Dex 17 Con 10 Cha 12**

Move base 6" Ht. 3'6" Wt. 85# Age 65 Al CN

Saving throws:

Par/poison	Pet/poly	R/S/W	Breath	Spell
12	11	9	15	10

Languages: Alignment, common, dwarvish, gnome, goblin, halfling, kobold, burrowing mammals.

Special abilities: detect slope 80%; detect unsafe walls/ceilings/floors 70%; detect depth underground 60%; detect direction of travel underground 50%; infravision 60'; +4 to hit from behind, with triple damage; +1 to hit vs. kobolds & goblins; -4 to be hit by gnolls or larger humanoids and giants.

Bend bars/lift gates: 2% Open doors: 1-2

**Base number to hit AC 0: 19**

Weapons: Short sword; damage 1-6/1-8.

Dagger +1; damage 1-4/1-3 (+1); +1 bonus to hit (for magic); range 1"/2"/3".

Sling w/bullet, damage 2-5/2-7; +2 bonus to hit (for dexterity); range 5"/10"/20".

Sling w/stone, damage 1-4/1-4; +2 bonus to hit (for dexterity); range 4"/8"/16".

Proficient in: all weapons listed.

Thief abilities: pick pocket 55%, open locks 57%, detect traps 50%, move silently 50%, hide in shadows 41%, hear noise 30%, climb walls 75%, read languages 25%.

Magic items carried: +2 leather; +1 dagger; *bag of holding* (5,000 gp capacity).

Other equipment: wineskin; backpack; flint, steel, & tinder; torches (3); cloaks; rope (50'); belt purse w/30 gp; thief's tools; 20 sling bullets. (Torches illuminate a 40' radius and burn for 6 turns.)

Number of spells available: 1st level 4; 2nd level 2; 3rd level 1. (Choose from illusionist spell list.)

**Half-elf magic-user/thief 4th/6th level****HP 27 AC 2 front, 6 rear Armor: leather with +2 ring****Str 13 Int 17 Wis 15 Dex 16 Con 15 Cha 16**

Move base 12" Ht. 5'2" Wt. 105# Age 36 Al N

Saving throws:

Par/poison	Pet/poly	R/S/W	Breath	Spell
12	11	11	15	12

(vs. fear: 11)

Languages: Alignment, common, elf, gnoll, gnome, goblin, halfling, hobgoblin, orc.

Special abilities: detect secret doors 1 in 6 within 10' (2 in 6 if searching); infravision 60'; +4 to hit from behind, with triple damage; 30% resistant to *sleep* and *charm*.

Bend bars/lift gates: 4% Open doors: 1-2

**Base number to hit AC 0: 19**

Weapons: Short sword +1; damage 1-6/1-8 (+1); +1 bonus to hit (for magic).

Dagger; damage 1-4/1-3; +1 bonus to hit (for strength); range 1"/2"/3".

Proficient in: both weapons listed.

Thief abilities: pick pocket 65%, open locks 52%, detect traps 45%, move silently 47%, hide in shadows 42%, hear noise 20%, climb walls 92%, read languages 30%.

Magic items carried: +1 short sword; +2 *ring of protection* (to AC only); *pearl of power* (2nd level spell).

Other equipment: wineskin; backpack; flint, steel, & tinder; torches (3); cloaks; rope (50'); belt purse w/30 gp; thief's tools; 4 daggers. (Torches illuminate a 40' radius and burn for 6 turns.)

Number of spells available: 1st level 3; 2nd level 2.

(Choose from magic-user spell list.)

## The Twofold Talisman Character Sheets

(Reproduce or photocopy these pages, then cut apart)

**Half-elf cleric/ranger 5th/6th level****HP 43 AC 1 front, 2 rear Armor: +1 plate****normal shield****Str 17 Int 16 Wis 17 Dex 14 Con 17 Cha 10**

Move base 9" Ht. 5'11" Wt. 140# Age 50 Al NG

Saving throws:

Par/poison	Pet/poly	R/S/W	Breath	Spell
9	12	13	13	14

(vs. fear: 11)

Languages: Alignment, common, elf, gnome, goblin, halfling, hobgoblin, orc.

Special abilities: detect secret doors 1 in 6 within 10' (2 in 6 if searching); infravision 60'; +6 to damage vs. giant-class creatures; 30% resistant to *sleep* and *charm*.

Bend bars/lift gates: 13% Open doors: 1-3

**Base number to hit AC 0: 16**

Weapons: Long sword +1; damage 1-8/1-12 (+2); +2 bonus to hit (for strength &amp; magic).

Dagger; damage 1-4/1-3 (+1 for strength); +1 bonus to hit (for strength); range 1"/2"/3".

Short bow; damage 1-6/1-6; +1 bonus to hit (for strength); range 5"/10"/18".

Proficient in: all weapons listed, plus mace.

Turn undead on: skeleton T, zombie T, ghoul T, shadow 4, wight 7, ghost 10, wraith 13, mummy 16, spectre 20.

Magic items carried: +1 plate mail; +1 long sword; +1 arrows (5); *cloak of elvenkind*.

Other equipment: wineskin; backpack; flint, steel, & tinder; torches (3); cloaks; rope (50'); belt purse w/30 gp; holy symbol; 20 normal arrows; 2 daggers. (Torches illuminate a 40' radius and burn for 6 turns.)

Number of spells available: 1st level 5; 2nd level 5; 3rd level 2. (Choose from cleric spell list.)

**Human cleric 7th level****HP 49 AC 0 front, 2 rear Armor: +1 plate +1 shield****Str 9 Int 15 Wis 17 Dex 14 Con 17 Cha 13**

Move base 9" Ht. 5'6" Wt. 124# Age 30 Al CG

Saving throws:

Par/poison	Pet/poly	R/S/W	Breath	Spell
5	10	11	13	12

(vs. fear: 9)

Languages: Alignment, common, elf, goblin, halfling, hobgoblin, orc.

Special abilities: bonus spells for high wisdom.

Bend bars/lift gates: 1% Open doors: 1-2

**Base number to hit AC 0: 16**

Weapons: Mace +1; damage 2-7/1-6 (+1); +1 bonus to hit (for magic).

Staff; damage 1-6/1-6.

Hammer; damage 2-5/1-4; range 1"/2"/3".

Proficient in: all weapons listed.

Turn undead on: skeleton D, zombie D, ghoul D, shadow T, wight T, ghost 4, wraith 7, mummy 10, spectre 13, vampire 16.

Magic items carried: +1 plate mail; +1 shield; +1 mace; *periapt of proof against poison* (+2).

Other equipment: wineskin; backpack; flint, steel, & tinder; torches (3); cloaks; rope (50'); belt purse w/30 gp; holy symbol. (Torches illuminate a 40' radius and burn for 6 turns.)

Number of spells available: 1st level 5; 2nd level 5; 3rd level 3; 4th level 1. (Choose from cleric spell list.)

**Half-elf magic-user 7th level****HP 35 AC 2 front, 4 rear Armor: bracers of AC 4****Str 12 Int 14 Wis 15 Dex 16 Con 17 Cha 11**

Move base 12" Ht. 5'8" Wt. 104# Age 56 Al N

Saving throws:

Par/poison	Pet/poly	R/S/W	Breath	Spell
13	11	9	13	10

(vs. fear: 9)

Languages: Alignment, common, elf, gnome, goblin, halfling, hobgoblin, orc.

Special abilities: detect secret doors 1 in 6 within 10' (2 in 6 if searching); infravision 60'; 30% resistant to *sleep* and *charm*.

Bend bars/lift gates: 4% Open doors: 1-2

**Base number to hit AC 0: 19**

Weapons: Staff +1; damage 1-6/1-6 (+1); +1 bonus to hit (for magic).

Dagger; damage 1-4/1-3; +1 bonus to hit (for strength); range 1"/2"/3".

Dart; damage 1-3/1-2; +1 bonus to hit (for strength); range 1½"/3"/4½"

Proficient in: all weapons listed.

Magic items carried: bracers of protection, AC 4; +1 staff; *wand of fire* (4 charges).

Other equipment: wineskin; backpack; flint, steel, &amp; tinder; torches (3); cloaks; rope (50'); belt purse w/30 gp; 6 darts; 2 daggers. (Torches illuminate a 40' radius and burn for 6 turns.)

Number of spells available: 1st level 4; 2nd level 3; 3rd level 2; 4th level 1. (Choose from magic-user spell list.)

**Dwarf fighter 7th level****HP 57 AC 2 front, 4 rear Armor: +1 chain mail****+1 shield****Str 18/95 Int 11 Wis 12 Dex 10 Con 16 Cha 9(7)**

Move base 6" Ht. 4'2" Wt. 156# Age 142 Al LG

Saving throws:

Par/poison	Pet/poly	R/S/W	Breath	Spell
6	11	8	12	9

Languages: Alignment, common, dwarvish, gnome, goblin, kobold, orc.

Special abilities: 3 attacks per 2 rounds; detect slope 75%; detect new work 75%; detect sliding/shifting wall 66 2/3%; detect stonework traps 50%; detect depth underground 60%; detect direction of travel underground 50%; infravision 60'; +1 to hit vs. goblins, half orcs, orcs, hobgoblins; -4 to be hit by ogres or larger humanoids and giants.

Bend bars/lift gates: 35% Open doors: 1-4 (1)

**Base number to hit AC 0: 14**

Weapons: Battle axe +1; damage 1-8/1-8 (+6); +3 bonus to hit (for strength &amp; magic).

Hand axe; damage 1-6/1-4 (+5); +2 bonus to hit (for strength); range 1"/2"/3".

Dagger; damage 1-4/1-3 (+5); +2 bonus to hit (for strength); range 1"/2"/3".

Proficient in: all weapons listed, plus mace and short sword.

Magic items carried: +1 chain mail; +1 shield; +1 battle axe; *potion of water breathing*.

Other equipment: wineskin; backpack; flint, steel, &amp; tinder; torches (3); rope (50'); belt purse w/50 gp; 2 daggers. (Torches illuminate a 40' radius and burn for 6 turns.)

# The Twofold Talisman Character Sheets

(Reproduce or photocopy these pages, then cut apart)

**Halfling thief 6th level****HP 35 AC 7 front, 7 rear Armor: +1 leather****Str 14 Int 8 Wis 10 Dex 13 Con 16 Cha 6**

Move base 9" Ht. 3'0" Wt. 60# Age 41 Al LN

Saving throws:

Par/poison	Pet/poly	R/S/W	Breath	Spell
8	11	8	15	9

Languages: Alignment, common, dwarvish, elf, gnome, goblin, halfling, orc.

Special abilities: detect slope 75%; detect direction of travel underground 50%; infravision 30'; +4 to hit from behind, with triple damage; surprise on 1-4 if 90' from rest of party.

Bend bars/lift gates: 7% Open doors: 1-2

**Base number to hit AC 0: 19**

Weapons: Short sword +1; damage 1-6/1-8 (+1); +1 bonus to hit (for magic).

Dart +3; damage 1-3/1-2 (+3); +3 bonus to hit (for magic); range 1½"/3"/4½"

Club; damage 1-6/1-3; range 1"/2"/3".

Proficient in: all weapons listed.

Thief abilities: pick pocket 60%, open locks 57%, detect traps 50%, move silently 57%, hide in shadows 52%, hear noise 25%, climb walls 77%, read languages 25%.

Magic items carried: +1 short sword, detects precious metals within 10'; +3 darts (3); *boots of levitation*.

Other equipment: wineskin; backpack; flint, steel, &amp; tinder; torches (3); cloaks; rope (50'); belt purse w/30 gp; thief's tools; 3 darts. (Torches illuminate a 40' radius and burn for 6 turns.)

**Human fighter 7th level****HP 50 AC 1 front, 4 rear Armor: chain mail****+1 shield****Str 18/50 Int 13 Wis 8 Dex 15 Con 15 Cha 14**

Move base 9" Ht. 6'2" Wt. 175# Age 28 Al CG

Saving throws:

Par/poison	Pet/poly	R/S/W	Breath	Spell
9	10	11	11	12

Languages: Alignment, common, dwarvish, elf.

Special abilities: 3 attacks per 2 rounds.

Bend bars/lift gates: 20% Open doors: 1-3

**Base number to hit AC 0: 15**

Weapons: Two-handed sword; damage 1-10/3-18 (+3); +1 bonus to hit (for strength).

Hand axe; damage 1-6/1-4 (+3); +1 bonus to hit (for strength).

Mace +1; damage 2-7/1-6 (+4); +2 bonus to hit (for strength &amp; magic).

Proficient in: all weapons listed, plus long sword, short sword, and dagger.

Magic items carried: +1 shield; +1 mace; +1 *ring of protection*; *potion of invulnerability*

Other equipment: wineskin; backpack; flint, steel, &amp; tinder; torches (3); rope (50'); belt purse w/50 gp; two-handed sword; 2 hand axes. (Torches illuminate a 40' radius and burn for 6 turns.)

attacks twice/round for 1-3 HP and *blindness*) that activates the moment it is touched. Nothing else is of interest here.

**14: Staircase**  
**5' wide, 30' down.**

This leads to the dungeon level. Halfway down is a step with a tripwire across it; a thief can find it with a "detect traps" roll (if light is available). Anyone doesn't know about the wire and trips over it must make a saving throw vs. wands or fall the rest of the way down the stairs, taking 2-8 points of damage and making all worn or carried items save vs. fall, as per the DMG, p. 80.

**15: Bureaucrat's office**  
**15' x 15'; 2 doors; hardwood floor.**

This room has many framed pictures of the building itself, painted from different angles. Seated behind the desk along the north wall is an orc (2 HP, AC 10) who is sound asleep. He will automatically be surprised if anyone enters. If he has a chance, he will shout out an alarm to his friends in room 16, who will come to his rescue. The orc is a weak one with no effective attacks.

**16: Guard room**  
**15' x 15'; 3 doors; hardwood floor.**

Six tough young orcs lounge about in here on the benches and chairs, reading comic books and belching. They are wearing chainmail armor and carry battle axes with them; they will attack any adventurers who enter the room and will come to the aid of the bureaucrat in room 15 if he calls. Each orc has AC 5; MV 9"; HD 1 HP 5; D/Att 1-8.

**17: Kitchen**  
**20' x 25'; 1 door; hardwood floor.**

The kitchen is currently in use. The walls are lined with cabinets and casks of meat and drink; an oven sits in the southeast corner of the room. The cook, a huge bugbear who gains a +1 on damage due to his strength, is rummaging around on the northeast end of the room looking for pickled dwarf fingers for dinner. If anyone enters, the cook (who has a hairtrigger temper) will throw a handaxe at the intruder and will then seize a large butcher knife and continue to attack. Nothing but disgusting food is in here, except for a calendar with a female bugbear on it (Miss July).

The bugbear has AC 4; MV 9"; HD 3+1; HP 25; surprises opponents on a 1-3 on d6; will attack once per round for 2-7 (hand axe, -2 "to hit" when thrown) or 2-7 (butcher knife).

**18: Ogrillons' bunk room**  
**15' x 25'; 1 door; hardwood floor.**

This is the bunkroom for the 4 ogrillons encountered in area 3. The room is a mess, and the four beds are soiled and filthy. A small paper sign on the east wall reads "Home Sweet Home." Every round someone searches the room, there is a 10%



(noncumulative) chance of the character passing out from the smell for 2-8 rounds. Under the debris may be found (after 5 rounds of searching) 20 unused bars of soap and one gold piece.

**19: Orcs' bunk room**  
**15' x 25'; 1 door; hardwood floor.**

Only one orc is in this room currently; he is sharpening his battleaxe. The orc has AC 5; MV 9"; HD 1; HP 5; D/Att 1-8. After one turn of searching, a scroll tube will be found under a mattress. It has a sheet of paper inside that reads in orcish, "Continue to maintain your vigilance against all intruders; if possible, bring them downstairs to me. — D.V."

**20: Danger room**  
**15' x 25'; 1 door; hardwood floor.**

The door to this room is clearly labelled "DANGER!" in huge red letters in orcish. No sounds come from inside. The door has three locks on it; each can be picked by a thief or broken with a successful "bend bars" roll.

Inside are dozens of bones all over the floor. Unseen by all, a grell hovers over the doorway with its tentacles pulled up, and it will surprise anyone who steps through the doorway on a 1-4 on d6, dropping down on them in silence. No treasure is in this room. The grell will actively pursue any prey (orc, human, or whatever) inside the room or outside. The grell is not tame. If it catches someone, it will spend 3 turns eating the victim if it is not being attacked.

The grell has AC 4; MV 12"; HD 5; HP 30; immune to lightning; 10 attacks for 1-4 damage plus saving throw vs. paralyzation

at +4 (lasts for 2-8 turns) each, plus beak attack for 1-6 damage. If a victim is paralyzed, all further attacks automatically hit (less two tentacles, for a total of 8d4+1d6 per round).

**21: Doors to the temple**

The doors are of massive oak boards and are heavily engraved with runes and dire warnings in many languages, including those the PCs speak. If detected for, they radiate magic. They may be opened as normal doors, however, and do nothing.

**22: Temple of Watt**  
**30' x 40'; 2 doors; stone floor.**

The temple area is currently deserted. Five rows of pews stand on either side, leading up to a podium and a huge statue of a thin human male, bald and wearing spectacles. The legend on the base of the statue reads, in common, "Watt, God of Destruction." It will be noticed that the figure is standing on and crushing many sorts of plants and animals. The statue radiates magic but has no detectable alignment.

The first PC who touches the statue (and that character only) receives the power to kill all plants by touch, permanently. If used on the yellow musk creeper in area 29 or any yellow musk zombie, this power will slay the plant or cure any zombie completely of the affliction. This power extends even to green slime and its victims, to shambling mounds, and so forth. However, any druid who sees any such character will immediately recognize the "curse of Watt" and will summon all available spells, weapons, and powers in an attempt to destroy the character.



The character with this power also has both his thumbs turn black.

Twenty 100 gp gems are hidden in a secret compartment (detectable by elves and half-elves) in the statue's back.

### 23: Outhouse

**5' x 5'; 1 door; stone floor.**

The outhouse is currently empty; there is nothing of interest here, though PCs may think otherwise. The door of the outhouse is marked "Secret tunnel entrance" in charcoal. However, the outhouse "tunnel," 10 feet deep, only leads down into a 30' deep cistern filled with water. Any character who drops down into the cistern will not be able to climb out unaided. Anyone wearing leather, no armor, or magical armor may stay afloat; others in metallic and non-magical armor will sink and will drown if not rescued in 5 rounds.

## THE BUILDING: LOWER LEVEL

All general notes describing the upper level also apply here. The ceiling height is still 10 feet, and going through walls or digging through floors should not be permitted in tournament play. Unless noted otherwise, all areas underground are totally dark, with no light sources (unlit torches, for instance) to be found.

### 24: Hall chamber

**15' x 15'; 1 door; 2 corridors.**

The area here is paved and walled in black marble. Low streamers of fog roll along the floor. The door to area 25 is black-painted iron, labelled "Do not disturb!" Anyone who listens at the door will hear the sound of heavy, regular breathing, resonating as if heard through a mask of some sort. (The sound is similar to what Darth Vader sounds like; the DM may do an imitation of that sound to clarify things for the players.)

### 25: The room of "D.V."

**20' x 15' with 10' x 10' alcove; 1 door; stone floor.**

The iron door to this room is *very* heavy; add one to any character's die roll to open doors (treat a roll of 1 as a 2, 2 as a 3, etc.) to make it more difficult to open. A *knock* spell will open it, however. The door makes no sound when it does open.

Inside, a torch burns on the south wall. A table 5' wide and 10' long sits in the center of the room with six chairs around it. The southernmost chair is occupied by a huge (7' tall) human figure in full-length black plate armor, with a shiny black helm and a black robe. The figure looks at the party entering the room, but remains silent except for the sound of heavy, filtered breathing.

The figure is actually an empty suit of armor and won't move no matter what the party does. Close inspection of the armor reveals that the breathing is caused by a *magic mouth* inside the helmet; the back of the armor opens up to reveal a small open place where levers and pulleys are visible. A



little seat is visible inside the armor, sized for a being only 3' tall.

An elf or half-elf will notice the illusionary wall in the southeast corner, on the same chance as detecting a secret door. Behind the wall is a cozy little alcove, 10' square, with thick carpeting, wall hangings, and throw cushions. Asleep on a small cot is a halfling who reeks of alcohol; wine bottles (Mad Dog #5) litter the floor. The halfling cannot be awakened except by physical attack, and even then will be groggy, incoherent, and will attack at -5 "to hit." Left alone, the halfling will sleep another 3-6 hours.

If awakened and questioned, he will claim to have been held prisoner by "that big guy," and even if he is confronted with the armor, he will stick to his story. (The halfling is a compulsive liar and will never

tell the truth about anything.) He actually had the armor built for him and has used it to fool everyone, including the guildmasters of Jalkive. The halfling is the only one who knows how to work the suit of armor, and he will lie or refuse to answer if anyone asks about how to work it.

The halfling, who likes to be called "D.V." (but will not reveal this to the PCs), is a 2nd level thief, aligned neutral, with 10 HP (13 while intoxicated). The referee may role-play the halfling as desired; in tournament play, he has no effective attacks.

The halfling has 495 platinum pieces, 1278 gold pieces, and 29 bottles of Mad Dog #5 wine under his bed. He knows where the Ebon Stone is, but will always lie about its whereabouts even if pressured. No weapons are in this area.

### 26: Undead room

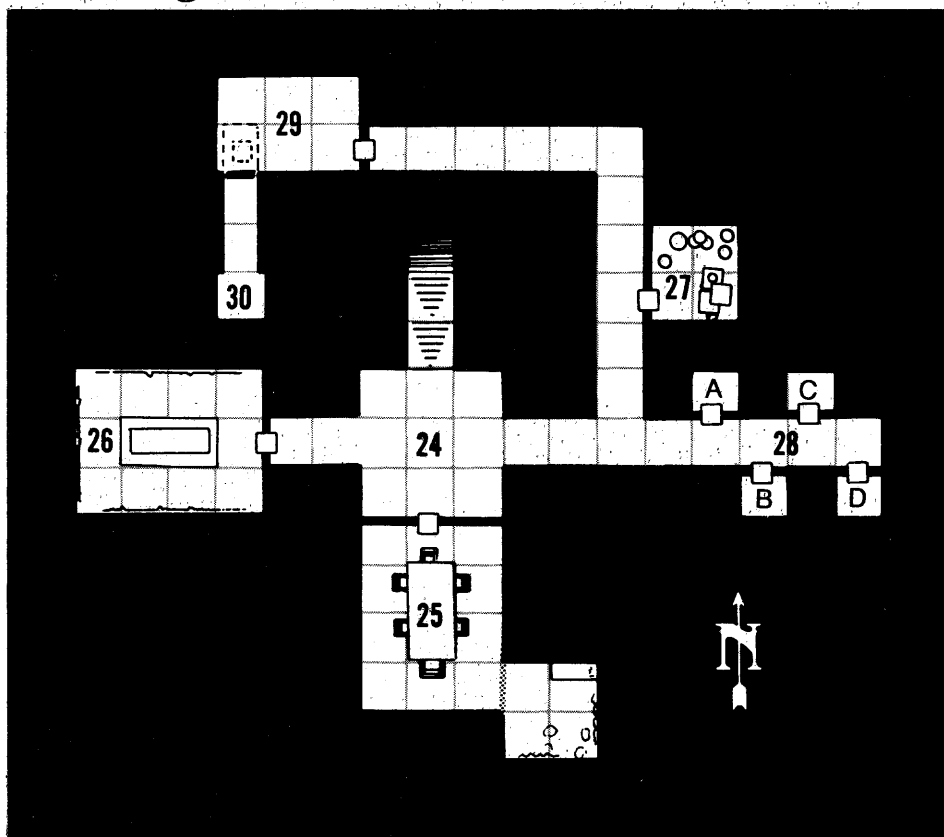
**15' x 20'; 1 door; stone floor.**

The door to this room is made of oak; listening at it reveals no information. Behind it is a coffin on a stone table; the room is obviously a vault of some sort. Wall hangings seem to indicate that some famous and powerful person lies buried here, someone who lived in a huge castle and was named Vlad. The coffin is not locked and can be opened easily.

The coffin contains a ghoulish (AC 6; MV 9"; HD 2; HP 15; attacks for 1-3/1-3/1-6 plus paralyzation for 3-12 turns) that serves as a guardian for the treasure in the coffin (a *potion of frost giant strength* plus 2000 sp). The ghoulish will attack as soon as the coffin is opened.

## Underground level

1 square = 5 feet



**27: Storeroom**  
**10' x 10'; 1 door; stone floor.**

The door to this area is clearly marked "Storeroom." Inside the room are food supplies, barrels of flour and wine, and crates of Mad Dog #5 wine. Also to be found is a pile of papers that include orders for more supplies, one asking for: "One incredibly horrendous monster, preferably a god or demigod, to guard the Ebon Stone." The order is marked as having been filled two weeks ago.

**28: Cells**  
**5' x 5' each; 1 door each; stone floor.**

All cells have locks on the outside that may be picked or broken off (with a successful "bend bars" roll). The four cells have the following contents:

- A. An orc skeleton, and nothing else.
- B. A bored 4th-level "preppie" monk, who was imprisoned for ridiculing Master Po's philosophical sayings. He's angry at everyone and will attack the party if he is released. He has AC 7; MV 18"; 5 attacks/4 rounds for 1-6 damage; evades normal missiles if he rolls a 12 or better on d20; can *speak with animals* at will.
- C. A live orc. He smarted off to "D.V." and has come to regret it (his nose is still broken). If released, he will run away to warn Skrunge in room 11 upstairs about the intruders. The orc has AC 10; MV 9"; HD 1; HP 5; no effective attacks in tournament play.
- D. This cell is empty.

The prisoners in cells B and C hate each other, and each of them will say anything to get the other in trouble while trying to save himself.

**29: Plant room**  
**10' x 15'; 1 door; 1 secret door; earth-covered floor.**

The door to this room opens inward and is simply labelled "Ebon Stone." This small room has a *continual light* spell on the ceiling, illuminating some pretty flowering vines growing in here. The floor has 3' of dirt over it (the true floor level is below the hall's floor, so one walks right in on the soil).

Six flowers are on the vines, each a bright yellow and purple color. The plant is a yellow musk creeper. As soon as the door opens, the two flowers next to the door will puff musk at the nearest character, rolling "to hit" as 3 HD monsters. If struck, the victim must save vs. spells or will walk into the room and into the vines at the end of that round. On the next round, aerial roots from the yellow musk creeper will attach themselves to the victim's head; on the following round, the victim will be drained of 1-4 points of intelligence. This drain will continue each round thereafter until the victim is rescued, dies, or becomes a yellow musk zombie. (See the FIEND FOLIO™ Tome for details on the yellow musk creeper.)

Anyone else who enters the room will be attacked by one of the other four blossoms;

after each blossom "fires," it won't fire again for one turn. The plant will make one attack per round until all four remaining flowers are "out." Hacking at the flowers, roots, and vines above the ground will not kill the plant. Any character turned into a yellow musk zombie will attack all other characters in the group.

The main bulb-like root (AC 7, HP 20) is in the southwest corner of the room, over the buried trap door. If the root is attacked, destroyed, and dug up, the door will be noticed at once. The passageway goes down and to the south; since it is only 3 feet wide, only halflings and gnomes may travel through without trouble. Dwarves have a 1 in 10 chance of getting stuck, elves 1 in 8, and humans and half-elves 1 in 6 when passing through it.

**30: Ebon Stone chamber**  
**5' x 5'; 1 secret door; stone floor.**

When a character crawls into this room, he or she will see the Ebon Stone sitting on a pile of gold coins in the center of the room. It may be picked up without harm. Note, however, what effect the stone has on magic items. There are 100 gp and no traps in the room (the Ebon Stone is enough of a trap!).

**The Ebon Stone**

The stone appears to be a black gem of bright obsidian, 3" in diameter. When it is touched, the gem will exhibit the following properties and characteristics:

- 1) It seems to send a shock through any character who touches it. The character suffers no damage, but all magic items carried by that character must save vs. magical fire or be destroyed.
- 2) If it is held out and aimed at another character within 30', the gem will shoot out a ray of blackness. The victim is automatically hit for 4-16 HP of damage (save vs. wands for half damage). This power may be

used once per round by anyone who holds the stone.

3) A *detect alignment* or *detect evil* spell will reveal that the gem is evil.

4) Any character who touches it will know immediately that it is the Ebon Stone, and that it must be immediately returned to Mekkari.

5) Examination reveals that the Ebon Stone is worth about 20,000 gp.

**Spell lists for tournament characters**

**Illusionists**

First level: *change self, color spray, detect illusion, detect in visibility, light, wall of fog.*

Second level: *blindness, blur, detect magic, invisibility.*

Third level: *dispel illusion, paralyzation.*

**Magic-users**

First level: *burning hands, charm person, comprehend languages, detect magic, feather fall, hold portal, light, magic missile, read magic, sleep.*

Second level: *continual light, detect evil/good, detect invisibility, invisibility knock, levitate, web, wizard lock.*

Third level: *clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball, haste, slow, water breathing.*

Fourth level: *charm monster, dimension door, fear, remove curse.*

**Clerics**

First level: *bless, cure light wounds, detect evil/good, detect magic, light, protection from evil, remove fear, sanctuary.*

Second level: *chant, find traps, hold person, know alignment, resist fire, silence 15' radius, slow poison, spiritual hammer.*

Third level: *continual light, create food and water, dispel magic, locate object, remove curse.*

Fourth level: *cure serious wounds, lower water, neutralize poison, protection from evil 15' radius.*

8

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## **The RPGA™ Network Judge Ranking System**

*The details of this system for scoring AD&D® game tournaments first appeared in issue #11 of the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine.*

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**The categories**

**A. Game knowledge:** *Did the referee know the game rules? Could he or she find specific information quickly? (x10)*

**B. Decisiveness:** *Was the referee firm in his decisions without being offensive or abusive? (x9)*

**C. Descriptions:** *Was the referee clear and understandable in his descriptions of rooms, encounters, and so forth? (x8)*

**D. Control:** *Did the referee allow a player or players to perform any illegal actions (such as using the same spell twice)? Did he allow players to browbeat their way through the adventure? (x7)*

**E. Time management:** *Did the referee waste time by giving excess information, straying from the subject, etc.? (x6)*

**F. Fun:** *Was the referee fun to play with? Did he help you to have an enjoyable time? Would you play with this referee again if given the opportunity? (x6)*

**G. Role playing:** *Did the referee play the monsters and NPCs well? Did he allow you to play your character's role? (x4)*

*The Player Ranking System designed to be used in conjunction with these ratings was published in DRAGON® issue #84.*

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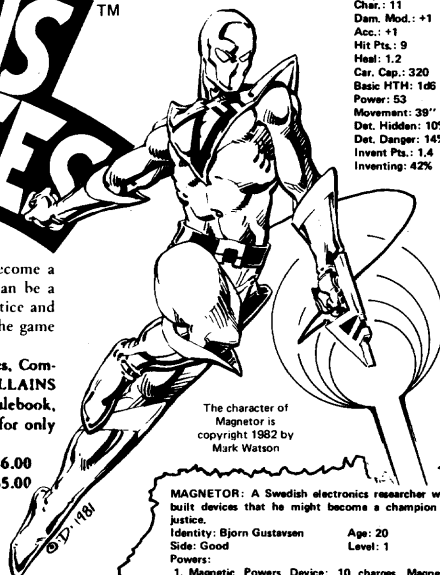
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# Modules: What we're hunting for

Since the first announcement appeared in DRAGON® Magazine #81 that we were searching for "a few good modules," several hundred letters with new module ideas have appeared in our mailbox. Having looked them over in some detail, we can now give more information on what we are (and aren't) looking for.

First of all, we are expanding the scope of the module hunt to include module ideas for game systems produced by TSR, Inc., other than the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and TOP SECRET® games. We are also looking for module ideas for the GAMMA WORLD®, STAR FRONTIERS®, GANGBUSTERS™, BOOT HILL®, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games. We will also consider submissions for the DRAGONQUEST™ and UNIVERSE™ games.

Second, some ground rules: Any module published in DRAGON Magazine becomes the sole property of DRAGON Magazine and TSR, Inc., upon payment to the author for the purchase of all publication rights. Payments are mailed within 30 days after publication, at a basic rate of \$45-50 per printed page of text. We pay extra, at standard rates, for maps, artwork, and other graphics materials supplied by the author that are published; however, in almost all cases the submitted maps and artwork will be redone by a staff artist.

We strongly recommend that you enclose a large, self-addressed stamped envelope with a module submission, so the manuscript can be returned to you if it is unsuitable or needs revision. If you don't want the manuscript returned, tell us so, and we will simply discard the submission if it's unsuitable. A photocopied manuscript is okay, but we will not consider a submission that has been simultaneously sent to another publication. We cannot assume responsibility for the safe delivery of a manuscript, or for its safekeeping while it is in our possession, so it's always best to keep at least one copy of whatever you send.

## How we make decisions

Some of our judgment about the potential of a module idea is based on the way the idea is presented in the letter of inquiry that we receive. If it appears that the writer has a lot of difficulty with spelling and grammar, we usually turn down the idea. If the letter is typed neatly (by typewriter or word processor), and if we find few or no grammar or spelling errors, we examine the idea itself much more closely. Handwritten letters of inquiry are acceptable, but should be easily readable.

The presentation of the module idea is a major factor in our decision. We have dismissed some ideas because the writer didn't say enough about what the module involves. Sometimes a writer tries to tempt us

into asking for more information on a module idea by presenting us with only a few hints about what the adventure involves. This won't get you anywhere. Don't be vague; in your initial letter, give us a complete description of your module idea, telling us what character types the module is designed for (levels, classes, races, etc.); what type of adventure is involved (dungeon, wilderness, oceanic, cross-planar, or some other); what opponents the characters will face; what treasures might be gained; and some details on how the adventure is developed and how it is expected to progress. We need to know everything, in general terms, before we can tell you whether to proceed with a manuscript.

## What we *don't* want

We don't want modules in which the characters must kill gods, destroy planets or cities, or gain unreasonably powerful magical or technological treasures that would throw campaign balance out the window. We also avoid adventures in which characters are given a *deus ex machina*, which is a fancy Latin phrase meaning, roughly, "an enormous amount of unexpected help." It is bad form to have deities, high-level mages, powerful aliens, and the like step into an adventure to help out characters whenever the designer thinks they might need it.

We don't want a module that is meant to run in several consecutive parts. We're looking for adventures that will fit within one issue of DRAGON® Magazine, using between 8 and 16 pages for text, maps, and artwork. A typed manuscript of 25 pages is probably too short; 60 pages is probably too long.

We don't want a randomly laid-out dungeon in which orcs inhabit rooms next to elves, with 1-4 dragons down the hallway. Encounters in a module should be carefully selected so that they make sense; there should be a reason why the orcs are standing where they are and doing what they're doing. In the same vein, we don't want illogical adventures in which paladins knowingly travel with assassins, agents carry atomic bomb ink pens, or the party must fight "evil" druids.

We cannot use an adventure that takes place in someone else's fantasy universe (Gary Gygax's Greyhawk campaign, Robert Asprin's city of Sanctuary, and Tolkien's Middle Earth, for example). Adventures we're interested in are those that can be placed in anyone's game campaign. This makes a module usable by anyone who plays the game for which it was designed.

Certain themes have been used, and sometimes often repeated, in role-playing adventures, and should be avoided in a module submission. In particular, a module should not resemble or duplicate a previously published adventure; we have a large

number of letters describing modules in which characters must fight pirates who have joined forces with dragon turtles, investigate cities with kidnapping or spy rings, attack orc-held citadels with ancient buried artifacts beneath them, defeat drow elves who are manipulating other races for evil purposes, enter buildings that rise and fall into the earth periodically, or invade a demi-lich's tomb or vampire's castle. Astute readers will note that these scenarios closely resemble modules produced by TSR, Inc., or adventures that have appeared in DRAGON Magazine. Granted, nothing can be completely original, but it is very important to make your module different from what has come before it.

Avoid touchy, offensive topics. Material that we consider to be in bad taste due to racial, sexual, religious, or cultural references will be dumped. In "modern" role-playing games such as the TOP SECRET or GANGBUSTERS game, this will be an especially important factor. It is fine to have adventures take place in foreign countries, with references to the local cultures and customs, but avoid modules in which, for example, secret agents must find an H-bomb hidden in London by Irish terrorists, or in which Olympic athletes are being threatened. Use your good sense and tact.

## What we *do* want

Many adventuring environments have not been fully explored in role-playing games. In the AD&D® and D&D® games, cross-planar travel, seagoing and undersea adventuring, and arctic adventuring (to name a few) have barely been scratched. In the GANGBUSTERS game, not all adventures must take place in Lakefront City. The stones left unturned in GAMMA WORLD and STAR FRONTIERS adventuring are beyond number, and even the BOOT HILL game has unexplored possibilities. Adventures that broaden the gaming environment and open up new places for characters to go are highly prized.

Modules that present new equipment, new magical or technological items, or new monsters, aliens, or secret organizations for characters to interact with are also valuable, but less so than those that present new environments. Avoid introducing too many new items in an adventure, so that the story becomes an excuse for the objects in it to exist. The adventure is what counts.

## Module presentation

We want manuscripts from people who can type or who can use a word processor; writers who can do neither must find someone to type up the final manuscript before it is submitted to us. We will not accept handwritten manuscripts.

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# A Stone's Throw Away

Fiction by Roger E. Moore

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"A Stone's Throw Away" is the second in a series of short stories which introduce some of the Heroes of the Lance seen in the modules DL1: *Dragons of Despair* (released in mid-March), DL2: *Dragons of Flame* (scheduled for May release), and other TSR products. This story's character, Tasslehoff, is a member of a new player character race, the kender, the equivalent of a halfling. Kender look like wizened 14-year-olds, and they are immune to fear, either magical or non-magical. Tasslehoff himself is a "handler," a polite way of calling him a thief, and it's his "handling" capabilities that provide the impetus for the following tale.

I

The citadel of the Magus sprawled atop the bleakest peak in all of Krynn. A black thunderhead rose the sky above it, raining lightning down on the barren slopes. The mall traces of life and dust that clung to the rocks were buffeted by a cold and endless wind.

For three centuries, no living mortals traveled closer than within sighting distance of the peak, their journeys and curiosity warned away by the boiling storm. Lords and kings turned their attention to other matters; great wizards investigated less dangerous secrets.

So it was when, upon finding an intruder within the castle, the citadel's master became at once confounded, enraged, and fascinated. He ordered his unliving servants to bring the intruder to his study for questioning, then retired there to await the arrival.

Catching the intruder was no mean feat, since he was quite skilled at evading pursuit. In due time, however, two of the man-like automatons which served the Magus entered the study, the intruder suspended between them by his arms.

The Magus looked carefully at the intruder, who stopped kicking the moment he

saw the Magus. The intruder was barely four feet in height and thinly built; he had bright brown eyes and the face of a ten-year-old human child. Narrow, pointed ears pressed against his light brown hair, which was pulled into a sort of ponytail on top of his head. The Magus recognized him as a kender, an annoying elflike race that shared the world with him.

The Magus was accustomed to seeing terror on the faces of his captives. It disarmed him to see this one look upon him with open-mouthed surprise and lively curiosity. The captive smiled like a boy caught with one hand in a pastry jar.

"Hey," said the intruder, "you must be one of those necro-guys — necromantics, thaumaturboes, whatcha-callums." He craned his neck and surveyed the study as if it were the living room of a friend. "Nice place you've got here."

Mildly annoyed, the Magus nodded. "I have not had visitors here for many years. Today, I find you here within my fortress. For the sake of courtesy, I will first ask your name before I demand an explanation of how you got in here."

The intruder struggled for a moment, but he accomplished nothing against the grip of his eight-foot-tall captors. With a sigh, he resigned himself to talking his way out.

"My name is Tasslehoff Burrfoot," he began brightly. He almost added, "My friends call me Tassle," but decided not to bother. "Could your guards put me down? My arms hurt."

The Magus ignored his request. "Tasslehoff. An unfamiliar name, though I recognize Burrfoot as common among the kenderfolk. How did you get into this fortress?"

Tasslehoff smiled, all innocence, though he was sure that his arms were getting bruised. "Oh, I dunno, I was wandering by and saw your place up here, so I thought I'd step in, see how you were doing—"

The Magus hissed as if he were a viper that had been stepped upon. Tasslehoff's voice faded away. "That's not going to work, is it?" Tasslehoff finished lamely.

"Wretch," said the Magus savagely. His pale, skull-like face grew dead white with rage. "I am wasting time on you. Speak plainly!"

Though kender love to infuriate and tease, they can tell when they have pushed someone too far. "Yes, well," Tasslehoff began, "I don't know how I got in here. I mean, uh, I put this ring on" — he nodded toward his left hand, still held tightly by an automaton — "and I teleported in, but, um, I don't know why I did. It just, uh, happened."

A fragile silence reigned. The Magus stared at the kender speculatively. "That ring?" he said, gesturing toward the heavily engraved device with the enormous emerald that rested on the kender's third finger.

"Yes," Tasslehoff said, sighing. "I found it last week, and it looked interesting at the time; well, I put it on, and then I teleported." The kender grinned in mild embarrassment. "I can't seem to stop teleporting now."

For a moment Tasslehoff thought the Magus didn't believe him. "You put it on and appeared here. A ring that teleports the wearer." The Magus appeared to consider this possibility.

Tasslehoff shrugged. "Well, it's got its positive and negative aspect—"

"Take it off," said the Magus.

"Take it off?" Tasslehoff questioned weakly, his grin fading. "Uh, well, I'll try if your big friends let go of me."

The Magus gestured, and the undead automatons released their grip on the kender's arms, dropping him to the floor. Getting up, the prisoner rubbed his muscles, sighed, then grasped the ring tightly. He pulled and tugged until his face turned red,

but his actions had no effect.

"Let me try," said the Magus.

Instinctively, Tasslehoff hid his ringed hand. Though he didn't fear the Magus, he was not eager to have the Magus approach him, either.

The Magus spoke a few words, and the air was suddenly charged with power. A nimbus of light appeared around the Magus's right hand, which he held out in Tasslehoff's direction.

"Show the ring," said the Magus.

Tasslehoff reluctantly held up his hand, hoping the spell would not blast his arm off. With gentle confidence, the Magus reached out and touched the ring.

A blinding flash of green light filled the room, followed by a loud thump. Tasslehoff jerked his hand away in surprise, but he was uninjured. When his vision cleared, Tasslehoff watched as the Magus slowly crawled into an upright position on the other side of the room. Like a stick, the flash had discarded him.

"Wow!" said the kender, his eyes widening. "The ring did that? I had no idea . . ."

A long hiss escaped the Magus's lips. Tasslehoff stopped speaking immediately. For perhaps a minute the Magus said nothing, then he dusted off his robes and looked at the automatons.

"Take him," the Magus whispered. The somberness of his voice reminded Tasslehoff of the closing of a mausoleum door.

## II

"Well," Tasslehoff said to himself, his voice echoing from the walls of his cell, "I guess I've been in worse predicaments."

Unfortunately, he couldn't think of any worse than the one he was in now. He almost believed that the gods of Krynn were angry with him and that they were toying with his final punishment even now.

He racked his brain for some sin he may have committed, other than cursing or borrowing things without putting them back where he found them. Other people called it theft, but that term made him wince. It was handling, borrowing, not stealing. There was a difference, though the distinction was rather hazy to Tasslehoff and he'd never quite worked it out.

He rolled over and sat up. The automatons had cast him in the cell after leaving the Magus's chamber, and he had only a low-burning candle for light. Tangled spider-webs hung from the ceiling. Listlessly, Tasslehoff tapped his hand against the floor, and the ring clicked out a lonely rhythm.

*I should've listened to Mother and gotten into the scribe business, he mused, but mapping and traveling have always been more interesting than keeping account ledgers. As a child, he had filled his room with dozens of maps and had memorized the names on each of them. This made it easy to invent unlikely tales about his travels, which always amused and entertained his friends.*



Tasslehoff had often tried to make his own maps, but he had no head for the exacting patience it took to draw one accurately. Instead, he thought of himself as an explorer who didn't have to make accurate maps, relying on those who came after him to clear up such details as the direction in which north lay. Being there first, not drawing it up afterward, was what counted.

For years now, he'd walked the world and remembered many sights, great and small. On a high gray mountain, he had watched a golden chimera fight a bloody-tusked mantichore to the death. The Qualinesti, the elfin people of the high meadows, took him to witness the coronation of a prince of their wooded realms, dressing Tasslehoff in silver and silk of rare design. He'd spoken with wayfarers of a dozen nations and all polite races, and a few races not so polite.

Once in a while, Tasslehoff would run into an old adventuring friend from years ago, and they'd travel together for a while. He sketched crude maps of his journeys to show his friends, elaborating on his adventures a bit for effect, waiting for the listeners to smile. He loved story-telling over a map.

Mapmaking was not his only hobby, however. Occasionally, Tasslehoff would see something small and interesting within easy reach. When no one was looking, he'd borrow the item to admire it; oftentimes when he finished looking at it, the owner

was gone. With a sigh, he'd drop the item in one of his many pockets and move on. He never meant to steal anything. Things just came out like that.

A week ago, Tasslehoff found the ring.

Tasslehoff scratched his nose in the dim light and remembered. He was in his home town, a farming community called Solace. He'd gotten up early to get hot pastries from a nearby bakery. While waiting for the shop to open, he heard two men having a shouting match in an alley.

Argument turned to scuffling, then came a hideous cry that made the kender jump. Three watchmen walking past immediately drew their maces and rushed into the alley as the killer fled from it.

The thin-faced murderer was almost too hasty to escape. He stumbled on a loose rock and opened a clenched hand to catch himself. A glittering bauble fell from his palm and bounced up to Tasslehoff's foot, who was perchance hiding behind a wooden box by the bakery door. With a slight move, Tasslehoff covered the ring from view. The murderer hesitated, cursing the ring's loss, but continued fleeing upon seeing the watchmen advance his way. Within seconds, both pursued and pursuers were out of sight. Tasslehoff pocketed the ring with a careless flourish and went off to examine it.

It was very impressive, no doubt about that: solid gold, inlaid with small green emeralds, topped with a great faceted

emerald that made Tasslehoff's head spin.

Undoubtedly, the ring was worth a fortune and could alone buy a small mansion or virtually anything Tasslehoff could imagine. Out of curiosity, he compared his left ring finger with the ring's diameter, then put the ring on to admire it.

It was then that he discovered the ring would not come off. He tugged, pulled, and used soap and water, all to no avail. A few minutes after he gave up a last attempt to remove it, the ring flashed, saturating the kender's vision with velvety green light. At the same moment, it teleported him into the ocean, which was supposed to be over a hundred miles away.

The change was so sudden that he almost drowned before he had the presence of mind to paddle to keep himself afloat. He struggled, growing wearier with each passing minute. When a tall wave slapped him and he choked, the ring flashed green again and teleported him away — into a woodland full of scratchy briars.

This process continued for days. Every few hours the ring would send him off to a new place he'd never seen before. If danger threatened, the ring would jerk him out of it and carry him elsewhere. He knew that the ring was cursed and uncontrollable and that he'd better find a way to stop the teleporting before he was dropped into a volcano. At least, he was learning to swim quickly enough.

It didn't take long before he noticed that the distance between hops was decreasing; eventually, he was only teleporting a mile or so at a time, though more frequently. By making a mental note of landmarks, he also judged that he was moving in a straight line; and this heartened him: the ring was taking him somewhere. An adventure, indeed!

This pleasant feeling was lost completely when the giant thunderhead came into view over the horizon. Below it, illuminated by flickering lightning, was a vast and barren mountain capped by a black stone citadel. He was heading straight for it.

Tasslehoff said a word he'd once heard an angry barbarian use. He liked adventures, but there were limits. As if piqued by his comment, a second later the ring teleported him to within a mile of the mountain itself.

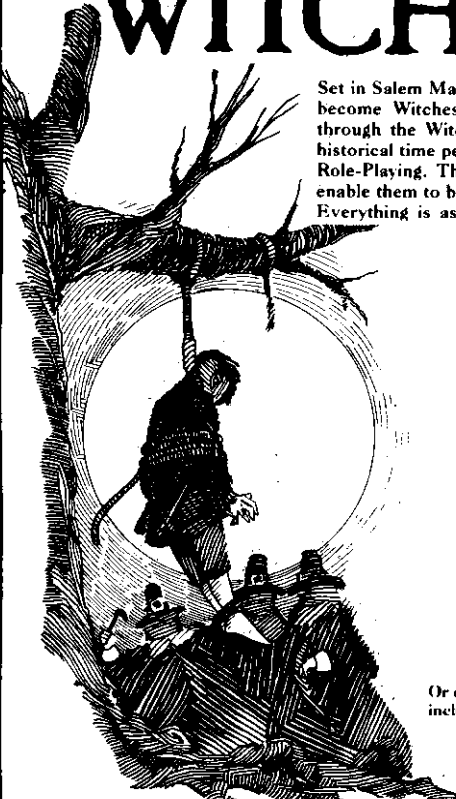
Kender know no fear, but they know a bad thing when they see it. Judging the thunderstorm, mountain, and citadel to be such bad things, Tasslehoff scrambled over rocks and debris in a mad attempt to flee. The ring flashed again, and he reappeared within fifty feet of the pitiless walls of the castle.

"No, no! Stop!" he yelled as he tried to bash the ring with a fist-sized stone. "Whoa! Let's go back to the ocean! I don't wanna g—"

A green flash in his cell cut the kender off in mid-thought. And a spider eyeing Tasslehoff from the safety of the cell's darkened ceiling coiled its legs in surprise. It was now the cell's only occupant.

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### III

At first Tasslehoff thought he had teleported into a cave. The flash blinded him as usual, but when the effects wore off, he was unable to see a thing in the darkness. By feeling about with his hands, he could tell he was in a narrow, square tunnel only three feet high. He crawled slowly in a random direction, testing the floor for traps or deep pits (of which there seemed to be none). Soon he saw a faint light ahead and quickly made for it.

A small, barred opening resembling a window was set in the wall to his right; carefully, he peered through it. Beyond the opening was a vast carved chamber, perhaps a hundred feet across and half as high as it was wide. The window was set two-thirds of the way up from the floor. Logic told Tasslehoff that he was in some sort of ventilation shaft; he had noticed a gentle air current while crawling along but had paid it no heed.

Within the chamber, light flickered from dozens of firepots laid out in a broad circular pattern on the floor. As he stared at the pattern, Tasslehoff realized it was a conjuration circle, such as wizards used to call up spirits from the invisible worlds. Faint tracers of colored chalk faded into the shifting darkness around the motionless flames below.

With a start, Tasslehoff saw that the room was occupied. Far below, striding quietly to the edge of the circle of firepots, was a dark-robed figure. It took but a moment for Tasslehoff to realize that it was the Magus. The little thief considered hiding, but his curiosity got the better of him, so he pressed closer to the bars.

The Magus stopped ten feet from the edge of the circle, within a smaller chalk-drawn circle beside it. For a time he appeared to contemplate the flames before him. Ruddy light played over his drawn face, white like a ghost's; his dark eyes drank in light, reflecting none.

Slowly, the Magus raised his arms and called out to the circle of fire in a language the kender had never heard spoken. At first

the flames crackled and jumped; but as the Magus continued speaking, the fires dimmed and lowered until they were almost invisible. The air grew colder, and Tasslehoff shivered, rubbing his arms for warmth.

Tasslehoff's attention was suddenly drawn to the center of the conjuring circle. Red streaks appeared in crisscross patterns on the floor, within the design of the firepots, as if the floor were breaking apart over red lava. A dull haze clouded the chamber, and the firepots burned more brightly. A strange roaring like a great ocean wave coming in to the shore filled the room by degrees, growing to a thunder that made the very rock tremble. Tasslehoff gripped the bars before him, wondering if an earthquake had been conjured by the sorcerer's powers.

Far below, the Magus called out three words. After each word, light and flame burst from the center of the conjuring circle. Each flash stung the kender's eyes, but he could not look away from the sight. Yellow magma glowed with superheated radiance within the circle, dimming the light from the firepots around it. A wave of heat reddened Tasslehoff's face and arms where the furs he wore did not cover him. The Magus did not seem affected by the heat at all.

One last time the dark figure called out, speaking a single name. Tasslehoff thought his heart would stop when he heard and recognized it. The thundering roar vanished instantly, and an eerie silence filled the air for the space of six heartbeats.

With a screaming whistle, the lava in the circle vanished entirely and was replaced by darkness streaked with an eye-burning violet light, resembling an impossible opening into the night sky. Tasslehoff was straining to see into the pit when a thing of titanic size arose from it, out of the night-pit and into the room.

Tasslehoff had heard rumors about the thing that stood before him, but he had never truly believed in it until now. The thing towered over the Magus, three times the height of a man. Two great tentacles dangled from its shoulders in place of normal arms, and two heads maned with black

fur rested where one head should be. Scales glittered over its skin, and in the light of the firepots the thief saw its feet were clawed like those of a bird of prey. Slime and oil fell from it, the droplets smoking when they struck the stony floor.

The heads gazed down upon the Magus. Inhuman mouths spoke, their rasping voices out of time with one another by a fraction of a moment.

"Again," the voices said, "you call me from my plane of the Abyss to defile my presence with your own. You summon my divine person to fulfill your petty desires, and you tempt my everlasting wrath. So, I wish to have vengeance on this world for giving you birth, you who toys with the Prince of Demons like a slave. I thirst for your soul like a dying man for water."

"I did not summon you to hear your problems," responded the Magus in a cracked, thin voice. "Bound you are to me, bound by the circle. You shall hear me out."

With screams that made Tasslehoff jerk from the bars and cover his ears, the thing's heads shot down at the Magus — and were thrown back by unseen forces that sparkled and flashed like lightning. The thing's tentacles writhed and flailed the air like titan's whips.


"AAIIIEEE!!! Wretch! To speak to me so! Ten thousand times you are cursed should these bonds fade! Ten thousand times will I break you in my coils, until

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your dark soul rots!" For several minutes the demon roared out its rage. The Magus stood before it, unmoved and silent.

In time the thing ceased to cry out. Its breathing became a slow, ragged thunder.

"Speak," said the heads venomously.

"There is an adventurer in my fortress," said the Magus, "who wears a green-stoned ring. The ring will not leave his hand and defies magical attempts to remove it. It teleported the adventurer into my citadel when it was not his intention to do so. What ring is this? How do I remove it? What are its powers?"

The thing twisted its necks. "You summon me to identify a *ring*?"

"Indeed," said the Magus, and waited.

The twin heads dipped closer to the Magus. "Describe the largest stone."

"An emerald the size of my thumb, rectangular cut with six tiers and no flaws. The face is engraved with a hexagonal sign, with a smaller hexagon set within and another in that one."

Silence filled the darkened room; even the thing's writhing arms were stilled. After a pause, the thing stood upright. Its heads turned about independently of each other, Tasslehoff shrank back against the opposite wall of the tunnel as a head turned his way.

The head stopped when it looked into the barred window of the airshaft. Red fires arose in its eyes and ran through Tasslehoff like spears.

Tasslehoff Burrfoot had never known fear, though he had seen sights that made hardened men shake with terror. When the eyes of the thing were upon him, he shook without breathing, his soul filled with a new emotion.

Something like a smile ran over the lips of the thing's face. The head turned slowly away.

"Magus," said the thing, "concern yourself not with the ring. Turn your pleasure to other matters. You probe the reaches of unseen planes and manipulate the destiny of worlds. Neither the ring nor its wearer will be your concern past the setting of the sun this day."

There was a long silence during which neither monster nor summoner moved.

"That is not the answer I asked of you," said the Magus.

For a time, there was no response from the thing. Then its heads chuckled heavily, and the sound rolled across the room.

"I have spoken," it said, then vanished into the circle of violet light and darkness as if it had been a shadow.

The Magus stood before the circle long afterward, head bowed in thought. Just as it occurred to Tasslehoff that he would have to breathe or explode, the Magus turned and walked to a hidden door that closed quickly behind him.

Tasslehoff, bathed in sweat, leaned against the wall. If the Magus caught him now, he would die. He looked down at the emerald ring and wondered how long he would be able to hide before the Magus found him at last.

## IV

Twenty minutes later Tasslehoff arrived at another barred window, this one looking into a musty library lit by candles on a tabletop. Struggling and gasping, the kender squeezed through the bars and dropped onto a bookshelf, climbing down to the floor from there.

He wiped gray dust from his hands and looked around. Shadows flickered against the stone walls. Towering shelves filled with browned volumes bound in exotic leathers and sealed with glyphs surrounded him. As he looked at the tomes, his curiosity got the best of him again.

He cautiously pulled a large volume from a stack on the table before him. A glance at the cover confirmed that the writing was unreadable and probably magical in nature. He opened the book, and ancient pages rustled and fell apart in the candlelight.

Tasslehoff flipped the book shut with a gasp. Hesitantly, he reached for another, hoping it was less loathsomely illustrated. To his relief, the next book was written in the common tongue of the land and had no pictures at all.

"*Being a Compendium of Mystic Protections and Sorcerous Inscriptions for the Summoning of Creatures from the Dark Worlds*," he read aloud; The book appeared to be well used. A thought occurred to him, and he flipped through the volume, his eyes running over the pages in search of the name of the thing he had seen. At the end of the text was a list of creatures one could summon, and the thing's name was among them.

Silently, he read the passage under the list of names, absorbing every word of it. His hands grew cold and damp at the implications of the text. Finished, he closed the book and returned it to the stack with care, arranging the other volumes to disguise his prying.

"Well," he said aloud, wiping his hands. Some of his confidence was returning, though strained by the circumstances.

"Summoning is more dangerous than I thought. If the wizard messes up, boof! Off he goes, taken away forever. Demons don't forgive. . . ."

His eyes glazed slightly as he thought about some variations on this possibility. Mentally, he crossed off the occupation of sorcerer from those he wished to learn more about. This was better left to people like —

He heard a door, hidden by racks of books, open. Tasslehoff dropped to all fours and crawled under the table.

The floor creaked. Thick robes rustled and fell silent. There was no sound, for what seemed like ages of time.

"Tasslehoff," said a wavering voice.

There was no reply,

"You poor wretched puppy, you cannot escape me." The door creaked and thumped shut.

"You watched me in the Room of Conjurations when I spoke with the demon lord. I knew you were there. Come out now. No

use hiding, Tasslehoff."

Robes swished softly and slowly behind a bookcase. His eyes sparkling, Tasslehoff pressed against a table leg.

"You're behind the bookcase, under the table." The wavering voice hardened. "Come out."

A long shadow, stepping from behind the shelves, appeared against a far wall.

"Tasslehoff." The Magus raised his hand and pointed a finger.

Green light burst across the room. Tasslehoff fell back on the floor as the room blinked out and a new one flashed in.

Now he was in the Room of Conjurations. He ran for a corner and tried to climb the wall. Falling back, he ran for the doorway he hoped would be an exit.

But just then, the Magus stepped through the doorway into the chamber. Tasslehoff stopped dead, crouching and ready to jump in any direction.

"Pleased you could join me," said the Magus.

V

"I must confess," the Magus said, "that I don't understand why the ring you're wearing teleports you about as it does. You're at its mercy, yet it pulls you out of my reach and keeps you safe. It's kept you alive for days and days, bringing you to this castle to me. I don't understand it, and I know I don't like it."

Tasslehoff watched his opponent like a hawk. "I'm not happy and dancing about it either," he said. "I'd rather be home in a tavern."

"I don't doubt that," the Magus retorted, walking slowly around the kender. The sorcerer scratched at his cheek with a bony finger. "Circumstances, however, dictate otherwise. I want to finish this now, before the sun sets. You're the first person to ever invade my castle. You deserve a special fate."

"You wouldn't want to be friends and let me go home, would you?" Tasslehoff asked faintly.

The Magus smiled, the skin pulling across his face like dry paper. "No," he said.

Tasslehoff darted for the open door. The Magus gestured, and Tasslehoff slammed into the door as it flew shut. Stunned, he found his nose wasn't broken, though his eyes streamed tears.

Light arose behind him. Tasslehoff turned and saw that the firepots of the conjuring circle were burning. A dark figure with upraised arms stood before the circle, chanting in a low voice.

Tasslehoff felt in his pockets for some last trick, something to pull him out of danger. He found six feet of string, a silver piece with a hole in it, a sugar bun, a crystal button, someone else's tinderbox, a bluejay feather, and a river pebble two inches across. No miracles. . . .

He beat and kicked the door until he ached. Thunder rattled his teeth; waves of cold and heat washed over him.

When he heard the Magus call the name of the thing, he gave up. Setting his back to the door, he turned to face the spectacle. If he couldn't escape, he could at least go out like an explorer. He would have lived longer as a scribe, but this was better in a way. Scribes lived such boring lives. That thought comforted him as the scaled shape of the thing arose from the pit of violet lightning and darkness.

The thing's eyes glowed, one head fixed on Tasslehoff and the other on the Magus. "Twice in one day, Magus?" questioned the thing, hissing. "You have company as well. Am I now a circus exhibit?"

"Hear me!" the sorcerer shouted. "There stands an offering to you, a soul you may eat at your leisure! I bind you with words and enchantments of power, under threat of eternal torture and debasement, to take this kender to the Layers of the Abyss with you until time is no more! Take him away!"

Tasslehoff's mind went blank. His fist, thrust into a pocket, clenched the stone that he had collected some time ago and admired ever since because of its smoothness. In an instant he snatched the stone out of his pocket and threw it.

The Magus gasped and staggered as the stone smacked the back of his skull. Stumbling, his hands clutching his head, he



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# NOVA

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stepped forward. A slippered foot scuffed over the pale chalky lines that surrounded him.

The glowing runes and tracings on the floor went dark like a candle snuffed out. Silently and easily, an oily tentacle reached for the Magus and caught his foot. The Magus screamed.

"Thousands of years ago," said the thing, its voices trembling with peculiar emotion, "it occurred to me that I would need a defense against those who abused my status as Prince of Demons, those who would use me as a footstool on which to rest their pride. Someday, something would be needed to turn the odds in my favor should this ever happen."

The thing's tentacle lifted the Magus high in the air, turning him around slowly as a man would a mouse caught by the tail. "I devised many such defenses, but the one of which I am most proud now is the ring you wear, kender."

Tasslehoff glanced at the ring. The emerald was glowing faintly.

"The ring," the thing continued, "only activates when I need its services. It defends the wearer against death, though it may not make the wearer comfortable. By leaps and bounds it teleports him to my vicinity. It prevents all attempts to remove it until the wearer performs a boon for me, accomplishing what I most desire. You were my tool, unknowing, but most serviceable."

Tasslehoff looked at the thing, his mouth

dry with the realization of what he'd done.

"Take off the ring," the thing's voices rasped, "and you will be teleported back to your home. I have no more need of you."

Tasslehoff carefully pulled the ring free from his left hand. As it left his finger, it flashed a brilliant, fiery green and dropped to the floor. And in that same instant, Tasslehoff was gone.

The heads of the thing roared with laughter. The Magus screamed, and screamed, and . . .

## VI

Tasslehoff finished his drink and pushed it away. Across the tavern table, two old friends, a man and woman, blinked as the thread of the tale snapped and drifted away.

"That," said Kitiara with a shake of her head, "was the most incredible story I've ever heard out of you, Tasslehoff." A grin slowly appeared on her face. "You've not lost your touch."

The kender sniffed, disappointment showing on his face. "I didn't think you'd believe me."

"That was supposed to be true?" Sturm asked, staring at Tasslehoff. His eyes were bright with amusement. "You actually mean to say you met a demon prince, helped destroy a wizard, found and lost a magic ring, and crossed half the world?"

The kender nodded, a playful grin reflected on his face.

For a few seconds, the listeners made no response. The man and woman looked at each other and then at the kender.

"Merciful gods, Tasslehoff," the woman breathed, pushing her chair back. "You could make a goblin believe rocks were valuable." She came to her feet, tossed a few coins on the tabletop, and waved at kender and warrior. "I think I'll go on to bed with that one."

Sturm groaned in mild embarrassment. Granted, the kender's tale was fantastic, but there was no need to rub his nose in it. He turned back to Tasslehoff with a self-conscious grin, meaning to apologize, and stopped.

Tasslehoff was looking after Kitiara with a strange, wistful gaze. His left hand rested on the tabletop beside the half-melted candle. A pale band was visible around his ring finger, wider than most rings would leave. The skin on either side of the band was scarred and discolored, as if someone had tried to remove a ring once worn there.

Tasslehoff turned to Sturm, missing his gaze, and shrugged. "Well," he said, "maybe it wasn't much of a tale at that. It's about time to turn in, after all." He smiled and pushed his chair back. "See you tomorrow."

Sturm half-waved his hand. The kender left him alone in the inn with his thoughts.

For Margaret, Harold, Kim, and Pat, at last.

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## FANTASY TRIBE FIGHTERS



# Advanced hack-and-slash

## Combat plays a big role in four fantasy games

Reviews by Ken Rolston

Half-naked barbarians slashing at scimitar-wielding demi-humans, titanic blows from the tree-trunk cudgel of a gnarled giant, devastating blasts of deadly fire from stark-eyed wizards — these are the dramatic images of fantasy warfare. In spite of my distaste of butchery and my preference for in-character play, intellectually challenging plots and themes, and elaborate, atmospheric settings, deep in my heart I harbor a longing for the visceral thrill of vicarious violence and the cerebral challenge of strategic and tactical maneuver.

The games reviewed in this month's column celebrate the wargaming element of fantasy gaming. The combat systems of most FRP games are designed for small group engagements; under these rules, battles of more than 20 or 30 participants become impossibly cumbersome. Individual combats are conducted with varying degrees of detail, ranging from simple, limited-option systems to more complex, multiple-option systems. The games reviewed here are at the extreme ends of the scale, tailored either to larger engagements of hundreds of miniature figures or to detailed one-on-one melee rules.

There has long been a small but dedicated group of fantasy miniatures gamers. The FRP hobby itself grew from the roots of this wargame genre. Ironically, while role-playing games have evolved, each succeeding year witnessing improvements and elaborations in new and revised systems of increasing quality, the development of fantasy miniatures rules has scarcely advanced since the dawn of the role-playing age. No major FRP game has a satisfactory mass combat system integrated with the role-playing, combat, and magical systems. No fantasy miniatures rules system combines the comprehensive and explicit detail of established ancient and medieval miniatures systems with the rules adequate to handle a wide range of magical effects or the special features of fantasy troops.

### **WARHAMMER: The Mass Combat Fantasy Role-Playing Game**

by *Bryan Ansell, Richard Halliwell, and Richard Priestly*

Published by *Citadel Miniatures*

**WARHAMMER**, though far from the perfect fantasy miniatures system, is a creditable step in the right direction. Though it doesn't compare with serious ancient and medieval miniatures rules, nor does it handle the variety of magic spells and fantastic beasts encountered in most

role-playing games, it is currently the most coherent blend of wargaming and fantasy role-playing available. As an introduction to fantasy miniatures warfare, it is quite satisfactory. More experienced miniatures gamers may lament the lack of more detailed wargaming or magical rules, but they should admire the way the elements hang together, and they may find a few game mechanics worthy of inclusion in their own campaigns.

### **Tabletop Battles: Volume 1**

**Warhammer** is a mass combat system. The figure scale is 1:1, and the action is similar to melee in the D&D® game. There's a lot of dice-rolling. Each figure rolls to hit, then to kill, and then the victim gets to make a save based on his armor. The three main elements of combat ability — weapon skill, strength, and toughness — smoothly accommodate the range of fantasy combatants from frail halflings to durable giants. The rules are simple and organized, and except for the dice rolling (which many gamers enjoy), the pace is fairly rapid.

One notable feature is the influence of Morale and Psychology in determining the response of troops to events on the table. As usual, units may recoil or rout from untoward events in melee if they fail morale checks. Responses to other kinds of events are included under a unit's or individual's Psychology. For example, hatred (of a troop type) impels a unit to move toward that unit and to charge at first opportunity. Terror (of a troop or creature type) may cause catatonic withdrawal or mindless flight. My favorite is Stupidity, which permits dull-

witted creatures like trolls to become confused and attack friendly units, or pause in confusion in the middle of a formation change. The 15-page creature/troop list is fairly comprehensive, and the mechanics are flexible enough to accommodate unique or omitted creatures. Some will be disappointed with the absence of familiar (and desirable) miniatures rules handling aspects of unit composition, command control, terrain effects, and off-table movement. Most unfortunate is the absence of a costing system for troops and magic. Nonetheless, the system is remarkably complete considering its simplicity.

### **Magic: Volume 2**

The magic system offers a variety of effects and has a fine fantasy flavor. Each mage has the innate ability to sense and defend against magical attacks, giving some scope for dueling wizards. There are four levels of spells. While many of the spells are most appropriate for dungeon-delving, there's also a good selection of useful battle magic spells. The necromancer specialist, a perfect candidate for tabletop fantasy warfare, has spells well-tailored to his character.

The magical items in the system have charm and utility — for example, fine dwarven blade-craft from the smithies of Caraz-Adul, obsidian dawnstone knives (brittle weapons, but with marvelous enchantments), and urn-guards (ritually sacrificed bodyguards who may rise to defend their master's tomb).

### **Characters: Volume 3**

The final book provides character design, advancement, encounter tables, skills — all the necessary details for fantasy role-playing. The treatment is unimpressive and cursory, somewhat less detailed than the original D&D® game. The introductory adventure/campaign is a vague sketch, omitting aspects like opponents' stats and tactics, NPC descriptions, and detailed floorplans. The tone of the scenario is suggested by a major NPC, a dragon named Thelma. Not exactly high fantasy. In short, it is a primitive role-playing system with many of the virtues and faults of the earliest role-playing games.

This is not a condemnation. Certainly many excellent role-playing campaigns developed with the old D&D game rules, and anything omitted by the designer can be provided by the gamemaster. *Warhammer's* modest virtue of simplicity at least distinguishes it from many other overly detailed and garbled systems. The notable achievement is that the player character



abilities are compatible with a mass combat miniatures system, a virtue not currently available with any of the more sophisticated fantasy role-playing games. Whether the role-playing system works remains to be seen in consumers' playtesting and market acceptance. For one thing, the simplicity needed for fast tabletop play may not be compatible with the detail desirable for role-playing. For most figures on a table to have only one hit point simplifies bookkeeping and speeds play; for a beginning RPG character to have one hit point makes life crude, brutish, and short. Heroes will die unexpectedly; prudent characters will avoid combat altogether — sensible enough, but discouraging to action-adventure games.

### Evaluation

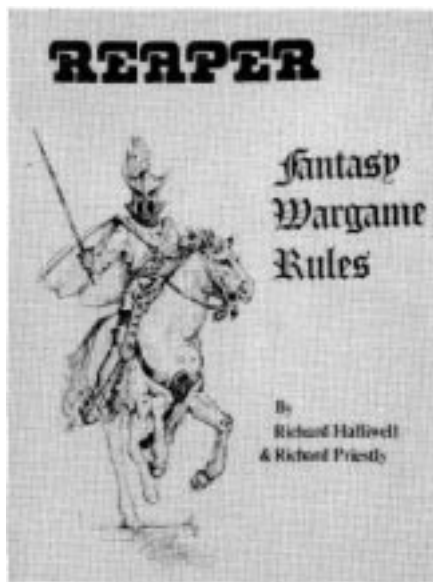
*Warhammer* is exceptionally simple and playable for a miniatures rules system. The presentation is good in comparison to other miniatures rules, and adequate in comparison to recent FRP games. The rules sacrifice detail and comprehensiveness for simplicity, but most of the important aspects of tabletop battles are addressed. Though hardly a model of English usage or proof-reading, the rules are well-organized and readable. The game has strong action potential, and the flavor of the fantasy elements is quite satisfying.

The rules are not readily compatible with other published role-playing systems; adapting *Warhammer* to other FRP rules would be a major do-it-yourself project and of dubious value. It could be a satisfactory introductory role-playing game for a beginner or for someone willing to convert his campaign to *Warhammer* rules, but its most likely application is for occasional mass combat tabletop games independent of your role-playing campaign.

In England, the price of the *Warhammer* set is £5.95. If the U.S. price is approximately \$10-\$12, then the three boxed booklets are attractive and a solid value.

(Editor's note: When this review manuscript was prepared in late January the U.S. price was not known. According to the U.S. distributor as of late March, the U.S. retail price is \$13.) If you run five or six tabletop sessions a year for your gaming circle, *Warhammer* will give you much better value than most adventure supplements. Of course, the investment of money and time in purchasing and painting miniatures must also be considered, but if you already have a lot of lead sitting around that you don't get much use out of, this may be a particularly good buy. Citadel also has two supplements planned for publication in the immediate future: *Forces of Fantasy*, with army lists and supplementary rules, and *Realm of Chaos*, featuring chaotic mutations, demons, and gods.

*Warhammer* was originally available only from Citadel Miniatures (10 Victoria St., Newark, Nottinghamshire, Great Britain), but is now being marketed in the United States by Games Workshop, Box 2537, Gaithersburg MD 20870.



**REAPER: Fantasy Wargame Rules**  
by Richard Halliwell and Richard Priestly  
Published by Table Top Games

**Attack of the Fungoid Trolls**  
Scenario for REAPER by Bryan Ansell and Richard Priestly  
Published by Table Top Games

*REAPER* is a 1981 copyright game from a British publisher. Halliwell, Priestly, and Ansell, the designers of *Warhammer*, produced this design and its accompanying tabletop scenario. This mass combat system is for a 1:1 figure scale. The combat and maneuver rules are not up to miniature wargaming standards, and the fantasy elements are adequately accommodated, but only with considerable do-it-yourself by the referee.

A detailed criticism of the game design is inappropriate, since many of the major weaknesses have been lessened or eliminated in the *Warhammer* design. The presentation of *Reaper's* game systems is amateur, and too much is cheerfully left for the reader to work out. Figure costing, combat calculations, and tactical factors are cumbersome. The rules presentation is disorganized and difficult to reference. Various sections of the rules are well-detailed, others are barely sketched, and often different rules elements are not well-integrated.

So what makes this rules system worth a review? Well, some of the systems are interesting, like the flying creature combat, control factors for unintelligent creatures, and "unformed points" (an incremental system representing fine distinctions of disorder in a unit resulting from combat, maneuver, and terrain). Most interesting, however, is the section on magic.

*Reaper* has a system for costing the various elements of magical spells when used in the *Reaper* game system. Magic use is analyzed into nineteen factors that describe elements and effects of magical spells (range, duration, killing power, physical

destructiveness, effect on movement, mind controls, etc.). These elements and effects are costed in "difficulty points." The referee and players design the spells for their miniatures campaign using these difficulty points, creating a customized spell catalogue describing the cost and effects of each spell. The referee can use the costs to balance scenarios and to limit the power of individual magic users.

The virtue of the system is its flexibility. Spells and other magical effects from most FRP games can be translated into *Reaper* mechanics, permitting a referee to organize epic tabletop engagements of 200+ participants. The effort in preparing a spell catalogue is considerable, but once it is completed, the referee will have an expandable mass combat magic system integrated with his specific campaign. The value of this will be self-evident to anyone who has tried to run campaign-related tabletop games. Scaling down the local FRP system's combat rules to match *Reaper* battle mechanics will require more work, but is relatively simple.

### Evaluation

*Reaper* is not a state-of-the-art fantasy wargame. The best thing that can be said about the vague and incomplete rules is that they are flexible and open to local customized variants. The real value will be for established fantasy miniatures gamers who already have satisfactory wargame rules (like Wargames Research Group's *War Game Rules*, the standard rules for ancient, classical, and medieval historical miniatures warfare) but are looking for a good magic system. With the basic principles of *Reaper's* magic system and a lot of work, the spells and magic items of a local campaign can be worked into large-scale fantasy engagements. At \$8, *Reaper's* price is a value for the experienced fantasy miniatures gamer. For a beginner unfamiliar with miniatures wargaming, it will not be a good introduction to the hobby; *Warhammer* would be far preferable.

*Attack of the Fungoid Trolls*, a *Reaper* scenario, is an interesting idea, and a good example of an imaginative tabletop fantasy scenario. In addition to standard fantasy troops engaging on the table, the scenario includes a cardboard cutout sheet of tree and shrub outlines. These plants are strewn about the field of battle, and each has some deadly feature (e.g., blood fungus, thornbush, pythonweed) that threatens the participants as they struggle to discover and control a supply of spore pods that may be used to create an army of mutant trolls. The booklet is very thin, however, and of limited value unless you happen to have the miniatures types used in the scenario. For a couple of bucks, it's worth looking at.

*Reaper* and *Attack of the Fungoid Trolls* may be available at your local hobby store, and can also be ordered in the U.S. by mail from The Compleat Strategist and The Armory. Even with shipping charges, it may be less expensive to order the products

direct from Table Top Games, 53 Mansfield Road, Daybrook, Nottingham NG5 6BB, Great Britain.

## LOST WORLDS: Fantasy Combat Book Game

by Alfred Leonardi

Published by Nova Game Designs, Inc.

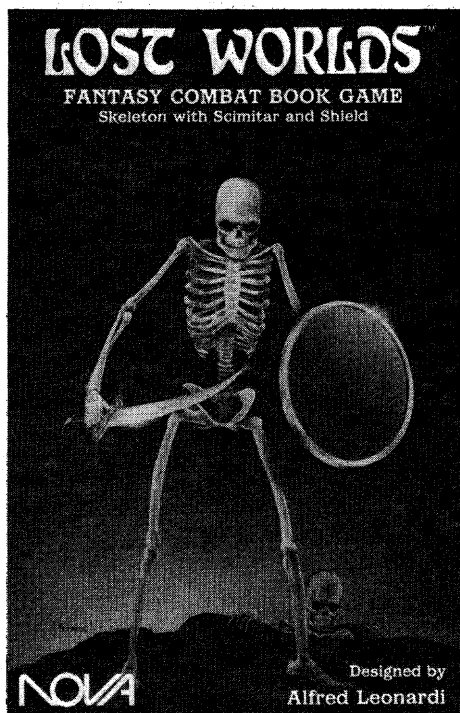
The *LOST WORLDS* system is similar to the award-winning *Ace of Aces* game of World War I biplane combat (no surprise, since both games were designed by the same person). The players select combat options, compare tactics, and resolve their interaction with a simple reference system that directs each player to a page where he sees a drawing of what the character would witness. For example, if your Jump Back maneuver was matched to the opponent's Strong Side Swing, you may find yourself standing behind your opponent (seeing a drawing of the opponent's undefended back), who has been swung all the way around because his powerful sword swing met no resistance. The directions are brief (2 pages long) and clearly explained. The action is fast-moving and dramatic.

The game product consists of a series of booklets, each representing a different type of melee opponent. At this writing five books are available (with others to come). They are: Man in Chainmail with Sword and Shield; Skeleton with Scimitar and Shield; Dwarf in Chainmail with Two-handed Ax; Giant Goblin with Mace and Shield; and Woman in Scale with Sword and Shield. You need at least two books to play the game. Opponents can either be different or identical characters.

The game mechanics are almost invisible under the surface of the game, the black-and-white illustrations that visually represent the resolution of each exchange of blows. Along with the illustrations is text describing blows dealt or blocked in terms of damage to the combatants, weapons, or shields. The illustrations are charming: opponents stumble backward, fumble their weapons; the skeleton even reaches down and picks up a bone he dropped, thereby restoring a few hit points. The invisibility of the game system and the simplicity of the directions and cross-referencing makes this game effective; the player moves rapidly from page to page, viewing the results of his tactics and of his opponent's countermeasures. It takes minutes to learn, and there are no rules to remember — just a series of procedures that can be mastered in the first few minutes of play.

The range of combat options is wide enough to offer a tactical challenge, and each of the characters (man, skeleton, dwarf, goblin, and woman) has a distinctive weapon, style, and abilities that a player-gliadiator must take into account if he is to be successful.

My ignorance of the martial arts prevents me from making a knowledgeable statement on the accuracy of simulation in this melee

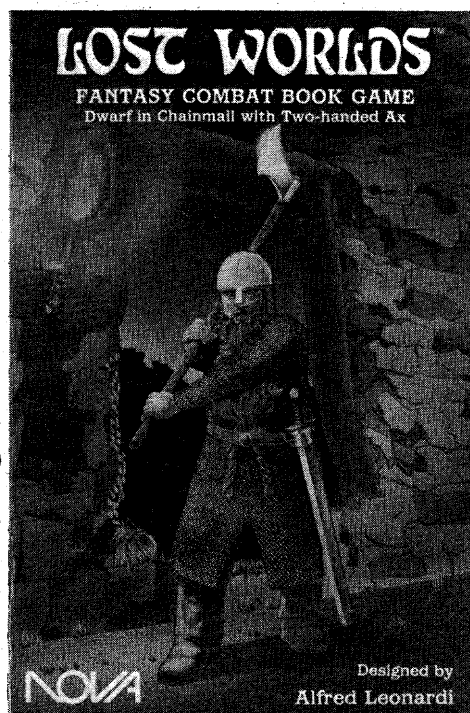


game, but the flavor is convincingly barbaric for me, with available actions including dodge, leap, thrust, parry, roundhouse, block and close, kick, duck, hook leg, bash, and so on. Since the technical advisor for the series is a fighter-trainer for the Society for Creative Anachronism, the game presumably bears some relationship to a real melee. There is scope for subtle or ferocious tactics, according to the character type you play. The giant goblin, for example, has a monster's bash-and-slash style, while the woman displays more finesse and defensive wit. A character earns experience points for vanquishing foes, and may advance in skills and durability through practice.

### Evaluation

Atmosphere, action, tension, and strategy — *Lost Worlds* has all of these elements. It is a splendid, entertaining game for a little quick hack-and-slash gaming fix. However, it is a questionable value in terms of money spent versus scope of play and flexibility. I have heard the repeated comment that the system is overpriced (at \$6 per booklet). Generally, this signifies a comparison with other mini-games like *Illuminati*, *Barbarian Prince*, and similarly priced diversions, and in these terms I do believe many other games give more play value and perceived value for the money. However, with *Lost Worlds* it is easy to forget that you are paying for the invisible rules system as much as you are for the physical components; ironically, the very virtue of the rules invisibility may be responsible for a gamer's misapprehension of the game's value.

Nonetheless, even giving due credit for the superior component and system quality, *Lost Worlds* has a very limited appeal. It is best suited for killing a few spare minutes; it is unlikely to develop into an obsession. The finely crafted closed system won't encourage tampering or variants, a typical source



of interest for hobbyists. You are also limited to a few character types, and the cost of expansion seems to outweigh the amount of novelty each new character offers to a gamer. For me, the greatest charm of *Lost Worlds* was in the first few games; thereafter I felt relatively little incentive to refine my technique and gladiatorial expertise.

The *Lost Worlds* game system is an entertaining, superbly produced minor diversion. It earns the highest marks in playability, time and effort to learn, presentation, originality, system quality, and dramatic effect, but its applications are limited and closed-ended, and the cost is perhaps a little steep for a quick thrill. It is certainly worth playing, but less likely to stimulate sustained interest, especially when compared with other similarly priced games. It's hard to judge an original novelty like *Lost Worlds*, since comparisons with other games are so hard to make. Buy a pair of books (or borrow a friend's) and judge for yourself.

*Lost Worlds* is available at most local hobby stores.

### CRY HAVOC

Published by Standard Games and Publications Ltd.

This is not a fantasy role-playing game, but a lovely model of what a perfect FRP combat wargame should look like. This medieval skirmish game contains two color maps with beautiful stone buildings (with open views of floor plans from above), contour lines, and forests, all overlaid with a large hex grid. The 228 playing pieces are exquisite color illustrations of medieval barons, knights, sergeants, halberdiers, spearmen, billmen, crossbowmen, archers, peasants, and innocent bystanders. Each individual counter is personalized with a name (Sir Glaston, Giles, Oddo, Edith) and a unique illustration.



Each combatant (or hapless victim) has four states: healthy, stunned, wounded, and dead. Each state is represented on front and reverse of two thin cardboard counters. The wounded portrait is a frayed portrait of the healthy one, the stunned portrait often displays charming up-pointed feet at the ends of sprawled legs, and the dead portrait shows multiple arrow shafts or an impaling lance. The game is worthwhile for these physical components alone, but also has other unusual virtues.

The game system is simple and clearly presented in three small booklets — 1. Rules of Play, 2. Historical Background: The Playing Pieces, and 3. The Scenarios. The rules are well-written and readable, covering the essential aspects of medieval combat. Detail is minimized to ensure clarity and simplicity, and the rules can be learned in minutes after a single reading. The historical background material is brief and introductory, just enough to suggest the period.

The scenarios are marvelous — comparable in dramatic staging and personality to most FRP adventures. A roster of participants in each engagement is given, along with a brief explanation of the situation. My favorite is the peasant revolt. The peasant roster includes six pack mules (loaded with loot from the countryside), 11 peasants, and 19 yeomen with some combat experience. Against this motley crew are arrayed 13 mounted knights. Fortunately, the peasants can seek the defensive cover of a nearby village, placing the knights at a disadvantage in the narrow streets where the peasants can thrust pitchforks and spears through windows and doorways at their heavily armored, upper-class foes. Among the other scenarios are Street Fight, City Sack, Robbery with Violence, The Trap (an ambush), Vanguard Clash, and Flight (pursuit of a routed unit, seeking captives for ransom).

#### Evaluation

*Cry Havoc* is easy to learn and simple to play. The presentation is superb in every way, with the possible exception of the thin cardboard the counters are printed on. The rules are clear and unambiguous, and the scenarios are varied and dramatic. It is a boardgame, and of little direct utility to an FRP gamer (though the maps would be quite useful in that context). The value of *Cry Havoc* is in the beauty of its presentation, the charm of its medieval atmosphere, and the appeal of its simple mass combat systems.

*Cry Havoc* is a British import, but is available from many game stores and distributors in the U.S. at a retail price of \$18. *Siegel*, a companion game to *Cry Havoc* that handles castle sieges, has been released recently by Standard Games.

#### BUYER'S GUIDE

*Warhammer* is a good introduction to fantasy miniatures mass combat and incorporates adequate role-playing systems to



enable running a mixed FRP/tabletop fantasy campaign. Good-looking, simple, and readable, the game is a solid value.

*Reaper* is of limited interest to any but experienced fantasy miniatures gamers. The rules probably will not satisfy as a foundation for a miniatures campaign, but some systems, like the magic rules, might be adapted to benefit existing campaigns.

*Lost Worlds* is a top-quality game — original, entertaining, challenging. Its novelty and immediacy are its greatest virtues; satisfaction may decline with repeated play and in light of the expense of supplements.

*Cry Havoc* is a beautiful game. Even though it has little practical application in FRP gaming, it is a boardgame most likely to appeal to fantasy gamers because of its medieval atmosphere and dramatic mass combat.

#### CAPSULE REVIEWS

**WHISPERS FROM THE ABYSS** (Tome, \$10): Excellent scenarios — literate, dramatic, sophisticated — perfect for the *Call of Cthulhu*™ game. The three adventures include mystery and intrigue aboard a zeppelin, a voyage with The Flying Dutchman, and the unearthing of the terrible fate of the Roanoke Colony. Valuable, enlightened GM notes set the tone and dramatic focus for the adventures. Historically credible settings with plenty of atmosphere and well-developed narratives are trademarks of Tome supplements, and the interior art is much improved over earlier products. Ambitious experiments mixing narrative and technical writing styles are quite effective in "The Ship Without Shadows," the Flying Dutchman scenario. Player materials are well-prepared and dramatic. Just very good stuff.

**THE SNOW KING'S BRIDE** (Chaosium, \$6): A solitaire adventure for the *RuneQuest*® game by Alan LaVergne. State-of-the-art in FRP solitaire — no revolutionary format, just a solid adventure with humor and atmosphere. LaVergne's work is always first-class; this and his other two *RQ* soli-

taires (*Soloquest* and *Scorpion Hall*) will give a solo gamer his money's worth in challenge, adventure, and entertainment. Expect to lose characters, but the wit and charm of the challenges is an adequate compensation for your loss.

#### TO CHALLENGE TOMORROW

(Ragnarok Enterprises, \$7.95): A role-playing game for the past, present, and future in three booklets. The first contains the role-playing mechanics — some of them interesting and original, the rest conventional and adequate. Booklet two suggests broad guidelines for RPG campaigns in periods from A.D. 1400 to A.D. 3000. A historical sketch, rule modifications, scenario possibilities, and a reading list is provided for each historical or futuristic period. The third booklet contains four scenarios — a crib of *Romeo and Juliet*, political intrigue at the turn of the century, a dystopian futuristic spy adventure, and the settlement of an alien planet. The scenarios are poorly developed; GMs must prepare most of the mechanics and the setting. The History of the World on a Low Budget is bound to disappoint; the presentation is not up to industry standards. The mechanics are appealing, the ideas are attractive, but they deserve a more elaborate package and better-developed scenarios.

**SHADY DRAGON INN** (TSR, \$6): A play aid for the D&D® game containing more than 100 pregenerated characters, an inn with floorplans in 25mm scale, and organized NPC parties for encounters. Of particular value to beginning-level and intermediate-level D&D campaigns. Stats, spells, and magical items are specified, and a brief but evocative personality and background are provided for each character. Well organized, illustrated, and presented.

**PALLADIUM ROLE-PLAYING GAME** (Palladium Books, \$19.95): A fantasy role-playing game closest to a variant D&D game in systems and style. Combat, skill, and spell mechanics are considerably different from those of the D&D game, but character classes, spell lists, and familiar adventure elements (orcs, balrogs, paladins, etc.) remind me of typical D&D campaigns. Attractive combat and skill systems. First-class magical character classes — complete with magical circles, mystic symbols, and elemental magics — offer simple but comprehensive fantasy magic. Nice treatment of alignments and deities. Contains an outline of a campaign world and a brief but imaginative introductory scenario. A complete FRP system, though lacking the box, dice, and player materials one expects nowadays. Could be a useful supplement for D&D campaigns or an alternative system for campaigns with a D&D flavor. Compares favorably with the AD&D® game, simpler than the *Chivalry and Sorcery*™ game but reminiscent of its comprehensive magic systems. At a price of \$20 for a paperback, only a fair value.

# Warhammer FRP system falls flat

WARHAMMER is the first major English entry in the hitherto American-dominated field of fantasy role-playing games, and it's one of the most irritating new games I've ever read. *Warhammer* has all the potential to be a good game — in fact, parts of it are very good — but overall it's a sloppy, amateurish piece of work that needs rewriting, editing, and extending to be a playable system.

The text is dreadful. To begin with, it's reproduced from typed manuscript and printed so small that long passages are difficult to read. It's further marred by a profusion of typographical errors, some of which cause real difficulty in understanding the rules. On top of it all, the authors have a miserable command of the English language. Their prose is even more awkward than the usual low level of gaming writing and is studded with grammatical errors. Although a role-playing game doesn't need to meet the standards of a Ph.D. thesis, using "it's" for "its" goes too far.

Unfortunately, this surface sloppiness extends to the rules themselves. Although *Warhammer* is billed as a "mass combat fantasy role-playing game," in truth the booklets contain two separate games with a weak attempt to link them together. The first, a set of rules for tabletop battles with miniature figures, is very good; the second, pieces of a fantasy role-playing game, is embarrassingly bad.

Let's look at the battle rules first. Experienced wargamers whose main interest lies in fighting tabletop battles will find these rules too simple, but this simplicity is a big plus for other gamers. The rules are so logically presented that they are the first set of miniatures rules I've seen that are clear enough for a beginner to understand and play after a little study. The turn sequence and the determination of melee results also move fast enough for them to be used as they're intended, as a combat system for a fantasy role-playing game.

The rules contain a simple system of determining not only morale, but also psychological factors such as standard mutual hatreds between fantasy races. These psychology rules also cover frenzy, terror, and an amusing concept — the "stupid" troops, such as trolls, who become confused and forget whom they're fighting unless their player makes a die roll. These rules add to the feeling of fighting a fantasy, not merely an ancients, battle.

The melee system is reasonably clear, with results determined on two tables, the "To Hit" and the "To Kill." The fighting prowess of troops depends entirely on racial statistics, but it's easy to create individualized fighters and wizards with a series of die rolls. Melee is run and resolved quickly once the players memorize the basic sequence of play.

There's a nice bonus in the combat section, too, in the form of a beginning scenario, "The Ziggurat of Doom." Although the set-up is simple enough for beginners to use while learning the rules, it's fun to play and bloody enough to satisfy the most berserk hack-and-slasher.

I'd rate this portion of the game as excellent if it weren't for numerous sloppy errors, like the ever-present typos. There are a couple of ambiguities in the content of the rules, too. For instance, it's impossible to find out if magical attacks are automatic hits or require determination on a melee table. From hints in the rest of the rules, either could be the case.

Aside from this one confusing point over magical attacks, the magic system as a whole is another strong point of the game. The authors have devised a means of keeping the magicians from taking over the game without recourse to a convoluted rationale such as the "forgetfulness" rule in the D&D® and AD&D® games. Each wizard has a randomly determined number of Constitution and Life Energy Points, both of which are expended by the casting of spells. Once the wizard has expended all of his Constitution Points, he may not cast another spell until those points regenerate, at a predetermined hourly rate.

Life Energy Points, however, do not regenerate at all. When a wizard has expended all of these points (which number in the hundreds), the character dies. Thus, players will refrain from having their powerful wizards blast everything in sight just for a lark.

The authors have provided a basic selection of enchanted objects. Most of these items are standard magical goodies, like elven cloaks and divining rods, but some are very powerful artifacts that should never be casually allowed into play. There is no distinction between the two types — another example of the general sloppiness of the rules.

When we examine the rules for character creation and general play, sloppiness is too mild a word. Not only are these sections poorly written and presented, but they're incomplete. Only two character classes are available — fighters and wizards. And since wizards are basically fighters with spell-casting abilities, the choice is even more limited than it first appears. Just three races are available for starting characters — human, elf, and dwarf. Race is supposed to be determined randomly (by a die roll), but I suspect that everyone will fudge this particular rule.

To generate characters, players use a series of die rolls that require many different probability spreads rather than being based on one underlying system. None of the characteristics are generated from or related to one another, either, so that it's

possible to roll up a physically weak character who is miraculously good with weapons, or a stupid character with high magical ability.

Aside from weapons skills and spell-casting abilities, which are rolled up when generating a character, all other skills available to a character are randomly determined from a meager list of 22 over-generalized skill areas. Thanks to this random system, it's possible to end up with some peculiar characters. I rolled up an elven princess who had skills as a desert nomad (when would an elf be in a desert?) and as a fisherman.

Worse yet, there is no provision in the rules for basic adventuring skills like disarming traps, climbing walls, or even riding a horse. Even for the ill-defined skills given, there are no rules for determining the success or failure of an attempt to use them, nor any way to increase a PC's proficiency with any skill except for weapon use and spell casting. (Weapons and spells use a basic experience level system that does have much to recommend it.)

All in all, the only good thing to be said about character creation in *Warhammer* is that it's very fast. It needs to be, unfortunately, because the vast majority of PCs start out so weak that few will survive a single scenario. Since the combat system is based on tabletop rules, which have to keep the kill determination simple, a single hit on a beginning PC will kill it 30% of the time, leave it permanently maimed 26% of the time, or mercifully put it out of action for that combat episode the rest of the time.

There's a set of sketchy random encounter tables, but no rules for determining NPC reactions to the PC party. Nor are there any rules or even advice for personalizing NPCs, henchmen, and hirelings. There's probably no use in listing all of the other things missing from this game; if it isn't mentioned in this review, you can assume it isn't there.

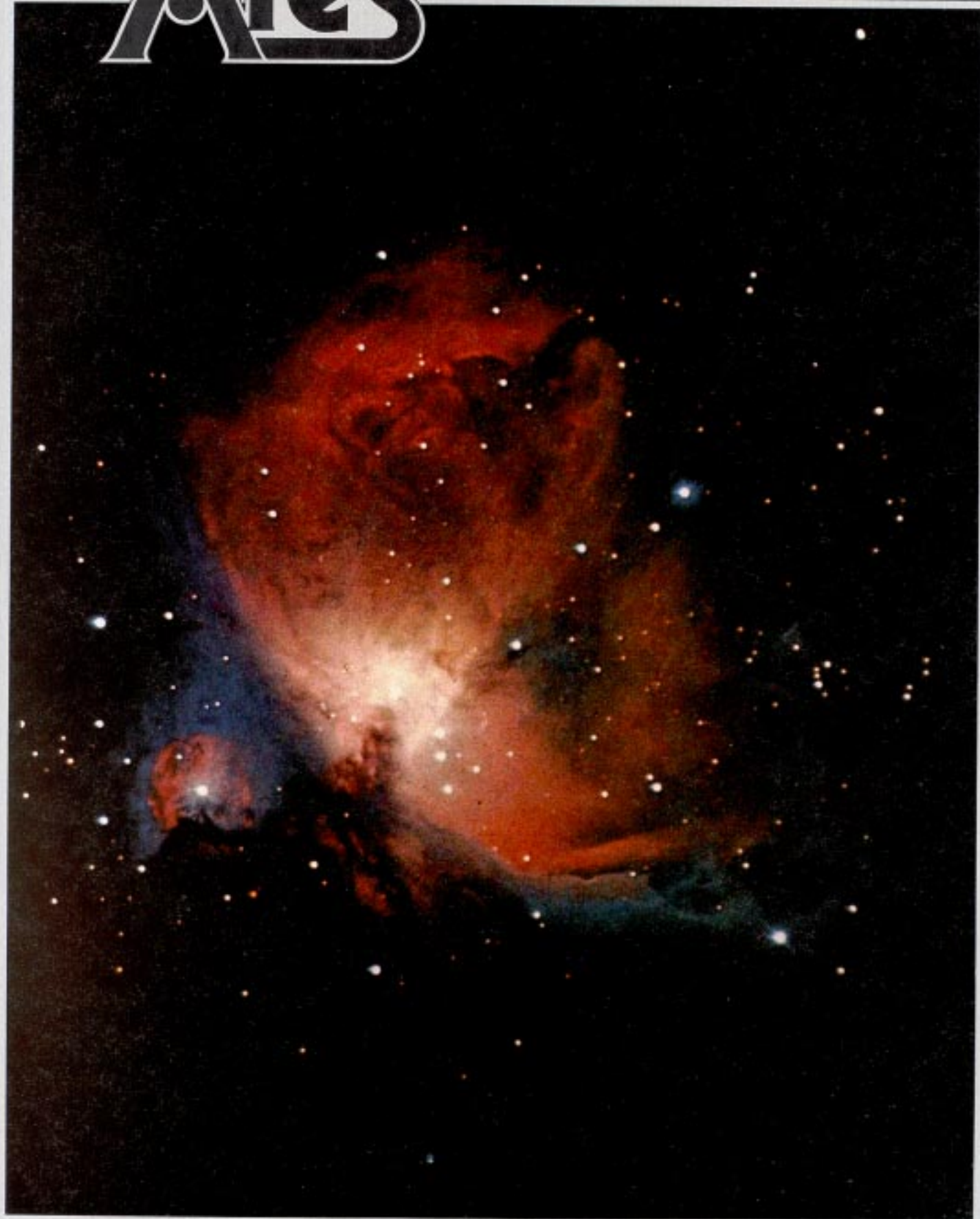
One thing that is included, however, is a case of adding insult to injury. The rules end with a scenario that's well-developed and that looks like it would be a lot of fun to play — if only we were given enough material to run it using this system.

Is *Warhammer* worth buying? The answer depends on the potential purchaser. An experienced referee who's discontented with the magic system in some other game might well profit from the magic rules in *Warhammer*. Anyone who revels in gory combat to the exclusion of all else will enjoy the game heartily. The novice gamer, or any gamer who's looking for a complete rules system, should save his hard-earned cash. Perhaps someday the game will be revised to make it live up to its potential; until then, it will be a curiosity and nothing more.

— Reviewed by Katharine Kerr

# Ares

SCIENCE-FICTION GAMING SECTION



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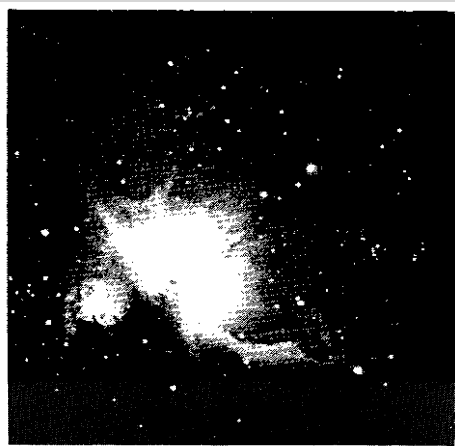
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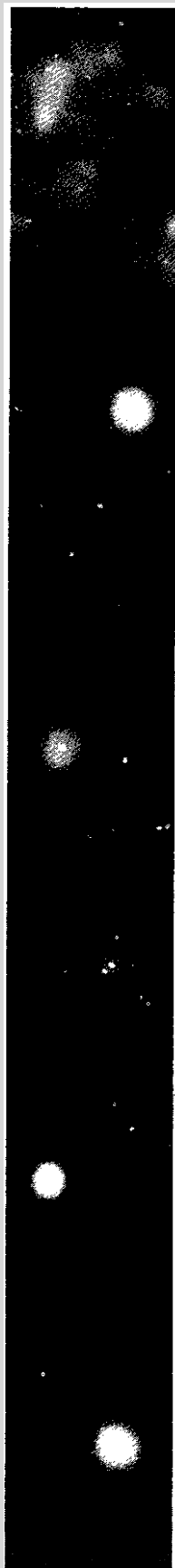
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#### ON THE COVER

The Great Nebula of Orion (M42) shines from the reflected light of the stars surrounding it. New worlds and suns are created in gaseous clouds such as this one; however, no two of these worlds, as pointed out on p. 77, need ever look alike. Photography courtesy of NASA.



Science-fiction gaming is a broad topic. It encompasses several smaller groups of games, such as the "galactic empires" environments of the STAR FRONTIERS®, TRAVELLER®, and STAR TREK™ games, post-holocaust adventuring as in the GAMMA WORLD® game, and superhero campaigns from the comic books, like that found in the CHAMPIONS™ game. In this issue we get a rare chance to cover all three varieties of science-fiction games, and all five of the above-mentioned games as well.

Continuing our series on the Moon as portrayed in the major science-fiction games is Dale Kemper's travelogue for STAR TREK: The Role-Playing Game. In case you were wondering, all of the "lunar visions" appearing here are *official* game additions, approved for their respective games. The U.S.S. *Enterprise* now has a new world to visit and new adventures to pursue. . . .

A new column, "StarQuestions," makes it debut. If you have any questions about TSR, Inc.'s science-fiction games, including the STAR FRONTIERS, GAMMA WORLD, and UNIVERSE™ games, as well as SPI-brand boardgames like the STARFORCE™ and DELTAVEE™ games, please send your letters to StarQuestions. This first column focuses on the STAR FRONTIERS game.

Tired of the same old mutants? Want to give the characters in your GAMMA WORLD game some nice surprises? Try some of our highly recommended "Gamma Hazards" and you'll soon have a whole new post-atomic ball game. If the players forgive you for it.

Rounding out this edition of the ARES™ Section we take a look at some animal statistics to enliven your CHAMPIONS game campaigns, and some thoughts on just how different worlds can be in the TRAVELLER game universe. Never take a planet for granted, as they say.

With that, we say "live long and prosper," and wish you good gaming.

*The editors*

ARES™ Section 85  
THE SCIENCE-FICTION GAMING SECTION

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The Moon of A.D. 2210 has lost none of the awe-inspiring power it has shown humanity for eons and still brings a sigh from those watching from Earth as it rises on the horizon, orange and full. Now, of course, the Moon means even more to humanity. Some 4.23 million beings, most of Earth/Luna human origin, live in the twenty-four domed surface and underground cities located on the Moon.

The Moon is well known for its mining industries, located primarily at the Clavius Mining Complex, as well as for the research and medical centers there. Today, however, the main economic resource for the Moon and its inhabitants is tourism. The Moon is an important stop on most Earth tours offered by the major interstellar travel agencies. In addition to out-system trade, the Moon is a popular recreation and vacation spot for Earthers who long for the thrill of space travel without straying too far from home.

Many interesting and varied experiences are offered by the lunar resorts, the most popular of these being the dust-skiing complexes located at Mare Imbrium and Mare Nubium. Dust skiing was recently included as an event in the Federation Interstellar Olympic Games; the Earth and Luna teams have their training facilities here. The Mars team has considered joining their colleagues, but for now they still use the slopes of Olympus Mons on their home planet.

Other points of more historic interest include the Goddard Moonbase Museum, located on the site of the first permanent lunar base, at Goddard Crater. Opened in A.D. 1998, Goddard Moonbase was still being used for various duties (ranging from geologic research to spare-parts storage) until the early 2100s, when the present museum was constructed.

The Tranquility Base Historical Site, with its impressive Apollodome Complex, is another must for any lunar tourist. For a nominal fee, many resorts around the Apollodome Complex offer guided tours of the various landing sites of the first Apollo moon missions and the landing sites of a few of the Ranger, Surveyor, and Luna probes that went on their information-gathering missions centuries ago.

Tourists with more current interests may visit the Star Fleet Disposal Yards, located in and around Mare Orientale all the way to the Cordillera Mountains. Out-of-date or heavily damaged vessels from the different branches of Star Fleet are collected and disposed of here, either by scrapping, cannibalization, or sale to the numerous parts dealers and used-ship brokers with offices in the surrounding cities. Orbiting above the Star Fleet Disposal Yards is the Quadrant Reserve Fleet, mothballed here for possible future service during an emergency. Parked in permanent low orbit, these hundred-odd vessels make a spectacular sight when the Sun sparkles off their silvered and protected hulls.

When touring the Star Fleet Disposal Yards, it must be remembered that this is a Federation Security Zone and the proper clearances must be obtained before any personal tours of vessel debris, wreckage, or hulks can be conducted. A number of junkyard areas in the Yards are considered dangerous and are prohibited to unauthorized personnel; these areas often contain active elements from warp-drive engine components and other unstable materials.

One of the most interesting scientific sites on Luna is the Dome Complex of Taenarium Observatory, located precariously on the promontory of the same name. This astronomical research center is still going strong after five add-on reconstructions and two hundred years of continued heavenly observation. The many architectural and structural design changes give the complex a unique look as it winds its way up Mount Arzachel, 3960 meters above the dusty floor of Mare

Nubium. Taenarium Observatory remains the oldest and most prolific scientific institute on the Moon.

Another favorite tourist stop is the Clavius Mining Complex, opened in A.D. 2004. It was here that materials were mined for the first L-5 space colony, which opened in A.D. 2007. When interstellar colonization superseded interest in the L-5 colonies in the late 21st century, the Clavius Mining Complex fell on hard times (as did most of the technical industries located on the Moon). Eventually, the mines were reorganized to provide for the needs of the lunar inhabitants only, and a thriving, if somewhat diminished, economy was again established.

The underground and domed surface lunar cities are a wonder of technological achievement. Maginus, the administrative capital of Luna, is the largest urban area, with just over 800,000 inhabitants. Located northeast of the Clavius Mining Complex, Maginus is home to many of that facility's workers, who travel to the mines using the underground magnetotube shuttle system. In accordance with the independent attitudes of most lunar residents, the government is composed of an informal administration that coordinates local activities, with a combined Federation/Star Fleet Assistance Committee to provide whatever extra help the residents might require.

Politically, the Moon remains independent of Earth, although a healthy respect is given her "big brother," and preferred trade partnerships are common. This was not always the case. In the early 21st century, Earth insisted on governing the growing lunar population when it became apparent that lunar industry was undercutting terrestrial mineral and technology concerns. After years of difficult negotiation, these differences were laid to rest, and this has led to the continuing state of cooperation seen today between the worlds.

The largest city on the Moon's farside is Farside V, with a population just under 200,000. Formerly scientific bases, Farsides I through IV are now tourist resorts connected by magnetotube to the hub of Farside V. Not surprisingly, most lunar settlements are located nearside, facing Earth. Aside from being heavily surveyed and mapped, the nearside has a mystique associated with its view of Earth that appeals to tourists and inhabitants alike.

Tourists and residents often point out an apparent social difference between lunar settlers, perhaps the only one of consequence. "Neariders" are said to be more conservative and refined than the "farsiders," who are generally described as independent and informal in attitude. Some reports circulate of prejudicial treatment of "farsiders" by certain restaurant and resort employees on nearside, but no incidents of major significance have been reported.

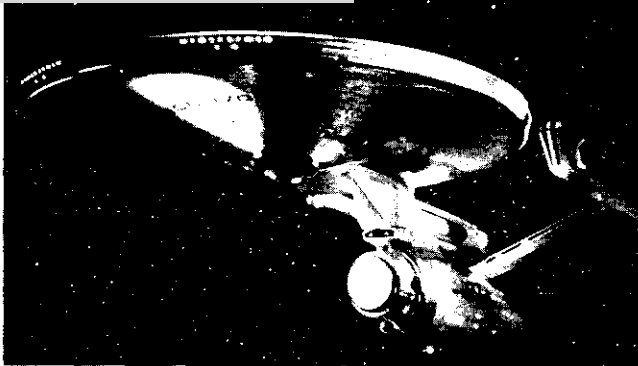
Some of the other interesting cities on Luna shouldn't be missed if there is time for an extended tour. Petavius (120,000 inhabitants) is famous for the Petavius Needle, rising 1.07 km high, the tallest man-made structure on the Moon. A revolving restaurant caps the tower, and the view is considered the best that one can get from the "surface."

Jansenville is an architecturally interesting lunar city. Built along the base of a 147-kilometer long V-shaped cliff, the city could be considered the longest in the Federation. The outer edge of the complex is made up of shielded, transparent ports that look out toward the municipal spaceport/shuttle landing area and the outlying settlements in the Rheira Valley beyond.

Selene City in Mare Nectarus is another interesting stop. Considered the Moon's largest industrial center, it is the headquarters of such firms as Astro Moonbuggy, Ltd., General Oxygen (listed as G0<sub>2</sub> on the Federation stock exchange), and Ultraski, the official supplier of dust skis to the Federation Interstellar Olympics.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FASA CORPORATION



*Above, a view of the uprated Federation heavy cruiser NCC 1701, the USS Enterprise, in lunar orbit.*

*Oriente Basin, right, as seen by Lunar Orbiter IV in 1967. the basin has two rings of mountains, 950 and 600 km across. The outer ring, the Cordillera Mountains, has peaks as high as 6100 meters. The inner mountain range is the Rook Mountains.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA

The twin cities of Eddington and Lunicgrad are also part of most tour packages. Located in the Sinus Iridum, the twin cities contain more above-ground construction than any other lunar urban area. Composed almost entirely of a series of large interconnecting domes, the two towns drew closer together as a result of new construction and finally overlapped. Most inhabitants now consider them a single city, known by various names such as Eddingrad, Lunicton, etc.

Transportation is no problem on the Moon. Most urban areas and their environs are connected by the underground magnetotube system. One can also take the instantaneous transporter system that uses an automated orbital relay station (any ship in orbit will do as well).

If adventuring is more one's style, or one doesn't wish his molecules scrambled, there is the ever-popular Luna Jump Buggy Service. These vehicles can accommodate up to two hundred passengers and run on eight huge bulbous tires. They also have an extensive array of thrusters to help them "jump" lunar terrain obstacles and debris. This gives an interesting ride that harkens back to the old rollercoasters of Earth's amusement parks. In addition to jump buggies, there are a number of private land rover and grav vehicles for hire at every city municipal spaceport.

For traveling further afield, a number of transportation systems are available. The Earth/Luna Shuttle leaves twice daily from Maginus Municipal Spaceport, with stopovers at the Tsiolkovsky L-5 complex and the Earth Orbital Services

Station, near the Star Fleet Construction and Repair Yards. Within the next few years, a long-range transporter system will be put into operation; using one of the L-5 colonies as a relay point, passengers can be transported between the Earth and Moon in a matter of seconds.

Even now, it is not a time-consuming trip to reach the Moon. Any vessel going Warp 0.1 on Impulse power can reach the Moon from Earth orbit in 11 seconds. The Earth/Luna Shuttle takes forty minutes due to stopovers and loading/unloading, however. For quick exits from the lunar scene, merchant and passenger vessels in orbit may be boarded by transporter or shuttle service at any city spacecraft landing area.

No military presence is maintained on the Moon, save for the Star Fleet Disposal Yards. This is not considered a critical situation, as warships from Earth and other nearby worlds visit constantly. The Moon is also included in Earth's defensive perimeter in case of armed attack on the Sol System.

The Moon of A.D. 2210 has been civilized in many ways. It can, however, still be a place of danger and death to the unwary. Even with centuries of development, the Moon is a dusty, inhospitable wasteland with a few islands of humanity amid its rocky seas.

### **Adventuring on the Moon**

Like any planetary body, the Earth's Moon in the STAR TREK™ game universe is full of adventuring possibilities as wide-ranging as the gamemaster's imagination. Some suggestions are

provided below to get groups started:

1. A player-character (PC) team of Star Fleet personnel is on detached duty to the Lunar Disposal Yards and is given the assignment of locating the wreck of a warship scrapped a hundred years ago. Archives have revealed that on one of the ship's last exploration missions, some key documents were withheld by the ship's captain and hidden somewhere in his stateroom.

These documents give the location of a distant planetary system that is the subject of some unusual stories (vast riches located there, fabled lost race lives there, etc). If these documents can be found, an expedition will be organized to check these stories out. Of course, other interested parties may also desire these documents. If they beat the PCs there, or arrive while the PCs are inside the wreck, trouble could develop.

Gamemasters should work up ship deckplans if they desire, or use the existing FASA plans for Constitution class ships. Plans for the Reliant class (hopefully appearing in 1984) could also be used in this adventure.

2. A team of PCs is in charge of security for Federation installations on the Moon. Suddenly they are informed that an anti-Federation terrorist group from Earth has taken hostages and captured the Apollodome at the Tranquility Base Historic Site. They threaten to blow the site up unless certain demands are carried out. This, of course, is entirely unacceptable to the Federation authorities; the PCs are ordered to gather a strike team and retake the Apollodome before the terrorists have a chance to carry out their threat.

Gamemasters will have to create the floor plans for the Apollodome, keeping in mind that it is a museum of space-

flight history rather than a heavily-populated city area.

3. A command staff of PCs has been ordered by Star Fleet Command to report to the Reserve Fleet Control Office at the Star Fleet Disposal Yards on the Moon. There they will take command of the U.S.S. *Resolution*, NCC-382, and ready it for active duty as a target/decoy ship for fleet maneuvers.

Many difficulties will be involved in getting the vessel space-worthy again after its lengthy period in mothballs. When the overhaul is complete, breakdowns may occur before the ship reaches the wargames area, ranging from annoying glitches to death-dealing disasters.

Upon arrival, the PCs must maneuver the *Resolution* in the games using piloting and command skills according to the difficulty levels required in the gunnery exercises. Of course, the vessel could be the target of nefarious hijackers who want to disrupt the wargames for some reason.

4. Other adventuring ideas can be produced for characters not working for Star Fleet. The Moon makes a good setting for a Merchant adventure using the STAR TREK game's TRADER game supplement. The familiarity players will have with the Sol System adds even greater realism and detail to such adventures, both on the Moon and the Earth in the STAR TREK game universe.

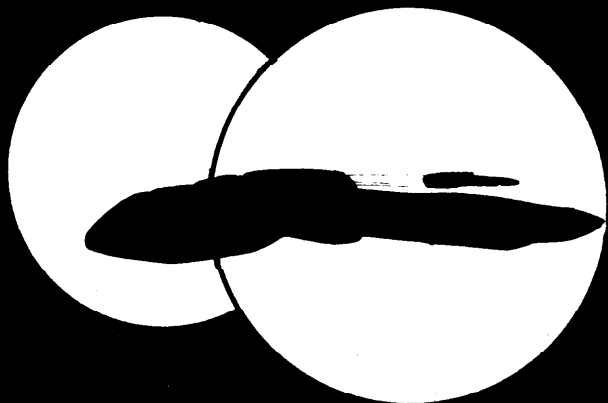
Those interested in adventuring on the Moon will find one playing aid extremely useful: a current map of the Moon. The one used for writing this article was a 1969 *National Geographic* magazine map, but other sources such as NASA have even more detailed survey maps. Actual maps of the gaming area add something special to the situation.

Good gaming in the Earthlight!

A

## Adventure Under

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# Gamma Hazards

*New mutants for the GAMMA WORLD® game*

by John M. Maxstadt

*Editors' Introduction: Three new critters to encounter in the land of the GAMMA WORLD game are described below, in a modified form of the revised rules format. They are guaranteed fiendish and, worse yet, are approved of by Jim Ward himself. Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the radiation. . .*

**NAME:** Fungimals

**NUMBER:** 1d6

**MORALE:** 0 (fungimals cannot be recruited or hired)

**HIT DICE:** 7d6

**ARMOR:** 10

**SIZE:** 1 meter tall or bigger (see below)

**LAND SPEED:** 16/1200/24 (or slower, see below)

**MS:** 1d6+6

**IN:** 2d6

**DX:** 1d6

**CH:** 1d6+4

**CN:** 2d6

**PS:** 2d6

**ATTACKS:** Special (see below)

**ORIGINAL STOCK:** Giant puffball

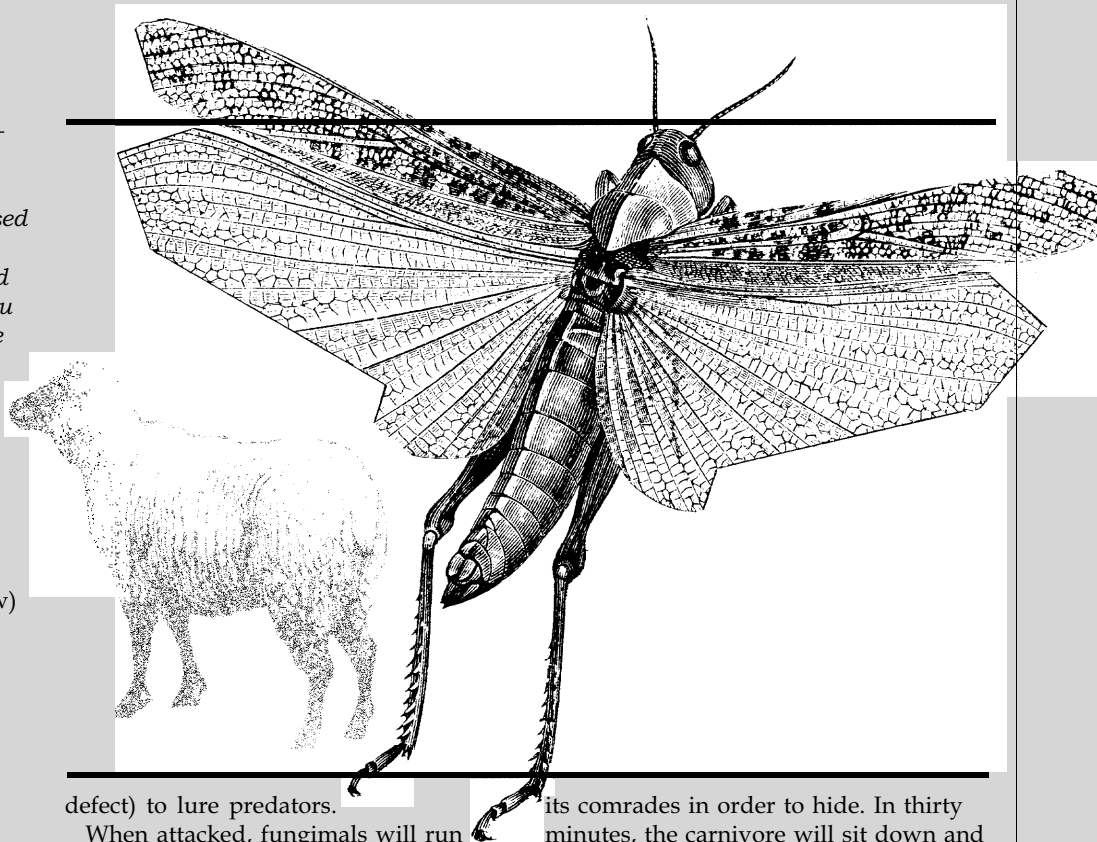
*(Lycoperdon maximum)*

**MUTATIONS:** Mobility, Increased Sense (hearing), Telepathy, Shapechange (special), Attraction Odor, Size Increase, and Intelligence in adult form; Size Increase and Poison in immature form.

**HABITAT:** Temperate forests and scrub

**DIET:** Special (see below)

**DESCRIPTION:** The fungimal is a parasitic plant with a truly unique duoform life cycle. The adult fungimal moves about in the shape of a small, white, lamblike animal. It can keep this shape indefinitely, but cannot change to any other shape (excepting unusual specimens, as explained below). Adult fungimals actively seek to be eaten by carnivorous animals and use their Attraction Odor (usually considered a



defect) to lure predators.

When attacked, fungimals will run away but not quickly enough to avoid being caught. If a predator appears to be losing interest in the chase, a fungimal may feign injury and slow down. If the fungimal can successfully Telepath a predator, it will use whatever knowledge it can glean to find ways to encourage the other creature to eat it, within the limits of the fungimal's own intelligence.

A carnivore that catches a fungimal will be able to kill and eat it with no trouble. Fungimals have no bones or internal organs, but they have a faint, repellent fungus flavor noticeable only to creatures with Heightened Taste. To ordinary carnivores, the fungimal is absolutely delicious.

Six hours after the fungimal is eaten, the eater will suddenly bolt away from

its comrades in order to hide. In thirty minutes, the carnivore will sit down and painlessly metamorphose into a giant puffball of size and weight comparable to its former self. This process takes three hours and cannot be prevented by any means short of killing the creature. The puffball is the immature form of the fungimal and has no Mobility, Telepathy, odor, senses, or intelligence. If eaten, the puffball acts like intensity 16 poison. After six days, the puffball will split open to release one adult lamblike fungimal per 20 kg of puffball weight.

If only part of an adult fungimal is eaten, the percentage of its mass consumed is divided by five and treated as a poison of that intensity for its chance to metamorphose a creature. For example, a creature which eats 50% of a fungimal must be able to survive intensity 10 poison (as per the Poison Matrix) or be

## The humbug can generate an infinite number of. . . illusions in a day. . .

metamorphosed. Only a "D" result on the matrix indicates metamorphosis; results indicating dice of damage are ignored. Mutations involving poison effects or resistances (e.g., Heightened Constitution, Poison Susceptibility) will have no effect on this outcome.

Fungimals in any form are immune to all kinds of mental attack except Devolution, Density Control, Molecular Disruption, Plant Control, Pyrokinesis, Cryokinesis, and Telepathy. One fungimal in ten can expand itself into a larger lamblike shape (2-5 meters tall) to attract giant carnivores. It is rumored that very rare individuals can change to *any* shape and alter their odor to attract herbivores, insectivores, or scavengers.

**NAME:** Humbugs  
**NUMBER:** 1 (rarely more)  
**MORALE:** 2d4  
**HIT DICE:** 3d6  
**ARMOR:** 7 (but see below)  
**SIZE:** 60 cm long

**AIR SPEED:** 12/900/18  
**LAND SPEED:** 0/100/4

MS: 1d12 + 8                      IN: 1d10 + S  
 DX: 1d4                          CH: 1d4  
 CN: 1d4 + 3                      PS: 1d4

**ATTACKS:** None

**ORIGINAL STOCK:** Angular-wing katydid (*Microcentrum rhombifolium*)

**MUTATIONS:** Shapechange (improved), Illusion Generation (improved), Physical Reflection (nuclear), Larger  
**HABITAT:** Virtually anywhere, but prefers ruins  
**DIET:** Grasses and leaves

**DESCRIPTION:** The humbug is a relatively defenseless insect that has developed a considerable intelligence and extraordinary protective skills to avoid predators. Its intelligence eventually enabled it to notice how carefully humans and humanoids protect their artifacts, and it shaped its abilities to capitalize on the phenomenon.

The humbug's Shapechange ability is unusual in three ways. It can change its shape into that of an inanimate object; it will gain the object's armor class; and it can hold the shape it takes indefinitely (unless it wants to eat, which it must do in its own shape). A humbug will be encountered in the shape of some relatively simple artifact (typically a pistol,

rifle, energy weapon, or ID card), hoping to be picked up and cared for by some intelligent creature.

The humbug gains the AC of the device (typically 1 or 2), but not its functional capabilities. It uses its Illusion Generation capability to hide this fact. For example, a humbug posing as a laser pistol will generate the illusion of a laser beam emanating from its "barrel" when fired. It will always appear to miss the target, as the bug could not maintain the illusion of a slain opponent for long (besides, the monster would still be attacking)!

The humbug can generate an infinite number of such illusions in a day, but they must affect its owner as a mental attack. If the illusion does not hit, the character may think the pistol fire or is out of power. In any case, the bug cannot help emitting a quiet hum while generating illusions. This sound has provided the creature with its name.

**NAME:** Jungle Lurkers  
**NUMBER:** 1  
**MORALE:** 1d4 + 1  
**HIT DICE:** 13d4  
**ARMOR:** 7  
**SIZE:** 2½ meters tall  
**LAND SPEED:** 2/400/12

MS: 3d6                              IN: 2d6  
 DX: 2d4 + 12                      CH: 1d4 + 2  
 CN: 1d8 + 10                      PS: 1d10 + 10

**ATTACKS:** 2 bladed forelimbs (2d6 damage each) or 1 bite (1d8 damage)  
**ORIGINAL STOCK:** African Leaf Insect (*Phyllium pulchrifolium*)

**MUTATIONS:** Life Leech (improved), Illusion Generation (limited), Larger  
**HABITAT:** Dense tropical jungles and rainforests  
**DIET:** Most animals and humanoids

**DESCRIPTION:** The jungle lurker resembles a tall, large-leaved tropical shrub, similar to a split-leaf philodendron. It is an insect, however, a distant cousin of the walking-stick and praying mantis. It is entirely immobile when hunting and has no distinctive smell, so the chance of telling it from an ordinary plant is only 10% plus the intelligence of the creature scrutinizing it. If characters casually look around, the chance of recognizing it is 2% per party.

The jungle lurker attacks without moving a muscle, using Life Leech. It is

The humbug will suffer with its owner if the latter is hit by Sonic Blasts, Pyrokinesis, Cryokinesis, or Stunning Force while carrying the humbug, but it is immune to radiation. Other attacks directed at the insect will affect it normally, but artifacts are rarely attacked separately from their owners even in melee. The humbug is not hurt by having energy cells "plugged in" or "inserted" (the devices are simply grasped by the humbug's feet while it generates the illusion of the device being connected).

A humbug must eat only once a week; it will try to do this while the party is asleep, possibly using an illusion to distract the guard when it leaves and when it returns. If its owner becomes frustrated enough with a weapon that always misses to harm the humbug in some way ("I oughta bust this thing into a million pieces!"), the humbug will revert to its own shape and fly away.

Humbugs are extremely fond of Archivists, and some Archivists' collections have been discovered to have been almost entirely made up of humbugs.

able to target the power on any being up to 30 meters away, so that the area of effect is a 10-meter radius around that point (it cannot leech more than a 10-meter radius area, regardless of its mental strength) rather than centering around the lurker itself.

After the first attack, the lurker will generate the illusion of a scrabbling movement in the undergrowth, as if a small, invisible creature were running from place to place. Each subsequent Life Leech will center on the point where the "creature" was last seen, since the lurker is trying to make it appear responsible for the attacks. The lurker will never bring the "creature" very close to itself. The illusion will be visual only and will stop at the end of five minutes, at which time the lurker will stop attacking (if anyone is still present and alive).

If characters leave the lurker's maximum Life Leech range, it will let them go rather than tip the victim's hand. If a creature becomes so involved with the illusion that it stays long enough to be completely "leached," the lurker will wait until its comrades are gone or killed and then devour its prey. It will have finished eating when its victim has taken bite damage equal to double its full hit-point total. If a lurker is attacked, it will fight with its sharp, leaf-shaped forelimbs. It will not bite in combat. **A**



# Preventing Complacency in TRAVELLER® Gaming

By Roger E. Moore

TRAVELLER gamers have been known to believe that the strings of numbers describing the various worlds tell them everything they need to know. Starport class, world size, atmosphere, government type, ho hum. Some players never look at the world codes at all unless figuring out where they can unload the 40-ton shipment of farm machinery they purchased on speculation.

This is unfortunate; TRAVELLER game referees may find it amusing to unplug this complacency. Are all worlds alike? Not a chance. There are millions of little things the world code doesn't tell you and numerous ways in which the code can be interpreted or (heh heh) be in error.

Each sector in the TRAVELLER game universe has hundreds of individual worlds, most of which may never be visited by the adventurers. There is an underlying assumption that every world is unique, but individualizing each world is a tough task for the referee. Often it seems easier to let the worlds blend into one another, especially if adventurers make only brief landfalls before jumping to a new system. It takes time to make Kerchov's Planet a different environment from Ramsiland when both share the same TRAVELLER game world codes. Slower-paced campaigns in which adventurers only visit one world per game session at most are better for allowing a campaign to be more fully developed.

Planning ahead is essential, though some people can invent whole solar systems at the drop of a jump drive. Before a gaming session starts, the referee should make notes on all stellar systems within a six-parsec radius of the

point where the group will be starting. Such notes should emphasize particular aspects of each world that serve to make it different from all the rest. For example, noting that the Mayhem system has an asteroid belt, the referee could include a few giant meteorite craters on the surface of the main world; the starport could be located in the center of one of them on a mountain peak. Particular details like these can be elaborated upon as the adventures on that world continue.

There are many ways to interpret the world codes themselves. A size 0 world is assumed to indicate an asteroid colony. However, it could also be a colony based upon an asteroid-sized moon orbiting another world. Perhaps no other bodies except the asteroid the colony rests on exist in the system (most people assume there should be an entire asteroid belt present with a size 0 world). Consider, too, a colony aboard a large artificial space station or a modified starship (like the Azhanti High Lightning) with no jump drives. Not large enough to qualify even for asteroid status, the "space city" could orbit close to its parent sun to gain enormous amounts of solar energy, or orbit far in the outer system using nuclear or other power sources. Even asteroid colonies need never look alike; one could rest in the hollowed-out interior of a 20 km long asteroid, while another rests on the surface of a 310 km diameter body with tunnels beneath it.

Planetary atmospheres seem to have a dreary sameness about them in most campaigns. Tainted air is generally thought to come from industrial pollution, but it might also indicate dust parti-

cles large enough to produce allergies, choking, or respiratory problems. There could be a mildly toxic gas in the air that produces drowsiness, nausea, euphoria, or poor vision. Pollen grains could induce hallucinations by biochemical interaction in the nervous system.

Erupting volcanoes, nuclear fallout, plague viruses, and war-related chemical poisons could all be causes for tainted atmospheres. The aftereffects of exposure may range from innocuous to severe, with an equally variable time-delay before the aftereffects appear.

Aside from normal saline oceans of water, hydrographic percentages could refer to huge frozen seas across which iceships skate. The local temperature could be so high that the oceans steam, resulting in almost continual 100% humidity. Corrosive atmosphere worlds could have alkaline or acidic seas, while other planets could have oceans with salt concentrations a thousand times that of Earth's. Lakes of liquid ammonia and methane might exist on frozen planets, and rivers of molten sulfur could flow on hot ones. In either of the latter cases, the atmosphere would almost certainly not be breathable.

World size, atmosphere, and hydrographic percentages need not remain always unchanged, either. An asteroid colony moving to a regular planet would result in a sudden increase in the world size listing for that system. Collision with a large asteroid could shatter a small world. A "clean" atmosphere could become tainted in a number of ways and may then be "cleaned up" by artificial or natural means. A rise or fall in solar output, changes in planetary orbit, or artificial tinkering could alter the hydrographic proportion. It is fair to say, however, that once established, these three statistics should generally remain constant.

This is not true of the "live" statistics, those that relate to the world population. Population size, government type, law level and tech level could all fluctuate widely over time, generally tending to rise toward higher populations, more restrictive law levels, and more advanced tech levels. Government types may tend to become more inflexible over time as well. As always, of course, there are exceptions.

Major changes could even be fairly rapid. A year after leaving a primitive world with some hundreds of thousands of citizens, ruled by an oligarchy that restricts ownership of all weapons, the travelers may return to discover that a new sentient race has been discovered

in the world's jungles, that a revolution has taken place, and now the world has millions of citizens, a charismatic dictator who doesn't care what weapons her subjects own, and has imported high-technology systems from a megacorporation. Surprise! Culture shock strikes again.

Interpreting these statistics in different ways will also produce chaos. Depending upon who did the counting, the population number might reflect only one sex, one race, or one country on the world. Maybe the government took its own census and purposefully altered the figures to appear stronger or weaker than it really is. How often are these figures updated, anyway? Frontier worlds in particular might be subject to extraordinary population growth over short periods of time.

Where government types are listed, special problems come into play. It is entirely possible that a government could be called one thing and function as something else entirely. A government managed by a corporation might be set up as a dictatorship or a workers' democracy. Captive governments might be free in all but name, or could be complete puppets to another power. Consider, too, that often a government might be listed as how it wants to be seen, not how it actually works. With an entire galaxy to map as well, perhaps those who compile the data for the world listings make mistakes or make superficial surveys of the worlds in question. This could produce amusing incidents similar to those described in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* series by Douglas Adams.

It is conceivable that one could have a law level 9 world where no one owns weapons, but on which crime is rampant. It is also possible to have a peaceful nation where even ownership of plasma weapons is allowed to citizens. The die roll involved in determining whether or not adventurers are spotted by police and arrested for some offense could be made separate from the tech level number: this would add more uncertainty to the plans that many adventurers develop to loot low-tech worlds and escape scot-free. And what law level would one give a world where only energy weapons may be owned?

The tech level value assigned to a world may not truly reflect the range of items and materials available there. A planet can always import high-technology equipment, though maintaining it may be difficult. Shortages of material or manpower might restrict the variety

of goods that a world would be expected to offer; local circumstances should also be taken into account. Given a high-tech culture based on a planet covered by a vast ocean, one would find extensive air/raft and boating industries but little or nothing of automotive or ATV technology except for sea-bottom rovers. Cultures on desert worlds like Mars would not produce boats. Exceptional radio interference caused by solar storms or the like would prohibit development of radio technology except under very specialized conditions.

Low-tech cultures might have surprises of their own in store. Aside from the import of high-tech goods, local materials might do admirably well as replacements for manufactured items. Raupp's World, for instance, has a plant that produces silvery and highly reflective leaves. When woven together, they may be made into suits of reflect armor. Granted, the suits deteriorate over time, but they're cheap and easy to make.

In short, world codes are useful, but must be regarded with caution. Taking them for granted can easily lead to a dreadful situation such as the purely hypothetical one that follows:

"Okay," announces a player, "We're about to land on a tainted-atmosphere, earth-sized planet with 70% water covering. The few thousand people here have a participatory democracy for a government, and they don't allow any weapons on their planet. They seem to be at a World War I tech level. This sounds like a dull place to visit."

"Well," says the referee with a grin, "You discover the sun is a flare star, and radio communication is impossible. When you land, you find the world is populated by telepathic female clones who use high-tech devices purchased from smugglers. Martial arts has replaced hand weapons, and everyone has Brawling-4 skill. The oceans are full of carnivorous monsters that can fly, and a mutant virus in the air turns your skin purple but doesn't otherwise harm you. High-tech clone tanks have produced almost two million people since the last census. Finally, your ship lands during a special celebration in which all off-worlders are captured, given a dagger apiece, and forced to swim a river full of sea monsters. The survivors, if female, are allowed to clone themselves and live on the planet. Furthermore —"

I doubt the players will let you live long enough to continue. But the looks on their faces will make it all worthwhile.



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# Lions, Tigers, & Superheroes

*Wild animals in the CHAMPIONS™ game*

by Leonard Carpenter

The CHAMPIONS superhero role-playing game is interesting and fun but incomplete. One element missing from the game are wild animals for the villains to use against the heroes ("Meet Fang, my sabertooth, Captain Macron!") To rectify this, I took some of the animals from the AD&D® *Monster Manual* and transfer-

red them to the CHAMPIONS game.

Table 1 lists the characteristics for each animal and the approximate number of points used to "build" the animal. After the table is a list showing the powers and attacks of each animal. These values may be altered by the game referee. These statistics may be used as guidelines for creating new animals such as wolves, mammoths, etc.

## Animal Powers

**Ape, Gorilla** — Teeth: 1d6 Killing Attack (KA), 2d6 with strength adds; Climbing, 14 or less.

**Bear, Grizzly** — Teeth: 1½d6 KA, 3d6 with STR adds; Claws: 1d6 KA, 2d6 with STR adds; 1 level of Growth, permanent; Discriminatory Smell, 13 or less.

**Table 1: Animal characteristics**

Char.	Ape, Gorilla	Bear, Grizzly	Crocodile	Char.	Dog, Guard	Elephant	Hawk	Horse	Char.	Barracuda	Shark, Great White	Squid, Giant
STR	28	25	23	STR	13	40	5	25	STR	6	30	40
DEX	18	15	14	DEX	17	8	23	14	DEX	20	17	18
CON	25	23	30	CON	15	40	5	25	CON	10	30	40
BODY	20	20	20	BODY	10	40	5	20	BODY	5	25	40
INT	6	3	1	INT	4	4	2	2	INT	1	1	2
EGO	6	3	1	EGO	4	4	2	2	EGO	1	1	2
PRE	25	25	20	PRE	10	30	15	15	PRE	15	30	35
PD	15	15	18	PD	5	25	3	12	PD	4	12	20
ED	6	6	8	ED	3	12	2	6	ED	2	8	12
SPD	4	3	2	SPD	3	3	3	2	SPD	3	3	3
REC	12	12	11	REC	6	18	4	10	REC	5	14	18
END	60	50	70	END	36	90	30	50	END	25	70	100
STUN	50	50	55	STUN	28	80	15	45	STUN	18	60	90
MOVE	8"	10"	3"	MOVE	12"	9"	2"	15"	MOVE	0"	0"	2"
POINTS	151	146	124	POINTS	77	227	84	78	POINTS	60	183	376

Char.	Leopard	Lion	Tiger	Sabre-Toothed	Char.	Rhinoceros	Snake, Constrictor
STR	15	20	23	30	STR	35	18
DEX	23	21	20	18	DEX	12	21
CON	18	20	23	30	CON	35	15
BODY	13	18	20	25	BODY	30	8
INT	3	3	3	3	INT	2	1
EGO	3	3	3	3	EGO	2	1
PRE	15	22	25	30	PRE	25	20
PD	8	12	15	20	PD	20	5
ED	4	5	6	8	ED	9	3
SPD	3	3	3	3	SPD	2	3
REC	8	10	11	14	REC	15	7
END	40	50	55	80	END	70	40
STUN	35	45	50	65	STUN	70	30
MOVE	10"	10"	10"	10"	MOVE	10"	6"
POINTS	104	144	163	228	POINTS	172	52

**Crocodile** — Teeth: 2d6 KA, 3½d6 with STR adds; Tail: 4½d6 strike; Swimming, 6".

**Leopard** — Teeth: 1d6 KA, 2d6 with STR adds; Claws: ½d6 KA, 1d6 with STR adds; Stealth, 14 or less; Enhanced Hearing, 1 level, 14 or less; Climbing, 12 or less.

**Lion** — Teeth: 1½d6 KA, 2½d6 with STR adds; Claws: ½d6 KA, 1d6 with STR adds; Stealth, 13 or less; Discriminatory Smell, 13 or less; Enhanced Hearing, 1 level, 14 or less.

**Tiger** — Teeth: 1½d6 KA, 3d6 with STR adds; Claws: 1d6 KA, 2d6 with STR adds; Growth, 1 level, permanent; Stealth, 13 or less; Discriminatory Smell, 13 or less; Enhanced Hearing, 1 level, 14 or less.

**Tiger, Sabre-toothed** — Teeth: 2½d6 KA, 4½d6 with STR adds; Claws: 1 ½d6 KA, 3d6 with STR adds; Growth, 2 levels, permanent; Stealth, 13 or less; Discriminatory Smell, 13 or less; Enhanced Hearing, 1 level, 14 or less.

**Dog, Guard** — Teeth: 3 or less; Backing Scent, 13 or less; Enhanced Hearing, 1 level, 14 or less.

**Elephant** — Tusks: 2d6 KA, 4d6 with STR adds; Growth, 3 levels, permanent.

**Hawk** — Twin claw attack: 1d6 KA, no STR adds; Beak: ½d6 KA, Flight, 15"; ½END on flight; Shrinking, 1 level; Enhanced Vision, 1 level, 14 or less.

**Horse** — Hooves: 5d6 KA; Growth, 1 level.

**Rhinoceros, Horn** — 1½d6 KA, 3d6 with STR adds; Growth, 2 levels; Discriminatory Smell, 13 or less; Enhanced Hearing, 1 level, 14 or less.

**Snake, constrictor** — Teeth: ½d6 KA, 1d6 with STR adds; Constriction: 3½d6 constriction damage; Climbing, 13 or less.

**Barracuda** — Teeth: 1½d6 KA, no STR adds; Swimming, 15"; Shrinking, 1 level; Discriminatory smell, 13 or less.

**Shark, Great White** — Teeth: 2d6 KA, 4d6 with STR adds; Swimming, 12"; Growth, 2 levels; Discriminatory Smell, 13 or less.

**Squid, Giant** — Beak: 3d6 KA, 5½d6

with STR adds; Swimming, 9"; Growth, 4 levels; Extra Limbs, 6 (usable in combat); Darkness, 5" radius, impervious to normal sight (ink cloud).

Special note on Table II: All sensory perception rolls for animals are made as if the animal had a higher intelligence because of the keenness of the animals'

senses. Smell perception rolls such as discriminatory smell or tracking scent are made on a 13 or less. Enhanced hearing or enhanced vision rolls are made on a 14 or less. This higher intelligence for purposes of perception rolls is not included in the point totals for animals as it has no real bearing upon the combat abilities of the animals.

A

ILLUSTRATION BY ROGER RAUPP





# Starquestions

*Questions, answers, and advice on STAR FRONTIERS® gaming*

by Penny Petticord, Carl Smith, and Roger E. Moore

This column is the science-fiction equivalent of the "Sage Advice" section of DRAGON® Magazine; the information presented here is as accurate as can be found, and comes from TSR, Inc.'s game experts. Readers wishing to contribute questions or problems should send them to: Starquestions, Dragon Publishing, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. Because of our workload, we cannot write back to everyone individually, but we'll answer your questions here.

We are also accepting questions on the GAMMA WORLD® and UNIVERSE™ role-playing games, and we may be able to answer questions on the older SPI science-fiction boardgames as well. Send all questions to the address listed above.

With POLYHEDRON™ Newszine's permission, we are reprinting some of the questions asked about the STAR FRONTIERS game in the "Dispel Confusion" column therein. Read and enjoy, and write to us soon!

## General topics

**Q:** Who created the STAR FRONTIERS game?

**A:** The original rules were developed by Dave Cook and Lawrence Schick, between 1979 and 1981. The game was revised by Mike Gray, Allen Hammack, Harold Johnson, David C. Sutherland III, and Steve Winter, and edited by Steve Winter and Troy Denning.

**Q:** I understand that the STAR FRONTIERS game was rewritten before it was first published. Will the original rules developed for the game ever be published?

**A:** Currently, there are no plans to publish the original version of the STAR FRONTIERS game. Much of the material that was left out was felt to be too complex; playability was



emphasized in the final version over complete realism.

**Q:** How is the STAR FRONTIERS: Alpha Dawn game different from the STAR FRONTIERS game rules that were first published?

**A:** There is no difference between them. For various marketing reasons, the game's name was changed to distinguish between the two separate sections of the STAR FRONTIERS game rules printed thus far: the Alpha Dawn character generation and combat portion, and the Knight Hawks space combat rules.

**Q:** How can the STAR FRONTIERS game be combined with other role-playing games like the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game?

**A:** At present, there are no set conversion systems to change characters from one game system to the STAR FRONTIERS game, or vice versa. Such conversions will be printed as game variants in the future, if some reader submits such systems to Dragon Publishing.

## Alien Races

**Q:** Can some of the new races described in the STAR FRONTIERS game modules, such as the Ul-mor, Kurabanda, and Enora from the Volturnus series, be used as player characters?

**A:** The full statistics and abilities of NPC races described in the various modules haven't been developed and playtested enough to see if they would fit within the game system as PCs. You can use them as PCs if you want, or even create new character races, but you'll run the same risk that players in fantasy games run when they use giants and dragons as PCs: it might be fun, but the PCs might be too powerful for the game to properly absorb. Careful game refereeing could offset this, of course.

**Q:** Can a Dralasite divide into two or three characters?

**A:** No; Dralasites are single creatures and can only divide themselves when giving birth, not at their whim. When they give birth, they produce baby Dralasites, not new player characters.

**Q:** How flat can a Dralasite make itself? Can it go under doors?

**A:** Dralasites can "squash" themselves as low as 10 cm high overall, but this will take them about an hour to

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**Adding Another Dimension**

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accomplish. Few doorways have cracks under them that are this high; most would be only a couple of centimeters at most.

Q: Can a Dralasite move if it turns into a big, round ball with no arms or legs?

A: It could roll itself along, but no faster than at its walking speed unless going downhill (a dangerous situation!) It would also not be able to fight, since it couldn't hold or fire weapons.

Q: Can a Vrusk carry another character on its back?

A: It can, but it would be the same as if a human were carrying someone around. Vrusk are not adapted to serving as pack animals, and acting as such could give them serious back injuries and other medical problems.

Q: Can Humans, Vrusk, Yazirians, or Dralasites interbreed and have children?

A: No; the four races are genetically incompatible with one another, and not even advanced biological sciences could crossbreed them.

Q: Could someone use a genetically-altered "superman" character in the game, with heightened strength and other powers?

A: Setting aside the question of whether or not this is possible (and it is doubtful even in reality), such a super-character would throw the game balance out of alignment. Who would want a normal human if one could have a super-human? How would the other players in the game feel about this? The problems that such a character might create would more than offset the enjoyment the player using such a character might feel in running it. Of course, the game referee might use such altered characters as non-player characters (since NPCs are not necessarily bound by character restrictions), and such NPCs might be allied with or fight against the player characters.

## Psionics

Q: Why weren't psionics included in the STAR FRONTIERS™ game rules?

A: This was a design decision. It was felt that psionics would not fit with the mechanics of the STAR FRONTIERS game system, so they were dropped from the rules. However, a psionics system for the STAR FRONTIERS game appeared in ARES™ Magazine, Special Edition #2 ("Frontiers of the Mind," by Jon Mattson), and may be worth a look.

## Character skills

Q: The cost for gaining skill levels is unclear; how many experience points does it take to get from one level to another?

A: The listed point cost is as stated for every transition. It does not simply require 3 (or 4 or 5) more points each time a new level is gained; instead, it is a progression. For example, to go from level 1 to level 2 in the Military PSA costs 6 points. When the same character goes from level 2 to level 3, it will cost 9 points. To get to level 4 from level 3 costs 12 points, and so forth. The entire progression from levels 1 to 4 will then cost 27 XP.

Q: Could a new PSA, Jack-of-All-Trades, be created? If so, how would it work?

A: You could create such a PSA, though the game system already allows a character to learn many different skills. If you use such a PSA, it would be best to use the doubled Technological PSA Skill Costs for all skills the character wants to learn. Remember, this PSA has not been playtested and may need to be altered for game balance and playability once the campaign has gotten underway.

## Equipment

Q: The Expanded Rulebook gives two different costs for the Standard Equipment Pack. Which is correct?

A: The 150 Cr cost given on the equipment list is correct; the 250 Cr cost given under Expanded Game Characters is incorrect.

Q: The rules say a gas mask fits over the wearer's face. How does this apply to Vrusk, who breathe through small nostrils in their undersides, or to Dralasites, who breathe through their skin?

A: The rules were written from a human point of view. A Vrusk gas mask is a harness arrangement that straps to the underside of the body. The filter is a thin sheet of plastic material that covers the nostril area.

The Dralasite gas mask is better called a gas suit; it completely covers the Dralasite. Again, a thin sheet of plastic material filters the harmful gases. Because this limits the amount of oxygen reaching the Dralasite, they may only wear these suits for a short period of time before they become too hot. The Dralasite gas "mask" may be worn with other defensive suits.

Q: On the Equipment List Tornadium D-19 masses 1 kilogram. Does this mean you

get 1 kilogram of the explosive for 50 credits?

A: No; Tornadium D-19 should cost 50 Cr for 50 grams. This should be corrected in the game rules. The 1 kilogram mass assumes that some of that mass is taken up by packing material, and also helps restrict the amount of explosive a character can carry around at one time.

Q: On the equipment lists, what are the masses of unmarked items like grenades? Why aren't they marked?

A: Unmarked items have masses of under .5 kg; they aren't listed individually because of the bother in having characters keep exacting track of every gram of equipment carried. A reasonable amount of such equipment may be carried about (20 grenades, for example) depending upon how difficult such items are to pack away and how many are taken. If *lots* of items are being taken, an overall mass may be assigned to them by the referee.

## Vehicles

Q: How does one manage vehicle-mounted weapons in the game?

A: The note in the rules stating that vehicle mounted weapons are not covered refers only to fixed and heavy weapons, such as turrets, tank guns, ball-mounted machine guns and lasers, and missile launchers. If the referee allows it, characters may mount a machine gun or similar weapon on a simple ring or post mount on vehicles such as aircars and explorers. This would cost 150 Cr total. Glijets and hovercycles cannot be so mounted.

Mounting a weapon does not change any of the modifiers given in the Vehicle Combat section. The advantage of the mounting is that it allows use of heavier weapons while on a moving vehicle. One major drawback, of course, is that vehicle-mounted weapons are prohibited in built-up, civilized areas; characters driving such vehicles risk immediate arrest.

## Modules

Q: What new modules will be coming out in the future?

A: Generally, TSR, Inc., avoids announcing lists of new products to be released, unless such items are almost ready for shipping. The best thing to do is to keep in close touch with your local hobby shop. They may receive a list of "coming attractions" that you can examine.

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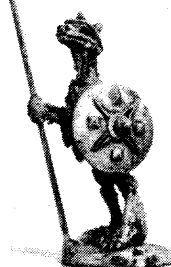
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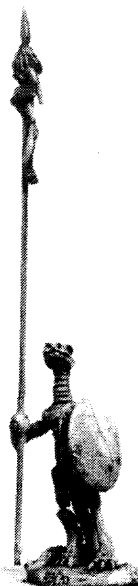
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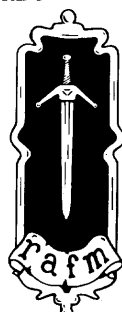
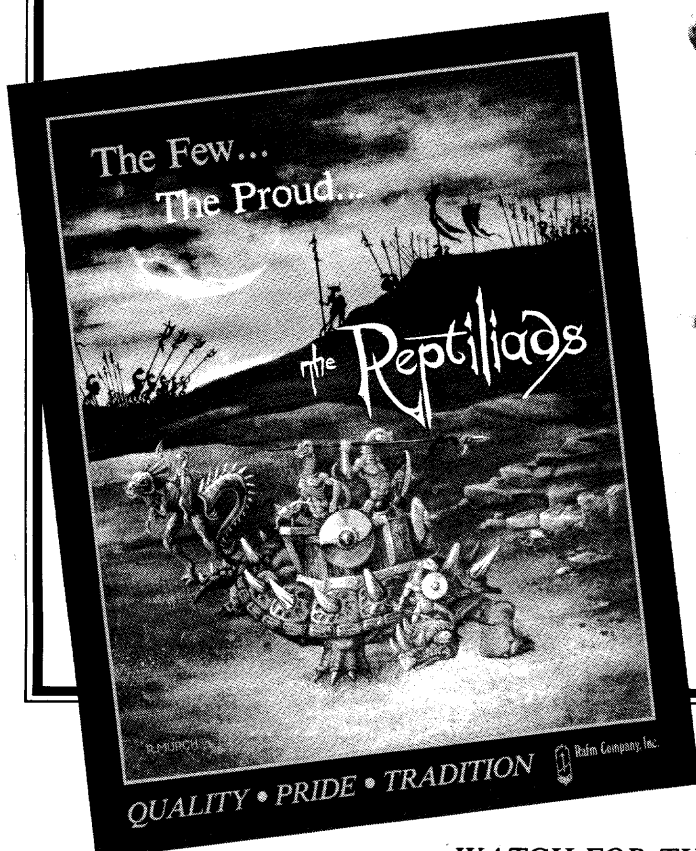


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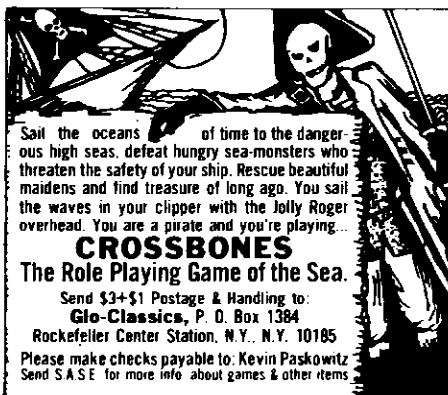
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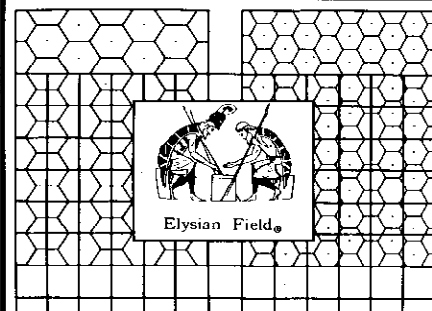
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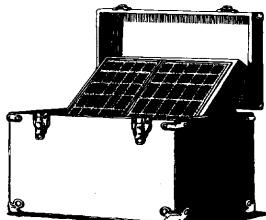
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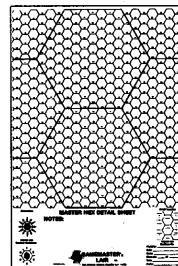
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# SF/gaming convention calendar

## TEXARKON 3, May 11-13

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held at the Tall Timbers Resort and Inn in Texarkana, Arkansas. Guests of honor will include Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Sturgeon, Phil Foglio, and Robert Asprin. An art show and auction, video room, D&D® game and costume contests, and a dealers' room will be featured at this event. For more information about the convention, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Texarkon, 1021 East 29th, Texarkana AR 75502.

## TRI-STATE CON 1984, May 11-13

This gaming convention will be staged at the Cincinnati Technical College in Cincinnati, Ohio. For further details, contact: Tri-State Con '84, c/o Boardwalk, 1032 Delta Ave., Cincinnati OH 45208, or call (513)871-2110 or (513)351-9920.

## KEYCON '84, May 18-20

To be held at the Delta Winnipeg Hotel in Winnipeg, Manitoba, this convention will be highlighted by such events as an art show, video programs and movies, various sf/fantasy role-playing games, seminars and workshops, a masquerade ball, and a Sunday buffet. Robert Asprin will be the con-

vention's Guest of Honor, with Phil Foglio as Artist Guest of Honor and Nick Burns as Comics Guest of Honor. Registration costs are \$15 until April 15, and \$20 at the door. For more details, write to: KEYCON '84, P.O. Box 165, Westwin P.O., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2R 0Y0.

## MARCON XIX, May 18-20

Ohio's oldest science-fiction convention will be staged at the Quality Inn, 4900 Sinclair Road, Columbus OH 43229. This event will include computer, fantasy, and science-fiction games, "filk" singing, comics, videos, and a dealers' room. Guest of Honor for the convention will be C.J. Cherryh. Membership fees are \$15.00. A buffet brunch will be served on Saturday morning; cost is \$7.50. Send all registration applications and communications to: MARCON XIX, P.O. Box 14078, Columbus OH 432114-0078.

## TECHNICON, May 19-20

This gaming convention will be held at the Squires Student Center, VPI Campus, Blacksburg, Virginia. For more information about this convention, please contact: Phillip Morris, D-4 Sturbridge Square, Blacksburg VA 24060, or telephone (703)951-2830.

## THE GAMES CAUCUS, May 25-28

This event will be staged at the Dunfey Hotel, 1770 So. Amphlett Blvd., San Mateo, California 94402 (located near San Francisco). Miniature events will include those from all periods, from Ancients to WWII/Armor. Other activities offered are naval and air wargames, boardgames, fantasy miniatures, chess, checkers, *Monopoly*® games, D&D® tournaments, and *Risk*® games. There will also be demonstrations, seminars, and various tournaments. Pre-registration fees for three days are \$10 (until April 30); registration fees are \$15 for three days, or \$7 for a single day. For further details, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Cynthia Nuckols, Chief Convention Chairman, Apt. C, 1550 Benton, Alameda CA 94501, or telephone (415)865-3668.

## GAMEATHON 9, May 25-27

Sponsored by the Schenectady Wargamers Association, benefits from this convention will go to the Hospice of Schenectady. Events will include FRP gaming, assorted tournaments, and an AD&D™ open tournament. For more details, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to R. C. Jones, SWA Gameathon, 1639 Eastern Parkway, Schenectady NY 12309.

## MIGS V, May 27

The Military Interests and Games Society is preparing for its fifth annual gamesfest. This will be a FREE day of wargaming, in all its myriad forms. Various wargame tournaments and events, as well as a miniatures painting competition, will take place. The event will be held at the Kitchener-Waterloo Regional Police Association Recreation Centre, R.R. 2, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada. The hall will open at 10:00 a.m. and close at 10:00 p.m. For further information about the convention, please contact: Chris Goldsmith, Secretary, 100 Lorraine Drive, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8T 3S3.

## CON-JURATION, June 1-3

Gaming tournaments, a trivia contest, figure painting competition, films, and a masquerade will all be part of this event. Guest of Honor will be Jack Chalker; special guests will include Edward Bryant, Glen Cook, Warren Norwood, and Mike Resnick. Lunch with the guests and a writer's workshop have also been planned. This year's convention will take place at the West World Inn in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Admission fees are \$10 at the door. For more information, write to: Con-Juration, P.O. Box 690064, Tulsa OK 74169.

## CAMP CON '84, June 2

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Featured events will include a mixture of board and role-playing games. Special guests for the convention will be Terry and Carol Sager, creators of *Sovereigns of the Sea™* game. For more information, contact: Kevin Sager, Box 833, Astoria IL 61501, or call (309)329-2934.

#### **GAMEX 1984, June 15-17**

At this convention, the first 1,500 people who register at the door will receive a free game worth \$10. Featured gaming events will include war, fantasy, role-playing, family, sports, and computer games. Seminars, flea markets, and a special game auction will also be on the convention schedule. For more information about registration and admission prices, contact: GAMEX 1984, P.O. Box 758, Bellflower CA 90706.

#### **DESOLATION CON, June 16**

This convention will offer board and role-playing games, miniatures, costume contests, an art show, and a movie room. For more information, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Desolation Con, P.O. Box 297, Richland WA 99352.

#### **ORIGINS 84, June 21-24**

This 10th annual national gaming convention will be staged at the Dallas Market Hall-North. Without exception, every major adventure gaming company will be present or represented at the show. Science-fiction and fantasy authors Robert Asprin, C. J.

Cherryh, Fred Saberhagen, and Richard Pini will be present for seminars and autographs. Noted boardgame, role-playing, and computer software designers and developers will share their secrets and philosophies. Hundreds of tournaments, demonstrations, and workshops will run throughout the four days. For more information, contact: Origins 84, P.O. Box 59899, Dallas TX 75229.

#### **POLYCON '84, June 22-24**

This convention will be held at the Cal Poly Campus in San Luis Obispo, California. It will feature events to satisfy every wargamer and fantasy role-player, including *Kingmaker™*, *Ace of Aces™*, *Cosmic Encounters™*, and AD&D® tournaments. Membership fees are \$12 if obtained before April 21. Dealer booths and positions for game masters are also available. For more information, contact: SAGA, Box 168, Julian A. McPhee, University Union, Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo CA 93410.

#### **WILCON, June 23-25**

Fifty free events will be featured throughout this convention, which will be held in Wilmington, Illinois. Memberships are \$4 per day, or \$10 for the entire weekend. For more information about this gaming convention, contact: Donald Heck, 1790 Vista Drive, Wilmington IL 60481, or phone (815)476-7385.

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# **ORIGINS 84**

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# TSR and GAMA are back together again

It wasn't on the front page of your local newspaper (or even the back page). You didn't hear about it on the evening newscast, and chances are you didn't get the news from your next-door neighbor — unless that neighbor happens to be Kevin Blume or Rich Banner. But a Very Important Event took place recently, one that has the potential to benefit everyone involved in the gaming industry.

TSR, Inc., and GAMA (the Game Manufacturers' Association) have resolved their long-standing differences. After a period of several years during which TSR disassociated itself from GAMA, and vice versa, the fences have been mended — and then torn down. No more barriers exist between the largest company in the adventure gaming industry and the largest independent organization designed to serve the manufacturers in the gaming industry and the consumers of the products they put out. The facts of the matter were described and discussed by Kevin Blume, president of TSR, Inc. His viewpoints on the present situation and his predictions and projections for the future are outlined in the following informal question-and-answer presentation.

## ***What is the current status of TSR, Inc., with respect to GAMA?***

We are a full, voting member. Through intensive negotiation, Rich Banner [the president of GAMA] and I have reached agreement. We understand the needs of GAMA, and GAMA understands the needs of TSR. It's ridiculous when the leader of the [adventure gaming] industry is not a member of the organization devoted to that industry; a situation like that removes legitimacy from both sides.

## ***What does this change in status mean to the average gamer? To those who attend gaming conventions?***

We and all the other members of GAMA will be making a joint effort to expose people to adventure gaming. One of the ways we can do this is by sponsoring a series of regional conventions, giving people in all areas of the country a chance to attend a big convention without having to travel thousands of miles. I'd like to see us set up a show circuit, with conventions at several sites during a year. And we'd also have a national convention once a year that would float from one site to the other. This national convention would be a showplace for the industry, an event that would attract a lot of attention from the media and from businesses who want to buy the products we make. Both sides have been kidding themselves — ORIGINS and GEN CON are not national shows. We [TSR] are for a national convention, and I think we should also have regional shows supported by the industry.

## ***Aside from anything addressed in the answer to the previous question, how will this change involving TSR and GAMA be a benefit — to the industry to TSR, to other GAMA members, to the general public?***

Probably the biggest single thing is that TSR and GAMA can stop wasting their efforts battling each other, and use that energy to make better products. I believe in business competition, but not on a personal level. Vendettas are a waste of time — the object of competition is not to drive everyone else out of business.

## ***People who are interested in this are going to want to know what caused the split between TSR and GAMA in the first place. How would you summarize that?***

The most visible difficulty was in the location and scheduling of ORIGINS rela-

tive to GEN CON. Our convention has always been at the same time of year and in the same area of the country, and it was a serious problem for us when GAMA scheduled ORIGINS a month prior to GEN CON and in Detroit. We got out of membership in GAMA because it was obvious to us that the organization was competing against us by scheduling ORIGINS in our back yard. I will never belong to a trade organization that's competing against me. GAMA is a much more polished, more professional organization now; the emphasis of the organization is no longer one of companies, but the industry as a whole. I think that basically, our differences were not ones so much of substance, but of perception. There probably were a few GAMA members who did want to burn TSR, but this was a minority position.

## ***What do you think is the general opinion of TSR now among GAMA members?***

I don't feel that the GAMA membership as a whole has ever had particularly bad feelings about TSR. When Rich Banner got up at the meeting of the Adventure Gaming Division of HIA and announced that three companies, including TSR, had become members of GAMA, there was enthusiastic greeting of that fact.

\* \* \* \*

The first visible evidence of the reconciliation between TSR and GAMA will be seen at the ORIGINS 84 game convention on June 21-24 in Dallas. TSR™ games and products will be exhibited at the show, and several tournaments involving TSR games will be on the schedule in addition to the usual ORIGINS bill of fare. A preview of the convention will be published in issue #86 of DRAGON® Magazine.

8

## Module hunt

(From page 54)

us, you should also try to have the material looked over by at least one other person, preferably someone with a good grasp of English grammar. We don't insist that the manuscripts we receive be perfect, but your idea will get a better reception from us if you haven't written "there" when you meant to write "their," for example. The module you send to us should be typed or printed out, double-spaced, on plain white paper (one side only). All charts, drawings, diagrams, and the like should be drawn carefully in ink, and should be carefully labeled and checked against the module text to make sure that all the places listed are explained and nothing's been forgotten. Small handwritten corrections can be made on the maps or manuscript sheets (crossing out a misspelled word or adding a short phrase), if the changes are legible.

The following three guidelines are the

ones we consider most important when we evaluate the content of a module:

- 1) The manuscript should not break, or even stretch, any of the rules of the game for which it was written. "Rules," in this case, means the basic structure of the game system (combat tables, character abilities, movement procedures, and so forth) — not accessory material such as specific monsters or magic items. You can use a new or modified monster or magic item in your module, but we won't accept an adventure constructed around an entirely new system for conducting melee combat, for instance, unless it is absolutely necessary in the context of the adventure. For example, the Astral Plane article and module in DRAGON issue #67 set forth a new system for movement based on the intelligence of the characters; this was necessary because of the nature of the astral environment.

- 2) Logic, consistency, and compliance with the intent of the game system are all

related, and all important. No manuscript will be accepted that does not possess all of these qualities. This parallels the comments above concerning "illogical" adventures. Modules that give magic items to STAR FRONTIERS crewmen, laser pistols to BOOT HILL gunfighters, or that feature giant meteors crashing into Lakefront City should generally be avoided. Granted, it may be possible to get away with something like the above on a very limited basis, but we are not likely to accept this kind of idea.

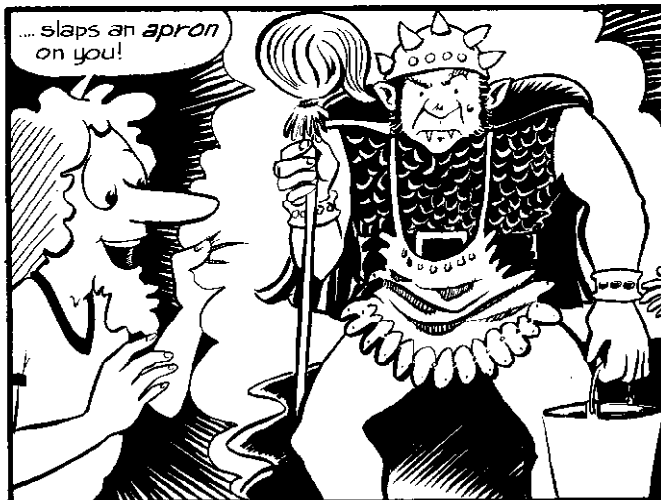
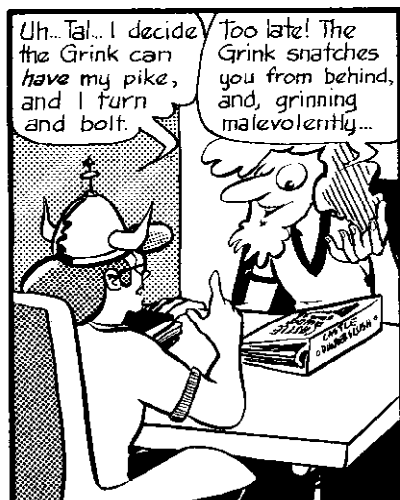
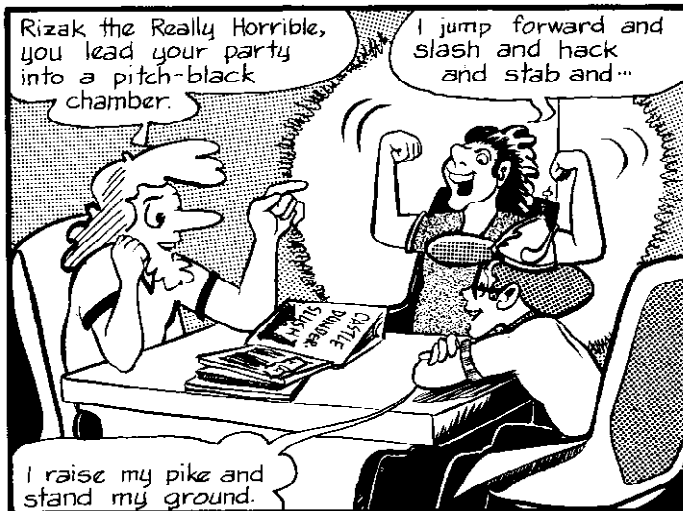
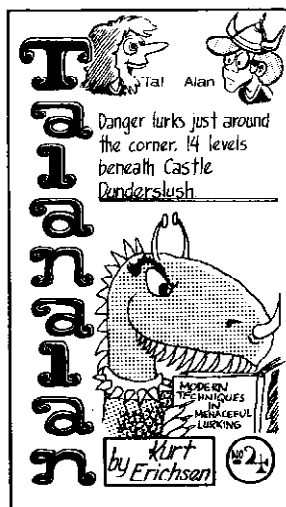
- 3) Also important is technical quality — writing style and ability. Be clear, and use your best grammar and spelling. We can forgive a few spelling errors, but not dozens of them, and not when they are found in sentences like, "The evil wizzard will throw his Confused spel at the players an there henchman if they attack the littel warerat that he was frends of." You get the idea. If we have to do major surgery on a module before we can publish it . . . we won't.

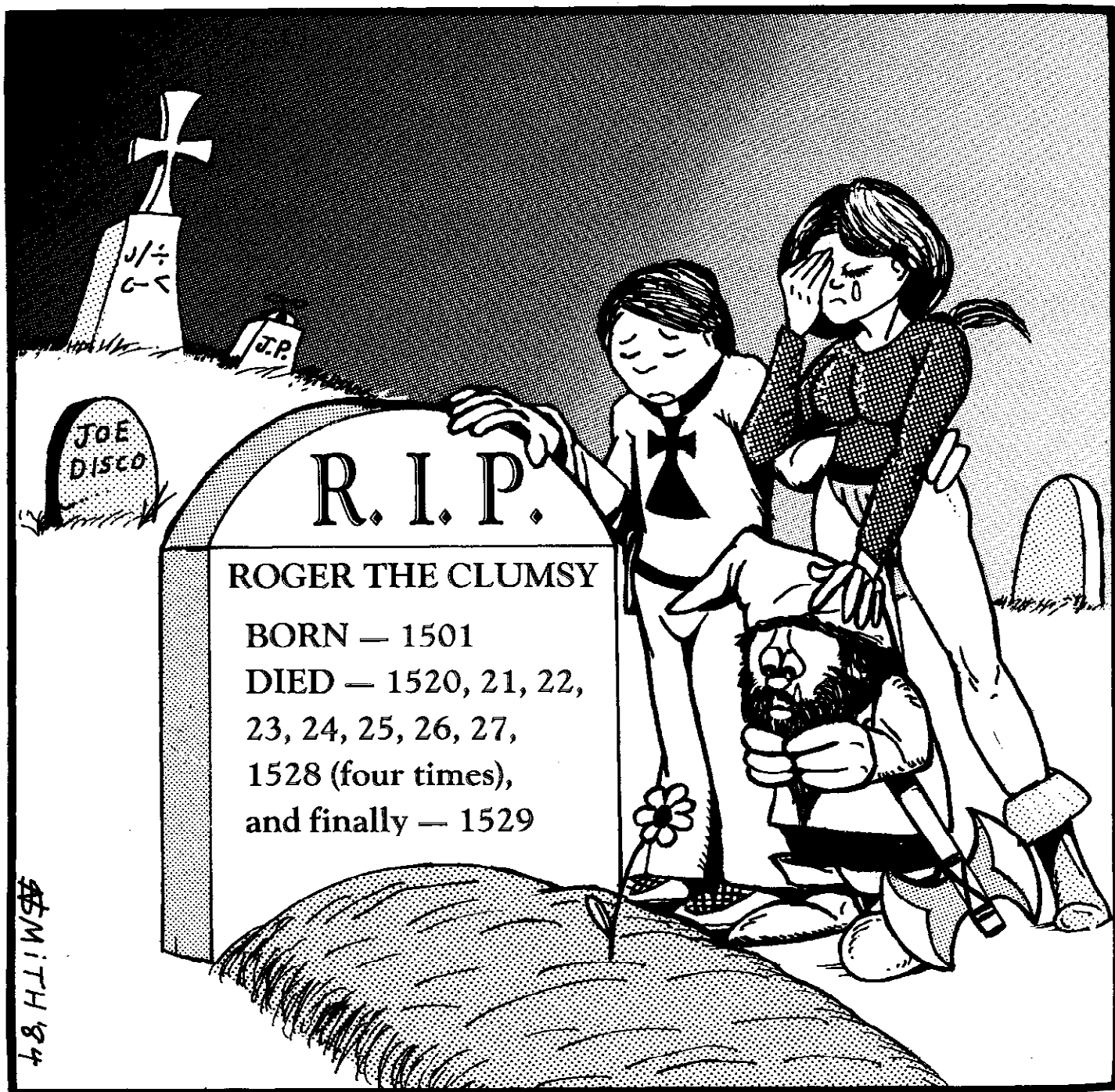
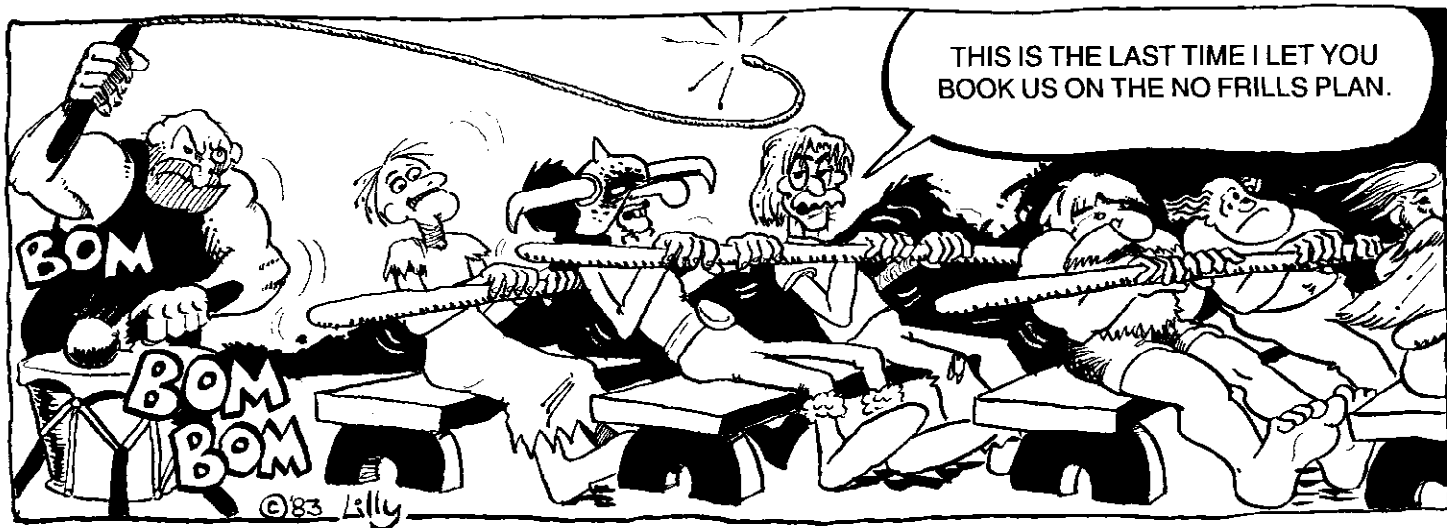
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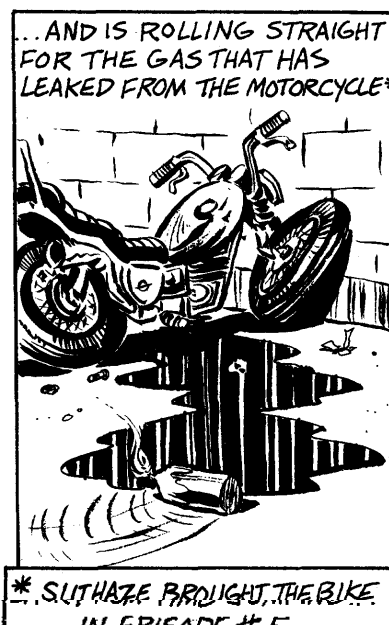
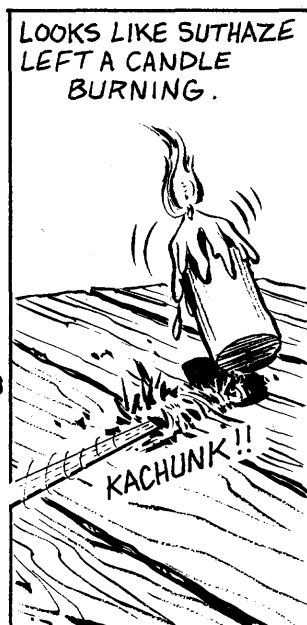
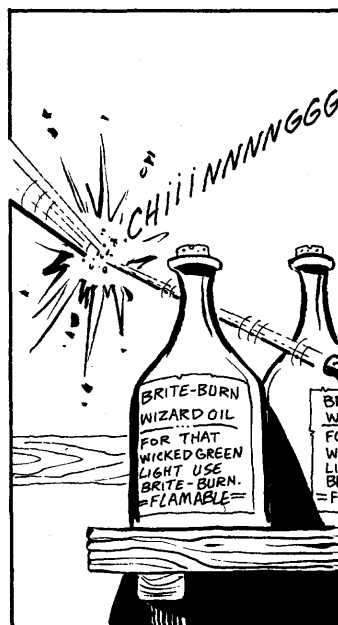
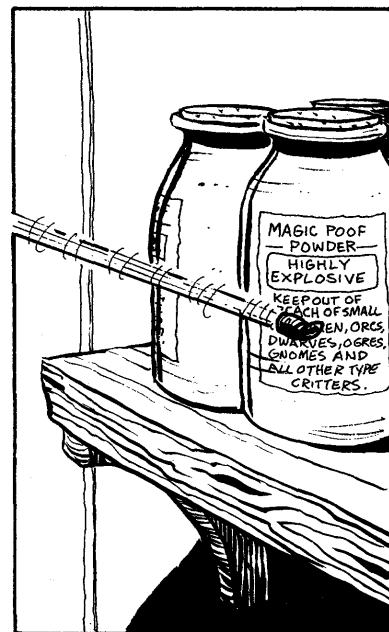
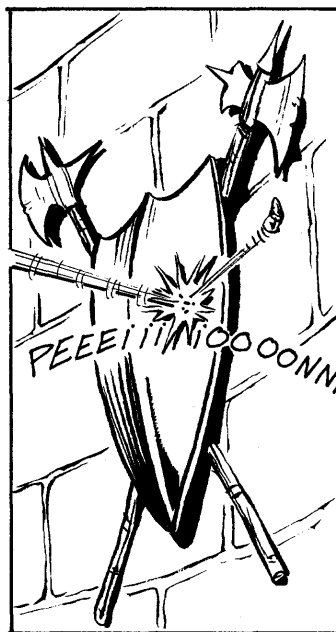
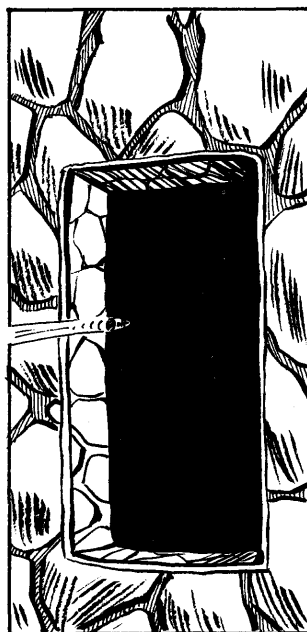
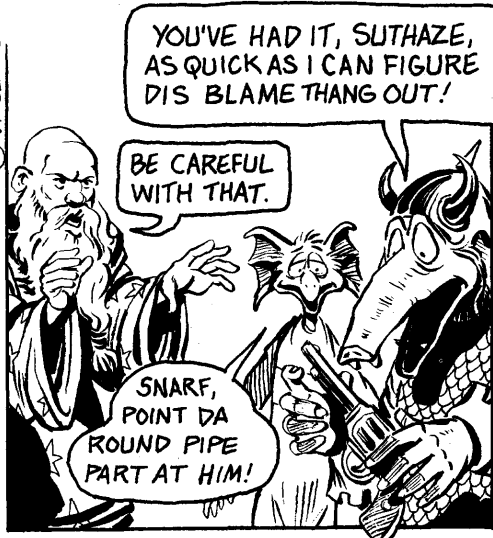


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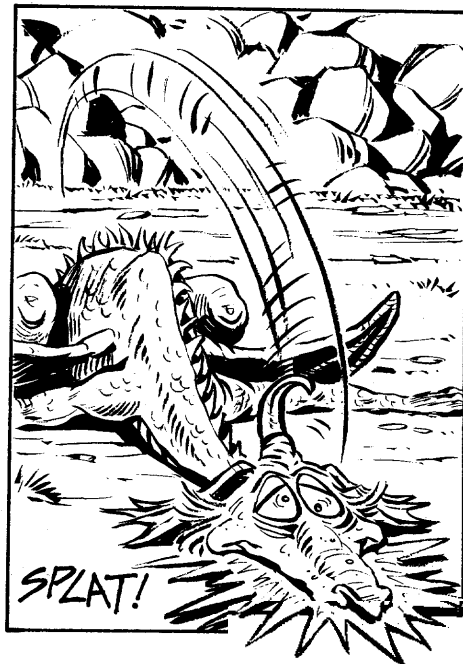
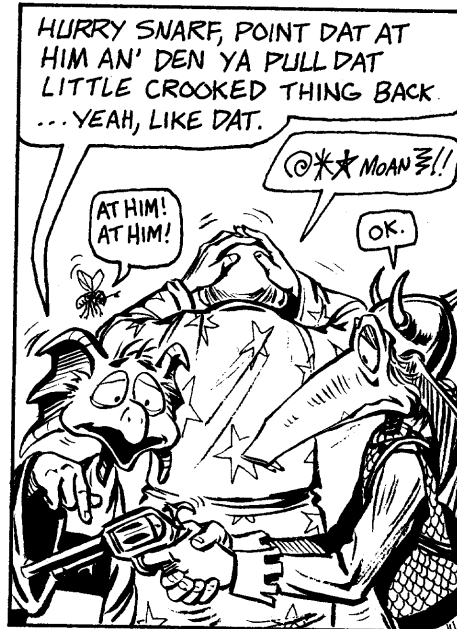
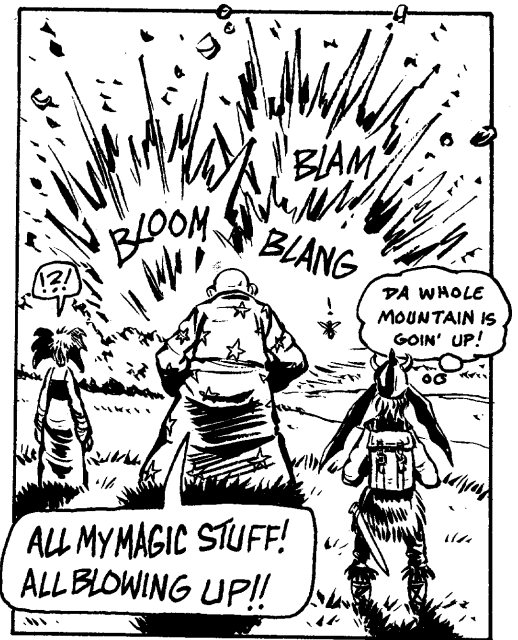
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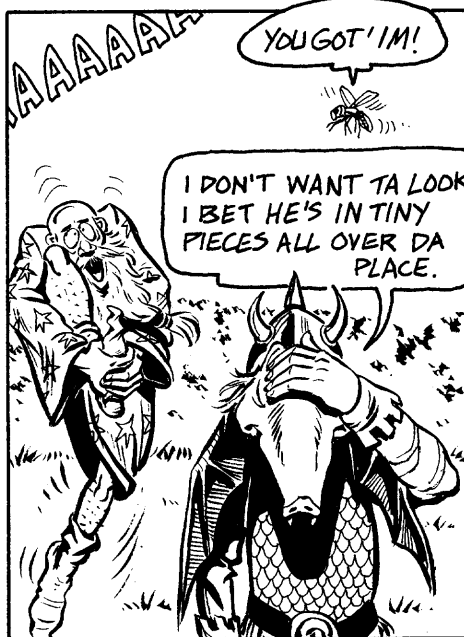
BY ELMORE

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NEXT ISSUE: DID OUR HEROES GET THE RIGHT WAND? WILL LIT TLE GEEZEL GET A WISH TOO?



# BUG-EYED MONSTERS

## They Want Our Women!

On silent grav sleds, the alien creatures slide through the forest, readying their lasers and stunners, drooling slightly in anticipation. They choose their first target: a little clapboard house nestled in the woods above town. They attack. The sounds of lasers and stunners are soon met by cries of fear and rage. Wild with lust, they fail to notice when one human makes it to a car and careens away to rouse the citizenry of the small town against the alien threat.

Ugly, slobbering, bug-eyed monsters! They land in remote American towns and make off with women. BUG-EYED MONSTERS is the new West End release by Greg Costikyan, designer of the successful *Creature That Ate Shboygan*.<sup>TM</sup> In this game, Greg returns to the "Creature" genre, bringing a flying saucer with menacing monsters to the quiet remote American town of Freedom, New Hampshire.

One player, as the monster, must attempt to kidnap the earthling women (the most beautiful in the universe). The other player must rally the citizens of the town to

stop the repulsive invaders and save his womenfolk from a fate worse than death.

A special "Aliens Kidnap Presidential Hopeful" scenario is also provided. Dwight Eisenhower, campaigning for the New Hampshire primary, along with an entourage of state troopers and secret service men, is surprised by a party of bug-eyed monsters. Will they kidnap America's war hero?

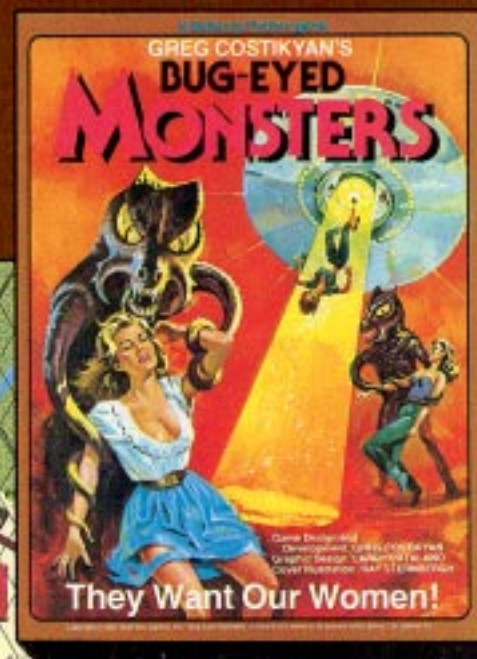
A simple but elegant game system with clear brief rules makes BUG-EYED MONSTERS a good introduction to adventure gaming, but its subject and smooth play will appeal to the hardcore gamer as well.

### THE DESIGNER

Greg Costikyan is the designer of nine published games, including THE CREATURE THAT ATE SHEBOYGAN,<sup>TM</sup> SWORDS AND SORCERY,<sup>TM</sup> DEATH MAZE,<sup>TM</sup> RETURN OF THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT,<sup>TM</sup> and TRAIL BLAZER.<sup>TM</sup>

The above titles are all the trademarks of TSR Inc. with the exception of TRAIL BLAZER which is the trademark of Metagaming.

- one 22" x 17" game map
- 160 full-color, back-printed precision die cut 5/8" counters.
- one 8-page rules booklet
- two dice and full-color game box (1" wide bookshelf size box)



**Complexity:** Low  
**Solitaire Suitability:** Low  
**Players:** Two  
**Game Scale:** Individual Person  
**Playing Time:** An hour or less for experienced gamers



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