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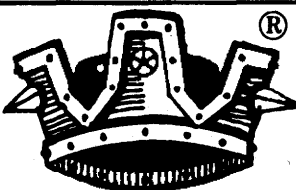
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April 1985

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## COVER

It should come as no surprise that Jack Crane does a lot of detailed, engineering-type illustrations when he's not painting covers for DRAGON® Magazine. He used his technical skills and his painting skills to come up with "Andragon," depicting a basement-sized do-it-yourself kit that will amaze your friends and neighbors — and maybe even your mom.

## If you're reading this, I apologize

I always do this column in the last few moments before the magazine has to go to the printer, and I never have an easy time deciding what to talk about. Well, when I got to thinking about that very thing, the questions followed one after another: What sort of subjects do you expect to see discussed in this space? What have I got to say that you want to hear? Do you care what this piece of writing is about? And, going one step further: Would you care if it was? I here?

The last answer is where I'm at right now. To get to the point: I've decided not to write any more of these columns after the one you're reading (or, more likely, not reading) right now (page 30)

# Letters

## Rational question

Dear Dragon,

I read Katharine Kerr's article on feeding an army in motion ("An army travels on its stomach," issue #94) and I was glad that someone finally outlined a system for feeding an army. After reading it I was left with one major question. In the *Players Handbook*, on the equipment list, iron rations are listed as costing 5 g.p. for one week's worth. My question is simple: Could a soldier function normally if given only iron rations and water? Iron rations are not very expensive and last a long time without spoiling.

Jonathan Zaleski  
Selden, N. Y.

I think a soldier could "function normally" if all he consumed was iron rations and water, but the problem of having enough food for a large army is not solved just by having each man pack a supply of iron rations, for these reasons:

On a small scale, it may be true that "iron rations are not very expensive." But let's imagine a 1,000-man army that's about to go on a march that could take as long as two weeks. It would cost 10,000 gold pieces to buy two weeks' worth of iron rations for every soldier — assuming that the leader of the army can find a merchant who has 2,000 one-week portions of iron rations to sell.

According to Appendix O of the DMG, a portion of iron rations has an encumbrance value of 75 gp, so that two weeks' worth would take up 150 gp worth of weight and space in a soldier's gear. Each soldier would also have to carry a substantial amount of non-edible equipment, and the result might be that many soldiers wouldn't be able to carry all their necessary gear and also have room for a supply of food. You can't count on being able to pick up non-edible equipment while on the march, but it would be a lot easier to find food along the way. So, many of the soldiers would not be able to pack all the food they would need, and they would have to find it while they're on the move.

And even if every soldier could carry enough iron rations to last him throughout the journey, that doesn't address the problem of how to feed the animals that are traveling with the army. For the reasons described in the article, it would probably still be necessary for the army to find some food along the way to keep all of the horses, mules, etc., alive and able to do their jobs.

So, although it's a good idea that might work in some situations, iron rations would not solve all the problems of how to feed an army on the march. — KM

## Jump adjustment

Dear Dragon,

I have a question about "Short hops and big drops" (issue #93). In the example where Jan Zweihander is chasing a halfling thief, wouldn't the halfling's extra jump number be 1, because

his modified jump number is 5, changed to 10 because of a running long jump, and 10 subtracted from 11 is 1. So he would have a 30% chance of jumping instead of 80%. Would you explain this a little better, please?

Travis Boelter  
New Ulm, Minn.

Yes, it should be explained a little better. The computation in the example is correct, because the "double credit" for a running long jump was accounted for by dividing the distance of the 11-foot jump in half. The halfling's chance of success was calculated as if she were attempting a 5½-foot horizontal jump with no running start. That distance is only ½ higher than her modified jump number of 5, which is why (according to the table on page 22) her chance of success is 80%. Dividing the distance in half accomplishes the same thing as doubling the character's jump number for a running long jump. The division step was done "automatically" in the text of the article, not explained when it was performed, so we can't blame anyone for not quite understanding how the example worked. — KM

## Eye examination

Dear Dragon,

I have a question about the article on the eye of the deep (#93). It says that when an eye of the deep grabs hold of one of its victims, it attacks at +2 or +4 depending on the number of claws holding the victim. Also, because of the claw holding the adventurer, his attacks are made at -2 if held by one claw and at -4 if held by two. My question is, does dexterity affect this penalty to hit? When attacking with two weapons, the higher a character's dexterity is, the less of a penalty. Shouldn't this apply here, too?

Seth Walther  
Marietta, Ohio

Attacking with two weapons isn't really a similar circumstance to being grabbed and held by an eye of the deep, but it does seem logical to give a character with high dexterity less of a penalty to hit when he's being grabbed by an eye of the deep; following the system on page 70 of the DMG, try an adjustment of +1 for every point of dexterity over 15. All that does is add a little more detail on top of the new information given in the article. If you use a dexterity benefit like this because you think the monster is too tough, then leave well enough alone. But if you want to tinker a little more to maintain a balance of power, you can add in a "reflex attack" for the monster: Whenever an eye of the deep takes damage from an attack by the character it is holding, it will reflexively squeeze its pincers tighter, doing twice normal damage (4-16 points) to the held character before releasing him.

Ecology articles, as complete as we try to make them, are not as detailed as monster descriptions could be. There's always room for a little more elaboration, but the amount of detail you use is always your decision; the extra "rules" incorpo-

rated into ecology articles are not official changes, so you can do anything you want with them — or nothing at all. We can't give a yes-or-no answer to a question like "Does dexterity affect this penalty to hit?" Whether it does or not is up to you. — KM

## Urisky business

Dear Dragon,

In issue #94 it says that urisks have the natural ability to hide in natural terrain. I would like to know the base percentage chance for one successfully doing so. I would also like to know if there are any modifiers to this base chance.

Andrew Peterson  
Lunenburg, Mass.

This ability is played the same way as an elf's ability to blend into his surroundings. Only someone who is able to detect invisible objects (by virtue of magic or intelligence) can see a urisk if the creature is trying to conceal itself in appropriate surroundings, so the only "chance of success" involved is whether or not an onlooker sees the urisk — which is more like a "chance of failure." Note that if the urisk moves, its (effective) invisibility will probably be negated — and certainly it will become visible if it launches an attack from its hiding place. — KM

## The last word

Dear Editor:

In the pronunciation guide (#93), it states the pronunciation of Titivilus as ti - tio - i - lus, while the earlier article "Nine Hells Revisited" states it as tih - tee - vie - lus. Which is correct?

Eric S. Goldstein  
Greenlawn, N. Y.

I wondered how long it would take someone to notice those conflicting pronunciations. For the record, the pronunciation given in issue #93 can be considered "correct," since it appears in a list of pronunciations that we regard as official. It's unlikely that a character's fate in an adventure will ever depend on whether he knows how to pronounce someone's (or something's) name, but it is nice to all be able to speak the same "language." — KM

## One good turn . . .

Dear Editor:

I just discovered your magazine and think it is great. Now that I have complimented you, I need a favor. I understand that many of your old issues are sold out, so all you have to do is make a photocopy of all the pages from those old issues and send them off to me. If you do this for me, I will buy another copy of your magazine next month and maybe write you another nice letter.

Howe Audacious  
Greedy Hollow, Ariz.

Dear Howe:

I can't say how nice it was to hear from you. As soon as your letter arrived, all us of dropped whatever we were doing, commandeered all the photocopy machines in the company, and spent three days making you a complete set of all the old issues. Look for a large truck to back up into

your driveway one of these days and drop off an enormous crate. All the old issues will be inside — we promise.

The Editor

## Point of contention

Dear People:

You usually do a pretty good job, but I think I found a pretty bad mistake in this month's issue. My copy has the usual 96 pages, but all of them are duplicates of the table of contents. If you don't send me a good copy, I'll have to go to the library across the street from my house and permanently borrow one of theirs. They get a whole lot of copies, and I'll bet you never send them bad ones.

Vic Timm  
Pickton, Me.

Mister Editor:

The strangest thing has happened. Your maga-

zine is very popular here in town, and we have to maintain 96 separate subscriptions to meet the demand. (A lot of boys accidentally take them home inside their schoolbooks, and other copies seem to get lost at home after they are checked out.) Well, this month all 96 of the magazines arrived as usual, but not a single one of them had a table of contents page in it. Can you suggest how we might solve this problem, so we won't have to deal with complaints from people who are forced to steal defective magazines?

Mrs. C. Date  
Public Library  
Pickton, Me.

Dear Mrs. Date:

*A word to the wise should be sufficient: Do it to Timm before he does it to you.*

The Editor

## Free thinker

Dear Editor:

My lifelong dream is to have you publish a letter from me in your forum section, but I do understand that you can't just publish every letter you get. I've noticed that every letter you publish seems to be expressing an opinion. I'd like to be able to do that, too, but I just can't decide what any of my opinions should be. Can you please give me some tips on how to get opinions? Should I take the first ones that come along, or should I shop around for some really good ones that fit me?

Andy Cisive  
Whichever, WA

Dear Andy:

*Those are both good ideas, but we think you should make up your own mind.*

The Editor

## Two quick questions

Dear Editor:

First of all, are you an expert on the rules?

Second of all, how would you handle this rule problem: My best friend has a 99th-level magic-user that just earned his 34,125,001th experience point and wants to go to 100th level. I, as DM, tried to make a ruling that there could be no such thing as a 100th-level character, feeling that there has to be a limit somewhere. Besides, the character record sheet we use in my campaign only has space for a two-digit number under "Level." My best friend got mad at me, and said just because it was my world didn't mean I could do everything the way I wanted. When I designed that record sheet, I never dreamed that a character would get as high as 100th level — but we have been running this campaign for almost three months now, and I sure didn't think it would last this long. Can you give me some advice on this problem?

Timothy Id  
Feeling, Ill.

Dear Tim:

*First of all, no.*

The Editor



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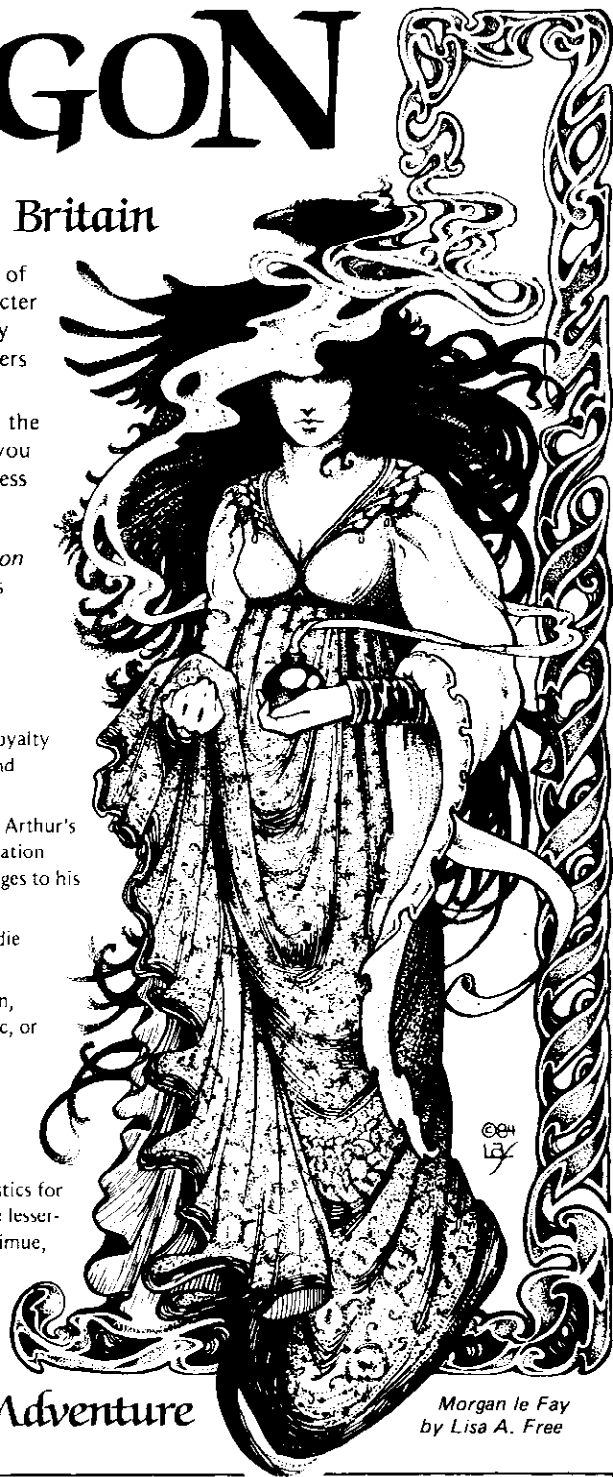
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Though he leaves the question unanswered, I would like to compliment David Godwin on his letter in The Forum of issue #93. He asks the basic question of what is "good" and what is "evil" in the AD&D and D&D game systems.

In his letter David seems to lean toward the idea that the definition and specific beliefs of each alignment should be determined before a campaign and then adhered to. This sounds nice, but in a well-done campaign with much variety it would not solve the problem. If it were to be decided that "good" believed in the absolute right to life, it would not solve the problem of what to consider the belief that humanoid young should be killed in order that they not grow up to cause trouble for humans and demi-humans. In such circumstances it would seem that this belief would be considered "evil." But how could this be? Could a person who believes in sacrificing ruthless humanoids to save friendly peasants, yet also believes in the right of those peasants to freedom and personal property, be just as "evil" as a corrupt dictator who overburdens the people with taxes, is concerned with naught else but his personal comfort, and kills all he even slightly suspects are opposed to him?

All numbers and statistics regarding a character in the game have the purpose of setting up "reality." A certain value will tell one how much damage a character can withstand, while another will relate how dextrous a character is. These statistics are only half the game, though. Alignment is the characteristic which regulates the character's beliefs or personality. Alignment, I believe, was created to prevent radical, illogical changes in a character's behavior. This is done through the harsh penalties inflicted when a character changes alignment.

Because alignment is only meant to prevent radical changes of belief and behavior, it is best to set a character's alignment through common sense. (A person who believes in the basic right of freedom is "good," while a person who constantly kills people for no reason is "evil.") After determining alignment, the player must then decide upon the details of the character's beliefs. Once decided upon, these details must be followed consistently, the player role-playing them as if they were part of the alignment. The DM can penalize the player for changing his belief just as he does for a change in alignment (though it would be a lesser penalty because it is a less drastic change).

By considering alignment only a general area of beliefs, one allows for greater variety in any adventure. Similar methods can be used for "lawful" and "chaotic."

David Miller  
North Miami Beach, Fla.

# The forum

I would like to compliment Arthur Collins on his well written and very informative article in issue #93 entitled "The making of a milieu." This article and others like it in DRAGON Magazine have helped me immensely in preparing my world and campaign.

Although I have played the AD&D game on and off since 1979, I have not started to DM other than for a few "trial runs" because I feel that I am not quite ready. I have some questions I would like to put forth as a means of starting some discussions among the readers of DRAGON Magazine.

The main question I have concerns many of the rules and their implementation. In issue #67 of DRAGON Magazine, Gary Gygax wrote an article entitled "Poker, Chess, and the AD&D system," subtitled "The official word on what's official." In this article he wrote that "The AD&D game system does not allow the injection of extraneous material. . . . Either one plays the AD&D game, or one plays something else. . . ." As far as adding "spurious rules and material," he says that "no claim to playing either game can then be made. Such games are not D&D or AD&D games." In the next paragraph he writes, ". . . Either you play TSR's D&D or AD&D games, or you play variants of them, or you use a hodge-podge system. . . . Next time someone touts some magazine or game as being useful for inclusion in your campaign, consider the following. Adding non-official material puts your game outside the D&D or AD&D game system."

Yet in the same issue he also writes this, concerning the AD&D game's official rules on grappling, pummeling, and overbearing: "I have regretted them ever since [their publication]. I tend to use a very simple system which we initially developed for such close-quarters combat in about 1974."

In issue #83 Roger Moore offered what I think is an excellent system for unarmed combat. Yet, since it is not official, does that mean that when I use it, I am not playing the *real* AD&D game? If it does, then I guess Mr. Gygax isn't either, if he continues to use a different system than the one in the DMG. However, since Mr. Gygax did invent the game, you might say that whatever

system he decides to use *is* official. Fine — but then why isn't it published?

Overall, I agree with Mr. Gygax about the use of non-official rules. I subscribe to DRAGON Magazine mainly to keep track of official rule changes. If I decide to use a new system, or pass one on to my DM, I will only use ones published in DRAGON Magazine since it is, for me, the "official" AD&D game magazine. I hope that I am correct in assuming that what Mr. Gygax meant by "extraneous material" would be, for example, replacing the AD&D combat system with that of another FRPG. Or making major changes to the armor class system, "making up" your own character classes for PCs, etc. I have seen so many people doing exactly that, and when they do, as Gary said, they are no longer playing the AD&D game.

However, the weaponless combat system in issue #83 doesn't seem to be a major change. It doesn't replace a set of rules, rather, it simplified the existing ones, and created a practical, *usable* system. In issue #65, Lenard Lakofka wrote an article entitled "Keep track of quality." He offered a system by which a character could, for example, buy a longsword not as good as a magical +1 sword, but better than the standard 15 gp longsword listed in the Players Handbook. In issue #92, the article "Let the horse buyer beware" presented what I thought was an excellent system for buying quality horses.

In my opinion, these systems and ones like them do not seek to replace any rules. They don't make any drastic changes in the game. They are tailored to the AD&D gaming system. If a person playing the game has a DM who uses Lakofka's weapon quality system and later switches to a DM who doesn't, the most that can happen is that the player gets a bit baked at having laid out 500 gp for a longsword that is now only just as good as the longsword his partner paid 15 gp for.

Still, the bottom line is, if Gary hasn't said it's official, then it isn't. Again, I hope that what Mr. Gygax meant when he referred to "extraneous material" was the "major change" and "other game system" type of material I gave examples of. Although this might seem like a moot point to some, it is important to me, because I try to adhere to the "official" rules of the game.

Up to now I've discussed new rules. Now I'd like to ask about the present ones: Mainly, does anyone use them? From what I've seen, it doesn't look like it. (I have never been to a GEN CON convention, AD&D tournament, etc., which may be one reason why it seems this way.) I've never played with a DM who took weapon speed factors into consideration. If I had a gold piece for every 5'4" half-elf I've seen carrying a 4'6" bastard sword, I could build myself a castle. If I had a silver piece for every time someone used a bastard sword in a crowded bar without hitting anything or anyone except his opponent, I could put a kidney-shaped moat around it. As for encumbrance: I had a friend who wanted to give the AD&D game a try. I introduced him to some people who were going to play that night. After the game, he showed me the list of monsters his character had encountered, treasure and magic

(Turn to page 24)

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# New jobs for demi-humans

Dwarven clerics, elven rangers, and that's not all

By Gary Gygax

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So you think that my extension of levels for demi-humans with exceptional statistics was stingy, do you? Well, Gentle Readers, despite all assumptions to the contrary, I do not dislike characters of non-human stock. In a "world" where humans are the principal population, and rule of most states is by mankind, I believe that the level limits set in the AD&D® game system (as expanded through articles published within these Hallowed Pages, and as eventually redone in new Players Handbook editions) are correct and necessary. Humans would be an inferior species if the limits on demi-humankind were removed. However, let's look at some new, logical concepts for demi-humans which are not destructive to the underlying game concepts.

### Demi-human clerics

With expansion of the deities in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ Fantasy Setting, and by Roger Moore's articles herein so as to provide for the races of demi-humankind, there is no logical reason to exclude their clerics from play. [Editor's note: The aforementioned articles comprise the "Point of View" series on demi-humans, which appeared in DRAGON® issues #58 through #62 and were reprinted in the Best of DRAGON Vol. III anthology.]

The level limits for non-exceptional clerics are one less than the number shown on the table below, i.e. 7th for dwarves, 6th for elves, etc. For clerics with exceptionally high wisdom, the new limits are as follows:

Level limit by racial stock of cleric					
WIS	Dwarf	Elf	Gnome	Half-elf	Halfling
15	8	7	7	5	—
16	9	8	8	6	4
17	10	9	9	7	5
18	11	10	10	8	6
19	13	11	12	10	8
20	16	12	14	12	10

Note that these new limits apply to player characters and NPCs alike — that is, the prohibition against PC clerics of dwarven, elven, or gnomish stock is abolished, and halflings are likewise now able to be either PC or NPC clerics, although on a limited basis (minimum wisdom of 16 required).

### Demi-human druids

Elves, half-elves, and halflings — being more nature-oriented than the other demi-human races — deserve admission to the druid sub-class. Elves are now unlimited in their ability to rise in levels within the druidical ranks, just as half-elves have always been. Furthermore, halflings can become PC or NPC druids of 5th level or greater — limited to 5th if either wisdom or charisma is below 15, but able to advance as high as 13th level if the ability scores are exceptional:

Halfling ability scores		Highest Druid level
WIS	CHA	
15	15	6
16	15	7
16	16	8
17	16	9
17	17	10
18	17	11
18	18	12
All scores above 18 — 18		13
		(maximum)

### Demi-human rangers

Elves are no longer prohibited from entering the ranger sub-class, in keeping with the same reasoning that now opens the druid sub-class to that race. For consistency, half-elven rangers are also given more potential. Level limits for elven and half-elven rangers are now as follows :

Ranger level		STR	INT	WIS
Elf	Half-elf			
7	8	18(01)	15	15
8	9	18(01)	16	16
9	10	18(51)	16	16
10	11	18(76)	17	17
11	12	18(76)	18	18
12	14	19	18	18
14	17	20	18	18

As with all other similar tables, ability scores given here represent minimums which must *all* be met for the character to rise to the indicated level. The downward progression for elves follows the same pattern as for half-elven rangers, i.e. elven rangers with less than 17 strength are limited to 5th level, and those with 17 strength can rise no higher than 6th level.

Both elven and half-elven characters can be druid/rangers, or can be triple-classed as druid/ranger/magic-users. All limitations apply, especially that regarding division of experience points equally among classes.

### Special note on cavaliers

If your campaign uses the cavalier class (described in DRAGON issue #72), it is important to include the paladin as a sub-class of cavalier, not as a direct sub-class of fighter. (More information on this reorganization is forthcoming in the *Unearthed Arcana* volume, about which more was said in last month's column.) Furthermore, both elves and half-elves may be cavaliers, with level limits the same as for members of the regular fighter class.

### Paladin and monk dual-classing

While it is not possible to renounce further progress as a paladin or a monk in order to pursue another profession, the opposite is not necessarily true. From a non-conflicting profession, a human PC can move to that of paladin or monk. For example, a lawful good cleric with sufficiently high ability scores might decide to become a paladin. Similarly, a thief of lawful alignment might determine that the monk profession is now a desired occupation. In both examples, no change in alignment occurs, and the activities of the new class do



not conflict with those of the previous class. It is not possible to take the opposite route, since the mental determination required for initial membership in the paladin or monk class disallows any lessening or redirection of those disciplines. If a character begins his adventuring career as a paladin, then a paladin he will remain (unless his paladin status is removed for some reason related to magic, behavior, or alignment change); and so it is also for a monk. Apply this same line of reasoning to any other dual-class question, and you won't be far off the mark.

### Humble pie department

This particular dish can be accompanied by homily grits, but that isn't the case here! On to my ample serving. . . . I must use more care when expressing concerns. This I have uttered to myself several times after reading a letter from Susan M. Garrett. That Kindly Reader pointed out that harsh words are usually ineffective tools — particularly when seeking a result that requires cooperation and understanding. An earlier issue of this Invaluable Journal (#90) contained a suggestion from me that Enthusiastic Gamers be firm in demanding materials not carried by their favorite retailer. Obviously, you wouldn't be in a store asking for a product if you didn't prefer to shop there. Just as evident is the fact that if you avidly seek the products, and your favorite retailer does not carry those goods, then only two courses remain open: One, the retailer must carry these items, or, two, you must go elsewhere to buy them. Option two is undesirable because it takes you away from your choice of supplier, and it loses that store your patronage.

Thus, simply informing the retailer of your desires, and politely requesting that they be carried so that you may purchase them there, rather than (perish the loathsome thought) elsewhere, is indeed sufficient inducement to any wise proprietor. Susan, bless her, is employed at a Waldenbooks store, and has done her best to see that RPG products are carried by that shop. In her letter she calls me on the carpet for singularly poor phraseology. I am duly cor-

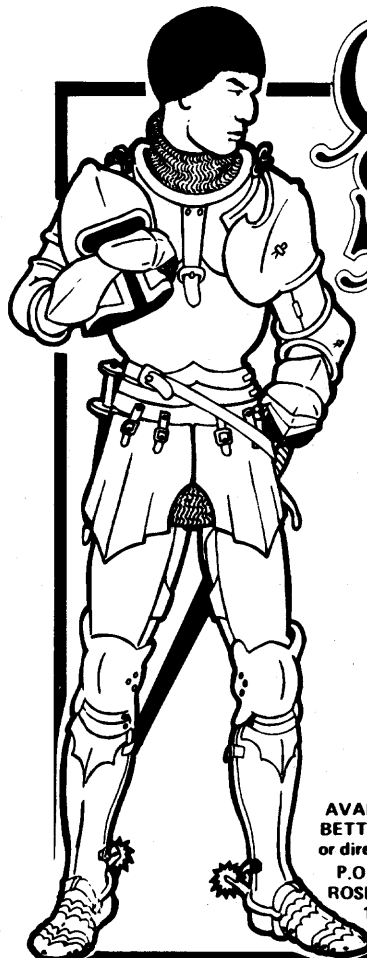
rected and contrite. Words such as "demand" and "take your business elsewhere" should not be used in this case — if ever! Thank you, Susan, for your good offices in behalf of role-playing and for caring enough to write and correct me.

A very important point which was brought up in Susan's letter pertained to pilfering, unfortunately the actual sort rather than the imaginary profession of many Worthy Gamers. It seems that unthinking persons of totally unscrupulous sort are making off with portions of modules. Breaking the plastic wrap around such products, they take what they like, leaving an unsalable remainder behind. Such evil activity jeopardizes the continued availability of these goods, for losses of this sort are annoying, give our hobby a bad name, and reduce the viability of the store. Each retailer has many financial obligations, including employees to pay, rent, utility bills, taxes, and so on. The small margin of profit from each sale is necessary indeed — without these receipts, there can be no store. Do mention this problem to your fellow enthusiasts. These real-life thieves should be excluded from campaigns, so to speak.

### A good "game" book

If you haven't read *The Black Company* by Glen Cook (Tor Books, Tom Doherty Associates, Inc., 1984), then you are missing a good book which relates closely to the AD&D® game. I can't swear that the author plays FRP games, let alone any of TSR's offerings, but somehow he has captured the essence of them, regardless. *The Black Company* reads as if it were a literary adaptation of actual adventuring, as it were, in a swords & sorcery milieu akin to that of a proper AD&D game campaign. The style of writing is neither heroic nor swashbuckling. There is none of Robert E. Howard in the book. It is a dark work. Nevertheless, it is one fine bit of fantasy authorship. I recommend it to all role-playing game enthusiasts for many reasons, not the least of which is that it will assist in proper fantasy role-playing. For \$2.95 this book will provide both reading enjoyment and much support for your RPG activity. It is one you shouldn't miss.

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# What good PCs are made of

## Play characters with more substance than statistics

by Katharine Kerr

One of the most enjoyable things about the AD&D® game and other fantasy games is role-playing a player character — taking advantage of the chance to “become another person” and to live out another life in a strange and magical land. In an ongoing campaign, developing a solid PC is the player’s main opportunity to be creative and to contribute something of his own to the Dungeon Master’s world. Using this kind of creativity can be very satisfying. A well-made PC is a miniature work of art, like a character from a good novel or movie, but all the player’s own.

Yet all too often, players deny themselves this particular pleasure simply because they fail to create a *true* character — someone different from themselves in most respects with a personality and a mind of his own. Many gamers have a standard character style that they return to over and over again in play, though this character may have a different name and a different set of stats from game to game. Some of these standard characters are very much like the players running them, and some are wish fulfillments, embodying all the strengths that the player doesn’t have and never will. Allow me to use myself as my own bad example: my standard woman warrior never compromises, never takes guff from anybody, and backs up her pride with a sword — a very different soul from your typewriter-bound author, who would probably cut her thumb off if she ever picked up a real blade.

Playing this kind of “compensatory” character can be psychologically healthy at times, but always running the same basic PC drastically limits the enjoyment players get from gaming. Creating a truly different character, on the other hand, seems like an imposing task to many gamers, because it requires some of the skills of both an author and an actor. First, the player has to create the character in detail, then pretend to be that character during the gaming session. The creation is the most important part of the process, because a player who really knows his PC’s background, attitudes, and mannerisms can respond in character much more convincingly and spontaneously than one who only has a vague idea of the PC’s general nature.

Although inventing an entirely new personality from scratch is a difficult job, any gamer can add some depth and life to his PCs with just a little thought and creativity. The problem is knowing where to begin. This article offers some guidelines for the

player who wants to create a well-developed PC with a life of his own. Although players will have to consult their DMs to fit their characters properly into the game world, they can do much on their own to flesh out existing PCs or to add depth to new ones. DMs may also want to give this article to their players to encourage them to be creative on their own within the context of the DM’s world.

### Growing up medieval

The old cliché is true: no person exists in a vacuum. Not only is everyone born into a specific family, but that family exists in a society with its own distinct ways of behavior and moral codes. During childhood, a person’s most basic attitudes toward life are formed by the events she’s experienced as well as by the treatment she receives from her family. Although few gamers give much thought to their PC’s early life, understanding that background is a valuable tool for creating a PC’s personality.

Most of us assume that the way we’re treated as children is the way that children have always been treated at all times. We have a strong concept of “childhood” as a special time of life for being irresponsible, protected, and loved. In our society, adults spend a lot of time worrying about their children and about the effects that their own actions will have on their children’s lives. In the western medieval society that forms the backgrounds for most game worlds, nothing could be further from the truth. (In ancient Rome, or in Constantinople and other civilized areas of the medieval world, children were raised in a more protective and loving manner in the middle and upper classes, but among the poor everywhere, what follows will still apply.)

In general, growing to adulthood in a medieval society or among barbarian tribes was a pretty chancy thing. The average woman could expect to give birth to eight children, of whom at least one would be born dead and only three of the others would live to reach maturity. As a result, children simply weren’t cherished; it was too heartbreaking to grow attached to a child who would probably die in a few years. What’s more, since so many women died in childbirth, many children grew up with either no mother at all or with a step-mother who was even more indifferent to them than their natural mother would have been. Rather than being in the center of the family as they are now, children found themselves on the edge of things. This is not

to say, of course, that no medieval parents loved their children, but such love was a rare thing.

In upper-class families, children were seen mostly as heirs, meant to continue the family line or consolidate family power by accepting a properly arranged marriage when they finally came of age. These little political pawns were usually put into the care of nursemaids — or, among the barbarians, foster parents of a lower class — as soon as they were born. Although the parents supervised their education and training, they had little actual contact with their children until the children were thirteen or fourteen, when the children were considered to be full-grown adult members of the family. These new “adults,” however, had no control over their own lives until their father died. The father announced whom the daughters would marry and sent any surplus sons either to the church or to a place in another lord’s castle. By law, the children had to obey his decisions.

Among the lower classes, children were considered as an economic asset, another pair of hands to work on the farm or in the family craft shop. Toys were only for the very youngest children. As soon as a child could walk, she was given useful work to do — watching the geese, sorting good beans from bad, and other such simple tasks. By the time they were eight, boys were expected to be doing a full day’s work alongside their father, while girls were doing much of the cooking and clothes-making to free their mother for money-making work in the fields or in the shop. By the time they were fourteen, most lower-class people were married, but still living under the control of their father or father-in-law.

In all classes, children were more likely to be neglected than fussed over. At meals, the adults were served first, and the children fought over the leftovers. Even in the upper classes, children’s clothing was cut down from the adults’ worn-out garments and rarely washed. The lord’s daughter and the farmer’s daughter were likely to look much alike when it came to their dresses. Few adults spent any kind of time with their children, except to give them orders or teach them how to do various kinds of work.

Medieval children were also exposed to violence on a regular basis. Children who made mistakes, appeared lazy, or merely angered their parents were beaten. For that matter, most would have seen their fathers beat their mothers as a matter of course,



too. The amusements of these times were genuine, not simulated, blood-sports: duels to the death in barbarian societies, jousts and tournaments in medieval ones, as well as the omnipresent cock-and-dog fights and such refined pleasures as bear-baiting. Children were usually taken to watch the public punishment of criminals as well, because their parents enjoyed watching the floggings, maimings, and hangings meted out by their overlords. Barbarian boys, of course, learned early that war and death were part of everyday life and the true pursuit of real men.

With such a start in life, the average PC comes to maturity with a pretty grim set of attitudes. (Although there are always exceptions to any cultural conditioning, it's surprising how many historical figures of the Middle Ages fit the pattern described below.) First of all, he realizes that life is short and harsh, and that he's lucky to be alive at all. He's seen several brothers and sisters, and maybe his mother, die from natural causes while he was still young. If he's a barbarian or a noble, it's likely that he lost his father and several uncles to warfare, too. He thus accepts the sufferings of other people with an attitude that would strike us as extremely callous, provided that these others are strangers rather than someone important to him personally.

What's more, from early on he learned that no one was going to take care of him if he couldn't take care of himself. He's had to squabble to get enough to eat, push and shove to get enough room in the bed he shared with his brothers and sisters, and fight over the few toys and amusements that the family shared. Thus, he has an arrogant and grasping side to his personality. Even if he's from the noble class, he's used to hours of hard work and drudgery. Noble boys were sent to other castles to work as pages at eight years old; noble girls put in their share of hours at spinning, weaving, and sewing family clothes.

Finally, his attitude toward his family is quite cold. Since they never did much for him, he truly doesn't care very much about them, either. Perhaps he had an unusual chance to grow attached to one parent or a favorite sibling, but it's more likely that he sees his siblings as rivals and his parents as distant authority figures who stand between him and his inheritance. If he's a barbarian or a noble lord, he does have a feeling for the honor of his family name. This feeling means that he'll avenge any family member who is murdered or shamed, but he's just as likely to kill any family member, male or female, who besmirches the family honor. The people who truly matter to him are the friends that he found for himself, not the family with whom he grew up. Since these friends are the real source of love and affection in his life, he's likely to be fanatically devoted to them in an emotional way that we moderns would find embarrassing.

In fantasy worlds, members of the non-human races will have different kinds of childhoods and thus a different set of basic

attitudes. However, since Roger Moore has already explored the cultures of the various non-human races in his "Point of View" series of articles for DRAGON® magazine (reprinted in the Best of DRAGON Vol. III anthology), there's no need to cover the same ground here. Any player who is building up a non-human character can refer to the appropriate article in that series for the necessary background and the innate attitudes of his chosen race.

With this basic background in mind, we're ready to turn to the individual PC. After rolling up his character and making adjustments for his chosen race, the next thing a player does is choose the character class — the profession — of his PC. Built into the game is the assumption that the PC has been apprenticed to a master in this class for many years, an assumption that's historically accurate. The average child would have been sent to his apprenticeship at nine or ten years of age, depending on how bright and capable the child was. Although the player should always choose the PC's class himself, he can work backward from that choice to fill in the events and influences of the PC's early life.

Ideally, of course, each player should invent all these details for himself with the active collaboration of the DM, as if he were writing a short story about his PC, but many players may simply not know where to begin their PC's "biography" or which facts to include.

This article provides a set of tables to randomly determine certain basic facts about the PC. These rolls, however, should only be starting points. The player should think about each result and decide what emotional effect it had on the PC and how this effect influenced the character's personality. To give them real meaning, the player has to turn the dice rolls into a story, even if it's only a sketchy one.

### Social class

The social standing of the PC's family should always be randomly determined, simply because we'd all like to be rich nobles if we could get away with it. But since only the DM of a given campaign can decide exactly what the term "social class" means or includes in his world, the following tables have been purposely left nonspecific. Here are some examples of how each class might be defined:

1. Very low: serfs, slaves, beggars, a hereditary guild of charnel-house workers.
2. Low: farmers with a small holding, servants of the rich.
3. Middle: farmers with large holdings, craftsmen with shops, midwives and herb-women, tavern owners.
4. Distinguished: lawyers, physicians, clerics, magic-users.
5. Noble: members of a hereditary aristocracy. This class can be based either on landholding, as was done in the Middle Ages, or on sheer wealth, as in ancient Greece or modern America.

Now for the tables themselves, which are

based on the character class of the PC and which use percentile dice rolls:

Thieves	Fighters
01-20 very low	01-05 very low
21-50 low	06-15 low
51-90 middle	16-50 middle
91-99 distinguished	51-70 distinguished
00 noble	71-00 noble
Magic-users	Clerics
01-10 very low	01-10 very low
11-25 low	11-25 low
26-60 middle	26-60 middle
61-85 distinguished	61-75 distinguished
86-00 noble	76-00 noble

Add 10 to all rolls for paladin characters. Subtract 10 on all rolls for druids.

Once the player has rolled on these tables, he should try to flesh out the raw result with some circumstances. For instance, a cleric with a noble background might have been a younger son of the house who had no chance at inheriting the title, or a daughter who preferred religion to an arranged marriage. Any PC who rolls "very low" can be assumed to have shown such great natural aptitude for his class at such an early age that he was adopted by an upper-level member of that class and raised away from his family — except for thieves, where poverty is a natural incentive to learn the trade.

### Family life and background

Results of rolls on the following progression of "tables" will help a player develop a detailed background for the character.

- A. Is the PC a legitimate child of his father? (01-75 = yes, 76-00 = no)
  - 1) If illegitimate, was the PC raised with the father's family? (01-75 = yes, 76-00 = no)
  - 2) If not raised with the father, was the PC raised by the natural mother (01-50), placed into fosterage (51-95), or raised by charity as an orphan (96-00)?
  - 3) If placed into fosterage, roll for the foster family as well as the natural family in the next steps. If raised by charity, ignore steps B and C.
- B. Does the PC have any living siblings? (01-75 = yes, 75-00 = no)
  - 1) If yes, then how many? (01-40 = one, 41-90 = two, 91-00 = three)
  - 2) For each sibling, roll to determine sex (01-50 = female, 51-00 = male) and age (01-50 = older than PC, 51-00 = younger than PC)
- C. Were there any family tragedies that affected the PC?
  - 1) Did the PC's mother die when the PC was young? (01-60 = yes, 61-00 = no)
  - 2) Did the PC's father die when the PC was young? (noble class:

01-60 = yes, 61-00 = no; all other classes: 01-40 = yes; 41-00 = no)  
 3) How many siblings died when the PC was young? (01-50 = three, 51-75 = four, 76-00 = five)

D. Is the PC's attitude toward the family normal for his culture (01-65), more loving than normal (66-90), or more hostile than normal (91-00)?

E. Was the PC's family poor by the standards of its social class (01-30), reasonably secure by those standards (31-75), or very well off by those standards (76-00)?

F. Did the PC's father have the same profession (i.e. character class) as the PC?

- 1) M-U: 01-10 = yes, 11-00 = no  
 Cleric: 01-35 = yes, 36-00 = no  
 Thief: 01-60 = yes, 61-00 = no  
 Fighter: 01-75 = yes, 76-00 = no
- 2) If the answer from F-1 is no, what was the father's profession? (To answer this question, the player will probably have to consult with the DM. If the social class is middle or lower, however, it's 85% likely that the PC's father was a farmer.)
- 3) If the PC has a different profession from his father's, was he/she apprenticed in a regular manner to a teacher of that profession? Thief class: 01-75 = yes, 76-00 = no (If answer is no, skip section G.) All other classes: automatic yes.

G. If the PC was an apprentice, rather than being trained by his father, what was the apprenticeship like?

- 1) Did his master treat him warmly and considerately (01-20), decently but coolly (21-80), or harshly and erratically (81-00)?
- 2) Was his master's status high among his peers (01-15), normal among his peers (16-80), low among his peers (81-95), or that of an outcast from his profession (96-00)? (If the master was an outcast, then the PC traveled with his master from place to place.)
- 3) How many other apprentices did the master have? (01-10 = one, 11-75 = two, 76-90 = three, 91-00 = four)
- 4) Did the master favor the PC above the other apprentices? (01-50 = yes, 51-00 = no)
- 5) If above answer is yes, did the PC get along well with other apprentices? (01-25 = yes, 26-00 = no)

H. A thief who was not taught by his father or by a member of the thieves' guild has been stealing since early childhood for his own reasons. The player should decide what those reasons were; some common ones are the challenge of the act, sheer greed, and resentment of the rich.

- 1) Was the budding thief contacted by the local thieves' guild as a teen-

ager? (01-75 = yes, 76-00 = no)

2) If the answer above is no, the player has to decide if the PC has made contact with the guild on his own since reaching maturity.

I. If the PC was trained by his father, the player should still roll on steps G-1 and G-2 above.

J. Where was the PC born?

Obviously, the player will have to consult with the DM to answer this question.

The player should also ask the DM for any relevant history of the PC's birthplace, to see if the PC lived through any important campaign events as a child, such as a war or a plague, that would have helped to form his personality.

### Making up the story

Now let's look at a couple of examples of how to create a PC using these tables. Basically, the percentage breakdowns on the tables are weighted to allow a fairly "normal" background for each character class. For example, a fighter PC is likely to have a fighter for a father, who most likely is a member of the middle class yeomanry, the distinguished class sergentry, or the noble class of warrior lords. It's still possible, though, to get some unusual or even contradictory series of rolls. These peculiar combinations of rolls are often the most fun to work with, because the player's creativity is sparked by trying to think of reasons behind the "decisions" of the dice.

First, let's take a magic-user who got a fairly typical series of dice rolls. He comes from the middle class, was a legitimate son of his father, and has one living sibling, a sister who is older than he. He lost his mother and three other siblings early in life, but his father is still alive. He thinks of his family more fondly than normal, and that family was reasonably secure by middle-class standards. Since his father wasn't a magic-user, our lad was apprenticed to a master of normal status among mages, who treated him and his two other apprentices decently if coolly. Since our PC was never singled out for special favors by the master, he got along well with the other boys. Adding some details from my campaign world, we also know that the magic-user, Evan, grew up in a prosperous, peaceful city, where his father was an herbalist.

Already these bare details are beginning to form a coherent picture of Evan's life. Let's add more color to them by using some imagination and by extrapolating from the nature of life in medieval worlds. As an herbalist, Evan's father must have known how to read and write and would have taught his only son this skill early in life. His interest in the powers and properties of plants sparked the boy's interest in magic. Since his mother died, we can say that the older sister took over Evan's care, and since his attitude toward his family is more loving than usual, she must have treated him unusually well. With his connections as an

herbalist, the father found a reputable magic-user to take Evan on as an apprentice, but the father was not well off enough to apprentice him to the best available master. Although Evan's master was a fair-minded man, he was too engrossed in his own studies to pay personal attention to his apprentices, but the boys made friends among themselves. It's likely, given his general cultural attitude toward friendship, that Evan is closer to the apprentices of his youth than he is to his family.

Next, we can see what this story tells us about Evan's basic personality. Since he had such a secure and peaceful upbringing for a man of his times, he is likely to be a little naive and inclined to trust everyone he meets. His fond memories of his hard-working sister make him treat women with respect. On the other hand, since he saw many a public hanging and so many natural deaths as a child, he knows that the world is a harsh place where death comes fast. This knowledge makes him grateful to the gods for his luck with his family and for making it possible for him to study magic, his real love in life.

We've just seen how the dice rolls can be worked into a solid-feeling character, particularly if the rolls give typical results for the PC's character class. Even unusual rolls, however, can be turned into a good character with a bit of thought, as in our next example.

The player of a female thief manages to roll 00 for social class, making her PC a member of the nobility! What's more, she's a legitimate daughter, not an unwelcome bastard child. She has three living brothers, of whom two are older than she, but both her mother and her father died when she was young. Her attitude toward her family is normal, but her family was poor by the standards of the nobility. Although as a thief she would normally have a high chance of rolling that her father was in the same profession, the DM rules that it's extremely unlikely that her noble father was a thief or that she was apprenticed at an early age to the thieves' guild. Thus she's a self-taught thief, although her roll on Section H-1 shows that she was indeed contacted by the local guild while a teen-ager. Between them, the player and the DM decide that the thief, Lyssa, was born in a war-torn region of the game world where poor lords are common.

Now it's up to the player to make sense of her PC's early life. She decides to start with Lyssa's position in the family, the only daughter among three brothers. Since warrior lords tend to favor their sons anyway, and since her family was poor, it's quite likely that Lyssa was even more ignored than usual in this family. Once her father died and her eldest brother succeeded to the title, she was doubtless thought of as nothing more than a pawn to be married off to a political ally as soon as possible. Stealing, then, became Lyssa's way of getting something of her own, a small revenge on her brothers. Probably she started out stealing extra food when the cook's back was turned,



then graduated to lifting small valuables from noble guests.

The next question for the player to answer is how Lyssa made the transition from petty pilferer at the castle to a professional member of the thieves' guild. Since local thieves were doubtless blamed for her crimes, they would have been aware of her activities, but they would have been afraid to approach the sister of the lord of the local manor. The player decides that the arranged marriage in the offing provides a perfect answer. Appalled by her brother's choice of a husband for her, Lyssa ran away to a distant town to live by her wits. There, the local guild contacted her and made her a late-come apprentice.

After making up this reasonable story to explain the unusual dice rolls, Lyssa's player now has some good insights into her PC's character. Lyssa must be a very independent and headstrong young woman to have managed her escape from her brother's castle. On the other hand, since she fell back to thievery to get her way as a child, she's essentially a devious person, preferring to use her brains rather than to force direct confrontations. After all her years of living a double life, coupled with her standard training in the manners of a noblewoman, she must be able to put on a very good front — very sweet, gracious, and timid on the outside, but hard as nails on the inside. At the same time, her upbringing in a warrior lord's castle has made her

no stranger to violence. If she has to, she'll use her dagger and short sword to good purpose.

We can see the value of all this effort put into developing backgrounds for PCs if we imagine a game where Evan the magic-user is interacting with Lyssa the thief. Poor trusting Evan will be putty in Lyssa's hands — at least until she bilks him out of his share of a treasure. At the same time, since Evan is so different from her crude brothers, Lyssa might have a soft spot in her heart for him and return the treasure she bilked him out of, along with a little lecture on the dangers of trusting people too much. The interplay between these two characters will provide a lot of amusement for the other players in the campaign, as well as giving the DM some ideas for dramatic confrontations during city play and other slower-moving parts of the game.

#### The whys and wherefores

After he's made up a background and sketched out a general personality for his PC, the player next needs to develop his PC's motivations in life. Understanding the PC's motivations is the key to staying in character while role-playing, because what a person wants out of life determines how that person will act in any given situation. For example, a warrior whose main goal is to gain glory and honor will never stoop to a cowardly deed, no matter how great the reward. It's possible, of course, that another

motivation might conflict with a person's main goal. The warrior of the example might be tempted to do a cowardly deed if that deed would save the life of his dearest friend. The player of a character caught in that sort of conflict would have to decide which motivation was the stronger.

Since motivations can be so complex, the best way to start determining a PC's motivation is to ask why the PC chose his profession in the first place. (The player has his own reasons for choosing a character class, based on the game mechanics; what counts here is the PC's reasons, as someone who grew up in the game world.) It's possible that events in the PC's life made him choose a particular class. A fighter who grew up in a war-torn country, for instance, might have had little choice of profession if every able-bodied man were being recruited. Likewise, a cleric who was born into a low social class might have seen the religious life as the one way she could better her fate.

Beyond the press of circumstance, however, each character class holds out the promise of a certain kind of reward and offers its own distinct satisfactions. Magic-users, to begin with, have the chance to learn secret knowledge, the mysterious lore that will give them power over things that few people even know exist. Any magic-user will have to have a love of knowledge for its own sake in order to endure the long years of study necessary to become proficient in this class. For fighters, the reward is glory,

A black and white advertisement for 'Warbots: The Ultimate Weapon!'. On the left, a detailed line drawing of a robot's head and upper torso is shown. The robot is wearing a helmet with a visor and has a large, complex mechanical structure on its head. It is holding a large, futuristic handgun with both hands, pointing it towards the right. The background is dark and textured. On the right side, the title 'WARBOTS' is written in a large, bold, stylized font. Below it, the subtitle 'THE ULTIMATE WEAPON!' is written in a smaller, bold font. Further down, the text 'The Robot Role Playing Game' is written in a bold font. At the bottom right, the text 'Coming Soon!' is written in a bold font. In the bottom right corner, the publisher's information is listed: 'Mayfair Games', 'P.O. Box 5987', 'Chicago, IL', and '60680'.

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respect in the eyes of others and the hope of earning a place in a bard's song or a saga so that their reputations will outlive them. Clerics, while motivated primarily by the love of their gods, also have the chance to earn a high status in society and a place in a respected hierarchy. For thieves, their ability to live outside the law and their self-concept as dangerous, daring persons are even more important rewards than the mere money they steal.

Although all PCs will be motivated by the main goals of their profession, each PC will have a slightly different emphasis. One cleric may want nothing more than the chance to serve his favorite god, while another may have her sights set on that temple position as head of the cult. One magic-user may love arcane knowledge only for its own sake, while another may want the intellectual power over others that it brings. It's up to the player to decide upon his PC's motivations in choosing the class, because no table of die rolls can possibly be flexible enough to create truly individualized PCs.

Once the player has decided why the PC chose his profession, he faces the next interesting question: Just why is this PC out adventuring? Unless the society to which the PC belongs is in a state of chaos, as the result of a disastrous war or a plague, for instance, most people in that society are leading settled lives in or near the place where they were born. Yet something motivated each PC to take to the roads in search of adventure and has made him willing to face the dangers that adventuring brings. The player, possibly in collaboration with the DM, should decide what this motive — or combination of motives — was.

It's possible, for instance, that an event in the PC's life forced him to leave home. Perhaps his family was disgraced, or perhaps he was framed for a crime he didn't commit. If the PC is a fighter, he may have fought on the losing side of a civil war. A cleric may have made the head of her temple hierarchy so jealous of her abilities that she was sent away to search for ways to glorify her god's name. Thieves, of course, are always in danger of finding their home town too hot to hold them after a successful heist. Creating some such dramatic event in the PC's life will give the player a sense of the PC as a person with a history.

On the other hand — and perhaps at the same time — the PC may have decided to become an adventurer for psychological reasons. He may be a restless soul who loves to wander for wandering's sake, or he may have always dreamed of riches beyond counting. The player needs to look at his PC's background and find reasons that are consistent with it. In our example of Lyssa the thief, for instance, her independent nature may have made her decide that her current town doesn't hold enough opportunities for her. This decision might be reinforced by a job that wasn't as successful as it might have been, leaving the authorities entirely too interested in her activities.

Alignment is another important factor in

all the PC's motivations, not merely the motive that made the PC become an adventurer. All too often players ignore their PC's alignment except in the most general way, but used properly, it's an important tool for good role-playing, because it indicates the overall way that the PC views the world and defines what certain of his goals will be. As well as having his own personal reasons for adventuring, for instance, a lawful good PC may want to rid the world of as many evil monsters as possible, while a chaotic evil type will want to get as much gold for himself and cause as much suffering for others as he can in the process of fulfilling his personal goals.

In some cases, the alignment is chosen for the player, either because the rules say that the PC's class can only have a certain kind of alignment or because the DM wants only certain alignments among the PCs. If the player can choose the PC's alignment, however, he should make sure that it's consistent with the PC's background and nature. In the example of Evan the gently raised magic-user, for instance, it's extremely implausible that he would be of any evil alignment, and even the neutral alignments are unlikely.

Whether the alignment is chosen for or by the player, he should figure it in from the start when he's making up his PC's motivations and goals, right along with the PC's background and personality. Let's continue our example of Lyssa the thief to see how this works. Although it's quite possible that Lyssa could be of an evil alignment, her player has no wish to play an evil character, and therefore opts for neutral good as Lyssa's alignment. After all, Lyssa's thievery was the result of childhood pressures, not some great hatred for law and the good. The DM accepts this rationalization and allows her to have this rather rare choice for a thief's alignment.

Lyssa's motivations in life can now be framed as doing as well as she can for herself without upsetting the natural balance of life by doing undue harm to others. Since she needs to live, and since she's good at lifting material goods that other people carelessly neglect to guard, she sees no reason why she shouldn't steal the surplus, but she would never turn bandit or wantonly kill someone decent just to rob them. With her background, she also refuses to rob poor people, especially women — it just seems beneath her dignity, somehow. On the other hand, if she can make a good pinch from a noble lord who reminds her of her brother, she's ecstatic. She's adventuring because the small town where she spent her apprenticeship has become a bit too small — not enough loot and too many town militia who know her too well. She'll gladly sign up for any job that promises good loot taken from someone whom she can rationalize as "deserving" of being robbed, such as nasty monsters or merchants who've upset the natural balance by hoarding wealth.

Evan, our example magic-user, is some-

what harder to motivate toward the adventuring life with his comfortable background and easygoing nature. He seems like the kind of person who'd be content to stay in his hometown and work his way up slowly in the local magician's guild. On the other hand, his alignment is lawful good. We can motivate him thusly. During his studies, he discovered that there are certain evil beings who pervert his beloved magic for their own unlawful ends, and that these beings and their polluted magic items are lying all over the landscape. In his rage at this discovery, he made a vow that he would devote his life to stamping out such misuses of the magical arts for the good of all mankind. The first step, of course, is getting out of his snug town and finding some of the misusers. Hence, he's on the road.

If Evan and Lyssa end up in the same party, some good role-playing can be the result. She'll be amused at his moral indignation but more than willing to go along with him, because most of these perverters of magic have also amassed large fortunes. Although he'll be exasperated by her lack of understanding on ethical issues, he'll need her street smarts and wily ways if he's going to survive. Sooner or later, though, they're bound to come in conflict, probably when she casually slits the purse of a merchant just because he's "too rich." How these two PCs reconcile this conflict will be up to their players and to the players of the other PCs in the party, but doubtless some kind of accommodation can be worked out — much to everyone's amusement during the game.

### Filling in the details

Once the player has developed her PC's general nature and motivations, she can add those little details of behavior that make a PC a distinct creation. At the beginning of a PC's career, it's unnecessary for the player to have a complete catalogue of the PC's every trait and whim, because such details will develop naturally as the player runs the PC over time and the PC's character deepens with experience. What the player does need, however, is a set of distinctive mannerisms and modes of behavior that identify the PC as an individual, different from the PCs of the other players. These mannerisms are also the foundations upon which the player can gradually develop her PC's complete personality.

Although the PC's background may play a part in his various habits, what really counts here are the rolled character abilities. These abilities represent the traits that the PC was born with — the raw material, as it were, that his society and his upbringing have had to mold into a personality. When working out mannerisms for a PC, therefore, the player should always keep these abilities in mind. A character with a low intelligence score, for instance, will probably talk in a very different way from a PC with a high one.

To begin with, the most important thing a player needs to create for her PC is the PC's way of talking. Since no one can actually

see the PC during the game, the player's voice is her main instrument for creating the illusion of being her PC. If the player has any acting skill (or doesn't mind hamming it up a little), she should try giving the PC a distinctive voice or an accent of some sort. One of the players in my campaign, for example, has a PC who talks in a deep guttural voice with something of a Cockney accent. When the rest of us hear that voice, we know instantly that Indro the thief is speaking, which is a real boon during confusing parts of the game action.

Any player who's too embarrassed to try a different voice can still personalize his PC's speech by paying attention to the pattern of that speech and the words that his PC chooses to use. Everybody has a distinct style to their speech. Some people use a lot of *ah's* and *um's*, for instance, while some speak in a clipped, rapid way. Some people speak precisely, others throw in a lot of slang, and so on. The player should figure out how a person of his PC's character class and intelligence would speak, making this pattern exaggerated at first until the player works into it as a matter of habit. Exaggerations are always easier to remember than subtleties.

Evan the magic-user, for example, might speak very deliberately and slowly, using lots of long words, while Lyssa the thief would be direct and more at home with oaths than polysyllables, unless she was using her courtly wiles to fool somebody. A conversation between them might go something like this:

"Um, it seems most advisable for us to explore the intersection of these tunnels promptly, unless of course we find evidence that the orcs in question have indeed passed—"

"Oh, by every god and his mother, let's get on with it!"

The reader should have no trouble identifying who's speaking each line.

Once the player has invented an individual way of talking for his PC, the player should make every effort to speak in character during the game. Of course, there are times when the game mechanics demand that each player identify his PC instantly by using his name or class, such as during a complex combat, but the player should try to speak *as* the PC rather than *for* the PC whenever possible. Although it's easier to say, "My fighter is going to try to batter down the door," it's a lot more fun for to announce something like, "Out of the way, thief! I'll smash that door to kindling, or my name isn't . . ."

Inventing some distinctive mannerisms is another good way to individualize a PC. One might have the habit of running his hands through his hair whenever he's nervous, for example, or shaking a fist at the heavens whenever he's mad at his gods. Another PC might always waggle one finger at whomever she's speaking to at the moment, and so on. If the player acts out such mannerisms whenever she's speaking in character, the effect is very convincing. It

also gives the player a feeling of physical identity with the PC, which is part of good acting.

Finally, the player can work up a set of actions or a pattern of behavior that the PC always performs in certain circumstances. Every time she enters a tavern, for instance, Lyssa the thief might stop at the door to look the place over before she goes in. Even the magic-user might insist on looking at every single inn and tavern in a new town before he allows the party to choose one in which to stay. Adding this kind of habit to a PC gives the illusion of a character whose conduct is consistent over time as well as in the moment.

Beyond these rather superficial kinds of behavior, the player should also give his PC some opinions about certain important parts of the game world, such as the various races, other character classes, the political structure of his homeland, and his religion. The PC should then always act in a way that's consistent with his opinions. For example, since Lyssa the thief has such a low opinion of noble lords, she would never go out of her way to help a noble lord unless she sees the chance to steal from him. In general, the player should make his PC's opinions rather broad in the beginning to allow them to change with experience or develop refinements as the player gets to know his PC better.

The question of racial prejudices has to be very carefully considered by players when they're making up their PCs. Certain racial dislikes, such as the well-known enmity between elves and dwarves, are built into the character creation process in the AD&D® game (and some other games as well), but this sort of thing has to be handled lightly or it can cause real problems. I once had to ask a player either to change his ways or to leave my group, for instance, because he insisted on running dwarven PCs who were so antagonistic to elven PCs run by other players that they were disrupting the game. His defense was that he was playing in character, but in this case, the role-playing was spoiling the fun, not enhancing it.

Any player whose PC has a strong dislike of either another race or another character class should find ways of role-playing those opinions without causing fights at the gaming table. A dwarf and an elf might engage in sarcastic banter, for instance, while still respecting each other's feelings enough to keep the banter light. Likewise, a magic-user who thinks all fighters are crass butchers should remember that his life may depend on the fighters in his party and keep his opinions to himself as much as possible. Players should always remember that the goal of role-playing is to have fun, not to assert the worst sides of our natures.

Another subject on which the PC should have an opinion is the government or power structure of her part of the game world. In general, PCs of any lawful alignment will have great respect for any well-run government, even if they personally don't agree

with some of the laws, and great contempt for any disorganized or inefficient power structure. Conversely, chaotics will see laws and rulers as nuisances, unless they find one or more of the leaders of the government personally appealing or charismatic. Within these broad guidelines, however, is room for many individual differences. One chaotic PC may find the idea of kingship so attractive that he gives his loyalty unthinkingly to any true-born king, while despising any kind of oligarchy or democratic government, while a lawful PC who grew up in a free city or some other form of representative government may find the idea of kingship distasteful and see it as essentially lawless.

A PC's opinion of the people in power will, of course, have a great effect on his conduct during the game. We can take the example of a group of adventurers who are politely asked to appear before the local lord to give an account of themselves. Whether or not the party shows up at the appointed time or merely leaves town in the middle of the night will depend on the opinions that the party members hold about government in general and lordships in particular.

#### Not for clerics only

There's one final subject that should be of importance to every PC but which is too often left to the clerics — religion. Although most game worlds are polytheistic societies, many gamers — and even some game writers — seem to have very little idea of what being a member of a polytheistic religion means. These misconceptions seem to fall into two main categories: first, that most people in a polytheistic society have little to do with religion, or second, that everyone picks out one favorite god and ignores or even opposes the rest. Running along with these misconceptions is a third: that only clerics would have any kind of active relationship to the gods.

The idea that few people in a polytheistic society are involved with their gods probably has its roots in the attitude toward religion expressed by the great ancient Roman and Greek writers. For most of us, our only acquaintance with polytheistic thought comes from whatever watered-down versions of the classics we read in school. The men who wrote these classics were highly educated members of an upper class who turned away from their religion toward abstract and skeptical philosophies, which taught that the gods were symbolic, abstract, or otherwise removed from everyday life. These men were the exceptions, however, not the rule, in their societies.

Most people in a polytheistic world firmly and completely believe that the gods are real and that they can intervene in human affairs if they choose. These divine beings are seen as powerful beyond conception, but also limited in what they can do by the presence and conflicting needs and demands of other gods. Their worshipers also see them as distinct and different beings. Some gods are whimsical and capricious; some are



reliable and bound by law; some are always beneficent; some are downright hostile and misleading — but all of them are approachable by worshipers who have the right intentions and who know the correct rites. It's also possible to offend a god out of sheer ignorance, in which case the god will often make the offender pay for his folly.

Since these gods are also omnipresent, quite likely to show up just when no one expects them, believers are all very concerned about having a right relationship to the gods. Believers make the effort to attend temple rites, to give sacrifices to the gods, to remember them and to salute them whenever appropriate. No Greek or Roman sailor, for instance, would have dreamt of starting a voyage without an expensive sacrifice to Neptune or Poseidon; such folly would result in shipwreck or some other disaster. By the same token, if having a woman crew member would displease Neptune, then no captain would have allowed one on his ship, because he firmly believed that his life and the lives of his men depended on Neptune's good favor.

Although one god might be particularly important to a certain person, like Neptune to the ship's captain, this importance did not mean that the person worshiped only that god. Since all the gods were real, each was equally important in his or her own sphere of influence. When our sea captain

came home from a voyage, for instance, he would have first thanked Neptune for the safe trip, then prayed to Vesta to give his wife another child while he was home and to Mercury to get him a good price on the goods he'd brought back from his voyage. He never would have argued with or made fun of a soldier for worshiping Mars or a lawyer for worshipping Jupiter; after all, he might need a little help from Mars or Jupiter himself one day.

In a truly polytheistic society, there are no religious wars and certainly none of the "my god is better than your god" taunting that monotheistic religions have given us. To a polytheistic worshiper, even the gods of his enemies are real and worthy of respect. When the Romans conquered the Celts, for instance, they incorporated many Celtic gods into their pantheon and built temples and altars for them in Gaul using the typical temple architecture of their time. An even better example of this kind of tolerance is the great temple in Athens, where the Greeks erected statues and altars to every single god or goddess they had ever heard of. There was even an altar marked "for the unknown god," in case they had left out and offended some divine being.

This polytheistic attitude toward the gods should have a part in every PC's behavior in the game world, not only the clerics. Although the player of a PC can pick out

one or two gods that would be especially important to her character, she should remember to give all the gods their due respect whenever it's appropriate. The player should ask her DM about the pantheon of the world and find out what actions offend or please her most important gods, then try to avoid the one and follow the other. The DM should appoint certain days of the year as religious holidays and hint that the characters had better worship them along with the rest of the populace if they want to keep the favor of their gods.

Likewise, PCs who follow different gods should treat each other's favorites with respect, not engage in banter about which is better or stronger. Even clerics should not only be tolerant of other gods but actively interested in them. To a committed cleric, all divine knowledge is important, and he should be interested in learning how newly heard-of gods relate to his own deity, not in stamping out or bad-mouthing other people's form of worship. Even evil gods have their place in the universe to a polytheistic worshiper. Although a person in ancient India might have shuddered at the very mention of Kali's name, for instance, no one would have thought of closing her temples or forbidding her worship. She was — and still is, to millions of people — as real and holy as the benevolent Krishna.

Even though the player has to give his PC strong opinions to hold about religion as well as other things, he should remember that opinions change over time as people learn from their experiences in life. Beginning PCs, after all, are considered to be young people just starting their adventuring life, which may teach them that their cherished and unthinking opinions are gravely flawed. As the campaign develops, a good role-player considers whether the events his PC has experienced have made any change in his personality. A dwarf who started out hating elves, for instance, might very well change his mind after an elfen PC saved his life. Likewise, the fighter who always trusted blindly in his skill with a sword might learn that thinking before charging into the enemy pays off in the long run.

As the campaign develops, the PCs will develop too. The process is analogous to reading a well-written book. In the first few pages, the reader gets a quickly drawn impression of the main characters, an impression which has to be consistent and recognizable. Yet as the story proceeds, the characters take on depth and come more into focus as the author fills them out and their experiences deepen them. By the time the book is finished, the reader feels that she *knows* these people and that they have a life of their own. A good role-player is in the author's position, first presenting his PC to the gaming group as a distinct personality, then refining that character as play proceeds. Although it may take some effort, by working out a solid, three-dimensional PC, the player adds not only to his own enjoyment, but to that of the group as a whole — a goal well worth working toward.

## The World Gamers Guide

If you live outside the continental United States and Canada, you can be included in the World Gamers Guide by sending your name and full address, plus gaming preferences, to World

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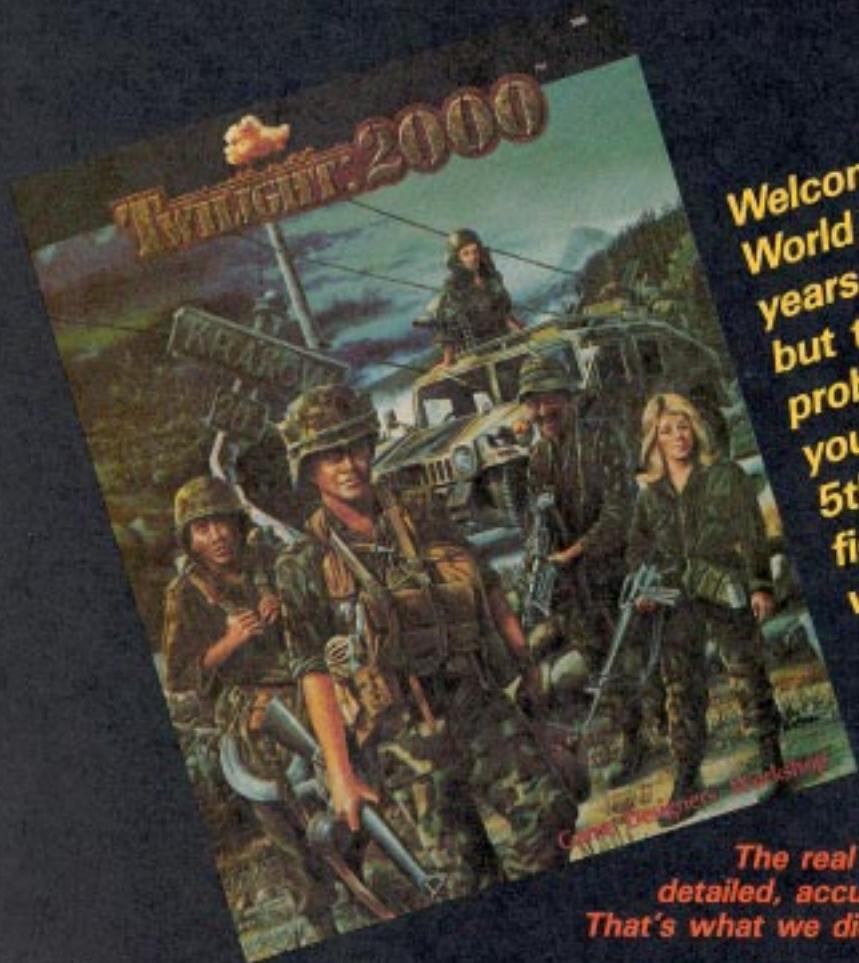
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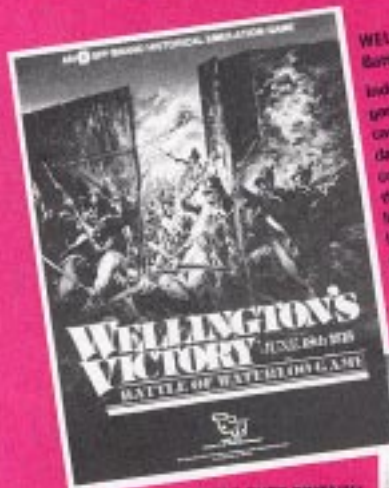
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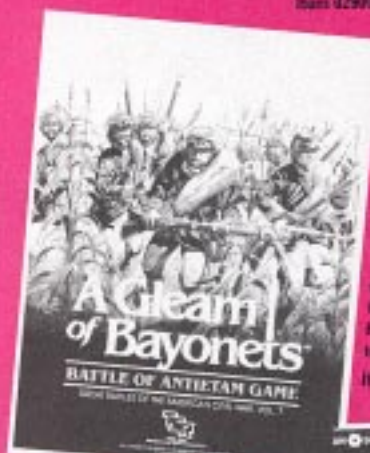


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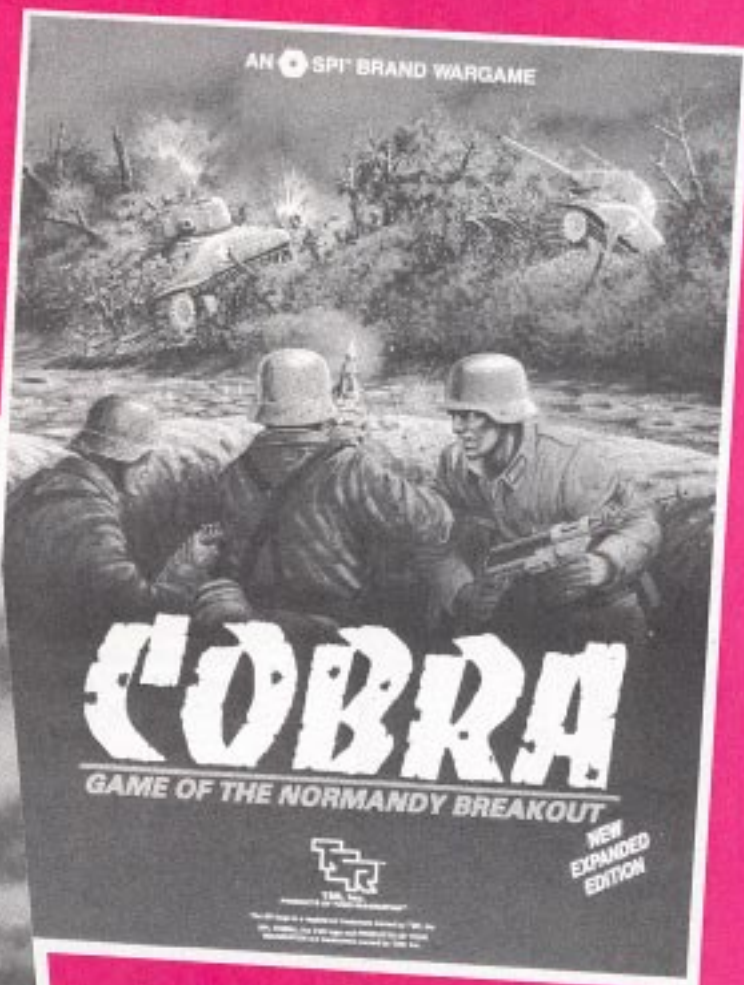
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# The ecology of the GULGUTHRA

by Ed Greenwood

The Gulguthra, or "Dung-Eaters" (the *otyugh* and *neo-otyugh*), are strange and deadly creatures indeed. I asked Elminster about them some time ago, and it happened that upon his next visit the house was — unexpected by us both — full of children; a captive audience to any sage worth his tongue. Elminster did not disappoint.

"Gather round," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "and I'll tell you of Erammon and the Kitchen Midden." He waited until the small whirlwind of visiting nieces and nephews had settled at his feet, and his pipe had drawn into life, green smoke rings rising from it. I had introduced him as "Uncle El," and he was enjoying the role gleefully — although he had muttered an aside to me that it had better only last this one night. I'll set down the tale as he told it — although, of course, without the voices'. (Elminster is a master vocal mimic when he wants to be.)

Erammon was a minor lordling of the eastern Dales — of Harrowdale on the Inner Sea, even then a sleepy farmers' land.

His father, the Lord Oraun, was wise and just, strong in battle, and well respected in the Dales. Erammon was a young prince like any other, reckless and fun-loving and full of himself. He longed for battles and ravening monsters and fell wizards so that he could swing his shining sword and win the day and walk into the taverns in Harrowdale to a hero's welcome (and not the usual hushed, wary silence). One day he asked his swordmaster why Harrowdale was so tranquil (that was not the word he used) and why his father was so respected as a fighter, since Oraun never seemed to fight.

The swordmaster, old Thaeron, replied: "Harrowdale's at peace because it's strong, boy, and it's strong because of your father. I fought with him, in the wars with Thar and with the outcasts of Sembia; he's a man to be feared over blades."

"But why then does he not fight?" Erammon persisted. "Why does he not raid into the elven-woods, or strike down the upstart in Scardale?"

Thaeron fixed a cold eye on the prince and said, "The wise man fights only when he has to. The fewer enemies made, the fewer to come at you all at once."

"But father *has* enemies," said Erammon. "Scardale, and Featherdale — and



everyone's an enemy of Archendale. . . "

"Aye, but they are enemies who fear him more than they hate him. Remember that, boy — when the hate overcomes the fear, you'll see their swords. Besides, your father protects the dales to the south from the fell elves, and the brigands who live in the woods along the river Lis."

"But I've never even seen an elf, or a brigand!" Erammon protested.

"He does a good job, then," replied Thaeron, wrinkling his moustache into what might have been a grin.

"But how do the other lords think these brigands, and the elves, so dangerous — and Harrowdale's force of arms so strong?" the prince demanded.

Thaeron was silent for a moment, and then said, "Those who come threatening your father, or, come uninvited, he does not protect — and they vanish; this the other lords know."

"But I've never seen any fighting, nor any strangers with swords."

"Only brigands threaten with swords, boy," Thaeron answered. "Learn that, if you learn nothing else from me." The swordmaster paused, jerked his head in the direction of the feasting hall, and said, "Come."

"To the hall?" Erammon asked, following hastily.

"This is where all guests come, is it not?" Thaeron replied, waving an arm at the great hall, where servants were scrubbing and dusting and filling lamps with oil for the evening ahead. "Aye," Erammon said, not understanding why the swordmaster had brought him here.

"And then they go to your father's chambers for wine and sweets, do they not?" Thaeron continued.

"Aye," said the prince again — and then his mind leaped ahead. "You mean . . . poison?" At that, Thaeron turned on him a look of such cold disgust that the prince recoiled as though menaced by a dagger-thrust.

"No! You think the other lords have no spies in our kitchens? Nor your father in theirs? No one dares to use poison in the Dales, lest all the other lords retaliate."

"What, then?"

"Some visitors disappear, do they not?" the swordmaster asked, returning to his earlier line of discourse. Erammon nodded. "So, even you have noticed that," the old warrior said sarcastically.

"And how not?" said Erammon in an irritated tone. "Word spreads, among travelers as well as among those who live in Harrowdale."

"Aye, talk travels," Thaeron agreed. "Those who disappear are brigands, or so your father tells the gossips."

"But — no bones? No corpses on the battlements?" Erammon asked, still bewildered. The pair kept walking through the hall, and Thaeron made a gesture toward the far end.

"The kitchens? You mean we *eat* . . . ?" The prince gasped and began to go pale.

Thaeron shook his head. "One so dense will not hold Harrowdale for long, helm-head!" he barked. "What is a corpse but garbage? And where do the kitchen-maids throw the garbage?"

"In the midden," Erammon said, following the swordmaster up to a stout, barred wooden door.

"Have you not wondered why the balcony of your father's audience chamber overlooks the stink of his kitchen midden?" Thaeron asked, unlocking the last chain and hurling its bar aside.

"Oh," Erammon thought for a moment. "Yes . . . yes, so it does. But why?"

Thaeron swung open the door and pointed out into the fetid pit beyond, ringed by a stout palisade of weathered timbers.

"Look out to the base of the wall there . . . look hard, and look for an enemy." Erammon peered into the midden as he had been told, and suddenly realized that he had locked gaze with —

"An eye!" he cried. "An eye — coming up from the ground like a worm!"

Thaeron was already pulling the door closed, but an instant before it slammed shut, Erammon saw the festering garbage ripple, undulating right before his wide eyes as though the refuse itself was alive.

"But — but — what is it, out there?" Erammon fairly screamed.

Thaeron fastened chains and set bars in place for a long time before he turned to face the prince. When he did, his face was blank, his eyes cold and level. "Only your father can tell you that, Erammon," he said. "And if I were you, I'd make sure he was in a good mood when I asked him."

The children were petrified, or thrilled, or asleep when Elminster finished the tale. They were tucked into their beds, and "Uncle El" and I took up mugs of cocoa and sat for a time in silence, enjoying the peace of the evening by the fireside. Then I broke the quiet, opening a discussion I could wait no longer to have.

"That was an otyugh in the midden?" I asked, for the benefit of my hidden tape recorder.

"Was," Elminster replied. "It turns out that Lashan, at least, knew of it — when he overran Harrowdale, his archers emptied flasks of oil and then quiversfull of flaming arrows from that balcony until the whole midden was aflame."

"What about Erammon?"

"He lives, some say, hiding in exile, but has not come to reclaim his seat since Lashan's fall. Certainly his body has not been found. Thaeron died fighting Lashan's armies . . . and of course Oraun died of heart-stop some winters ago." The sage stared into the fire and shrugged. "Interesting times, indeed. But I have more than a tale to answer your query. I have brought with me a certain document, and know more besides. Bend thine ears, then — and be sure that recording instrument you hide so well is working properly."

I flushed a bit, shifted in my seat to hide

my embarrassment, and leaned forward attentively as Elminster began to read. . . .

From a report by Phiraz of the Naturalists to the Commissioner of Public Sewers in the city of Scornubel:

. . . The greatest of the nuisance creatures that will plague your system is the "dungheap" or otyugh, a scavenger of the strangest appearance and habits. The otyugh and its larger cousin, the neo-otyugh, share the form of a pile of festering dung with a toothed maw set into it. An otyugh's body is lumpy, mottled purple, green, and (primarily) brown, and the creature stumps about on three fat legs of similar appearance. From this delightful bulk — which the creature is wont to bury in piles of rubbish and dung — protrude two long<sup>1</sup> ridged tentacles with large, heart-shaped gripping ends, and a flesh-colored and segmented wormlike stalk containing two yellow-purple eyes. A buried otyugh watches its surroundings constantly by means of this stalk, so look for it when you suspect that one of these creatures is near.

An otyugh is never surprised by the approach of a creature; take care that you or your men are not in turn surprised by one lying in wait. Otyughs often happily attack and kill parties of three people or less; they will eat fresh meat as readily as they consume carrion, dung, or offal. Beware this predator!

Otyughs are terrifically strong, able to snatch warriors off their feet, armor and all, and fling them aside as children throw dolls. They are under no circumstances to be fought alone.<sup>2</sup>

The otyugh is most often solitary, but may exist in symbiosis with another (often more dangerous or energetic) creature, such as a doppleganger, ettin, will-o-the-wisp, or even a beholder. For such creatures they serve to guard treasure, which they always conceal at the very bottom of their offal pile, hidden from view beneath the otyugh itself. Encountering an otyugh is bad enough — but if you do see one, be sure to look around for another even more fearsome foe!

Thankfully, otyughs mate only seldom (perhaps once in every seven years or so), traveling by night and subterranean routes to bonepits deep under the earth, where the remains of many ancient creatures lie in vast layers. There they mate in mass gatherings with others of their kind who have made the same journey.<sup>3</sup>

## Notes

1. Elminster provided precise details of a gulguthra's reach (tentacles can grow up to 14 feet in length, fully extended) and senses. An otyugh can communicate telepathically with creatures up to 4" away; the neo-otyugh's telepathic range is 6", and the higher intelligence of the latter creature enables it to communicate on a more sophisticated level with creatures it encounters. Only rarely, however, will a gulguthra initiate such communication, for it has little



to "say" to any other creatures. The eyes of a gulguthra have infravision and ultravision, both out to a range of 9". Both eyes are positioned on the same side of their stalk, but this does not contribute to any lack of alertness because the eyestalk continually swivels, periscope-style, and any creature that comes within range of its visual powers is instantly detected. (The creature does sleep, but only when it is not threatened, and even in this semi-dormant state, its eyestalk and eyes function as though it were awake, for the purpose of detecting approaching creatures.) The eyes function very well in gloom or darkness, but narrow to mere blurred slits in bright sunlight — for which reason the creature lives below ground. The presence of a torch or the casting of a *light* spell can sometimes so disconcert these creatures that they do not attack. Gulguthras cannot smell with any acuity, probably due to the dung and decay that customarily surrounds them, and so they cannot track prey, nor readily discern the true natures of disguised creatures.

2. Phiraz, never having fought a gulguthra and having viewed only one such encounter through the eyes of a sedentary scholar and not a fighting-man, is both vague and brief as to their fighting style and abilities. Elminster has other sources, and their information boils down to this: When it is attacking, an otyugh's tentacles erupt from the concealing pile of offal and slap

victims with force equivalent to 18 (no percentile) strength for purposes of matching the creature's grip or the force of its thrust against the strength of an opponent. A tentacle does 1-8 points of damage on a slap that hits its target, and can also curl about an opponent within range, constricting for 2-4 points of damage per round until the hold is broken. The otyugh can lift a grasped opponent and hurl the victim into a pit or against a wall; the more intelligent neo-otyugh also likes to use a grasped creature as a shield, flailing the victim about to fend off attacks from other adversaries.

Either sort of creature can sense when a grasped opponent is weakened or disabled, and will try to push such prey into reach of its suckerlike, toothed mouth. Due to the creature's favored habitat (proximity to dung and carrion) and its digestive system (wastes are spat back out of its mouth), anyone bitten will suffer both 2-5 points of damage and a 90% likelihood of contracting *typhus* (treat as a parasitic infestation; see pages 13-14 of the DMG). There are no known cases of gulguthra suffering from any such diseases carried in waste and filth themselves, and they are thought to be immune or at least highly resistant to these.

3. Phiraz again is vague; his research had gone so far as to confirm at least the partial truth (periodic journeys far underground) of a legend concerning gulguthra mating — but, having a mistrust of legends, he merely

reported it briefly and without comment. Elminster checked with the sorcerer known as Jovriam of the Mines, and certain *svirfnebli*, and was able to glean the following facts and observations:

Every gulguthra is bisexual. Each produces, once every seven winters, a jellylike "eggmass" and travels underground (in a slow, patient journey) by instinct and memory until it reaches others of its kind. Then it regurgitates the eggmass from a secondary stomach and wanders off, that part of its task done. In some manner not yet understood, another gulguthra can fertilize any eggmass (except its own) by taking it briefly into its mouth, or perhaps some internal organ, and expelling it again.

An eggmass that is fertilized, if left undisturbed, will develop in one week's time into a miniature version of the parent that provided the eggmass. (An otyugh eggmass will only produce another otyugh, and likewise for the neo-otyugh, even though either species can fertilize any eggmass.) This "newborn" creature is driven by an instinctual urge to find warmth and food, and will wander off to seek its own "fortune," returning to its birthplace years later to breed in its turn.

Gulguthra young are smaller (3-5 HD) and weaker (damage of 1-6/1-6/1-4, tentacle strength of 16) than mature specimens, but are otherwise identical to their parents, and grow to maturity within 4 months. ¶

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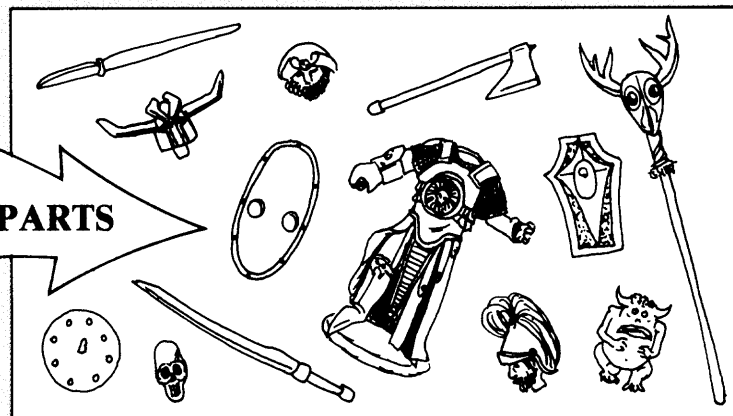
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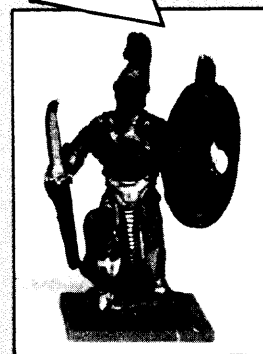
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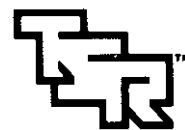
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## The forum

(From page 6)

items obtained, and told me about the adventure. When I looked at the list of money alone, I almost had a heart attack. By the rule of 10 gp = 1 pound, he was carrying about 2 tons of gold and silver. The character was already 2nd level, and he had magic items that I would expect to see possessed only by characters of much higher level. And on and on.

Do DMs "out there" go through the process of totaling the weight being carried by PCs prior to an adventure and every so often during it? Do they use that weight to determine movement rate, and use the movement rate as a means of telling how much time has passed in the dungeon? I've never seen a DM do this yet, but I intend to when I become one.

Another example: When an outdoor encounter occurs, do DMs use the system given in the DMG for determining the distance between the parties, by rolling the appropriate dice and modifying results based on the terrain? Or do you just make an intelligent estimate? All the DMs I've played with have done it the latter way.

I believe in making up a character history, based on race, class, alignment, secondary skills if any, social status, religion, and country or land of origin. I feel that this history is a very useful tool for a DM, when he or she has to decide whether or not a character would have prior knowledge of a particular person, place, or event. I feel it also makes each character an individual. Yet, I have seen many people play all the characters they have exactly alike. The person who DM's for our group now doesn't require a written history on our characters (which I provided anyway), but he does recognize the value of character history and takes it into account.

Overall, it seems that the people who follow all

the "nitty gritty" rules and consider things like character history and world history in their campaigns are in the minority. Although the rules are official, I would like to know if DMs "out there" really take the time to use them. I've tried DMing a few times using everything down to the "nitty gritty" rules, and it can really be a pain. Of course, there are going to be situations where a given rule just doesn't apply, or no rule exists at all, and you must use common sense when you make your decision. Overall, though, I feel that the rules should be followed for the system to work correctly, and to keep the game from degenerating into a "Monty Haul" scenario. So, before I start to DM regularly, I would like to find out: Do people really use the "nitty gritty" rules, or do they just "guesstimate" a lot? I would really like to know!

Joseph M. Dornbier  
CTTI USN  
NRRT Box 1364  
Imperial Beach CA 92032

# Off the shelf

## Literature with a flavor that gamers will savor

Reviewed by John Bunnell

### THE BISHOP'S HEIR

Katherine Kurtz

**Ballantine/Del Rey 0-345-31824-2 \$14.95**

Like Katherine Kurtz's previous books, *The Bishop's Heir* is well written, deviously plotted, and full of memorable characters. But unlike her earlier novels, this new tale of the Deryni is also a disappointment.

If that sounds contradictory, it should. Kurtz is arguably one of the best stylists in contemporary fantasy. Moreover, she has shown the ability to create complex characters who react believably to demanding situations. Very few writers can match Kurtz's overall quality when she is at her best. From any other hand, *The Bishop's Heir* would likely be a major achievement; from hers, however, it is merely an average entry in a very good series.

The problem with the novel definitely does not involve inept prose; by now, Kurtz's narrative voice is firmly attuned to the medieval period in which the Deryni books are set. Readers are easily drawn into the atmosphere of the author's world, seeing the adventure first-hand rather than reading intrusive description. In particular, the Scottish Highland region where much of the action occurs seems perfectly natural, though it contrasts sharply with the less pronounced background of the earlier tales.

The book's plot is equally strong; indeed, it may be Kurtz's least predictable novel to date, complete with two startling twists near the end. The story opens two years after the events of *High Deryni*, during the reign of Kelson Haldane, and mixes a familiar conflict with a new threat. Kelson's old enemy, Archbishop Loris, has escaped from confined exile to renew the long-standing struggle between church doctrine and the practice of Deryni magic. Loris's new allies, also determined to depose Kelson, are members of a rebel faction of Meara, and they possess a tenuous claim to Kelson's own throne.

These Mearan rebels are the key to the novel's weakness. In the past, like a detail-minded DM, Kurtz was always careful to characterize her villains — and the tests to which they put the central characters — as consistently as she drew her protagonists. *The Bishop's Heir*, however, falls too easily into the trap of assuming that the series star is always right; we see very little of the Mearan dissidents, and all the evidence concerning their claim to Gwynedd's throne is of highly dubious validity.

As a result, Kelson and his associates never have to confront the real ethical and

political issues raised by the revolt. Instead, they act far too much like RPG characters intent only on getting from point A to point B and on knocking aside any obstacles set in their path. Nearly all of the emotional stress in the novel is connected with relatively unimportant subplots, with one significant exception involving the book's final scenes.

That makes the reader's decision whether or not to buy *The Bishop's Heir* unusually difficult; even with its flaws, the novel is still a good deal better than the average fantasy novel is. But even devoted Deryni fans may justifiably balk at paying the hardcover price for a book that could have been much better than this one is. Katherine Kurtz is definitely capable of writing intellect-stretching novels. And, while waiting for the paperback edition to appear, the fiscally conservative should also be hoping that the next volume in her new trilogy will be a stimulating book.

### MOONHEART

Charles de Lint

**Ace 0-441-53719-7 \$2.95**

Good reviewers are supposed to avoid the quotable superlative; used too frequently, such adjectives tend to erode professional credibility. But occasionally, a book appears that urges even the most jaded columnist to break out in rampant enthusiasm.

*Moonheart* is one of those books. More

than that, it shows a streak of originality that is missing in far too many current fantasies. The pattern that de Lint weaves from some of the genre's most familiar strands forms a refreshing and distinctive design. Settings and characters from a variety of aeons and cultures are expertly intertwined to form a complex yet coherent plot. Also, each personality is stitched together with unusual realism. The touch of rare genius in *Moonheart* will linger in the imagination long after the last page has been turned.

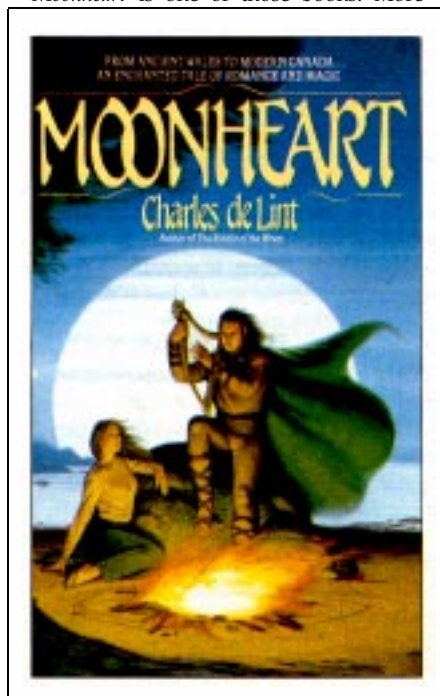
All praise aside, even without rose-colored glasses to dull the critical faculties, *Moonheart* is still an intriguing and well-crafted novel that can be appreciated on several levels.

To begin, labeling the tale a fantasy is almost a case of deceptive marketing; the novel might just as easily have been marketed as a psychic thriller. After all, it begins and ends in Ottawa, Canada, and chronicles the efforts of a mysterious special branch of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that tracks down and documents the existence of people with paranormal powers. Much of the action takes place in and around a haunted house. And there is most definitely an ancient evil lurking in the shadows.

But, while all the elements are there, *Moonheart* only resembles a horror yarn on a superficial level. De Lint's prose is much more cheerful on the whole than that of Stephen King's imitators, and a great deal more character interplay can be found in *Moonheart* than in most efforts in the horror genre.

The reasons for all that interaction — a quite considerable amount, I might add — are that de Lint has assembled a large and exceptionally diverse cast in the novel, and he has taken the time to fill in all the details. RCMP inspector John Tucker may be the most complex character: he begins as a "heavy," but, without sacrificing his personality, he becomes a hero by the tale's end. Folk singer Kieran Foy "changes class" from bard to spellcaster as the novel unfolds, and Thomas Hengwr, a druid whose catalytic presence sets the story's events in motion, sheds interesting light on the theory and practice of neutrality. In de Lint's hands, even mere hired gunmen are more than stereotypes.

All this scarcely scratches the surface of *Moonheart*. Besides being part character study and part occult thriller, the novel has elements of romance, high adventure, and



Gothic mystery. De Lint's background material ranges from Celtic legend to *The Last of the Mohicans* and beyond, yet all the diverse locales and characters are remarkably well integrated, and the novel as a whole manages not to seem overly eclectic.

But if *Moonheart* is difficult to classify, it's also very easy to appreciate. Novels this good are rare indeed, and they are well worth a brief lapse into superlatives.

## BRISINGAMEN

Diana L. Paxson

**Berkley 0-425-07298-3 \$2.75**

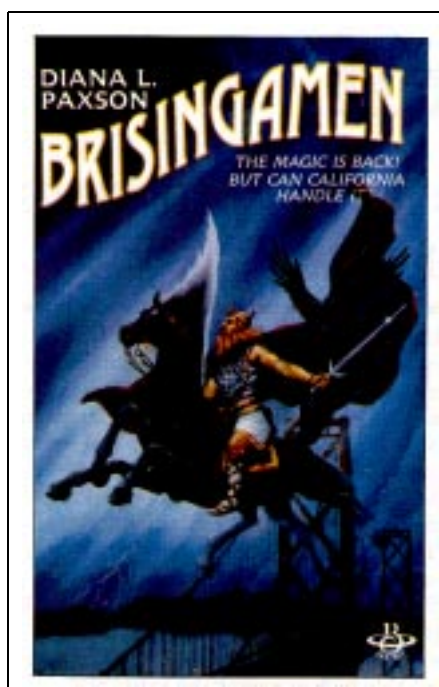
The ingredients are all there: a powerful and mysterious artifact, an ancient conflict between the powers of order and chaos, and long-forgotten gods watching on the fringes of the struggle with advice and support for their human patrons. But *Brisingamen* isn't a tale of an AD&D® game-style quest through medieval lands populated by peasants and monsters. It's the story of what happens when graduate student Karen Ingold comes across the legendary Norse necklace mentioned in the title in modern-day San Francisco.

Paxson, in fact, precisely inverts the usual quest plot formula. Rather than focus her narrative on a search for the necklace, she drops the artifact into Karen's lap at the beginning of the story. As a result, Karen attracts considerable attention from a diverse cast of characters — mortal and otherwise — before the adventure ends. Her struggle to cope with events is both more challenging and less confusing than might be expected: Karen, recovering from a broken romance, is not used to being in the middle of a situation.

There is a quiet sense of reality about *Brisingamen* as well, even during its more exotic moments, that keeps readers closely tied to the story. In part, Paxson's use of real Bay Area settings is responsible. For example, her university campus is the real UC-Berkeley, and several poets from the Greyhaven writers' group turn up halfway through the novel at a coffeehouse. Even more important, however, is her introduction of Vietnam into the fabric of the tale: two major characters are veterans of that conflict, and their responses to its influence directly affect Karen's destiny.

Yet, for all its immediacy, the book manages the unlikely just as effectively. As the novel's events approach the climax, Karen and her newfound friends call on the old Norse gods to manifest themselves in order to set matters right. Their summons succeeds, and in a state that both is and is not possession, Thor, Odin, Heimdall, and Freyja superimpose their personas on the tale's human protagonists. The ensuing combat pits them against Loki, who is already abroad trying to touch off Ragnarok ahead of schedule.

Given its echoes of Vietnam and its heroine's sometimes high-strung personality, *Brisingamen* might easily have been a very dark, somber novel. Happily, it's not;



Paxson has laced it with a light humor that relieves some of the book's psychological stress and lends credibility to its portrayal of academic life.

Different readers will find different ideas and inspirations in the novel. Creative DMs could experiment with Paxson's approach to bringing deities down to earth, or they could develop the necklace itself into an artifact or relic. While feminists will find an intriguing role model in Karen Ingold, prospective students may learn something about Berkeley's campus subculture. But all those who pick up *Brisingamen* will find a thoughtful, well-crafted adventure that blends all the traditional ingredients into a most unusual meal.

## THE FIRE SWORD

Adrienne Martine-Barnes

**Avon 0-380-87718-X \$3.75**

Applied to books, "I couldn't put it down" is usually a compliment. And the comment does apply to *The Fire Sword*, twenty minutes after I finished reading it, the book was still in my hand. The reaction wasn't one of euphoria, though; rather, it was the frustration of losing the key piece to a jigsaw puzzle. There is something perceptibly wrong with the novel, but it's hard to isolate what that something is.

It isn't the basic scenario, which is typical enough: Eleanor Hope, an American student living in England, is abruptly transported into an alternate eleventh-century world in which history is subtly different and Albion has been overrun by Darkness. Almost immediately, she is dispatched by St. Bridget on a quest to restore the Light (which Eleanor conveniently radiates) by finding assorted persons and magical relics and by leading them to the proper battles. While the pattern is hardly original, it has served novelists and DMs alike, well and frequently.

Lack of originality is one of *The Fire Sword*'s problems, but not the deeper one. Martine-Barnes's prose reveals echoes of many other sources, both ancient and modern, few of which are consistent in content, style, or mood. There is humor strongly reminiscent of Elizabeth Scarborough's Argonian tales. The Light and Darkness are forces not entirely unlike their namesakes in *The Dark is Rising* sequence by Susan Cooper. Wroth, Eleanor's wolf friend, is drawn intact from an obscure Elizabeth Goudge novel, without so much as a change of name. And the novel blends Christian, Arthurian, and Celtic legends into a cosmic reality that defies comprehension.

On the surface, the reason *The Fire Sword* lacks substance appears to be that Martine-Barnes hasn't created a believable, three-dimensional protagonist. By turns, Eleanor cracks jokes, complains about her situation to anyone within earshot, leaps into physical combat, or withdraws into herself and tries to renounce her quest. Her actions seem inconsistent, and readers are never sure whether to empathize with her position or to curse her for being chronically indecisive.

However, the novel isn't that simple, and neither is Eleanor's personality, which gradually becomes clearer as her relationships with the other characters are carefully examined. It's hard to tell whether Martine-Barnes is preaching Freudian psychology or railing against it, but it's certain that Eleanor suffers from some sort of identity crisis, if not something more complicated. The underlying themes of *The Fire Sword* revolve partially around sexual identity, but Martine-Barnes is content to raise questions and to pose problems without thinking seriously about the answers.

All of which is likely to leave readers holding the book and shaking their heads. There's a lot to be found in *The Fire Sword*, but at the cover price, it's not really worth finding.

## THE VULCAN ACADEMY MURDERS

Jean Lorrain

**Pocket 0-671-50054-6 \$3.50**

At first glance, it seems odd to discuss a Star Trek novel in the pages of DRAGON® Magazine. Besides being a minor form of literature at best, the apocryphal adventures of Captain Kirk and his crew would seem to have little or nothing to do with the business of rescuing fair maidens and slaying fire-breathing dragons.

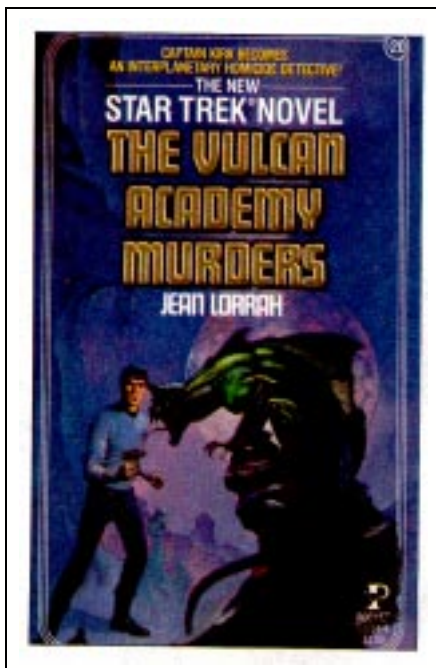
There are, however, two excellent reasons for gamers to pick up Star Trek novels in general and *The Vulcan Academy Murders* in particular. The first, of course, is that Star Trek has spawned an extensive role-playing game. The second is that Jean Lorrain's novel is more than usually reminiscent of an RPG adventure module. As such, it offers useful insights on introducing characters from science-fiction and fantasy literature into role-playing situations, Star Trek or otherwise.



Players of STAR TREK®: The Role-Playing Game will find the book filled with information about Vulcan life and customs that could be adapted into individual campaigns. It is revealed, for example, that Vulcan healers are virtually unknown in Starfleet, but enough is explained about their abilities that some might reasonably be introduced as NPCs. Readers learn about systems for surface travel on civilized worlds, a subject rarely mentioned in other Star Trek materials. Referees can easily expand the Vulcan Science Academy to suit their own needs, since Lorrach confines her narrative almost exclusively to its medical facilities.

More ambitious referees may decide to try to adapt the novel itself into a game scenario, if they can keep the book out of their players' hands. The main thread of Lorrach's plot is suitable for such treatment, as it inserts Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, and Dr. McCoy into a situation where they are essentially outsiders observing a sequence of unexpected events.

These events revolve around an experimental regeneration treatment being developed at the Academy and tested on three subjects: an injured Enterprise crewman; Amanda, Spock's mother; and the wife of the Vulcan medic partly responsible for creating the process. All is going well until a computer malfunction causes the latter woman's death and a similar incident claims the crewman's life. Kirk concludes



that the deaths are not accidental and sets out to catch the murderer, in effect doing some role-playing of his own.

As the premise for an RPG adventure — and as a fair-play whodunit — this works fairly well. As a tale about Kirk, Spock, and McCoy, it's less effective; the reader's conflicting expectations stretch Lorrach's plot in too many directions at once. While Kirk is generally a credible sleuth, he behaves with

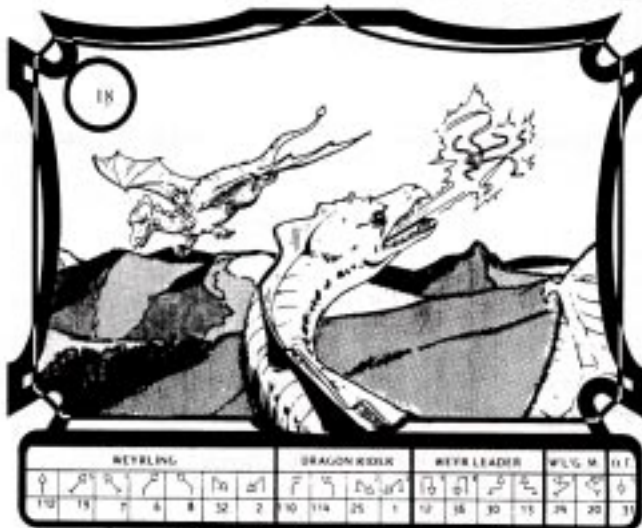
rare stupidity in an incident late in the novel just before finally solving the puzzle. Spock stays in character but out of Kirk's way. Instead, he fences with his father in a subplot inspired by the "Journey to Babel" TV episode. As for McCoy, he is virtually ignored in favor of the treatment's other creator, a human Academy member involved in an elaborate romantic subplot which has little to do with the deaths.

Few Star Trek novels tend to satisfy all readers, and Lorrach's is no exception. Not everyone will accept the portrait of Vulcan behavior and culture that appears in *The Vulcan Academy Murders*. However, the tale is by no means the worst of the growing series of books set in Captain Kirk's universe. For all its weaknesses, this novel is one that Star Trek aficionados are likely to find interesting reading.

## Guidelines

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# The handy art of forgery

An assassin's pen can be mightier than his dagger

by Keith Routley

Ningle strolled casually around the corner of the warehouse, not expecting to run into trouble in the middle of the night — and stopped short as the point of a spear lunged forward to within inches of his stomach.

"Halt!" barked the sergeant of the guard, and Ningle did as he was told. For a second, he considered sidestepping the spear and taking on the sergeant, but then two guardsmen appeared from out of the shadows, hemmed him in, and lifted him up by the arms so that he was eye to eye with the grinning sergeant.

"I don't know your face," said the sergeant. "And I don't know what brings you here, creeping around this warehouse in the darkest part of the night."

"How may I be of assistance?" said Ningle, who was literally in no position to be impertinent.

"We are looking for a murderer by the name of Ningle Saragrin," said the sergeant. "Might you be that person?"

Oh, no! thought Ningle. *There must*

*have been a witness. I should have used a disguise. . . .*

"Of course not, sir," said Ningle. "I am but a poor traveling merchant. I am new to this town, and seem to have lost my way."

"Lost your way, eh?" the sergeant grumbled. "Do you expect us to believe that?"

"Well, if these fine fellows will release my arms," said Ningle, "I can prove that I am who I say." The sergeant motioned to the guardsmen, who dropped Ningle back onto his feet. Ningle opened the pouch at his belt and pulled out his identification papers, which the sergeant snatched from his grasp.

Ningle's pulse quickened as the sergeant spent a few agonizing seconds studying the papers, then muttered, "Jarance Lightman, eh? A merchant, eh? Humph . . ." Then he scowled and thrust the papers back at Ningle. "You are free to go," he said, "but you had best not lurk around here at night any more, or we won't be so friendly next time."

"Thank you, sir," said Ningle as he

backed away from the guardsmen, fixing the sergeant's face in his memory. *I won't be so friendly the next time we meet, either.*

What is more natural than for the masters of deceit in the AD&D® game world to employ forgery? What is more necessary for an assassin disguised as an influential person than to be able to forge that person's writing style and technique if he is being observed by servitors and lackeys?

That barely scratches the surface of what can be done with forgery by assassin player characters and NPCs alike. In lawful societies it is convenient (and money-saving) to forge residence papers, papers of purchase, free passes through city gates, and other important documents. Forgery can enable an assassin to fill his purse twice as full: In a scenario in my campaign, an assassin PC was hired to steal incriminating papers for some corrupt members of the Laborers' Guild before they fell into the hands of the guild leaders. He pilfered them, made

forgeries, and gave the copies to his relieved clients in return for his fee. Then his clients were surprised (to say the least) — and he was paid a second time — when he turned over the original documents to the guild leaders.

Profit aside, a forgery skill can be exceedingly useful when an assassin is in disguise. The disguise could easily be ruined if the assassin had to write something and it didn't look anything like the imitated person's script. And even if the assassin could forge the person's handwriting, he could be found out if the way he held the quill or positioned the paper was different from how the imitated person does it.

The possibilities for the use of forgery are many and varied; ideas can spring from the imaginations of the players and DM, or from the circumstances of an adventure. No matter how it is employed, a system is required to define how it is done and whether the forgery will be successful.

### Basic requirements

Forgery can only be performed by members of the assassin class. It is an unnecessary and uncharacteristic capability for regular thieves, who use physical stealth and dexterity-dependent skills to achieve their ends, not the calculating deception and trickery that is the hallmark of the assassin. Just as thieves are not capable of using disguise, neither should they be able to practice forgery.

A good knowledge of the written language to be forged is necessary; an assassin can only forge documents in the common tongue or in any other single language that he is the most familiar with.

Proper materials are essential for a forgery to be successful. The paper, ink, and writing utensil must be identical to those that were used for the document being copied.

An assassin can begin to study and practice forgery upon attaining third level or as soon as he gains mastery of the written language to be used, whichever comes later. If he does not have fluency in reading and writing the "forgery language" until fourth level or later, then he is treated as third level for determination of the base chance of success in the forgery and thereafter progresses one level in forgery skill for every new assassin level he gains. For example, an assassin who does not acquire fluency in reading and writing the forgery language until 6th level will then acquire 3rd-level forgery skills, and even if he rises to become Grandfather of Assassins he will never have forgery skills better than 12th level.

### Types and techniques

Forgeries are of two types, copies and original forgeries, and come in three degrees of complexity — simple, average, and difficult. A copy is a forgery made to look identical to the document being copied, and this kind of forgery is always done in secret. An original forgery is a new document prepared by imitating a person's writing

style. This work may be done in seclusion, but is also often performed when the assassin (in disguise) is in the presence of others.

Complexity is related to the length of the document being copied or created. A simple forgery is a copy no more than 100 characters in length, an original forgery of no more than 50 characters, and/or a copied signature. A forgery of average complexity is a copy of no more than 300 characters or an original forgery of no more than 150 characters. A difficult forgery is a copy of more than 300 characters or an original forgery of more than 150 characters, or an effort where a certain individual's writing style must be imitated in the presence of people who are familiar with that individual and the way he writes — regardless of how long the document is. Thus, even the "simple" act of imitating someone's signature can be a difficult forgery if it is attempted in front of onlookers who have seen how the imitated person writes.

To have a chance of successfully performing an original forgery, the assassin must have obtained a sample of the person's writing that is at least twice as long as the document to be forged. Thus, an assassin who is in possession of a document 200 characters long could construct an original forgery of up to 100 characters. (To help the DM judge the success of the attempt, the player of the forger should write out exactly what the document is to say.)

It takes time to perform a forgery, and

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# Ral's Checklist to Adventure!

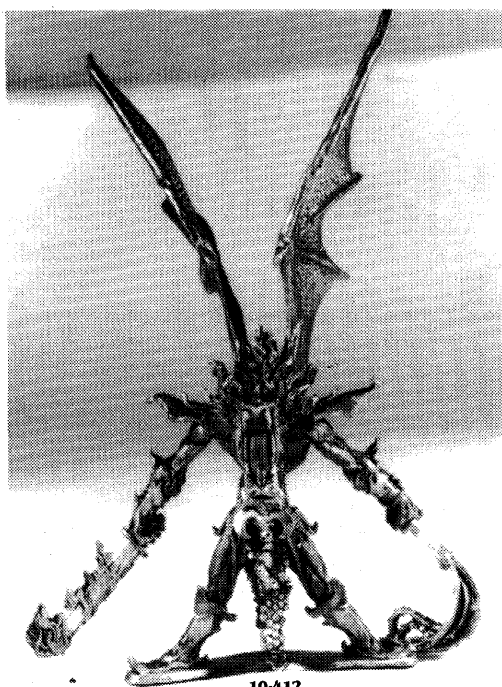
This month Ral's new release checklist features "Ral" Lord of the Balrogs. To celebrate our 10th Anniversary, Ral Partha is releasing four Commemorative Boxed Sets. Each set is inspired by one of the compass points of the globe. In the first quarter - from the North - came the **Bear Chariot of the Iceldands**. This quarter - from the East - we present "**Ral**" Lord of the Balrogs.

Also on our checklist this month you'll find more chaotic types from Tom Meier. If you liked our **Warriors of Chaos** (released last year), these new figures must soon be a part of your collection.

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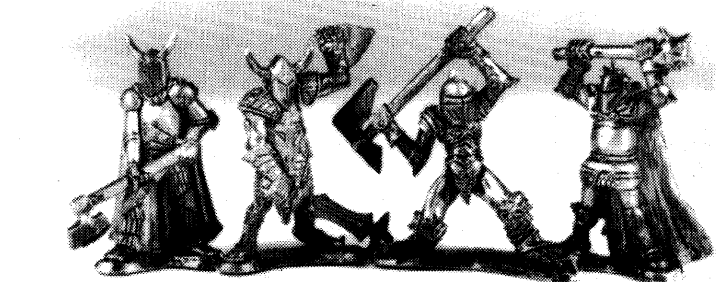


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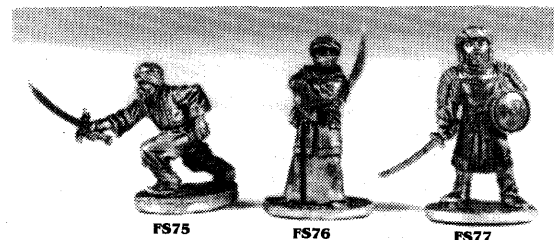
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# Books to games? Perhaps!

## Using literature as the backdrop for adventuring

by Arn Ashleigh Parker

Is there a Dungeon Master or a player who has never wished to have an AD&D® game adventure in a world such as Tolkien's *Middle Earth*, Burroughs's world of *Barsoom*, or the savage *Hyborian* kingdom of Robert Howard's creation? Where is he who has never dreamed of risking the perils and reaping the rewards of such lands? Does a person like that exist among the ranks of fantasy role-playing enthusiasts?

I think not. We are, after all our facades are taken from us, human, and it is the nature of humanity to dream. I have often wished that I would be taken from this small, uninteresting planet of ours to a fantastic world — much as *John Carter* was transported to *Barsoom* in *A Princess of Mars*. Books have always been the center of such dreams — not only to you and me, but to millions upon millions in times past.

Now, among those of us who indulge in fantasy role-playing games, those games have begun to usurp the role of books. Lately I have found that, instead of starting (or even continuing) a book that appears promising, I will work on some aspect of my campaign that needs attention. And, as most everyone who is connected with fantasy role-playing games knows, such avenues of advancement for a game are numerous beyond count. But there are only 24 hours in a day, so after the mundane, necessary tasks of our world have been completed, precious little time remains for enjoyment. If the book ever gets read, it is in bits and pieces over a long period of time.

The effect of reading less is, of course, to place more importance on what is read. This in turn leads to the desire to incorporate what has been read into one's fantasy adventure game. Can this be done? And if so, how much can be taken from the book and placed in the game? The purpose of this article is to explore the possibilities involved in bringing a *book world* into a *game world*, as well as to offer ways in which this can be done.

### Recreating a world

In DRAGON® Magazine issue #31, E. Gary Gygas expressed his opinions on the topic of blending elements of books and games together. [Editor's note: That column was reprinted in the *Best of DRAGON Vol. II* anthology, under the title "Books Are Books, Games Are Games."] While I am an avid fan of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game (I am a Dungeon Master for my own campaign on a regular

basis, employing variants of AD&D® rules only rarely), I must disagree with the bent of Mr. Gygas's article, if not with the actual text. Mr. Gygas states that "a truly excellent novel provides an inversely proportionate amount of good material for a game." This is true within the context of the novel, of course: if the game evolved into a continuous replaying of written events, then the more detail provided by the author, the less the players can role-play (the activity which is the heart of the AD&D game).

But what if the novel is left behind? Could not a novel be used as something that has happened in the distant past and now has been consigned to legend? Many possibilities are found along this train of thought; however, there is also much work required for the DM and the players, should the attempt be made to follow this route. True, it would be easier (though by no means *easy*) to use a prepared setting such as the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ Fantasy Setting published by TSR, Inc., but for those who are fascinated with a certain book and who are willing to provide the time and energy required, the following is a system that will give much enjoyment.

### First: select a book

This is probably the most important decision you, the DM, will have to make, and it may be your most difficult as well. If you are like I am, then there are many fantasy worlds that grab your imagination. How are you to choose between them? It won't be an easy choice. If there is a selection of two or three books from which you are to choose, then you will have to let your gaming habits, rather than your reading habits, guide you in your choice. For instance, the three series of books that I will explore in some detail will show how gaming preferences may guide the selection of a book world. The three series are all very popular, and they have their own idiosyncrasies that will set them apart from one another on key points. They are *Gor*, from the writing of John Norman, *Barsoom*, and *Middle Earth*, but more on that will come later. Most important of all is for the prospective world-building DM to keep a proper perspective on the whole process. You will select a book in time, but more thinking and planning is necessary first.

### Second: obtain a map

As any DM knows, a map is absolutely necessary to a game, since characters (and the world they live in) would have no sense

of purpose if they simply wandered from forest to forest or dungeon to dungeon. Moreover, the map must be in reasonable agreement with the written word of the book you have chosen, or much of the point of making your favorite book world into a usable game world is lost. It is fortunate for the DM that many authors include a general map of their worlds within the text of their respective books. However, this is often not the case, and this can play havoc with the DM's hopes: must he read through the entire book (or worse, series of books) and note all of the many cities, forests, mountain ranges, and other places of which the author wrote in passing?

The DM may not need to go that far if there is no map present in the book, for other books on the market may suit his needs. Many books have such tremendous fan followings that vast tomes have been written about them, and there is often a map included in such a text. Unfortunately, many books loved by those of us who participate in fantasy role-playing games are not viewed by publishers to be popular enough to warrant such additional books. Thus, you may find yourself in the position of having to make a map of a world whose details probably do not come quickly to mind.

Should you find yourself in such a situation, I suggest that you take the easy way out and do not attempt to reproduce the book world exactly as described by the author. Clearly, it would take an enormous amount of time to sift through the author's work, searching for details such as are generally important to fantasy novels and their readers. The time and effort expended to uncover the details of the book world would probably not affect the play of the game in any significant manner. The method that I suggest you use in this situation is the same as that a writer often uses to begin an article: write down the items of interest about the book world that entered your mind the most, then gradually recall details from there. I would do this without reference to the book for about a half-hour, and only then should you seek passages in the book for additional information about things that you cannot quite remember.

Each of the three series of books used as examples in this article represents a different aspect of the mapping issue. The *Gor* books neither have maps in any of them, nor have any auxiliary books been written about them (despite their very large following). The *Barsoom* books do have maps



available, though not in the books themselves. Both *A Guide to Barsoom* by John Flint Roy (Ballantine Books) and the game *John Carter: Warlord of Mars* (Simulations Publications, Inc.) have maps that are of immeasurable value to anyone choosing the *Barsoom* books as the basis for a fantasy world. The *Middle Earth* books not only have maps within their covers but also have had many books written about them that contain maps. *Journeys of Frodo* by Barbara Strachey (Ballantine Books) and *The Atlas of Middle Earth* by Karen Wynn Fonstad (Houghton Mifflin) are two examples. Another interesting book concerning *Middle Earth* is *A Tolkien Bestiary* by David Day (Ballantine Books), though there is only one map.

### Third: change the world

You already have done the basic work for your game: a world has been chosen, and a map of that world sits before you. Unfortunately, the world you have is, while interesting, different from an AD&D game world. This is a problem. Fortunately, the solution is within your very grasp: a pencil! You are the creator of this new world; thus, all the powers of creation are yours to wield. You must now craft a story, and in it, you must tell the tale of how the world changed.

This is the point where purists will diverge from pragmatists. To play the AD&D game in your favorite book world, you must be willing to make sacrifices: things cannot

remain the same if the AD&D game system is to be played as it was meant to be. You will find it easier to alter the author's world if you recall that change is the essential nature of all things. In any event, once you decide to alter the world, you will probably ask yourself what changes you should make.

If a city existed in the book world, does it exist at present in your game world? If so, *how* does it exist? Is it poor? Has it developed, stagnated, or regressed? Has some strange happening changed it from the city it once was? These value judgments — in general terms, not detailed game terms — must be made for every important place that exists in your world. Since it seems that some role-players are frustrated writers (and the DM may be the most frustrated of all), ideas on how to transform your world should spring quickly to mind.

### Fourth: redraw the map

You have now created the framework of your world. What remains to be done is to draw out the new map. Noting all the changes that have happened to your world (by your own hand in the previous step), make a new map on a hex sheet, with one hex equal to five miles. This is highly suitable for gaming purposes. If your world is large, you will probably wish to create a larger-scale map as well: one hex equal to 50 miles might be very useful, for instance.

At this point, you will want to place the details of your world that were too unim-

portant to mention in your creation story: monster lairs, ancient shrines, special terrains (scrub, canyons, marshes, etc.), and population centers. When this lengthy step is finished, you will be ready to play, but will your players be?

### Fifth: inform your players

Your world is now complete, and, after preparing some adventures, you are ready to have your players begin to explore the wild, untamed lands of this newly created environment. There is one difficulty, however: your players have no idea what is happening in your world or what your world is all about. Those players who have read the book(s) from which your world has sprung will have a degree of familiarity with your world, but their misconceptions might prove worse than the ignorance of other players. To remedy this problem, you must supply the players with a general fact sheet that enumerates the major happenings that have occurred since the conclusion of the book(s) upon which your world is based. They should then be ready to discover what awaits their characters in the world that you have devised.

### Example one: *Gor*

*Gor* is a world without magic, as created by author John Norman. Technology, though present in the *Sardar*, is not for general use on *Gor*, since the *Priest Kings* do not allow its use. Thus, steel and gold

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rule *Gor*, and great cities wage war by primitive means. There are no dwarves, elves, orcs, dragons, or many other creatures of the AD&D game system on *Gor*, at least as far as we know. There are, however, many terrifying beasts such as larls, sleens, and tarns.

To alter *Gor* into a magical world with deities and basilisks is not an easy task. Also, we must be careful not to go too far in our changes, or the flavor of the world will be lost. A person who chooses *Gor* for his game world is obviously someone who likes fighting with non-magical abilities, so the changes must be slight as far as magic is concerned. But, at the same time, it must be possible for a player character to be a magic-user, an illusionist, a druid, a cleric (called an *initiate* on *Gor*), or a member of a sub-class that uses spells.

I suggest the following scenario. Let us first interpret the evil *Kurii* in our own manner, since John Norman has not supplied enough details about them. The *Kurii* are not only creatures that have developed great technology, but they also worship a great evil spirit that has been created by the *Kurii*'s own dark souls. This spirit surrounds and permeates the *Kurii*'s *Steel Worlds*. Since all attempts to improve their lot have failed, the *Kurii* have prayed all the more fervently to the evil spirit, hoping that it will aid them in their attempt to rule *Gor*.

In time, a *scientist-Kur* creates a machine that he believes can materialize the malevo-

lent spirit. He chooses himself as the receptacle for the experiment, and (unknown to the other *Kurii*) he succeeds in placing the spirit within his corporeal being. Almost immediately, he feels the power within him, and he succeeds in keeping it under control. He obtains a vessel and goes to *Gor*. After using his power to land on *Gor*, he disembarks from his ship and attacks the city *Ar* with black energy blasts that destroy half of the city before the *Priest Kings* can intervene. As the *Priest Kings* use their power on the renegade *Kur*, the scientist loses control of the spirit. In that moment, the spirit destroys the physical body that it inhabits, and the body explodes.

From the *Kur*'s body, hordes of creatures stream forth: orcs, dragons, drow, and many others. Also, a few good creatures stream from the form, probably due to the influence of the *Priest Kings*' powers when they attacked the *Kur*.

*Ar* becomes a ruin with many evil creatures in it. Many creatures flee to the *Voltai range* and other places. In all, *Goreans* are stunned, as are both the *Priest Kings* and the *Kurii*. Also, the spirit seems to have disappeared into the fabric of *Gor*. From this, magic is created; though this explanation of magic is different from that offered in the AD&D system, it will have to do. This would be an interesting world.

Clearly, however, this is not going to be a pure AD&D game campaign: there is too much that differs from a "legal" world. But

that is fine for the DM who desires such a world. If he wanted the *WORLD OF GREYHAWK* Fantasy Setting, he would have chosen it.

## Example two: *Barsoom*


The world of Mars as envisioned by Edgar Rice Burroughs is a fantastic planet with incredible alien races. This is a world that is far more suited to fantasy role-playing games than the world of *Gor*. Nevertheless, it has some of the problems that *Gor* has: for instance, a lack of magic and deities. The setting provided by Edgar Rice Burroughs, however, is better for our world-building purposes. *Barsoom* is shrouded in mystery, even though the whole surface has been mapped out by the *Red Men*. Rumors of magic circulate throughout the *Barsoom* novels, though it is always portrayed as voodoo, with the exception of John Carter's ability of teleportation.

On *Barsoom*, unlike *Gor*, technology is not limited. For example, radium pistols and air ships exist, and they are used regularly. This is one of the most attractive features of the world to the DM. Unfortunately, such things are antithesis to the AD&D game system. There are two ways to deal with this situation: 1) eliminate the technology, or 2) make it difficult for player characters to obtain these technological items. The first solution is probably out of the question for most Burroughs fans, and the second requires the skill of a good Dungeon Master.

The following scenario is an example of what can occur on *Barsoom*. An ancient being of enormous power (understood as a *deity*) is awakened by a foolish man or beast or nation. This power, then, awakens others of its kind. These "gods" were old when *Barsoom*'s oceans yet thrived, and they chose to sleep in the bosom of *Barsoom* at a time when the planet was a thing of beauty, for it was they who made the world beautiful. When awakened, these gods see what has happened to the world they love.

In an attempt to discover what caused the decay of *Barsoom*'s beauty, these powers seek the races of old — races that were to have been the caretakers of *Barsoom* while the gods slept. Elves (guardians of the woodlands), dwarves (protectors of the land below), and gnomes (watchers of the fair hills and plains) — these races were the assigned caretakers of *Barsoom*. Needless to say, the gods find few of these caretakers still thriving. Apparently, these races chose to hide themselves long ago, and, for some reason, the secret of how to awaken the gods became lost after a few generations.

After having learned all these details, the gods then get together to determine their plan of action. They choose to attempt to bring back the natural beauty of *Barsoom* by performing miracles (i.e., granting cleric spells) for their devotees and by revealing the lost secrets of magic (i.e., magic-user and illusionist spells). As for the many monsters listed in the AD&D books . . . well, the DM is free to populate *Barsoom*



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with those creatures he feels would add more local color to the environment.

### Example three: *Middle Earth*

Over half a decade ago, I followed the process described in this article to remake J.R.R. Tolkien's *Middle Earth* according to my own image of it. The process has been neither a short one nor an easy one. However, the great advantages I have found in making use of Tolkien's work have been well worth the time and labor required. I have been able to call upon a world so grand in scope that it has the possibility to encompass everything that I could conceive.

One of the most important reasons that I selected *Middle Earth* as the world of my

game campaigns was the vast culture provided by Tolkien. Though Mr. Gygas says that "a truly excellent novel provides an inversely proportionate amount of good material for a game," I have found that this is true only for games that try to rework the author's storyline. The *Lord of the Rings* trilogy has provided my players and me with at least a proportionate amount of good, solid fun.

To illustrate specifically my point, the following list enumerates the events that have transpired in my world. Note that the player characters had no part in the events until item 9 and that the game was in transition (normal *Middle Earth* changing to standard AD&D rules) during items 8 to 10.

### Event Explanation

- 1 *Annuminus* was rebuilt (*early fourth age FO*).
- 2 Travelers from the far east emerged, slaying the savages in *Rhun* and claiming the land as their own (*early FO*).
- 3 *Khazad-dum* was reclaimed (*middle FO*).
- 4 Dwarves of the East (a once-lost kindred) journey to west *Middle Earth* and take the *Ered Mithrin* as theirs, freeing it of many Cold Drakes (*late FO*).
- 5 *Osgiliath* is rebuilt and renamed the seat of *Gondor's* power (*late FO*).
- 6 The occurrence of the Great Disaster: the second strife of music between *Eru* and other *Ainur*. The multiverse is created, and *Middle Earth* is torn and shook by the shock (*Enedwaith* is sunk, a new sea — *Valaer* — is created east of *Rhun*, and many cities are toppled) — named the beginning of the fifth age (*FtA*).
- 7 Much rebuilding is done (*early to middle FtA*).
- 8 The Temples of Shadow are found: otherworldly prisons for monsters created by old and new *Ainur* whose essences have been corrupted. These temples are used by the *Valar* to build adventures of great power in an arena-like series of trials. A king of *Middle Earth* is foretold (*early FtA*).
- 9 Adventurers enter the Temples of Shadow in search of their destinies (*all FtA*).
- 10 The Temples of Shadow "explode" during the god wars. The result is the release of horrible monsters into *Middle Earth*. *Annuminus* and *Osgiliath* are destroyed. A king of *Middle Earth* is named, and he is imbued with many powers by the gods (*beginning of the sixth age*).

Purists would, no doubt, find my interpretation of *Middle Earth's* fourth, fifth, and sixth ages to be unsatisfactory at best, but they can make their own versions of *Middle Earth's* future. Mine works fine for my players, their characters, and myself, as I am sure your choice of a world will work fine for you. After all, that is what counts.

### Editor's note

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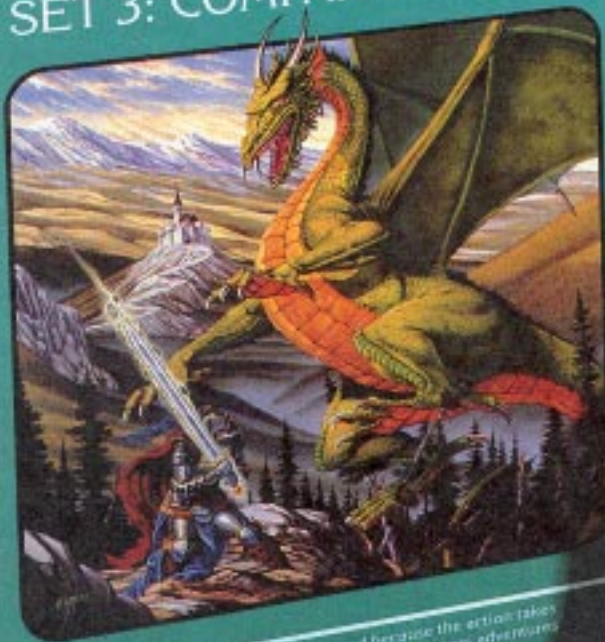
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# PBM update: news & views

## One man's perspective on the play-by-mail industry

by Mike Gray

It's been almost a year since my last article about play-by-mail games appeared, and lots of things have happened in the industry since then. The biggest news is that the play-by-mail industry is finally pulling together to form an association. As of this writing (January 1985), there are more than two dozen charter members. So far the association has run a group advertisement in *Analog* magazine in an attempt to generate new interest in the hobby, offering a package of catalogs, rules, flyers, and magazines prepared by the member companies. To get the package, send \$2.00 to Play by Mail Association, 8149 E. Thomas Rd., Scottsdale AZ 85251. You can also become a Consumer Member of the association by sending in a check for \$10.00 to the same address. Consumer Members receive a one-year subscription to the Association Newsletter and voting privileges in yearly balloting for best PBM game, with the award to be given out at the Origins convention. [Editor's note: See the nomination ballot for the Origins awards, printed elsewhere in this issue.]

The association has made some plans already — for instance, a reimbursement program has been proposed to “rescue” the customers of a PBM company that goes out of business. Elections are being held among the members to choose a board of directors, a membership committee, and an awards committee. Yours truly was chosen to count the ballots, and I am also a nominee for membership on the awards committee. These are indeed exciting times!

*Gaming Universal*, a PBM magazine with a lot of real potential, has ceased publication after three issues. According to publisher Bob McLain, all subscribers will receive a \$10 gift certificate from Advent Games and a free copy of *Flagship*, a PBM magazine published in Great Britain that is, in effect, absorbing and replacing *Gaming Universal*. [Another editor's note: *Flagship* is available in the U.S. through Flying Buffalo, Box 1467, Scottsdale AZ 85252.] All of the advertisers who had lined up space in *Gaming Universal* will receive comparable space in *Flagship*. McLain will become an editor for *Flagship* and will be a regular contributor of PBM articles for the magazines *Game News* and *Space Gamer*.

Now, on to the games. All five of the games described and reviewed in this article have at least one thing in common: they are all run by responsible, efficient, professional companies. [Yet another editor's note: One

of the games Mike reviewed is now being run by a different company — but the above statement still stands.] Although the games differ in nature and complexity, the results sheets are clear and legible and the turns are processed quickly. I have found all of the moderators to be very interested in new ideas and quick to answer questions and give help and advice. I liked all of these games (some more than others, naturally) for different reasons — even though I got hammered in three out of the five.

### BATTLE OF THE GODS

Integral Games

P.O. Box 13562

Arlington TX 76013

Game format: 100% computer moderated

Turn cycle: fast game, every 10 days;  
slow game, every 14 days

Game length: 15-25 turns

No. of players: 10

Initial cost: rules \$1.50, set-up \$3.50

Turn cost: \$3.50

*Battle of the Gods* is a very easy game in which the players become powerful gods who shape a universe to their own designs. The object of the game is to have the most victory points on a randomly determined last turn. Victory points are earned for creating worlds, creating life, converting a population to your “religion,” destroying life, and teaching.

Each player must first create a god-character by distributing seven points among four goals: creation, destruction, conversion, and teaching. (No goal can have a point value higher than 5.) A base number of victory points is awarded for fulfillment of any of the goals, and each player's goal-points act as multipliers for any victory points earned in that category. For example, a player who has chosen goal numbers of 4 for creation, 0 for destruction, 2 for conversion, and 1 for teaching will receive 4 times the base number of victory points for any act of creation, no points for any act of destruction, double value for conversion, and the base value of any points earned for teaching.

The universe, laid out on a 20-by-20 grid, starts as a collection of about 100 chunks of matter randomly scattered around. From this point on, players spend up to 100 power points each turn in an attempt to achieve their chosen goals. These power points are spent on one or more commands each turn; each command has a small basic cost, but can be reinforced by

putting more power into it. When one of your commands opposes or conflicts with a command from another player, the one with the most power behind his command is the one who wins out. The commands include protect, destroy matter, teach, crusade, send prophet, bless, create life, and create world, to name a few. The “protect” command is a defensive maneuver, keeping you safe from conflict from another player unless he uses enough reinforcement in his command to break through your protection.

Since all moves are secret and simultaneous, you have no way of finding out what anyone else is going to do on a turn. You have to decide how to use your power on each turn — will you spread it thin and try a lot of actions, or will you concentrate on a few actions, using a lot of reinforcement on each one?

The rulebook has a color cover and is professionally written and designed — a remarkable effort for a company's first game, which this is. Critically speaking, the game is relatively simple, and you can't do a whole lot for the \$3.50 turn fee. Half of the players in my game dropped out. It is not the most exciting PBM game I've ever played — but it's far from the worst. For a beginning PBM player, the game is easy to understand and very clearly explained. I like the fresh, new ideas in this game very much — I've never played anything else like it. Down the road, I can see these ideas expanded into a more complex and very interesting game.

### WORLD OF VELGOR

(THE MELDING)

Kelstar Enterprises

P.O. Box 639

Zephyr Hills FL 34283

[Positively the last editor's note: Shortly before this article was prepared for publication, we received word that the World of Velgor game had been sold and renamed. Under the title of *The Melding*, the game is now being run by Kelstar Enterprises, at the address given above. Anyone who's interested in getting involved in it should write to Kelstar for information, because the game has been modified in some respects. Mike Gray's assessment of World of Velgor is printed just the way he wrote it, on the assumption that most of what he has to say still applies to the game in its new form.]

This is a medieval fantasy game with a healthy dose of role-playing thrown in.



Each of the 40 players starts with possession of one piece of the Rod of Wizardry. This piece confers minimal powers on the owner — powers which increase as you obtain more pieces of the Rod. One of the objects of the game is to collect and assemble the 40 parts of the Rod, which you can accomplish by allying with or conquering the other players; either an individual or an alliance can win the game. But it's not quite that simple. . . .

As a neutral "rodbearer," you start with a castle, three apprentices, and several hundred troops which can be divided into three movable groups (divisions). The first thing you must decide is whether you will lean toward the good god Velgor or the evil god Vexous. By doing good deeds, you increase your "allegiance factor" on the way to attaining good Arch-lord status. Or, by doing evil deeds, you move your allegiance factor closer to Black Master status. As soon as you achieve one status or the other, you are no longer neutral and the other players will know which god you serve. It's important to know who your friends and enemies are, because you get a big boost in your experience rating for doing away with the enemy. In addition to putting the pieces of the Rod together, your goal is to either enslave Vexous or fully restore the evil god to power — and nobody tells you how to do any of this; you have to figure these things out for yourself.

The next thing you must decide is what profession to take up — General, Wizard, High Priest, or Expert. Generals are best at fighting, but cannot cast magic spells. Wizards are best at casting spells, but not very good at fighting. High Priests have some battle advantages and some magical ability. Experts (EXceptional PERSONality and Training) can find hidden passages in dungeons and are very good at recruiting new troops, but cannot cast spells and aren't too good at fighting. On each turn, your experience rating will increase based on your actions. As your experience reaches new levels, you get new spells, better combat abilities, better recruitment bonuses, and so forth.

Each turn you move your three divisions around the map by writing down the coordinates of the spaces you want to move through. As you travel, you will encounter other divisions of troops and other players' castles as well as neutral groups of all kinds of creatures — elves, dwarves, giants, centaurs, and dragons, for instance. You must decide to attack or parlay with the strangers, who will then decide whether to attack you or join up with you.

The world map is very sketchy at the start of the game; you fill it in for yourself as you travel and learn more about the surroundings. (It is rumored that there are even some uncharted islands off the coast somewhere.) You will soon find the locations of dungeons, cities, ports, camps, and other features.


The rules come in a cardboard tube, like a scroll — a very nice touch. Unfortunately,

the rules are not very well organized, and they are purposely skimpy in some areas. There are even some rules that aren't true, but you'll have to find those out for yourself. . . . Okay, I'll give you one example: You are told that city escorts will answer yes/no questions in return for gold. Well, it turns out that they will give you a lot more than a yes or no if you pay them enough gold. (I wish I had found that out before I got wiped out!)

There's a lot more to this game than meets the eye. For example, you can buy magic items in the cities, or discover them in the dungeons. You can collect "ortron" (magical rocks!), bring it back to your castle, and build your own magic items. You can choose different tactics for each battle you get involved in. There are a lot of choices to be made, and I can tell you from personal experience that the more time you devote to trying new things and talking to the other players, the better off you will be.

So why did I get wiped out? Well, I was in a square with another player who heard from someone else that I was going to attack him. Instead of calling me or writing to me, the player attacked me with his superior force — and the group he attacked contained my leader and my part of the Rod. Being a good soul on the road to Archlordship, I had chosen to stand and defend in the "unlikely" event that I was attacked, without bothering to write or call my adversary — and that turned out to be a very bad


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Identity: Sheena Grey      Age: 20  
Side: Evil      Level: 1

**Powers:**

1. Heightened Expertise: Martial arts, +4 to hit
2. Special Weapon: Power-chucks, HTH +3 to hit, +1d6 damage, carries a Power Blast
3. Heightened Defense: -4 to be hit

**Other Weaponry:**

Katana, HTH +2 to hit, +1d6 damage  
6 Shuriken, HTH +3 to hit, +1 damage, with a 13 inch throwing range.

**Weight:** 130 lbs.  
**Strength:** 16  
**Endurance:** 13  
**Agility:** 13  
**Intelligence:** 12  
**Charisma:** 15  
**Dam. Mod.:** +1  
**Accuracy:** +1  
**Hit Points:** 9  
**Heal:** 9  
**Car. Cap.:** 351  
**Basic HTH:** 1d6  
**Power:** 54  
**Movement:** 42"  
**Det. Hidden:** 10%  
**Det. Danger:** 14%  
**Invent. Pts.:** 1.2  
**Inventing:** 36%

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move! If I had used a little more diplomacy, I might still be playing.

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## ILLUMINATI

### Adventure Systems

P.O. Box 22305

Houston TX 77227

Game format: 100% computer moderated

Turn cycle: weekly or bimonthly

Game length: varies

No. of players: 24

Initial cost: rulebook, set-up, and  
3 turns for \$15

Turn cost: \$4.00

This game is largely based on the excellent *Illuminati* card game published by Steve Jackson Games. As a great fan of the card game, I found the PBM game to be a lot of fun (as long as the other players left me alone).

You start out with an alliance of groups, and your goal is to build up your power until you control 32 (out of 256) groups before anyone else does. The available groups range from the ordinary (Russia, Mafia, CIA, PLO) to the extraordinary (Boy Sprouts, Rocky Horribles, Society of Nannies and Butlers, United Package Smashers). Each group is defined by a string of alignments, attributes, and abilities which you can raise and lower during the game to suit your devious purposes.

All of the defining indices affect the relative success of the various orders that you can give your groups on each turn. Orders involve the allocation of men and cash by each group that you control. The more alike two groups are, the better the chances that one group will be able to take control of the other. The building of a power structure can be a lot of fun.

Since the object is to control 32 groups, and since your fair share of available groups is only 10, you'll have to wheel, deal, and steal a good number of groups from other players. When I started losing groups and had a streak of failures at getting new groups, I knew I was in trouble. So I wrote a note to the gamemaster and he promptly sent me a 3-page reply with just the advice I needed.

Before you decide to try to take control of a new group, you may first want to *probe* it. A successful probe will tell you the target group's alignments and attributes. With this information, you can determine which of your groups should try the takeover. Then you will want to *infiltrate* the target with some of your group's agents and *subvert* some of its cadre and leaders to your cause. If this is successful, you can then send agents and spend money to take *control* of the target and add it into your own power structure.

What this game becomes is a very competitive race to build up your offensive and defensive powers. Each turn you have to

decide whether to build up your groups or to go on the offensive. You have to do both, eventually, or you may lose all that you have built up.

The rulebook is professionally typeset and very comprehensive, and includes an invaluable example of several sequential turns and their results. The rules are not trivial, and it will take several readings to digest all of the text. In some cases, essential rules are imbedded in the Questions & Answers section. I overlooked an important formula and was spending too much money on my orders. The appropriate rule is in the Q & A section as a tip: "The square root of the excess cash is rounded up to the next even number and added to the number of fully supported agents."

It is not readily apparent that diplomacy is useful in this game, even though there is a menu of dozens of messages that can be sent to other players. But once you start losing your groups to a powerful adversary, you can see how a group of weak players can team up against the strongest player by attacking a lot of that player's groups at the same time. Conspiracy is what *Illuminati* is all about!

The game is very interesting, but it can also be quite frustrating when things aren't going your way. As with most games, practice makes perfect. And players who have played this game before are going to have a definite advantage just because they will already be familiar with many of the groups, while a new player will have to probe to find out about them.

*Illuminati* is a game of medium complexity. For this reason, it might not be the best first effort for someone new to PBM games. If you are a new PBM gamer, read through the rulebook before you sign up to play. If you are an experienced PBM gamer, you will find *Illuminati* to be an enjoyable and rewarding challenge.

## CAPITOL

### Adventures by Mail

P.O. Box 436

Cohoes NY 12047

Game format: 100% computer moderated

Turn cycle: every 10 days

Game length: varies

No. of players: 48 to 96

Initial cost: \$2.50 for rulebook

Turn cost: \$2.50 for 60 orders,  
\$1 extra for 30 more

This game is run by the same company that produces the grand role-playing PBM game *Beyond the Stellar Empire* and the non-diplomatic PBM game of robotic warfare, *Warboid World*. And they have recently introduced a new fantasy role-playing PBM game called *Crasimoff's World*.

*Capitol* has many features that set it apart from other games. In particular, victory is achieved by teams, not individuals. Players are grouped into twelve identical-sized teams of 4-8 people each, and these teams vie for control of the galaxy's resources. Individual players are

grouped into teams according to where they live, making it relatively easy for players to contact each other or actually get together with each other to plan strategies. Thus, *Capitol* makes a great club game, in which you can work closely with your friends and neighbors without having any major advantage over other teams.

The object of the game is to be a member of the race that controls the highest number of worlds when the game ends. The game ends when three races have no worlds left, or when the race with the most worlds has at least twice the number of worlds as the second most powerful race.

The galaxy is a 98-by-98 grid with hundreds of worlds scattered around it. Once a world is controlled, it starts producing resources. These resources can then be used as bases to build ships, probes, and production goods. Some worlds produce more resources than others and thus become more valuable.

Ship building is an individualized activity. A ship consists of weapons, shields, and cargo bays. Each race has its own formula for how much each of these things costs in resources. On your turn sheet, there is a list of five ship types that you can build, how fast they are, how often they have to be refueled, how many resources it takes to build them, and what size base is necessary to build each ship. You also get a list of all the worlds you control, any worlds you lost control of in the previous turn, and all the worlds your ships are/were at before and after movement.

Designing ships, transporting resources around the galaxy, building bases, conquering new worlds, and exploring are all part of the opening game. Then you start running into the enemy, which is when the fun really begins. You have to start thinking defensively by building bases and ships with more shields, and when you meet an alien race you have to decide whether to try to ally with them or attack them.

Movement is handled by a clever system which uses transparent overlays (sent to you in your first package), so you don't have to fiddle with x-y coordinates. You just lay the transparency over your local galactic map and specify where you want to go by using a directional code on the overlay.

The emperor of each race (team) is the player who controls the largest base owned by that race. Each emperor gets a special printout which contains information on how many words each race controls; this information should be passed along to other members of the same team. Emperors also have special powers that enable them to steal worlds from other players.

Later in the game, the advanced stage rules kick in. Stargates can be built to connect any two worlds, and the minimum ship size is increased.

I had a great team, and our emperor was very efficient. However, my territory bordered on two powerful enemies that I was not strong enough to attack by myself. So I was asked to make and keep alliances with

the enemy (in the best interests of our race). At that point, I lost interest and asked that another team member take over my position. I think my biggest mistake was in not expanding and exploring more in the beginning. I spent too much time hauling resources and building up my bases. Instead, I should have been out conquering new worlds to build up my resource supply for later in the game.

*Capitol* is a fun and very different experience. The rules are clear and easily understood, the overlays are a nice touch, and the teamwork aspect will prepare a novice for the individual diplomacy that must be developed in most other PBM games.

## QUEST OF THE GREAT JEWELS

Zorph Enterprises

3646 Gibsonia Road

Gibsonia PA 15044

Game format: 100% computer-moderated

Turn cycle: every three weeks

Game length: varies

No. of players: 12

Initial cost: rulebook, set-up, and 2 turns for \$10

Turn cost: \$2.50 (through turn 10), \$3.00 (turns 11-20), etc.

*Quest of the Great Jewels* is one of my favorite play-by-mail games. I've just started playing my third game. I enjoy building up my empire, sending great armies into battle, and capturing special magic items which give me unique advantages over the other players.

The object of the game has varied a bit as the game has evolved. In my first two games, the object was to capture all three Great Jewels or to be the first player to exceed a specific (but unrevealed) score of victory points. However, because some players have felt that the game was too short, my latest game will end somewhere between turns 20 and 30 instead of at a predetermined score. Whoever has the highest score after the last turn will win. Each game I've played has been very different because the designer is still perfecting his creation. I like the changes and that's why I continue to enter new games.

Before the game starts, you must choose which one of the four races to become: Azoni, Quntag, Rilris, or Slenth. The Azoni are powerful fighters who reproduce slowly and earn victory points for building defensive citadels. The Quntag are empire builders who get points for controlling territory. The Rilris earn points for hoarding zorans (money) and magic. While the Slenth are the weakest fighters, they are quite prolific and earn points for destroying troops, leaders, and citadels, and for ravaging the land.

The most creative features of the game are the magical talismans which can be found in neutral citadels, or guarded by dragons, or secured in the ten Forbidden Cities. There are special keys which open the gates of the Forbidden Cities, Rings of Power which confer special bonuses to their

proper owners, and dozens of other strange and wondrous talismans: The Cloak of Darkness makes an army invisible except when it attacks. A Palantir allows its owner to spy on the contents of any one province. Paul Bunyan's Axe can turn a forest into clear terrain. The Doppelganger makes an army appear twice as large as it really is — and there are many more talismans besides these.

If you haven't heard enough yet, you can build roads, citadels, navies, siege towers, and battering rams. You can send your strongest leaders against hungry dragons. You can (and should) flee from the invincible Drevonyx. Or you can open and besiege a Forbidden City in search of the three Great Jewels, which bestow fantastic powers each turn. If you capture all three jewels, you win the game.

As a Rilris, I allied with all three of my neighbors, rarely fought a battle, sold a few leaders to a Slenth (blood money is still money), and ended up winning the game. As an Azoni, I am furiously attacking my Rilris neighbor, but I still have no magic and no keys. And I just started a new game as a ravenous Slenth.

On the critical side, I am not sure that the game is completely balanced, since it seems to be very hard to get enough victory points to win as a Slenth. A Slenth must kill and destroy things to earn victory points; this is not as easy a task as it is for an Azoni to build citadels in the safety of his king-

dom, or for a Rilris to hoard his money turn after turn. Many players agree that it is very difficult to win as a Slenth, but it's a lot of fun to play one, because they breed like flies and are always waging war.

Another criticism I have had is that the best magic talismans are locked in the Forbidden Cities. By the time you find and capture a key, you may not know where the city it opens is located. And by the time you find out and fight your way through enemy territory to get there, the game will be close to being over. This problem may be solved by the new game-ending rule that is being tried in my latest game.

I like *Quest of the Great Jewels* very much and recommend it highly. However, it is very much a game of diplomacy. If you don't spend time and money communicating with other players, you'll soon have many uninvited guests in your kingdom.

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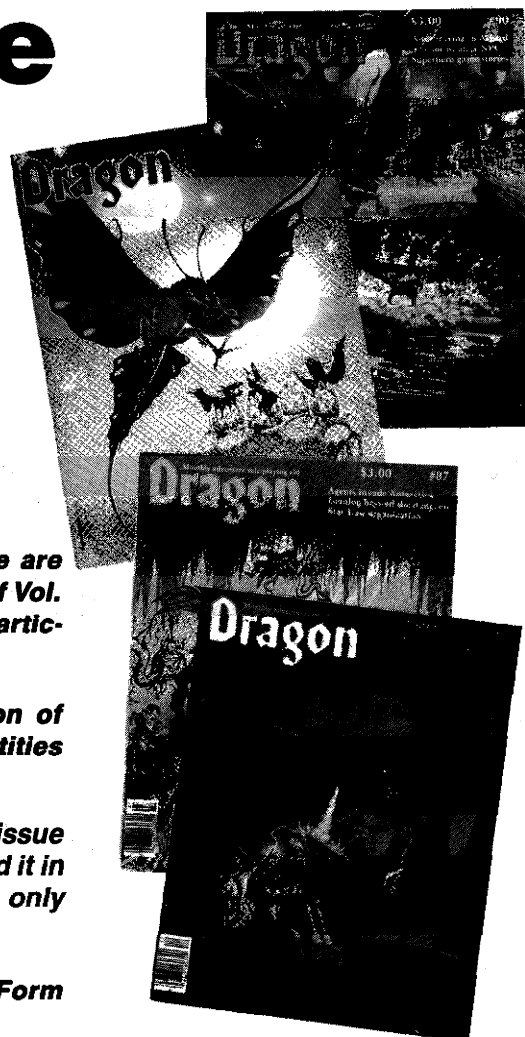
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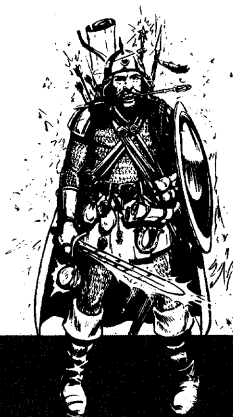
# Nogard

**No** price

**No** DM needed

**No** danger

**No** point whatsoever



**No** adventure has ever been like this!

# Nogard

## *The high-level adventure to end all adventures*

Welcome to *Nogard*, a solitaire scenario for the AD&D® game designed specially for player characters of ultra-high level and world-shaking power. The adventure takes place in an environment unlike any that your character has ever experienced, and you and your character will both face challenges that you never thought were possible in an AD&D game adventure. And all of this is achieved without once placing your favorite incredibly powerful character in jeopardy. Your player character can't help but survive a journey through *Nogard* — but his life will never be the same again.

### Instructions

You will serve as both the player and the Dungeon Master, so to speak, in this solitaire adventure. Except for your character's record sheet and a pencil (which you'll need only briefly; don't bother to get up for it now), no materials are needed to run this adventure other than the rules you are reading. Begin by setting the scene with the background, then start with Section I of the adventure itself. After you play through the events of a section, turn to the section you're directed to at the end of that passage. At times, you or your character will be called upon to make decisions — but you always get as much time as you need to make up your mind. There are no tricks, traps, or unfair surprises in this scenario.

*Nogard* is actually four adventures in one — certain passages in the text are read differently for cleric, fighter, magic-user, and thief characters. Depending on what kind of character you're running, insert the appropriate passages where indicated. To revive the adventure after several play-throughs, try mixing passages for different classes for a completely different adventure every time.

### Background

In your career as a player character, you have not simply reached the pinnacle of achievement — you have defined it. But for years now, ever since you became

- C: Protector of the Universe,
- F: Warrior Without Peer,
- M: Supreme Spellcaster,
- T: Sultan of Stealth,

life hasn't had as much zest as it did before. Your accomplishments are unparalleled, your talents beyond compare and your riches beyond counting — but all of it is coming to mean less and less. Lately, you've

found yourself wondering whether you can ever feel challenged or motivated again.

Being a person of tremendous intelligence and wisdom, you decide that there must still be challenges unrealized for you, because it doesn't make sense that someone as powerful as you should be forced to be this miserable. Then, one day, it happens. Just as you concentrate mightily, trying to figure out where this place of challenge is and how to

get there, a sharp noise resounds (like the sound of a book being closed) and you are whisked away.

### THE ADVENTURE

**I:** After a journey that takes only two eyeblinks longer than teleporting, you find yourself in the middle of a large expanse of





gray space. Amazingly, you have arrived in a state of full readiness — equipped for any adventuring challenge you meet. At your feet are some of your most prized possessions, including

- C: Thor's hammer, plus a complete operating room inside a *satchel of holding*.
- F: Your collection of +5 laser blasters and a 20-gallon jug of *potion that does anything I want*.
- M: A 32-volume set of spell books and an *amulet of protection from rules*.
- T: A key that opens any door and defuses any trap, plus a cloak that always stays invisible (funny, I thought I saw it a minute ago . . .).

You don't see much going on, but that doesn't lull an experienced stalwart like you into a false sense of security. You know this is an adventure, and sooner or later something is bound to happen to you if you simply:

Stand there and wait — go to Section II.  
Sit down and wait — go to Section III.

II. After a while, you start to get bored with just standing there, so you sit down. Go to Section III.

III. Sitting doesn't seem to help. Neither does pretending you're asleep. You decide that nothing is going to sneak up on you, so you start to move toward the gray area in the distance. It doesn't take long to notice that *everything* is a gray area in the distance. You become even more watchful, thinking that attack from an unseen enemy could come at any moment. The suspense is building — surely this will be a tale to regale even the most jaded of your friends back home! Go to Section IV.

IV. Nothing at all happens to you for what seems like ages. You get more edgy as time goes on, moving gradually from a feeling of anticipation to one of anger: Why isn't anything *happening*? As time goes on and on (which, for game purposes, is twice as long as just "on"), your mood becomes one of panic: Why isn't *anything* happening??

If you want to stick it out a while longer, go to Section VI.  
If you want to end the adventure now, go to Section VII.

V. There is no Section V.

VI. You aren't sure how much longer you can stand this horrible combination of suspense and boredom. Once in a while you

search furiously for some way out of the gray, but that never takes long because there's nothing to look at. You've even considered doing away with yourself as a way of escaping, but

- C: Because of the enchantment placed upon you years ago by a deity who's a buddy of yours, your wounds always heal instantly.
- F: Your armor class is so low that not even you can hit you.
- M: A spell you once researched turned your body into a magic item, and whenever you cast a spell on yourself, all you do is recharge.
- T: You can't very well stab yourself in the back, and who ever died from picking his own pockets?

The pressure is getting unbearable. You're not sure if you can stand even another minute of this existence. . . .

. . . and you've just decided it isn't worth it. Go to Section VII.

. . . but you're determined to get your money's worth out of this adventure. Go to Section VI.

VII. Being an adventurer of ridiculously high intelligence and wisdom, you must have figured this out by now. But just in case, a voice booms out this brief message: "This extended vacation in Nogard comes to you through the combined efforts of the Gods of Game Balance. You do not need the assistance of your player for the remainder of this adventure. Proceed to Section I, and be on your guard — something could happen at any minute."

#### Epilogue: For players' eyes only

While your character goes back to Section I, you should read and follow the instructions in Section VIII.

VIII. Go get the pencil we said you'd need. Across the top of your character sheet, write the word "Retired." Get out your next most incredibly powerful and awesome character and start the adventure over again. At least this time you won't have to get up in the middle to find a pencil.

## There can never be too many dragons, right?

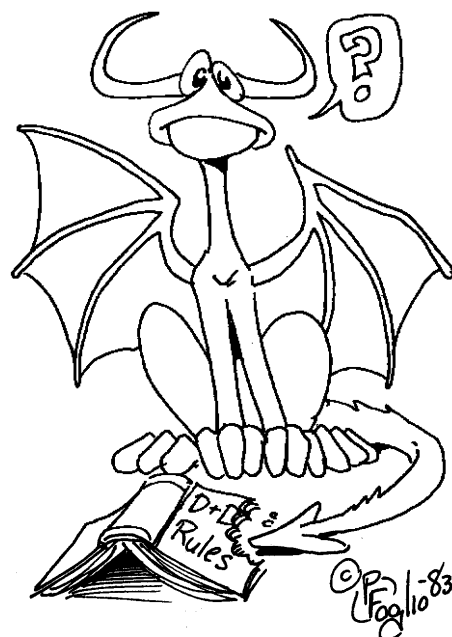
### The "What's New?" Dragon (*Draco Phoglius Ridiculus*)

by Matt Legare

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*  
NO. APPEARING: 1 (*unique*)  
ARMOR CLASS: 4  
MOVE: 12"/26"  
HIT DICE: 3  
% IN LAIR: Nil  
TREASURE TYPE: Nil  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *See below*  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Breath weapon*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *DM's grace*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *See below*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Animal (charitably speaking)*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*  
SIZE: *S (3½' tall)*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil  
Attack/Defense Modes: Nil

The "What's New?" Dragon (also known as the Mauve Dragon, or the Big Pain in the Expletive Deleted) is a rare creature indeed in the AD&D® game world. Because of its characteristics and general behavior, however, it is not much missed. It stands roughly waist high and resembles a short, light purple, fire-breathing dragon, with the head of a cow wearing a puzzled expression.

According to legend, the "What's New?" Dragon was created when a drunken archmage attempted to crossbreed a red dragon,



a blue dragon, a cow, and a small terrier dog he had handy, "Just to show 'em!" The resulting animal (using the term loosely) promptly torched the wizard's lab and flew away. The archmage later gave up magic and drinking, as well as a few other vices he was indulging in at the time, and became a hermit monk.

The "What's New?" Dragon, named for (Turn to page 53)

# The meanest of monsters

Two creatures that are tougher than anything  
your character has ever encountered

by Craig Kraus

Dungeon Masters come in many colors, sizes, shapes, and alignments. Two sorts of Dungeon Masters, the Killer Dungeon Master and the Sleep-Inducing Dungeon Master, are particularly nasty and are covered here. General information and common characteristics of these creatures are dealt with in this section.

These two breeds of renegade Dungeon Masters will always appear to be human beings, and continually seek new players for their campaign worlds because no sane person will play with them more than once.

**Sleeping Dungeon Masters:** The best time to come upon a Killer Dungeon Master is when he is asleep. Unfortunately, Sleep-Inducing Dungeon Masters never sleep. However, the victims of a Killer Dungeon Master will find this an excellent time to avenge all of their dead characters.

**Attacking a Dungeon Master:** You will probably be charged with assault, though self-defense may be claimed. Check the laws in your state.

**Subduing a Dungeon Master:** An attack on a Dungeon Master may be made to subdue rather than to hospitalize. This usually occurs when the entire gang of players becomes enraged simultaneously and rushes the offending Dungeon Master, but no one has access to automatic weapons. Players Handbooks are often used for pummeling attacks, as well as soft-drink cans, chairs, and good old-fashioned fists. A maximum of six human-sized attackers per Dungeon Master is possible. When the Dungeon Master is no longer moving except to breathe, he has been subdued.

**Example of Subduing a Dungeon Master:** Two 8th-level fighters, a 7th-level dwarven fighter, an elven 4th-level fighter/6th-level magic-user, and a halfling thief of 9th level stumble upon an unarmed, wounded orc with no armor. Thinking the orc will be an easy hit, the group approaches. Suddenly the orc pulls out a ray gun and *disintegrates* the entire adventuring party.

"I've been playing that thief for three years!" yells Ken, slamming his fists on the table. Greg, not the type to be outdone, flips the table over and all the dice go with it. Sensing the group's possible displeasure, the Killer Dungeon Master attempts to flee while Mike hurls his copies of the Players Handbook and Monster Manual; the Players Handbook hits. Pat starts throwing empty drink cans, and Nick tackles the Killer Dungeon Master as he reaches the door. Down on the ground, the Killer Dungeon Master is bombarded with dice, books, chairs, and old copies of DRAGON® Magazine. (*These guys are really mad!*) When the Killer Dungeon Master is no longer visible under the debris, Greg announces, "I think he's unconscious." Now it's Miller Time. The Killer Dungeon Master is officially *subdued*.

Value of a Subdued Dungeon Master: Zilch.

**Encountering Multiple Dungeon Masters:** Don't stop to ask stupid questions, just run.

## KILLER DUNGEON MASTER

(*Dungeus Masterus Horribilis Maximus*)

FREQUENCY: *Not rare enough*

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 10 (8 if unwashed)

MOVE: 12" (15" if pursued)

HIT DICE: *Constantly*

% IN LAIR: 100% (*detailed below*)

TREASURE TYPE: *Special, see below*

NO. OF ATTACKS ON CHARACTERS: *Unlimited*

DAMAGE/ATTACK ON CHARACTERS: *See below*

SPECIAL ATTACKS ON PLAYERS: *Mental stress and frustration*

SPECIAL DEFENSES FROM PLAYERS: *Immune to pleas of mercy*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *None except to mind-affecting spells, which have nothing to affect (see INTELLIGENCE)*

INTELLIGENCE: *As if you couldn't guess*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic destructive*

SIZE: *M*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Can a vacuum be psionic?*

This mutant strain of Dungeon Master is found in poorly lit rooms, seated at some sort of card table (75%) or desk (25%) behind a flimsy cardboard screen covered with archaic lettering that he never reads. The table and adjacent areas are usually littered with books, notepads, empty soda cans, and miniature lead figures. The Killer Dungeon Master uses this lair to lure unsuspecting role-playing gamers into the world of his warped imagination. Once seated at the table, the players are destined to lose at least one dearly beloved character apiece. It is a cruel fate, but unavoidable at this point.

The Killer Dungeon Master thrives on eliminating player characters as fast as one can create replacements, even by computer print-out. With the Killer Dungeon Master in charge, monsters will automatically become at least six hit dice more powerful than the scenario suggests is appropriate. If a module places two monsters guarding a treasure, you can count on at least fifteen being there. When a regular Dungeon Master would say, "The three orcs are dead; now you see a small chest," the Killer Dungeon Master says, "So you killed three orcs, huh? Let's see what you can do against twelve mind flayers!"

Killer Dungeon Masters are known to use wandering monsters, deadly traps, and the disease table in the DMG to destroy characters, but what really sets them apart from other Dungeon Masters is their access to the revolutionary new Wandering Damage System. The following information was stolen from the notebook of a sleeping Killer Dungeon Master, and is presented in its entirety for the benefit of all gaming humanity (Killer Dungeon Masters have no other treasure but this):

## How To Use The Wandering Damage System

*First there was the wandering monster. They serve well when applied in hordes, but why not cut out the middleman and just deal out damage to the characters directly? It makes for a smoother, faster-paced game, and if you want to kill off characters quickly, it can only be beaten by divine intervention by Cthulhoid godlings.*

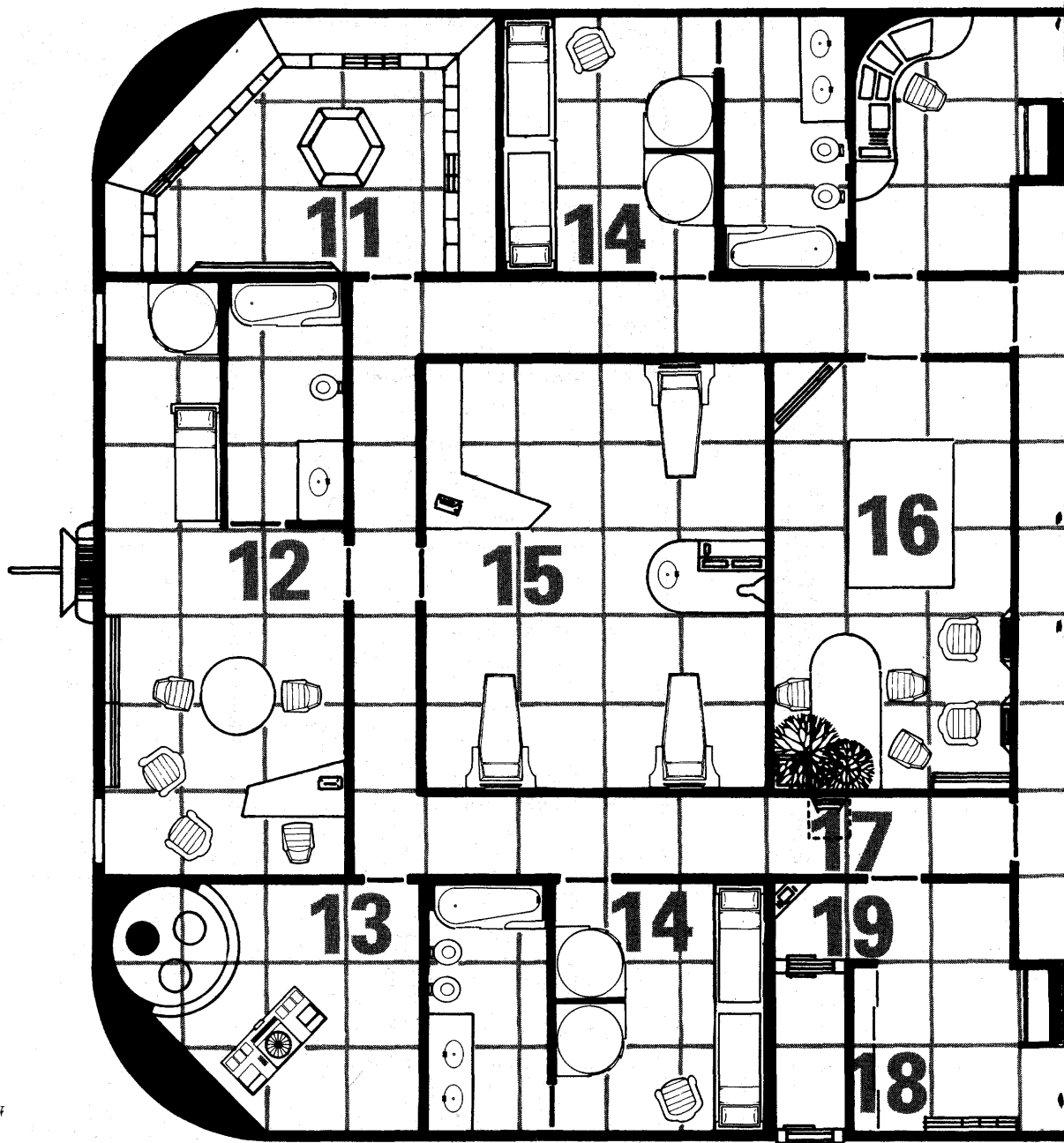
**Instructions:** Whenever a player annoys you in any way, by wearing tasteless clothes or eating the last corn chip, ask him to roll a d20. He may become worried that he's rolling a saving throw.

(Turn to page 51)

Each square on this map is 1.5 meters across.

Starboard

Bow



### Map Key

- 11. Ship's stores and armory
- 12. Captain's quarters
- 13. Transporter room
- 14. Crew quarters (2)
- 15. Sick bay
- 16. Recreation room
- 17. Ladder up
- 18. EVA stores
- 19. Airlock
- 20. Stairway up (2)
- 21. Impulse drive engineering controls
- 22. Cargo bay
- 23. Warp drive engineering controls

Port

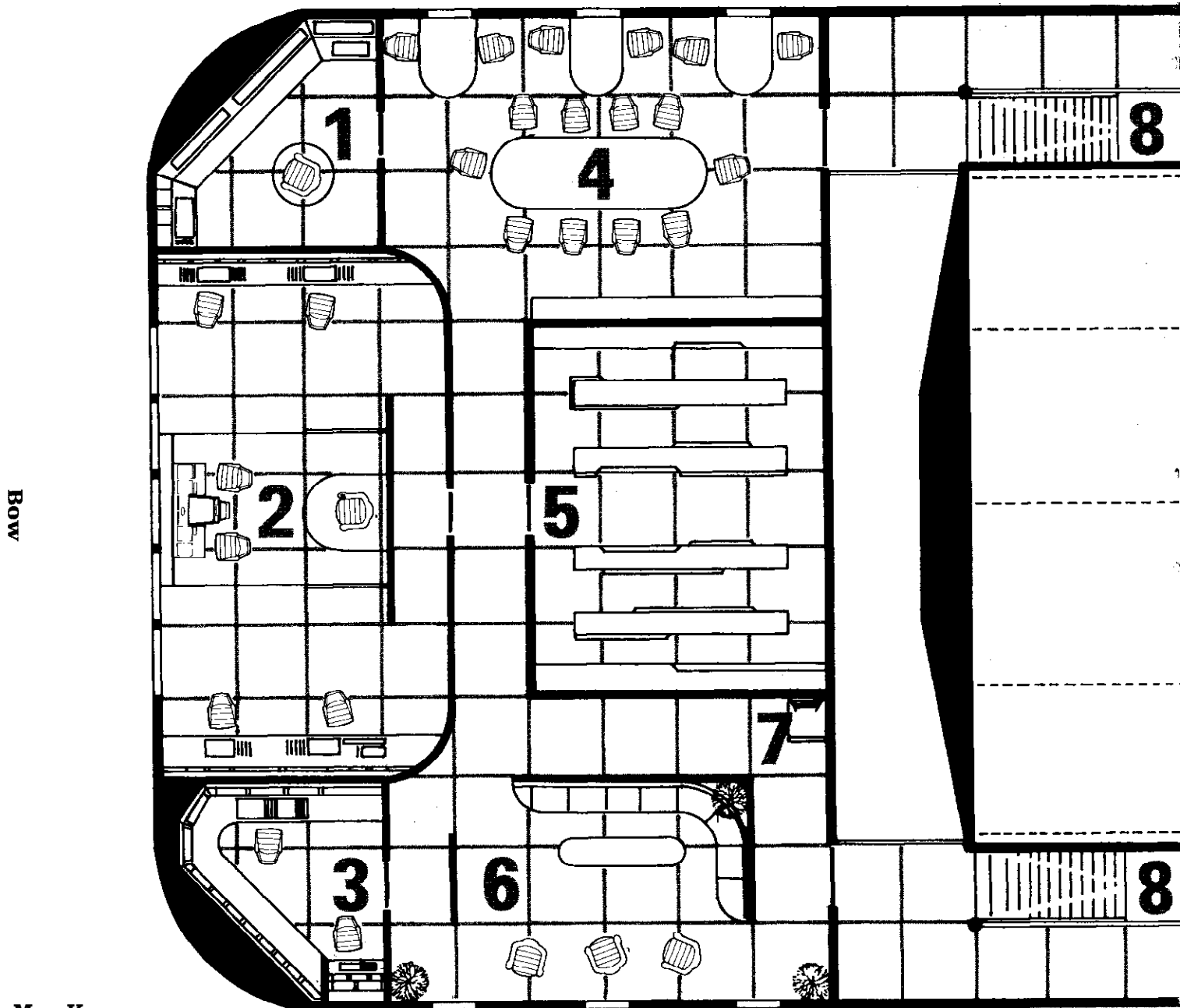
LOWER



# Deck Plans for the GINNY'S DELIGHT

©1985 by Dale L. Kemper

An ARES™ Section Special



## Map Key

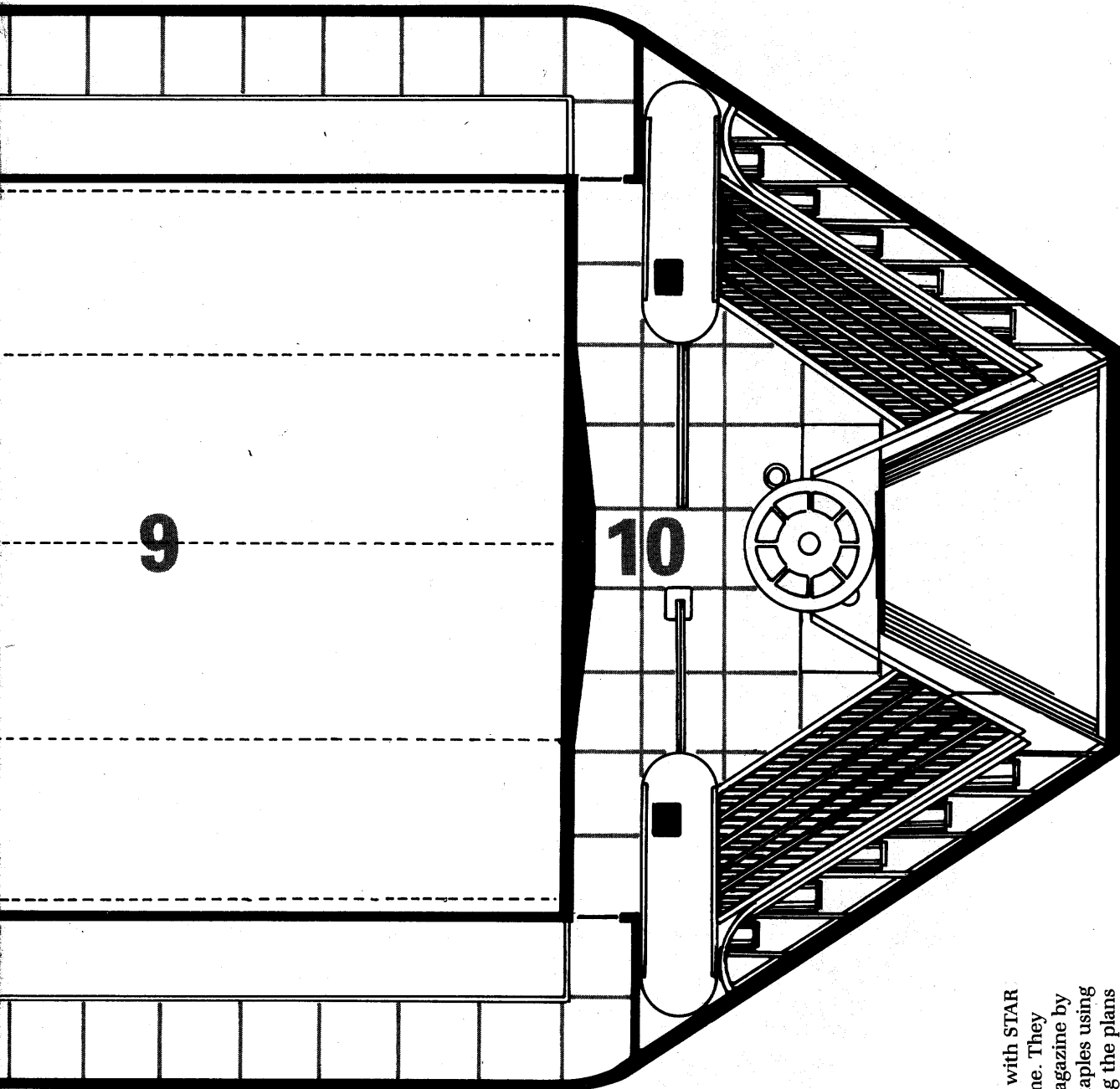
1. Sensors
2. Bridge
3. Sensors
4. Dining room
5. Computer room
6. Lounge
7. Ladder down
8. Stairway down (2)
9. Upper half of cargo bay (no floor)
10. Impulse engine

Port

UPPER

Each square on this map is 1.5 meters across.

Starboard

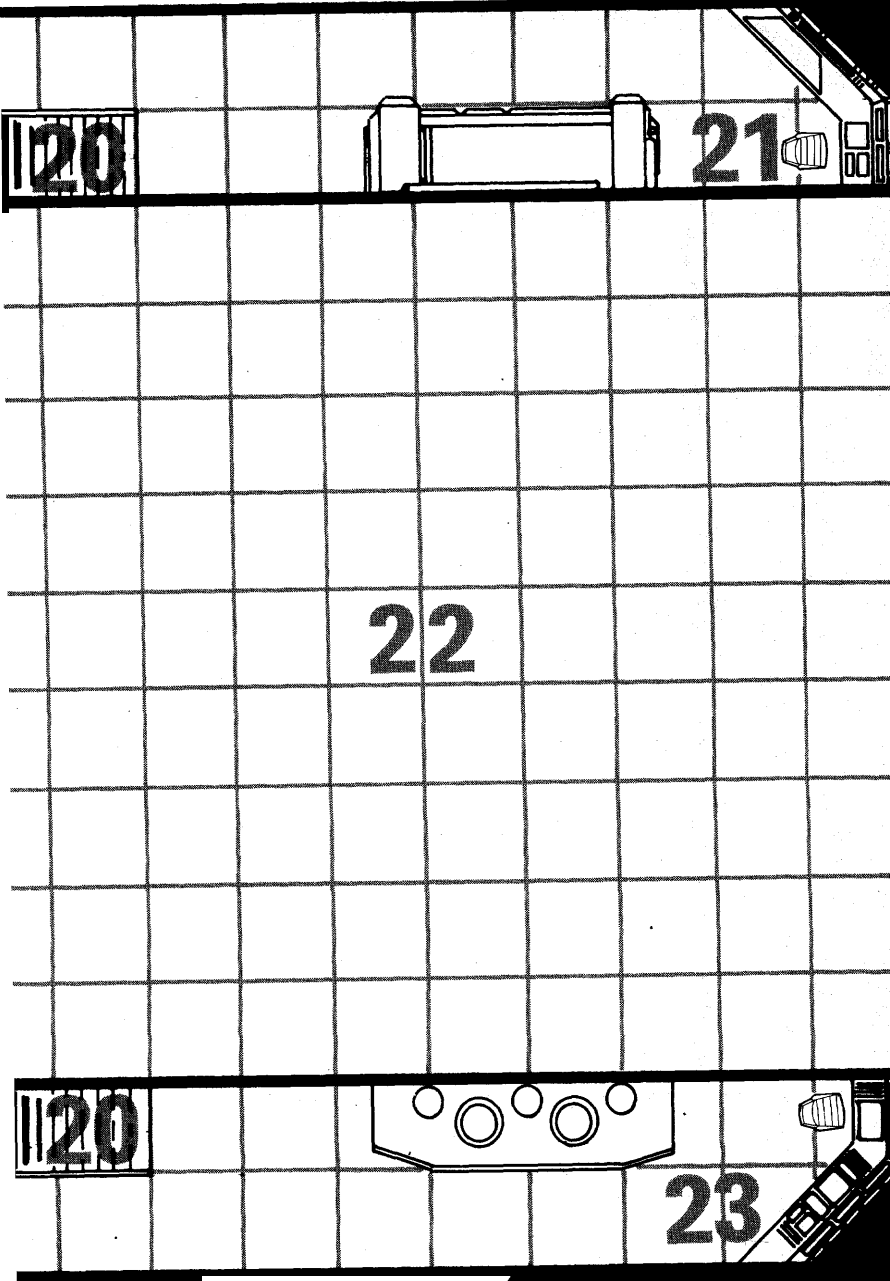


Stern

These deck plans are for use with STAR TREK®: The Role-Playing Game. They may be removed from the magazine by carefully bending back the staples using a dull butter knife and pulling the plans free. A description of the Ginny's Delight may be found in the ARES™ Section of this issue (DRAGON® Magazine #96).

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DECK



DECK

Stern



(From page 46)

Ha, ha!!! Little does he know that he just rolled on the Wandering Damage System matrix!!! Repeat the roll as often as desired.

### The Wandering Damage System Matrix

#### Roll Result

- 1 Your character has fallen down a flight of stairs; roll his dexterity or less on percentile dice, or else consult Limb Loss Subtable.
- 2 The monster your character just killed gets up and attacks him, doing 8-80 points of damage.
- 3 Your character smells smoke; his right arm is on fire. Take 14 points of damage and save vs. gangrene.
- 4 Your character cuts himself while shaving; consult Limb Loss Subtable.
- 5 Your character's nose hairs catch fire and he dies of smoke inhalation.
- 6 Your character stumbles backward into a yawning chasm and disappears from view.
- 7 The next time your character says something, he eats his words, chokes on them, and dies.
- 8 Something cuts your character's nose off, doing 2-12 points damage and really messing up his charisma.
- 9 Your character steps on a piece of glass; consult Limb Loss Subtable.
- 10 Your character suddenly catches a severe case of brain death.
- 11 Something invisible chews on your character, doing 6-36 points damage.
- 12 Your character develops an incredibly severe case of arthritis and can grasp nothing with his hands; he drops anything he's holding — and if that happened to be a sword or an axe, consult the Limb Loss Subtable.
- 13-20 Consult the Random Damage Subtable for no reason whatsoever.

#### Limb Loss Subtable (roll d6)

- 1 — Left leg gone
- 2 — Right leg gone
- 3 — Left arm gone
- 4 — Right arm gone
- 5 — Head gone
- 6 — Torso cut in half

#### Random Damage Subtable

##### Dice

##### roll Result

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 01-05 | Take 10 hit points damage.   |
| 06-10 | Take 15 hit points damage.   |
| 11-20 | Take 30 hit points damage.   |
| 21-25 | Take 10 hit points damage and consult Limb Loss Subtable, modifying die roll by +5.  |
| 26-30 | Take 10 hit points damage and roll again on Wandering Damage System Matrix.          |
| 31-35 | Take 15 hit points damage and then take 30 more.                                     |
| 36-40 | Roll every die you own for damage.   |
| 41-45 | Take 17 hit points damage.   |
| 46-50 | Take 42 hit points damage.   |
| 51-55 | Multiply your character's age by 5. Take three times that much damage.               |
| 56-60 | Take 24 hit points damage and then take 31 more.                                     |
| 61-65 | Take 1,000 hit points damage and roll again.   |
| 66-70 | Roll every die within 30 feet for damage.  |
| 71-73 | Add up the total hit points of everyone in the party. Take that much damage.         |
| 74-75 | Take 3 hit points damage and consider yourself very lucky — for the time being.      |
| 76-00 | What? You didn't get hurt? That's impossible — this system is foolproof. Roll again. |

### SLEEP-INDUCING DUNGEON MASTER

(*Dungeus Masterus Aerheadium Monotonus*)

FREQUENCY: *Here and there*

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: *Not applicable, cannot be attacked*

MOVE: *Immobile*

HIT DICE: *Just enough to be considered alive*

% IN LAIR: 100% (*detailed below*)

TREASURE TYPE: *Players' dice*

NO. OF ATTACKS ON CHARACTERS: *Nil*

DAMAGE/ATTACK ON CHARACTERS: *Nil*

SPECIAL ATTACKS ON PLAYERS: *Boredom*

SPECIAL DEFENSES FROM PLAYERS: *Boredom*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Immune to sleep spells and powers of all kinds*

INTELLIGENCE: *High (for a rodent)*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral tedious*

SIZE: *M*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *"Psionics? Well, I worked out a system, only 340 pages long, based on the 13th-century German philosopher Noodleheinz, who said form does not precede reality but rather is derived from the innateness of the mental image. Here, I'll get it and show it to you. . . ."*

The Sleep-Inducing Dungeon Master is always found seated at a table (75% likely to be laden with food), behind a homemade screen devoid of writing. The table is well-organized though extremely crowded, and the adjacent areas are meticulously clean. Soft Barbra Streisand music can be heard from a concealed sound source, and the room temperature will be ten degrees over the comfortable limit.

The Sleep-Inducing Dungeon Master lives only to steal the dice of unsuspecting role-playing gamers, by luring them into his lair and then boring them to sleep (or, in some cases, to death). Standard techniques used by these Dungeon Masters include excruciatingly dull dungeons, pointless mazes, no monsters or treasure to be found, and constant searches through the rulebooks for scraps of information ("The combat tables are in here somewhere, I saw them yesterday.") In some cases, a low-level Sleep-Inducing Dungeon Master will have an accomplice, who will be disguised as one of the players. This person will ask questions like, "What does a glaive-guisarme look like?" and will not be able to decide on a name for his mule.

The Sleep-Inducing Dungeon Master gains power by accumulating dice, at the rate of one Dungeon Master level per 1000 dice stolen from players. As the following table shows, the Sleep-Inducing Dungeon Master is also proficient at making players lose interest in gaming if he can't make them fall asleep.

#### Sleep-Inducing Dungeon Master Table

##### S-I DM

level	Distract	Sleep	Comatose	Dead
1	50%	10%	—	—
2	55	20	—	—
3	60	30	05%	—
4	65	40	08	—
5	70	50	10	05%
6	75	60	15	10
7	80	70	18	15
8	85	80	20	18
9	90	90	25	20

*Distract:* Power causes player to wander away from game, either to a nearby checkers set or to the refrigerator.

*Sleep:* Player falls asleep, either at table or on any nearby sofa.

Duration 10-60 minutes.

*Comatose:* Player will regain consciousness and come to his senses in 4-6 weeks.

*Dead:* The unfortunate player has been bored to death, with no saving throw.

# It takes all kinds . . .

## Who's hot and who's not in this new game world

by Adda Littlemore

Since the release of the ENRAGED GLACIERS & GHOULS Fantasy Role-Playing Game, we've received several letters from gamers as far away as Elkhorn, Wisconsin, and Crystal Lake, Illinois, in an outpouring of praise. True, a moderate number of letters have pointed out some minor flaws within the game system, such as the lack of any information on character races and classes, poorly described monsters, and an unworkable combat system, but we at TyrannoSaurus Rex, Inc., feel that these annoyances can be overcome with a little time and patience.

As the first part of a projected 138-part series of corrections, alterations, revisions, adjustments, tinkering, opinions, and replacement rules for the EG&G game system, we present the six major races of the NEIGHBORHOOD OF FRED Fantastically Complete Game Setting.

### Humans

Humans, of course, are the dominant race found in the NEIGHBORHOOD OF FRED. They are able to enter into any character class and may progress as far as they like in such classes. In general, humans regard themselves as undeniably superior in every respect in comparison to other races, for which sentiment other races will gladly waylay humans at every available opportunity.

### Kobolds

Also known as "diggers," "beardos," and, for the tapping sound their mining tools make, "knockers" (as in, "That's an interesting pair of knockers coming up the street"), kobolds have made their greedy presences felt in many a hoard and treasury vault. Barely topping 4' in height and resembling short, grubby Santa Clauses, kobolds live in great underground caverns and tunnel systems, much to the relief of the surface-dwelling races. They compete with rats and goblins for living space in most city sewer systems. Kobolds covet everything they see that might even be remotely valuable, particularly if such items appear to be made of gold. Wise persons will cover their mouths when speaking to kobolds, to avoid showing their fillings.

### Fairies

Artistically sensitive in temperament and prone to throw fits if not given their way, fairies are widely respected as the foremost authorities on flower arrangement in the land. Fairies lead merry lives of dancing in the woods, interior decorating, and *avant garde* hair-dressing. Despite a racial tendency toward anorexia, fairies are prone to complain about their weight and are happy to offer dietary advice to all who care to listen. ("Oh, dear, I just know that nasty fried centipede is going to give you cellulite, I just know it.")

### Goblins

Powerful, strong, and yet dull, goblins are the biological equivalent of bulldozers, and in fact they are often used as such by certain highway departments. Goblins come in many assorted shapes, colors, and sizes, much as mongrel dogs will, and classification schemes meant to sort them out invariably fail. According to the best authorities, goblins all belong to the same species, judging from their ability to interbreed with each other, though it has also been pointed out that goblins can also interbreed with numerous other races and with most mammals and reptiles as well. Kobolds and goblins have had an ongoing conflict (variously termed a "border conflict" or "police action") that has continued for the last thousand years and could eventually lead to the annihilation of both races, or so it is hoped.

### Biters

Ranking somewhat lower on the evolutionary scale than kitchen toasters, biters are a green-scaled reptilian race of short stature (4' to 5' tall) widely known for the ability to consume anything composed of organic matter. Biter communities have been successfully employed as alternatives to landfills, but despite this service, biters are generally given the same regard and esteem as rattlesnakes. It is rumored that biters have compiled an encyclopedia on the culinary preparation of every sentient race in the land, though when asked of this biters will only grin in a silly way and show their teeth. Their teeth, by the way, can chop, cut, slice, dice, and make julienne fries out of most unarmed opponents.

### Boggies

Though you might have the impression that nothing could be worse than any of the aforementioned races, we have not yet gotten to the boggies. Boggies are a very small and hairy race, looking something like a cross between halflings and rats. They are lucky if they reach 3' in height, though their sticky little fingers have reached into money purses much higher than that. Boggies may be characterized as sly and cowardly, and they are prone to gang up on lone wayfarers in a ratio of 20 boggies to one wayfarer. More boggies may be required if the victim is over 2' tall, and the whole assault may be called off if they cannot find a way to attack from behind.

Boggies have sharp, whiny voices that compare favorably to the sound of fingernails being scratched down a blackboard. Their racial habits of pocketing everything that isn't nailed down and of leaving rude sayings scrawled on sidewalks and front doors have led many a race to speak knowledgeably about the "boggie menace," and some countries refuse to import them even for zoological exhibits. Boggies resent it that anyone should be taller than they are, and they go to great lengths to make the "big 'uns" pay for the insult.

### Racial Preferences Table

	Feel about:					
How:	Hum	Kob	Fair	Gob	Bit	Bog
Humans	T	M	NS	EN	M	A
Kobolds	M	RI	NS	H	E	NG
Fairies	A	GM	PA	GM	R/N	A
Goblins	RI	H	BC	V	PE	E
Biters	MD	WD	RA	WD	QS	?
Boggies	HE	HE	HE	HE	AV	B

### Explanation of results

- T — Will tolerate members of this race.
- M — Considerable mistrust is felt toward this race.
- NS — This race is not taken seriously.
- EN — Desire exists to enslave this race for use as unskilled laborers, preferably as bulldozers.
- A — Considerable annoyance is felt toward this race.
- RI — Strong feelings of rivalry exist toward this race.
- H — Extreme hatred exists toward this race.
- E — Desire exists to see this race become extinct.
- NG — Race should be nuked until they glow.
- GM — This race is viewed as grody to the max.
- R/N — Revulsion, bordering on nausea, is felt toward this race.
- BC — This race is seen as beneath contempt.
- V — Variable reactions, depending completely upon the individual in question.

PA — Despite *petty arguments*, the company of this race is preferred over all others, especially over those tacky, tacky, tacky goblins and those nasty little kobold thingies, they are so *gross*, but those little walking lizards, oh, my, they are the *worst*, they barf me out, like, gag me with a mace.

PE — This race would probably make good *pets* if they could ever be housebroken.

MD — Individuals of this race should be served cooked *medium*.

WD — Individuals of this race should be served cooked *well done*, due to extra toughness.

RA — Individuals of this race should be served cooked *rare*.

QS — Aside from *quarreling over scraps*, individuals of this race get along well together.

? — Uncertainty exists as to the best cooking procedures for this race.

HE — Constant desire exists to *humiliate* and *embarrass* this race at every possible opportunity.

AV — Absolute *avoidance* of this race is practiced.

B — *Bickering* is the rule within this race.

Aside from the statistics for the races, which will be appearing next year at this time, that should cover all of the basics. Next month we'll have the character classes: Halberdier, Arquibusier, Caveman, Sumo Wrestler, Commando, Mugger, Medic, Chaplain, Apothecary, and Prestidigitator. Until then, keep gaming and we'll see you in Fred's Neighborhood!



## There can never be too many dragons, right?

(From page 45)

some pages in an ancient tome that first described the beast, does not have a lair. The chance of catching it while it is asleep or unawares is so low that players could just as well throw their dice off the table rather than try to roll for it. Instead, the dragon will simply wander onto the scene at the DM's discretion and investigate any loud noises, such as those made by the average party of adventurers in chainmail and plate-mail armor.

Upon arrival, the dragon will announce its presence by voicing its call, "Growf!" (pronounced "growf" or "growph"). This could mean many things, since it is the only word in the dragon's language. This call will be repeated for 1-6 rounds, after which (unless somebody answers the call with another "Growf!") the dragon will use its breath weapon on whatever targets are handy.

Its breath weapon is not unlike that of a red dragon's, with a few notable differences. It forms a cone of fire extending 30' from the dragon's mouth; the cone's base is 15' in diameter. The fiery blast lasts for half a segment (3 seconds) and only affects non-living objects. Flammable items struck by the magical breath (such as clothes, backpacks, arrows, etc.) will automatically smolder and burn, falling into ashes; strangely enough, the dragon's breath causes its victims to magically resist the flames, and no harm will come to people so affected — though embarrassment is possible. ("What happened to your loincloth, o mighty barbarian?") Magical items are allowed a saving throw vs. magical fire.

Metallic items will not burn, but non-magical metals will automatically melt into slag (again, without harm coming to anyone touched by it). Once the breath ends, the metal will have magically cooled so that, while hot to the touch, it will not cause injuries. Getting out of a suit of melted platemail, however, could prove difficult without a can opener.

Despite its annoying habits, lack of intelligence, and homeliness, the "What's New?" Dragon has one peculiar ability that allows it to survive all it meets. It is able to invoke a condition known as "DM's

Grace," an annoying streak of unkillability brought about by incredible twists of fate and a snickering DM. Spells cast at the dragon are dispelled mere inches away from it, weapons miss it no matter *how* skilled the wielder is, and thieves always step on a squeaky board when creeping up on it (even in the outdoors). After about ten minutes of this nonsense, the dragon will get tired of the party and leave.

The worst thing that characters can do is to submerge the "What's New?" Dragon in water, for it will then appear to multiply in number as if a *mirror image* spell had been cast upon it. The "images" are real, however, and the dragon will produce multiples of itself at a rate of 1-4 per round for the duration it is kept in water. Splashing water upon it will automatically produce 1-4 multiples of the dragon, all of them identical to the original. Watering a "What's New?" Dragon is considered a felony in most kingdoms, punishable by being made to swim a frogemoth's pond armed with a putty knife.

No experience will be gained from attacking a "What's New?" Dragon, and those who try it should have their wrists slapped by a fire giant.

### Quazar Dragon

(*Draco Godawfulus Armageddonus*)

by Susan Lawson

FREQUENCY: *Only once*

NO. APPEARING: *1 (unique)*

ARMOR CLASS: *-4000 (equal to sixteen miles of iridium plating)*

MOVE: *Effectively infinite*

HIT DICE: *All there are*

% IN LAIR: *Nil, lives in interstellar space*

TREASURE TYPE: *Planets may be found in stomach*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *One world's worth per bite*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Belch causes 10,000d6 damage to all beings within one million kilometers*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Has no enemies*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Magic?*

*What's that?*

INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*

ALIGNMENT: *Perpetually hungry*

SIZE: *L* (120,600 km from nose to tail)  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Psionics? How do you spell that?*

The dreaded Quazar Dragon is actually an alien lifeform that consumes whole worlds to sustain its energy requirements. It is especially attracted to worlds where enormous quantities of magic may be found, and it can detect the presence of such planets from a third of the distance across the Galactic Disk. Such worlds are usually in the terminal stages of what the gods call "The Monty Haul Syndrome," in which a handful of characters has managed to seize control of their entire world's supply of magic items and are busy making even more.

The first clue that a "Monty Haul" world is about to be eaten comes when the characters walk outside their gold-plated +8 castle walls, wearing their +22 *plate-mail of prismatic invulnerability*, and see the sun disappear. This is a sure indicator that the Quazar Dragon has opened its 28,260 km wide mouth and is about to swallow the planet whole. The only possible way to save oneself in such a situation is to *immediately* throw all the magical items one can get hold of into a *sphere of annihilation*. The Quazar Dragon will take about 12-48 hours to close its mouth, so the characters do have a little lead time. *ALL* magic, every scrap of it, every teensy weensy itty bitty bit of it, must be destroyed. If this is done, there is a 5% chance the Quazar Dragon will change its mind and not gulp the planet down.

The deities themselves cannot undo or have any say in the actions of the Quazar Dragon, and to be perfectly honest, none of them want to do so. The Quazar Dragon has gotten rid of many planets on which characters dared call themselves the equals of the gods, and the gods are quite pleased with the overall result, even if it does mean having to go back to the drawing board and create another new planet.

The Quazar Dragon has no natural enemies, being immune even to bumping into neutron stars. It uses the vast amount of energy it takes in to launch itself across interstellar space at trans-light velocities, ever searching for another inflated world to have for a light snack.





# Rules to lose by

## The Hopeless character class

From an idea  
by Roger Koppy

Almost every gamer has had his bad days with the dice when creating a new character for AD&D® gaming. I've had my share of them and have decided to do something about it. Instead of rolling and rerolling and re-rerolling and re-re-rerolling the dice to get an acceptable character that the DM's going to kill off in five minutes anyhow, why not just generate a thoroughly lousy character and give it a class of its own?

Thus was born the Hopeless character class. In order to qualify as a Hopeless character, a character must have all ability scores rolled as  $d4 + 2$ , giving a range of 3-6 for all major characteristics (strength, intelligence, etc.). A Hopeless character will suffer some sort of penalty for each such characteristic, as given in the Players Handbook. Not to worry. After all, this IS supposed to be a *hopeless* character.

**Race:** All Hopeless characters are human, since the racial ability limits are too high for this class to qualify as anything other than human. Besides, humans are boring compared to things like elves, dwarves, and the like, and this just adds insult to injury for Hopeless characters.

**Hit dice:** Hopeless characters get only one roll for hit points, regardless of their level, and they don't even get to use regular dice at that. At 1st level, a Hopeless character receives 1-2 hp (flip a coin, with heads being 2 hp and tails being 1 hp). This coin toss is re-flipped at every level, and all former hit points are dropped and forgotten. A 1st-level Hopeless character could have 2 hp, then have 1 hp at 2nd level, then 2 hp at 3rd level, then back to 1 hp at 4th level, etc. You get the idea. Life ain't fair, man.

**Armor:** Any protection other than padded armor would be foreign and useless in the hands of a Hopeless character. None of them know how to put on anything more complicated than an old quilt. And shields? Shields are too cumbersome and Hopeless characters are needlessly burdened by them. Shields do make nice dinner trays and wall hangings, however.

**Weapons:** To their credit, Hopeless characters may use any sort of weapon that has no moving parts to confuse them, sharp edges to cut themselves on, or any other dangerous parts. This eliminates all of the useless things like the spetum and the glaive-guisarme, which no one can pronounce, much less use anyway, and leaves just the simplest and most efficient of all weapons: the club. No hurled or projected missiles may be used, as these *always* backfire in the hands of a true Hopeless character, causing serious injury to either the thrower or the nearest ally. This rule also applies to sharp weapons and those with moving parts.

**Oil and poison:** C'mon, get serious. Oil? Poison? Hopeless characters avoid these for their own good, being too clumsy to even think about using them. I mean, really now.

**Number of attacks per round:** Just one. No more. Also, as long as we're on the topic, Hopeless characters don't have to worry about gaining any new weapons as they rise in levels or anything; read the paragraph above on weapons if you can't figure out why.

**Alignment:** As if it made any difference, Hopeless characters may be of any alignment that will have them.

**Strongholds:** A Hopeless character will never settle down to construct a stronghold for the following reasons:

1. He wouldn't have any idea of how to get such a project started;
2. If he received any help on getting the project started, he wouldn't have the faintest notion of how to govern a castle complex, its inhabitants, or his retainers, servants, hirelings, henchmen, maids, or the persons who live in his realm; and,
3. If, by some major miracle or gift of the DM, the Hopeless character accomplished both of the above objectives, those people who are supposed to be under his rulership would *immediately*

realize they were under the command of an incompetent and would overthrow the character.

If a Hopeless character is lucky, he might be able to settle down at some point and construct a straw or sod hut. Then the character can govern as many chickens and pigs he wishes, until such time as they overthrow him.

**Henchmen and hirelings:** Not a chance. Would you work for a guy like this?

### Hopeless character experience table

Experience Points	Level	2-Sided Die For Hit Pts.	Level Title
0 — 2,024	1	1	Klutz
2,025 — 4,076	2 *	1	Quack
4,077 — 7,351	3 *	1	Goof
7,352 — 16,395	4 *	1	Jerk
16,396 — 33,743	5 *	1	Blunderer
33,744 — 52,448	6 *	1	Fumbler
52,449 — 101,010	7 *	1	Maladroit
101,011 — 217,732	8 *	1	Public Hazard
217,733 — 575,949	9 *	1	Incompetent

\* — All information on levels greater than 1st level is presented primarily for the reader's amusement. Few Hopeless characters are known to have ever made it past 1st level.

### Special abilities

All Hopeless characters attack as 0-level humans and make saving throws as 0-level humans. This is special because no one else is treated in this manner.

Anytime a Hopeless character rolls a 1 for a saving throw, he immediately takes the maximum possible amount of damage from the attack. If a Hopeless character rolls a 1 on a "to hit" roll, he automatically hits himself for normal damage (or, optionally, his nearest ally for maximum damage).

All enemies of a Hopeless character immediately gain a +10% to all morale checks, regardless of the company that the Hopeless character has at the time. Six devas and an army of phase doppelganger elf-trolls could be backing the Hopeless character up, and the opposition will still feel good. Conversely, all allies of a Hopeless character take a -10% penalty on morale checks so long as they believe the Hopeless character is attempting to support them.

Any Hopeless character who survives beyond 1st level immediately gains the power to cast *fumble* on himself once per day per level of experience thereafter. A Hopeless character who actually makes it to 4th level gains the power to cause *confusion* in any intelligent character who attempts to hold a conversation with him, a power usable once per round. This *confusion* is similar to the druid spell of the same name, only no saving throw is given and the *confusion* lasts for 1-4 days. Any Hopeless character who, ahem, makes it to 9th level will immediately gain the power to *feeblemind* an opponent by touch, to an unlimited extent (this power limited only to one use per round). This will cause the Hopeless character to be declared dangerous and harmful to the public welfare, and he will be hunted down by the armed forces of any nation he passes through.

Hopeless characters, by their nature, have saving throws of 40 vs. illusion/phantasm spells or enchantment/charm spells.

### Uses of a Hopeless character

A Hopeless character is useful if you don't want to waste a better character in a dangerous scenario. They also make amusing attractions in sideshows if one doesn't approach them too closely.



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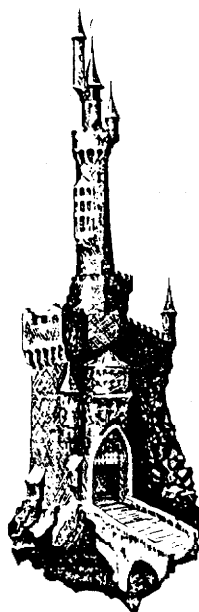
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# Getting in over your head

## Sink-or-swim rules for the DRAGONQUEST™ game

by Craig Barrett

In the realm of the Deep, mankind is an alien. Given the most sophisticated modern equipment (or its magical equivalent in the DRAGONQUEST™ game), man is still only a visitor here. He does not really belong in this environment.

He is, however, a persistent visitor. Whether freshwater lake or saltwater ocean, the Deep is a repository of mysteries and treasures that has lured man from time immemorial. So, DRAGONQUEST game players ought to reconcile themselves to the fact that sooner or later one of their characters is going to be drawn into an aquatic adventure. If he is going to survive that adventure, he better have an idea of what could happen to him once his head goes under the surface.

These rules are an attempt to meet that need for knowledge of underwater life and activities; be aware, however, that every effort has been made to adhere to existing DRAGONQUEST rules. When necessary, realism has been sacrificed to playability. So, players should start thinking of swimming (which, for clarity's sake, includes skin diving) as an adventure skill (according to rule 83.0), not as an acquired skill (Chapter VII).

### Swimmers

Every DRAGONQUEST character begins campaigning with the Swimming skill at Rank 0. A character can keep himself afloat in the water if he doesn't panic, but that's about all. He can hold his breath for 6 pulses (30 seconds), but the thought of *diving* is utterly appalling to him. As the PC increases his Swimming Rank, he begins to extend these and other abilities; by Rank 10, he is an adept Swimmer.

To chart this progress, use the experience point costs listed for Stealth, which are exactly the same for Swimming, on the Experience Point Cost Chart (87.8). Up through Rank 4, EPs are applied to this skill as described under rule 87.5; from Rank 5 on, EPs are applied directly, as described under rule 87.6.

When a PC achieves Rank 1, he acquires these abilities: diving under the surface to a distance of 7½ feet (1.5 cubic hexes), holding his breath for 6 pulses while diving and swimming, and swimming without stopping (hereafter called a *sprint*) a maximum distance of 25 yards, at a speed of TMR ½.

With each advance in Rank, diving distance increases by 7½ feet, underwater time increases by 2 pulses, and sprint distance increases by 75 yards. Swimming speed

increases to TMR 1 at Rank 3 and to TMR 1½ at Rank 8. For all humans, chase speed in the Adventure Sequence (see 80.0, paragraph 2b, and Movement Rates, 65.0) is determined by multiplying the TMR by 50 yards/minute. Note: A PC must spend 3 pulses (Ranks 1-4) or 6 pulses (Ranks 5-20) hyperventilating before diving; if this isn't done, his diving time is reduced by 30%.

### Divers

Some PCs begin campaigning at a higher Swimming Rank. The Diver is a person who was born and raised around water, and who probably learned to swim very soon after he learned to walk. He has a natural affinity for water that is almost magical and that no landsman could ever hope to match.

In order for a player to develop a PC who is a Diver, during the character generation process he simply opts, when he comes to rule 8.7, for his PC to be a Diver in lieu of enrolling the PC in a magical college. The PC automatically receives the Swimming skill at Rank 5 (worth 7,500 EPs), along with the following advantages:

1. A Diver can progress to Rank 20 in the Swimming skill. With each advance in Rank from Rank 11 up, diving distance increases by 9 feet, underwater time increases by 3 pulses, and sprint distance increases by 100 yards. At Rank 12, his swimming speed increases to TMR 2. (EP costs for Ranks 11-20 are 5,000 EPs per Rank.)

2. If a Diver becomes a Beast Master specializing in aquatics, a Navigator, or a Ranger specializing in the ocean environment, his EP cost for advancing in that skill is reduced by 25%, provided that his Swimming Rank is at least 2 levels higher than his Rank in that skill. Also, Divers have their success percentages in these skills modified by 5 points in their favor, whenever these skills are used in, on, or under the water.

3. A Diver who becomes a water mage receives a +5 addition to the base chance of performing any talent, spell, or ritual of his College. No Diver may become an air mage, fire mage, earth mage, or black mage.

Players are not encouraged to blithely enter their PCs into the Diver class. Unless the player expects most of his PC's early adventures to be in and around water, the advantages of the Diver class are insufficient to compensate for not being allowed immediate entrance into a magical College

or ready access to "The warrior alternative" (see DRAGON® Magazine, issue #86, p. 24). The Diver option is primarily included for GMs to use in creating very important NPCs who ought to have special aquatic advantages due to their origins, and to illustrate the fact that latecomers to the sea face enormous difficulties in attempting to match the prowess of people who have spent all their lives in and around water.

However, players who feel that they're getting their value's worth can make their PCs into Divers if they wish. While this excludes them from using the warrior alternative, PCs who are Divers can always enter a magical college at a later stage of their careers.

In addition, Swimmers are not forever barred from the higher ranks of the Swimming skill. Once a Swimmer has achieved Swimming Rank 10, any further EPs obtained during aquatic activity *while wearing a merfolk's cap of woven gold* can be applied toward achieving Swimming Rank 11 and up. Without a merfolk's cap, swimmers must pay 7,500 EPs/Rank to achieve Ranks 11-15, and 10,000 EPs/Rank to achieve Ranks 16-20. In this way, a Swimmer can go as high as Swimming Rank 20 if he desires, but he uses the skill increases per Rank described under the "Swimmers," heading above, not the increases given for Divers. Swimmers are never Divers: the advantages of Divers described in this section never apply to Swimmers, no matter how high a Swimming Rank they achieve. (But Swimmers *do* get TMR 2 at Swimming Rank 12.)

As to whether Divers who are already water mages (or some other type) can also become air, fire, earth, or black mages, using the option described in Eric Goldberg's DRAGONQUEST article in Chaosium's *Thieves' World*, this should be left to GM discretion. I would favor it, providing the Diver became a water mage *before* becoming any of the other four types, to fully establish his mastery of the water environment.

### Underwater combat

All surface dwellers, whether Swimmers or Divers, suffer one common disability underwater: they are "legally blind." They can locate light sources, and they can see, fuzzily, for about 3 hexes, but that's all. Fortunately, this problem can be overcome by using goggles (which block peripheral vision into the rear half of each hex on the character's right and left front) or a diving

mask (which gives unobstructed vision in those hexes).

Less easy to overcome is the 25% visual distortion with regard to distance, size, and angles that also affects all surface dwellers underwater. Only experience teaches compensation for this, so distortion is reduced to 20% at Rank 1, 15% at Rank 2, 10% at Rank 3, 5% at Rank 4, and 0% at Rank 5 and above. This affects all ranged and melee combat, underwater only.

Other than that, aquatic combat is essentially governed by rule 67.0, with directions reversed: base chance of a character on the surface hitting a character underwater is reduced by 20, with the added provision that no character who is 5 cubic hexes or more below the surface can be hit by ranged combat from the surface. Base chance of a character below the surface hitting a character above the surface is reduced by 15.

All ranged weapons are useless underwater, except for three. Crossbows and heavy crossbows can be used, with reduced ranges of 3 and 4 hexes respectively, but no change in the base chance for being underwater. Nets used underwater have a range of 2 hexes, with -10 to the base chance for the second hex only.

Both in and under the water, any melee or close combat weapon has its base chance reduced by 10. Underwater, both Class B and Class C weapons suffer a further reduction of -20 to their base chance, as well as -5 to their current damage modifier. The

minimum Physical Strength for proper use of Class B and C weapons is increased by 1 while underwater.

These reductions do not apply to magic weapons. Likewise, the fact that surface dwellers are unable to make effective vocal communication while underwater does not affect the use of magic. The limited sounds that are possible serve magical purposes perfectly well. However, the process of casting a spell, vocal or not, reduces underwater breath time by 1 pulse in all cases — unless the Water Breathing Spell (41.G-12) or the merfolk's cap of woven gold is being used.

A note on watergoing monsters: In addition to the 13 creatures listed in the Aquatics section of the DRAGONQUEST rule book, the rules also contain swimming information for crocodiles, giant land turtles, suarimes, nixies, fossergrim, nagas, water elementals, and the demons Furcalor, Vephar, and Forneus. Tigers and sabertooth tigers may also be met in the water, and these have TMRs of 1 and ½, respectively. Other non-aquatic creatures that are in water seldom move faster than TMR ½.

#### Buoyancy

Another critical factor in underwater combat is buoyancy (hereafter abbreviated as BCY). With positive BCY, an object rises in water; with negative BCY, it sinks. At 0 BCY, an object floats where it has been placed until it is moved.

The following assumptions are made for game purposes only: When used to balance weight, 1 BCY point equals 5 pounds. How fast an object rises or sinks depends on how much BCY it has in excess of 0 BCY, with 1 BCY point equal to 1 TMR. Maximum rates are TMR 4 in ascent and TMR 7 in descent.

Example: If a Diver wants to raise a 15-pound object from the bottom of a lake, he can attach three 1-pound flotation bags (each filled with +1 BCY equivalent of air) to get 0 BCY, and then he can add one more to get 1 TMR of lift. The object will rise 1 hex every pulse until the bags reach the surface. Attaching a total of seven flotation bags would give the maximum ascent of TMR 4.

Example: To gain extra "bottom time," a Diver can hold onto a line attached to a heavy weight and move with it as far down as he likes. If the diver is at 0 BCY, a 35-pound weight will take him down at the maximum rate of TMR 7.

Human males have +1 natural BCY and require a 5-pound weight belt to achieve 0 BCY, human females have a +2 natural BCY and require a 10-pound weight belt. Or, natural BCY can be overcome by expending Agility points, with 1 AG point equal to 1 BCY point.

Example: A woman of AG 15 can use 2 AG points to overcome her +2 natural BCY, rather than a 10-pound weight belt.

Similarly, the Diver described above

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could have used 4 AG points to lift the 15-pound object to the surface, rather than four flotation bags. While Physical Strength states how much one can carry (see rules 4.1 and 82.9) and indicates how much energy is needed to overcome the inertia of objects in water (to lift, pull, or push), Agility dictates whether one can or cannot move that weight. Use this formula:  $1 \text{ AG} = 1 \text{ BCY} = 1 \text{ TMR}$ .

This can become dangerous, though, because AG points are also required for a swimmer so that he can move *himself* in water. At Ranks 1-2, 6 AG points are required per  $\frac{1}{2}$  TMR of speed; at Ranks 3-7, 3 AG points per  $\frac{1}{2}$  TMR; at Ranks 8-11, 2 AG points per  $\frac{1}{2}$  TMR; and, at Ranks 12-20, 1 AG point per  $\frac{1}{2}$  TMR. These AG points are *not lost*, and AG used for swimming can be simultaneously used for combat, stealth, or when determining Initiative Value. But AG points used for swimming cannot also be used for BCY.

Example: At Swimming Rank 9 and AG 15, with a 5-pound weight belt for 0 BCY, a Diver needs 4 AG points to swim at 1 TMR and 4 more to lift the 15-pound weight at 1 TMR. This would still leave him 7 AG points unused and a total of 11 AG points available for combat (his normal 15 minus only the 4 AG points used to lift and move the 15-pound object).

Example: A woman of AG 15 would have 13 AG points available for combat if she used 2 AG points to overcome her natural

BCY, no matter what her Rank is or how fast she chooses to swim. With a 10-pound weight belt to counter her natural BCY, all 15 of her AG points would be available for other uses.

All of this points to the trouble a clothed and armored man has in water. Clothes become waterlogged rapidly, and their weight affects both BCY and AG, with a minimum AG loss of 2 points. Shoes absorb an additional 1 AG point; boots, 2 AG points. All types of armor except chain mail have 30% added to their weight; all types of armor except plate mail add 1 to the wearer's AG loss, and plate mail *doubles* its AG loss.

Example: Wearing chain mail armor and seven pounds of clothes and boots in water, a man of AG 25 has a total AG loss of 7 points (2 for clothes, 2 for boots, and 3 for armor). He also suffers -10 BCY ( $7 + 42 = 49$  pounds of weight, divided by 5 = 9.8, rounded up to 10). His natural BCY is +1, but the additional 9 AG points applied to BCY gives him a net result of 0 BCY. With 7 AG points already lost, that leaves him with 9 AG points to spare. He can easily apply 1 AG point to moving the weight he's carrying and 6 AG points to swimming, no matter what his Swimming Rank is. He even has a total of 8 AG points for combat (his 9-point reserve minus 1 point needed to keep the burden he's carrying in motion).

With only AG 16, he would have enough points to keep afloat, but not enough to

swim even one stroke. How long he could float like that, or whether he could unburden himself, would depend on GM discretion. With only AG 15, he couldn't even float. He'd sink at a rate of TMR 1, starting the moment he entered the water.

If two men grapple in the water (two combatants, or a drowning victim clutching in panic at his rescuer), all of their AG points are absorbed in combat and cannot be used for BCY. (The same is true of a man who is entangled.) Men in this condition rise or sink according to their combined BCY, with -2 BCY added to their total to account for the effects of mutual awkwardness in water.

### Normal exertion

Time spent active in water is always costly in Fatigue points for a landsman. Whenever a character spends a significant portion of any given hour in water (see 82.1, paragraph 3), consult the Fatigue and Encumbrance Chart (82.9) as though he had been carrying 60 pounds of weight for a full hour, and charge him the appropriate number of FT points. The exercise rate should be read as one level higher than the same exercise on land. (In lieu of assigning it a higher rate, the cost of strenuous exercise is doubled.)

This does not include the FT cost of anything being carried, pushed, or towed in water for a significant amount of time. Determine this cost separately, again at a rate one level higher than on land.

### Exceeding the limits

Up to this point, the life of a Swimmer or Diver is relatively easy and uncomplicated. As long as he stays within his limits (and out of the reach of the nasties, he doesn't have much to worry about. But if he wants to complicate matters, he can exceed his limits — for a price.

1. If a character dives past his Rank limit, he *immediately* expends 1 FT penalty point for every 5 feet that he exceeds it by.

2. If a character exceeds his sprint limit, he *immediately* expends 1 FT point for every 5 yards (+5 per Rank), or portion thereof, that he exceeds his limit.

3. During the tactical stage (rule 80.0, section 3), a character may double his TMR for a number of pulses equal to his Swimming Rank. To do this, he must have enough free AG points to account for the extra speed (at the usual AG cost for his Rank). He must also pay 1 FT point per  $\frac{1}{2}$  TMR of extra speed, payable every 10 pulses, or portion thereof, spent at extra speed. Underwater, the FT penalty is payable every 5 pulses, or portion thereof. This burst of extra speed is possible only once per sprint or dive.

4. A character may exceed his underwater time by a number of pulses equal to one-half of his Willpower (rounding down), at a cost of 1 FT point every third pulse. The first FT penalty point is lost on the first Willpower pulse. If the character is not able to take a breath by the time these pulses are

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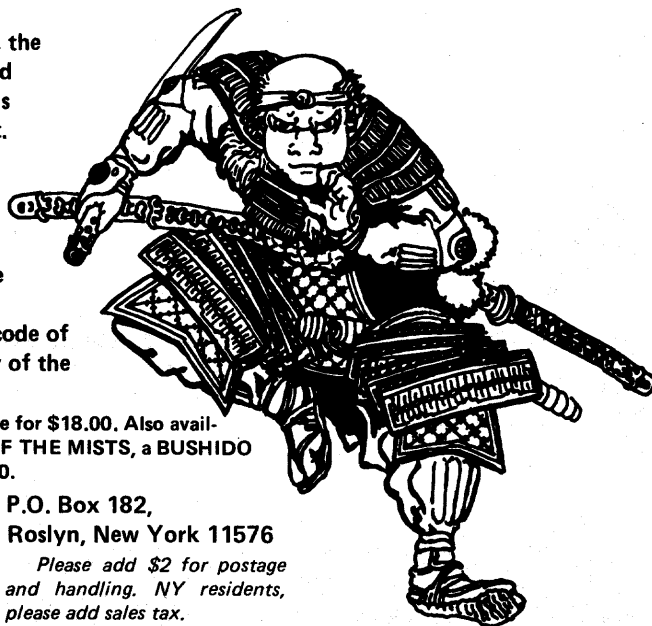
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used up, he *immediately* begins to drown.

5. In addition, whenever a surface dweller dives past 33 feet, he *immediately* loses 1 FT penalty point. Another point is lost going past 66 feet, and another going past 99 feet.

FT penalty losses due to these five causes are cumulative during a single sprint or dive. (A sprint is ended when at least 3 pulses are spent at rest; a dive, when the character resurfaces.) If a character accumulates FT penalties greater than one-third of his original Endurance level (rounding down), the effect is the same as if he had suffered these losses due to a wound (rule 19, paragraph 2): the character is immediately stunned and begins to drown if still in the water.

Fortunately, so long as the character doesn't incur the drowning penalty, FT losses due to these five causes are fairly easy to recover — unlike normal FT losses, which aren't. Once the character is able to spend time resting totally out of the water, his rate of recovery is determined by dividing his normal FT level by his Swimming Rank (rounding up). The result is the number of pulses of rest it takes him to recover each FT penalty point. (FT points lost to causes other than these five cannot be recovered in this fashion.)

Females recover FT penalty points as if they were one Swimming Rank higher than their current level.

A character has one hour to recover FT penalties; all unrecovered points after that time become normal FT losses that will have to be recovered in the normal fashion. FT penalty points are treated as lost points for all purposes until they are recovered. If a character hyperventilates for a full dive, but only dives for 70% or less of his allotted underwater time, 1 FT point lost during that dive is automatically restored at the end of the dive.

Also note that a character can exceed his TMR limit while descending, without penalty, by making a *sounding* dive. This is only possible at Swimming Rank 8 or higher. The technique is to float on the surface at 0 BCY, often while using a diving mask and snorkel to observe below. When the character wants to make an extra-rapid dive, he jackknifes in the water, throws his feet into the air, and descends at TMR 3 (for males) or TMR 2 (for females). Hyperventilation cannot be used with a sounding dive.

Even the number of FT points a character has can be exceeded (as in rule 82.6), but for a character in water, this is dire danger. The character may expend "phantom" FT points up to one-half of his initial FT points (rounding down) in aquatic activity. In the pulse in which the last phantom point is expended, he immediately collapses. These phantom FT points must be "restored" by sleeping 1 hour per 2 points, and only when this is completed can the character begin restoring real FT points. (By now, FT penalty points have become normal FT losses, of course.) For

rule 82.6, paragraph 3, 1 phantom FT point equals one half-hour of exhaustion.

### Drowning

Drowning is the greatest danger a character faces in the water. Aquatic enemies may or may not be present in any given situation, but wherever there is water, there is the danger of drowning.

For game purposes, drowning is a process of Fatigue and Endurance point loss. In the pulse a character is declared to be drowning, he loses 1 FT point, and then continues to lose 1 FT point every pulse thereafter. When he has lost all FT points, he is stunned. In the following pulse, EN point loss begins at the rate of 1 point per pulse. When all EN points are gone, the character is dead.

Once drowning has begun, the process continues until it is corrected by direct action, or until the character dies.

Drowning may result from several things. Whenever a character underwater uses up all his breath time, including his extra Willpower pulses, he is declared to be drowning. Swim rate is reduced to 1/3 TMR (plus BCY ascent rate), and the character immediately makes a Willpower test to see if he panics. If he rolls equal to or less than (Willpower  $\times$  4), he retains his self-control and can continue to help himself (by releasing his weight belt if he hasn't already done so, for example). If he rolls higher, he panics and can no longer help himself.

A character who is stunned in or under the water is also declared to be drowning. He cannot recover from being stunned or panicked until after the drowning process is stopped (presuming he's rescued).

Panic may result from anything that would cause panic on land (see rule 64.1, for example). When consulting the Fright Table (44.8) for characters in water, any result from 26-95 should be considered as panic only — use the 26-76 explanation (recognizing that in water a panicked, drowning victim is virtually immobilized). All panicked victims begin to drown.

In addition, a Rank 0 Swimmer who (voluntarily or involuntarily) enters a free body of water up to neck level makes an immediate Willpower check. If no fright occurs, a further WP check is made every 30 seconds the swimmer remains in the water at that depth, or whenever an event occurs that would frighten him (such as a splash sending water over his head). If fright occurs, consult the Fright Table, with 01-20 as given and 21 + as a panic reaction.

### Rescue and recovery


To rescue a drowning victim, the rescuer must come into close contact and execute a successful restrain action (16.5) on the victim. A victim who is either stunned or not panicking presents no problems (use the PS and AG of the rescuer,  $\times$  3, only), and the victim can be pulled to safety at  $\frac{1}{2}$  TMR (if rescuer has a Swimming Rank from 1-7) or 1 TMR (if rescuer has a Swimming Rank from 8-20).

A panicked victim, however, will attempt to grapple (16.3) any rescuer who comes within range *and* sight. If the grapple action succeeds, the rescuer must attempt to break the victim's hold, or both may sink (see Buoyancy, above). To lessen this risk, two rescuers may make a combined restrain attempt on a panicked victim.

An unstunned victim may also attempt a self-rescue by using a grapple action to seize a rope, branch, floating log, bush, or some other object that is within reach and sight, and pull himself to safety. Base chance of the grapple is determined as if the object were a person with PS 0 and FT 0 (see 17.6, Strike Chance Modifiers). A panicked victim suffers a -10 penalty to his base chance.

Only when the drowning victim reaches or is brought to a place of safety — essentially, out of the water, though the GM may rule a character halfway up on a log or rock to be considered safe — can an attempt be made to end the drowning process.

Every Swimmer and Diver learns lifesaving techniques when he learns to swim, and improves them as his Swimming Rank increases. Therefore, the rescuer with the highest Swimming Rank should make the primary lifesaving attempt. The base chance for this is the total of the victim's remaining FT and EN points at the moment of the attempt, plus (the rescuer's Swimming Rank  $\times$  3). If a D100 roll is equal to or less than the base chance,



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drowning stops at once. If not, drowning continues, but further attempts may be made every pulse until the victim is saved or dies. If more than one rescuer is present, a second rescuer may assist by adding his (Swimming Rank x 2) to the base chance. (An unstunned victim who is not panicking may add his unmodified Swimming Rank to that of a single rescuer.)

An unstunned victim who has performed a self-rescue may attempt a self-save by adding his unmodified Swimming Rank to his remaining FT and EN points; a panicked victim uses only his FT and EN points. The self-save attempt may be repeated only until the character becomes stunned.

If the victim is under the Spell of Flotation (41.G-4), the extra Willpower pulses added to his breath time are increased by 50%, and his chance of resisting panic is increased by the strength of the spell (base increase of 5, plus 1 per mage's Rank). All rescue and lifesaving attempts (both by himself and others) also benefit by the strength of the spell. (Attempts by a panicked victim to grapple rescuers are *reduced* by the strength of the spell — the magic helps its target in spite of himself.)

In the pulse that a lifesaving attempt succeeds, all FT and EN losses end. Panicked victims will not resist lifesaving, though they may have resisted rescue, and panic ends in the pulse that lifesaving succeeds. Beginning with this pulse, stunned

victims may attempt to recover from stunned (see rule 19).

Once the drowning victim has been saved, recovery of FT and EN points lost due to near-drowning depends on the victim's fitness, as measured by his Swimming Rank. First, lost EN points are recovered at a rate of 2 per Rank for every six hours the victim sleeps. Once that process is completed and all EN points lost due to near-drowning are recovered, then FT points lost due to near-drowning are recovered at a rate of 2 per Rank every hour the victim rests. If no EN points were lost, FT recovery may begin at once.

New weapons and basic goods

The following items should be added to the weapons and goods lists:

*Diving knife:* 14 oz., PS 7, MD 11, base chance 50, damage modifier +1, range P (not weighted for throwing), Class A, use MC, cost 12. Skill Ranks with daggers apply.

*Diver's safety line:* 150 ft. long, 15 lbs., 15 SPs.

*Diving goggles:* 9 oz., 15 SPs.

*Diving mask:* 16 oz., 30 SPs.

*Snorkel tube:* 12 oz., 2 SPs. Used to breathe while floating facedown in water. Sounding dives will not dislodge it. Be sure to clear it of water before each use.

*Weight belts:* 5-pound type, 3 SPs; 10-pound type, 4 SPs; 15-pound type, 5 SPs. Belts have quick-loose ties and should be put on last when donning diving gear so that they can be released without trouble during emergencies.

*Flotation (air) bags:* 1-pound size, 2 SPs.

*Diver's net sack:* 8 oz., 1 SP. Since water flows through the fine, cut-resistant mesh, the sack never adds + BCY beyond whatever is placed inside. It has a drawstring closure.

*Diver's belt:* 12 oz., 4 SPs. Belt has sewn pouches for items small enough to pass through the mesh of a diver's net sack, and it also has loops for carrying tools and weapons.

*Calf sheath:* 8 oz., 2 SPs. Used for carrying a diving knife (only) at the calf; can be used on either leg.

Remember that the gear that a diver actually wears is made for underwater use and never imposes BCY or AG penalties on the wearer — except for weight belts, which affect BCY.

A final word: These rules are designed for a Mediterranean-style climate. If campaigns are to occur in cold Northern waters, be prepared to add warm clothing — long-johns, for example (of the waterproof sort) — to the basic goods list.

In real life, the hallmark of the good swimmer or diver is caution. Wisdom dictates that he knows his limits and that he doesn't go beyond them. Hopefully, that principle has come across in this article. If a Swimmer or Diver stays within his limits, he can collect all the rewards of the Deep and perhaps suffer none of its penalties. ¶



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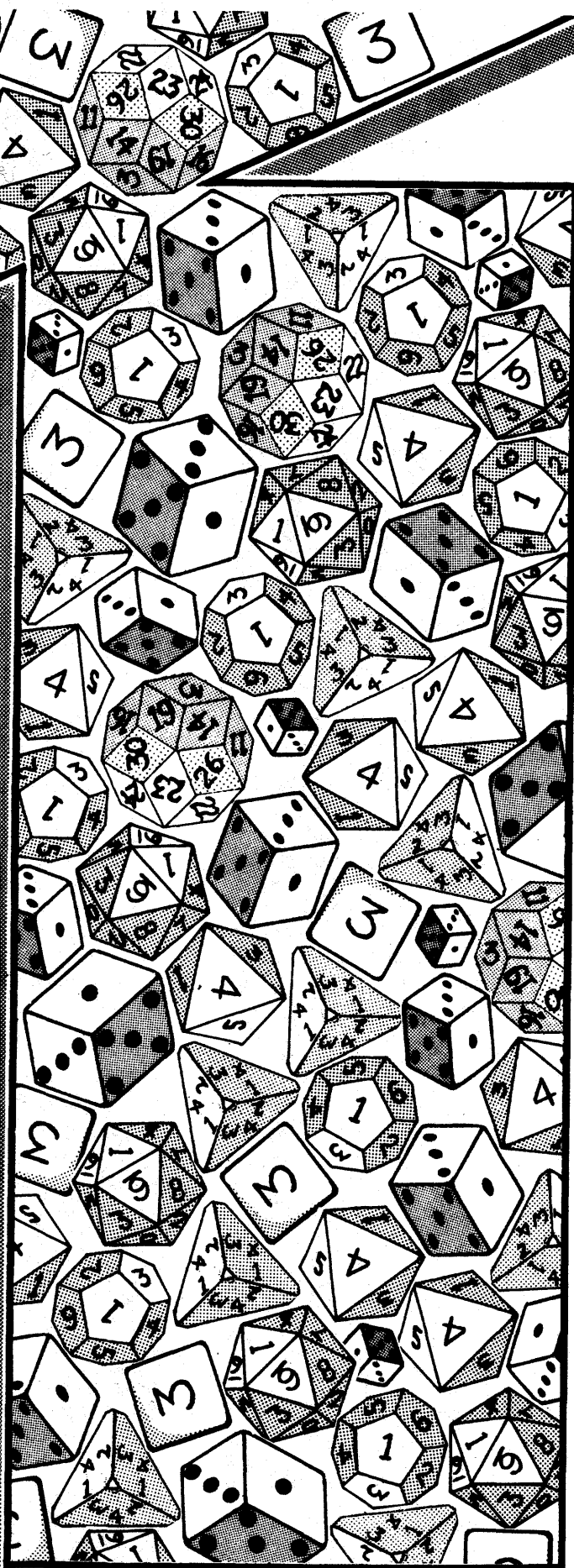
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**O**N A HILLTOP JUST NORTH OF Wyndark, Sister Ayala huddled by the campfire in the grey pre-dawn chill. In a few hours her party would be on the move again and, before nightfall — *with the Goddess' blessing*, thought the cleric automatically — out of these debatable lands and in the river settlements. She crossed her arms under her cloak and rubbed her thin shoulders. *A bed tonight, and no night watches.* Her militant order was not noted for its austerity.

A movement among her sleeping companions caught the attention of the little priestess. Briony was stirring. Suddenly rolling over and sitting bolt upright, Briony scattered her fur wraps. Ayala smiled. The ranger always woke thus, leaping from her bed as if the camp were being attacked. An admirable trait in a ranger, but one with occasionally humorous results. Ayala, remembering a certain incident at the inn in Usseresk, smiled more broadly. Again, her order was not noted for its austerity.

Picking her way between the sleepers, Briony moved to the fire. "God's teeth, but it's cold!" she growled.

Ayala reached toward the pile of firewood by her side. "Then let us build up the fire for breakfast, rouse up these sluggards, and be gone the sooner."

"Nay, Sister," the ranger replied, touching Ayala's outstretched hand, "bide for a moment. I've been watching for a time to consult with you privately."

Puzzled, the little cleric sat back, folding her arms under her cloak again. The tall ranger stood, turning to scrutinize the party still sleeping behind her. She stared at the still forms for a moment, then moved around the campfire and squatted beside Ayala. "Have you noticed nothing amiss with Inglaf?" Briony asked.

Ayala peered across the fire at the figure of the warrior bundled in his sleeping robes. "No," she answered after a brief pause. "Is his wound paining him? I would have sworn it was healed. Why did he say nothing of it to me last night?"

The ranger poked at the fire with a branch. "I don't think it is his wound. I'm no healer, of course, but he moved lithely enough yesterday. No, there's something else troubling him. I don't know what, but I'm worried." Briony thrust the stick into the fire impatiently.

Ayala nodded vigorously. The ranger was not a fidgeter. She probably had reason for her concern.

"Keep an eye on him, won't you, Sister?" asked Briony. "Perhaps he's slept off his trouble, but if not. . . . Look, we're not home yet, even if we are nearly out of the wilderlands. We'll need every fighter alert and whole-hearted until then.

The cleric nodded again. "I'll ferret out whatever it is that ails him, Briony, never fear." Ayala slapped her knees with a decisive air. "Depend upon it."

As the day wore on into the afternoon, Sister Ayala began to wish that she had not spoken so confidently. Gloom wrapped Inglaf like a cloak, bowed his head like a heavy burden. No, worse than that! Inglaf's strength was his pride; no physical weight would cause

# Inglaf's Dream

by Ama Darr Rogan

Illustrations by Valerie Valusek



him to hang his head. *And worst of all*, worried the little cleric, *his demeanor has begun to infect the rest of the party*. Even Trath, usually as light-hearted as his elvish kindred, and his half-brother Lilliard looked dour. *As dour as . . . as dwarves!* thought Ayala angrily. She shook her head with vexation, the loops and braids of her ritual headdress dancing in the sunlight. *What ails Inglafl?* she asked herself just as she had asked him earlier. His only answer then had been a despairing sigh; now she answered with a sigh of her own and trudged onward.

At eventide they found the inn for which Ayala had yearned during the cold morning watches. It was not a particularly elegant accommodation, but was stocked with the homely comforts weary travelers most desire.

It had clean beds, noted Trath, his spirits restored, "though who'd complain of a flea or three after spiders and wood lice?"

It had hot water. Ludo Piedevair leered up at tall Briony. "Shall I come along and scrub your back, m'dear?" he asked.

"What! You'd steal the soap, you half-pint thief! Pick on someone your own size," the ranger sputtered with laughter.

And it had superlative ale. Ayala sighed with contentment. She could feel her first mugful clear down to her toes, which now seemed as warm as Ludo's. Jovially, she banged the mug on the bar for a refill. *Off the road again! Party time!* Then she caught sight of Inglafl, slouched at the end of the bar knocking back his . . . yes, his *fourth* mug of ale as if it had been water. *Damn the man!* thought Ayala furiously. Then, contritely fingering the medallion at her breast, "No, I didn't really mean it," she whispered.

The barmaid who was offering her the refilled mug brought Ayala's thoughts back to reality. *A comely enough wench*, Ayala mused. *Why can't Inglafl take a fancy to her and take his mind off his troubles?* Ayala took a deep draught of the ale, trying to recapture the party mood. *No use, Sister*, she told herself. *You know your duty*. With another sigh, she set down the mug, wiped her mouth on her sleeve, squared her shoulders, and marched over to Inglafl.

"Come along, brother. Outside."

The fighter gazed at her dully.

"And don't pretend you're drunk. You've put away enough, but it's had no effect. I can tell."

"Nay, Sister." They stood staring at each other for a moment, then his head dropped and he covered his face with his hands. "Oh, God. Sister . . . I . . . I —"

Ayala quickly grabbed his shoulder. "Not here, man. Come on. Outside, I tell you. Come, Inglafl. Outside."

Half pulling, half shoving him, the little cleric bundled the warrior through the taproom and out of the door, slamming it firmly behind them.

The night air, sharp with frost, still and clear, braced Inglafl for a moment. Ayala relaxed her grip on his arm. After she had guided him gently to the bench under the lantern hanging by the inn door, Inglafl slumped down. He threw up a hand to shield his eyes from the lamplight, then said, "I thank you, Sister. I

don't know what came over me in there. The heat and the noise belike, or the ale. Say what you like, but that were uncommon powerful ale."

Ayala snatched his hand from his face and glared at him. "Don't trifle with me, Inglafl," she snapped. "Heat and noise, indeed! Look me in the eye and give me that sort of a child's tale, if you dare." Then she added more kindly, "Come now, Inglafl. There's something weighing on your mind. Tell me."

"Don't ask me, Ayala, I beg you." Again he buried his face in his hands and groaned. "Ah, God! The horror of it. Don't ask me."

Ayala drew herself erect. Clasp ing her medallion, she held it out toward him and called, not loudly, but in a commanding tone, "Inglafl Ingmarson. Attend to me."

His hands dropped, and he gazed at her with awe. Was it a trick of lantern light and moonlight combined, or one of his diseased imagination, that gave the little cleric an unearthly aura?

"Attend!" she said again. "I adjure thee, in the name of our Sovereign Lady and Mother, the most compassionate Queen of Heaven, to reveal thy distress to me, Her servant, that thou mayst have solace."

Could this be Ayala, the Ayala he knew? Trembling, the fighter sank to his knees, stammering, "M — m . . . my Lady . . ."

"Kneel not to me, Inglafl," she said quietly. "You know, I hope, that it was never I alone who healed your wounds, but my Goddess. I wish Her now to heal your wounded spirit; however, as I am only Her earthly instrument, you must tell me what your trouble is." She moved to the bench. "Sit here beside me." Somewhat hesitantly he obeyed her, shaking his head as if to clear away the disturbing visions. She patted his hand. "Now speak, my friend."

"Well." He leaned forward, staring at his hands clasped together on his knees. "Well, it were like this, Ayala. It were a dream."

*Oh, Heaven bless us!* thought the cleric crossly. *All this fuss for a mere dream!* Either she fidgeted impatiently or he caught her thought, for he shot her a sharp glance.

"It weren't no common dream."

"Some dreams are sent from the gods, of course — or from elsewhere," she replied as patiently as possible. *It's most unlikely that this is either a portent or an omen*, she thought, *whatever I may say to soothe him*. *No, Inglafl has had a nightmare, so I must sit here freezing*. Unobtrusively, she drew her feet in under her robe. "Go on, Inglafl."

"Not no common dream," he repeated. "More of a vision, like. And what's more, Sister, it's come on me these two nights running. Now that's more like a sending, ain't it?"

Ayala nodded slowly. Two nights! That altered the case considerably. "And tonight?" she asked.

He shuddered. "It's the third night, you see. That's why I was trying to get drunk. But you were right: It done no good."

"No," answered the priestess briskly. "All that can help is to tell me. What happens in your dream?"

He looked at his hands again. Ayala, following his gaze, saw that they were tightly clenched.

"It begin with me, all alone in the dark . . . and it get lighter and lighter, very slow. But I can't turn my head, nor even my eyes, to see where the light comes from. I'm standing there but I can't move at all. It's like — do you remember that fellow we met, in that bar in St. Sylla that time? Poor bastard were magicked into a statue for a hundred year — or so he said. But all the while, he were alive inside." He looked at her inquiringly. She nodded.

"It's like that. So then it's light, you see, and I can tell I'm on a vast, great pavement, stretching as far as I can see. I can't see sky nor walls nor anything else." He hesitated. "And then . . . then I do notice . . . something."

She leaned toward him. "Go on," she whispered.

He wrung his hands. "It's . . . all of us."

Inglaf gestured toward the inn door. "All the rest of us — our company. Don't you see? We're all statues *too*, lined up as we usually march. Briony's out in front, on point. And little Ludo's about ten paces behind and flanking her like always. Sharper than a ferret, he is, always looking out for any little thing. It's them to the life, but frozen, sort of. . . . Then Trath and Lilliard's behind them and — oh, merciful Gods, Sister — the horrible thing is their cloaks, billowing out behind them like there's a high wind or like they're running. But there's no wind at all, and they can't move at all.

"And then . . . I can't move nor look around, but my statue's turned a little so I can just catch a glimpse of . . . of you, Ayala."

Beside him Ayala trembled with a chill that had nothing to do with the autumn night.

"That ain't the worst yet."

Ayala signed him to continue.

"Beyond you . . . there's Reynar."

"Oh, no!" she cried. "That can't be, Inglaf. He's dead!"

"In my dream his statue . . . it's fallen over."

She was sobbing now, her thin shoulders shaking, her braids quivering. "Oh, Inglaf. I tried to save him; I tried so hard!"

Inglaf put his arm around her, patting her shoulder soothingly. "There, there. There, Ayala, I'm sorry. But you would ask me."

She gulped, stiffened, dashed the tears from her eyes. "No!" She drew a deep breath, forcing herself to speak calmly. "No, Inglaf. I didn't just *ask* you. I *adjured* you in the name of my Goddess. And I adjure you still. You were right: It is a terrible dream. But you must finish telling me if I'm to help you. Don't try to spare me."

He nodded. "I understand, Sister. Well, then. That's the first bit, where I can just see. Then, a little at a time, I can hear. It's a horrible din at first. Far above me, voices are gabbling all at once. The first night — forgive me! — I thought it was the gods and I was come to judgment. But then, even though I can understand what they say, it don't make sense at all."

"What do they say?" Ayala was almost afraid to ask.

"It don't make *any* sense," Inglaf cried angrily.

"They go on for a bit about rolls and about how he didn't make a roll nor she didn't make a roll. And then they quieten down some and one voice — the one that's been yelling loudest — says, 'Okay, Karl. You roll up another character, and I'll put him in later.' And another voice says, 'Same level?' First voice, he says, 'Fat chance!' Like that — kind of nasty." Then Inglaf looked away. "I won't repeat what the other says, that Karl. And another voice — it's a woman this time — she says 'Oh, shut up, Karl. Let's get on with it.' And then, all of a sudden, I'm pulled out of my body, in the statue there; and I'm in another body, one that can move and feel. And . . . and I'm staring down at that pavement, but it ain't no pavement. It's . . . it's sort of a great, shiny parchment . . . marked off like tiles. And there's our statues again. But this time, they're tiddly little things not so big as your thumb."

"I look up then, and I'm sitting at a table with a party of strange youths and maidens — if maidens they be, so immodestly as they're dressed. One . . . female looks around at the company and speaks — Ayala, she speaks with Briony's voice! — saying, 'All right, gang, let's get our butts out of Jack's little trap here.' And she reaches for the figure of Briony on the parchment."

"And then, I understand that these folk believe that . . . that they are us and that we are naught but their fantasy, their playthings for an idle hour."

Ayala sat rigid. Inglaf grabbed her hand between his two enormous ones, wrenching it in his anguish. She hardly noticed the pain.

"Is that all? Ayala, you're a priestess; you must know. Are we but a game for these gods or devils?"

Sister Ayala sat on a rough bench by an inn door.

She gazed across the road to the fields sloping down to the river, to the forest dark beyond, to the hunter's moon riding the sky above the tree tops. "Nay, Inglaf," she said softly. "It is but a dream — a strange and fearful dream, it may sometimes seem — but nothing more." Standing, she laid her hands on his head. "And now, let us pray to Our Lady that she will heal thy wounded heart and mind and grant thee peace."

A little later, the little cleric and the fighter crept into the inn. A drowsy innkeeper waited to bolt the door behind them as they stole softly up the stairs. At her door, Inglaf took Ayala's hand again. She grimaced slightly; her hand would be sore for a week. Then Inglaf whispered, "Thank you again, Sister."

Withdrawing her hand — tactfully she hoped — she patted his cheek. "That's all right, Inglaf. That's what I'm here for. Now, off to bed with you. You'll sleep well tonight"

"Goodnight, Ayala."

Too tired to bother lighting a lamp, Ayala undressed by firelight, murmuring her evening prayers through a succession of jawbreaking yawns. Finally, she crawled into the high, curtained bed. *Clean sheets! And I'm almost too weary to care.*

Instantly, she was asleep. And soon, Sister Ayala began to dream.

# ACADEMY OF ADVENTURE GAMING ARTS & DESIGN

## OFFICIAL ORIGINS AWARDS NOMINATION BALLOT

for the year 1984, to be presented at ORIGINS '85, June 27-30, 1985, in Baltimore, Maryland  
(for information about Origins '85, write P.O. Box 139, Middletown, N.J. 07748)

The Origins Awards, presented at Origins each year, are an international, popular series of awards aimed at recognizing Outstanding achievements in Adventure Gaming. They comprise the Charles Roberts Awards for Boardgaming, and the H.G. Wells Awards for Miniatures and Role-Playing Games. An Awards Committee of hobbyists (some professionals, but primarily independents) directs and administers the awards system. The nomination ballot is open to all interested gamers. YOUR VOTE can make a real difference! A final ballot is prepared by the committee and voted on by members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design. Academy membership, \$3/year, is open to active, accomplished hobbyists, both pro and amateur. Membership guidelines are available for a SASE from the addresses given below. Correspondence should be sent to the USA address. Present members may renew by sending their check with this ballot. Canadians may send \$3 Canadian, payable to Mike Girard. UK and European members may send 2 pound sterling payable to Ian Livingstone. US and all others may send US \$3 payable to GAMA.

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**Instructions. Read Carefully.** Print legibly or type your nominations. Ballots that are messy, not filled out correctly, or show attempts at stuffing will not be counted. You may list three nominees per category. It does not matter in what order you list them. To keep the voting as meaningful as possible, do not make selections in unfamiliar categories. **YOU MUST SIGN THE BALLOT!** And include your address. You may vote only once.

Nominations should be for products produced during the calendar year 1984. Exceptions are permitted for older products which gain significant exposure and acclaim during 1984. Miniature figure series nominations should be for product lines which are either new or have been substantially expanded in 1984.

This ballot may be reproduced and circulated by any means available, provided its contents are faithfully copied. Magazine editors and publishers should plan to include the ballot in an issue of their publications due to come out during the interval from February to April of 1985. Clubs and other organizations should circulate copies among the members shortly after the first of the year.

All Adventure Gamers are encouraged to vote!

**DEADLINE - APRIL 28, 1985**

### THE H.G. WELLS AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN MINIATURES AND ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

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8. Best Professional Role-Playing  
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9. Best Play-By-Mail Game, 1984: \_\_\_\_\_  
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10. Best Pre-20th Century  
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11. Best 20th Century  
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12. Best Science Fiction  
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13. Best Fantasy  
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\_\_\_\_\_
14. Best Professional  
Boardgaming Magazine, 1984: \_\_\_\_\_  
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15. Best Adventure Game  
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16. Best Amateur Adventure  
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\_\_\_\_\_
17. Best Graphic Presentation  
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(includes cover and interior art,  
components, etc) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame:  
(Previous winners are Don Turnbull,  
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A new race for the STAR FRONTIERS® game



LISTEN UP! If you've been sending letters to Jeff or the ARES™ Section asking to see the Uncanny X-Men™, the New Mutants™, the Hellfire Club™, the Morlocks™, the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants™, the unstoppable Juggernaut™, or Jean Grey™ (in all of her incarnations), then GO IMMEDIATELY TO YOUR HOBBY SHOP and purchase *Operation Wideawake*, the new all-mutant module for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game. Play it, read it, eat it, dance to it, just get it and have fun.

April is here, and with it we bring a special bonus to all Marvel® Universe freaks out there. Not only will you get the Invincible Iron Man™, but you get the Incredible Iron Duck™ as well! Thanks, Jeff, even if you couldn't include Winda Weston™. See "Not Quite the Marvel®-Phile" for more.

We have our very first ARES Section Special: The deck plans for an adventure-class starship for the STAR TREK® game, set in the center of this issue. We have a nasty little surprise for the hardened Star Lawmen among you: the Sathar's cousins — as *player characters* — and mutant gamers (aren't we all?) will find more mutations for their money in this section.

With regards to the StarQuestions column: please don't send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your questions. Any questions sent to us will be answered only in the column, except in unusual circumstances. We don't have the time to make personal replies. Also note that POLYHEDRON™ Newszine has a "Dispel Confusion" column that answers some science-fiction gaming questions.

See you next month!

*Roger E. Moore*

## ARES™ Section 96 THE SCIENCE-FICTION GAMING SECTION

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# "These are the voyages of the *Ginny's Delight* . . ."

An adventuring starship for  
**STAR TREK®: The Role-Playing Game**

by Dale L. Kemper



©1985 by Dale L. Kemper

Many science-fiction gamers enjoy creating adventuring parties which go from planet to planet in their own small starships. If no such ships are available in the game, then the game master or one of the players with an interest in starship design will have to create them. The supplements already published for the STAR TREK® game that deal with starships (such as the Klingon and Federation Ship Recognition Manuals) are quite limited in their presentation of vessels that could be run by a small band of adventurers. The manuals are instead concerned with the larger ships of Star Fleet and the Klingon Imperial Navy, ships that usually have 300-400 crewmen aboard them.

Some games fill this gap with "adventure-class" vessels published in various supplements or magazines. This article presents one such ship for the STAR TREK game, and it is ideal for adventuring parties of up to four characters. The STAR TREK game is not just for those who wish to be Star Fleet officers or Klingon Naval personnel. Only imagination should limit what characters can do.

## **Tramp Trader *Ginny's Delight***

Vessel Class: Tramp trader, small  
Vessel Type: Merchantman  
Designer: T.P. Hodekker  
Vessel name: *Ginny's Delight*  
Hull number: MM 13920

Contractor: Belter Industries  
Cost: 29.23 MCR

Overall length: 48 meters  
Overall width: 34 meters  
Overall height: 15 meters  
Deck ceiling height: 2.5 meters  
Cargo units: 90  
Metric tonnage (empty): 8000

## **Warp engines**

Type: One FWA  
Movement point ratio: 1/1  
Power units available: 6  
Stress charts: F/G  
Max. safe cruising speed: Warp 7.5  
Emergency speed: Warp 9

## **Impulse engine**

Type: FIA  
Power units available: 2

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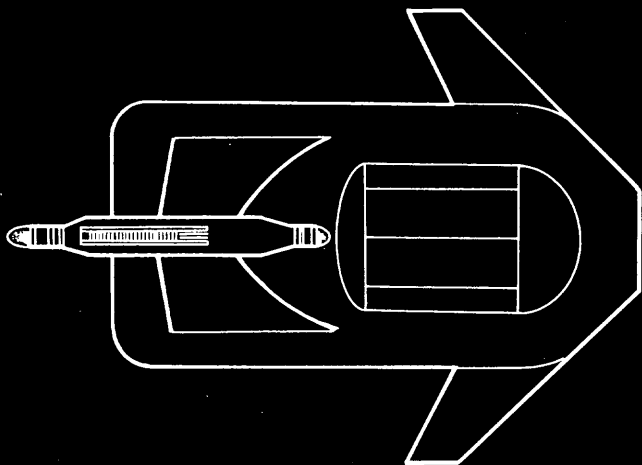
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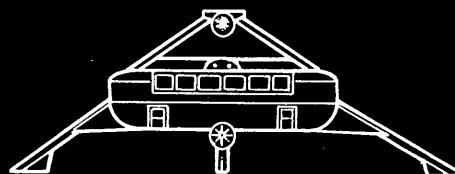
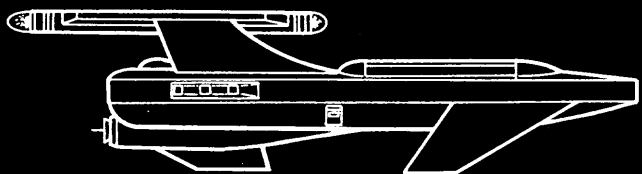


Contrary to initial appearances, the bow of the *Ginny's Delight* is to the left in the two schematic views of the ship to the left. The forward-mounted warp drive overhangs the bridge and photon torpedo mount.

Upper left: Overhead view of ship

Lower left: Port view of ship

Below: Bow view of ship



### Shields and damage control

Superstructure points: 5

Deflector shield type: None

### Armaments

Type: FP-2 photon torpedo mount

Location: Bow

Firing chart: 3

Power to arm: 1

Damage: 6

### Other data

Transporters: One standard 2-person model

Shuttlecraft: None

Tractor beams: None

Crew requirements: 1-4\*

Passenger facilities: Varies

Damage chart: A

\* — Captain, navigator, engineer, assistant engineer. One person may operate the ship, however.

The tramp merchant trader *Ginny's Delight* is a one-of-a-kind vessel, currently owned and operated by Captain Ontario Barnes and various free-lance crew personnel picked up at starbase bars and flop houses. Built some thirty years ago, the ship has acquired a number of "special modifications" along the way that make her unique. One of the most important alterations is the Type FP-2 photon torpedo mount situated

beneath the forepart of the warp nacelle. Being in such close proximity to the warp drive, the mount cannot be detected by most standard sensors, and the *Delight* has surprised a number of unwary pirates, eager for an easy kill.

No deflector shields have as yet been installed, but Captain Barnes has frequently announced his intention to

## Ginny's Delight is a one-of-a-kind vessel...

mount some eventually. Because of the currently poor defensive capabilities of the vessel, her usual tactic, when approached by any suspicious vessel, is to make an emergency warp out of the area and to ask questions later. This has been very effective in keeping the ship in one piece.

The *Ginny's Delight* is streamlined and capable of planetary landings. With her low cargo capacity, she usually is found transporting smaller, high-profit cargoes,

sometimes of an illegal nature. Found mainly in the Federation/Orion border areas, she is well known in some of the major ports there. She is easily recognizable by her unique forward-positioned warp nacelle on her upper hull and by the large cargo hatch aft. The old-style sensor array and swept-back atmospheric winglets, combined with her worn appearance, complete the picture. There are no passenger facilities, but Captain Barnes has been known to take on a "paying" crewman or two, usually being smuggled into one system or another.

The *Delight* was constructed by one of the smaller ship construction yards, Belter Industries, located amid the asteroid field surrounding Dicameron VI. Named by her designer after the memory of a pleasant leave spent on the pleasure asteroid Alover, she continues to be one of the most interesting tramp merchantmen amid the thousands that ply their trade within the Federation Exploration Zone.

The deck plans for the *Ginny's Delight* have been placed on the four center pages of this magazine. Simply bend back the staples, pry the deck plans loose, and lay them out flat for use in your STAR TREK® gaming with miniature figures or cardboard counters.



In the current GAMMA WORLD® game rules, the physical mutation *new body parts* has been left as a sort of miscellaneous physical, mutational advantage. When it is rolled, the player is allowed to design any sort of *new body part* he thinks will help his character, subject to the GM's approval. The idea seems to be that such a variable mutation, rather than a combination of dry stats and official mutations, will make a character unique.

However, this system creates problems, at least in my experience. Some players have trouble inventing original mutations which are more than mere variations of the official mutations in the book, especially now that the latter have been greatly expanded. Not everyone can be creative at the drop of the percentile dice, and it is not fair to make the party wait a week before adventuring while one player designs his *new body part*.

The system is hard on the GM, too, who must regulate these player-designed mutations to keep them sane and reasonably balanced. As we all know, some players constantly push for all they can get, and some GMs may lack either the experience to balance suggested mutations fairly or the foresight to imagine how a clever and ambitious player could wreck a campaign with a mutation that seemed harmless enough when it was approved.

When the GM does have the strength and the judgment to hold the line against an overambitious player, it can be the beginning of an exhausting round of haggling ("All right, if you won't allow that, how about this?") or bickering ("You accepted his mutation, why won't you accept mine?"). After the furor has died down and the hard feelings have settled in, chances are that the whole group will simply fasten on the one *new body part* they consider the best that the GM will allow. This destroys the whole point of *new body parts*: variety.

A table of *new body parts* is given below. Hopefully, this one is extensive enough to bring variety to the mutation without demanding impromptu inventions from the players or snap rulings from the GM. Some mutations given here are better than others, just as some official physical mutations are better than the others. None of them are utterly useless, but none are doomsday, either. Random percentile rolls are used to keep the system fair. Everyone has the same chance at the best mutations, and it cuts down on conflicts, since players seldom argue with ten-sided dice.

## New body parts in GAMMA WORLD® gaming by John M. Maxstadt



# WHY IS THIS MUTANT SMILING?

This table could also be used as a list of suggestions for any GM who prefers to assign *new body parts* himself or who has the players choose them. In the latter case, the last two (*duo-animalism* and *multimorphism*) should be excluded, since they are more powerful than the rest. Players would tend to choose them all the time, making them rather common instead of very rare as they should be.

The table itself requires a few words of explanation. It is important to remember that *new body parts* is a beneficial mutation, so the parts that a player rolls should not hamper his character's other abilities. For example, *carnivore jaws* and *siphon mouth* do not lower a character's charisma or impede his speech (although they might change the sound of his voice). *Talons*, *pincers*, or *hands* will not replace existing hands, claws, feet, or other useful appendages, but will have proportioned limbs of their own. *Carnivore jaws* or *fur* would be rerolled for a reptilian character, as they would be net disadvantages over the creature's own natural attributes. If the GM rules that a *hump* or *clublike tail* would prevent a bird from flying, he should disallow and reroll these new parts for avian characters.

Likewise, new body parts should be rerolled if the character already has them, *multiple body parts* being a different mutation. *Hands* are no more new body parts for a humanoid than are *scales* for a snake or *carnivore jaws* for a bear or tiger. In keeping with the beneficial nature of the mutation, the GM should avoid looking for situations in which new parts could be troublesome and restricting, with two exceptions. Most will not allow humanoids to "pass" as pure strain humans, and many will not allow them to fit into armor. Humanoid characters run these two risks with any physical mutation. One final note: Unless otherwise specified, attacks with *new body parts* are rolled to hit on Physical Attack Matrix II.

### New body parts

Roll percentile die and consult the following list of new body part descriptions.

**1-4:** A *poison sting* is gained on the mutant's tail, fingers, or elsewhere. One attack is allowed per round (maximum of five poison uses per day), with a poison intensity of 9-18 (d10 + 8).

**5-6:** Two *tentacles*, each 1.5 meters long with suction disks, are attached to the mutant's upper torso. Two attacks per round are allowed at 1-6/1-6 damage

(no damage vs. AC better than 5). The tentacles can grasp objects and can disarm opponents (must hit AC 10 and have greater strength than opponent). The tentacles cannot perform fine manipulation, however.

**7-8:** An *acid pump* is attached to the mutant's digestive system and mouth. It squirts a stream of hydrochloric digestive acid 4 meters long and 7 cm wide, twice per day, hitting anything in its range as weapon class 13 (damage 4-24). The acid corrodes metallic locks, hinges, machinery, etc.

**9-11:** *Stalked eyes* on 20-cm retractable stalks replace ordinary eyes, giving sight in two directions at once, around corners, etc.

**It is important  
to remember  
that new body  
parts is a  
beneficial  
mutation...**

**12-15:** Two crab- or lobster-like *pincers* are gained on the mutant's upper torso or tail. Two attacks may be made per round for 3-12 damage each; the pincers can open cans, act as scissors, etc.

**16-18:** Beetlelike *mandibles* are set on the mutant's face. One attack per round at 4-16 damage can be made, and the mandibles may act as can openers, scissors, etc.

**19-20:** A *siphon mouth*, mosquito-like in nature, is gained. One attack per round at 1-6 damage may be made, with continuous 1-6 damage every round after the first hit from fluid draining (ineffective against androids, robots, and other opponents without bodily fluids).

**21-24:** A *light-producing organ* is gained on the tip of the mutant's tail, palm, or anywhere else. The light covers a 15-meter radius area for a maximum of two march turns per day (the mutant may divide time into search turns or even action turns as desired).

**25-26:** *Bladelike limbs* are gained on the mutant's upper torso or tail. 1-4 attacks per round (roll d4 for number of limbs) may be made, at 1-8 damage each; each limb hits as weapon class 3.

**27-29:** A *swimming bladder and fins/flippers* are set on the mutant's abdomen, back, feet, or wherever appropriate. These allow swimming in water at land speeds, but do not confer the ability to breathe water.

**30-31:** *Froglike legs* are gained. The mutant may move normally and can jump 24 meters forward or 10 meters straight up.

**32-33:** A chameleon-like, *prehensile tongue* is gained. It may reach out to 6 meters to snatch objects by adhesion, with a strength comparable to the character's arm strength. The adhesion may be broken at will by the mutant character. The tongue may wield a dagger, hand axe, or club for an extra attack each round.

**34-37:** *Sucker or friction pads* are gained on the mutant's fingers and toes. The mutant may climb sheer, smooth walls and even cross ceilings at slow speed. Obviously, this ability is not effective if the mutant is wearing shoes, gloves, or armor.

**38-39:** *Eyeshields* (shaded transparent third eyelids) are gained inside the mutant's eyelids. The eyeshields close instinctively to negate *light generation*, and they protect eyes with *infravision*, *dark dependency*, etc. However, they do not negate physical damage taken from *dark dependency*.

**40-42:** A *saurian snout* (with toothy jaws) is gained on the mutant's face. Mutant may bite for 3-18 damage once per round.

**43-46:** *Scales* cover the mutant's entire body, giving it AC 7.

**47-49:** A *clublike tail* replaces the mutant's ordinary tail (if any). One attack per round at 3-18 damage is allowed, and the tail may be used as a hammer, battering ram, etc.

**50-51:** A *constricting tail* is gained instead of an ordinary tail. One attack per round at 2-12 damage may be made, and damage can continuously be applied every round after the first hit. This attack is not effective vs. any AC better than 4.

**52-54:** *Poison fangs* are gained in the mutant's mouth, allowing one attack per round (maximum of 5 poison uses per day). Poison intensity is 13-18 (d6 + 12).

**55-56:** A *viper tongue* replaces the mutant's ordinary tongue. This organ combines the *heightened taste* and *heightened smell* mutations. The mutant

may track prey by "tasting" the air over any terrain, but this ability is ineffective if the trail is over an hour old. This tongue also detects heat and radiation.

**57-59:** An eaglelike *beak* is gained on the face, giving one attack per round at 1-8 damage.

**60-62:** *Talons* are gained on the mutant's upper torso limbs or on his feet. Two attacks per round at 1-10 each may be made. These talons can grasp objects but cannot perform fine manipulation.

**63-67:** *Fur* is gained over the mutant's entire body, providing AC 8 and insulation in cold weather.

**68-69:** *Skin flaps* that allow gliding are gained on the mutant's arms (fore-legs), extending to the lower (rear) limbs. Gliding may be accomplished from any higher elevation to a lower one, for a horizontal distance equal to the difference in elevation x 5. The GM may wish to consider hot-air thermals and other wind phenomena for long glides beginning at great heights. These flaps may also be used as a parachute to slow falls and negate falling damage.

**70-72:** A food-storing *hump* is gained on the mutant's back, providing food and water for four days with no ill effects. The hump must be replenished by two days of heavy eating before its resources can be used again. The hump has no encumbrance value.

**73-75:** A *fatty layer* is gained under the skin. The layer negates poison damage from claws, fangs, stings, etc., unless a "to hit" roll 4 or more points over the number needed to hit was rolled. The layer also provides insulation in cold weather, and the mutant may go without food (but not water) for two days, as per *hump* above.

**76-78:** A *prehensile trunk* is gained on the mutant's face, serving as a third hand for an extra weapon attack each round. Other uses are possible, and the trunk can even fire a pistol or type (slowly).

**79-81:** *Carnivore jaws* are added to the mutant's face, giving one attack per round for 2-12 damage.

**82-84:** *Retractable claws* are gained on the mutant's fingers. Two attacks may be made per round for 1-6 damage each, but the mutant cannot use his hands for other purposes at the same time as he attacks.

**85-87:** A *prehensile tail* 2 meters long is gained. It acts as a third hand (see *prehensile trunk*), but it cannot melee effectively unless brought around to the front where the mutant can see it.

**88-91:** *Vocal articulators* may be

gained by mutant animals, giving them coherent, humanlike speech capabilities.

**92-95:** *Hands* are gained on the upper torso or feet. These hands may wield weapons, perform fine manipulation, handle artifacts, etc.

**96-97:** Roll twice on the above table, ignoring any result over 95.

**98:** Pick any of above (including "roll twice," though in the latter instance the player must roll for random abilities).

**99:** *Duo-animalism* is gained. The mutant is combined with another animal type to form a hybrid creature. For example, a human/bird might have wings, talons, and a bird's beak, but could retain human size, speech, arms, and hands. An alligator/lobster might have a *full carapace*, gills, stalked eyes, and pincers, while retaining the alligator's size, bite, and tail-slap attacks. Half-human duo-animals are common in fantasy literature (such as the centaur, minotaur, lamia, and harpy). Any second animal type is acceptable, but the character should not abandon his original animal type altogether. The player and GM should design a hybrid character together and agree on its abilities.

**00:** *Multimorphism* is gained. The mutant's consciousness exists simultaneously in more than one body. This is not like *temporal fugue*; it more closely

resembles having twins or triplets with a single guiding mind. Roll a d6: 1-5 = two bodies, 6 = three bodies. All bodies may attack at once and otherwise function as individuals, except as noted below.

All bodies are basically identical in appearance and have similar ability scores. Mutations rolled before *multimorphism* is generated are common to all bodies, but those rolled after this mutation are split evenly between them (which may make the separate bodies look different).

Each multimorph can sense everything the other bodies can, even if they are miles apart. A single consciousness guides the bodies, but each body has its own brain, so mental attacks must roll to hit each brain separately (as per *dual brain*, except that each brain hit by an attack will take damage). All bodies may be hit by the same area attack if near each other, effectively multiplying the damage.

Hit points are rolled separately for each body, and they cannot "loan" hit points to each other. Each body heals at the normal rate, effectively multiplying the character's overall healing rate. If one body dies, its hit points do not transfer to the survivor(s).

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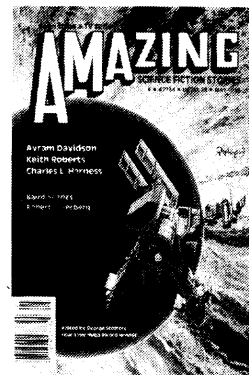
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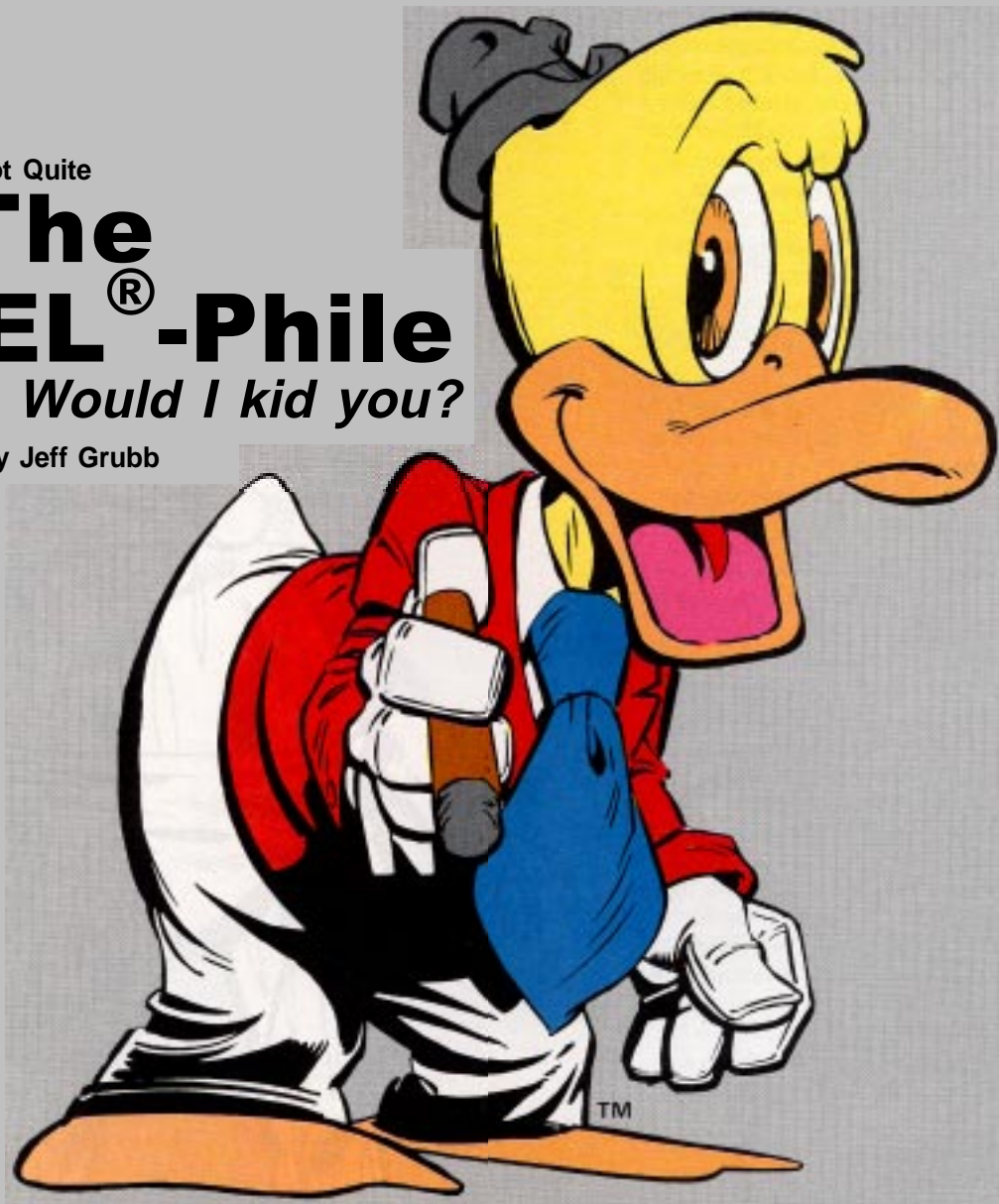


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Not Quite  
**The**  
**MARVEL<sup>®</sup>-Phile**  
*Iron Duck<sup>™</sup>? Would I kid you?*

by Jeff Grubb



A caveat to the reader: If you are looking for the inspired second half of the Iron Man<sup>™</sup> article entitled "Pumping Iron," be warned that *this ain't it!* Iron Man's over on page 81. If you want real Marvel<sup>®</sup>-stuff, go there, then come back. I'll wait.

Back? OK. I'd like to dedicate this article to a few individuals who would normally wait some time before appearing in a MARVEL SUPER HEROES<sup>™</sup> product. I mean a long time. A *really* long time, like eons. Glaciers will have to move south and cover Lake Geneva. Mephisto<sup>™</sup> and Pluto<sup>™</sup> will get into a snowball fight before these characters appear in a module.

This is because these characters are basically silly. Now, there is nothing

wrong with being silly. If you think about it long and hard, most heroes are kind of silly to start with. Flashy outfits. Funny abilities. Funky names. (How many of YOU would call yourself Stilt-Man<sup>™</sup>? Let's see hands!)

Still, there are those that go beyond the bounds of what even a world that accepts the existence of radioactive spiders, gamma bombs, and adamantium steel alloys could imagine. Such characters would make your standard, irradiated, upgraded, high-powered hero sit up and say, "Hey! Are you for real?"

Each of these characters has had that said to them at least once. Despite that, they show pluck, determination, and a lot of grit. Thanks for everything guys. Don't forget to write.

**HOWARD THE DUCK<sup>™</sup>**  
**Duck, currently unemployed**

Fighting: GOOD (10)  
 Agility: GOOD (10)  
 Strength: TYPICAL (6)  
 Endurance: GOOD (10)  
 Reason: GOOD (10)  
 Intuition: GOOD (10)  
 Psyche: REMARKABLE (30)

Health: 36  
 Karma: 50  
 Resources: FEEBLE  
 Popularity: ?

**Known Powers:**

QUACK FU. Quack Fu is a very obscure martial art. With it, Howard can stun and slam opponents who are bigger than he is. (Of course, most of the population of the U.S. is bigger than he is.)



**IRON DUCK SUIT.** Created by Claude Stark (short for Starkowski), the Iron Duck suit provided Excellent protection from physical attacks, and it had springs which allowed Howard to jump 1 story high and 2 areas away. In addition, the suit was equipped with a small flame-thrower (Excellent Damage, 2-area range) and a chest lamp (Typical intensity, 1-area range). The suit was shredded in a conflict with the nefarious Dr. Bong™. I mention it here only because Roger nagged me into it. Happy now? [Yes.]

**Talents:** Howard is a licensed cab driver in the city of Cleveland, Ohio. It is a good bet he won't get lost there. He has also taken some odd fares to New York City as well.

**Howard's story:** Howard is a native of Duckworld, an alternate world where ducks are the most highly advanced species. Men (or "hairless apes") are unknown on Duckworld. Howard was pulled from his world by the machinations of a power-hungry demon mucking about with the Cosmic Axis. Howard landed near the Nexus of All Realities, and with the aid of the Man-Thing™, he attempted to set things right. During that adventure, Howard fell from the dead Stones of Oblivion to his doom.

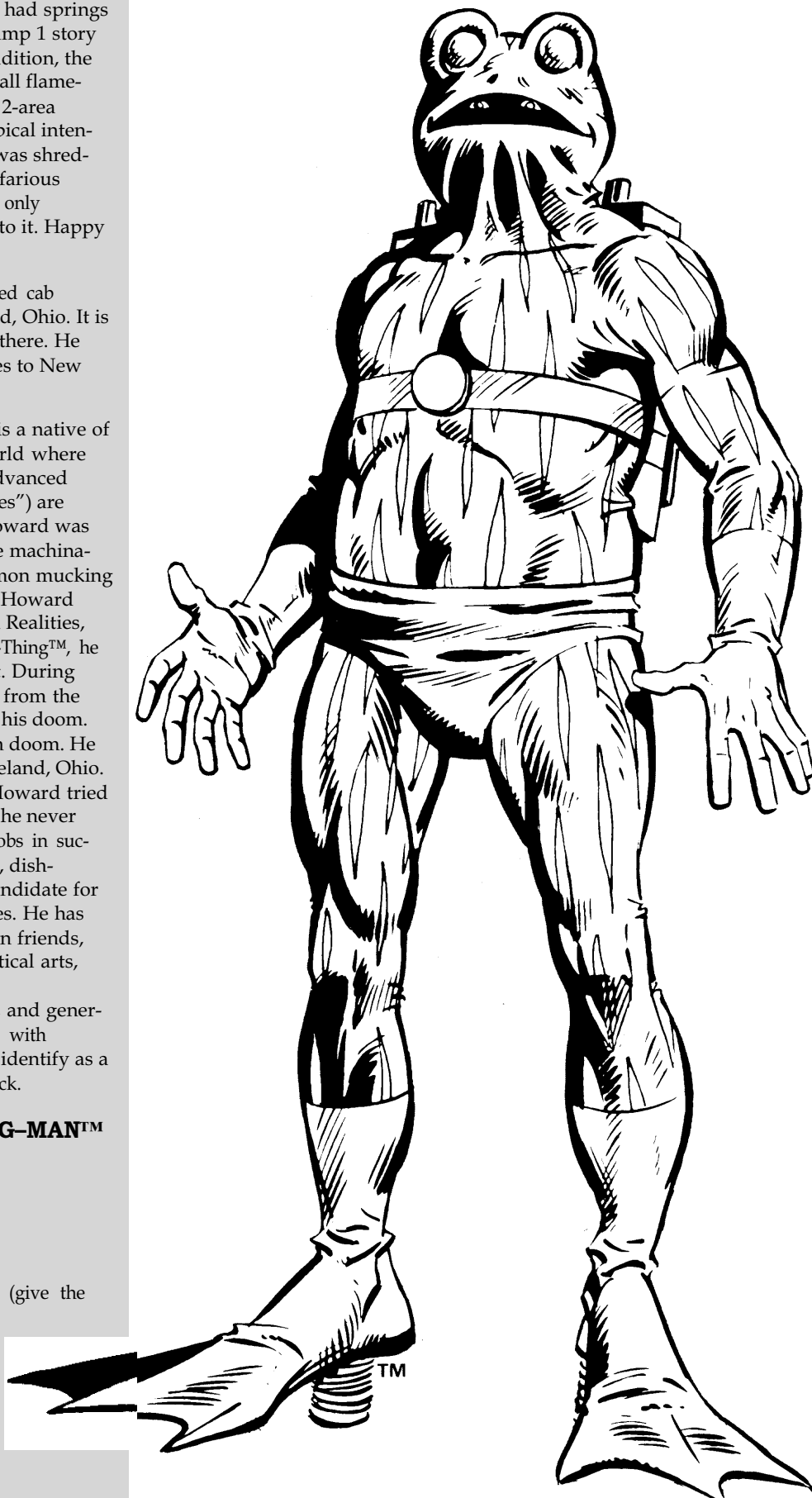
Actually, it was worse than doom. He landed in our world, in Cleveland, Ohio. In the years that followed, Howard tried to make a living in a "world he never made," and he held several jobs in succession, including cab driver, dishwasher, bill collector, and candidate for President of the United States. He has made some important human friends, including the master of mystical arts, Doctor Strange™.

Howard is caustic, cynical, and generally bad-tempered in dealing with others. He is usually easy to identify as a cigar-smoking humanoid duck.

### **THE FABULOUS FROG-MAN™**

**Eugene Paul Colorito**  
**High School Student**

Fighting: POOR (4)  
Agility: POOR (4)  
Strength: POOR (4)  
Endurance: EXCELLENT (20) (give the kid a break, will ya?)  
Reason: TYPICAL (6)  
Intuition: POOR (4)  
Psyche: TYPICAL (6)  
Health: 26  
Karma: 14  
Resources: POOR  
Popularity: 3



### Known Powers:

**LEAPING:** Frog-Man wears a suit equipped with electrically-powered leaping coils that allow him to reach a height of 6 stories per jump and to cross 3 areas at a hop. Sadly, Eugene does not have very good control over his leaping: when he lands, he must make a Agility FEAT to stop, or he keeps on going into the next area, rebounding off buildings like a drunken pinball. Fortunately, when bouncing around so erratically, Eugene is DOWN TWO to be hit and shifts UP ONE to charge an opponent.

**Frog-Man's story:** Eugene is the son of Vincent Colorito, alias the Leapfrog, a small-time villain who wore a frog suit that allowed him to leap small buildings in a single bound. After several stinging defeats, Leapfrog retired and Vincent went straight. Seeking to redeem his father's name, Eugene donned the costume to turn it into a force for good as (tah-dah) The Fabulous Frog-Man.

Eugene is very earnest and truthful. He is also trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, brave (sort of), clean, and reverent. He embodies the hero's code as he sees it. He is also a klutz who's going to get hurt if someone doesn't watch out for him.

Frog-Man has **sprung** into combat alongside Spider-Man™ and the Human Torch™ in battles against Marvel Super Villains™. He hasn't been **croaked** yet, but he's always **bounced** back to tell **ribbiting** tales of his Incredible **FEETs**. Though he told Spidey™ that he's **toad** the line and has acted more cautiously, it's only a matter of time before he **leaps** from his **pad** into action against— [*Stop or the column gets cut off.*] Okay, okay, I'll be good, no more.

### WILLY LUMPKIN™ Mailman

Fighting: POOR (4)  
Agility: POOR (4)  
Strength: POOR (4)  
Endurance: GOOD (10)  
Reason: TYPICAL (6)  
Intuition: TYPICAL (6)  
Psyche: TYPICAL (6)

Health: 22  
Karma: 18  
Resources: POOR (pension)  
Popularity: ?

### Known Powers:

Willy Lumpkin has no known super-human powers. He can, however, wriggle his ears real good.

**Willy's story:** Once a mail carrier for the New York City branch of the U.S. Postal Service, Willy's route included the Baxter Building, home of the Fantastic Four™. The bulk of his overfull mailbag was usually filled with letters to the FF from fans and other true believers. At one point, Willy offered his services to the Fantastic Four, based on his ear-wriggling skill. The FF politely declined, as Willy's skills were better used in serving the government.

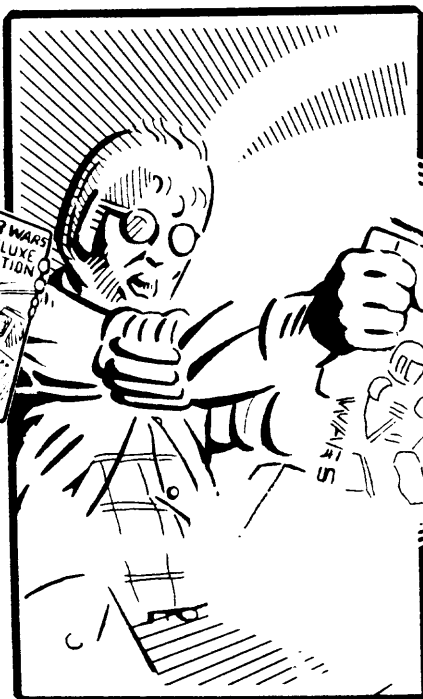
As the years past, increased technology caught up with Willy, and the old postman retired with a pension and the love of the people on his former route. He still visits his old friends on occasion, and he is always welcome at the Baxter Building.

There is no truth to the rumors that Willy Lumpkin is really the Hobgoblin™; nor is he a former Herald of Galactus™, a front for the Maggia™, the man that taught Daredevil™ everything he knows; nor is he Thor's™ brother, who was sent down to Earth to learn humility and whose paperwork was then lost in Asgard. However, if any of the above is true, remember that you heard it here FIRST!

This June . . .



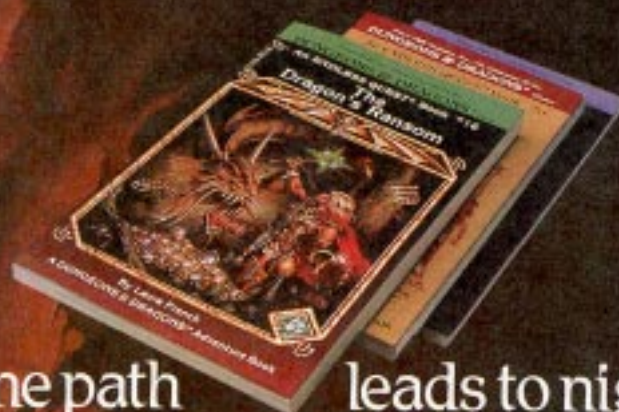
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# The MARVEL® Phile

## Pumping Iron, Part 2

by Jeff Grubb

Last time, you will remember, the brave (but foolish) designer set about describing all of the important gizmos that were part of the Iron Man™ armor. He ended up with an article twice the size of a normal Marvel®-Phile, and under the gentle(?) prodding of the ARES™ editor, he carved it down into two manageable sections. The first section went into depth on Iron Man's familiar red-and-gold suit and gave the stats for Tony Stark™ and Jim Rhodes™. (See DRAGON® issue #95.)

This section will describe some of the different suits that have popped up recently. The most recent set of armor

worn by Tony Stark first appears in *Iron Man* #191 and gets a workout in the following issues. It was recently lost undersea. The Space Armor first appeared in *Iron Man* #142 to #144, and the Stealth Armor first appeared in *Iron Man* #152. Both the Stealth and Space Armors were destroyed. Finally, rounding out this article is a history of the Iron Man suits.

A final note: I recommend use of these characters only for those players who are die-hard Shell-head fans. The stats available in MH AC 2, *Avengers*™ *Assembled!*, and MH Special, *Secret Wars*™, should be sufficient for most of

your gaming needs. Check with your local Judge.

### NEW IRON MAN™ ARMOR Designed and used by Tony Stark (lost)

Fighting: EXCELLENT (20)  
Agility: GOOD (10)  
Strength: REMARKABLE (30)  
Endurance: INCREDIBLE (40)  
Reason: INCREDIBLE (40)  
Intuition: EXCELLENT (20)  
Psyche: TYPICAL (6)

Health: 100



### **Known Powers:**

**BODY ARMOR:** Tony's most recent set of armor was similar to his original set, but it was much less powerful, as it was not designed for combat. The new, slate-gray armor provided Remarkable protection from physical attack and Excellent protection from most energy attacks (including radiation, cold, and fire).

**REPULSORS:** The new suit of armor had limited repulsor power capable of doing Remarkable damage at a range of 8 areas.

**FLIGHT:** The new suit flew by less powerful boot-jets, capable of reaching Excellent speeds.

**OTHER:** Tony's gray suit had no air supply as Rhodey's armor did. It was equipped with all-band radio, including Rhodey's private wavelength, as well as the radar/sonar package.

### **IRON MAN™ SPACE ARMOR Designed and used by Tony Stark (destroyed)**

Fighting: GOOD (10)  
Agility: GOOD (10)  
Strength: MONSTROUS (75)  
Endurance: UNEARTHLY (100)  
Reason: INCREDIBLE (40)  
Intuition: EXCELLENT (20)  
Psyche: TYPICAL (6)

Health: 195

### **Known Powers:**

**BODY ARMOR:** The properties of this armor were similar to the suit noted in DRAGON® issue #95, save that it provided Monstrous resistance to heat and cold as opposed to Remarkable.

**REPULSORS:** The repulsors of the Space Armor caused Monstrous damage at a range of 15 areas.

**FLIGHT:** Short term flight was managed by conventional boot thrusters that flew at Amazing Speed. Once the suit cleared the inner atmosphere, Tony could trigger his nuclear thrusters that provided Unearthly speed in space. Triggering the thrusters inside the atmosphere would have resulted in Unearthly damage to all below him and produced a high level of radiation. (This is known as Bad Karma.)

**VARIO-BEAM SPOTLIGHT:** An extension of the Unibeam that was never incorporated into the standard suits, the vario-beam could provide illumination up to 15 areas away. In addition, it could create a deflector beam (the opposite of

the tractor beam), which could apply Monstrous Strength to an object.

**EXO-UNIT GAUNTLETS:** In addition to repulsors, the Space Armor was equipped with a separate set of gauntlets that could act as long-range grapplers. The gauntlets could maneuver up to 7 areas away, and they could be manipulated as if they were still part of the armor. The weak mooring of the gauntlets allowed them to be used only in zero-gravity situations.

**AIR SUPPLY:** The bulk of the Space Armor was devoted to transportation and life support. Iron Man could survive for 4-5 weeks on the recycled air and water in his suit.

**ECM:** The Space Armor had the same electro-magnetic countermeasures as the standard suit now worn by James Rhodes. Due to the powerful nature of the suit's thrusters, the wearer had no ability to evade detection when the thrusters were in use.

**OTHER:** This suit was equipped with standard radar/sonar detection units and radio hook-up with a 2000-mile range, as well as an automatic camera designed to withstand the rigors of space.

### **IRON MAN™ STEALTH ARMOR Designed and used by Tony Stark (destroyed)**

Fighting: EXCELLENT (20)  
Agility: REMARKABLE (30)  
Strength: INCREDIBLE (40)  
Endurance: MONSTROUS (75)  
Reason: INCREDIBLE (40)  
Intuition: EXCELLENT (20)  
Psyche: TYPICAL (6)

Health: 165

### **Known Powers:**

**BODY ARMOR:** The Stealth Armor was designed for speed and non-detection. It had only Remarkable protection against physical and energy attacks, including fire, cold, radiation, and acid.

**FLIGHT:** The Stealth Armor could reach Unearthly speeds in open air, but normally moved at Amazing speed when on secret missions, traveling at treetop level. Its jet gasses passed through multiple baffles to eliminate noise and to produce a quiet ride. The jet-boots could be used offensively, with a range of 1 area for Remarkable damage.

**NO REPULSORS:** The Stealth Armor had no repulsor capabilities.

**SENSORS:** In addition to the standard radar/sonar package and radio, the Stealth Armor was equipped with X-ray and sonic scanning capabilities, each of which had a range of half a mile. The Stealth Armor was also equipped with photographic equipment loaded with infrared film.

**ECM:** The mostly highly developed set of armor in this regard, the Stealth Armor evaded standard radar detection by a wave-modifier that curved the radar waves back on themselves, producing no image (Monstrous protection from radar detection). The jets were baffled to prevent sonic detection, and the waste gas was cooled to deter heat-seeking devices. Finally, the armor had a black, non-reflective coating that deterred both mechanical detection and visual sighting, at a cost of lowered resistance to energy attacks.

### **IRON MAN'S™ STORY**

Anthony Stark was the heir of industrialist Howard Stark, whose achievements included the development of the Arsenal™ robot for the U.S. government. Stark built his father's business into a multimillion-dollar industrial complex with major munitions and weapons contracts with the Department of Defense.

While supervising the test of one of his transistorized weapon systems in Vietnam, Stark was wounded (a piece of shrapnel lodged dangerously near his heart) by a booby trap and taken prisoner by the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong leader, Wong-Chu, offered to have the shrapnel removed if Stark would produce a super-weapon for him to use against the ARVN and American forces. Distrusting Wong-Chu, and aided by a captured physicist named Ho Yinsen, Stark built an electrically powered, transistorized suit of armor, equipped with a pacemaker to allow Stark's heart to continue functioning. Yinsen perished in an attempt to let Stark fully charge the armor, but Stark took vengeance on Wong-Chu and scattered his guerillas.

Using this original armor, Stark made his way back to safe territory. He was aided by Lt. James R. Rhodes, a helicopter pilot downed behind enemy lines. One their way to an American firebase, the two of them flushed out a secret Viet Cong supply dump.

In the years that followed, Stark used the armor to fight criminals and threats to the U.S. government. He kept his identity secret, letting the world believe that Iron Man was only an employee of Stark Industries. Iron Man was one of

the original Avengers™, with Giant Man™, Wasp™, Hulk™, and Thor™. Stark provided the team with its New York Headquarters, and supported the group through the Maria Stark Foundation, a trust organization set up in Tony's late mother's name.

During this period, Stark Industries flourished, becoming Stark International and controlling a large industrial complex on Long Island. Aware of the growing misuse of powerful weapons technology, Stark closed out his weapons contracts, developing instead new techniques and equipment for communication, medicine, and space technology. Stark also received an artificial heart, allowing him to survive without wearing his pacemaker chest plate.

Iron Man's armor slowly evolved from a slate-gray suit into its present form. New methods of attack demanded that the hero be able to develop new defenses, in particular methods of preventing override of his circuits, as was successfully attempted by Justin Hammer, a business rival. Stark also developed specialized suits of armor for unusual missions, including an atomic-powered set of Space Armor and a low-radar-profile set of Stealth Armor.

The pressure of being an inventor, businessman, and hero led Stark to drink, first socially and then to excess; he became an alcoholic and his work and life suffered accordingly. Stark made a brief recovery only to plunge back into the bottle under the influence of another business rival, Obadiah Stane, who played upon Stark's weaknesses in an attempt to take over Stark's company. The takeover of Stark (now Stane) International succeeded.

Unable to function as Iron Man, Tony passed the armor on to Jim Rhodes, who had joined Stark International following the end of the Vietnam War as Tony's private pilot. Rhodey used the armor to repel attackers on Stark International and to disable and destroy the majority of the machinery capable of creating more Iron Man armor. The Space and Stealth Armors were also destroyed.

Rhodes, as Iron Man, worked freelance for some time, while Tony, his credit frozen, undertook a long battle to conquer his alcoholism. Rhodey, Tony, a former Stark scientist named Morley Erwin, and Morley's sister Clytemnestra (a computer specialist) relocated to California. The "new" Iron Man joined Hawkeye™ and the West Coast Avengers™, while Tony returned to inventing, developing an advanced "s-circuit" that allowed greater use of avail-

able area than standard transistors. With the Erwins, Stark and Rhodes created Circuits Maximus, a small hi-tech company funded from specialized jobs that Rhodes provided as Iron Man.

As time went on, Rhodes began having severe headaches whenever he used the armor. At first it was believed that the cybernetic helmet of the armor, which was adjusted to respond to Tony Stark's specific brain patterns, was ill-fitted to Rhodey's mind. Tony attempted to correct the problem several times without success. Rhodey became increasingly uneasy over his ability to use the Iron Man armor properly, and he feared that Tony would ask for the armor back. Though justifiably proud of his service as Iron Man, Rhodey became irritated, hostile, and irrational as his headaches worsened, and he developed homicidal tendencies.

Tony became increasingly worried about Rhodey's now-violent temper, and he created a new suit of Iron Man armor, using several new techniques he wished to try out. While this most

recent set of armor resembled the original gray armor developed in Viet Nam, it was controlled by more precise "s-circuits." It was not more powerful than Rhodey's suit, but it was more highly advanced. The two Iron Men confronted each other when Rhodey lost control of his rage; with his new armor and knowledge of Rhodey's armor, Tony won the fight, calming Rhodey and talking out their difficulties.

Tony debated for a time whether to retain his new suit of Iron Man armor, as the role of being a hero was one of the pressures that drove him to drink. Rhodey left Circuits Maximus to discover the source of his headaches. Eventually he learned that they were the result of repressed guilt over enjoying the use of the Iron Man armor, while his friend Tony suffered from alcoholism. After losing his "new" gray Iron Man suit in a recent battle, Tony has set to work building an all-new, state-of-the-art version, using the West Coast Avenger facilities. The new suit will premiere in *Iron Man* #200.



# The Coming of the S'sessu

## A new alien race for the STAR FRONTIERS<sup>®</sup> game

by David Cook

[Editor's note: David "Zeb" Cook was one of the original designers of the STAR FRONTIERS<sup>®</sup> game system. Though future releases from TSR, Inc., may make no reference to the S'sessu, gamers may adopt them into their games as player characters if the referee so allows and if care is used in setting them up in the campaign.]

First contact with the S'sessu occurred shortly after a brief skirmish between the S'sessu and the UPFS frigate *Hellscar*. The *Hellscar*, severely damaged in an encounter with two Sathar ships, made an emergency jump and re-entered normal space off Phri'sk, one of the two settled worlds belonging to the S'sessu. Orbital stations registered the arrival of the warship, and an interplanetary scout was sent to investigate.

The *Hellscar* established visual contact with the scout and refrained from offensive action, since the scout was of an unknown design. Hailing signals from the *Hellscar* were returned on an unused frequency in an untranslated language. When televisual ship-to-ship communication was established, the *Hellscar's* captain, believing he had stumbled onto a Sathar base, opened fire on the scout vessel.

Fortunately, the frigate's fire-control systems were damaged and the shots missed. The scout vessel returned fire and managed to cripple the frigate, though the smaller ship's weapons were technologically outmoded by UPFS standards. The frigate's captain broadcast a long-range distress call to the Federation, but he and his crew were unable to resist a boarding attempt by the S'sessu.

Several weeks later, an attack/rescue fleet arrived off Phri'sk. The UPFS fleet was large enough to suitably impress the S'sessu, a remarkable achievement considering their racial tendencies. Having determined by talking with the *Hellscar's* captain that the aliens were not Sathar, the fleet commander organized the first diplomatic missions and formal

contact between the S'sessu and the Federation proceeded unhindered. The S'sessu refused to give up the frigate, which they considered a prize ship; because of this and the frigate captain's familiarity with the S'sessu from his captivity, the *Hellscar's* captain was designated temporary ambassador to the S'sessu worlds.

### Physical appearance

S'sessu are almost identical in appearance to Sathar, the most obvious difference between them being body coloration. A Sathar's skin is yellow or brown, but a S'sessu has a bright pink- or green-tinted skin. The S'sessu do not have the patterns of dots or stripes on their heads that the Sathar have. Otherwise, all other descriptive information on Sathar can be applied to S'sessu.

### Senses

A S'sessu's sense of hearing is equal to a Human's. Its sense of taste is slightly better than a Human's, but its sense of smell is somewhat less well developed. A S'sessu's double pupils give it superior all-around vision, allowing it to see in several directions at once. A S'sessu always has a +2 Initiative Modifier because of its excellent vision.

### Speech

S'sessu speak with a hissing lisp. They have quickly learned Pan-Galactic since their existence was discovered, and they can speak it normally. They can also speak the language of their own race.

### Society and customs

In general, S'sessu are extremely competitive and self-centered. Each individual does what it wants, caring little for others except for those who can help the S'sessu achieve its goals. Power and possessions are only for those S'sessu who can take and keep them. This would seem to create a society where murder and violence are rampant, but this is not the case. Indeed, at times S'sessu can be highly organized and

cooperative, and violent crime is an uncommon occurrence among them.

If a S'sessu believes there is some sort of personal gain to be had in doing so, it will work cooperatively with other beings. A group of S'sessu might pool their money to build an interstellar spaceship, and another group might hire a police force to protect them from robbery or murder by others. However, S'sessu will have only one leader among them in most situations. Thus, a S'sessu company is controlled by one extremely powerful boss; the captain of a S'sessu spaceship is the absolute leader of all beings aboard that ship. S'sessu philosophies are based on getting and keeping power, not on what is right or wrong. To a S'sessu, the only actions that are "wrong" are those that keep it from reaching its goal in the best and safest manner possible.

The discovery of the S'sessu has presented a puzzle for xenobiologists. The S'sessu have no explanation for their similarity to Sathar and were in fact unaware of the existence of the Sathar until contact with the UPF. The current theory held among scientists is that the S'sessu are an offshoot of the Sathar race, and this seems well-supported. If this is true, the separation between the Sathar and S'sessu would have to have occurred more than 20,000 years ago, long before the Sathar or the S'sessu are known to have developed space travel. It has been speculated that an ancient unknown race of aliens (possibly the group known to xenoarchaeologists as the Tetrarchs) transplanted a small group of S'sessu to their present homeworld at that time.

S'sessu only hold claim to a small region of space, consisting of two stellar systems (each with one small inhabited planet) lying ten light years from the Gruna Garu system, on a line running from Dixon's Star to Gruna Garu and on to the S'sessu worlds. Due to their similarity to the Sathar, it was only through luck and careful diplomacy that they were not immediately attacked as hostile

aliens by the rescue force that found their homeworld. Little is known about the S'sessu's history, as friendly diplomatic relations have only recently been established.

The S'sessu are extremely aggressive business dealers. In their attempts to gain an equal footing with the other races in the Frontier Sector, they have hired adventurers to spy on, infiltrate, steal from, or suppress activities the S'sessu deem "unfriendly" in the Frontier systems closest to them. This has caused Star Law to take an active interest in certain foreign and business affairs of the S'sessu, though the race as a whole is not regarded as dangerous or hostile.

### Attitudes

The S'sessu are essentially amoral (neither knowing nor caring about the difference between good and evil). It is a good bet that a S'sessu will always do exactly what is best for it, even to the extent of betraying others without a second thought to save itself. This "every-worm-for-itself" attitude makes the S'sessu disliked, especially by the Vrusk (who have suffered in certain business dealings from the S'sessu love for "dirty tricks").

Nonetheless, the other races have learned to work with the S'sessu, often with great success and mutual benefit for both sides. S'sessu adventurers often work well as team members, especially if they see their chances of finding personal gain and wealth are improved through cooperative effort. Of course, a better offer might always be made by someone else, leaving the door open for possible treachery.

### Special abilities

**Ability Insight.** Because of the extremely competitive nature of S'sessu society, individuals have developed the ability to judge the strengths and weaknesses of opponents. All S'sessu start with a score of 5% in this ability. This is the percentage chance a S'sessu has of learning one ability score or skill level of a being he observes. The S'sessu must see his opponent actually doing something related to that ability score before he can make this judgment.

For example, Asphenomenas, a S'sessu, sees a smuggler outside a spaceport. The smuggler is trying to shoot a beam weapon at a guard robot. Asphenomenas secretly watches the smuggler, and the player tells the referee that Asphenomenas wants to use his *Ability Insight* to determine the smuggler's DEX

score (based upon the smuggler's shooting ability). The referee secretly rolls percentile dice. If the die roll is 05 or under, Asphenomenas will have learned

**P**ower and possessions are only for those S'sessu who can take and keep them.

the smuggler's DEX score. A roll over 05 would indicate uncertainty and no knowledge gained. *Ability Insight* may be increased by spending experience, just like any other ability score may be raised. This ability may only be used

once per game hour, simulating the intense concentration required to use it.

### Creating a S'sessu character

S'sessu characters are created in the same way as other characters. The following Ability Modifiers are used when creating a S'sessu:

STR/STA: +0  
DEX/RS: +0  
INT/LOG: +10  
PER/LDR: -10

S'sessu have the same movement rate as Sathar do. They walk at 10 meters per turn, run at 20 meters per turn, and move long distances at 3 kilometers per hour.

The following Racial Reaction Modifiers may also be used when dealing with S'sessu:

Humans have a -5 reaction penalty to S'sessu.

Vrusk have a -10 reaction penalty to S'sessu.

S'sessu have a +5 reaction bonus to Sathar.

S'sessu have a -5 reaction penalty to Vrusk.



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# Convention Calendar

## CAPCON VIII, Apr. 5-7

This gaming convention will be staged at Ohio State University. Admission fees are \$2 per day; gamemasters will have their admission fees refunded. For more information, contact: Jeff Gerckens, Box 21, Ohio Union, 1739 N. High, Columbus OH 43201, or telephone (614)876-2170 or (614)764-6085.

## NORTHEASTER 3, Apr. 12-14

This gaming convention will be held at the College Ave. campus of Rutgers University. A game auction, a costume party, and seminars will be among the featured events. For more details, contact, Northeaster 3, Box 101, Rutgers College Student center, 126 College Ave., New Brunswick NJ 08903.

## PINE CON III, Apr. 12-14

The university of Maine Gamer's Society presents its third annual gaming convention, which will be held at the University of Maine at the Orono campus. Features will include

tournaments, contests, seminars, and lots of surprises. Preregistration fees are \$12 for the weekend. For more details, contact: Pine Con III Director, 218 Gannett Hall, UMO, Orono ME 04469.

## CAROLINA CON IV, Apr. 19-21

To be held at the Tremont Motor Inn in Cayce, S.C., this convention will offer an assortment of role-playing, board, and miniatures tournaments. For more information, contact: Ed Vincent, 1851 Windover Road, Columbia SC 29204; or, Robert Chenoweth, 133 Casbel Court, Hopkins SC 29061.

## CONTRAPTION, Apr. 19-21

To be held at the Holiday Inn in Troy, Mich., this convention promises many interesting events. Contact: Contraption, 327 Orion Terrace, Lake Orion MI 48035.

## EXPLOR-O-CON '85, Apr. 19-21

This convention will offer many gaming activities, including numerous RPG tour-

naments. Gamemaster, dealer, and speaker inquiries are invited. For more information, contact: Explor-o-con '85, P.O. Box 435, Gardner MA 01440-435, or telephone (617)632-9588.

## FAL CON IV, Apr. 20-21

This convention will be held at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo. For more information, contact: Paul Toro, Box 1016 USAFA, Colorado Springs CO 80841.

## WIZARDCON '85, Apr. 20

This gaming convention will be held in Ferris Booth Hall at Columbia University in New York, N.Y. Events will include demonstrations, panels, and role-playing and board game tournaments. Although there will be no admission charge, a nominal entry fee will be required for each tournament. For more information, contact: Columbia Games Club, 301 Ferris Booth Hall, Columbia University, New York NY 10027.

## ALTI-EGOS, Apr. 26-28

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be staged at the Sheraton Denver Tech Center in Denver, Col. Guest of honor will be acclaimed author Anne McCaffrey. Featured events will include a writer's panel, an art show, science-fiction and fantasy films, and a model contest. Registration fees are \$35. For details, contact: Alti-Egos, P.O. Box 261000, Lakewood CO 80226.

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### GAME FAIRE '85, Apr. 26-28

To be held at Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Wash., this convention will offer a large variety of role-playing tournaments and board games. Preregistration fees are \$7; registration fees are \$5 for a single day and \$9 for a weekend pass. For more details, contact: Paul Wilson, c/o Merlyn's Science Fiction/Fantasy Store, West 621 Mallon, Spokane WA 99201, or telephone (509)325-9114.

### WIZARD'S CHALLENGE '85, Apr. 26-28

This annual gaming convention will be held at the Travel Lodge in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Guest of honor will be game designer Steve Jackson. For more information, contact: The Wizard's Corner, 801C Broadway Ave., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 1B5.

### GOLD CON III, Apr. 27-28

To be held at Omni Auditorium in Pompano Beach, Fla., events for this convention will include historical, fantasy, and science-fiction games, various movies, and a dealers' area. Participants of U.S. Armed Forces are welcome. Registration fees are \$6. For further details about this convention, contact: John Dunn, Omni Box Office, B.C.C.-North, 1000 Coconut Creek Blvd., Pompano Beach FL 33066, or telephone (305)973-2249.

### MILCON, Apr. 27-28

To be held at the Ramada Inn in Milwaukee, Wis., this science-fiction and fantasy convention will feature *Car Wars*™, *Chill*™, and AD&D® tournaments. Registration fees are \$15. For more information about convention offerings or about judging events, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Metropolitan Gaming Association, c/o Louis B. Mengsol III, 5616 W. Cairdel Lane, Mequon WI 53092, or telephone (414)242-2304 after 3:00 P.M.

### LITTLE WARS, May 4-5

To be held at the Willow Creek Hotel in Palatine, Ill., this convention will feature over 70 events, strictly for fantastic and historic miniatures. Preregistration fees are \$5; admission fees are \$6 for the entire weekend, \$4 for Saturday attendance only, and \$3 for Sunday attendance only. For details, contact: Todd Fisher, 6908 N. Oakley, Chicago IL 60645, or telephone (312)465-7006 during evenings only.

### CONJURATION 2, May 10-12

This event will be held at the Camelot Hotel in Tulsa, Okla. Toastmaster will be Ed Bryant, and guest of honor will be Mike Resnick. For more details about this gaming convention, contact: ConJuration 2, P.O. Box 690064, Tulsa OK 74169, or telephone (918)438-3336.

### MADNESS '85, May 11

Sponsored by the RECAP Truancy Prevention Program, this gaming conven-

tion will be held at Middletown High School in Middletown, N.Y. Registration fees are \$3. For more information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Madness '85, 34 South Street, Middletown NY 10940.

### HAWAIICON '85, May 17-19

To be staged at the Pacific Beach Hotel in Waikiki, Hawaii, this convention will feature role-playing games, miniatures, seminars, and a dealers' area. For more information about the convention or about tailored travel arrangements, contact: HawaiiCon, Inc., P.O. Box 25445 Honolulu HI 96825.

### TALLY CON 4, May 24-26

This gaming convention will be held at the Hilton in Tallahassee, Fla. Guests of honor will be L. Sprague and Catherine Crook de Camp. Activities will include an art show and sale, panel discussions, a game room, and "filksinging." Registration fees are \$15. For more details, contact: The Grinning Gremlin, 824-C W. Tharpe St., Tallahassee FL 32303, or telephone (904)385-1518.

### V-CON 13, May 24-26

This science-fiction convention has a theme which focuses on the bizarre, the macabre, and the supernatural. Featured events will include role-playing and board games, an art show, and a dealers' room. Registration fees are \$18 (in Canadian funds only) until May 23, and \$20 at the door. For more details, contact: V-Con 13, P.O. Box 48478, Bentall Centre, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V7X 1A2.

### M.I.G.S. VI, May 26

Sponsored by the Military Interests and Games Society, this event will be held at the Kitchener-Waterloo Regional Police Association Recreation Centre in Cambridge, Ontario. Featured activities include wargaming tournaments and a painting competition. Registration fees are only \$1. For additional information, contact: George M. Bawdfen, 11 Veevers Drive, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8K 5P6.

### CAMPCON '85, June 1

To be staged at Camp Emmanuel, south of Astoria, Ill., this event will feature all popular role-playing and board games. Registration fees are \$1 in advance, and \$2 at the door. For more information, contact: Kevin B. Sager, P.O. Box 833, Astoria IL 61501, or telephone (309)329-2934.

### HATCON 3, June 6-7

To be held at the Ramada Inn, this convention will include a hat masquerade, a pool party, a champagne Sunday brunch, and various games. Guests of honor will be Ian and Betty Ballantine and Fred Haskell. Registration fees are \$30 until June 1, and \$35 at the door. For additional information, contact: Kennedy Poyser, CT SF Society, 108 Park Ave., Danbury CT 06810, or telephone (203)743-1872.

### SYCCON I, June 8

To take place at the Peach Tree Mall in Marysville, Cal., this convention will feature a variety of gaming events. Winners will receive \$50 worth of gaming merchandise and comic books. Though admission is free, there will be a \$1 registration fee for each event. Be aware that openings are limited. For more information, contact: UPdate Productions, c/o The Game Warden, 24 Peach Tree Mall, Marysville CA 95901.

### GLATHRICON, June 14-16

To be held at the Sheraton Inn in Evansville, Ind., this event will feature a masquerade, seminars, tournaments, and an RPGA luncheon. Guest of honor will be Frank Mentzer, game designer and editor for TSR, Inc. Registration fees are \$6 until April 15, \$8 until June 1, and \$10 thereafter. For more information, contact: R.C.S.F.A., P.O. Box 3894, Evansville IN 47737, or telephone (812)858-5419.

### SEAGA '85, July 5-7

To be held at the Airport Ramada Inn in Atlanta, Ga., this gaming convention will feature computer gaming tournaments, door prizes, and movies. Dealer inquiries are welcomed. Admission fees are \$12 until June 15, and \$15 at the door. For more details, contact: SEAGA, Inc., K. Scott Filipek, P.O. Box 930031, Norcross GA 33093.

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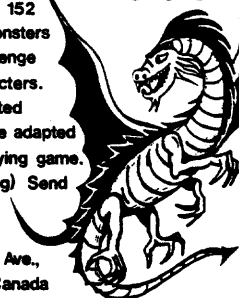


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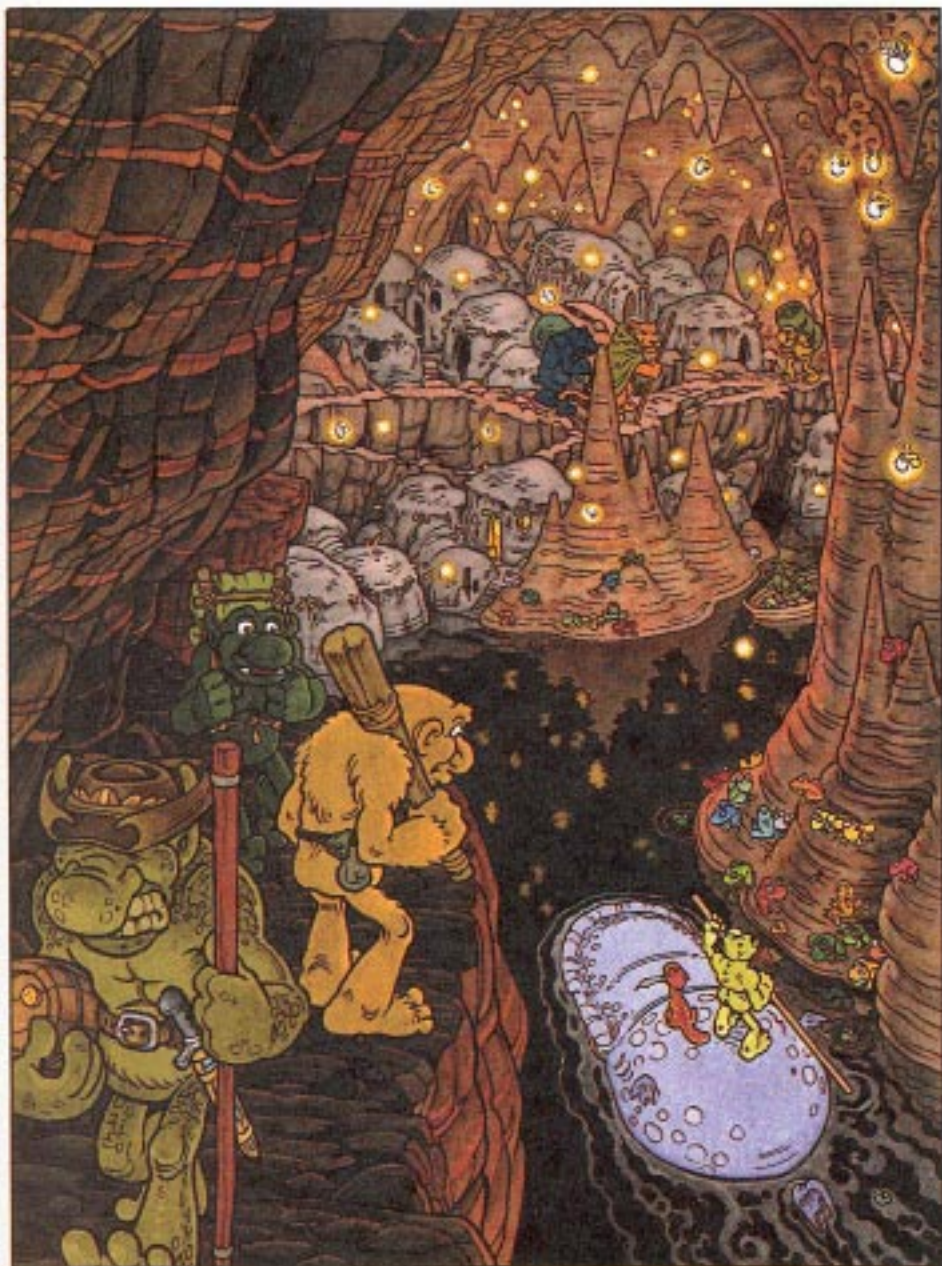
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# SNARFQUEST

# 21

BY ELMORE

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OPEN DA GATE AN' LET US AT DA BEAST, WE WILL FREE DA ROYAL FAMILY AN' RID DA CITY OF DIS DRAGON!

WHAT HEROES!

HUH?

SNARF REALIZES THAT WILLIE, THE DRAGON, IS PROBABLY SUFFERING PERMANENT BRAIN DAMAGE AND IS REALLY HARMLESS.

CLOSE DA GATE BEHIND US AN' DON'T WATCH... GO BACK AN' GUARD SUTHAZE.

OK!

IT'S WILLIE.

WHAT DO YOU TWO STHNIVELING LIL' TWITHS WANT? ... STHPEAK!!

GULP! ... AVEEARE, I MIGHT'VE BEEN WRONG ABOUT OL' WILLIE!

WELL, @\*#!\*!

STHPEAK... I STHAID!

AHH...ERRR... AHM... HI WILLIE, R-R-REMEMBER ME, SNARF? AN' DIS IS MY FRIEND, AVEEARE.

BIIP! BLEEP! HI!

IT'S ME... SNARF! GAK... I'VE SCREWED UP, BAD!! SAY YER PRAYERS AVEEARE, WE'RE BACON!

NEIT... BLEET... BOIT!

SSSSSSSS...

STHNARF, I KNOW ITHS YOU... STHILLY. BUT STHUTHAZE TOLD ME TO ACT LIKE A DRAGON, REAL BAD AND MEAN. THE WHOLE TOWN THINKS I'M A DRAGON... QUACK!

I THANK ALL MY LUCKY STARS!

THIS IS TOO MUCH!





NEXT ISSUE: DOES AVEEARE GET MARRIED??



...STAY ALERT!... TRUST NO ONE!...  
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Aren't you glad you have a laser? Won't this be fun? There are many traitors in Alpha Complex. There are many happy citizens in Alpha Complex. Most of the happy citizens are crazy. It is hard to say which is more dangerous — traitors or happy citizens. Watch out for both of them.

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