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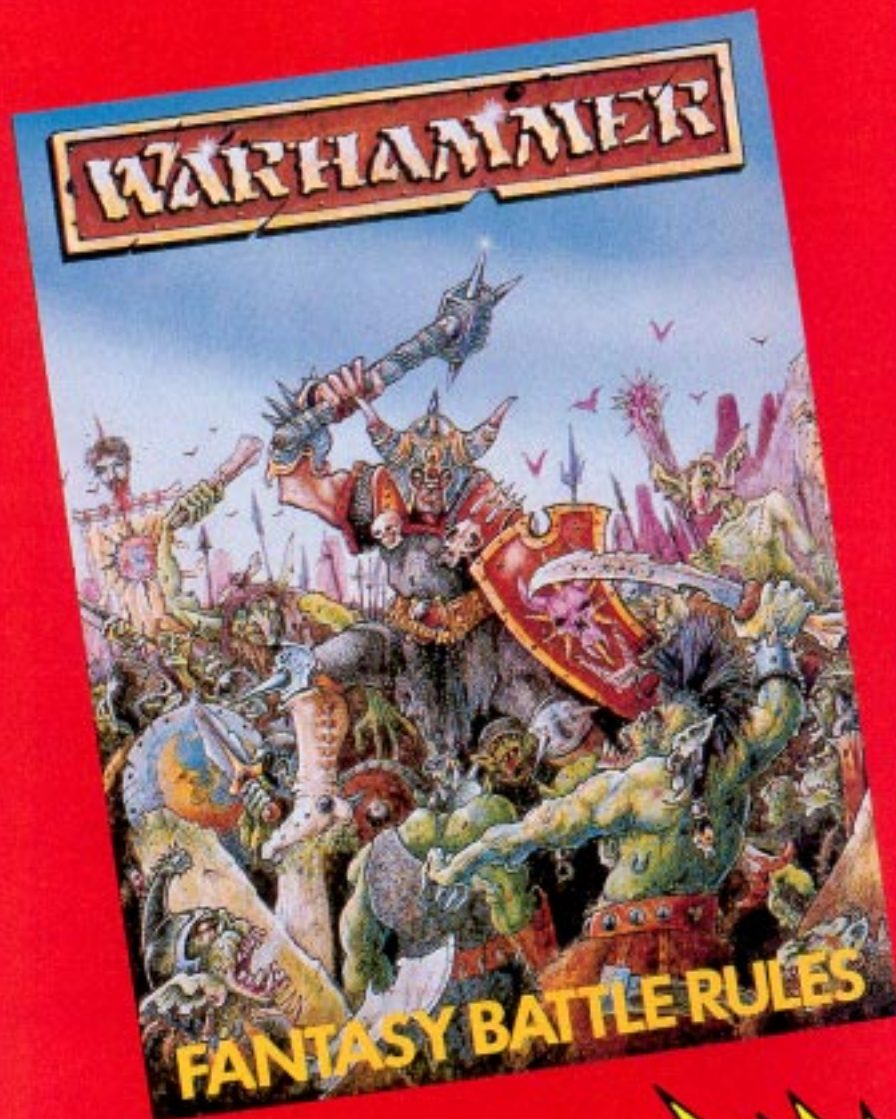
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## COVER

Clyde Duensing III, whose work is gracing our cover for the first time, makes a point of *not* giving titles to his paintings, feeling that the image is more important than its identity. So you can call this painting whatever you want to — as long as you're not too cryptic about it.

# Letters

## A gorgon and its gas

Dear Dragon:

Mr. Greenwood's article, "The ecology of the gorgon" (issue #97), is excellent. I have, however, noticed one minor error. It says, on page 26, that "Gorgons often hunt together in small bands of two mated pairs, . . ." The word "hunt" is footnoted with a 5 and "mated" with a 6. But there is no footnote numbered 6, and number 5 appears to refer to "mated." What was the footnote (if any) referring to "hunt"?

Kirk Schmidt  
Seven Lakes, N. C.

*When we edited the manuscript, our intent was to avoid the rather unsightly use of footnote numbers twice in the same sentence. We accomplished that, in part, by consolidating the information for notes 5 and 6 into one note, which appears as number 5. (In other words, nothing is missing.) But, obviously, we forgot to remove the 5 and change the 6 into a 5 in the text. Sorry for the oversight. — KM*

Dear Dragon:

In "Ecology of the gorgon," concerning the gas that a gorgon breathes out in an attack, do you have to breathe in the gas or does it just have to touch you to take effect? With the young's gas, do you receive a bonus to your saving throw or is it just as powerful as the adult's?

Dan Daley  
St. Clairsville, Ohio

*The article is pretty clear on the first point: "Any creature enveloped by the cloud of vapors" (page 26) can be petrified. Holding your breath does no good. And the second question is answered indirectly; if a bonus to the saving throw was allowed, that would have been mentioned. A young gorgon's breath-weapon cloud is half the size of an adult's, but the chance of petrification for someone caught in it is the same. — KM*

## Take our word for it

Dear Editor,

These questions concern the article "Blueprint for a big game" (issue #97). Two of the "Possible Terrain Features" on p. 90 confuse me. When Jim Dutton wrote "Ford," was he referring to a ford as a place where a river, or other water, may be crossed by wading? Or did he mean "fiord," such as the narrow inlets along the coast of Norway? Second, what exactly is a "Karst"? I've looked in five dictionaries with no success.

Kevin Deavey  
Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

*Second things first: A karst is "a limestone region marked by sinks, abrupt ridges, irregular protuberant rocks, caverns, and underground streams." That's from Webster's Third New International Dictionary, a volume which would not easily fit in the average backpack. (We*

*couldn't find the word in anything smaller.) And "ford" means just that; although typographical errors have been known to happen in these pages, this wasn't one of them. — KM*

## Turning the table

Dear Dragon,

In "The handy art of forgery" (issue #96), the table of modifiers for reader's intelligence can't be correct, because intelligence 3-5 is listed as +10%. This can't be correct because someone that stupid can't even read, much less spot a forgery.

Rob Williams  
Alexandria, Va.

*The table is indeed correct, as long as you interpret it as what it was meant to be. The modifiers are to the forger's chance of successfully fooling the reader, not to the reader's chance of discovering the forgery. And incidentally, being unable to read is not the same as being unable to detect a forgery. If someone tried to pay you with a dollar bill made from a pencil drawing and cut out of green construction paper, your chance of being fooled by the forgery would have nothing to do with whether you could read. — KM*

## Chariot of confusion

Dear Dragon,

"Pages from the Mages IV" in issue #97 was indeed well written, but one part didn't make sense to me. In the second paragraph of the description of the *Death Chariot* spell on page 34, it states: ". . . at the end of 1 turn after casting (or any time previous to that if the caster wishes), the death chariot will suddenly explode in a gigantic ball of fire and vanish." This is fine, except that at the end of that paragraph, the text contradicts itself: "The maximum duration of existence of a death chariot (if not exploded earlier) is 1 round per level of the caster; if kept until the maximum duration, the chariot will fade away harmlessly, and not explode."

Is the maximum duration 1 turn, or 1 round per level? Does the chariot explode at maximum duration, or fade away harmlessly?

Todd Shafritz  
Aurora, Colo.

*Hmmmm. I guess we can't squirm our way out of this one, so the only thing to do is back up and pretend we're still editing the manuscript. If we had it to do over again, we'd change the text to say that the caster can will the chariot to explode at any time (presumably after all of his enemies have climbed on), but if the chariot is allowed to remain in existence up to the maximum duration of 1 round per level, then it will simply fade away without blasting the passengers at the same time. If that answer doesn't satisfy you, then hop aboard my chariot and we'll discuss it further. — KM*

(Continued on page 4)

## The transition starts now

In the next few months, you may see some AD&D® game articles in this magazine that aren't quite right or aren't quite complete. (All you smart alecks who just said "What else is new?" can turn the page now.) The reason for this confession-in-advance can be summed up in two words: *Unearthed Arcana*.

As Jeff Grubb so aptly put it in his introduction to the book, *Unearthed Arcana* will change the way the AD&D game is played. It will also change the way that DRAGON® Magazine is produced. And, just as it will take you some time to fully incorporate all the new rules, spells, and magical gizmos into your adventures, so will it be a while before the magazine makes a complete transition from the pre-Arcana rules to the *post-Arcana* game. Tucked away in our stack of to-be-published manuscripts are some good articles that (obviously) were written before *Arcana* was available, and in the next couple of months I'm sure we'll be receiving and accepting even more of that sort of material.

I hope the transition won't take too long, and that within a very few issues we'll be entirely switched over to a supply of articles that were submitted after the writers all got their own copies of the new book. And yes, we are going to have to eventually require that anyone submitting a manuscript uses *Unearthed Arcana* as a source for that manuscript, if any of the new rules apply to the topic of the article. (You probably don't have to own the new book in order to send us something for an upcoming Creature Catalog, but if you're compiling an article on new weapons, then you're going to have to know what weapons are already in the rules — and the new book has a lot of new weapons.)

Just for the sake of picking a date, let's make the 1985 GEN CON® Convention the cutoff: Any manuscript submitted to us during or after the convention (which starts on Aug. 22) must take *Unearthed Arcana* into consideration. For our part, we'll try to use up all of our "old" stuff within the next three or four magazines, and when the transition is over we'll devote all of our AD&D game coverage space to exploring the new, enlarged game universe. There should be enough article ideas left in the system to keep us — and you — going for years to come.

## Shorter, not smaller

Dear Dragon:

Did you know your magazine is getting shorter? No, I don't mean the number of pages, I mean the actual length from top to bottom. The difference isn't much and I'm not complaining, but I am curious as to the reason.

Marshal Smith  
Newport, N.Y.

*Marshal's right, and if you stack a fairly recent magazine on top of a fairly old one, you'll see that the difference in height of the page is about 1/8 inch. The change from 11" to 10 7/8" was necessary when our printer changed from one type of press to another one; the new press requires a slightly smaller sheet of paper, so the page size had to shrink accordingly. We're still getting the same number of lines on every page, and we don't expect the page to get any shorter. But if it does, we're already prepared; to keep from losing any space, all we have to do is set our type so that it looks like this. — K M*

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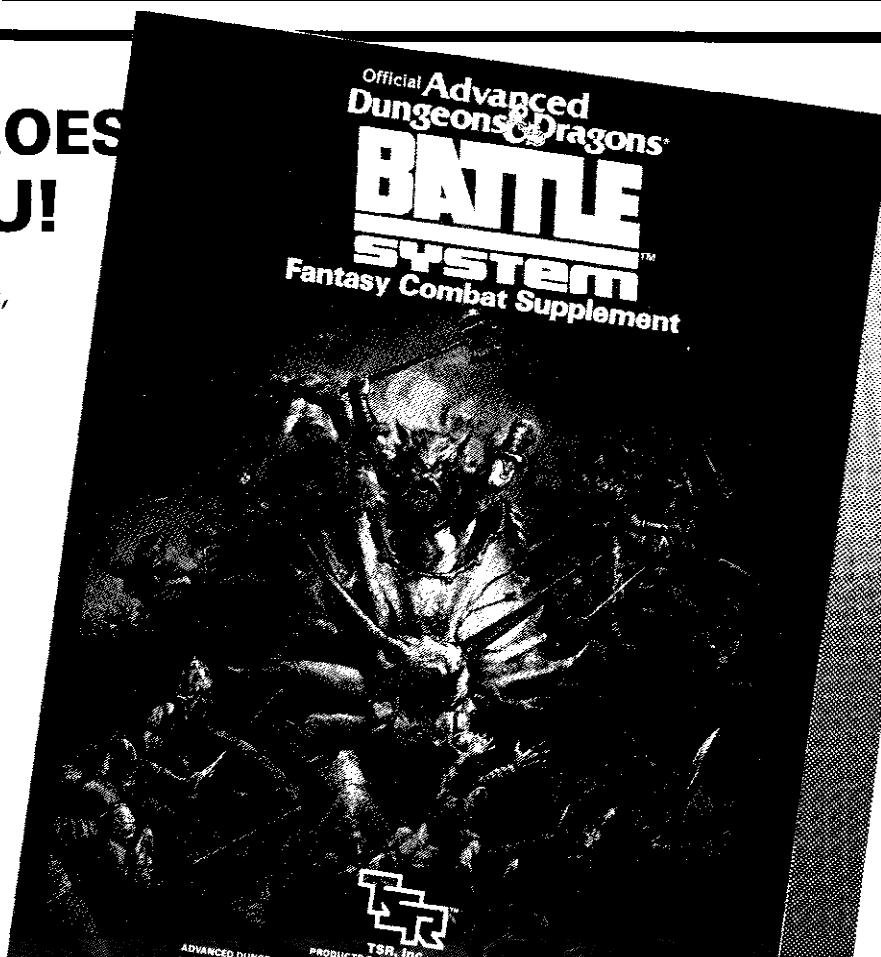
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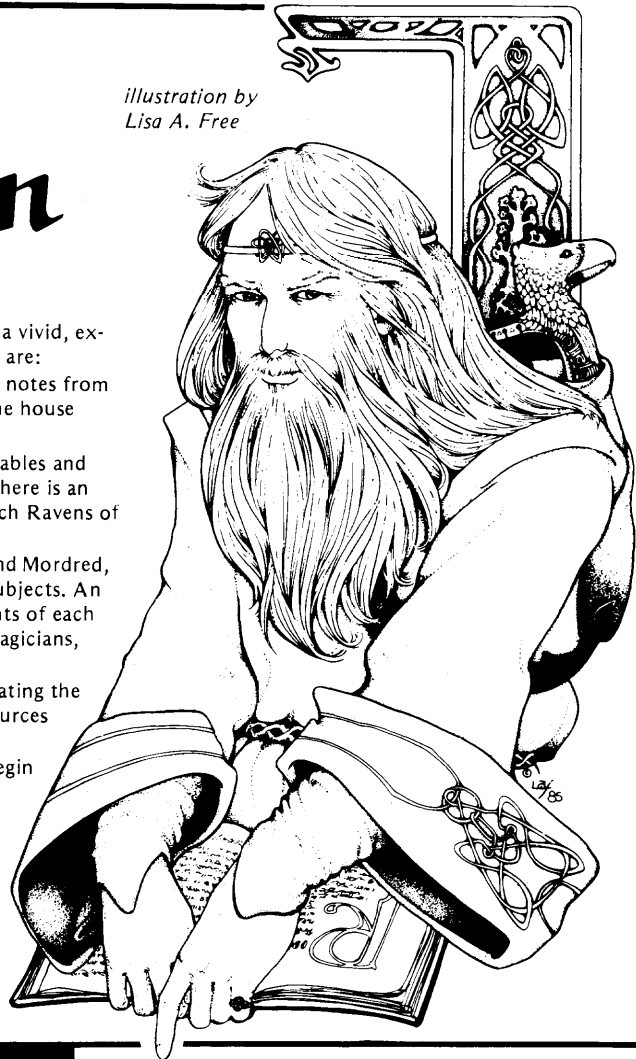
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In issues #95 and #96 of DRAGON Magazine, Gary Gygax has provided articles which extend the classes and experience levels available to the demi-human PC races in the AD&D game. Mr. Gygax states that he does not dislike the non-human races, but that he wishes AD&D worlds to be human-dominated, and the advancement limits and racial class restrictions are the means for achieving this.

Without arguing with this goal, I'd like to suggest an alternative rule that provides the same results. In the AD&D rules, demi-humans possess several inborn advantages over equivalent characters of human stock; e.g., all demi-humans have infravision, a very useful ability when scouting or hiding in a dark place. But when a demi-human PC reaches the maximum level for his class, all advancement stops for him, while human PCs continue to advance. The result is that at the lower levels, demi-humans have advantages over their human comrades, while at higher levels humans dominate the play. If the campaign remains at the lower levels, players are encouraged by these advantages to create non-human characters; if and when the campaign moves into higher levels, old favorite non-human characters suddenly can't keep up with their human counterparts. This is not so much game balance as two different imbalances which, while they may cancel each other out in the long run, do not produce a constantly balanced long-running campaign.

The alternative is this: Instead of limiting the advancement of non-human characters, impose a constant experience-point penalty (as a percentage) which only slows their advancement, but does so at all levels.

How much of a penalty to earned experience should depend on the race (as they have different

advantages) and may be adjusted by the DM for a campaign (if some racial advantage has little use in your milieu, the penalty can be reduced). All non-human races listed below share the advantages of infravision and many additional languages, plus:

Dwarves gain some bonuses against spell and poison attacks, and have the ability to detect slopes, pit traps, shifting walls, and depth underground. They also gain combat advantages against certain creatures. For these advantages, I penalize them -15% to earned experience.

Elves are nearly immune to sleep and charm spells (as well as to the paralyzing touch of ghouls), have bonuses with swords and bows, and a bonus to surprise. They detect secret doors twice as easily. (The rules also provide that they cannot be raised or resurrected, which may or may not be a factor in a campaign, but in any event is too harsh a counterbalancing disadvantage for my taste.) For these many advantages, I penalize them -25% to earned experience. (No, I don't hate elves; but in my campaign these elven racial advantages have made elves far too popular as PCs, and so it is necessary to use a heavy hand to balance the scales.)

Gnomes have racial advantages similar to dwarves, and so share the -15% penalty.

Halflings share with dwarves and gnomes special resistance to magic and poison, and mining skills such as detecting slopes. They also have an advantage to surprise, and for all of this I penalize them -15%.

Half-elves have some resistance to sleep and charm spells, plus advantages in locating secret doors. I penalize them -15%.

Half-orcs have no special racial abilities (except the infravision and languages already mentioned). I penalize them -10% to earned experience.

These penalties allow a DM to remove all advancement limits for demi-humans, secure in the knowledge that the human PCs will advance more quickly in compensation for their lack of special racial abilities. (Even the 25% penalty I assess against elves is modest when you consider that the experience points necessary for advance-

ment increase geometrically, so even elves tend to lag only one level behind the human PCs.) Individual DMs should adjust the penalties according to how useful these special racial abilities are in his or her campaign. These steps insure that a player can select a race based on the type of character he or she really wishes to play, and not based on some consideration of game advantage.

Bruce Carlson  
Phoenix, Ariz.

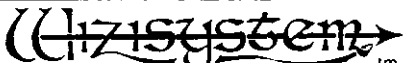

\* \* \* \*

Mr. Gygax's article "Deities and their faithful" (issue #97) was for the most part very well done. It has given me some insights into how the deities supposedly control their followings. There were two points that I disagree with, however. Mr. Gygax's point system seems rather foolish to me, because very few DMs ever get to the point of fleshing their own world well enough to know how many "points" a certain god will have. In my experience, it is much easier to make the gods fit the campaign as needed. (My campaign has approximately 50 gods, and if I tried to count out points for each god, it would take me years to complete the task. Only seven gods have been directly involved in my campaign, and I "phase them out" when they are no longer needed.)


Mr. Gygax seems to have a different conception of a gaming universe crowded with gods than I do. My conception is similar to that of the Greco-Roman gods, each trying to be the most important. This and this alone keeps the alignments in check. (If this were not so, chaotic evil would crush all other alignments combined, because of the sheer number of demons in the layers of the Abyss.)

While I'm on a roll, let me gripe about the "catapult fodder" (goblins and kobolds) at the end of the article. Zero-level humans have a hit point range between one and seven, making them creatures of less than one hit die. So, the next time I see a catapult, I'm going to run full speed in the other direction.


Alex Bergmann  
Cato, N.Y.

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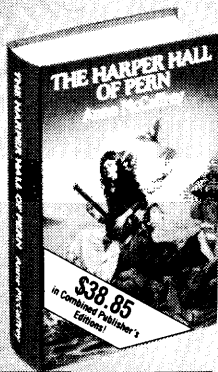
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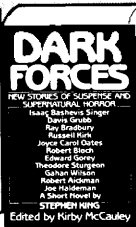
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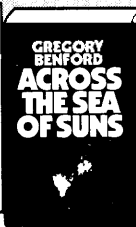
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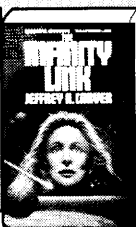
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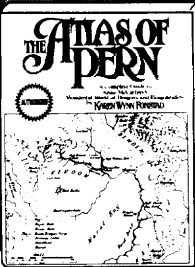
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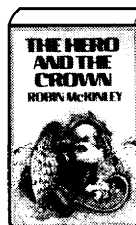
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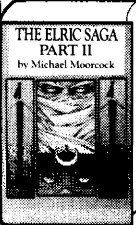
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# The neutral point of view

## Examining the territory between good and evil

by Stephen Inniss

The lawful neutral, chaotic neutral, and true neutral alignments are less well provided for in the AD&D® game rules than are the various good and evil alignments. The Positive Material and Negative Material Planes serve as sources for good and evil, respectively, but no planes give out “law” or “chaos.” There are the Upper and Lower Outer Planes, but little distinction is made between the “middle” (neutral) planes. It is known how good or evil clerics affect undead, but how neutral clerics do so receives little mention. While the earliest AD&D books contain creatures from the Upper and Lower Outer Planes, outer-planes creatures that are neither good nor evil are fewer and more recent in invention. Some spells have good and evil versions, such as *detect evil/detect good*, but none have lawful or chaotic variants. No magical items have effects depending solely on the user’s alignment with respect to law or chaos, but many have effects depending on the user’s good or evil standing. Even Gary Gygax’s latest rules, detailing the effects of magical diagrams on extraplanar creatures (see DRAGON® issue #56, or the *Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth* module), ignore the lawful neutral and chaotic neutral planes.

The bias of the rules is echoed in the way the AD&D game is played. A group of characters of good alignment will generally get along even if some are lawful and some chaotic, but the same is seldom true of a group if some of the characters are good and some evil. Similarly, one rarely hears of an AD&D world in which chaotic creatures (elves and ogres, say) put aside their differences to fight a lawful threat (such as dwarves). On the other hand, one often sees AD&D worlds in which good creatures such as dwarves and elves are willing to ally against evil despite their differences in law and chaos.

All of this is hardly surprising. The AD&D game is derived from fantasy and mythology, in which there are many models for good and evil but few for a law/chaos opposition.

There is nothing wrong with according the contest between good and evil more importance than between law and chaos, since that seems to be a natural bias even in a fantasy game. It might even be a good idea to make this implicit bias more explicit, to formally acknowledge that law and chaos are less important than good and evil in the AD&D game. In the light of such a statement it would be clearer, for instance, why it is more important for a paladin to be

good than lawful. On the other hand, the alignments having nothing to do with good or evil cannot be entirely ignored in the game’s rules.

As the scope of the AD&D game expands, and more lawful neutral and chaotic neutral creatures and elements are added to the game, it becomes increasingly important to resolve the present ambiguities and omissions. What are the effects of holy/unholy water on creatures not aligned with good or evil, and are there lawful and chaotic equivalents to such substances? If a neutral good cleric can drive off daemons with a *holy word* spell, does a chaotic neutral cleric have any such defense against modrons? What magical diagrams will contain or exclude beings from the Outer Planes of Nirvana or Limbo? If lesser devils and the like may be turned, what about other minor Outer Planes creatures?

Two different approaches might be taken toward filling these gaps. The first is to simply rule out considerations of law and chaos wherever possible, in view of the greater importance of good and evil. This approach offers the fewest complications, but it is unfair to characters (particularly clerics) who are not aligned with good or evil. The second approach is to stretch the present rules to include the elements of law and chaos, and let the players decide just where the greater emphasis should lie. This adds complexity but also offers greater flexibility. Pending the publication of official rules on these subjects, some general recommendations are offered here.

First, spells which affect or detect beings of certain alignments, such as *detect evil*, *protection from evil*, *dispel evil*, and *holy word*, have lawful and chaotic versions as well as the standard good/evil ones. A magic-user with the right variants of *detect evil* memorized can then discover the exact ethos of some strongly aligned creature without recourse to more powerful magic. A lawful good cleric may cast *holy word* against evil opponents or a *word of law* (the lawful equivalent) against chaotic ones. A lawful neutral spell caster can use *protection from chaos* against any chaotic creature. True neutral creatures will not usually be affected by any of these spells. Depending on circumstances, true neutral creatures might possibly be affected by *dispel evil* or one of its variants if summoned or commanded to perform an act for an evil being. Of course, extraplanar, summoned, or otherwise enchanted beings will (barring magic resistance) be hedged out by *protec-*

*tion from evil* or any of its variants. Note that clerics using *detect evil*, *detect law*, etc., have a 10% chance per level of picking up a secondary component to any alignment radiation they detect, as described on p.41 of the *Dungeon Masters Guide*.

The lawful/chaotic versions of these spells operate in the same way that the good/evil variants do, and the same rules apply to memorization and casting (that is, the particular variant that is to be cast must be memorized as such). The lawful and chaotic versions of *holy word* are named in a different way (*word of law*, *word of chaos*) because alternate names such as *legal word* don’t have the right ring to them.

New material components must be specified for the new spell variants. For the various *protection* spells, powdered jet or obsidian (or some other black gemstone) is suggested for *protection from chaos*, and powdered rock crystal or a similar material is suggested for *protection from law*. If the circle of protection is traced in the air rather than on the ground, then incense of color or odor appropriate to the spell caster’s religion might be used. For lawful and chaotic variants of the *dispel evil* spell (*dispel law* and *dispel chaos*), the requirement of holy or unholy water must be waived, for reasons given later in the article.

Another suggestion concerns the ability of clerics or paladins of high level to turn lesser creatures from the Outer Planes (“special” on the Clerics Affecting Undead table). If the cleric or paladin is of the same alignment as the affected creature, or is only one place removed on the alignment chart, there may actually be some neutral or friendly reaction, just as between evil clerics and undead creatures. Thus, a chaotic evil cleric might exert his or her demonic power in an attempt to obtain the cooperation of a lesser being from Hades, Tarterus, the Abyss, Pandemonium, or Limbo. Residents of the other Outer Planes, including lesser devils, undeveloped barghests, modrons, and foo dogs, will only be repelled by the manifest chaos and evil. Similarly, a neutral good cleric might hope to command the aid of any lesser representative of the Upper Outer Planes (Arcadia to Gladsheim) or of the Plane of Concordant Opposition, but will only repel others.

The Players Handbook does not allow for true neutral clerics, but Gary Gygax has described several neutral deities that have non-druidic clerics in TSR’s WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ Fantasy Game Setting (Fharlanghn, Istus, Obad-hai, and Boccob).

If such clerics are allowed in a campaign, they might be able to get help from minor natives of the planes of Concordant Opposition, Nirvana, Hades, Limbo, or Elysium.

In no case will an Outer Planes creature that has been turned into an ally do anything contrary to its cause or alignment. An attempt to dupe it into such an act constitutes a hostile action, negating all of the cleric's influence.

Obviously the above is a considerable modification and extension of the rules found in the DMG, but it is a logical one and one that favors game balance. It gives chaotic neutral characters some protection, against lawful creatures such as modrons, and it gives characters of lawful neutral alignment protection from chaotic creatures like lesser slaadi. As for evil clerics, they might reasonably be expected to have an adverse effect on lesser minions of good, especially given the precedent of their ability to repel paladins. The power of evil clerics is not significantly increased by these changes, since for most of them the range of creatures they may command is reduced: Demons will never cooperate with a representative of the Nine Hells, or devils cooperate with a chaotic evil character as a result of turning.

This modification also brings into play an often neglected character ability: charisma. Charisma scores will not affect the turning, of course, but they might be expected to modify the results of successful turnings;

whether or not a potentially allied creature is to be friendly or merely neutral is presumably determined by a reaction roll. This gives concrete significance to the charisma score whenever a creature that might be turned into an ally is encountered. Too often in AD&D gaming, the reactions of monsters are predetermined and unaffected by a character's charisma. Under this system, charisma scores will be significant in encounters, for good and neutral clerics as well as for evil ones.

If the system needs further justification, consider where the power for clerical turning might come from. If this power were associated with the Positive or Negative Material Planes, one might expect such beings as drelbs and xeg-yi to be affected. Since they are not, it is more probable that the cleric or paladin taps some of the power of his or her plane of alignment, using the holy symbol (or unholy symbol as the case may be) as a focus. A more advanced cleric or paladin would tap into more power than a lower-level one. A creature from an Outer Plane is affected according to how well its own alignment agrees with the cleric's. If there is fairly close agreement, the creature is favorably influenced and will not harm the cleric or paladin; it may even render aid of some sort. If a wide separation in alignments exists, the creature will be repelled and must leave the area due to nausea and pain. Paladins, who can be turned by evil clerics, could also be commanded into serv-

ice by lawful neutral, lawful good, or neutral good clerics who successfully "turn" them as an evil cleric of equal level (see DMG, p p. 75-76).

If one assumes that the force of a cleric's or paladin's turning effect comes from the Outer Planes, then the difficulty of explaining why creatures of the energy planes (Positive and Negative) are unaffected is avoided. However, this leaves the question of how skeletons and zombies can be affected despite the fact that they are non-aligned. Two pieces from the *Players Handbook* (p. 46) point to a solution, however. One is that the skeletons or zombies can understand commands and (by implication) make some simple decisions in carrying them out, despite an intelligence rating of "non-intelligent." This would seem to indicate that the skeleton or zombie has some sort of guiding mind, though perhaps not one of its own. The other bit of information is that the act of creating a skeleton or zombie from the spell and the appropriate material is not considered a good act. This supports the idea that some minor power from the Lower Planes might be involved in the creation of such monsters. If so, it is easy to see how skeletons and zombies could be repelled or commanded by clerics.

This theory of clerical turning also provides a basis for the evil areas described on p. 66 of the DMG. In such places, the power of the Lower Planes radiates onto the

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Prime Material Plane, thus reducing the effect of a good or neutral cleric's turning. This is comparable to the way in which an evil cleric might counter-affect undead or other evil creatures which have been turned, or to the way in which the more powerfully evil (and strongly connected) creatures are difficult or impossible to turn. On the Lower Planes themselves, the ability of good or neutral clerics to turn away creatures would be reduced even further or eliminated entirely (see "The Nine Hells," p. 44, *DRAGON* issue #76). Whether or not evil clerics and (in some cases) neutral clerics would be able to cause such creatures to ally with them in such areas is debatable. Naturally, there must be lawful and chaotic areas, too, as well as good and evil ones. In fact, there might be as many as 17 different sorts of "alignment zones" found on the Prime Material Plane, one for each Outer Plane of alignment. In each of these areas, the effect of clerics of opposing alignments would be reduced. Each area would radiate some combination of good, evil, law, or chaos, if the appropriate spell of detection were used.

Finally, the above theory of how clerical turning works implies that the cleric's actions might cause the character to register positively to a *detect evil* spell (or some variant thereof) during the turning of creatures, even if the character would not normally give so clear a signal. If powerful alignment radiations are involved, then surely they will be detectable.

The emotions and motives involved when a paladin displays his or her badge of authority (holy symbol) and radiates lawful good power to call a lesser lammasu into service are of course very different from those in an evil high priest's compelling of a hostile daemon, but the result is much the same. It might be argued that a lammasu would help a paladin in any case, and so it might. But it must be remembered that natives of the Upper Planes, perhaps especially those of the Upper Outer Planes, are likely to feel superior to mere humans, and to be mistrustful of their motives; aid is not to be had just for the asking. By successfully gaining the aid of the lammasu, the paladin displays his advancement in the cause of

law and good, and so by its nature the lammasu will render aid.

Just which creatures are of the Outer Planes and which are not is not always clear, and their status must be decided on a case-by-case basis. The latter is not too difficult using the guidelines on p. 76 of the *DMG*, although the rule of thumb given for deciding the status of miscellaneous creatures should be used with caution: the derghodaemon, a lesser daemon, exceeds the upper limits in two of the three measures given (hit dice and magic resistance). Whether a being is of the Inner or of the Outer Planes is not always so easily decided. A case might be made either way for lammasu, shedu, or couatl (who travel ethereally and can go to the Inner Planes at will), though the evidence indicates they are of the Upper Outer Planes. There are also some borderline cases such as the githzerai, who are originally from the Prime-Material Plane but dwell on Limbo, or the aludemons and cambions, who are half-human. The former are probably unaffected by turning and the latter are probably affected, but it could be argued otherwise. Lastly, there may be special cases, such as the spectator (*Monster Manual II*), which should be invulnerable to turning while it is on guard duty (otherwise it would be useless in its profession).

There is the question of how clerics who are not of good or evil alignment affect the undead. The simplest fair solution is to allow them to affect undead either as good clerics would or as evil clerics would, according to what the player decides before the turning attempt is made. If the neutral cleric chooses to affect undead as an evil cleric, a neutral rather than a favorable reaction is likely, because of alignment differences that affect the reaction roll (note that a hostile reaction is impossible if turning of this sort was successful, and any unfavorable result must be re-rolled). If the undead are at least of the same lawful/chaotic alignment there may be somewhat less difficulty, but undead allies can be awkward at times for a non-evil character, and intelligent undead creatures will almost certainly resent having been pressed into service once they are no longer under the

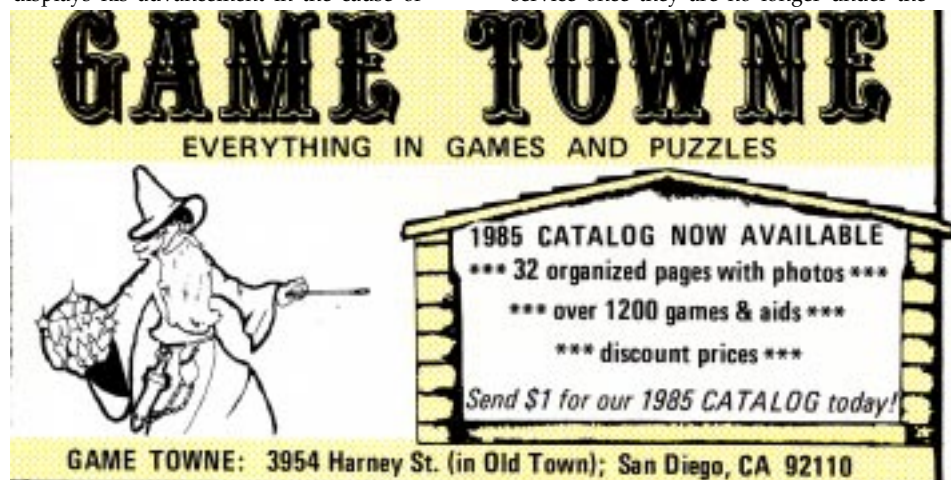
influence of the cleric.

Another problem area concerns holy and unholy water. Holy water is effective against creatures from the Lower Outer Planes (Pandemonium to Acheron) or against very evil Inner Planes creatures such as the undead or the evil genies. Unholy water has the same effect on those of the Upper Outer Planes (Arcadia to Gladsheim) or against very good Inner Planes natives such as paladins (see *DMG*, p. 65). Creatures affected are harmed due to their connection with the Positive Material Plane (for good creatures) or the Negative Material Plane (for evil creatures). This is why only magical beings (including paladins, who are magical by profession and have several special powers to prove it) are affected, and why clerics are not affected even though they are strongly aligned. Clerics have access to the powers of the Positive and Negative Material Planes, but only by means of spells. Creatures that do not continuously draw on the energy planes are immune to the effects of holy water or unholy water. This includes representatives of the Middle Outer Planes (Limbo, Concordant Opposition, and Nirvana). The definition of the "Middle Outer Planes" might be expanded to include those realms adjacent to Limbo or Nirvana, such as Arcadia or Acheron, but this would be contrary to indications in the *AD&D* books, such as the definition of the Lower Outer Planes given in the description of the opincius. This theory of how holy/unholy waters work implies that holy water should be effective against creatures of the Negative Material Plane regardless of alignment, and that unholy water should likewise harm even neutral creatures that are from the Positive Material Plane.

No lawful or chaotic equivalent to holy/unholy water exists. The implication of the above material is that holy water draws from a good power source (the Positive Material Plane) and unholy water from an evil one (the Negative Material Plane). No such power sources exist for law or chaos.

What about circles of protection? In *From the Sorcerer's Scroll* in *DRAGON* issue #56, Gary Gygax named six protective devices that could be used by spell casters summoning creatures from other planes or trying to protect themselves from the same. Of the six given, only the magic circle and thaumaturgic triangle are effective protection against creatures from the "Middle Outer" planes. A pentacle will entrap creatures from these planes. A magic protection circle, thaumaturgic circle, or pentagram will have no effect against such creatures.

The spell *dispel evil/good* will not affect creatures from the "Middle Outer" planes, unless such creatures were specifically summoned for the purpose of committing a good or evil deed. This distinction will require the Dungeon Master's best judgment. Hopefully, this article will end some of the confusion regarding the creatures from the neutral-aligned outer planes and make for a more coherent campaign.





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# Tables and tables of troops

## Many factors affect followers for fighters

by James Yates

One area in which the AD&D® game rules could be expanded is that of determining followers for upper-level fighters. Two small tables in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* cover the acquisition of leaders and troops for fighters, and their range of outcomes are exceedingly narrow. This method takes nothing into account but the results of two rolls of percentile dice, with the result that most lords will have remarkably similar forces. What is needed is a system of generating leaders and troops that offers more variety and takes into account the various factors influencing a body of soldiers and their officers.

### Troops and terrain

Where a character decides to set up a freehold should have a strong bearing upon what types of troops will be attracted to him. Someone who sets up house on a steep, rocky island has little use for a troop of heavy cavalry, and a company of plate-mailed pikemen would be at a disadvantage in a desert. Terrain has always determined the types of troops that reside in it. A character organizing a freehold should be given the opportunity to attract troops best suited to the terrain of that particular freehold.

At the end of this article are several troop tables, each representing the predominant terrain of any given freehold: plains, forests, hills, mountains, marshes, deserts, and maritime areas. Terrain types such as scrub, rough, and depression have been omitted, since they can easily be included within one of the terrain types listed. Climate is not taken into account because it cannot substantially alter the prevalent terrain, only the creatures which reside in it. Special troop tables for dwarves and evil half-orcs are also included.

Use of these tables will assure a greater variety of forces from one lord to the next. It will also force player characters to think more carefully about where they wish to set up a freehold, since certain terrain types are more advantageous for certain purposes than others. Now high-level fighters and their minions can be more than just so many statistics. Great lord of the forest, mighty master of the mountains, feared sea baron, noble sheriff of the desert — the choice is up to you!

### Types of lords

Just what a lord is like also helps to determine what sorts of troops he will be able to enlist into his service. Is he an uncaring, lazy, murderous poltroon or a sympathetic,

hard-working Mr. Nice Guy? A wide range of factors determines the loyalty of a person's followers once they have been obtained. It's logical that at least some of these factors should play a part in determining what types of followers a lord can obtain.

The *Players Handbook* says that a character who builds some type of castle and clears the surrounding territory of hostile creatures for a radius of 20-50 miles will automatically attract a body of men-at-arms, and will earn the right to collect taxes from every inhabitant of the freehold. Someone who has cleared an area with a 50-mile radius will rule more than twice the land of a lord who only clears the bare minimum necessary to fulfill the requirements. It seems only fair that the industrious should be rewarded for their time and effort and the indolent should be penalized for their sloth. This translates into a positive or negative die roll modification on the leaders and troop tables.

A lord's alignment should also play a minor part in determining the number and quality of his followers. No matter how well he pays or what threats or promises he makes, it is a reasonable assumption that soldiers will not trust a chaotic evil lord. We are talking about men-at-arms here, not orcs or bugbears. No matter what their own alignments may be, men-at-arms would show reluctance in signing on with a master who disembowels the sergeant of the guard just because his drilling of the troops disturbed the lord's breakfast.

Certain other facts about the prospective lord should have an influence upon what he receives. The lord's level should be considered; a fighter of 14th level will almost certainly have more prestige than a fighter of only 9th level. Higher-level lords are granted a positive die roll modification for each level above 9th on the leader and troop tables. This may encourage player characters to continue adventuring instead of settling down to cushy lives as barons as soon as they hit 9th level.

Charisma is also important. The more charismatic the leader, the more followers he will have and the greater their loyalty will be. Alexander against Darius, Napoleon against Louis XVIII — history is full of examples of charismatic leaders who succeeded against seemingly impossible odds to topple foes who had all the charisma of a mollusk. Conversely, someone with a low charisma will have a difficult time retaining the loyalty of his followers without resorting to threats or other inducements.

One final point which may influence the leaders and troops a lord receives is race; dwarves and half-orcs can become lords, too. High-level dwarven fighters use a different system for obtaining officers (they do not roll on the leaders table), and their troops will be almost exclusively dwarven in race.

Half-orcs are a different matter. Not all of them need to be nasty and evil; it is quite possible for a player to have a lawful good half-orc. Nevertheless, a half-orc is still a half-orc. The vast majority of them will be homely, at best, in the eyes of most humans, and most members of other races will have a strong prejudice against them. Only a rare, exceptional half-orc might be capable of overcoming this handicap.

### Summary of modifiers

*Territorial modifiers:* These approximate the size of the freehold the lord has established. The figures in square miles have been rounded off to the nearest 50, and are used for those lords who weren't obliging enough to clear a perfect circle around their castles.

Area cleared has a radius greater than 45 mi. or is more than 6,350 sq. mi. = +5%

Area cleared has a radius greater than 40 mi. or is more than 5,000 sq. mi. = +2%

Area cleared has a radius less than 40 mi. or is less than 5,000 sq. mi. = 0%

Area cleared has a radius less than 35 mi. or is less than 3,850 sq. mi. = -2%

Area cleared has a radius less than 30 mi. or is less than 2,800 sq. mi. = -5%

Area cleared has a radius less than 25 mi. or is less than 1,950 sq. mi. = -8%

### Alignment modifiers:

Lawful good = +3%

Lawful neutral = +2%

Lawful evil = +1%

Neutral good = 0%

Neutral = 0%

Chaotic good = -1%

Chaotic neutral = -2%

Neutral evil = -3%

Chaotic evil = -4%

### Characteristic modifiers:

Each level above 9th = +2%

Each point of charisma above 13 = +1%

Each point of charisma below 9 = -2%

Half-orc = -10% (this modifier is not used in conjunction with the evil half-orc troop table)



On both the leaders and troop tables, any modified score of less than 01 is treated as 01, and any modified score greater than 00 (100) is treated as 00.

Using an extreme case, a 9th-level chaotic evil half-orc with a charisma of 6 who has cleared a paltry 1,600 square miles of territory would have negative die roll modifiers of -28% for leaders and -18% on the evil half-orc troop table. Going towards the opposite extreme, a 15th-level lawful good human with a charisma of 18 who has cleared 7,000 square miles of territory would have a modifier of +25% for both leaders and troop rolls. A rare and exceptional half-orc, say a 10th-level lawful good half-orc with a charisma of 12 who has cleared about 6,800 square miles of territory, would have no modifiers for either the leaders or troop tables. Somebody a bit more average, an 11th-level neutral good human with a charisma of 14 who has cleared 4,000 square miles of territory, would have a modifier of +5% on both the leaders and troop tables.

#### Leaders table

Roll percentile dice and add or subtract any modifiers that the lord might have. Once the leaders have been selected, determine any arms and equipment they might possess. "Capt." and "Lt." are abbreviations for captain and lieutenant respectively; the number accompanying each entry is the experience level of the leader that has been gained.

#### Modified

##### dice roll Result

01-40	Capt. 5
41-60	Capt. 6
61-70	Capt. 5, Lt. 2
71-80	Capt. 7
81-85	Capt. 5, Lt. 3
86-90	Capt. 6, Lt. 2
91-95	Capt. 8
96	Capt. 6, Lt. 3
97	Capt. 7, Lt. 2
98	Capt. 8, Lt. 2
99	Capt. 7, Lt. 3
00	Capt. 8, Lt. 3

Leaders have the following chance per level of having magical arms and armor (typically +1 in power):

Shield:	16%
Chain mail:	15%
Banded mail:	12%
Plate mail:	10%
Dagger:	5%
Edged weapon (select type):	15%
Blunt weapon (select type):	7%
Pole arm (select type):	9%
Missile weapon (select type):	6%
Miscellaneous magic item:	4% (roll until a usable item is obtained)

All leaders are allowed separate rolls to see if they possess the various sorts of magical accoutrements: a shield, one type of armor (of the DM's choice), a dagger, and one miscellaneous magic item. Captains roll

for two types of weapons; lieutenants roll for only one type of weapon (of the DM's choice in both cases).

Multiply the level of the leader in question by the percentage chance to possess a particular item, then roll percentile dice; if the score rolled is equal to or less than the percentage, the leader has the item. If any leader has a percentage greater than 100% of having an item, the percentage above 100% is the chance of the item being +2 in power. It should be noted that only captains of 7th or 8th level have any chance of receiving a +2 item, typically a shield, a suit of chain mail, or an edged weapon. If no magic armor or weapons are received by a leader, the DM may outfit that leader with any armor or weapons deemed suitable.

Some of the percentages used might seem a bit high. It should be remembered that these leaders are professional soldiers who have been around for awhile. They could easily have picked up a magic shield or weapon on some battlefield. These percentages give the lieutenants a moderate chance of receiving some sort of magic item, and they give the captains an excellent chance of having magic arms and armor.

Specific weapons were not listed to insure greater versatility among the leaders. A leader of cavalry would probably want a large, heavy sword, while a leader who is going to serve aboard a ship would probably want a lighter weapon. This method permits the DM to select weapons that will fit


the terrain or circumstances in which the leaders will most often find themselves.

#### Using the troop tables

First, the player or the DM (if creating a freehold for an NPC) selects which troop table he wishes to use. The table must correspond to the predominant terrain of the freehold, although this is open to the DM's interpretation. A freehold with a +2% modifier for leaders and troops would be larger than the state of Connecticut; more than one type of terrain may exist in that area. A mountainous freehold in a wilderness region might be heavily forested as well. When more than one terrain type exists, the DM must decide which troop table is used, keeping the wishes of any player character involved in mind. After all, it's that person's freehold.

Once the terrain type has been chosen, the percentile dice are rolled and modifiers are applied. The final result will show the number of troops of various types which will form the nucleus of the lord's fledgling army. The higher the result, the more and better equipped the troops will be. A high score will also gain bonus troops who will greatly improve the quality of the lord's forces.

A score of 66-85 on every troop table except the dwarf troop table means that one out of every ten troops received is a sergeant. A sergeant is a 1st-level fighter incapable of progressing beyond that level.



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Each sergeant can command as many as ten soldiers as an independent unit, or he can be used to extend the command ability of a lieutenant or captain. A score of 86-00 means that one out of every five troops received is a sergeant.

A score of 96-00 means that the lord receives a small detachment of special scouts (except on the dwarf or evil half-orc troop tables) which, depending on the lord's alignment, will usually be demi-humans or humanoids. These special scouts are optional; if the DM feels they should not be given to a lord, then they are not given.

Some final notes on the troop tables. An evil half-orc doesn't have to roll on the evil half-orc troop table, although that would be his best shot. Also, these troop tables are not tablets of stone. DMs should feel free to alter them in any way they see fit. Sergeants could be added earlier and doubled earlier. Special scouts could be added earlier or increased in numbers. You might even wish to add more exotic troop types, like war elephants, chariots, or even rhino riders!

Unless otherwise stated, all troops given in the tables below are 0-level human men-at-arms. Each soldier has 4-7 hp.

**Troop Table I: Plains**

"Plains" represents prairie, steppe, savanna, etc. The horse has always been the primary mode of transport to most plains people, be they Sioux, Gaucho, or Mongol. Rapid mobility is of the utmost importance and a large proportion of all plains troops will be cavalry. But because you can't defend a castle from the saddle of a horse, some of the troops will be infantry.

Dice	Result
01-40	40 light cavalry — 30 with leather armor and shield, lance and sword; 10 with leather armor, light crossbow and sword; and, 20 infantry with leather armor and shield, sword and spear
41-65	50 light cavalry — 30 with studded leather and shield, lance and sword; 20 with leather armor, composite bow and sword; and, 30 infantry with ring mail and shield, sword and spear
66-85	40 medium cavalry with ring mail and shield, lance and sword; 20 light cavalry with studded leather, light crossbow and sword; and, 40 infantry with scale mail and shield, sword and spear
86-95	50 medium cavalry with chain mail and shield, lance and sword; 25 light cavalry with studded leather, composite bow and sword; and, 50 infantry with chain mail and shield, sword and spear
96-00	30 heavy cavalry with banded mail and shield, lance, sword, and flail; 60 medium cavalry — 30 with chain mail and shield, lance and sword; 30 with ring mail, composite bow and sword; and, 60 infantry — 40 with chain mail and

shield, sword and spear; 20 with ring mail, light crossbow and sword; plus special scouts\*

\* — If the lord's alignment is good or neutral, the special scouts will be 5 normal centaurs led by 1 leader type. If the lord is evil, the scouts will be 5 goblins mounted on worgs.

**Troop Table II: Forests**

"Forests" represents woods, groves, and jungle. Large masses of cavalry do not perform well in forested terrain, and fewer mounted troops will be found. Hacking your way through a thick wood in plate mail could be tedious, to say the least; most troops found in the forests will have lighter gear. Forests abound with game, and a fair amount of troops in the forests will be armed with bows, to help ease the commissariat's situation.

Dice	Result
01-40	10 light cavalry with leather armor and shield, short bow and sword; and, 50 infantry — 30 with studded leather and shield, pole arm (select type) and hand axe; 20 with leather armor, short bow and, sword
41-65	15 light cavalry with studded leather armor and shield, lance and sword; and, 60 infantry — 40 with ring mail and shield, sword and spear; 20 with studded leather, long bow and hand axe
66-85	20 light cavalry with studded leather, short bow and sword; and, 70 infantry — 40 with scale mail and shield, sword and spear; 30 with studded leather, short bow and hand axe
86-95	25 medium cavalry with ring mail and shield, lance and sword; and, 85 infantry — 50 with chain mail and shield, sword and spear; 35 with ring mail, long bow and axe
96-00	30 medium cavalry — 20 with chain mail and shield, lance and sword; 10 with ring mail, short bow and sword; and, 100 infantry — 60 with chain mail and shield, sword and spear; 40 with chain mail, long bow and sword; plus special scouts *

\* — If the lord's alignment is good or neutral, the special scouts will be 6 1st-level elf fighters led by a 2nd-level fighter/magic user. If the lord is evil, the scouts will be 10 normal orcs.

**Troop Table III: Hills**

"Hills" represents rolling ridges and the flat land between them. Some hills are quite rugged, while others are low and flat. Hill country requires a good mix of forces; it is often open enough for cavalry and missile troops to be used effectively, yet broken

enough to allow infantry a chance to stand against such troops.

Dice	Result
01-40	20 light cavalry with leather armor and shield, lance and sword; 40 light infantry with studded leather and shield, 2-4 javelins and sword
41-65	25 light cavalry with studded leather and shield, lance and sword; 60 infantry — 45 with ring mail and shield, pole arm (select type) and mace; 15 with leather armor, heavy crossbow and sword
66-85	30 medium cavalry with ring mail and shield, lance and sword; and, 70 infantry — 50 with scale mail and shield, sword and spear; 20 with studded leather, long bow and sword
86-95	40 medium cavalry — 30 with chain mail and shield, lance and sword; 10 with ring mail, light crossbow and sword; 40 heavy infantry with banded mail and shield, sword and morning star; and, 40 infantry — 20 with chain mail and shield, sword and spear; 20 with ring mail, heavy crossbow and sword
96-00	20 heavy cavalry with banded mail and shield, lance, sword, and morning star; 30 medium cavalry with chain mail and shield, lance and sword; 40 heavy infantry with plate mail, pike and sword; and, 60 infantry — 30 with chain mail and shield, sword and mace; 30 with chain mail, long bow and sword; plus special scouts*

\* — If the lord's alignment is good, the special scouts will be 5 0-level halfling fighters led by a 1st-level halfling fighter. If the lord is neutral, the scouts will be 5 1st-level gnome warriors led by a 2nd-level gnome fighter/illusionist. If the lord is evil, the scouts will be 10 normal hobgoblins.

**Troop Table IV: Mountains**

"Mountains" represents very high, steep masses of land with valleys or canyons beneath them. Cavalry and missile troops become less important and infantry becomes the predominant military force in such terrain.

Dice	Result
01-40	60 infantry — 30 with ring mail and shield, sword and spear; 20 with studded leather, pole arm (select type) and hand axe; 10 with leather armor, heavy crossbow and sword
41-65	10 light cavalry with leather armor and shield, lance and sword; and, 70 infantry — 30 with ring mail and shield, sword and spear; 20 with scale mail and shield, sword and mace; 20 with studded leather

66-85	and shield, 3-6 javelins and sword 15 light cavalry with studded leather and shield, lance and sword; 30 heavy infantry with splint mail, pike and hand axe; and, 50 infantry — 30 with scale mail and shield, sword and spear; 20 with ring mail, short bow and sword
86-95	20 light cavalry with ring mail and shield, lance and sword; and, 90 infantry — 60 with chain mail and shield, sword and spear; 30 with ring mail and shield, 3-6 javelins and sword
96-00	25 medium cavalry with chain mail and shield, lance and sword; 50 heavy infantry with banded mail and shield, sword and mace; and, 55 infantry — 30 with chain mail and shield, sword and spear; 25 with chain mail, short bow and sword; plus special scouts*

\* — If the lord's alignment is good, the special scouts will be 9 1st-level dwarven fighters led by a 3rd-level dwarven fighter. If the lord is neutral, the scouts will be 5 1st-level gnome fighters led by a 2nd-level fighter/illusionist. If the lord is evil, the scouts will be 10 normal hobgoblins.

#### Troop Table V: Marsh

"Marsh" represents marshes, swamps, bogs, and so on. Cavalry will be few in such treacherous terrain. Missile troops are useful because the overland movement of any enemy forces will be slowed. Infantry will tend to be light (one false step in a suit of plate mail could prove fatal) and there will be a larger proportion of bashing weapons, for smashing the hordes of creepy-crawlies that infest such places.

Dice	Result
01-40	50 light infantry — 30 with studded leather and shield, sword and mace; 20 with leather armor, military fork and hammer
41-65	60 infantry — 40 with ring mail and shield, spear and mace; 20 with studded leather, short bow and hand axe
66-85	10 light cavalry with leather armor and shield, lance and flail; and, 70 infantry — 40 with scale mail, pole arm (select type) and sword; 30 with studded leather and shield, 2-4 javelins and mace
86-95	15 light cavalry with studded leather and shield, lance and sword; and, 80 infantry — 50 with ring mail and shield, sword and mace; 30 with studded leather and shield, 2-4 javelins and sword
96-00	20 light cavalry with ring mail and shield, lance and flail; and, 90 infantry — 40 with chain mail and shield, sword and spear; 25 with ring mail, military fork and mace;

25 with ring mail, short bow and hammer; plus special scouts\*

\* — If the lord's alignment is good or neutral, the special scouts will be 5 "moss troopers" (1st-level human fighters native to the region) led by a 2nd-level ranger. If the lord is evil, the scouts will be 6 of the superior type of lizard man.

#### Troop Table VI: Desert

"Desert" represents barren lands, sand seas, and so forth. Nowhere is mobility more vital than in the desert. The vast majority of troops in such lands will be mounted, as a mount often means the difference between life and death to people in these regions.

Missile troops will be plentiful in the desert. Infantry will be few in numbers and many of the cavalry will be forced to serve as such in the defense of the lord's strong hold. Armor will tend to be light due to the extreme heat.

Dice	Result
01-40	35 light cavalry — 20 with leather armor and shield, lance and sword; 15 with leather armor, light crossbow and mace; and, 15 infantry with leather armor and shield, 2-3 javelins and sword
41-65	45 light cavalry — 25 with studded leather and shield, lance and sword; 20 with leather armor, composite bow and sword; and, 20 infantry with studded leather and shield, sword and spear
66-85	55 light cavalry — 35 with ring mail and shield, lance and sword; 20 with studded leather, light crossbow and mace; and, 25 infantry with ring mail and shield, sword and spear
86-95	40 medium cavalry with ring mail and shield, lance and sword; 25 light cavalry with studded leather, composite bow and sword; and, 30 infantry — 20 with chain mail and shield, sword and mace; 10 with studded leather, light crossbow and sword
96-00	45 medium cavalry with chain mail and shield, lance, sword, and flail; 30 light cavalry with ring mail, light crossbow and mace; and, 35 infantry — 20 with chain mail and shield, sword and spear; 15 with ring mail, composite bow and sword; plus special scouts*

\* — If the lord's alignment is good, the special scouts will be, 9 0-level human fighters led by a 2nd-level cleric. If the lord is neutral or evil, the scouts will be 5 1st-level human fighters led by a 3rd-level thief. All will be mounted on camels or light horses.

#### Troop Table VII: Maritime

Strictly speaking, this table is not just used for sea-going lords. To qualify for this table, the freehold must be on the coast of a sea or ocean, border or contain a major lake, or border or contain a major river. It will be up to the DM to decide whether or not a freehold fits the bill. Cavalry will be few and most troops will have to double as sailors (rowers, marines, etc.). Arms and equipment will be on the light side, reflecting possible service on the water.

Dice	Result
01-40	70 infantry — 25 with ring mail and shield, sword and hand axe; 35 with studded leather and shield, sword and spear; 10 with leather armor, light crossbow and sword; and, 1 patrol galley (see below)
41-65	85 infantry — 30 with ring mail and shield, sword and mace; 40 with studded leather and shield, sword and spear; 15 with leather armor, short bow and hand axe; and, 1 patrol galley
66-85	10 light cavalry with leather armor and shield, lance and sword; 95 infantry — 25 with chain mail and shield, sword and hand axe; 20 with ring mail and shield, battle axe and mace; 35 with studded leather armor, heavy crossbow and sword; and, 1 patrol galley
86-95	15 light cavalry with studded leather and shield, lance and sword; 110 infantry — 25 with chain mail and shield, battle axe and mace; 50 with studded leather and shield, sword and spear; 15 with leather armor, light crossbow and sword; and, 1 patrol galley
96-00	20 light cavalry with ring mail and shield, lance and sword; 125 infantry — 30 with chain mail and shield, sword and hand axe; 25 with ring mail and shield, battle axe and mace; 50 with studded leather and shield, sword and spear; 20 with ring mail, short bow and sword; and, 2 patrol galleys (see below) plus 1 mate*

\* — The mate is the replacement for the special scouts on this table. A mate is a 4th-level fighter and he can command a patrol galley. This assures that a lord who has 2 patrol galleys will have captains for both of them without having to act as one himself. A mate has the same chances as other leaders for having magical arms and equipment.

The patrol galley grants the maritime lord a useful vessel without forcing him to strip the stronghold to man it. The patrol galley is similar to the Greek pentekinter, only somewhat smaller. It has a single bank of oars, a large square sail, and is equipped



with a ram and a ballista mounted in the bow. The vessel is about 60' long and 12' wide. It has a hull value of 10 and corresponds to the small galley in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* in all other respects.

The crew of the patrol galley is drawn from the maritime lord's troops. It consists of 1 captain, 1 steersman, 1 timekeeper, 3-4 deck-hands, 30 rowers, 2-4 archers, and 2-4 men to crew the ballista (it is assumed they are trained in this function). A patrol galley can carry up to 10 additional soldiers besides its crew. Each patrol galley must be commanded by either a lord, a captain, a lieutenant, or a mate.

#### Troop Table VIII: Dwarven Lord

Dwarven lords are rare and powerful individuals, and any dwarf who becomes a lord will be a true hero of his race. His troops will be drawn from dwarven clans and the lord will take over primary responsibility for any clans within his freehold. This is one of the most powerful troop tables, because every soldier on it is at least 1st level (having 6-9 hp).

#### Dice Result

01-40	50 infantry — 30 with chain mail and shield, battle axe and hammer; 20 with ring mail and shield, sword and spear
41-65	65 infantry — 35 with chain mail and shield, battle axe and hammer; 20 with ring mail and shield, sword and spear; 10 with ring mail, light crossbow and sword
66-85	80 infantry — 40 with chain mail and shield, battle axe and hammer; 25 with ring mail and shield, sword and spear; 15 with ring mail, light crossbow and sword
86-95	95 infantry — 45 with chain mail and shield, battle axe and hammer; 35 with ring mail and shield, sword and spear; 15 with ring mail, long crossbow and sword
96-00	110 infantry — 50 with chain mail and shield, battle axe and hammer; 40 with ring mail and shield, sword and spear; 20 with chain mail, light crossbow and sword; plus 10 pony-mounted infantry*

\* — These 10 pony-mounted infantry are all 2nd-level fighters with chain mail and shield, battle axe and mace. They use their ponies only for transport and do not fight as cavalry. These troops can be used as scouts or as a special bodyguard for the lord.

Dwarven lords do not roll on the leaders table; instead, they receive officers according to the number of troops they receive. For every 20 dwarves received, there will be an additional 3rd-level dwarven fighter to serve as a sergeant. For every 40 dwarves, there will be an additional 4th-level fighter to serve as a lieutenant. If the lord has 30 or fewer dwarves, he will receive an additional

5th-level fighter to serve as a captain; if 80-95 dwarves are commanded, a 6th-level fighter; if 120 or more dwarves, a 7th-level fighter. In addition, no matter how many dwarves the lord receives, there will also be one 3rd-level dwarven cleric/fighter to serve as chaplain.

All these dwarven officers have the same chances as other leaders for having magic items and equipment. If no magic armor is received, all dwarven officers will have plate mail.

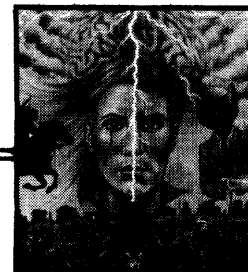
#### Troop Table IX: Evil Half-Orc Lord

Evil half-orc characters may always use this table, regardless of the local terrain around their stronghold. When using this table, the half-orc does not incur the -10% negative die roll modifier for being a half-orc. This is a strong table due to the number of orcs gained by it, which are superior to 0-level human men-at-arms. A word of caution: the half-orc who picks this table had better be extremely tough; an iron hand will be required to keep the human and orcish troops from each others' throats. Human troops are 0-level and have 4-7 hp; orcs have 5-8 hp.

#### Dice Result

01-40	30 human infantry with leather armor and shield, battle axe and flail; and, 34 orcs (30 normal and 4 leader types)
41-65	10 light human cavalry with leather armor and shield, lance and sword; 35 human infantry — 25 with studded leather and shield, sword and spear; 10 with leather armor, light crossbow and hand axe; and, 34 orcs (30 normal and 4 leader types)
66-85	15 light human cavalry with studded leather and shield, lance and battle axe; 40 human infantry — 25 with ring mail and shield, sword and mace; 15 with studded leather, short bow and sword; and, 51 orcs (45 normal and 6 leader types)
86-95	20 medium human cavalry with ring mail, lance and sword; 45 human infantry — 30 with chain mail and shield, sword and spear; 15 with ring mail, heavy crossbow and flail; and, 51 orcs (45 normal and 6 leader types)
96-00	25 medium human cavalry with chain mail and shield, lance and sword; 50 human infantry — 30 with banded mail, pike and mace; 20 with chain mail, short bow and sword; and, 68 orcs (60 normal and 8 leader types); plus 5 ogres*

\* — These ogres are in lieu of any special scouts. The lord will find them quite useful in bullying his orcish cousins to help keep them in line. They will also give his human troops something to think about.



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# The ecology of the Will-o-Wisp

by Nigel D. Findley

We are dead men; I know it. The knowledge is dry and dusty on my tongue — but not bitter.

I have drunk of life deeply and to the dregs these five-score summers, and I thank my elven sire for the equanimity to view death as I should. No, it is not for myself that I grieve, but for these others: for Nex, the young guide who — at my direction — led us into this accursed marsh and who still claims he can lead us out alive; for the nameless mage who rides with us, grey cowl pulled forward over raven tresses to mask her sorrow; and, most of all, for the boy Tristan, her apprentice — if such is the word — who edges his pony ever closer to his mistress's bay and looks up to her for comfort she cannot give. For, when the Corpse Lights come again after sundown, as come they shall, we will be unable to turn them away a second time. The slender silver wand that the enchantress used to such effect last night is almost drained, and, without its power, even the stout bow slung across our guide's shoulders will offer us no hope. As for my own Talent . . . it leans more towards scrying than combat. I am no warrior-mage like the fierce beauty riding before me.

When this day ends, so do all our lives.

Still, if but one person finds this document and the translation it contains, and wins through with it to civilization, then our deaths will not have been entirely for naught — or so I try to console myself. The information I have stumbled upon concerning the Corpse Lights could be of inestimable value — if it is ever seen by living man.

We found the scroll tube yesterday forenoon, as the sun was just struggling above the miasma that cloaks the treacherous ground. It was shielded and warded by a small globe of faint silver light that flared briefly to brilliance — in recognition of a kindred spirit, perhaps? — then collapsed upon itself as I reached out with my Talent toward it.

My companions gathered around — even Nex, for the marsh seemed home to no large creatures to be on guard against<sup>1</sup> — as I removed the wax stopper from the tube of dark gold. The scroll within crackled as I drew forth and unrolled it.

I could tell by the frowns of those around me that the script on the parchment meant nothing to them, but that concerned me not at all. Though the scribe's hand was cramped and hurried, I recognized a disused elven dialect that I had learned as a curiosity at my father's knee. My eyes grew wide as I read, then closed in sadness when I realized that I could as well have been reading our death warrant.





There is neither space nor time to furnish a complete translation of that long-passed elf's last work. As I ride, I will attempt to set down what I can, then, when the sun sinks into the marsh-fog, I will follow my predecessor and use my Talent to ward my final document. Hopefully, in time, it will be found and read by one more fortunate than I, one who will spread the knowledge about the Corpse Lights for which I have paid with my life.

Firstly, the Corpse Light — or the will-o-wisp, to use its seemingly more common name — is not innately a magical creature. No, even though its form — a glowing ball of light — and powers seem to give me lie, it is more a creature of nature than one of dweomercraft.

As the many species of demi-humankind have risen — or so say the wise — above their baser antecedents, thus has the will-o-wisp risen above its forebears. As we have left behind us our more brutish nature (or so we hope), thus has the Corpse Light left behind it the tyranny of matter, progressing to a higher state of being.

How this can be I do not claim to know, yet so proposes the long-dead author of the scroll. Perhaps some Talent of the will-o-wisp's progenitor hastened its evolution. Perhaps its rapid advance is a boon from whatever god the will-o-wisp may have worshipped. Perhaps we shall never know. I feel certain that the will-o-wisps themselves will never tell us.

By whatever means the evolution may have occurred, that it did occur is impossible to deny when one looks upon the immature form of the will-o-wisp: the boggart. No wonder that wild and dangerous creature, commonly close in appearance to a young demi-human<sup>2</sup>, is so often found in proximity to the will-o-wisp; they are the same creature. The relationship is confirmed by the boggart's ability to take the guise of an adult will-o-wisp.

Many who would have fallen prey to a boggart have been warned of their foe's nature by the creature's mercurial changes in form. Such is obvious. But, surprisingly, a boggart's change can warn of the very presence of the creature. According to the manuscript, the change from non-corporeal to corporeal is accompanied by a sharp drop in the temperature of the surroundings. The reverse is also true. If one is unlucky enough to be in the vicinity when a boggart makes its final transition to adult form, a pulse of heat can warn of the fact, though little good such a warning would be to most<sup>3</sup>.

The elven manuscript describes the adult will-o-wisp as a lattice of information with no material substance — "a scroll with no parchment," the sage writes — much as is a *symbol* or a cleric's *glyph of warding*. It is crystalline energy, self-sustaining and potentially immortal. From this nature come the will-o-wisp's main powers: electrical bolts and levitation. The glow that comes from the lattice can be quenched temporarily, giving it its temporary invisibility<sup>4</sup>.

But the will-o-wisp has yet another boon, a form of limited telepathy. This, coupled with its high intelligence, makes it an awesome foe, as many have found to their loss<sup>5</sup>.

How does as intangible a creature as the will-o-wisp reproduce? The question has oft been asked, but never before answered. The elven manuscript proposes the following.

There are *three* genders of will-o-wisp, to all intents and purposes identical in appearance, powers and behavior; all are required for the production of an offspring.

The reproductive act itself takes place usually deep within an impenetrable marsh — necessary to protect the participants.

The three will-o-wisps draw close together and apparently merge their forms together, becoming one. The event is over in a moment: almost immediately the tripartite will-o-wisp flares to intolerable brightness, then splits once more into three. Left behind is an infant boggart. If one wished to destroy a will-o-wisp, now would be the ideal time, since the three parents are in a severely weakened state after the mating<sup>6</sup>.

Mating appears to take place in cycles. Adult will-o-wisps congregate rarely, but when they do they tend to mate three — or sometimes more — times within a period of about a week. When the boggarts are born, the parents share the nursing chores.

After the boggarts are capable of hunting, the parents leave them to fend for themselves. The boggarts, however, tend to stay together — I know not whether for social reasons or simply because three can hunt more efficiently than one — until they reach maturity<sup>7</sup>.

As to the social philosophy of the will-o-wisps — what gods they worship, what they see as their place in the cosmos — the manuscript says nothing. It does note that the will-o-wisps have no love for gold and gems or for things magical; those things that men see as treasure have no value for them. The will-o-wisps do collect any material wealth possessed by their victims, however, for they know the strong — and often fatal — attraction that gold has for men. The Corpse Lights bait their traps well.

I can write no more. The sun is sinking into the marsh-fog, and it is time to seal — this, my final work, into its tube and ward it as did my long-dead patron. Will it ever be seen by living man? I can only hope so.

The preparations are being made. Nex is stringing his bow and honing his broadheads to razor-keenness. Our warrior-mage is composing herself for what must be her final battle. And young Tristan is making his peace with his gods.

And I? I wrap my cloak closer about me to keep out the night's chill.

The time is upon us. To the east is a deathly glow, waxing coldly through the fog.

I wish I could believe it were the moon.

## Notes:

1. Few creatures with an intelligence of *semi-* or better will be found in the vicinity of will-o-wisps, since such creatures repre-

sent prey, and a will-o-wisp will never decline to feed if food is easily available. The only such creatures present will be those that managed to escape the will-o-wisps, those that are yet to be detected by them, or those that are too powerful for the will-o-wisps to trifle with (blue dragons are a fair example). In an area determined by the DM to contain will-o-wisps, for any random encounter that generates a creature of intelligence *semi-* or better but with fewer than 7 HD, roll percentile dice: 01-80 indicates that the encounter has not taken place at all; 81-00 indicates the encounter is with fugitives from will-o-wisps, in which case the maximum number of creatures encountered is 20.

2. As described in the *Monster Manual II*, the boggart can take on the form of an adult will-o-wisp or of a small demi-human or humanoid (usually a small halfling or gnome, a goblin imp, a young xuart, or a norker neut). It can also become invisible for a short period of time. This ability to change form — and the instability of form described in the *Monster Manual II* — is a result of the true nature of the will-o-wisp.

When it first enters the world, the young boggart is in the form of a newborn humanoid. This infant is nondescript in appearance; it has no features that distinguish it as one humanoid or demi-human race as opposed to another. The young boggart grows rapidly; within two weeks, it is the same size as an average two-year-old human. During this time, the boggart is given energy by a parent and so does not have to feed.

It is at this point that the boggart's vagueness of form — and concomitantly its electrical powers — begins to manifest itself. The boggart begins to slip into will-o-wisp form — a ball of light, smaller and brighter than an adult will-o-wisp. The change occurs rarely, without warning and without volition, and lasts, at first, for only a segment or two. When the boggart returns to physical form, its appearance may match any demi-human or humanoid race that it has seen (thus, as the young boggart's experience grows, it can take on more different forms; conversely, if a particular boggart has never seen a human, it cannot take on human form). Each time it resumes humanoid form, it is a little larger.

At this stage, the boggart possesses a rudimentary form of electrical power. It can deliver a shock of 1-6 points by touch and fire an electrical bolt (once every other round, to a range of 10 feet) delivering 1-6 points of damage. The boggart is so inaccurate with this bolt, however, that the target gets two saving throws. If it makes the first one, it takes no damage (the boggart missed); if it makes the second, it takes only 1-3 points of damage. These powers increase with age until, at two years, the boggart's damage potential matches the figures listed in the *Monster Manual II*.

As soon as the boggart gains its electrical power, the parent that protected it and nursed it with energy abandons it to fend

for itself. The boggart must now- begin feeding itself physically (*i.e.*, hunting).

As the boggart grows and ages, its form shifts become more frequent and more prolonged until, also at the age of two years, its characteristics match those in the *Monster Manual II*. It is also at the age of two years that it gains its invisibility and *confusion* powers. At the age of five years, the boggart makes its final transition to adult will-o-wisp form, possessing from the outset the full powers listed in the *Monster Manual*.

3. When the boggart shifts from corporeal to non-corporeal form (*i.e.*, from humanoid form to will-o-wisp form), the body of the creature literally disintegrates. The position of every atom in that body is remembered by the non-corporeal creature. The matter that actually made up the body is converted into energy.

Some of this tremendous energy yield is consumed fueling the non-corporeal being of the creature; the vast majority is channeled off to the Negative Material Plane. (It is this close connection with the Negative Material Plane that grants the will-o-wisp immunity to most magical spells. Only those that disturb the actual non-material lattice of the will-o-wisp's existence can damage it.) When the reverse change occurs, the body is re-built following the template in the mind of the boggart. The actual matter required for the body is re-

created using energy withdrawn from the Negative Material Plane.

But, when the humanoid boggart reforms, it is larger than it was before. The energy debt represented by this additional mass is withdrawn from the environment, lowering the local temperature. This sudden, transient temperature drop can be perceived by creatures within 30' of the boggart, although being able to perceive it does not necessarily mean being able to interpret it.

When the final transition to will-o-wisp form occurs, the energy released is not all transferred to the Negative Material Plane; rather, a portion affects the environment. This heat pulse will cause 1-6 points of damage to any unprotected creature within 30 feet of the will-o-wisp, and it can be perceived from distances of up to 200 feet.

4. The fact that only a few spells can affect the will-o-wisp indicates that those spells somehow disrupt either the will-o-wisp's lattice on this plane or the will-o-wisp's energy pipeline to the Negative Material Plane. The fact that any material weapon can harm the will-o-wisp — albeit with difficulty — shows that physical interference with the will-o-wisp's lattice can possibly disrupt it. (The unlikely nature of this event is reflected in the will-o-wisp's very good armor class. It may actually be easy to contact a will-o-wisp with a weapon, but the chance of landing a blow that causes damage is low.)

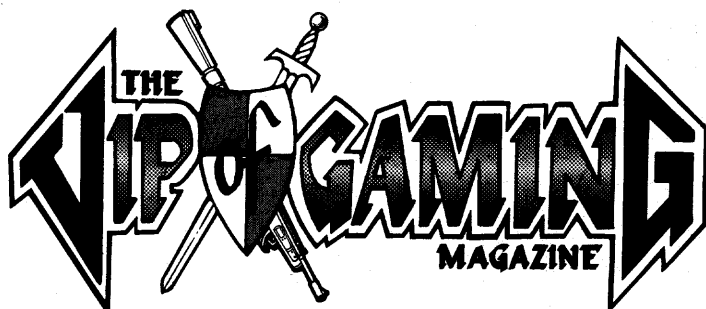
5. As well as allowing communication with other intelligent creatures, this innate telepathy grants the boggart its *confusion* powers. The *confusion* is not a direct result of the noise a boggart makes; the noise is merely a focus for the effect (which explains why stoppering the ears does no good). The *confusion* is actually caused through telepathy: a direct muddling of the mind. Such spells, devices, and the like that shield against telepathy are also effective against a boggart's *confusion* attack.

It is worth noting that the will-o-wisp's telepathy will inform it if an attempt to lure prey to its doom is working or not. If it is not (if, for example, the prospective victim suspects the nature of its foe), the will-o-wisp will often change tactics.

6. When the three will-o-wisps join together to reproduce, they do literally merge, intermingling their lattices and, for a moment, becoming one. During that moment each shares with both others its entire store of knowledge and memories: everything it knows, each of the others comes to know. While so merged, the three-in-one will-o-wisp possesses the sum of all three will-o-wisps' hit points.

While merged, the will-o-wisps construct the lattice that will become the boggart. This lattice contains that information that would, in a regular creature, be labeled instinct, but does not include specific memories possessed by the parents. When the lattice is formed, the will-o-wisps draw upon their own energy stores, and upon the Negative Material Plane, to provide the energy necessary to produce a body for the boggart. While the great majority of this energy requirement is drawn from the Negative Material Plane, enough comes from the parent will-o-wisps to significantly weaken them: for the next 11-16 turns, all three are at half-normal hit points and are incapable of using their electrical powers.

7. The 10% chance of encountering 1-3 will-o-wisps as outlined in the *Monster Manual* represents the possibility of meeting some or all of a group that is about to engage in, or has just completed, mating. If more than one will-o-wisp is encountered, there is an additional 25% chance that 1-4 boggarts are also in the area. **S**



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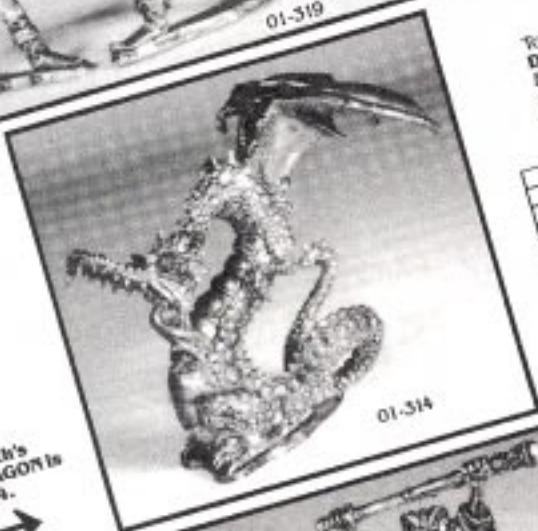
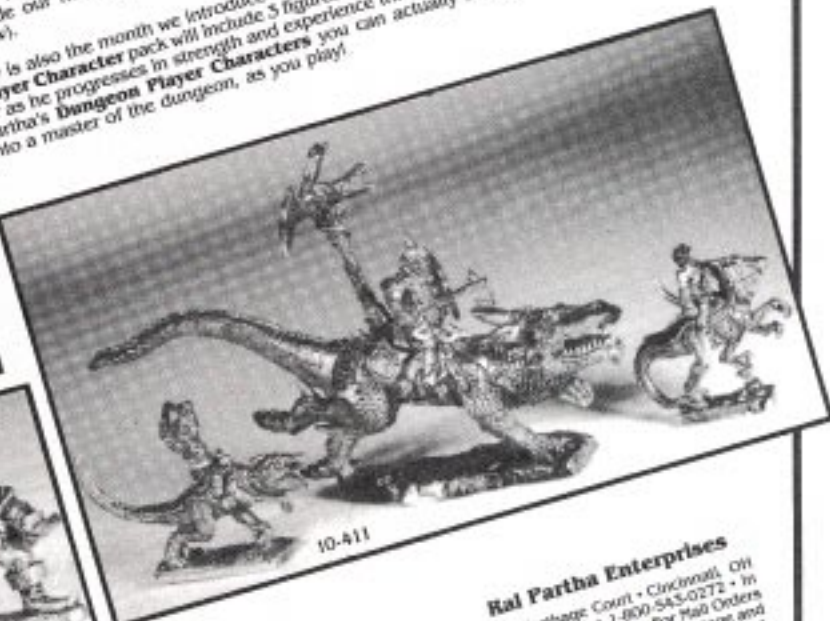
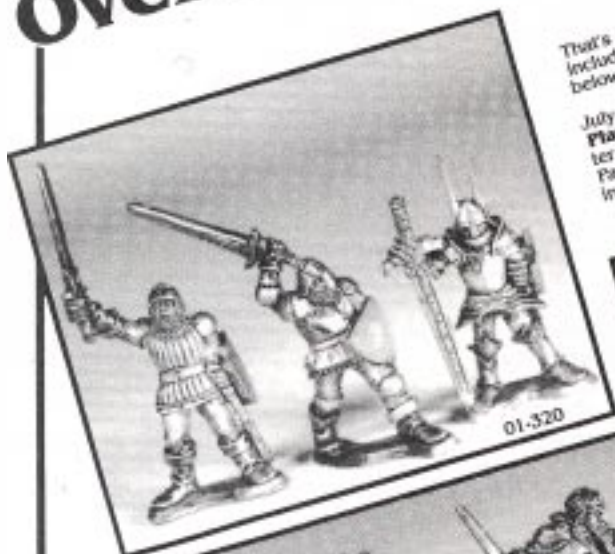
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# That's life in the big city

## Advice on creating authentic urban environments

by Kevin Anderson and Kristine Thompson

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"Cities, towns, and sometimes even large villages provide the setting for highly interesting, informative, and often hazardous affairs and incidents," says the *Players Handbook*. True enough. However, when it comes to creating a medieval town for a fantasy gaming campaign, many Dungeon Masters don't play the role of builders very well. Most people have a vague idea of what a typical town in the Middle Ages was like, but in order to create one for use in your game, you'll need more than a vague idea.

We've campaigned in one fantasy medieval town which had all the necessities: a town wall, complete with a gatekeeper just waiting to be bribed; plenty of inns and taverns scattered throughout the town; dark alleys; and suspicious folk — but it also had wide streets, huge warehouses and empty buildings where characters could meet in secret, a vast prison with large roomy cells for everyone (one person to a cell), and large, grassy parks. It was like a Minneapolis suburb in a time-warped.

Granted, the key in fantasy role-playing is *fantasy*, but it is fantasy based on historical fact. One of the major points of the game is to experience what your characters would have experienced if they had lived in the Middle Ages, had magic been possible, and had dragons roamed the land. With these guidelines, you should be able to visualize a medieval town more clearly and enjoy the experience of building one for your own game and playing within it.

The *Dungeon Masters Guide* offers the DM very little help with creating a town campaign. That makes the DM's job twice as difficult, because almost every party of adventurers encounters a town at one point or another. Most player characters buy their equipment in towns. Others search for followers there, and still others enter towns to seek directions. If characters have to visit a town, they may as well have an adventure there, too.

Before the players can enjoy a town campaign, the DM must create a town. Although the DMG recommends using a vague town map, a detailed map makes the campaign more interesting. A town adventure can be as exciting as a dungeon or wilderness adventure, with a little planning.

### Community size and location

The difference between cities, towns, and villages lies in population size. The average medieval town held about 2,500 people, although a large town might contain as many as 20,000. A huge city such as Lon-

don or Paris boasted 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. A Russian village consisted of a family group of two to four generations clustering together, 40 to 100 people, with the clan head being the eldest member. When the population of a Russian village reached about 100 people, the village divided itself in half. One group of people remained where they were, and the other group left to seek a place to found a new village. (Imagine meeting them on the road!) Often the new village was established close to the original site, so the move wasn't a great hardship. The causes of such splits varied, but the usual reason was that the clan leadership of the village became ineffective after the population reached a certain size.

Other villages split for religious, economic, or political reasons. After Henry VIII's mandate made England a Protestant country, Catholics who refused to accept the change found the need to create their own communities — or lose their lives. Some of these pockets of Catholicism still exist in England today.

Cities grow out of towns, and towns grow out of villages. The French village of Bardou remained small because it could not support more than a handful of people at a time. But, London's population grew from 33,000 in 1500 to 400,000 in 1650. The reason for the increase was not London's beauty. (Medieval towns were filthy places.) London grew because of its geography. It became a viable commercial center for trade to Antwerp (the commercial center of medieval Europe), Italy, and France, and its central location made it easy for goods from other countries to reach remote portions of England. This made London the only important English city in the Middle Ages.

The location of a settlement was determined by a number of things. Peasants tended to cluster around a lord's castle for protection and to serve his needs according to their feudal obligations. Villages sprang up at a crossroads or at a shallow ford in a river, where some entrepreneur would set up a shop to sell ale to thirsty travelers. A blacksmith might then set up shop to shoe horses or repair carts, an innkeeper might come, and so on. Merchants tended to cluster around shrines and holy places, selling trinkets and holy relics to pilgrims. People also considered the defensibility of a potential village site, important in a time of marauding bandits, bloodthirsty wild men, and mercenary armies (not to mention orcish hordes or vicious demons). A group

of builders would usually seek a strategic site, such as a hill near a river, and set up their village there.

Events in the outside world also influenced the development of villages. Bardou came into existence during the Roman era because of the site's proximity to iron mines. When the mines died in the 4th century, so did Bardou. But 1200 years later the village was resurrected when squatters, following the roads as they fled city life, decided it was an ideal site for a village. They built stone homes, scratched out gardens among the rocks, gathered chestnuts, and caught game in the surrounding forests. For three centuries, life in Bardou remained the same. Then the call to city life reached the inhabitants of the village. One by one, they left to make their fortunes elsewhere — and Bardou died again.

### Fortifications

Once the DM has decided on location and population, the next item concerns local fortifications. In early times, people built settlements close together but fortified them poorly. In the 9th and 10th centuries, villagers began to build walls around their settlements, which then became towns. The townspeople took pride in their walls, since a wall made them better off in many ways than the sprawling, unprotected country villages were. Most European towns had walls made of stone; those of the northern barbarians in Russia had wooden fortifications, making their towns look much like the stockades of old forts in the American west. The Russians had no need for heavy stone walls, because of the absence of large siege machines at the time, and wood was far more plentiful in the dense northern forests than stone could ever be. Enemy arrows — the only real threat from invading armies — could be stopped by wood as easily as by stone.

Sometimes towns were surrounded by a circular moat, possibly with guarded bridges or a drawbridge. (In 1150, a tax collector in Belgorod, Russia, went out for an evening walk and discovered an army of invaders approaching for a surprise night attack on his city. He raised the drawbridge himself, shouting the alarm, and saved the town.) Townspeople kept themselves proficient in arms and fought valiantly to protect their town. They considered it their duty to fortify the town, for which they received payment and a food allowance usually of meat, fish, malt for beer, millet, and oats for their horses.



Although walls protected a town, they also created problems of their own. Conditions became more and more crowded inside the walls as the population grew, and suburbs formed around the town proper. The powerful aristocratic families remained within the well-protected areas, but the craftsmen spread out and around the wall where water (vital to much of their work) was easily available.

Outside a town wall, characters might pass through such suburbs, with their orchards and garden patches. They may also pass by the lazaret, the leper's hospital which stands outside the town walls. A leper's hospital doesn't really need the protection of the walls anyway: What army would be foolish enough to attack a leper colony? But the leper colony and its relative, the insane asylum, could add another dimension to the town adventure.

If the characters don't get to the gates by nightfall, they're going to have to sleep outside until sunrise — or else do something spectacular to get over the walls. But that's only one problem which the town gates may hold. There may be rules that must be met before entering the town. Or worse yet, in most players' opinions, the gatekeeper may make characters pay a toll. Unless your party is very suspicious-looking, the gatekeeper won't pay much attention to you — remember, he's bored silly from seeing an endless stream of dirty merchants, peasants, travelers, and craftsmen who pass by him all day long. He might be in a bad mood, too.

Something to remember at this point is that people traveled a lot in the Middle Ages. Some were on crusades or religious pilgrimages, and the rest were traveling to find their fortunes. The gatekeeper might be a valuable source of information, especially if your party is searching for a specific person. Although a gatekeeper wouldn't pay much attention to most of the stream of humanity flooding through his gates, he might notice anything out of the ordinary — and, for a small fee, might tell you what he saw.

### Inside the walls

If the town is relatively new, one may see orchards, small fields and gardens, granaries, and perhaps some marshland or ponds inside the city walls. In older towns and cities, all such places would be crowded with houses instead. The upper stories of houses crowded together in the late Middle Ages lean out over the streets on either side, making the streets seem like dim, stuffy tunnels.

Towns are noisy places. Bells toll constantly from countless towers, to tell the time of day, to rejoice, to mourn, to announce war or peace, to announce the election of a new leader, to call the people to church, or to warn of danger. Street vendors roam the streets singing their wares (as they did in the musical *Oliver!*), and screaming crowds gather around entertainments, such as cock fights or jugglers.

In addition, town criers shout important messages, the time, or local gossip. These criers were often the town ale-testers, too, since their throats got so parched from shouting. Paris had six master criers appointed by the provost, each with a number of assistants who were sent out to the crossroads and squares of various quarters to announce official decrees, taxes, fairs, and ceremonies, houses for sale, missing children, marriages, funerals, births, and baptisms. When the King's vintage was ready for sale, all the taverns had to close while public criers twice a day cried the virtues of the royal wine.

The town's narrow streets are usually crowded with people going in all different directions. Chances are, inside the gate, one may encounter a traffic accident. Carriages often sailed through the streets without regard for anyone in their way. That led to many carriage collisions, as well as the deaths of hapless pedestrians. Traffic jams were also common, especially when pack mules laden with baskets met street vendors carrying their trays or porters bent under loads of wood and charcoal.

If you manage to get past the street hazards, you will probably see a great many miserable people, some who have suffered real tragedies and some who are simply fakers. The fakers know ingenious ways to make it appear that they have large, festering wounds on their arms and legs, using these fake miseries to make money from almsgivers. Lepers may wander the streets, ringing their bells and asking for mercy from the gods and from those who have been luckier than they. Lepers aren't turned away from most towns, but they are required to buy anything they touch.

Towns are good places to encounter wererats, as well as wights, shadows, and ghosts. The wererats will be human by day, of course, and could easily join an adventuring party. The wights, shadows and ghosts will probably be encountered at night, near charnel houses and graveyards. Charnel houses will be found either just inside the town wall or well away from the wall on the outside.

No teeming mass of humanity would be complete without thieves and pickpockets. Some such encounters will be with relatively high-level thieves — after all, with so many travelers, thieves would get lots of practice. Vagabonds wander here and there, along with merchants, pilgrims, friars, and peddlers. Traveling shows of minstrels, tumblers, magicians, dancing bears, or actors performing bawdy plays compete with the old standbys of bull-baiting and cock-fighting for the crowd's attention. An occasional out-of-work bard may be standing on a street corner strumming his melodies.

As if the crowd isn't enough, the average traveler may also encounter several religious processions. Such processions are common occurrences, becoming more frequent when times are worse than usual. Churches celebrated saints' days, feast days, and holidays.

The chance of encountering a festival, procession, or other celebration is even greater in a village. Village life was tied to both the seasons and the local religion. Every village had its parish feast day, as well as special fairs and festivals centered on church-reformed pagan traditions. Other standard holidays in medieval times included Christmas, Twelfth Day, Shrove Tuesday, Easter (a week-long celebration, often more pagan than Christian in nature), May Day, Whitsun, and special harvest observances. Northamptonshire in England celebrated 82 wakes (festivals centering on a saint's day or special parish holiday) between late September and early November.

All of these people, carriages, and carts must fit on a main street which is only eight to ten feet wide. An alley is only a yard wide. Principal streets usually run straight toward the center of town, where the marketplace is usually located, but the alleys form a haphazard, aimless maze. Alleys are often paved and well-traveled near the streets, but as you go farther, the paths become dusty and aimless, sometimes leading to the middle of a field or dead-ending at a blank wall for no apparent reason. It's easy to see that a town could make as interesting a labyrinth as a dungeon does.

The town's streets are usually paved with cobblestones, if they are paved at all. In northern lands in our own world, townsmen paved their streets with wood. They laid three or four wooden poles lengthwise along the street and notched split logs of pine, laying them across the new street so that poles fit tightly into the notches to make a "boardwalk" type of street. This pavement provided protection from freezing and thawing, and from the muddy muck that occurred every spring. In wintertime, people traveled along these roads with sleds.

Adventuring parties may wish they had a *protection from stench* spell, due to the filthiness of the streets. Pigs, dogs, and chickens run loose through the town. Piles of refuse lie in the streets; the people know of no other places to throw their garbage. French cities were better ordered; there, the side streets had gutters running down their middles.

Sticking to the sides of the streets may not help either. Somebody might carelessly dump a filled chamberpot (the medieval version of an indoor toilet) on the party's heads. King Louis IX (later canonized as Saint Louis) took a walk alone one night and received the contents of a chamberpot down his back — the man above neglected to call out the customary warning, since it was late at night and the streets were supposed to be empty. The king went inside the home, in control of his temper (he was a saintly king, remember), and discovered that the perpetrator was merely a hard-working student, up late studying his Latin. The King granted him a scholarship.

Each city had a different method for dealing with their garbage problem. In principle, every person had the duty to clean the street daily in front of his home,

but few people complied. Decay, rats, and rain slowly took care of the garbage, but not quickly enough to keep it from accumulating. If all else failed, a man would shovel all the garbage off into his neighbor's gutter, who would then curse and shovel it all into *his* neighbor's gutter, and so on. It's not surprising that many brawls, quarrels, and lawsuits arose during an annual street cleaning. By 1564, London passed an act that every householder had to wash the street in front of his home with ten buckets of water every day before 6 a.m., and then sweep it again after 6 p.m. Few people bothered to carry this order out.

The filth of the average medieval city makes disease all the more likely. Many DMs ignore the disease tables in the DMG, which is a pity. In a town adventure, disease is as great a threat as the pickpockets. A DM should roll daily for a chance of infection for each party member, if local conditions require it. If a character gets a chamberpot spilled on him or falls in the sewer, his chance of catching a disease will increase. If the weather is warm, then the very air is dangerous to breathe, and the only way to stay healthy is to leave the town walls.

In most European countries, the only buildings using stone were churches and castles; most people, both rich and poor, lived in fire traps. In old Russia, carpenters spoke of cutting a town rather than building one, since all the homes were made of logs. The northern people found wooden homes easier to heat than stone ones throughout their cold winters and long, wet springs and autumns. These log homes were built with interlocking timbers, using few nails or metal parts at all. Wooden furniture, utensils, and toys filled these homes — the vast amount of timber in the thick Russian forests seemed undaunted by whatever new uses men found for it. Northerners covered their roofs with a layer of dirt for insulation.

Since the danger of fire was so great, all activity stopped at sunset, as most towns forbade artificial lighting. Still, London had four major fires in the 12th century, and the city of Rouen in France burned six times in the first quarter of the 13th century. Adventurers who are ignorant of the law may find themselves fined for lighting a torch inside their home. One of your party could also start a major fire simply by letting a hearth fire get out of hand.

Good inns aren't hard to find. On a main road, one can spot many of them with large signs sticking so far out into the street as to block traffic. In many inns, guests will be forced to sleep three to a bed, but the more wealthy guests will receive a room of their own, complete with bed linen "fresh from the washerwoman." Freshly washed linen doesn't help all that much, though, since all the lice, fleas, and ticks are hiding within the straw or feather mattress and not in the linens at all. Bugs carry disease; if the party spends a night in an inn, the chance for catching a disease increases again.

But, a handful of travelers will be privy to

certain home remedies for fleas, ticks, and lice. Knowledgeable people will carry a small container of fox or hedgehog grease, since it is commonly supposed that vermin can't resist the smell of the grease. Smear some grease on a stick, and all the nasty critters will flock to it from all corners of the room, making it easy to for you to smash them. Innkeepers were certain that if they placed a coarsely woven piece of white cloth under the bed in the morning, all the pests would drop out of the mattress on their daily prowls and become tangled in the rough nap of the cloth; servants then killed the easily visible vermin on the white cloth.

Innkeepers guaranteed the safety of a traveler's possessions in the security of his room. A traveler kept the key to his room throughout his stay, even though the locks were simple and easily picked. No matter how closely innkeepers watched the rooms, they couldn't always prevent a traveler's bedmate from stealing the traveler's possessions. Other innkeepers developed a system to take part of the loot themselves. A wealthy adventurer who displayed his wealth in the inn might find himself accosted on the road by bandits, the innkeeper having reported the traveler's wealth to local thieves. In return for the tip, the innkeeper would receive a cut of the profits.

Constables patrol the towns by day, but at night groups of citizens are forced to form the night watch. The night watch isn't paid, and the people usually resent having to perform this civic duty. People on night watch walk together, laughing and talking so loudly that any self-respecting criminal with a modicum of common sense won't be anywhere nearby when the night watch comes around the corner.


During its stay in the town, the party may venture to the town's marketplace in search of a good deal on new weapons, armor, or magical items. The party won't need to shop around much, for powerful trade guilds usually control almost all crafts — fixing prices, setting standards of quality, and generally using strong-arm tactics to enforce their rules. Merchants can be vicious and dishonest, to the customer and to the competition. During a salt shortage in Kiev, the merchants sold their salt for a high price and shared their profits with the prince. One friar sold his salt for less, and naturally the customers flocked to him. The merchants complained to the prince, claiming the friar was selling ashes instead of salt. The prince decided to have the friar seized. In the meantime, the merchants filled the friar's bucket with ashes and pointed to it as evidence of his wrongdoing. The friar was convicted, and the merchants and the prince started turning a profit again.

No consumer protection agency will be able to help if (make that *when*) characters get ripped-off by shoddy goods. Craftsmen had a standard practice of showing the customer one type of cloth, then making the ordered garment out of far cheaper material. Bakers often made loaves of bread with stones in the middle so that they would

make the required weight without using so much flour. Sacks of grain were often sold half-filled with rocks. One baker used the sales gimmick in which he would knead bread dough for a customer only if it was brought to his shop; as he was doing the laborious job of kneading on his special counter, his apprentice would open a small trapdoor beneath the counter and steal small bits of dough to add to his master's own supply.

In medieval Paris, each trade occupied its own quarter. Butchers and tanners were gathered around the Chatelet; money-changers, goldsmiths, and drapers were found on Grand Pont; scribes, illuminators, and parchment- and ink-sellers were centered on the Left Bank around the university. In a town, however, you might well pass dozens of specialized shops in the same area — potters, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, woodworkers, masons, locksmiths, bridge-builders, armorers, jewelers, etc. Getting some items may not be a simple task, though. To get armor, you might have to go to one shop to buy armor for the neck, another shop for breast armor, another shop for leg armor, another for helmets, and another for shields. You have to find a swordsmith to buy a blade, a bowyer to buy a bow, and a fletcher to buy arrows. Luckily, most of these craftsmen clustered together, rather like an armory shopping mall.

Medieval towns resemble modern ones in many ways. Street crime, overcrowding, poverty, and traffic accidents were as common then as they are now. The differences rest in the level of knowledge and technology possessed by the town's inhabitants. For example, we know a lot more about disease and fire prevention than medieval citizens ever imagined. Remember those differences, and building a town campaign will be much easier.

Town campaigns can be some of the most interesting and exciting in your game. But, like any other adventures, they require careful planning and mapping. Following the guidelines in this article won't ensure the success of player characters, but it will guarantee that you will have interesting, informative, and hazardous adventures — just like the *Players Handbook* promises. 

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# The role of books

## Fiction to inform, inspire, and entertain gamers

Reviewed by John C. Bunnell

### CREWEL LYE

Piers Anthony  
Del Rey 0-345-31309-7 \$3.50

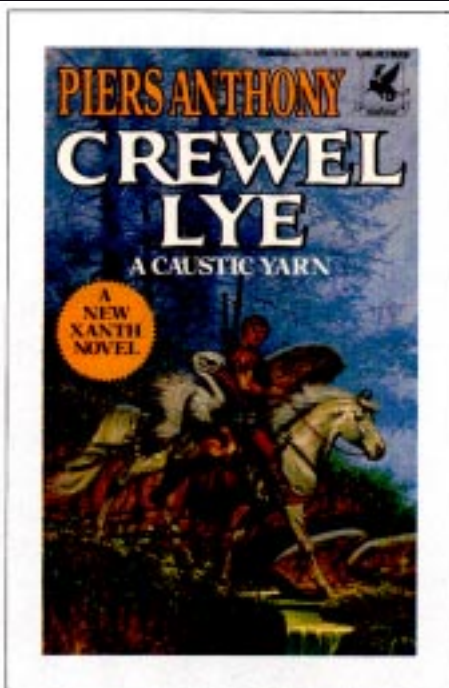
In the author's note at the end of *Crewel Lye*, Piers Anthony comments that ninety-nine per cent of his readers love the Xanth novels, while the other one per cent tear them to pieces in the reviews. It's true that many reviewers have criticized the series (of which *Crewel Lye* is the eighth). But the objections don't make Anthony's tales any less fun to read.

There are, as the author observes, a few constants in the Xanth books. The most prominent of these, of course, is the liberal dose of puns which populates each of the novels. Anthony has not scrimped on these in the present tale — appropriately subtitled "A Caustic Yarn" — and, in fact, he has slipped some sophisticated imagery into the wordplay this time around.

*Crewel Lye* is the story of Jordan the Barbarian, who has become Jordan the Ghost by the time in Xanth history when the novel opens. Most of the tale consists of a lengthy historical flashback narrated by Jordan himself, sandwiched between introductory and climactic episodes set in present-day Xanth. It's the first time Anthony has used first-person narration in the series, and it works surprisingly well, though at the cost of making the third-person episodes sound a trifle awkward.

The plot is straightforwardly devious, in authentic Anthony form. Jordan, out to make a name for himself, walks accidentally into the middle of royal intrigue and finds himself the subject of an obscure prophecy and the focus of a unique magical duel. There are intriguing companions, including a ghost horse and a beautiful but dangerous woman with whom Jordan falls in love, and there are occasional pointed asides concerning the nature of barbarians.

Three aspects of *Crewel Lye* may be of special interest to gamers. Anthony introduces a chimera-like creature called a tarasque that would make a fearsome addition to a wilderness adventure. (This is not the same beast as the tarrasque, described in *Monster Manual II*, although the two creatures do share some physical characteristics, and neither of them takes a back seat to the other in terms of ferocity.) The structure of the duel of spells is also fascinating, involving equal and opposite magic that becomes dangerously garbled along the way, with outrageous consequences. And finally, there's the perpetual problem of getting into Good Magician Humfrey's castle, which the



author's note reveals has already been addressed by at least one band of D&D® game players.

As for the traditional criticisms of the Xanth novels, Anthony seems to have taken special care to refute them with *Crewel Lye*. Charges of sexism meet with some interesting speculation as the result of an accidentally fired spell, and the moral conflict posed by the tale is a bit more directly stated than usual. In any event, the novel is a solid, skillfully told adventure that's guaranteed to entertain. Reviewers looking unfavorably on it, or on the other tales of Xanth, are viewing the series with the wrong eyes; Anthony may not be a literary artist, but he is a first-class craftsman.

### STORMWARDEN

Janny Wurts  
Ace 0-441-78757-6 \$2.95

As its title suggests, *Stormwarden* is largely concerned with a field of magic often neglected by spell casters in role-playing games: weather sorcery. (It's hard enough for referees to generate weather in the first place, let alone giving characters the ability to manipulate it besides.) And, while author and artist Janny Wurts doesn't always keep her tale on a consistent course, the novel is sufficiently well crafted that both spell researchers and more general readers should enjoy themselves as they follow the story.

The mechanics of Wurts's weather magic seem reasonably adaptable to role-playing situations. Assorted spell effects are created by the use of enchanted feathers which manifest as birds, not unlike the AD&D® game system's *Quaal's feather tokens*. The novel's events illustrate the strengths and vulnerabilities of the process in precise detail, as well as noting its varied potential.

But *Stormwarden* also includes much more than an exploration of climate-controlling wizardry. The tale Wurts tells is barely underway before its title character, Anskiere, is made a victim of political and magical intrigue and removed from action. *Killed* isn't quite the right word; rather, he is imprisoned within one of his own spells, and while not quite dead, he ends up having little hope of rescue.

At this point, the novel gets a little out of control. After disposing of Anskiere, Wurts focuses on two different protagonists. One, the lost son of a powerful wizard, is summoned by Anskiere's magic to try to free the trapped stormwarden, while the other, a young child from a coastal village, is conveniently washed ashore on the one obscure island where she can learn to be a mind reader rather than starve to death. All of this is loosely connected to a shadowy plot by demons of several kinds who plan to take over the known world, and loosely explained to the reader in terms of a totally superfluous science-fiction conflict.

Still, while there are enough loose ends in *Stormwarden* to tie several dozen knots (and, one suspects, to foreshadow a sequel), the novel has the style and depth of characterization to keep most of them in the back of the reader's mind where they're only mildly annoying. Wurts is at her best when shaping characters rather than developing complex plots, and she provides a refreshingly three-dimensional rendering of what might otherwise have been a flat, straightforward good-versus-evil conflict.

On balance, that makes the novel a near miss that's nonetheless worth reading, especially for those interested in weather magic. For a second book, that's not bad at all, and it means readers have good reason to hope for an even better third book yet to come.

### WITCHDAME

Kathleen Sky  
Berkley 0-425-07449-8 \$2.95

The newest trend in fantasy seems to be the alternate-England novel, preferably





featuring a female protagonist. A number of these have arrived recently, the latest being Kathleen Sky's *Witchdame*. (By the time this reaches print, there will be at least two more.) Even in this rather narrow category, though, *Witchdame* has a flavor of its own.

For one thing, Sky's setting is a bit more deliberately English than most are. The land of Englene was conquered in 1066 by invaders from across the English Channel, and its royal line is peppered with Henrys and Williams in approximately the right numbers. Cornwall is in the proper place on Englene's map, though Scotland has become Gaeland and Ireland is referred to as Faerie, a land populated by Things. Englene has had its own versions of Henry VIII and the Wars of the Roses as well.

But magic works in Englene, and the houses of Lancaster and York are replaced as opponents by two separate races of sorcerers, the witchlords (who invaded in 1066) and the woodwitches (apparently native to Englene). Witchlord magic relies largely on high ritual and ceremony, while woodwitch spells are of a more natural, slightly druidic character.

Naturally, Princess Elizabeth — heir to the throne — is of mixed parentage, and she faces a series of complex obstacles in her quest to claim the crown. She must travel, literally, to the four corners of Englene and come to terms with earthly companions and heavenly forces to achieve her goal.

Kathleen Sky handles both characterization and magic well in *Witchdame*, which is no small accomplishment considering the amount of detail she provides. But, that very detail is somewhat selective. The novel has no real sense of period; it's neither Elizabethan in tone and texture nor evocative of a more medieval style. Sky also avoids any explanation of the origins of her two witch races, which don't seem as distinctive as the novel's characters seem to think they are.

It's also not entirely clear who is in charge of Sky's cosmos. The hierarchy, for the most part, is distinctively Christian, complete with angels and archangels. Yet, the ruling God is apparently not the Christian Jehovah, and there is a ruling Goddess as well — and most curious of all, there is no disagreement over religious issues between witchlords and woodwitches.

Though *Witchdame* is undeniably well written, it is also expertly stage-managed, and the fact detracts from the tale's impact. Sky subtly manipulates the order and outcome of events so that Elizabeth really has no control over the outcome of the struggle. Instead, the most crucial decisions are made offstage by various immortals, and Elizabeth's own decisions sometimes seem almost automatic. Sky's characters are engaging and well drawn, but they lack the spark of free will needed to maintain an element of suspense.

While the novel isn't a major success, it is enjoyable and smoothly crafted, and Sky offers useful insights on the structure of magic and the nuances of court protocol as she spins her tale. That makes *Witchdame* worth reading, and a bit better than average for an alternate-England novel.

### ENCHANTERS' END GAME

David Eddings

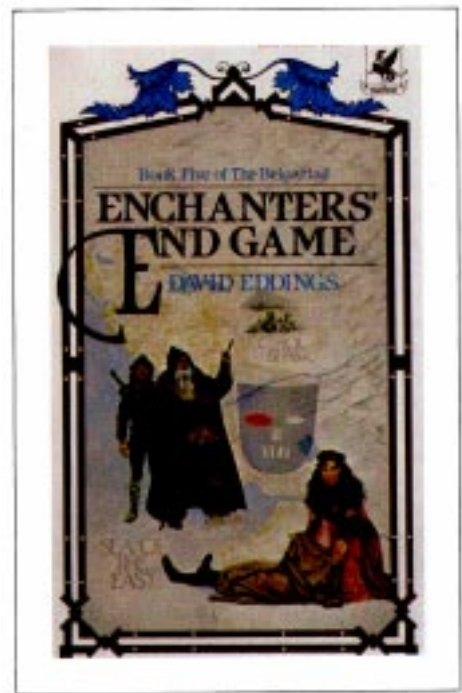
Del Rey 0-345-30078-5 \$3.50

In most fantasies, prophecies are cryptic verses or obscure pieces of arcane manuscripts, and characters spend vast amounts of time trying to figure out what they mean. David Eddings, in the five-volume *Belgariad*, has turned that principle inside out, and the result is an intriguing tale that may help DMs make better use of prophecies in their own campaigns.

By the time *Enchanters' End Game* (which concludes the series) opens, the meaning of the Prophecy has long since been made clear. It means that young Garion, who by careful genealogical design is heir both to a vast empire and to awesome sorcerous power, must find and confront the evil god Torak in mortal combat — with the fate of the universe at stake. Rather than hunting for hidden meanings, then, Garion must interact with the Prophecy face-to-face when it periodically manifests itself as a mental presence.

That's a fascinating concept, which Eddings handles much as a DM might dramatize the effects of a *commune* spell, though he gives the Prophecy a bit more of a personality than that example might imply. But, the Prophecy is not a god, and it's not unique; there's another Prophecy extant elsewhere that uses the same ingredients to come up with another conclusion, one that favors Torak rather than Garion. That gives a distinctive flavor to the interplay between the Prophecy and the human characters as they gradually accumulate information and converge on their destinies.

Sustaining the adventure for live books is no easy task, although Eddings gives ample



attention to the diverse political intrigues of his world as well as to hair-raising cross-country treks and richly detailed development of his characters' personalities. Some readers may find the going a bit uneven as a result; for those used to more violent hack-and-slash adventures or to more rarefied allegorical tales, the blend of forms isn't always smooth. Instead, Eddings tends to put each element in its own section — politics, then a character-building sequence, then a tight scene, then back to political matters again.

*Enchanters' End Game*, though, is a grandly spectacular finish (in scale, if not quite in quality) to an ambitious and absorbing saga. Eddings's prose is both highly readable and laced with a dash of dry wit that helps speed the story along, and the *Belgariad* is likely to find itself shelved somewhere between Tolkien and Donaldson as one of the standard sequences in the field. Considering the number of multiple-book books currently in print, that's no mean accomplishment.

### TALKING TO DRAGONS

Patricia C. Wrede

MagicQuest 0-441-79591-9 \$2.95

*Talking to Dragons* has several things working against it: it's been marketed as a young adult book, it's the first original novel in a line previously devoted to reprints, and the line itself has one of the ugliest logos in all of paperback publishing. None of those things, however, alter the fact that Patricia Wrede's latest novel is by far the funniest fantasy to come along in a very long time.

What sets the tale apart is the fact that, unlike most other fantasists, Wrede derives her humor directly from the personalities of her characters and the situations they face; it's not merely a topping or spice used to flavor a basically serious quest story or

adventure yarn. *Talking to Dragons* is something else entirely.

It begins simply enough. After a wizard wanders by and makes a nuisance of himself, Daystar's mother gives him a sword and kicks him out of their hut, warning him, "I don't want to see you back here again until you can explain to me why you had to leave." From there, matters become more preposterous by leaps and bounds. To start, the sword is far from ordinary. Then Daystar — who has also been taught to be polite to everyone he meets, especially dragons — encounters a wide variety of persons and things to whom and which to be polite, including a fiery-tempered fire-witch and a dragon with a severe allergy.

Yet, none of the outrageousness comes at the expense of plot or character development. Daystar gradually picks up useful information about his sword and his mission, and he and his friends must cope with a number of persistent wizards. (Wrede's wizards are nearly indestructible; they survive melting, barbecuing, being crushed under rockfalls, and more, though not without serious inconvenience.) And, Daystar and Shira (the fire-witch) are both thoroughly appealing and believable.

What does all this have to do with role-playing, you ask? The answer is that Daystar's (and Wrede's) approach to the unknown is a whole style of play often ignored by gamers caught in the perpetual conflict between the hack-and-slash

and puzzle-solving schools of RPG design. *Talking to Dragons* represents a kind of cheerful, exuberant fun that's as rare in AD&D® game campaigns as it is in fantasy novels, and both worlds should be suitably grateful for its existence as a reminder.

Anyone with nagging doubts about the value of a book published for young adults has nothing to fear, though in fact Wrede's novel is definitely written with that market in mind. Like the rest of the MagicQuest line, it can also be read and appreciated by fantasy lovers of any age — the ugly logo aside, MagicQuest's editors have shown an uncanny knack for finding and reissuing winners, not all of which are lighter fare and none of which are unsophisticated.

### THE MAGIC CUP

Andrew M. Greeley

Warner/Geis 0-446-32438-8 \$3.50

When is an Arthurian novel not an Arthurian novel? On the book's cover, Andrew Greeley describes *The Magic Cup* as "an Irish legend retold," which answers the question accurately if not clearly. It isn't until the postscript that Greeley explains the complicated scholarship involved in tracing the origins of the story of the Grail quest, but by then readers will be far too wrapped up in the tale to worry about it.

In truth, the novel is not nearly as complicated or as unapproachable as the academic aura might make it appear. *The*

*Magic Cup* is the straightforward story of King Cormac MacDermot of Ireland and the slave girl Brigid — also known as Biddy — and their search for the Irish equivalent of the Holy Grail. This quest sends them all over the island's countryside and beyond, and gradually builds up a deep attachment between the unlikely couple, before the goal is achieved and King Cormac can return to claim his throne.

What makes the tale memorable — and of particular value to gamers — is the depth of character Greeley gives to both his protagonists and the way in which he develops their personalities. Cormac and Brigid are not the Arthur and Guinevere of familiar legend, but as they set out on their travels, they find themselves forced to assume larger-than-life personas. In a legitimate sense, they act much like players in an epic game as they slowly adjust to their places in history. Greeley expertly portrays the two, both on this epic level and as everyday mortals, with the latter viewpoint firmly in control.

As a result, *The Magic Cup* is intensely believable and absorbing reading, somehow balancing the magical and the matter-of-fact at the same time to produce a lively yet thoughtful tale of romance and adventure. There's a dash of poetry, plenty of action on land and water, and an authentically well soaked emerald landscape to be found in Greeley's prose, all well worth the price of the book.

5

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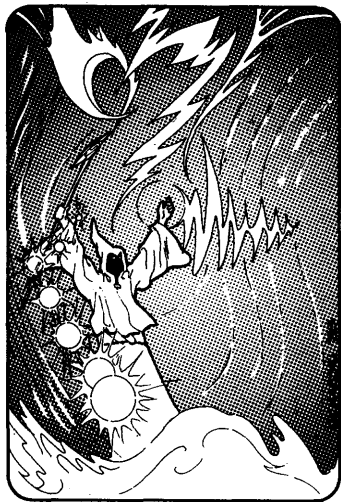
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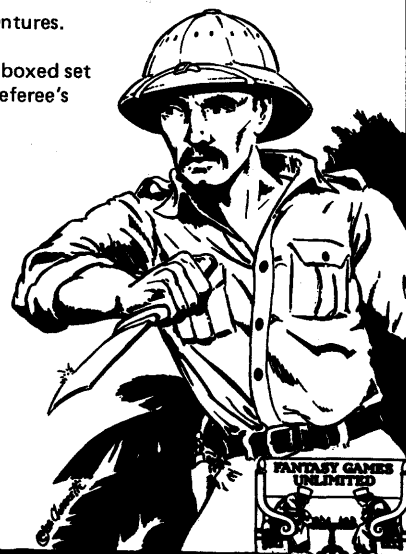
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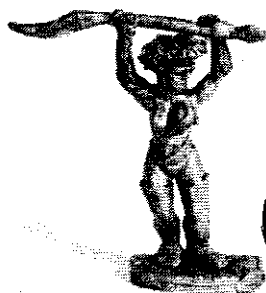
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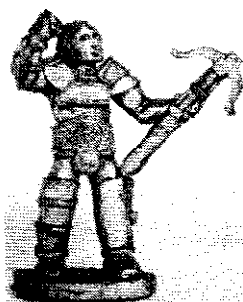


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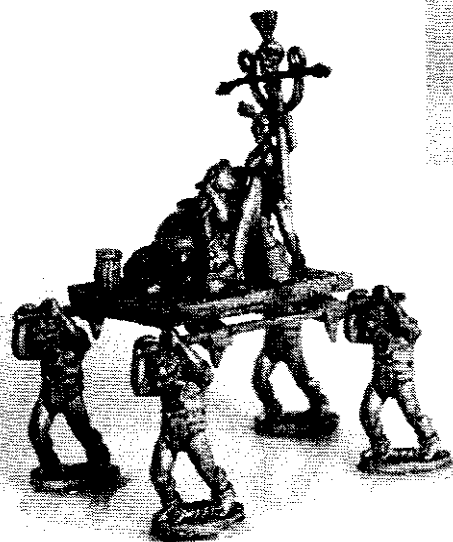
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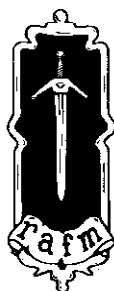
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# History of a game that failed

## An essay on mistakes — and how not to make them

by David F. Godwin

Lord Arrogo, a 15th-level fighter, walks into a great cavern — the lair of the huge, ancient red dragon Feuerhauch. The dragon has lately been a terror to the countryside, flame-broiling whole herds of livestock and leveling sizable villages.

Arrogo is modestly equipped with *plate mail* +5, a *shield* +5, and a dexterity of 18, giving him an armor class of -12. In other words, Feuerhauch will have to roll 20s to hit him with his claw/claw/bite attack routine.

Lord Arrogo also happens to have a *hammer of thunderbolts*, *gauntlets of ogre power*, and a *girdle of storm giant strength*. That means that he will automatically hit the dragon's armor class of -1, no "to hit" roll needed. He gets two attacks per round, so no initiative roll is required, either. Damage will be  $2d4 + 5 + 6 + 12$ . ("all girdle and gauntlets bonuses"), or a minimum of 25 points of damage per hit. He can also throw the hammer 90' and stun the dragon for one round.

But Arrogo doesn't want to make it *too* easy. After all, he has 120 hp, and he is wearing a *ring of fire resistance*. If the dragon has spells, no sweat. Our hero is also wearing a *ring of spell turning*.

So Arrogo forfeits his first attack of the round by trotting up to the dragon, who immediately breathes a fiery holocaust right in his face — the same blazing inferno that roasted those herds and flamed those villages, enough firepower to reduce even the stoutest man-at-arms to a charcoal briquette fifteen times over. Arrogo just shrugs and bashes Feuerhauch with his hammer. Arrogo made his saving throw of 2 and damage was -2 per die, thanks to the ring, so he took 33 points of damage. At the end of round one, he has 87 hp and the dragon has no more than 63.

Second round: Arrogo strikes Feuerhauch again, and the hapless dragon's hit points are now no more than 38. Feuerhauch tries his claw/claw/bite attack routine and by some miracle rolls three consecutive 20s. He hits on all three attacks and, by another miracle, does maximum damage each time. Arrogo is now down to 41 hp. At the end of the round, he hits the dragon again, and poor Feuerhauch now has at most 13 hp.

Third round: Lord Arrogo hits the dragon yet again, stifling a yawn as he does so, and Feuerhauch is dead. Perhaps one of the most fearsome and powerful beasts on the Prime Material Plane, Feuerhauch has been an "automatic kill" for Arrogo, notwithstanding the fact that the dragon always

did maximum damage and the fighter minimum damage. So our doughty lord gathers up the treasure (including the 30,000 copper pieces) into his *portable hole*, slips on his *ring of regeneration*, and zips back to the local inn with his helm of teleportation. There, he quaffs flagons of the best wine in the house while bragging about his exploits and insisting that he *earned* every experience point he ever got.

A huge, ancient red dragon is not really that tough a customer even for a more normally equipped 15th-level fighter. So who let this guy have all that stuff? And who decided to match him up with so measly a beast as a dragon?

Answer: A Dungeon Master running his first campaign.

The title of this article is derived from an essay by Mark Twain, wherein he describes his brief tenure in the Confederate army at the beginning of the American Civil War. His experiences, as he tells them, were somewhat ludicrous. The same thing can be said of many campaigns run by novice DMs — myself included.

Over the years, the pages of DRAGON® Magazine have included many very useful articles for the beginning DM, and the *Dungeon Masters Guide* is itself chock full of good advice. What I want to do here is to supplement and amplify this advice with specific observations and warnings. No one ever told *me* this information; I had to find it out the hard way. You see, in my ignorance, all the wise counsel was too general to do me much good. You can say, "Thoughtless placement of powerful magic items has been the ruination of many a campaign." But what does that mean in practical terms? Let the party have nothing more than one *potion of sweet water* in ten game years of hard campaigning? Or let them have one of everything on the list of magic items in the *DMG* but not more than half a dozen artifacts and relics?

The end result of using my own judgment — and I confess to being soft-hearted enough to want to see the PCs survive and do well — was that I was no longer playing the AD&D® game. I was shooting fish in a barrel.

Out of this "game that failed," then, I got quite a bit of school-of-hard-knocks experience, and I would now like to pass along a few tips:

**1. Feel free to fudge.** The first time I fudged a die roll, an elf character, through

no fault of the player, had just received a death blow from an evil fighter. There was nothing he could have done to avoid the confrontation, which came without warning. I looked at the 18 on the d20 (I think the evil fighter needed to roll an 8 or better to hit.) and announced, "He missed!" I felt terrible! I had cheated!

No, I hadn't. The first rule of Dungeon Mastering, one which includes and supersedes all the others, is that you are running the game. Not the dice, not the module, not even the rule books, but you, the *Dungeon Master*. What you say goes. If you do not recognize this fact, on the one hand you will have characters getting killed off quite arbitrarily and, on the other hand, the players may try to use the rule books to take charge of the game.

If you fudge a die roll, it doesn't have to be in favor of the players, you know. How else do you think Feuerhauch rolled three consecutive 20s? That's an extreme case, but just because you rolled it up doesn't mean you have to trot out an 8 HD monster with only 12 hp, either.

**2. Just because it's in the module doesn't mean it's so.** Many beginning DMs rely heavily on published modules, just as I did. A common mistake is to accept the module as written — despite the module's own admonitions to the contrary.

I said to myself, "I lack experience and judgment. These modules were written by professional, experienced gamers. So, if I stick to them, I won't have to worry about keeping game balance or having the right amount of treasure or anything." That was a mistake.

No module you can pick up is going to be tailored to your particular group of PCs. The adventure is going to be either too hard or too easy. The early stages may present magic items that the author feels are necessary for the PCs to complete the adventure but which, for your party, are redundant or needless. Most modules try to give some guidelines as to the number and levels of PCs for which they're designed, but that doesn't necessarily apply to *your* group.

A party of beginning, 1st-level adventurers can easily be wiped out in the very first encounter in a module designed for levels 1-3, particularly if they are not familiar with or do not accept the time-tested tactic of "Run away! Run away!" At the same time, many of the upper-level modules are just plain boring for a party loaded with magical goodies, and you are very quickly intro-

duced to the old routine of “room-monster-kill-loot-is that all?”

You must feel free to modify what’s written whenever you feel it’s desirable to do so for your particular party. If a (so far) perfectly competent 1st-level fighter in ring mail (the best she could afford) is escorting a freed captive to the surface while the rest of the party recovers from the last melee, and you roll up 20 giant rats as wandering monsters — because the tables in the module and the dice say so — the fighter and the former prisoner have probably both had it. With the armor, the fighter can’t even move fast enough to get away from the rats. If that’s how you want to play it, okay, but it seems rather arbitrary to me.

When a party of 4th-level characters goes through a dungeon, plays with reasonable competence, and yet emerges with a 60-percent fatality rate, it is a little late to say, “Gee! I didn’t know this module was that tough!” One way you can avoid such farcical slaughters is to do a little solitaire playtesting ahead of time. You have the module, and you should have the stats for all the PCs you are planning to run through it. You can’t tell what they are going to do, of course, but you can tell in general terms how well they will do in a given encounter if they choose to slug it out toe-to-toe. You may have to guess at their tactics, battle formation, and so on, but, if you’ve had this group before, you can make some fairly reasonable judgment about that. Then just roll the dice for both sides, the party and the monsters, and see how it comes out. If one PC gets “killed” in this testing process, that might be a fluke. But if half or more of the PCs get killed, the monsters are probably too tough for them.

So change the module. You will not be committing sacrilege, believe me. You will be using the module as intended. Decrease the numbers or hit points of the monsters who ran all over your party in the test encounter. If necessary, downgrade them a bit. For example, ghouls to zombies, bugbears to gnolls, and so on.

On the other hand, if, in your solitaire playtesting, the party walks in and wipes out all the monsters in one round without taking any damage themselves, you will want to *upgrade* the monsters — more of them, more hit points each, or different monsters with more hit dice. Now the ghouls become ghosts, the bugbears become trolls. You can tell that you have been overly generous with magic items and in other ways if you find it necessary to upgrade the bugbears to demigods, but things should never be allowed to reach that point.

What you are looking for is a balance, a point where one or more players could get their characters killed off if they’re careless, but Certain Death is ruled out. Then be prepared to be astonished when they walk in and snuff the monsters like a candle flame with some ingenious tactic. Be prepared to moan as they somehow bypass this encounter entirely. Most DMs, you will find, underestimate their players.

Naturally, you don’t want to limit this playtesting to a single encounter in the module, nor do you have to go through and playtest every possible encounter. A couple of samples from each dungeon level should do it. The monsters on the first level should not be too tough — a few minor wounds to the party here and there. But the monsters on the bottom level should be no pushovers. It’s best when the party has to use a little gray matter to keep from getting wiped out, but you don’t want to make it a sure thing for the monsters.

Some of the authors of the modules have attempted to inject humor into their scenarios to one degree or another. These attempts range from fairly witty name coinages, whose nature is not apparent until you try to pronounce them, to an overall motif of grim humor, to the lamest, corniest “jokes” you can possibly imagine, which succeed in totally destroying the whole carefully structured atmosphere. Some DMs like humor in their adventures; others think that “This is grim business, boys and girls!” Whatever the case, feel free to change it. Please! The 800-foot engraven glyphs do not have to make any reference to chickens and roads. The succubus does not have to be named Draino and talk like a Valley girl.

The module may describe treasure you want the characters to have, or that they needs to have, or that you don’t mind them having, but it’s hidden in such a way, according to the module, that your particular party has absolutely no chance of finding it. (For example, the treasure can only be found by using a *true* seeing spell or some device that duplicates the spell, but the party has no such spell or device.) In that case, feel free to overrule the module. Always feel free to overrule the module, to make it harder or easier in any given instance. Usually, when the module’s author has something very, very well hidden and next to impossible to find, that means it should be very, very well hidden and next to impossible to find *for your party*. If they have the spells and gear to find it easily, step up the concealment or the difficulty. If there is no way they could possibly find it, make it easier. But don’t say, “The dwarf stumbles against the wall and the *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords* falls out of a hidden niche and lands at his feet.” If it’s supposed to be difficult, make it difficult! The point is, *the module is not holy writ*.

On the other side of the coin, just because a module includes some super-powerful magic item as treasure doesn’t mean you have to leave it there in your own game. It has been my experience that most modules are just a little too generous with magic items. Look at the magical accessories carried by the sample characters provided with many of the modules. How does their equipment compare with the paraphernalia your own group is carrying around? In almost every case, the furnished characters will be very magic-poor compared with your own group. This means that you have

been too open-handed, even if all you did was give out the magic items as listed and described in previous modules that the party has been through. This leads to the third point.

**3. Be exceedingly stingy in handing out magic items.** Just playing through several modules, as written, will allow the party to accumulate so many magic items it will scarcely be able to move. Don’t hand it out automatically just because it’s in the module. If you’re not using a module but are running your own adventure for a change, be careful. Just because you rolled up the *Throne of the Gods* as part of the treasure doesn’t mean it has to be there.

If you start letting powerful magic items get into every dungeon, the players will be disappointed when they’re not there. Most players are positively greedy about their characters acquiring magic items and will not hesitate to point out “but the dice say . . .” or “but the rules say . . .” or “but the module says . . .” (Yes, players can buy modules, too, and are highly trained experts when it comes to sneaking a peek at *your* copy.) The main thing you have to remember in this connection is the Prime Directive — you are running the show.

What are you going to do when you suddenly wake up and realize that one of your players has a character equipped like Argo — *plate mail +5, shield +5, girdle of storm giant strength, gauntlets of ogre power, hammer of thunderbolts, ring of fire resistance, ring of spell turning, ring of regeneration, portable hole, helm of teleportation, and rod of automatic mass death?* I’ll tell you what you’ll do. You’ll weep.

Remember that whatever magic weapons or devices you put into the hands of a monster or NPC — so that he can be some kind of challenge for your super-party — are almost certainly going to wind up in the hands of the PCs. So, if you’re letting the adventurers assault the kobold god Kurtulmak in Acheron, please do not have them attacked by 202 ordinary kobolds wielding vorpal swords. First of all, you will remember to your dismay (when the players point it out — instantly) that a rule in the *Players Handbook* says that a fighter can attack once per round per experience level when fighting monsters with less than one hit die. In other words, a 13th-level fighter can exterminate 13 kobolds per round. If the kobolds can hit him at all — which they can’t, in a frontal assault, if he has an armor class of -8 or better, even with a +3 vorpal sword — it will be with a 20. Maybe they’ll get lucky. Then the cleric will have to trot out his *regeneration* and *raise dead* spells. In any event, the characters are going to end up with 202 vorpal swords. They can add these to their stockpile that includes Thor’s hammer, Elric’s sword *Stormbringer*, and the universal weapon they got when you let them fight and kill the Chinese “Killer of the Gods,” Ma Yuan. This kind of thing is just plain ridiculous, but I’m afraid it’s not that rare.

Let's take a look at some of the more powerful magic items that can sneak into a campaign past an unsuspecting DM and send everything right to the last layer of the Abyss.

*Girdle of giant strength:* In the D&D® game, this is not a big deal ("... same chance to hit as a hill giant. The wearer inflicts 2-16 points of damage per hit (or) damages are double normal. . ."). But in the AD&D game — look out! If for some insane reason you convert a D&D campaign to an AD&D campaign, as I did (in ignorance; I thought "Advanced" was the next step beyond "Expert") — and one or more of your PCs has one of these, you're in trouble. The incomprehensible fact that these things are listed in the DMG as being worth only 200 experience points or 2,500 gold pieces is very-misleading. Maybe one *girdle of hill giant strength* in five years of campaigning-would be all right, but any DM who even admits the existence of a *girdle of storm giant strength* (+ 6 to hit, + 12 to damage) is going to rue the day. Bye, bye, game-balance. You will notice that there are very few, if any, *girdles of giant strength* of any kind suggested as treasure in any of the forty or more modules published by TSR, Inc. If you feel you really want to do it, you might include such a thing if you make sure it has "charges" or works only for a certain length of time or until some specific task is accomplished. Of course, the players will then point at the item description in the DMG and cry, "But it doesn't say it's temporary! Unfair! Unfair!" Do not give in to them, although they may have little patience with your explanation that you're trying to keep the game fun for them to play instead of just an exercise in bookkeeping.

*Gauntlets of ogre power:* One or two of these might conceivably be all right. After all, the strength you get with them does not exceed maximum possible human strength. Believe it or not, I did once see a player roll up a fighter with 18/00 strength and do it honestly — once. But don't pass out such gauntlets like the little pieces of sausage that the company representative wants you to sample in the grocery store. And if you are somehow naive enough to let a pair of gauntlets and a *hammer of thunderbolts* get into the campaign, then any *girdle of giant strength* is definitely on the endangered species list. If you allow that combination — the only one in the game that allows cumulative strength bonuses from devices — then you've got Thor, Jr., to content with, and all your giants can start lining up at the cemetery.

While I'm on the subject of extraordinary strength, I think I should mention something-about multiple damage. In all cases that I can think of, it is only the number shown on the die or dice that is doubled (or tripled, or more, in the case of high-level thieves doing a backstab), not strength or magical bonuses. This fact is spelled out very clearly in the DMG item descriptions for such things as a giant-slaying sword or a

dragon-slaying sword, but in some other cases, including the case of multiple damage from a thief's surprise backstab, it is not elucidated quite so clearly. Players will prefer to believe, of course, that, when it says "double damage," it means double everything. You should not be required to prove otherwise to them, although it can be done. Even the infamous *hammer of thunderbolts* with girdle and gauntlets does  $2(d4) + 23$ , not  $2(d4 + 23)$ . When a thief with a *longsword* + 2 and a strength bonus to damage of + 1 completes a successful backstab for "double damage," the damage is  $2(d8) + 5$ , not  $2(d8 + 5)$ .

The one exception to this is when the normal damage for a weapon has a plus factor. For example, a non-magical footman's mace does 2-7 ( $1d6 + 1$ ) points of damage against a small or medium-sized opponent. Twice the weapon damage would be  $2(d6) + 2$ . But, for a mace + 2, double damage is  $2(d6) + 4$ , not  $2(d6) + 6$ .

All this explanation may seem like a waste of time and space to people who have been playing the game for awhile, but I wish someone had explained it to me when I first started out.

*Hammer of thunderbolts:* I've already discussed this at some length, but I don't want to leave the impression that *hammers of thunderbolts* should go on the forbidden weapons list. As long as you watch out for the hammer/girdle/gauntlets combination, these weapons are perfectly all right.

*Cube of force:* It sometimes seems as if *cubes of force* are as common as copper pieces in the modules — if you take them as written. If it is at all possible and if they have any imagination whatever, your players are going to try to misuse these things. "Okay, I'm letting down the *cube* just long enough to cast a fireball, and then I'm reactivating it again instantly! Look, a *fireball* takes 3 segments to cast, right? That's 18 seconds. So it's 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-deactivate-cast-reactivate-20-21 . . ." And if you let them get away with it, the *cube* will be deactivated only against magic during that instant of time and remain activated against everything else.

At this point, you may argue that a spell caster can't cast a spell and still be operating the *cube* in this fashion, whereupon the players will assure you that some other character is operating the *cube* and is sufficiently on his toes as to be able to get the timing right on the money. Amid groans and catcalls, you reach for the percentage dice. . . .

You won't do yourself, or the monsters, any good by relying on the fact that the *cube* has charges and that it drains them every time you activate it or move with it. You'd be surprised at how many shenanigans the party can get away with long before the charges ever run out, even if you have a couple of NPC magic-users bombarding them with charge-draining spells like *disintegrate*, *fireball*, or *lightning bolt*.

Look at that item description a little more

closely, though. In the first place, you can't deactivate the *cube* against just one thing. It has one face that deactivates it, period.

Also note that certain spells "cannot be cast either into or out of the *cube*." For a long time, I thought this meant just when the *cube* was up against magic or against "all things." But, if that's the case, why the list? If you can't cast a *fireball* into it or out of it when it's activated against magic, well, neither can you cast a *faerie fire* into it or out of it at that time. This may be my own interpretation, but the list has to be for spells that can't be cast into or out of the *cube* at any time, whenever any force screen is activated against anything. So there's no keeping it up against a hail of crossbow bolts (non-living matter), for example, and casting a *fireball* out of the *cube*. On the other hand, you could have it activated against non-living matter and cast a *death spell* out of the *cube*, because that's not on the list. Perhaps these spells on the list are a no-no because of some quasi-material manifestation of the spell (lightning, fire, etc.) that falls within every category of protection, or maybe it's just a property of the *cube*. But this limitation does tone down indiscriminate use.

A situation I got into more than once with the *cube* was a sort of stalemate. The party would sit there in the *cube* (every now and then deactivating it just long enough to fire off a spell, as described), and the NPC or monster would more or less be forced to wait it out, or at least surrender all initiative to the party. He could try draining charges by casting various spells — a long, slow, frustrating, magic-eating process — or he could watch them very closely to see when they were going to deactivate the *cube* to let out a spell. But, with the kind of timing required to do that, what chance does an NPC have of casting a spell — or of jumping the party — at just the right instant? Usually, the monster or NPC would just twiddle his thumbs/claws/tentacles, work crossword puzzles, or try to solve Rubik's cube until the charges ran out on the *cube of force*. By that time, the adversary was usually dead.

If the PCs do try this deactivate/cast/reactivate routine, you should definitely assign a percentage chance (or call for a roll against one or more ability scores) that they will mess up the timing and let the spell loose a fraction of a second too early or too late. One *fireball* going off inside the *cube* should be enough to discourage them for awhile, especially if you raise the damage because the volume is so compressed.

Another thing you can do, if the characters' adversary has help, is to keep up a constant bombardment with missiles so the PCs don't dare let down the force screen. If you've got giants throwing boulders, that comes under the heading of "catapult-like missiles" and drains charges. But perhaps the best way to cope is just to start piling stuff on top of the *cube* — dirt, rocks, boulders, compost, whatever you have handy. It's a *cube*. It's flat on top. So whatever you



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put up there is going to stay put, held aloft by the force screen, until the cube is deactivated or until it runs out of charges. The party could very well end up getting crushed under ten tons of stone if they don't bother to react to the situation in time by giving up the protection of the cube.

There are a lot of things they can do with the cube that are more or less legitimate, such as protecting against magic, gases, and living matter while they fire missiles at a dragon, but that's okay. You're just trying to prevent an overall situation of "We're invulnerable, but we can hurt you anytime we want."

Perhaps the easiest solution is the cop-out — don't allow *cubes of force* in your campaign. But if you can't cope with them, or feel that you might have difficulty doing so, there is nothing whatever wrong or terrible about changing the item description to suit yourself! If you want to say that the *cube* has 36 charges and that, once those are gone, it's forever useless, that's perfectly okay. If you want to say that, once deactivated, the cube cannot be reactivated for 24 hours, that's okay, too. It's *your* campaign. You can, you should, you must do as you see fit. No one is going to come knocking at your door to chew you out for tampering with the rules.

**Armor:** Once your PCs' armor classes start creeping below the -5 mark, you're getting dangerously generous with magic armor and shields or with magic rings,

cloaks, and bracers. Remember that monsters with few hit dice are incapable of hitting extremely good armor classes without some kind of bonus. But also remember that the character does not have the same armor class in all circumstances. If he is charging to attack, he gets no dexterity bonus to armor class. If a character is attacked from the flank or rear, his shield does not count for armor class. If attacked from the rear or rear flank, he doesn't get any dexterity bonus, either. From the rear, the attacker is +2 to hit on top of that — +4 if a thief or assassin. Look out, Arrogio! Your armor class against that assassin attacking your rear is not -12, but +2! Yes, *plus 2!*

If it seems like a hassle to figure out all the variations in an individual's armor class, do it once, ahead of time, and keep these figures for all the characters on a 3" x 5" index card.

**Ioun stones:** Aside from my personal opinion that these are unesthetic, there is really not so much terribly wrong with *ioun stones*. I do object to the pale green model, however, that adds one level of experience. I think that experience levels should be earned, not found lying around. With one of the tomes or librams that raise experience levels, the character at least has to spend some time using (studying) the item.

**Carpet of flying:** Whether you allow these in your campaign or not depends on your personal preferences and Dungeon-Mastering style. If you are mainly inter-

ested in dungeoneering and do not much care for outdoor adventures that involve a lot of traveling and random encounters — and your players don't, either — then one or more *carpets of flying* are ideal for getting you out of a lot of tedious dice rolling and encounter structuring. If, however, you prefer for the PCs to travel by conventional means and have to deal with random encounters with brigands, bands of roving orcs, and so on, or if you have some number of planned outdoor encounters prepared or adapted by you, or if you feel (as I do) that the game is a little weird if nothing ever happens except underground, then you might want to be a little more conservative about passing out flying carpets.

If you should happen to hand them out all 'round and then think better of it, having gotten a better grasp on the game, there are always such things as flying red dragons with breath weapons that are very hard on carpets. To reiterate a previous point, do not depend on rolling up a red dragon on the random encounter tables and forget about it if the dice don't come up right. If you want a red dragon, then by all means put one in.

**Spell books:** The magic-user PCs will always be very acquisitive about new spells, and a captured spell book is, in the words of the DMG, "a benison beyond price." Benisons beyond price should not be as easily found as goblin droppings. In this connection, please note that most spell-casting creatures do *not* use spell books. Even lichs, who are ex-magic-users, do not have spell books.

**Flashy items:** These are the savior of many a DM. By "flashy items," I mean magic items that look absolutely fantastic but really don't do that much. For example, a character somehow gets hold of a laser pistol from an extra-terrestrial visitor. Hoo boy! Duddar the dwarf is suddenly a big shot in the duchy!

But the laser pistol only does  $2d8 + AC$  points of damage. Except for the "plus armor class," that's the same as an ordinary bastard sword against a large opponent. The pistol will eventually run out of charges, and it confers no bonus to hit.

You may find, late in the campaign when your PCs have become the owners of lots of magic items, that they have some stuff they were impressed with at first, but which they never bothered to use at all after the first few days. A laser pistol (as described above) would be one example. Another is a whip that turns creatures to stone if you hit them with it, but they get a saving throw and the thing has no bonus to hit. Why mess with that when you've got a good old reliable *frost brand* sword? Especially since the PCs probably don't have weapon proficiency with a whip.

**4. Don't let your players have a continuous *commune* spell.** By this, I mean don't let the players have a continuous *commune* spell with you. In other words, don't tell the players anything that the characters could

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find out only by using a *commune* spell or some other informational spell, or by going to the trouble of consulting a sage or whatever. Make them find out the hard way.

This is nowhere more needful and nowhere more neglected than in the identification of magic items. As it says in the *DMG*, "do not simply blurt out the properties and powers of an item. . . ." The identification process can be tedious at times, if players decide to have their characters determine the nature of an item by experimentation, but you should not give in to the temptation to save time and tedium by saying something like, "Oh, well, heck, it's a *pearl of wisdom*." (If they are like most players, you won't have to tell them what a *pearl of wisdom* is good for. They will have memorized all the magic item descriptions in the *DMG* anyway.)

Similarly, you can say that a suit of plate mail glows under a *detect magic* spell, but you should never let on how many "pluses" it has, much less whether it is cursed or not. Also, note that you can't find out the relative strength of a weapon, suit or armor, or shield by experimentation in the form of mock combat or chopping up chairs. It has to be a real combat situation, a matter of life or death.

Yes, I will admit that it is much easier to go ahead and supply the players with a parts list when they uncover a treasure horde, and it saves time. But it isn't very plausible. The magic items don't have

labels on them. "Warning! The Surgeon General Has Determined That Putting On This Cloak Is Dangerous To Your Health!" "This is a *shield* +3, slightly better than the *shield* +2 you are currently using." To paraphrase PT. Barnum, never give a player a free ride.

The "continuous *commune* spell" prohibition does not apply only to magic item identification. You should also never start reading statistics when the party encounters a monster or monsters. You shouldn't even tell them what it is unless they've encountered such a monster before a few times. You should just describe it. "There's this thing coming toward you and it looks like a big pile of garbage," not "You are approached by a hostile shambling mound. It has an armor class of zero, and this particular specimen has ten hit dice and fifty-one hit points. Its damage per attack is two to sixteen, two such attacks per round, one with each arm. If you get hit with both arms . . ." And so on. Boccob knows they will recognize it from your description, inasmuch as they have studied the *Monster Manual*, FIEND FOLIO® Tome, and *Monster Manual II*. If you let them do so, they will look it up then and there. But don't give it away. Do not say how many hit points it has, or how many it has left after they bash it a few times. You can say things like, "That didn't appear to hurt it at all." "That seemed to hurt it pretty bad." "It's getting a lot weaker." "You just sliced its leg

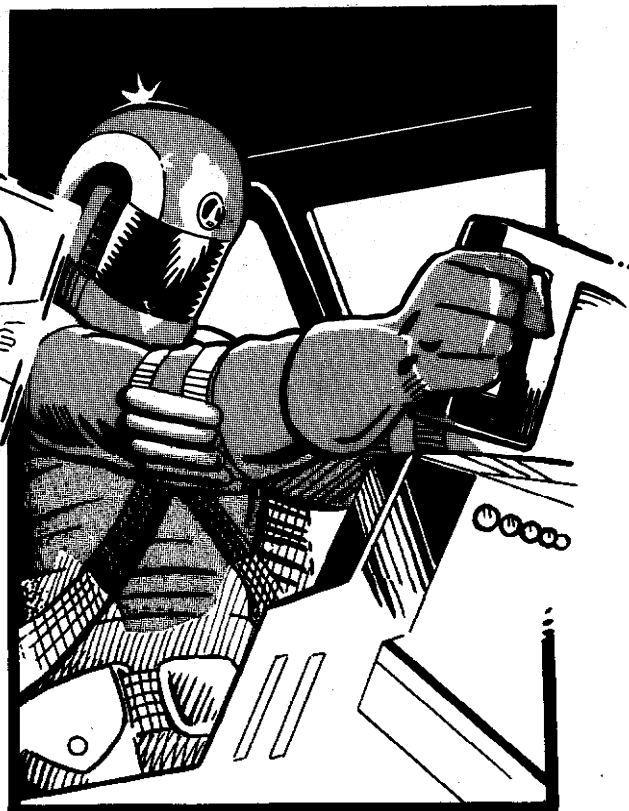
off, and black ichor oozes out like tree sap and gunks up your sword." But stay away from statistics. Again, it is easier to keep up an oral countdown of hit points than it is to come up with descriptive condition reports, but whoever said that being a DM was a job for a lazy (or uncreative) person?

The players are supposed to be role-playing characters in a fantasy universe. What do these hypothetical characters know about esoteric data like "hit points" and "armor class" and "to hit rolls"?

**5. Do not allow a character to become more powerful than a chugging locomotive.** What I'm talking about here is ability scores. An ability score can be increased in a lot of different ways. In some game systems, it can be increased by training; but, even then, it cannot exceed the racial maximum. In the AD&D game, an ability score can be increased by books, librams, tomes, manuals, a *deck of many things* (if you draw the right card), *ioun stones* — even *wishes*, up to a point. In addition to this, some of the modules have little set pieces where it is possible to get an ability score raised. There are a few cases where an individual can get a score as high as 19 by natural means; an elf with an initial dexterity roll of 18, wisdom gained with increasing age (*DMG*, p.13). But, normally, no one should ever get an ability score as high as 19 without going through terrific trials and under the most unusual conditions.



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And it should not be possible to raise an ability score to 19 by means of any of the tomes or librams; the limit on these should be 18, even though the item descriptions don't say so. It is true that, in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ Fantasy Game Setting, personages such as Heward and Keoghtom have ability scores as high as 20, but they are quasi-deities. Murlnyd is also a quasi-deity, but he has no ability score over 18.

**6. If they wish for the moon, don't let them have it.** The material on *wishes* and their misuse in the AD&D rule books is very scant. The only specific rules govern the use of *wishes* to increase ability scores (*DMG*, p.11). Aside from that, the buck is passed to the DM: "If the players are greedy and grasping, be sure to 'crock' them. Interpret the wording exactly, twist the wording, or simply rule the request is beyond the power of the magic" (*DMG*, p. 130).

In a module, a *wish* ring or scroll is usually thrown in for some purpose, to cover some emergency that is likely to have arisen: to resurrect characters, to transport the party out of danger, to get a halfling out of a frog's belly, or to undo some devastating event such as a character being turned into a wight. If PCs can make it through such encounters without the "disaster" occurring, perhaps they deserve a free *wish* or three.

Naturally, you are free to leave the *wish* rings or other *wish* devices out of the module if you think it best. Usually, it will be best. Nor should you include them in any adventure you yourself have designed unless it is for a very good reason. Wishes can be a serious problem and tax the quick thinking and ingenuity of the DM like nothing else in the game. Saying that something is "beyond the power of the magic" is a cop-out, and the players know it. And after being burned a few times by imprecise wording, literal interpretations, and so on, players will learn, unless they are profoundly stupid, to be so careful in the wording of a *wish* that no misinterpretation is possible.

The problem is one of free rides and maintaining game balance. Why can't a fighter lord, upon attaining 9th level, *wish* for a castle and save years of construction time and hundreds of thousands of gold pieces? A "small keep," at least, can be obtained by a lucky draw in the (hopefully rare) *deck of many things*. Why not by a *wish*? In folklore, protagonists are always getting castles and such things by means of a *wish*. Aladdin got a fancy pavilion overnight, for example. So, aside from risking the awful vengeance of the powerful god of Game Balance, why can't Argo the fighter get at least a small castle just by wishing for it?

Aside from castles, why can't PCs obtain large amounts of ready cash or powerful magic items by means of a *wish*? The problem of wishing for material items or wealth has never been discussed, so far as I can discover, in any of the rule books or even in

DRAGON Magazine. I find this surprising, because I encountered the problem many times in my "failed game."

Water always flows downhill, following the path of least resistance. This can be said to represent a general law of nature. Therefore, *the magic of a wish will always operate in the fashion that involves the least expenditure of power*. The same rule applies, only more so, to wish-granting creatures like efreet. Being lazy and usually resentful at having to grant a *wish* at all, such creatures will always get whatever is wished for in the easiest way possible. Thus, if the *wish* is for a second magic item like one the party already has among them, the *wish* will simply transfer the item from one PC to the other. If the wishing PC is careful to ask for "another" or "second" item, the first will vanish and the new one will appear in its place. An analogy: If you ask for "another beer" in Germany, the waiter will ask what is wrong with the first one and, if there was something wrong with it, why did you drink it? The idiom is "Still one, please." Who knows what the idiom might be in the language of the efreet?

Since it is easier to transport an item already in existence than to make one from scratch — and I am assuming the impossibility of creation *ex nihilo* for anyone but the more powerful deities — the item will have to come from someone's treasure vault or off his person. This constitutes theft, and such an action will endanger the alignment of a good character.

Players will usually accept in good grace your desperate efforts to defend Game Balance against their relentless and ingenious assaults if you can give them a convincing reason for something instead of just resorting to the oft-used (and resented) last refuge of a scoundrel: "Because I said so and I'm the DM!"

The more powerful magic items will, of course, be protected against incursion by wish-granting creatures and from the power of *wishes* in general. The same goes for vast hoards of wealth. The fabrication of magic items or coining of money (other than poor counterfeit or illusion) is beyond the skill of most if not all wish-granting creatures, so there you are.

Players may have access to the *DMG* list of magic items, but their characters do not. Therefore, if they've never seen an item before, they won't even know that such a thing exists in spite of the fact that their guardian angels (the players) are drooling at the mouth for the characters to have one. But the characters' knowledge is not the same as the players'. And if a player *does* voice a *wish* for some item on the *DMG* list, the DM can have a lot of fun with literal interpretations of the name of the item.

The usual form of such a *wish*, at least at first, is something like, "I wish I had a pale green *ioun stone*." A devious efreeti will be likely to distort the meaning into "I wish I had (i.e., once had) a pale green *ioun stone*." The subjunctive is dying in the

English language; why should an efreeti respect it? The "had" is taken to be past tense. So the character will remember having once had such a stone that soon vanished, and he did not even know what it was at the time. Or it appeared in the treasure vault and the "owner" didn't even know it was there. Even if misinterpretation is made impossible by the wording of the *wish*, the efreeti will probably deliver something like a pale green *ioun stone* that has been smashed and is now useless (hence abandoned and easier to come by) or a burned-out stone painted pale green. Also note that used-up or disenchanting magic items are easier to come by than good ones. The possibilities are endless. As always, the easiest way to literally fulfill the *wish* will be taken.

But what about the castle? This is fundamentally nothing but dressed stone arranged in a meaningful pattern, so it isn't necessary to steal anything, and it may be easier to cut and dress the stone on the spot than to transport already finished (stolen) stone.

But do efreet, for example, have stone-dressing and castle-designing skills? Probably not. Following the "easiest way out" rule, any castle obtained by a *wish* is likely to be so shoddy and poorly designed and built as to be virtually useless. Just so long as it can be by any stretch of the imagination be called a castle — a toy castle, for example — it fulfills and uses up the *wish*.

If the character says, "I wish for a pale green *ioun stone*," avoiding the use of "had," the efreeti will adopt a nonplussed expression and finally say, "You wish WHAT for a pale green *ioun stone*?" If it is a *wish* scroll or ring that is involved, nothing will happen until the character says something that can be interpreted as answering the efreeti's question. As likely as not, the PC will say something such as "Garbage! It didn't work!" Somewhere in the world, a pale green *ioun stone* is covered with garbage, and the *wish* is used up.

Assuming that the PC is not of good alignment and is therefore unconcerned with theft as a danger to alignment, and that he has been to law school, he may eventually learn to say something like, "I wish that I now have in my possession, on my person and not somewhere else or inside my body, and indefinitely retain the possession of, subject to my will as to whether to retain possession, a working pale green *ioun stone* that will increase my experience level in the manner usual for such stones." So the *ioun stone* appears attached to the PC's rear end and cannot be removed without getting rid of it entirely.

And of course entire scenarios can be built out of incidents wherein some unknown NPC *wishes* for something owned by a character. "Hey, my *mirror of life trapping* just vanished!"

**7. No, you can't polymorph a henchman into Odin.** As any DM knows who has ever handled imaginative players, *polymorph* spells can be a problem. A lot of

time is wasted explaining why “you can’t do that” and coming up with plausible reasons why not. You will save yourself a lot of grief if you thoroughly familiarize yourself with these spells ahead of time.

To begin with, the *Players Handbook* clearly states that a *polymorph self* spell does not endow anyone with the hit points or combat capabilities of the creature *polymorphed* into, just the appearance and rate of movement. This is not true of *shape change*, but even then, there is no increase in hit points.

As for *polymorph other*, anyone except possibly another PC will resent being changed so much that they will probably attack the magic-user at once, regardless of alignments, purposes, other foes present, and so on. If the NPC or henchman assumes the “personality and mentality” of the creature, he may just wander off never to be seen again or, depending on intelligence, attack the magic-user.

But sometimes another PC with a high constitution score will volunteer to be *polymorphed*, and here we have a problem. Suppose the PC is *polymorphed* into a gold dragon, an ancient one specified. All gold dragons can use spells, right? Of course, no change can take place unless the PC has an intelligence of 17 or above (minimum for a gold dragon), but suppose he does? All of a sudden, you have a new, more powerful spell caster in the game!

But, just because all gold dragons can cast spells doesn’t mean that this particular *de novo* gold dragon has ever had the chance to *learn* any spells. It could have done so if it had ever had the chance, but it hasn’t, being newborn on the instant.

Assuming that the PC *polymorphed* has an intelligence of 17 and is 9th level, there is still a 30% chance, to be checked daily, that he will take on the personality and mentality of a gold dragon; that is, suppose himself to in fact *be* a gold dragon.

If this happens, the PC will become an NPC monster under the control of the DM. It will almost certainly take off for more congenial haunts and be out of the campaign for good. Once this possibility is explained, the PC may very well feel that the risk is too great.

**8. Be careful playing with fireballs.** It is the magic-user who should be careful. In my days of naive inexperience, the *fireballs* in my campaign flew thick and fast at the slightest provocation, and many, many monsters were baked. What you have to remember is that a *fireball* is a sphere 40’ in diameter and that “the burst will generally conform to the shape of the area in which it occurs, thus covering an area equal to its normal spherical volume.”

The volume of a 40’-diameter sphere is more than 33,520 cubic feet. That’s about 33½ 10’ sections of a corridor 10’ wide and 10’ high, the standard dungeon corridor. Yes, that’s right: 33½’ of corridor. If the magic-user casts the spell from as far as 165’ away, he and anyone standing there

with him is going to suffer the full effects of the *fireball*.

With the ceiling at only 10’, a *fireball* will fill a room 50’ x 60’ with fire shooting out the doors for an additional 3,510 cubic feet. With a 20’ ceiling, the room can be as small as 40’ x 40’, with only 1,510 cubic feet gushing out the doors.

You don’t need to mention any of this to the players ahead of time (ah, but they know it *now*, don’t they?), but a *fireball* will have its maximum effect if it is cast as a hemisphere against a flat surface rather than as a sphere centered 20’ off the ground. The radius of such a hemisphere will be approximately 25’ rather than 20’) and the *fireball* will cover an area of 1,995 square feet.

Otherwise, a circular cross-section across the center of a *fireball* will have an area of 1,257 square feet, but it will only loom above the heads of those at its edges. At a point 6’ off the floor, the diameter (not radius) is 28.6’ with a cross-sectional area of 641 square feet. Assuming a mob scene with nine man-sized creatures per 10’ x 10’ area within the area of effect of the *fireball*, a hemispherical *fireball* will affect 179 creatures. A spherical one can affect 113 in the central cross-section, but only 65 who are at least 7’ tall, 58 who are 6’ tall, and only 49 who are around 5’ tall.

Of course, the magic-user may have a *ring of fire resistance*, or some other device that duplicates its effects, and may choose to take his chances with being engulfed by his own *fireball*. The magic-user will usually survive in such a case, albeit with singed eyebrows, and there is no reason that you should discourage such heroics.

**9. Be reasonable in awarding experience points.** Aside from judgmental factors (“If you think I’m going to award experience points for *that*. . .”), the DM should most assuredly use the “equivalent hit dice” system explained on p. 84 of the DMG. This is the most effective brake I know to the problem of overly rapid advancement in experience levels, aside from such extralegal measures as awarding experience points for monsters only and not for treasure. The equivalent hit dice (EHD) system doesn’t make much difference at lower levels and is probably safely ignored at that point, but, around 4th level, it becomes wise to use it. Around 8th or 9th level, it becomes vital to use it!

What you do in this system is to take the hit dice — the equivalent hit dice — of the monster(s) and divide this figure by the total levels of the PCs. If the resulting figure is less than one, you multiply it by the normal experience point award. Equivalent Hit Dice are a real pain to figure out in each and every case, and I think EHD figures should have been listed along with the monster descriptions in the three books, or in the DMG, just as experience point awards are listed. Until such a boon occurs, you will have to figure it out yourself. The EHD figure for a certain monster is found

as follows: “. . . each hit die balances 1 experience level, counting each special ability and each exceptional ability as an additional hit die, and also counting any hit point plus an additional hit die.” So an orc with 1 HD also has just 1 EHD, but a 10 HD ghost has 16 EHD. The extra six come from special and exceptional abilities, as outlined on p. 85 of the DMG; in this case, armor class 0, age 10 years and panic, age 10-40 years by touch, *magic jar* ability, ethereal versus weapons and spells, and high intelligence.

What this means in practical terms is that a 9th-level fighter who trashes a 6 hp orc in single combat does not get 16 xp for it. The fighter gets 16 x 1/9, or, rounded off, 2 xp. The same factor can be applied to any treasure the monster was carrying or guarding. So, if the orc was wearing a 200 gp necklace, the xp award is not 200, but 22.

If you really want to get nasty, you can apply the EHD system to the PCs and assign them extra “levels” (for EHD-factor purposes) for armor class 0 or better, missile use, intelligence, and so on, not forgetting another level thrown in for anyone with a constitution bonus to hit points.

This system can be a lot of trouble and, from what I can tell, is not much used. But it *should* be used, even if you have to invest in a pocket calculator, if you want to slow down lightning-like advancement to super-high levels. If you have the time (and it is time-consuming), you can go through the three monster books and write down the EHD for each monster ahead of time.

And, of course, you must always feel free to use your own judgment in awarding experience points. One 7th-level magic-user wiping out 50 orcs with a *fireball* gets full xp under the EHD system, but, considering how much trouble she went to and how much danger she was in, she should probably not get the full value.

Also note that, when PCs cause a horde of monsters to “flee in panic” — or when clerics turn undead — all they should get out of it is their hides saved, not experience points. According to the rule books, the monsters have to be killed or captured before any xp can be awarded. In the case of clerics turning undead, this rule makes particular sense. Otherwise, a cleric could rack up enough xp for the next level just by standing in one spot and repeatedly turning the same zombie until his arm got tired from holding up the holy symbol.

If you want to say that the DMG supersedes the PH — which it does, in any case of contradiction — and take into account the fact that the DMG makes no mention of “capture” as a legitimate means of gaining xp, then the monsters have to be killed. Unfortunately, this makes for a certain amount of bloodthirstiness. Insofar as possible, a PC’s actions should ever be motivated by game mechanics.

With regard to gaining levels, please read page 86 of the DMG and take note of the fact that advancement costs money. Experience points alone are not enough. If the

DM thinks your performance was lousy, it could be that experience points and money will not be enough.

A thief may need only 1,251 xp to qualify for second level, but she also needs 1,500 gold pieces. If xp are awarded for gp on a one-for-one basis, this means in practical terms that the thief needs at least 1,500 xp to advance! (*Editor's note: See "Train while you gain" in DRAGON issue #97 for a suggested new way of dealing with training costs between levels.*)

**10. Go easy on the poor deities.** When the campaign has been going on so long that the players are around 15th level and are loaded down with dozens of magical devices, forgotten artifacts rotting away in some corner of their treasure vaults, you may be tempted to allow them to take on some of the minor deities from the Outer Planes — on the Outer Planes. This results in absurd scenarios such as the one mentioned in DRAGON Magazine a few months ago where PCs wiped out Thor with a push spell.

Attacking deities is ridiculous on the face of it, as the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopedia (now titled *Legends & Lore*) clearly states. How do you suppose the idea ever got started that it was even possible for a party, however powerful, to do such a thing? Couldn't have anything to do with Lolth, the Queen of the Demonweb Pits, could it?

If you use that particular module (Q1), which forms the logical climax of a series of other modules, my own recommendation is that Lolth should be allowed to escape, even if she has to teleport out. Even if you allow her to be slain, you should make it clear that she wasn't really much of a deity, but just sort of a super-demon. Just because you can kill Lolth doesn't mean you can trash Kurtulmak, much less Odin.

What about *awe* power? Well, unfortunately, anyone over 12th level is not affected by the *awe* power of any deity. What about the powerful abilities of the divine beings, such as the 90'-range *geas* or *quest* with no saving throw? But the PCs have at least a *scroll of protection from magic* to protect them from that, if not a *cube of force*. If our friend Argo is totally protected from magic and if the deity in question doesn't do an enormous amount of damage per attack, that single fighter can snuff the head of a pantheon (400 hp) in eight rounds.

The most important rule should be that the deity will always teleport out to avoid being killed, if defeat or death is otherwise inevitable. If the deity does so, it (i.e., you) should not be provoked into a return appearance by cries of "Chicken!"

The best thing you can do if you insist on letting the PCs fight deities is to make a few logical rules of your own, even though the players may want to challenge these rules because they aren't in the rule books. For example, you can say that a *cube of force* or a *scroll of protection from magic* is useless against the powers of a deity. Definitely insist that no deity can be affected by the special properties of something like a *sword of life stealing* or a *vorpal sword*. ("I did it! I rolled a 20! I cut off Odin's head!")

#### 11. Beware the many-headed hydra.

You may under some circumstances be tempted to let players have more than one character in the game at the same time, on the same adventure. This is not a good idea, for several reasons. In the first place, the AD&D game is supposed to be a role-playing game. Unless the player is Alec Guinness or Peter Sellers, he is not going to be able to play several roles simultaneously. One character will get role-played and the others will become no more than shadow figures, henchmen who are under the control of the predominant character.

Another reason to disallow such multiple personalities is that, when the prime character of a player reaches a high level, so will his secondary characters, and the individual player will be a one-person SWAT team. Get a couple of these together and it's "Look out, Valhalla!"

You must insist that the extra characters a player may run be henchmen. This status will hold down their experience levels, if only because they get half experience points for everything, and you will not have a hydra on your hands. Also remember that henchmen are NPCs and are thus ultimately under *your* control, not the player's.

Yet another reason to disallow a game

with only one or two players with multiple characters is that you're missing one of the best parts of the game — the multiple interactions among players.

The best thing to do in this situation, where you have something like two or three players, is to tailor the adventures to *them*, not to a party of six or eight. You can still use the modules if you want to, but they will have to be somewhat overhauled to suit a party of 25% normal size.

**12. Avoid an adversary relationship with your players.** In view of all the advice given so far, it may seem as if an adversary relationship with the players is inevitable. They will be using every sneaky technique they can think of to throw anvils on their side of the scale of game balance, and it's your job to prevent that.

It would be a wonderful world if players were so conscientious and so willing to risk their characters for the sake of a good time that they never looked at the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, the modules, or even "Dungeon Master advice" articles (such as this one) in magazines. It would even be nicer if they did not look up monsters in the *Monster Manual*, FIEND FOLIO® Tome, and *Monster Manual II* whenever they confronted them. Maybe you can forbid this sort of activity during the playing of an adventure, but you can't control what players do on their own time. And never underestimate the ingenuity of players. I once had a player justify looking in the *Monster Manual* during play by saying that his character carried around a bestiary in his backpack!

Also, of course, things tend toward an adversary relationship just because you are playing the roles of all the monsters. But you should nevertheless avoid such a relationship if you can. Unless you rule with an iron hand, it makes for a lot of time-wasting arguments. Make it clear, if you can, that your objective in being such a heartless taskmaster is to show them a good time! And *that* should be your objective. If your players are reasonably mature, mentally and emotionally, they should be able to realize that getting too much too soon ruins the game for everyone.

If you start killing off characters more or less arbitrarily or sending the party through 60% -fatality dungeons, the players are going to get pretty feisty (and clever) just in order to survive. A certain amount of ingenuity is fine; it is altogether desirable. Much of the fun of the game is seeing how players can come up with something really clever to get out of a tight spot. But this ingenuity should not have to extend to memorizing the rule books so they can catch you when you make a mistake or alter the rules in some fashion for a good reason.

**In case it needs to be said . . .**

Oh, yes. There is one point, a 13th rule of thumb, that I will decline to elaborate upon. It is simply this: *Do not allow thermonuclear devices.*

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# Another Gem from The Companions

*Gems for Death*, by Peter L. Rice and Wm. John Wheeler, is produced by The Companions, 245 Water St., Bath ME 04530. The 50-page book sells for \$8.50.

This is the second module in the Gem series, and it is meant to take place at the same time as or shortly after the events in *Street of Gems*. Many of the same characters appear in both modules, but it isn't necessary to have the other module to understand or play this one.

This module is presented in standard Companions format, which makes it a model of organization. The description of each room, cave, or wilderness site is divided into five sections: The Entrance (Approach, if a wilderness site), Rapid Glance, Detailed Look, Brief Search, and Thorough Search. Each of these sections contains information the players will get if the named action is performed, along with a note on the amount of time that action will require.

Basing descriptions on the amount of time spent looking at the scene can make the game seem more realistic. Imagine a group of hardy explorers traveling through a dimly lighted corridor. Suddenly, as they round a corner, a huge figure looms over

them, arms outstretched, grasping for them! The less stalwart of the crew immediately take to their heels. The rest of the group pauses for a moment, steeling themselves for a fight, but nothing happens. A closer look at the figure in the darkened alcove reveals it to be a statue, cunningly carved out of ebony.

By placing a false impression in an earlier description and not dispelling it until a longer look is taken, you give the players momentary frights which will keep the tension building until the moment when the shadowy figure is not a statue. That is precisely the effect The Companions was trying to create by dividing encounter descriptions into several parts.

The non-player characters also receive detailed treatment in this product. First, their outward appearances are described. Second, information is given about them, not necessarily true, which could be obtained from the people in the area. Third, their manner is described — the ways they will act and the types of personalities they will display.

The fourth section of the NPC descriptions is called Rationale, and it contains everything one needs to know to role-play

that character. This requires more than mere statistics; it requires knowing enough personal history to accurately portray actions and reactions. The information in this section is always correct, so that players and characters aren't misled.

Finally, there is a section called Hints For Play, which gives specific advice on playing the character in specific situations. Taken together, these sections provide more than enough information to properly role-play the character.

Even traps are not exempt from this detailed approach. There is a complete description of the discharge mechanism of each trap, enabling you to decide precisely when the trap is sprung. The effect of springing the trap is also described in detail, as are the ways to discover, disarm, and (perhaps most importantly) reset the trap.

This kind of detail allows you to role-play the discovery and disarming of any traps encountered, rather than to simply roll a couple of dice. It also imparts to the player characters exactly how nasty a villain is by showing how fiendish his traps are.

There's another part to this scenario which may be new to anyone unfamiliar with The Companions' products. The



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scenario contains a time line, a series of events which will take place if the player characters do not change things. In other words, the villains in this module are not simply waiting for the characters to arrive before doing anything. They have hopes and plans of their own. They were causing trouble before the player characters arrived, and they will continue doing so in an attempt to fulfill those plans.

Providing a time line for the adventure accomplishes two things. First, it gives a more realistic feel to the villains of the piece. They aren't waiting to be beaten up by the player characters, and they aren't merely responding to the actions of the characters. They may even do things that the characters don't know about — yet. Second, it means that the player characters are operating under a time limit. They need to discover and foil the villain's plans before it's too late. The certainty that the player characters will succeed if they can stay alive no longer exists.

There are two separate time lines presented in this module. One is an absolute time line, identifying things which will happen if the PCs don't interfere at all. The second one gives events which will happen after the PCs begin to interfere. The action is fast and nasty.

This module is linked to no particular game system, but it cannot completely escape game mechanics. Every character in it has some property which needs to be

translated into the numbers your game system requires, the most obvious of which are the ability scores, or characteristics. The numbers given for them are based on a scale of 3-18 (three six-sided dice).

Another number required by most games — the experience level — is never mentioned, because some games don't use levels. Instead there is a value called MAL (Malignancy). MAL is calculated in a manner similar to Don Turnbull's Monstermark values from *White Dwarf* Magazine issues #1-3 (and reprinted in *Best Of White Dwarf* #1). The equation is too involved to get into here, but the Monstermark measures the power of different characters against a standard opponent. This product gives an approximation of about five MAL per level in comparison to the D&D® game system.

The plot of this module is intriguing. The "gems" of the title are not stones, but children. Sleek ships cruise the coasts, stealing children from every port of call and selling them into less scrupulous society. The children who are stolen are called gems, after the names of the ships which spirit them away.

This adventure has what is undoubtedly the strongest opening encounter I have ever seen, but describing it here would be a disservice to those of you who may be about to play it. Let me only say that any good character, no matter how calm he usually is, will finally understand a berserker.

The characters in this module seem real.

Their plans are intelligent, and there is enough information presented to the players to keep the action flowing smoothly.

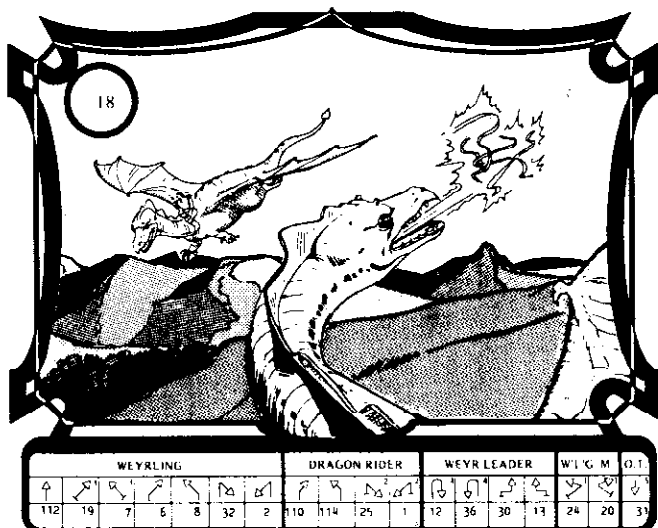
The biggest disappointments in this module are the MAL values. There simply is not enough information here to assist people playing non-level-based systems (such as the RUNEQUEST® game) to convert NPCs. Guesses can be made, but they may not be very accurate. An improvement would be to give more information about how the MAL value is derived.

But that's just a disappointment, not a severe problem. It would be nice to be able to convert this module directly to any system, but those who play non-level-based systems usually have a great deal of experience in converting adventures and characters to their system from the D&D game. They'll just have to convert this module first to the D&D game system, and then to their system.

If your players are accustomed to a great deal of (dice) roll-playing rather than (character) role-playing, this module might cause problems. Adventures with as much detail as this one are an acquired taste, and some players may not appreciate the extra work it puts them through; some referees may agree. But the extra work will be more than amply repaid by the enjoyment you'll get out of playing one of the liner game aids produced. This one's very good, folks. Don't miss it.

— Reviewed by Arlen P. Walker

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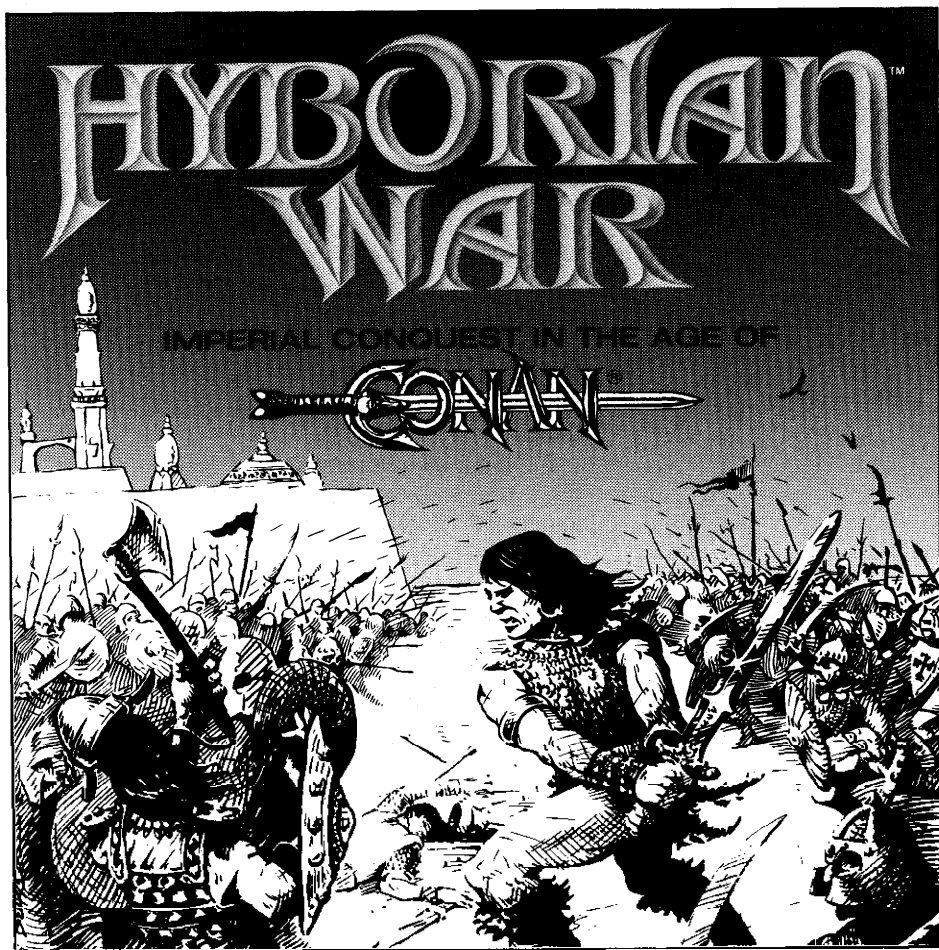
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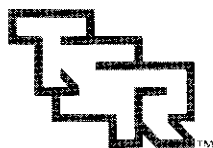
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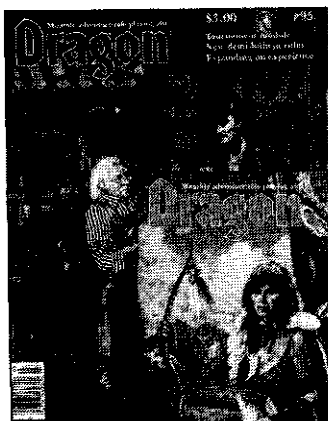
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# A sharp system for swords

## Magic blades get more personality and purpose

by Pete Mohnhey

The tables in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* for creating magic swords have been more than adequate for most DMs. This author, though, has had two problems with the magic sword creation system. First, no experience-point or gold-piece value in addition to the base value of a magic sword is given for primary abilities, extraordinary abilities, purpose swords, or languages. Certainly, a sword with any of these characteristics is worth more than an identical sword without them — but how much more? Second, the list of extraordinary abilities for swords is relatively short, leading to an adventuring group possessing very similar weaponry in a long-term campaign. This article presents an extension to and (it is hoped) an improvement on the existing sword-creation system.

The primary abilities have been left as they appear in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, because they are all powers of detection and the existing abilities seemed to cover all the necessities. All that was added here were figures for additions to gold-piece and experience-point values of the sword possessing these abilities.

The extraordinary abilities, on the other hand, were greatly expanded without perverting the original intent of the table. All spell powers granted by extraordinary abilities function at the 8th level of spell use, and each is accompanied by additions to experience-point and gold-piece value. In the *DMG*, it appears that sword abilities have levels of use as low as 6th level in some cases. This was increased to 8th level of use across the board, as some swords in the *DMG* tables could *heal* or *teleport*. Thus, *levitation*, *fireball*, *strength*, and *magic missile* are at 8th level of use when cast from a sword. It is suggested that all extraordinary powers be usable only with the knowledge of a command word or phrase.

The greatest change made here is in the area of purpose swords. The original list of victims for purpose swords ignored sub-classes or (perhaps) assumed their inclusion with the major classes. The original list also lumped all monsters together in the same category. The new table divides monsters up by type or major groups. Several purpose abilities, as well as experience-point and gold-piece values for those purposes, were added to the tables.

Creating a table for languages spoken by a sword would be a monumental task. (I know — I tried to make one.) This is especially true since many monster descriptions in the *Monster Manual* books and the FIEND FOLIO® Tome do not say if the monsters *have* a spoken language. Therefore, languages may be assigned for magic swords in several ways, using any or all of the suggestions below.

1. A language may be assigned to every creature of at least low intelligence. Most semi-intelligent creatures will have a primitive spoken language of a few dozen words.

2. Creatures such as devils or demons will have a common tongue capable of expressing most common concepts. Other creatures possessing common tongues might include elementals, daemons, dragons, modrons, and so forth.

3. Sword languages are then assigned as the DM sees fit, or they may be rolled for on the encounter tables for the lands where the campaign is taking place. This takes into account factors such as where the sword was made, where it was intended to be used, and the relative frequency of various creatures in the area in question.

The encounter tables from *Monster Manual II* are the most up-to-date published as yet, and are admirably suitable for use in generating languages for swords. A magic-user enchanting a sword for use in the tropics would not bother enchanting the sword to speak the white dragon's tongue. Similarly, in the desert, a sword that spoke the tongue of unicorns would have no great worth.

The personality of a sword should be considered. To begin with,

each sword, whether intelligent or not, should have a name, preferably engraved on the blade or hilt. All intelligent swords should have a definite personality. A random table for sword personality would not suffice, because personality would depend for the most part upon alignment, abilities, intelligence, ego, special abilities, and purpose, if any. The language spoken might have an effect upon a sword's personality; thus, a pixie-speaking sword should be somewhat different from a manticorespeaking sword. The swords will have to be played by the DM just as any non-player character would be played.

Here's an example of a sword personality extrapolated from its abilities.

*Broad sword +2, bronze dragon slayer* — detects precious metals (type and amount) within a 2" radius; detects secret doors within a ½" radius; and speaks the blue dragon tongue. Intelligence 14; ego 7; neutral evil.

This sword is greedy, hateful, and probably has concerns for its master only insofar as its own interests are concerned. The sword's abilities are 1) killing bronze dragons, and 2) finding their loot, however well hidden it might be. It speaks the blue dragon language so that it can communicate with them and find their most hated foes, the bronze dragons.

The benefit of having individual sword names cannot be overstressed. Compare *Excalibur*, *Anduril*, and *Stormbringer* to "my plus three sword with gem detection that speaks orcish." Names should relate to sword powers, origins, or original owners if possible, and may or may not give clues to the above. Each DM's imagination will have to do this work. Here are several examples of sword names I have used or heard of in other campaigns:

A *giant slayer* called *Fist of Odin*;

A *sword of dancing* called *Heartseeker*;

A *sword of wounding* called *Blood-drinker*;

A *sword of sharpness* called *Piercer*;

A *nine lives stealer* called *Life Taker*;

A +1, +4 vs. *reptiles* sword named *Snakebane*;

A *sword* +1 that could detect evil named *Foefinder*.

Given below are expanded and revised tables for random generation of magic swords. They derive from the *DMG's* tables, and the first two are copied straight from the book for the purpose of having all necessary material for sword creation in one place.

Table 1. Sword Intelligence and Capabilities

Dice	Int.	Capabilities	Communications
01-75	none	none	none
76-83	12	1 primary ability	semi-empathy <sup>1</sup>
84-89	13	2 primary abilities	empathy
90-94	14	2 primary abilities	speech <sup>2</sup>
95-97	15	3 primary abilities	speech <sup>2</sup>
98-99	16	3 primary abilities <sup>3</sup>	speech <sup>2</sup>
00	17	3 primary abilities plus 1 extraordinary power <sup>4</sup>	speech and telepathy <sup>5</sup>

1: The possessor will receive some signal (a throb, tingle etc.) and feel urges when its ability functions.

2: The sword will speak its alignment language plus one or more other languages, as indicated on a table hereafter.

3: The sword can also read languages and maps of any non-magical sort.

4: The sword can read magical writings as well as other languages.

5: The sword can use either communication mode at will, with language use as any speaking sword.

**Table 2. Sword Alignment**

Dice	Alignment	Dice	Alignment
01-05	chaotic good	31-55	lawful good
06-15	chaotic neutral	56-60	lawful neutral
16-20	chaotic evil	61-80	neutral
21-25	neutral evil	81-00	neutral good
26-30	lawful evil		

See notes at end of text regarding alignment of sword owners.

**Table 3. Sword Primary Abilities**

Dice	Ability	X.P. Value	G.P. Value
01-11	detect elevator/shifting rooms/walls in a 1" radius	60	300
12-22	detect sloping passages 1" radius	60	300
23-33	detect evil or good 1" radius	120	600
34-44	detect gems, number and kind, 2" radius	240	1200
45-55	detect precious metals, kind and amount, 2" radius	240	1200
56-66	find traps, 1" radius	240	1200
67-77	detect magic, 1" radius	240	1200
78-82	detect secret doors, 1/2" radius	120	600
83-87	detect invisibility 1" radius	240	1200
88-92	locate object, 12" radius	180	900
93-98	roll twice, ignoring scores of 93-00		
99-00	roll on Table 4 instead		

Note that the *detect good/evil* sword power is one or the other, according to the alignment of the sword. (Evil swords *detect good* and vice versa.) Neutral swords detect one or the other (50% chance for either kind).

If the same primary ability is rolled twice, the radius of the power is doubled.

All abilities function only when the sword is held, drawn from its scabbard, and the possessor is concentrating on the desired result. A sword cannot fight and detect at the same time.

The experience-point and gold-piece values in the above table are based on, among other things, the value of wands with similar powers, and the swords are much less valuable than wands of similar power (despite the fact that they have no charges to be exhausted) for several reasons. First, few swords have the detection radius of the corresponding wand (for instance, a *wand of magic detection* has a 3" radius, while the sword ability has only a 1" radius). Second, the swords' values derive primarily from the fact that they are, first and foremost, weapons — most detection abilities are "icing on the cake." Third, a sword is not exactly an innocuous detection device. (Ever try to slip one up your sleeve?) Thus, the gold-piece values range from 300 gp to 1200 gp maximum, based on perceived value to fighters and other sword users.

Extraordinary powers are, by definition, better than primary abilities. The weakest extraordinary swords are worth as much as 1500 gp, and some of the strongest are worth up to 3000 gp. They come in three general types (offensive, defensive, and miscellaneous) and in weak, medium, and strong levels of power. Gold-piece values assigned to each category are as follows:

Defensive power — weak 1500, medium 1800, strong 2100.

Offensive — weak 1500 or 1800, medium 2100 or 2400, strong 3000.

Miscellaneous — weak 1500 or 1800, medium 2100 or 2400, strong 2700.

**Table 4. Sword Extraordinary Powers**

Dice	Ability	X.P. Value	G.P. Value
01-03	Add sword's plus to saving throws, 1/day, 1 turn duration	300	1500
04-06	Animate dead, 1/day	420	2100
07-09	Charm person on contact, 3/day	360	1800
10-11	Clairaudience, 3" range, 3/day, 1/rd.	360	1800
12-14	Clairvoyance, 3" range, 3/day, 1/rd.	360	1800
15-17	Color spray, 2/day	360	1800
18-20	Command, 3/day	300	1500
21-22	Cure light wounds on self, 3/day	300	1500
23-24	Determine direction and depth, 2/day	300	1500
25-27	Dispel magic, 2/day	480	2400
28-30	ESP, 3" range, 3/day, 1/rd	480	2400
31-33	Fireball, 8d6, 1/day, 18" range	600	3000
34-36	Fly, 12"/round, 1 hour/day	480	2400
37-39	Gaze reflection, 3/day	360	1800
40-41	Heal self, 1/day	600	3000
42-44	Hold person, 2/day, on contact	420	2100
45-47	Hypnotic pattern, 2/day	420	2100
48-50	Create illusion, 12" range, 2/day, as a wand of illusion	480	2400
51-53	Invisibility on self, 3/day	360	1800
54-56	Levitate, 1 turn duration, 3/day	420	2100
57-59	Lightning bolt, 8d6, 1/day, 12" range	600	3000
60-62	Magic missile, 4 missiles, 14" range, 2/day	420	2100
63-65	Mirror image, 2/day	360	1800
66-68	Paralyzation, 2/day, on contact	480	2400
69-71	Protection from evil, 3/day, 16 rounds duration	360	1800
72-74	Ray of enfeeblement, 2/day, 35% strength loss, 3" range	420	2100
75-76	Strength on self, 1/day, 8 turns duration	420	2100
77-79	Silence on self, 3/day	300	1500
80-82	Suggestion, 2/day, 5 turns duration, one creature only	420	2100
83-85	Telekinesis, 2500 gp wt., 2/day, 1/rd.	420	2100
86-87	Telepathy, 6" range, 2/day	420	2100
88-89	Teleportation, 1/day, 6000 gp wt. max., 2 segments to activate	540	2700
90-92	Web, 2/day	360	1800
93-94	X-ray vision, 2/day, 1/turn	420	2100
95-97	Roll twice, ignoring scores of 95-97		
98-99	Character may choose one power from this table		
00	Character may choose one power and roll for a Special Purpose		

Note that all spell effects, including those concerning magic resistance, saving throws, and so forth, apply as if the spell were cast by an 8th-level spellcaster.

If the same power is rolled twice, the number of uses of that power per day are doubled.

Powers function when the sword is drawn and held and the possessor concentrates upon the desired effect. Most powers will require that the user concentrate for at least a full round.

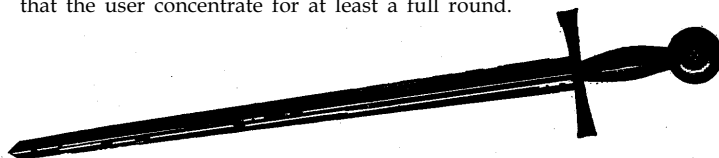




Table 5A. Special Purpose Swords: Purposes

Dice	Purpose	X.P. Value	G.P. Value
01-04	Defeat opposite alignment	200	1000
05-07	Defeat law	200	1000
08-10	Defeat chaos	200	1000
11-13	Defeat neutrality	200	1000
14-16	Defeat good	200	1000
17-19	Defeat evil	200	1000
20-23	Slay clerics	225	1125
24	Slay druids	225	1125
25-28	Slay fighters	225	1125
29	Slay paladins	225	1125
30-31	Slay rangers	225	1125
32-34	Slay magic-users	225	1125
35	Slay illusionists	225	1125
36-39	Slay thieves	225	1125
40-41	Slay assassins	225	1125
42	Slay monks	225	1125
43	Slay bards	225	1125
44-46	Slay avians	200	1000
47	Slay daemons or demodands	250	1250
48-50	Slay demi-humans	200	1000
51-54	Slay demons	250	1250
55-58	Slay devils	250	1250
59-62	Slay dragons	250	1250
63-65	Slay extra-planar creatures	250	1250
66-69	Slay giants	225	1125
70-72	Slay humanoids	200	1000
73-75	Slay insects	200	1000
76-79	Slay magic-using creatures	225	1125
80-82	Slay mammals	200	1000
83-85	Slay plant life	200	1000
86-88	Slay poison-using creatures	225	1125
89-91	Slay psionic creatures	250	1250
92-94	Slay reptiles	200	1000
95-97	Slay faerie creatures*	225	1125
98-00	Destroy undead	250	1250

\* Faerie creatures are: brownies, centaurs, dryads, pegasi, pixies, satyrs, sprites, sylphs, unicorns, and the like (perhaps including, with certain swords, elves, gnomes, and halflings).

The purpose of a neutral sword with a "defeat opposite alignment" purpose is to defeat or slay creatures of the four extreme alignments (LG, LE, CG, CE).

With regard to the character classes mentioned in the above table, note that "fighter" does not include ranger or paladin, "magic-user" does not include illusionist, and so on.

A purpose must suit the type and alignment of the sword in question. Good-aligned swords will only use purpose abilities on evil creatures, though neutral and evil swords are not so restricted. Thus, a good sword that was created to slay giants would not use its purpose ability to slay storm giants, for example.

When a creature is struck by the sword, the sword will use its purpose ability if the creature is one the sword was meant to slay or destroy. The victim gets a save vs. spell. The power will operate only in pursuit of the special purpose, and a character who fails to attack a creature the sword was created to slay, or who fails to kill the creature with the sword, will have at best a strained relationship with the sword — the weapon may, in fact, refuse to use any of its powers for the master until the affront is settled.

Table 5B. Special Purpose Swords: Powers

Dice	Power	X.P. Value	G.P. Value
01-08	<i>Cause blindness</i> for 2-12 rounds	100	500
09-15	<i>Confusion</i> for 2-12 rounds	100	500
16-25	<i>Death</i>	200	1000
26-35	<i>Disintegration</i>	200	1000
36-42	<i>Cause fear</i> for 1-4 rounds	100	500

Table 5B, continued

Dice	Power	X.P. Value	G.P. Value
43-49	<i>Feeblemind</i> for 1-4 rounds	150	750
50-56	<i>Insanity</i> for 1-4 rounds	100	500
57-66	<i>Maze</i>	100	500
67-75	<i>Paralyzation</i> for 1-4 rounds	150	750
76-85	<i>Petrification</i>	150	750
86-93	<i>Plane shift</i>	150	750
94-00	<i>Quested</i>	150	750

Any sword determined to have a Special Purpose is allowed one roll on Table 5A followed by one roll on Table 5B. However, a sword's power will be appropriate to its purpose; e.g., a sword that destroys undead would not have *fear* as a purpose power. In a case where purpose and power conflict in this fashion, simply re-roll on Table 5B until a non-contradictory set of characteristics is obtained. The *plane shifting* power throws the victim to a random plane of existence. The *petrification* power will not cause the sword to become entrapped in the body of the victim; this effect may be undone by a *stone to flesh* spell. Any *insanity* caused will be catatonia, suicidal mania, or insanity involving constant hallucinations.

Table 6. Non-alignment Languages of Sword

Dice	Number of languages
01-40	1
41-70	2
71-85	3
86-95	4
96-99	5
00	6, or the total of two additional rolls (ignoring further results of 00), whichever is the greater.

Languages should be appropriate to the type of sword and its abilities. Each language spoken adds 50 xp and 250 gp value to the sword's value, including the alignment language.

Table 7. Sword Ego

Attribute of sword	Ego points
Each "plus" of sword <sup>1</sup>	1
Each primary ability <sup>2</sup>	1
Each extraordinary power <sup>2</sup>	2
Special purpose	5
Each language spoken <sup>3</sup>	½
Telepathic ability	2
Reading languages ability	1
Reading magic ability	2

1: A +1 sword has 1 ego point, but if it has another (higher) plus, the highest is also counted. In addition, swords which have no extra plusses, but have extra powers, add double their "plus" rating for ego.

2: If the ability is doubled, double the ego points.

3: Round up.

Under the *DMG* rules, a magic sword with a neutral alignment can be used by any character whose alignment in any part corresponds with the non-neutral alignment of the sword. However, a neutral good sword (for instance) would dislike the lawfulness of a lawful good character's actions just as much as a lawful good sword would dislike a neutral good character's lack of orderliness. The same, it would seem, would be true for a lawful neutral sword and a lawful evil character, and so on through the full gamut of possibilities. Neutrality is not the lack of a viewpoint — it is a balance of viewpoints. Thus, a neutral sword would dislike the unbalanced views of a character who was non-neutral where the sword is neutral. In my campaign, character alignment must correspond to sword alignment exactly, or ego damage will result upon grasping the sword.

# Seventeen new treasures

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*Potion of  
Pain Suppression  
Ring of Energy  
Rod of Melting  
C a t s t a f f  
Amulet of  
Psionic Reflection  
Bracers of Deflection*

*Dust of Forgetfulness  
Gem of Shielding  
Gem of Scroll Reading  
Hand of Remote Action  
Oyster Chest  
Quill of  
Scroll Creation*

*Stone of  
Mysterious Sounds  
Armor of  
Acidic Secretion  
Shield of  
Dragon Protection  
Bow of Doubling  
Hammer of Penetration*

---

## Potion of Pain Suppression

by Stephen Martin

This non-magical concoction is presumably a barbarian creation, but, if so, the secrets of its manufacturing are closely guarded. The potion deadens pain for 1-4 hours and tends to deplete the user's energy reserves.

Against magical powers that directly cause pain, such as a *symbol of pain* or venom from erinyes' daggers, the potion gives a +5 on all applicable saving throws and reduces all effects of such pain by half in every respect but duration. Furthermore, the potion restores 2-8 hp to the drinker (not exceeding the drinker's original hp total) and allows the character to exert himself physically as if he were one strength class stronger. (A strength class is considered to be each individual line given in the Strength Table II: Ability Adjustments on p.9 of the *Players Handbook*. Thus, a fighter with a strength of 12 would be able to exert himself as if he had a strength of 14 (the lowest value of a range is considered to be the strength achieved). When the potion's effect ends, the user suffers the loss of strength and hit points bestowed, and loses an additional 1-4 hp of his own as well from exhaustion.

Because the potion draws on the user's reserves, taking more than one dose at a time can be risky. If two doses are taken together, they will last a total of 2-8 hours, and the user will lose 2-8 hp when the double dose wears off: However, the strength-class increase is the same as for a normal-sized dose, and bonuses against magical pain attacks are as described above. If three or more doses are taken at once, the user must make a system shock roll, with a +5% per dose penalty, to avoid retching and ruining the effect. If the roll is successful, the duration of the potions will be 3-12 hours, and 3-12 additional hp will be lost at the end. In no case is strength raised by more than one class, bonuses against magic raised, or more than 2-8 temporary hp bestowed.

Experience Point Value: 0

Gold Piece Sale Value: 100

## Ring of Energy

by Michael Persinger

This magical ring always has a gem of some sort in its setting. Upon command, a pencil-thin beam of energy can be made to shoot out from the gem toward a desired target. The beam will automatically hit any desired target located along an unobstructed line of sight from the ring wearer and within 60 feet of the wearer. A save vs. spell is allowed to avoid the beam and its damage, and if the intended target makes its saving throw, the beam will continue along its straight-line path and may hit an unintended target that lies within range. The power beam of the *ring of energy* loses potency as it travels outward. Against a target within 20 feet of the ring wearer, the beam does 4-24 points of damage; at 21 to 30 feet, it does 3-18 points of damage; at 31 to 40, 12-12 points; and at 41 to 60 feet, 1-6 points. The beam only affects living things; golems, undead, and

creatures of similar sort are not hurt by it, but it will hit such a creature and in so doing expend its energy. The *ring of energy* cannot be used more than four times in one day. The energy of the power beam is drawn from the Ethereal Plane; as such, each usage has a 3% chance (non-cumulative) of opening a passageway to that plane and causing a terithran (see FIEND FOLIO® Tome) to arrive on the Prime Material Plane. Any such creature "summoned" in this fashion will appear 30 feet away from the ring wearer and will immediately move in to attack in an attempt to destroy the ring (and its possessor).

Experience Point Value: 500

Gold Piece Sale Value: 6,000

## Rod of Melting

by Richard Lucas

This item, usable by a member of any character class, is the bane of all magical swords, particularly those with an innate intelligence. It destroys magical swords through heat, which an intelligent sword will perceive as pain. If used to destroy a sword when not in combat, the user simply touches the rod to the sword and gives the command words to activate it. If the sword fails a saving throw vs. disintegration (as hard metal), the sword grows rapidly hotter until it melts into white-hot slag within a single round. Anyone touching the hot slag or holding the sword as it melts takes 4-16 hp damage (save vs. wands for half damage).

In combat, the wielder of the rod must concentrate on striking the opponent's sword, which is considered to have a base AC 0 (with bonuses for magical protective devices applicable, such as from a *ring of protection*, but not from *bracers of defense*). Any misses against the sword will not strike the sword's wielder.

If a sword is struck while in combat, it gains a +2 bonus to its saving throw due to the circumstances of combat. If this save fails, however, the sword quickly accumulates dangerous thermal energy, and the wielder will take the damage noted above and drop the weapon. The sword will often spray the 5' area around it with sparks and light as it melts, though this display is not dangerous. A sword with speech capability will emit a death shriek that will deafen all within 30' of it for 1-6 turns, if the affected creatures fail to save vs. wands.

There is a 5% chance per ego point a sword possesses that it will explode when it fails to save against the *rod of melting*. Such a blast will cause 1 hp damage per ego point the sword possessed to all beings within 30' of it. If this occurs, the rod must save vs. disintegration (as hard metal), or it, too, will be destroyed by backfiring thermal energy, forcing its wielder to take damage and drop it as well.

A *rod of melting* has at most 50 charges, and cannot be re-charged. Each time it forces a sword to save against its melting power, whether the sword is destroyed or not, a charge is used for every point of ego that the sword possesses (or for the total "to hit"

bonus the sword possesses at its greatest effect, if it is not intelligent). The rod will not affect non-magical swords or any other magical or non-magical weapons or items. If used against a living creature, it may be treated as a jo stick for damage. It has no effect at all against iron golems.

Experience Point Value: 3,000  
Gold Piece Sale Value: 12,000

Catstaff

by Ed Greenwood

This item is a black, 7-foot-long staff of stout wood topped with a sculpted knob resembling a cat's head. When carried on or strapped to one's person, it imparts abilities related to silent movement and concealment. The holder/bearer of a catstaff is able to *climb walls* (if both hands are free) and *move silently* as a 9th-level thief, *hide in shadows* with a 94% chance of success, see with *ultravision* to a 60' range, and cast shadow six times per day. This *shadow* is a 1" radius globe of semi-darkness centered on the staff; this gloom does not block infravision or ultravision, and is negated by a light source within its confines. It can be dispelled by magical (but not normal) light which touches its periphery, and unless dispelled or cancelled by the desire of the staff-holder it remains in effect for 2-4 turns. The *shadow* does not allow normal vision into or through its area of effect, and as such serves as a defense against visual attacks (gaze weapons, hypnotic and dazzling effects, and the like).

The *catstaff* is a magical weapon and can be used in combat as a normal quarterstaff would be; however, it has no bonuses to hit or damage. It can be employed as a weapon while any or all of its magical properties are being utilized. The staff never makes any noise itself while tapping, scraping, striking, or otherwise contacting any solid object. Many such staves contain secret compartments for the carrying of small items such as thieves' tools, spell components, magical *tokens*, and the like. If it is broken in two, all of its magical properties are lost.

Experience Point Value: 6,000  
Gold Piece Sale Value: 13,000

Amulet of Psionic Reflection

by Roger E. Moore

The ancient githyanki-mind flayer wars have spawned a number of interesting psionic-related magical items and weapons. Among them is the githyanki *amulet of psionic reflection*, a small, ornate device that is pinned to a headband and placed so that it centers on the user's forehead. The wearer is protected from all *psionic blast* attacks made upon him; this protection does not extend to anyone else. In addition, if a *psionic blast* is cast upon the person wearing this amulet, the amulet itself will generate another *psionic blast* in the direction of the attacker, at one-half the strength of the original *psionic blast* (round fractions down). If the wearer is psionic, he cannot fire his own *psionic blasts* without attacking himself at the same time he attacks everyone else.

This device is generally used by githyanki scouts who operate alone on missions into mind flayer lairs. Wearing such an amulet is considered a great honor, and githyanki will go to great lengths to recover lost amulets from their new owners. Mind flayers will be equally enraged to see such an amulet if they recognize it as such. Only humans, githyanki, and githzerai may use this device; psionic demi-humans and non-psionic characters are neither helped nor harmed by it.

Experience Point Value: 2,500  
Gold Piece Sale Value: 10,000

Bracers of Deflection

by Michael Persinger

These magical bracers function like *bracers of defense* of the most powerful sort, affording the wearer an effective armor class of 2. In

addition, if the wearer chooses to attempt to parry an opponent's attack (as detailed on page 104 of the *Players Handbook*), the bracers cause the opponent to take a -4 penalty "to hit," making a successful parrying attempt more likely. The wearer may only parry in this fashion against one opponent in any round, and cannot attempt to parry unless he does not take any offensive action during that round.

Experience Point Value: 4,500  
Gold Piece Sale Value: 27,000

Dust of Forgetfulness

by Richard Webb

This dust looks exactly like other magical dusts, and is stored and delivered in the same manner. When thrown at a character or other living creature, the dust causes the victim to forget everything that has happened to him in the last hour (including having the dust tossed upon him). Enemies encountered during that time will be forgotten, paths explored will look unfamiliar, and newly made friends will be seen with suspicion. If a character's immediate surroundings are similar to those the character was in an hour before, the character won't even be aware of the difference without close examination (if any differences in environment exist). After one week, the lost memories will be restored, and no experience will be lost.

Player characters, if sprinkled with dust, should be forbidden by the DM to use "forgotten" knowledge. No saving throw is given against this power.

Experience Point Value: 1,500  
Gold Piece Sale Value: 4,000

Gem of Shielding

by Richard Lucas

This object is a small, magical gemstone that has the power to bestow upon its user complete immunity against certain psionic attacks. Each of these gems has a clear, pale color and initially seems to be of 10 gp value, though of an unidentifiable sort of gem.

A *gem of shielding* is pressed to the user's forehead, where it will seem to melt into the skin and become invisible. No command word is necessary for this to occur. Thereafter, the gem performs its protective functions automatically. The gem may be removed by placing one's fingers against the forehead and mentally commanding the gem to reappear. It is possible for more than one gem to be emplaced on a character; however, there is a 20% cumulative chance per extra gem emplaced that a resonance field will be set up between the two (or more) stones. This resonance field will continue to protect against the attack forms the gems were designed to stop, but they will suppress all other psionic defenses that the subject possesses. A person who is using gems to shield against attack forms C, D, and E would thus have no defense at all against attack forms A or B if this occurred. The affected person will not be able to sense his own vulnerability.

Additionally, the resonance field will alert all psionic creatures within a one-mile radius of the gem-user as to his location, ruining all attempts to surprise such creatures. It is also possible for a psionic creature to track down the gem-user because of the resonance field given off when the item is in use.

Only 1-2 *gems of shielding* will usually be found. When one or more are discovered, the type(s) of gem(s) found may be randomly determined using the following table.

Die roll			Protects against
(d12)	Color of gem	Gem type	attack mode
1-3	pale violet	nerve shield	A
4-5	pale green	mind shield	B
6-7	pale orange	ego shield	C
8-9	pale yellow	id shield	D
10-11	pale blue	psyche shield	E
12	clear	brain shield	special

The *brain shield gem* gifts its wearer with a generalized defense against all five psionic attack modes, reducing the psionic strength of all such attacks against the wearer by 50 points. Thus, an attacker using a 110-point *psionic blast* against the wearer of such a gem, would only make a 60-point attack against the wearer, though everyone around the victim would be struck at full strength. Additionally, the *brain shield* gem puts up a screen that keeps away cerebral parasites, effective out to a 60' radius.

	<i>Experience Point Value *</i>	<i>Gold Piece Sale Value</i>
Nerve shield	450	7,000
Mind shield	300	5,000
Ego shield	300	5,000
Id shield	300	5,000
Psyche shield	300	5,000
Brain shield	500	8,000

\* — Only psionic characters may gain experience points from using *gems of shielding*. Characters without innate psionic powers may not employ these gems in any fashion, but they may sell them if so desired.

## Gem of Scroll Reading

by Nick Kopsinis

This small, white, translucent gem holds much power for spell casters. The gem has a flat top and bottom with faceted sides, and if one side is placed against printed matter, the gem will automatically make the writing legible as if *comprehend languages* and *read magic* spells were both in effect. More importantly, the reader (who must be a magic-user, illusionist, cleric, or druid) will be able to decipher spell scrolls usable only by other spell-casting classes. If an entire scroll is read through using a *gem of scroll reading*, the reader may cast the spell normally, even if the spell was intended for someone of another character class. However, the reading and casting time for the scroll spell is doubled; thus, a druid trying to cast a *fireball* from a scroll would take 6 segments to cast it using the *gem of scroll reading*. In addition, there is a 1% chance per level of the spell being cast that the reader/spell caster will be blinded (as if struck by a *cause blindness* spell).

The reader may not use this gem to actually acquire a spell not normally usable by his class, and any attempts to copy spells read through this device using a write spell will fail. Magic-users cannot learn druid spells, clerics cannot gain illusionist spells, etc.

If the spell cast is of a level greater than that which the caster could normally use (e.g., if a 3rd-level druid tried to cast a *cone of cold* spell), then there is a 50% chance that the spell will either backfire (01-20) or simply fail (21-50). A backfiring spell will never benefit the caster and will harm the caster or work in the caster's worst interests.

It must be noted that if a cursed or trapped scroll is read using this device, the gem will not help the reader recognize the curse or trap before it is activated.

Experience Point Value: 3,500

Gold Piece Sale Value: 17,000

## Hand of Remote Action

by Ed Greenwood

This unusual creation is actually two devices: a gauntlet of steel which will change size to fit the hand of any wearer (halfling through human), and a "hand" of solid steel which is identical to the gauntlet in size and appearance. The two items are magically linked, so that the *hand* will mimic all actions of the gauntlet from a distance of 1" per point of wisdom possessed by the wearer. Thus, the wearer of the gauntlet may grasp at empty air and the *hand*, some distance away, will grasp at an enemy. The positioning and movement of the *hand* are under the complete control of the gauntlet wearer as long as the *hand* is within the maximum allowable distance and within

sight of the wearer.

All attacks made by the *hand* are at -1 "to hit" due to the difficulty of accurately judging distances from afar. The *hand* may transport weapons, but cannot be used to wield them or hurl them; its chief use is in the manipulation of dangerous items and the disarming of traps and locks from a distance. As such, it is particularly suited for use by thieves, although members of all classes may employ the item.

The *hand*, unless its speed is markedly increased (by *telekinesis* or similar means), does 1-8 points of damage per blow. For purposes of bending bars, opening doors, etc., it has the same effective strength as the gauntlet wearer. It cannot be destroyed by physical attacks, but will become inert if it takes blows amounting to 20 points of damage. It can be "recharged," negating all damage it may have suffered, by bringing it into contact with the gauntlet before the 20-point limit is reached. If it falls inert, either from damage or by moving out of sight of or too far away from the gauntlet wearer, it must be "replenished" by keeping it within the maximum distance for a period of one day for each day (or fraction thereof) that it was inert; thus, even a momentary loss of control over the *hand* will cause it to be useless for one day thereafter. The gauntlet and *hand* cannot be employed in conjunction with any other form of magical gauntlets. The *hand* cannot be controlled when the wearer is being attacked psionically, or is the target of some form of mind-control magic; however, it will remain functional, and can be used again as soon as the wearer is no longer under mental attack.

The *hand* cannot be damaged by fire, heat, cold, or electricity, but if it is hit by a magical force of one of these sorts, the spell effect will be transmitted at half-strength to the gauntlet wearer. For instance, if the *hand* is hit by a *fireball* of 8d6 strength, the gauntlet wearer will take 4d6 of damage, or 2d6 if a saving throw is made. The gauntlet and the hand are not subject to any form of rust or corrosion, including such forces as the attack of a rust monster.

Experience Point Value: 1,400

Gold Piece Sale Value: 16,500

## Oyster Chest

by Nick Kopsinis

This item appears to be a small, square, wooden chest, 2' in length along any side. The inside of the chest is lined with red velvet, which has numerous soft, cushiony folds. Hidden between the folds is a command word, inscribed on the velvet itself. If from 1-5 grains of sand are placed within the folds inside the box and the command word is spoken, the chest will magically lock itself and will not open again until the command word is spoken again.

During the time that the chest is locked, it will begin turning the grains of sand into perfectly formed, non-magical pearls. For each consecutive day that the box is left undisturbed, each pearl will increase in value by about 3 gp. Thus, after a week, each pearl would be worth about 20 gp; after a month, each would be worth about 80-100 gp. If the box is left unopened for longer than one year, there is a 1% cumulative chance per day thereafter that the growing pearls will become misshapen and worthless.

Casting a *dispel magic* spell on the chest will not open it, but successfully casting a *knock* spell against 14th-level magic will do so. However, the pearls inside will immediately disintegrate and be worthless. If the chest is ever broken, it will lose all of its magical properties forever.

Experience Point Value: 1,500

Gold Piece Sale Value: 15,000

## Quill of Scroll Creation

by Victor Selby

This enchanted writing implement is of great use to a magic-user or illusionist attempting to enscribe a magical spell scroll. It gives its user a 10% bonus to the chance of successfully writing a spell onto a scroll. The quill is only good for six uses (six spells), and loses its magical property when the sixth spell is finished. Each usage counts



against the quill's capacity, whether or not the spell in question was successfully transferred to the scroll.

If the quill is used along with a special ink that is attuned to the item, the chance of success in the preparation of a scroll spell is increased by an additional 10%. The manufacture of this ink is a costly and time-consuming process, taking at least a week and requiring ingredients of at least 1,000 gp in value to make enough ink to last for six usages. This special ink must be mixed with the ink that a particular scroll normally requires. A bottle of this ink may be found along with the quill, but the ink will never be discovered by itself.

Experience Point Value: 250 (500 with ink)

Gold Piece Sale Value: 600 (1,000 with ink)

## Stone of Mysterious Sounds

by Nick Kopsinis

This stone appears to be similar to any other magical stone, though it is malleable and can be easily grasped and reshaped by a human hand. The stone cannot be pulled apart into smaller stones, and it has only limited elasticity. Each such stone weighs 50 gp.

A character may hurl this stone up to 30'. If the character's strength is 15 or greater, the stone will stick to whatever non-living surface it strikes (roll "to hit" against AC 6). The stone will remain stuck to that surface until it is pulled off (which doesn't require any special strength roll). Three segments after it sticks to a surface, the stone will emit one of a number of different sounds. The stone will broadcast this sound until it is pulled free of the surface to which it is stuck.

A character may also fit the stone onto a solid surface (requiring a strength of 15 or better, but no "to hit" roll), then strike the stone with a heavy blunt object to start the sound production (again, not requiring a "to hit" roll).

The *stone of mysterious sounds* is useful for distracting and deterring opponents from pursuit, to allow the characters to escape or gain time for other actions. Each time the stone is activated, a roll must be made on the following table to determine what sound it produces.

<i>Dice Noise produced</i>	<i>Dice Noise produced</i>
01-04 creaking	53-56 screaming*
05-08 buzzing bees	57-60 animal growling
09-12 groaning*	61-64 birds chirping
13-16 footsteps	65-68 horns (musical)
17-20 ocean waves on beach	69-72 steady rain
21-24 stones grinding	73-76 wind chimes
25-28 laughter*	77-80 fighting (swords clashing, shouts, etc.)*
29-32 coughing*	81-84 speech**
33-36 sneezing*	85-88 whistling*
37-40 muffled whispering*	89-92 chains rattling
41-44 whip cracks	93-96 crying*
45-48 fingers snapping	97-00 wind blowing
49-52 mumbled chanting*	

\* — The race of the person(s) making the sound cannot be determined, and no intelligible speech will be discerned.

\*\* — The race of the person(s) speaking can be determined using the random languages table in the *DMG*, p. 102. The content of the speech may be determined by the DM as desired.

Experience Point Value: 500

Gold Piece Sale Value: 5,000

## Armor of Acidic Secretion

by Gregory Detwiler

This cursed armor appears to be normal magical armor, but it gives no benefit to the wearer in combat (though this will not be known to the wearer). This armor is found either as a suit of banded mail (25%), splint mail (25%), or plate mail (50%).

From the moment that the wearer first suffers damage while using

this suit, the armor and any padding used with it will secrete a corrosive acid for 1-20 rounds, doing 1-4 hp damage to the wearer each round (no saving throw). It takes a full turn (10 rounds) to remove this suit of armor, and it will continue doing acidic damage during that entire time (if the secretion duration is still in effect).

Due to the nature of the acid, the burns, blisters, etc., left by such wounds cannot be removed except by a *wish*, *alter reality* or *tempus fugit* spell, although normal rest and healing will recover lost hit points. The damage can only be stopped otherwise if the armor is destroyed by a magical attack (e.g., by a blue dragon's breath or by a rust monster).

Experience Point Value: 0

Gold Piece Sale Value: 2,000

## Shield of Dragon Protection

by John Uustal

This shield has magical runes across its front and back rim which spell out the word *dragon*. The runes are magical, so that anyone who reads them will see the word written in his native tongue. Whenever a dragon comes within 30' of the shield, the word "dragon" will glow softly for one segment, then fade.

The *shield of dragon protection* is normally an item of +3 in protective power, but it confers +5 protection from all non-magical dragon attacks (including claws and bite). If the word *dragon* is spoken aloud by the shield's bearer, in the language in which the word appears to be written on the shield, the whole shield begins to glow with the effect of a *light* spell and an additional bonus is conferred. If the bearer makes his saving throw vs. the dragon's breath weapon, he will take no damage from it, and only half damage will be taken if the saving throw is failed. Finally, the shield gives a +3 bonus to the bearer's saving throw against any magical spells cast by dragons against him, as per a *ring of protection*.

Experience Point Value: 1,100

Gold Piece Sale Value: 11,000

## Bow of Doubling

by Stephen Martin

This magical bow offers no bonuses to hit or damage, but it does have the unique property of firing *two* arrows at a time. Whenever a non-magical arrow is fired from this bow, the bow automatically creates and fires a second arrow. If the first arrow hits its target, so will the second; if the first shot misses, the second arrow has normal probabilities to hit it. All arrows shot from this bow, whether they hit or not, will be destroyed upon impact (or as soon as it is determined that they did not hit) and cannot be recovered. About 75% of all such bows are short bows, because of their usefulness to horse archers.

Experience Point Value: 1,000

Gold Piece Sale Value: 6,000

## Hammer of Penetration

by John Uustal

This hammer is sometimes described as a smaller version of a *maul of the titans*. It is a large-headed hammer with a 2' long handle. The hammer's head slopes down to a point on one side, and the hammer is not balanced for throwing.

The *hammer of penetration* may be used one-handed in combat, and it does double normal hammer damage (4-10/2-8), plus a +3 bonus to hit and damage. When used two-handed on walls up to 2" thick, the hammer will have a chance of smashing through a hole in the door equal to double the wielder's chances to bend bars or lift gates. The hole will be large enough to allow a man-sized or smaller being to crawl through it without trouble. The pointed end of the hammer must be used to smash through wooden barriers.

Experience Point Value: 2,000

Gold Piece Sale Value: 20,000

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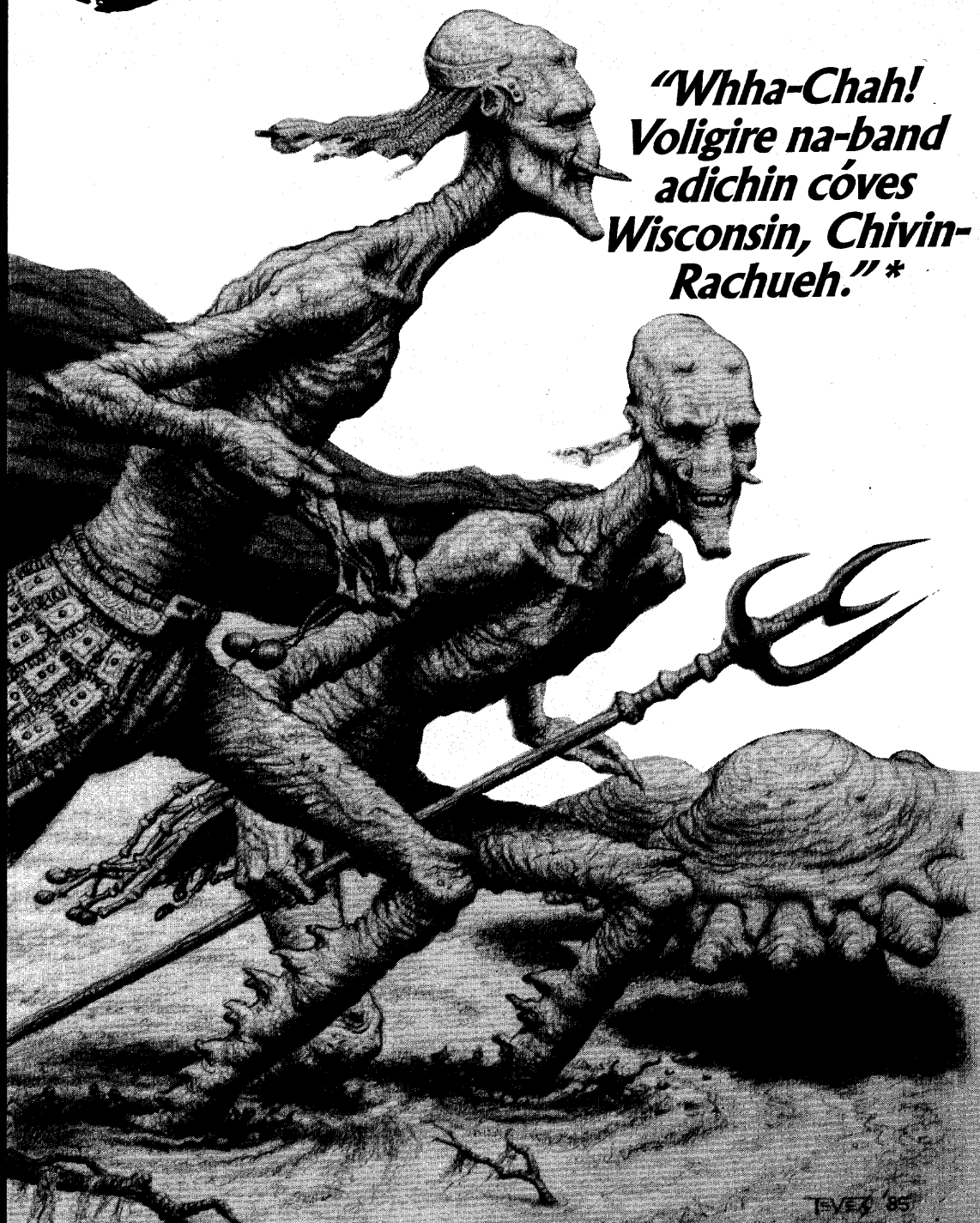
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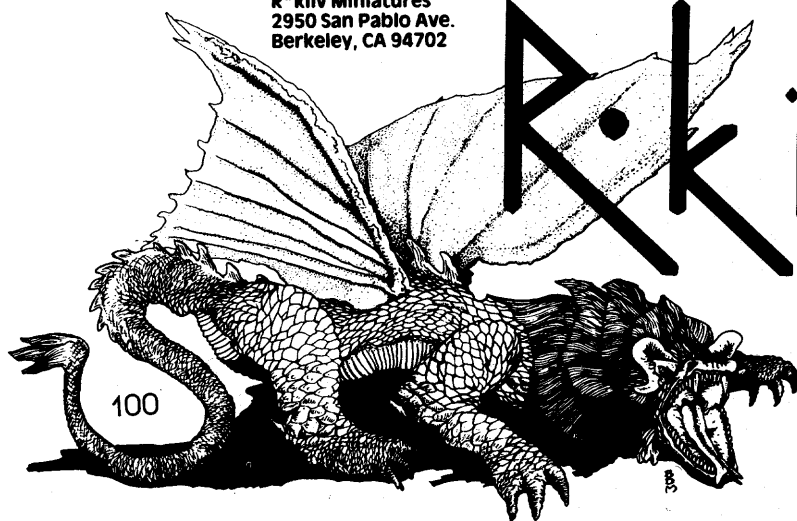
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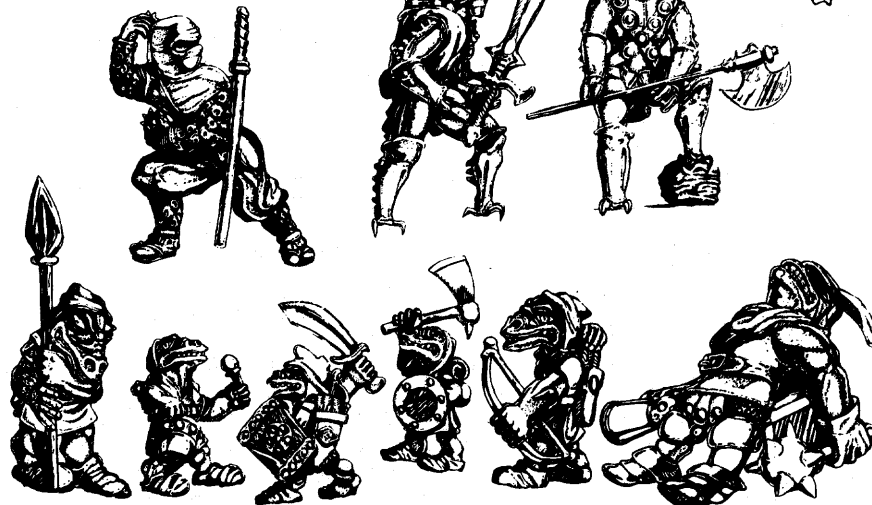
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# Authentic agencies, part III

## Pulling back the curtain on the KGB and others

by Merle and Jackie Rasmussen

This is the last in a series of articles presenting the TOP SECRET® game world's intelligence community. DRAGON® issue #93 described the game's fictitious spy agencies; issues 97 and 98 gave information on the American and allied foreign espionage organizations, respectively. This month's edition presents the Communist spy organizations (including the infamous KGB). It also gives a little more information on agencies described earlier, new agencies, and spy agencies in general.

Though these agencies exist in the real world, they are given here only as constructs for the TOP SECRET game world. Some of the statistics given below for these agencies are reasonably accurate and are taken from publicly available information, but some of the statistics were invented for the sake of completeness, and some have been altered to conform to the specific background and nature of the TOP SECRET game world.

Information about these agencies, as with the previous articles, is presented in several categories defined below. It is assumed that this information is commonly available to player character agents and to the general public, though the agents might be given additional information that is not public knowledge, during the course of a game campaign.

*Nature of agency:* The basic nature of the organization.

*Governing body:* The governing body of most intelligence organizations are national governments. The control for government agencies is the government official to whom the chief of the agency reports. Non-government organizations may have a short description of their group listed here.

*Personnel:* The estimated size of agency staffs based on public sources. Comparisons show the relative size and activity of various agencies.

*Annual budget:* The U.S. dollar figures shown are estimates based on public sources. Comparisons show the relative size and activity of various agencies.

*HQ:* The main headquarters for agency operations.

*Established:* The date the agency was founded.

*Activities:* Domestic counterintelligence means that the agency is responsible for counterespionage inside the borders of its own country. Foreign counterintelligence means that the agency has responsible for counterespionage outside the borders of its own country.

*Policies:* Several of the major laws and philosophies of the organization.

*Objectives:* The major goals of the organization.

*Areas of involvement:* The places in which the agency is known to operate or exercise jurisdiction.

*Allies:* Agencies often share intelligence data formally and informally with one another, when it suits them to do so. Associated agencies do not necessarily share intelligence because of publicly recognized treaties.

*Additional data:* More information on agency structure, operations, covers, and past history is given here.

*Bureaus:* If the word "All" is present, the following TOP SECRET game bureaus may be active within a particular agency: Administration, Investigation, Confiscation, Technical, Operations, and Assassination. (See DRAGON issue #82, "New avenues for agents," for an explanation of the newest bureaus.) The KGB is the Administration Bureau for the intelligence agencies of the Warsaw Pact nations.

*Alignment profile:* An agent trained by a particular intelligence agency will very often develop political opinions that are shared by a majority of fellow agents in the organization. The range of personal opinions an agent has relating to political systems, political change, and economic systems are called his alignment profile. The TOP SECRET alignment system was detailed in DRAGON issue #93, in "Agencies and Alignments" (p. 34).

For further details about the KGB, GRU, and the Hungarian AVB, see p. 32 of module TS 004, *Operation: Fastpass*.

### Warsaw Pact

*Nature of agency:* International Communist mutual defensive alliance

*Governing body:* Member nations (under Soviet control)

*Personnel:* Varies

*Annual budget:* Varies

*HQ:* None

*Established:* 1955

*Activities:* Military and naval defensive alliance

*Policies:* An attack upon one member is regarded as an attack on all members.

*Objectives:* The Warsaw Pact is the Communist equivalent of NATO. It seeks to defend the Eastern-bloc portion of Europe and Asia from attack.

*Areas of involvement:* All member countries

*Allies:* Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, E. Germany (Democratic Republic of Germany), Hungary, Poland, Rumania, and the U.S.S.R.

*Additional data:* Albania, a signatory member, was barred from meetings in 1962 and withdrew from the Pact in 1968, following ideological differences with other member nations.

*Bureaus:* All

*Alignment profile:* 20-94/07-94/20-94

### Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (KGB, Committee for State Security)

*Nature of agency:* Principal Soviet intelligence service in charge of internal security and external espionage

*Governing body:* Politburo, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

*Personnel:* 400,000-500,000 directly (this includes 25,000- 100,000 assigned to foreign intelligence and counterintelligence, 300,000 troops and guards, and 100,000 administrative personnel)

*Annual budget:* Unknown, even in U.S.S.R.

*HQ:* 2 Dzerzhinsky Square, Moscow, U.S.S.R.

*Established:* 1954

*Activities:* Military and strategic intelligence; electronic intercept; domestic and foreign counterintelligence

*Policies:* The KGB heads the system of state security organs, and it also includes border troops, military counterintelligence, and other institutions such as labor camp guards.

*Objectives:* The KGB combats espionage, terrorism, sabotage, and subversive propaganda of the so-called imperialist states and foreign anti-Soviet centers. It insures the security of the state boundaries of the U.S.S.R., investigates crimes aimed at subverting and weakening the Soviet State and social order, and participates in the development of statewide measures to ensure the state security of the country. The KGB conducts indoctrinational-preventative work to thwart actions aimed at undermining the state and social order of the U.S.S.R.

*Areas of involvement:* Worldwide, particularly within the U.S.S.R. and its satellites, U.S.A., Canada, Latin America, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia, West Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland, China, Vietnam, North Korea, Japan, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, the Arab nations, Yugoslavia,

Turkey, Greece, Iran, Afghanistan, Albania, the English-speaking nations of Africa, and the French-speaking nations of Africa

*Allies:* GRU, DGI, and intelligence agencies of the Warsaw Pact nations.

*Additional data:* The KGB is recognized as the world's largest intelligence organization. Its agents excel in human intelligence (HUMINT). KGB agents infiltrate most Soviet institutions, including the GRU.

*Bureaus:* All. The KGB is the Administration Bureau for the intelligence agencies of all Warsaw Pact nations.

*Alignment profile:* 20-94/07-94/20-00

### **Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravleniye (GRU, Chief Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet General Staff)**

*Nature of agency:* Soviet military intelligence service

*Governing body:* Ministry of Defense, U.S.S.R.

*Personnel:* 25,000

*Annual budget:* Unknown, even in the U.S.S.R., but much less than is given to the KGB

*HQ:* Moscow, U.S.S.R.

*Established:* 1920

*Activities:* Military intelligence, electronic intercept, industrial espionage, and guerrilla warfare

*Policies:* The GRU maintains its own schools, offices in Soviet embassies, operations, and communications channels. Most Soviet military attaches are GRU agents.

*Objectives:* To serve as an independent source of overall foreign intelligence for the General Staff

*Areas of involvement:* Worldwide, via a network of agents directed by Soviet military attaches abroad and from the intelligence staffs of the Soviet Army, Navy, and Air Force

*Allies:* KGB

*Additional data:* The GRU is considered by some to be a subsidiary of the KGB. An intense rivalry exists between agents of the KGB and the GRU.

*Bureaus:* All

*Alignment profile:* 20-94/07-00/20-94

### **Central Control of Information**

*Nature of agency:* Communist China's secret service

*Governing body:* Social Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, People's Republic of China

*Personnel:* 10,000,000 (estimated)

*Annual budget:* \$12.3 billion

*HQ:* 15 Bow Street Alley, Beijing (Peking), P.R.C.

*Established:* Unknown, possibly millennia old; probably the most ancient of all intelligence agencies

*Activities:* Military and strategic intelligence; electronic intercept; and, domestic and foreign counterintelligence

*Policies:* The Central Control of Information concentrates more upon maintaining internal security than upon spying against foreign targets.

*Objectives:* To obtain free military and technical intelligence from industrialized nations of the world through overt, not covert, means

*Areas of involvement:* Worldwide, through journalists, business people, military delegations, and students (especially in the U.S.A., Europe, and Japan)

*Allies:* An information alliance exists with the U.S.A., through weak oral and written recognition of mutual strategic interests (i.e., watching the Soviets).

*Additional data:* The Communist Chinese intelligence service is ancient and massive. It is organized as one of 13 secret departments among 30 operated by the Central Committee. There are four major units: those of the Chinese Communist Party, the foreign office (Central External Liaison Department), the defense ministry (Military Intelligence Department of the General Staff), and the State Council (government). Each unit not only performs intelligence functions but checks on the others as well.

In 1980, the United States and China set up a jointly operated listening post in the mountainous Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of western China. This post monitors Soviet nuclear missile test flights along the Sino-Soviet border. The Social Affairs Department is similar to the Soviet KGB in its attempts to exercise overall control of intelligence received by the politburo. The size of the CCI reflects the large number of "unofficial" agents throughout China who turn in intelligence data to the agency regularly.

*Bureaus:* All

*Alignment profile:* 20-94/01-94/20-00

### **State Secret Security (STB)**

*Nature of agency:* Czechoslovakian security service and secret police

*Governing body:* Minister of the Interior, Czechoslovakia

*Personnel:* 52,000

*Annual budget:* \$950 million

*HQ:* Prague, Czechoslovakia

*Established:* 1948

*Activities:* Military and strategic intelligence; electronic intercept; and, domestic and foreign counterintelligence

*Policies:* To guard the borders, watch for foreign subversion, prevent civil disorder, and cooperate with the KGB

*Objectives:* To teach sabotage, weapons use, electronic telecommunications, and urban guerrilla tactics to terrorists

*Areas of involvement:* Czechoslovakia

*Allies:* KGB

*Additional data:* The KGB set up a terrorist training camp for novice terrorists in Karlovy Vary. Top foreign terrorists from Europe and the Third World are trained at a GRU parachute camp in the middle of a 2,000 acre forest, only 30 miles south of Karlovy Vary. The latter camp is called Doupov.

*Bureaus:* Investigation, Confiscation, Technical, Operations, and Assassination

*Alignment profile:* 20-94/07-94/20-94

### **Staatssicherheitsdienst**

#### **(SSD, Ministry for Security and Intelligence)**

*Nature of agency:* East German security and intelligence service, and secret police

*Governing body:* Politburo, Democratic Republic of Germany (DDR, East Germany)

*Personnel:* 57,000

*Annual budget:* \$1 billion

*HQ:* East Berlin, DDR

*Established:* 1953

*Activities:* Military, economic, political, and strategic intelligence; electronic intercept; and, domestic and foreign counterintelligence

*Policies:* To guard the borders, watch for foreign subversion, prevent civil disorder, and cooperate with the KGB

*Objectives:* To provide terrorists with instant sanctuary, false documents, money, paramilitary training, protected entrance and exit routes in and out of the country, and weapons

*Areas of involvement:* West Germany and Third World nations in Africa and Latin America

*Allies:* KGB

*Additional data:* The SSD is the most efficient of the Warsaw Pact intelligence agencies, and it is part of the Ministerium fur Staatssicherheit (MfS, Ministry for State Security), also founded in 1953.

East Germany's Verwaltung fur Koordination (VfK, Administration for Coordination) is in charge of East German military intelligence. Part of the VfK's list of tasks is to secure information concerning military matters in general, military policy, and armaments. The 400 officers, NCOs, and enlisted personnel belonging to the VfK's directing staff are influenced by Soviet advisors. The VfK works closely with the Independent Department of the Political Administration of the National People's Army. The VfK's alignment profile is 20-94/07-94/20-94.

*Bureaus:* Investigation, Confiscation, Technical, Operations, and Assassination

*Alignment profile:* 07-81/07-94/20-94

### **Allami Vedelmi Batosag**

#### **(AVB, State Security Guard)**

*Nature of agency:* Hungarian security service and secret police

*Governing body:* Hungary

*Personnel:* 36,000

*Annual budget:* \$800 million

*HQ:* Budapest, Hungary

*Established:* 1948

*Activities:* Military and strategic intelligence; electronic intercept; domestic and foreign counterintelligence

*Policies:* To guard the borders, watch for foreign subversion, prevent civil disorder, and cooperate with the KGB

*Objectives:* To provide terrorists with weapons and training

*Areas of involvement:* Hungary

*Allies:* KGB

*Additional data:* See module TS 004, *Operation : Fastpass*, for more information.

*Bureaus:* Investigation, Confiscation, Technical, Operations, Assassination  
*Alignment profile:* 20-94/07-94/20-94

#### **Durzhavna Sigurnost (DS)**

*Nature of agency:* Bulgarian security service and secret police

*Governing body:* Interior Minister, Bulgaria

*Personnel:* 30,000

*Annual budget:* \$750,000

*HQ:* On General Gurko Street, Sofia, Bulgaria

*Established:* 1947

*Activities:* Military and strategic intelligence; electronic intercept; domestic and foreign counterintelligence

*Policies:* To guard the borders, watch for foreign subversion, prevent civil disorder, and cooperate with the KGB

*Objectives:* To smuggle weapons, sell and ship arms, train guerrillas, and perform coups and assassinations.

*Areas of involvement:* Bulgaria

*Allies:* KGB

*Additional data:* The loyal Bulgarian security service is closest to the KGB of any satellite spy agency, and it's also the most obedient.

The KGB runs a training camp for foreigners (disguised as a pig farm) near Birimirts, 7 miles north of Sofia.

*Bureaus:* Investigation, Confiscation, Technical, Operations, Assassination

*Alignment profile:* 20-94/07-94/20-00

#### **Direction Generale de Inteligencia**

**(DGI)**

*Nature of agency:* Cuban security service and secret police

*Governing body:* Cuba

*Personnel:* 34,000

*Annual budget:* \$775 million

*HQ:* Camp Matanzas, just outside Havana, Cuba

*Established:* 1968

*Activities:* Military and strategic intelligence; electronic intercept; domestic and foreign counterintelligence

*Policies:* To guard the borders, watch for foreign subversion, prevent civil disorder, and cooperate with the KGB

*Objectives:* To teach urban guerrilla tactics, automatic arms, plastic explosives, sabotage, mapmaking and map reading, photography, forgery, and disguise to revolutionary elements; and, to maintain close surveillance of United States personnel and operations at the U.S.-controlled Guantanamo Bay Naval Base

*Areas of involvement:* Cuba, U.S.A., and Third World nations in Latin America and Africa, especially in Angola, Central America, and the Caribbean Sea

*Allies:* KGB

*Additional data:* The DGI is under direct control of the Soviet Union in matters of assignments, missions, and training.

*Bureaus:* Investigation, Confiscation, Technical, Operations, Assassination

*Alignment profile:* 20-94/07-00/20-94

#### **MELT and SAVAK**

One (fictitious) TOP SECRET game organization not included in the article in DRAGON issue #93 was MELT, described below.

#### **Middle Eastern Liberation Tribunal (MELT)**

*Nature of agency:* Terrorist group

*Governing body:* Unknown individuals

*Personnel:* 50-100

*Annual budget:* Varies

*HQ:* Jidda, Saudi Arabia

*Established:* 1983

*Activities:* The skyjacking of aircraft and the sabotage of Western space vehicles and launch facilities

*Policies:* MELT terrorists, who consider themselves idealists, believe that money spent on space exploration should be spent on bringing food to the world's starving masses instead.

*Objectives:* To destroy Space Shuttle launch facilities and spacecraft

*Areas of involvement:* France, Mauritania, and the U.S.A. (Florida)

*Allies:* KGB

*Additional data:* MELT will assist the Soviets on missions they believe will advance their own objectives.

*Bureaus:* All

*Alignment profile:* 20-94/01-06/82-00

Another agency that should be noted is

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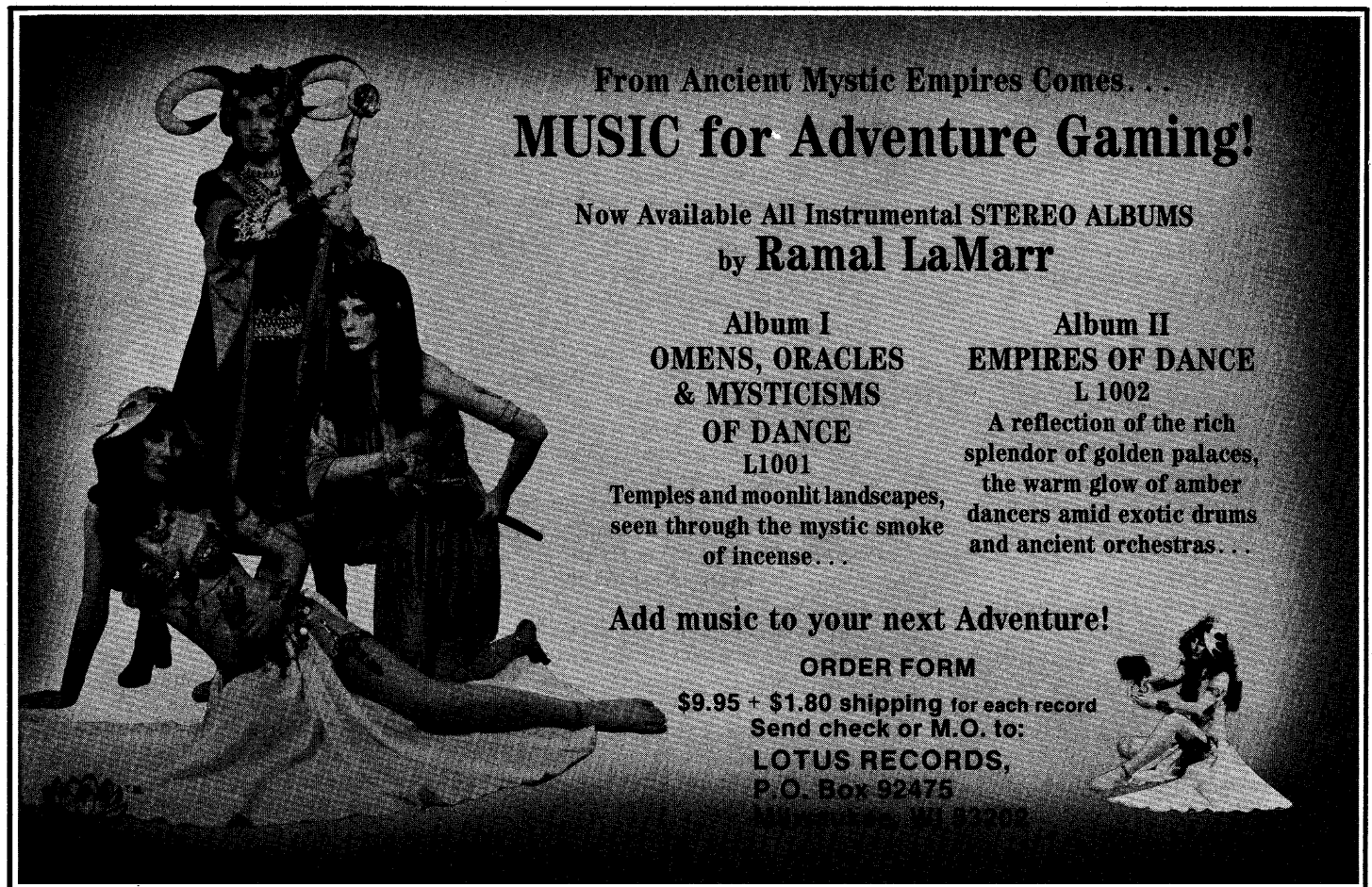
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SAVAK, the (presumed to be) extinct Iranian secret police agency which held power under the Shah of Iran before his overthrow. However, it is conceivable that SAVAK, or a portion of it, survived the 1979 revolution, and that it continues to serve the government of the Ayatollah Khomeini as it once served the Shah. The TOP SECRET game world assumes that this is so, and that SAVAK (or its immediate descendant) continues to exist.

**National Intelligence and Security  
Organization of Iran (SAVAK)**

- Nature of agency:* Iranian secret police force
- Governing body:* The government of Iran
- Personnel:* 40,000
- Annual budget:* \$850 million
- HQ:* Teheran, Iran
- Established:* 1939 (under the Shah; current form began 1979)
- Activities:* Internal security and foreign counterintelligence
- Policies:* SAVAK was formerly known for its use of extreme violence and torture. The current version of the Iranian secret police is scarcely less dangerous, being further motivated by religious intolerance and extreme paranoia.
- Objectives:* To maintain control of the Iranian republic through the government of the Ayatollah Khomeini
- Areas of involvement:* Mostly inside Iran, though agents have been known to exist in the U.S.S.R., Afghanistan, Israel and its neighboring states, and (especially) in Iraq
- Allies:* The intelligence services of most Arab nations
- Additional data:* The war with Iraq, the conflict in Afghanistan, the existence of Israel, the threat of Soviet invasion, the hatred of Americans, and boiling internal difficulties (including assassinations and terrorist attacks on Iranian government officials) have preoccupied SAVAK's activities. The name SAVAK is an acronym of Persian words. It is without doubt the most dreaded secret police force in the Moslem Middle East.
- Bureaus:* All
- Alignment profile:* 20-81/07-00/20-81

**The rest of the world**

Western intelligence agencies share roughly similar security classifications. The different levels of such classifications are shown in the table below. Increasing levels of secrecy progress from left to right.

NATO (English)	NATO Restricted	NATO Confidential	NATO Secret	Cosmic Top Secret
U.S.A. (English)	none	Confidential	Secret	Top Secret
U.K. (English)	Restricted	Confidential	Secret	Top Secret
F.R.G. (German)	VS — Nur Fur Den Dienstgebrauch	Vertraulich	Geheim	Streng Geheim
Belgium (French)	Deffusion Restreints	Confidentiel	Secret	Tres Secret
Belgium (Flemish)	Deperkte Verspriedlung	Vertrouwelijk	Geheim	Zeer Geheim

Two notes should be made concerning the "Authentic Agencies II" article in DRAGON issue #98. One addition to the description of the BfV is that any one of the state or local Offices for the Protection of the Constitution is called the Landesamt fur Verfassungsschutz (LfV). Also, a third South African agency exists: the South African Defense Force (SADF), which is composed of the Army, Air Force, and Navy of that country. SADF is responsible for external intelligence-gathering and espionage. SADF's alignment profile is 20-94/20-94/20-81.

The spy agencies of the rest of the world are of much lesser power and influence than those already described, but are worthy of mention. South Korea has a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which shares intelligence with the U.S.A., Japan, and Taiwan. South Korea's failure to become a fully democratic society has strained its relationship with the U.S.A., limiting the political intelligence that that country will share with Americans. The U.S.A. and South Korea have a "Combined Military Command" and generally share all military intelligence relating to South Korea's security.

The Taiwanese intelligence agency shares information with Japan, South Korea, Israel, and South Africa. Their agency's major espionage target is, of course, Communist China, but certain agents have also been sent to the U.S.A. to assassinate Taiwanese-Americans who speak out against the Taiwanese government. This agency's alignment profile is 01-19/07-94/01-81.

Not much is known about the Italian intelligence agencies. Their Office of Intelligence Coordination (abbreviated SID in Italian) was in an uproar recently following the arrest of high-level individuals who attempted to set up a right-wing state-within-a-state. The SID did assist in the rescue of Brigadier General James L. Dozier from Red Brigade terrorists, and it successfully detected a Soviet nuclear submarine and notified the Italian Navy, which chased it from Italian into international waters. The investigation into the Papal assassination attempt also involved Italian intelligence units. SID, the Italian counter-intelligence service, has an Alignment Profile of 01-19/07-94/07-81.

Small West European nations rely on their diplomats, military attaches, and NATO membership for necessary intelligence. Neutral Switzerland relies on its

excellent military intelligence services for military, political, and economic intelligence (plus counterespionage). Swiss military intelligence has an alignment profile of 20-94/20-94/20-81. Romania, exercising some freedom from the demands of the KGB, maintains relationships with Albania and Yugoslavia. Romanian intelligence has an alignment profile of 20-94/20-00/20-00. Yugoslavian intelligence has an alignment profile of 20-94/20-94/07-94. The remainder of the Warsaw Pact services give all their intelligence to the KGB or GRU and get little in return.

In the Far East, Mongolia is completely under Soviet control. North Korea, playing Russia against the Chinese, maintains intelligence relations with Iran and Libya through arms sales and training programs. Vietnam, dependent on Russia by choice, provides the Soviets with electronic intelligence facilities at Da Nang and landing rights for Soviet naval intelligence aircraft. These arrangements may change if Vietnam stops pursuing its conquest of Indochina and begins associating with ASEAN.

Non-aligned, emerging, Third World nations use the United Nations as a trading ground of information about neighbors in their region of the world. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have developed such an intelligence-sharing relationship. ASEAN began as an economic alliance and now shares many military and political secrets. The intelligence services of the Arab nations currently operate on a national basis; if they pooled their military intelligence, they would pose a serious threat to Israel.

In Africa, Libya supplies Soviet arms to whomever needs them, especially terrorists. Egypt and South Africa have the continent's most advanced intelligence agencies. Egypt, because of its peace treaty with Israel, is not well liked by other Arab nations and suffers internal strife. South Africa could share much intelligence with British and American sources if it would give up its apartheid practices; instead, it shares intelligence with other politically outcast nations such as Israel and Taiwan. Much of the rest of Africa lies starving and in chaos because of mismanagement by selfish leaders and meddling superpowers.

Just because a nation isn't as rich or as powerful as some of those described in the last few articles doesn't mean it can't have a spy agency of its own. As an example of the complexity of even a small intelligence system, such as those found in Central America, South America, and Africa, the Liberian system is explained below.

Liberia, unique for never having been a colony of a superpower, is surrounded by militarily stronger enemies. Sierra Leone is being assisted by the Cubans and Guinea by the Soviets. The Ivory Coast blames Liberia for the disappearance of their president's son-in-law during the 1980 coup that carried Samuel K. Doe to power. In 1983, a coup attempt was made to replace Doe with General Quiompka. The unsuccessful coup adds to the country's internal problems.





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This year, President Doe is to allow free elections in Liberia. He hopes to be re-elected.

An intelligence training team from the U.S.A. assisted in the development of a functional intelligence organization for the armed forces of Liberia. The Liberian intelligence community is divided into three parts: the National Security Agency (NSA), G2, and Brigade S2.

The NSA, mainly composed of personnel from the President's tribe, is supposed to be an external intelligence gathering organization but is instead used for gathering internal intelligence. The NSA provides personal presidential security and spies on individuals within the presidential hierarchy. Some NSA agents have dual roles as G2 person-

nel. The NSA and G2 receive more finances and better equipment than does Brigade S2.

G2, also largely composed of personnel from the president's tribe, is divided into two sections: administrations and operations. Operations is subdivided into four branches: interrogation, agent, order of battle, and liaison. G2 is primarily responsible for uncovering internal plots and assisting in criminal cases. G2 personnel have judicial jurisdiction over the Liberian people. The interrogators are involved in civil, criminal, military, and espionage matters.

Brigade S2, composed of personnel from a mixture of tribes, is used for gathering external intelligence and combat tactical intelligence. Its duties include reporting on external aggression (which is unlikely) and patrolling the borders. Brigade S2 receives the least amount of finances and resources.

The president uses infiltration on all levels of each intelligence agency to ensure that no one in any agency is building a power base which could overthrow him. The NSA and G2, concerned with internal security, are trying to bring General Quiompka, currently in the Ivory Coast, to justice.

Currently, no cross-indexed files are being kept, much less shared, between the various agencies. There is also no classification system to designate the sensitivity of certain information. Tribal affiliation alone gives an individual a "need to know," which hardly limits access.

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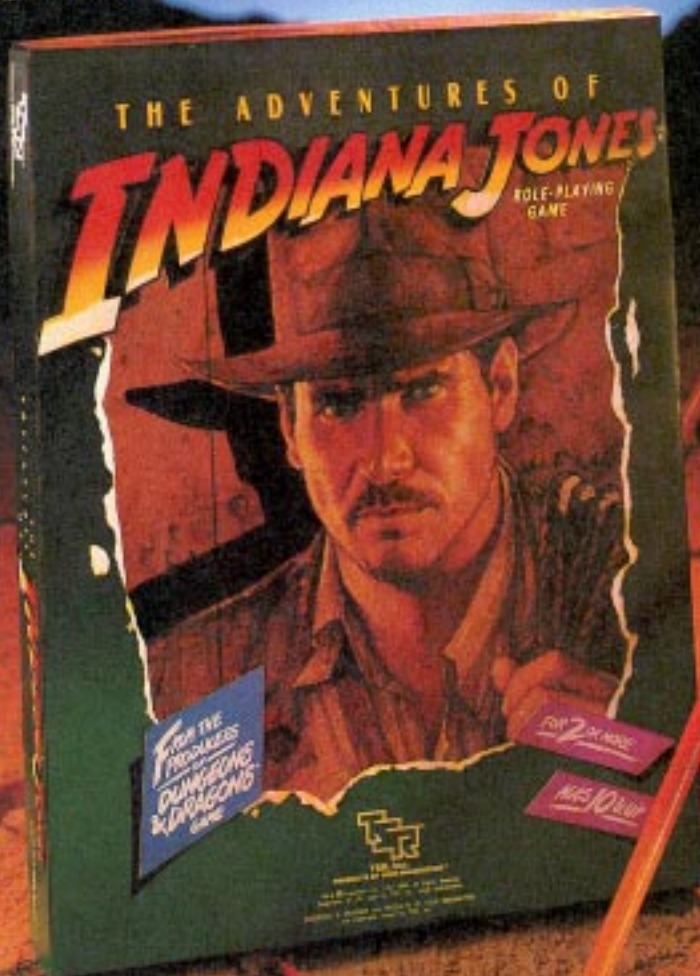
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## NIGHTFALL IN THE MOUNTAINS

was like nightfall in the city for Dennim. Shadows — home — grew and prospered; darkness, which blinded others, keened his eyes and ears as nothing else could. The sounds were different, to be sure, but

hearing a centurion sneak from behind was almost the same as hearing a cat poise to attack. And the awesome mountains of Kenna held something that had eluded Dennim for all of his life in the city: everlasting treasure.

Dennim was a hobgoblin and a thief, and both identities had caused him discomfort many times. In the villages at the foot of Kenna's mountains, a child of mountain goblin and lowland human was neither as unusual nor as humiliated as in the larger city. But justice against an apprehended thief in Montgate and other small villages was swift and brutal, far worse than the labors and imprisonment issued in Kenna City. There was a best and worst in both places, just as there was Whitefire and Darkfire. The best in Kenna City were those shadowy streets and questionable taverns, where a half-man might be welcome and a thief could earn a living. The best in Montgate and the villages were these nearby mountains and the secrets that they hid.

The jagged opening in the mountain face was exactly where the map Dennim had memorized had indicated it would be. It was a tall, man-sized, but cleverly concealed entrance. From his pack, Dennim pulled out some of the corn ears which he had stolen in Montgate for luck. He arranged these ears in a tottering pile at the cave entrance. On top of the pile of corn, he balanced rocks and a few coins. Anyone or thing following him would topple the standing ears, and Dennim's sensitive hearing would pick up the noise. This done, he crept inside.

The map, which Dennim had stolen in Kenna City, had recorded this place as a monastery, but it was like no monastery that he had ever seen. The jagged entrance widened into a full room, barely lit by the moon outside. Once inside, Dennim moved quickly to the right-hand wall, which was clammy and rough. Running water had probably carved out the cave, as it did not appear to be the work of man or tool. There were no torches, no offering fires. While there were dark forms scattered about this near part of the room, none of them resembled the shape of the traditional Whitefire vault that Dennim was here to loot.

He pulled an ear of corn from his pack and tossed it toward the dark center of the room. It landed with a quiet splash, which echoed to his goblin's ears but quickly ended. All was quiet again. He tossed another ear as far as he could into the darkness. It didn't land, or it landed on something soft, or it landed beyond his hearing range.

"Or," he whispered, "just to be paranoid, something caught it."

Dennim smiled and slid his dagger out of its scabbard. With a flick of his wrist he flipped the dagger

# Dennim and the Golem

by Robert S. Babcock

*Illustrations by Stephan Peregrine*



into the air, heard it spin, and caught it by the blade. The best smith in Kenna-City had made this knife, had formed it lightweight and streamlined for easy throwing. Of course, the smith hadn't made it for Dennim.

With his right hand, Dennim withdrew yet another ear of corn from his pack and tossed it in the same direction as he had the last, but only half as hard. It landed on stone, at floor level. He threw another ear in this same direction, harder than the last one, but softer than the first. It also hit rock, probably floor. The room was very deep.

Dennim turned his attention to the opposite wall, made visible only by the moonlight which filtered into the room. There were several large shadows and shapes against that wall. Though this was the wrong place for a vault, it was just right for an ambush. The next ear he threw found wall. The one after also hit stone, but was followed by the sound of claws scampering across stone and a sharp, squeaking noise. Rodent? Or small cat?

Maybe.

Dagger-arm poised, Dennim crept past the moonlit entrance, his small, crouched form briefly silhouetted onto the rocky floor. One by one, the shapes and shadows by the wall became distinguishable to Dennim's eyes. A stalagmite, nothing above it. A waist-high slab of rock. A sculpted metal foot.

Dennim leapt backwards and nearly hurled his dagger. The foot was metal, shiny, and there was no sign of rust or scratches on any part that Dennim could see. And it was more than just a foot. As he let his attention focus on a wider area, Dennim saw that it was a statue, taller by far than he, but in proportion, squat, and powerful-looking. "And ugly," he murmured, gazing up at the too-wide, too-shallow, not quite mannish face.

Who would sculpt a statue of metal, since the material had so many better uses? Certainly not Whitefire monks, who preached Rikmon's pragmatism and conservation. Moreover, who *could* build it? Dennim straightened from his crouch, curious rather than cautious, flipping his dagger once into the air and catching it by the hilt. No seams, he noticed, no rivets nor forge marks. He tapped the statue with the hilt of his dagger. As no echo sounded, it was either very thick or not hollow. He scratched it with the blade, but it wasn't metal flaked over stone, either.

"Rikmon's fire, you are ugly!" Dennim breathed, flipping the dagger back into its throwing position. He spoke in the sing-song doggerel of outcast hobgoblin society. "But you're too big to carry and too strange to sell, so what good are you? And why in Whitefire are you in this butt-backwards monastery?"

The statue's leg swung forward at the knee and kicked Dennim across the cave floor. He landed hard, unprepared. He ached in the belly, where it had kicked him; he hurt in his leg, where he had landed. Without thinking, he sprang to his knees and hurled his dagger with deadly accuracy.

The giant, moon-gleaming arm swung forward.

Stubby fingers flexed and delicately, ever so precisely, caught Dennim's dagger between metal thumb and forefinger.

Dennim stared, his jaw hanging to his chest. It had moved so quickly, and it had changed so much. It glowed now, not with moonlight, but from some inner source. Where once it had been dull and lifeless, it now had the sheen of a centurion's steel sword. It was fully alive, moving effortlessly and as nimbly as Dennim himself, and it moved toward him. Dennim's knife dangled between two shiny, stubby fingers.

Dennim retreated desperately. The thing made no noise as it walked and still showed neither seams nor joints where it might be vulnerable. It moved as effortlessly as a human, though it was made of more metal than existed in all of Montgate. What could he do? Throw corn ears at it? He was dead. It would surely crush him.

It leaned forward at the waist and, with a long powerful arm, held out Dennim's dagger. It also stopped, and Dennim let himself breathe again. The thing's eyes began to glow. They didn't open, for they were not eyes. They glowed, grew intense as the light of a just-lit candle grows intense. Dennim felt that the thing was looking at him.

It turned its outstretched arm and rotated its big hand in such a way that the hand's palm was held open. Dennim's dagger fell across the metal palm. It was handing Dennim his dagger. *Very* hesitantly, open-mouthed, he reached out and took the knife. The metal statue straightened to its full height and did not move.

Dennim took one step backward and found wall. Water dripped off the rock and down his back, but he barely noticed it. The thing's eyes glowed stronger, and they lit the room so that what had been shadow was clear and what had been dark was shadow. Dennim allowed himself a quick look around, but standing as he was in the focus of the new light, he wished the statue would close its eyes.

The cave was perhaps thirty yards long, compared to but ten or so feet wide. There were strange stone statues and unfamiliar altars spread throughout the deep room, but not patterned in a way similar to Whitefire monasteries. Just the opposite, in fact, and Dennim suddenly realized how stupid he'd been. Of course this was nothing like a Whitefire room! This was just the opposite; it was not Whitefire, but Darkfire. Not Rikmon's house, but T'oori's, evil, Lost. And this — Dennim glanced back at the huge statue in front of him — was Lost T'oori magic!

"Very good," a voice called from deeper within the cavern, "Dennim." At the sound of his name, Dennim turned from the statue. A figure in dark robes stood beside a long flat stone perhaps halfway down the cavern. "And your next thought, thief, is that there are riches to be taken here." The figure stepped onto the stone. "There are, and I have taken them. Come here."

Dennim's mind raced. He stepped around the huge statue and walked slowly toward the new figure, absently palming his dagger as he walked. The thing

with the glowing eyes followed him. The figure ahead had known his thoughts — more Lost T'oori — and probably knew them now as well. There was little that Dennim could do. Thinking not to think something was as good, or as bad now, as thinking it in the first place. He struggled to remember his Whitefire upbringing.

T'oori the Enslaver, master of Rikmon and Rikmon's wife Katelin and of the pantheon of Landsman, Spain and Linares. Rikmon had fought T'oori, the wicked enslaver who had a thousand eyes and arms. Their battle had been so fierce that from it had burst forth the sun and life on Kenna and the other islands. As Rikmon had fought with his blade and his heart, T'oori had held his evil magic in each of his thousand hands.

"The fiercer Rikmon fought," the dark figure called, "the more he injured T'oori. He cut off arms with his sword, yet as each arm fell to the world, so did a piece of Lost T'oori magic."

Dennim looked behind him. The statue was still there. As he kept moving, so did it. "Rikmon won," he said as defiantly as he could. "T'oori is Lost, while Rikmon is in God-Heaven, watching over the children he freed."

"And the magic?" the figure asked. "What of it, Dennim?"

"Lost as well, but lost in the many corners of the world."

"Found now, goblin! Found by me, and found by my brethren of the Darkfire! I have it. I have the power of Lost T'oori!"

Dennim glanced quickly behind him. The statue showed no change, "The hands of T'oori still clench Lost T'oori magic," he quoted.

"More Whitefire lies!" the figure shouted, his voice echoing through the cavern.

The figure was more in focus now, faceless still, but more detailed. In his hands he held two dowel-shaped objects. Wands? The source of his —?

"I possess T'oori magic, thief. This" — he raised his right hand — "renders me invisible to any whom I wish not to see me. And this . . . this tells me your thoughts, goblin." When Dennim stopped walking, so did the statue. The man — it was a man beneath that hooded robe — was about fifteen feet away. "But I am not alone in my magic, Dennim. You, you too, have an arm of Lost T'oori."

The man's face was visible beneath the hood, an old grey face lined with zealous fire, Darkfire. The man's brows tightened over his hawk's nose, and Dennim did

not need T'oori magic to know that whatever was upcoming was important.

"What did you say that brought the T'oori golem to life, Dennim? What were your words, exactly?"

Dennim smiled in spite of himself. He couldn't know, of course, because if he knew the Darkfire priest would have read his thoughts and known, too. The priest nodded unhappily as if to confirm this. "It must have been an unconscious, unthinking slip of the tongue," the old man growled. "A saying, perhaps, or an oath. Something you say often that cursedly sounds like the Lost T'oori commands which activate and control the golem."

Dennim fought against thinking over his collection of oaths and exclamations. He was not sure that he



succeeded — can one truly know all of the thoughts running through the mind? — but the priest did not seem satisfied, so Dennim had done something correct. "I say many things," he said truthfully, "without thinking about them first. It is my nature."

"And you say much in that damned doggerel tongue," the priest snarled, reading Dennim's next thought, "which I neither know nor can pronounce." The black-garbed figure seated himself upon the stone in one graceful motion, legs crossing effortlessly beneath him. "Very well, I have time and I will know the secret commands of the golem. Speak for me, Dennim. Speak for me in doggerel, if you like. Call me slime or toad, whatever you wish. I want to see what effect it has upon our friend behind you."

Dennim was curious, too, about many things. His mind raced once more, but this time with doggerel thoughts of the hobgoblin societies of Kenna City. He had to be careful, he realized, for so many of the thoughts and ideas were expressed in little more than bastardized human words. But his goblin father's heritage, whatever it was, flowed in Dennim's blood and occupied some part of his mind as well. Doggerel owed

some of its existence to the hobgoblins who had grown in the company and with the language of goblinkind.

"Darkfire priest," he said in doggerel, "you are T'oori's own private parts, shriveled and useless as T'oori himself."

They both waited a moment, but for different things. The priest's dark eyes looked past Dennim to the golem. "Nothing," he said. "Try again. Something: that you say frequently."

Dennim thought of vivid goblin tortures to which he would subject the priest. He thought of methods and techniques of violence that only a goblin or hobgoblin could possibly conceive. He colored his thoughts as graphically as he could, so that anyone sharing his thoughts would wince, if not cry out in pain. Aloud, he spoke in human tongue. "Lost T'oori's eyes."

"A common enough exclamation," the priest agreed calmly, "but one I've tried many times." Dennim thought he saw the man flash a smile. "And Dennim, the tortures of your father's race pale in comparison with the rites and practices of Darkfire. Think hard, thief; what did you say when you first saw the golem?"

Well, that was that. Dennim slumped back against the metal golem. Either the priest had lied when he said that he could not understand hobgoblin doggerel, or thoughts were thoughts, regardless of one's race or spoken language. In either case, there was nothing that Dennim could do. The priest was in complete control.

"Dennim," the shadowy figure said, "we really are much alike, you and I. We live by our wits, we take from lesser people. We lie, cheat, steal — we are better than normal people, more deserving of the riches of the world.

"Dennim, you're a thief. Not a bad one, I gather. But think of how good you could be, of the things you could steal, if you were invisible to those you were stealing from! I'll give you this wand, Dennim, the wand and its secrets, if you can remember the secret of the golem." The priest's voice grew more soothing. "I'm Darkfire, Dennim, but I am a priest. There are holy things upon which I can swear that I will uphold my side of any bargain we strike."

It was not an idea that had not crossed Dennim's

mind. In fact, that was probably where the priest had gotten it — a point which disturbed Dennim considerably. Dennim was not Darkfire by any means, but neither was he Whitefire. Religious fires and other spiritual passions interfered with his independence. And what use had a thief for a lumbering golem that he only half understood anyway? The uses he could find for invisibility, however . . .

Another point that angered Dennim was the priest's offhanded description of him. He quite agreed with the man's account of his thieving abilities, but he preferred to think of himself as a loner, an independent being holding his own against a hostile society, rather than the selfish, insensitive, almost evil being which the priest had described.

"Stop deluding yourself, Dennim, and let's get on with it. I can read all the thoughts of our ilk, so there is no escape. Cooperate and I will make it worth your while, for you'll share my treasure. Choose not to, and I will destroy you."

Our ilk? Selfish and evil ilk, selfish and evil thoughts. That must be it: The priest could only read selfish and evil thoughts! Just as Lost T'oori's weakness had been all that was true and good, all that allowed Rikmon to win their battle, so was there such a weakness in this T'oori relic. Again, Dennim smiled.

"I never said that the wands were infallible, Dennim," the priest said, "but surely someone such as yourself would still want to be invisible in order to steal? What I offer is still a good bargain: the wand for the secret of the golem."

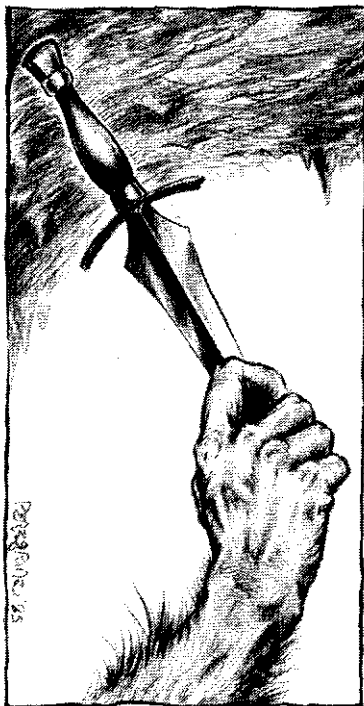
True, Dennim agreed. Considering his profession, he could think of a great many profitable uses for the wand. But what uses had the priest for the golem? This was not a harmless man who sat before Dennim. The priest had probably given the better years of his life to this cave, this monastery. For a reason, a goal. For a dream, and undoubtedly for not a very pleasant one.

The priest was going to kill him, Dennim realized. Even if by some wild chance, after days of trying, Dennim could remember the words which activated the metal golem, the priest was not going to let him live. Dennim did not want to die.

The man in the cloak said nothing, gave no reaction that Dennim could see. Perhaps for the first time he could not read the thief's thoughts. Dennim felt the cool metal of the dagger he'd palmed beneath his sleeve. Perhaps thoughts of survival were not selfish or evil and, thus, shielded from the wand. Perhaps.

Dennim raised his dagger-arm abruptly, flicking his wrist strongly upward as if tossing a card in a Kenna City tavern. His dagger flew straight, rising in a deadly and true path until it buried itself deep in the Darkfire priest's throat. The man gurgled once and fell back. Then a terrifying bolt of green light sprang forth from the priest's left hand and shattered a slab of rock that had rested behind the golem. Dennim whirled to see the results: a mistake. Sickly dark ooze slunk forth from the rubble and slithered quickly up the wall of the cavern, where it slurped into a crack in the roof.

"Lost T'oori spits," Dennim growled, already diving



to his right. A fiery green beam shot past him and brought rubble down from the far wall. *The problem with daggers, damn it, is that after you throw them they're gone!*

Dennim had more problems, he realized. Not only was the priest not dead yet, but the golem was no longer still. As Dennim had moved, so had the metal creature, not mimicking, but following him wherever he went. Now it stood towering over his crouched form. A green beam from the priest's hand struck the golem in the chest, which glowed green and sparkled orange momentarily before both colors vanished. The golem took another step toward Dennim.

Dennim rolled between its legs and to his feet, standing as close behind the golem's leg as he could without actually touching it. There was another burst of green and orange on the far side of the golem, but then silence loomed. Perhaps — Dennim was not fond of *perhaps's*. He crept from behind the golem and, hidden in the shadows created by the thing's glowing eyes, moved carefully to the cave wall. The golem cursedly followed him, a clear giveaway as to where the priest should fire.

But there were no more bursts of the priest's green beam. Dennim, pursued by the golem, moved forward cautiously. The golem with its eyes was like a beacon. Dennim kept low and spied the priest whose body was collapsed over the slab of stone. In one quick surge of speed, Dennim reached the slab. The golem lumbered behind. Dennim's dagger, bloodied, rested off to one side of the body. The priest had pulled it from his throat, but that might have been the last action the man ever took.

Dennim was a hobgoblin and a thief. His first identity had saved his life; his second might now make him rich. This narrow slab of stone, from where the priest never seemed to stray, must be the monastery's vault. In a Whitefire monastery, a vault contained the collected offerings of the fervent. Dennim hesitated only briefly before investigating the vault of the Darkfire cave.

His fingers found the lock, a camouflaged masterpiece. It barely rose from the smooth surface of the vault. No depression for a key existed, so there was probably a spring somewhere. Dare he test it normally? Dennim slid his pack off his back and removed the small metal pins and wedges that were the tools of his livelihood. He wanted to tap the vault, but was far too leery to do so unprotected. He backed up, bumping into the golem's leg.

This gave him a brilliant idea. He slid around the golem, and the creature slowly turned to *watch* him. Pressing himself against the golem's legs, Dennim reached his arms around one thick leg and tapped the side of the vault with an iron pick. He heard a small crack and what sounded like hail on a tin roof. After the sound stopped, he peered around the golem and found hundreds of tiny spikes littering the floor behind the golem. The golem's back and legs were unscarred.

With this kind of protection, Dennim had the lock

sprung and the vault open in no time. As he had suspected, the Darkfire priests took in very little compared to their Whitefire counterparts. All he found were a few coins and assorted stones, all of which he slipped into his pack. He stood and looked down at the slumped corpse of the priest. The two dowel-shaped sticks lay beside the body, and on one of its fingers was a large ring within which was set a sparkling green stone. Dennim very carefully put each of these objects into the hidden lining of his pack.

Darkfire priests wanted power, perhaps so they could rule all of Kenna. They studied long and hard to obtain this power, and they apparently did not value the coin of Kenna's races. The treasure which they lived and died for was Lost T'oori magic.

### **I T WAS A BUSY NIGHT AT THE GOLEM'S LAIR.**

The farmers of Montgate, at last through with the harvest, hurried to their favorite tavern for a tall mug of ale and a tender leg of game. The proprietor of The Golem's Lair, a hobgoblin like about half of his customers, watched happily as the coins crossed the counter. His business was a great success; customers came in now for the service and the ale as much as for the tavern's novelty. Dennim was far wealthier than he had ever been as a thief.

There had been no way in which Dennim could have continued in his former profession. No thief lurks well in the shadows when he is forever followed by a towering metal statue, and sneaking up on would-be pickpocket victims was out of the question. The two wands and the ring were as great a mystery to him now as they had been the many times he had tried them in the Darkfire monastery. There were reasons why it took Darkfire priests years of study and practice to attain their goals, and, having encountered such a priest, Dennim realized that he simply did not have the consuming fire or the endless patience to do the same. The Lost T'oori magic remained lost.

Despite his initial findings, there had been a fortune in the monastery, just as his map had promised. Dennim was the richest person residing in the area of Montgate and its numerous neighboring villages. None of it would have happened had he not ventured into the cave. He smiled at more customers who were coming through the door and puffed contentedly on his pipe. Then he leaned back against the golem's leg and wondered for the thousandth time how much money he could have stolen had he ever rendered himself invisible.



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# Ares™

**SCIENCE-FICTION  
GAMING SECTION**





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### ON THE COVER

Everyone knows about the Avengers™ and Alpha Flight™, but what about the Soviet Super Soldiers™? Jeff Grubb tells all in this month's Marvel®-Phile, p. 80. Cover art by the Marvel Bullpen.

The mail that the ARES™ Section receives every month can be categorized into several basic groups. Over half of it consists of suggestions for heroes that the MARVEL®-Phile can cover. Star-Questions keep coming. A smaller chunk of mail requests coverage of games by other companies, particularly the TRAVELLER®, CHAMPIONS™, and VILLAINS & VIGILANTES™ systems. And then there are the GAMMA WORLD® letters. . . .

Okay, folks, here's the bottom line. For the foreseeable future, TSR, Inc., will not be producing any more official GAMMA WORLD modules or accessories. It's obvious that many of you play and enjoy the game, and we have been getting many requests for things like a hardcover, advanced edition of the GAMMA WORLD rules. This isn't likely to happen yet.

Why not? I wish I could answer that, but I don't know the answer.

So, what can GAMMA WORLD fans do about it? Well, for one thing, you can write up your own articles for publication in the ARES Section. Try to imagine what new rules, new weapons, new items of equipment, and new mutations that you would like to see in something like an Advanced GAMMA WORLD game, then create the material yourself and send it in. That's what people have been doing for months now in the ARES Section.

What's planned for future ARES Sections on the game? Well, I'm putting together another ARES Section Special, composed of various weapons, vehicles, robots, and tools submitted by readers. A GAMMA WORLD module is not out of the question. We may have an article on the starship Warden before too long, as well as some information on the rest of the Solar System and on spacecraft in the game.

Beyond that — it's up to you.

*Roger E. Moore*

## ARES™ Section 99 THE SCIENCE-FICTION GAMING SECTION

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# Tanks a lot!

## Vehicle combat in STAR FRONTIERS® gaming

by Alex Curylo

Simba the Yazirian and Dandel the Dralasite crested the second-to-the-last dune before the Streel outpost — and almost bumped into a perimeter guard. Simba's sonic sword cut the man in half before he even raised his weapon.

"As I was saying," the unrattled Dandel continued, "the problem with this war is that it's boring. We watch Streel, they watch us, and occasionally somebody gets shot. What we need is some excitement. We need something like—"

Suddenly, the stutter of a machine gun sounded ahead. Simba and Dandel hurriedly climbed the last dune and unslung their magnigoggles. All was clear at the base, but a firefight was in progress along the base highway.

A hover transport with Streel markings was trying to reach the base as an Explorer with GTF insignia gained on it. A jet of oil splashed from the truck; the Explorer fishtailed through the slick, barely keeping control. Slowing down, the Explorer released a guided missile from its roof rack. The transport driver tried to dodge, but the missile hit and the truck rolled over twice under the blast, landing upright but flaming.

As the Explorer approached, one of the truck's turrets turned to face it. Fire from a heavy flamethrower licked over the Explorer's roof, setting off the three

remaining guided missiles in a red ball of fire and light.

"Now that," said Simba, "is exciting!"

The STAR FRONTIERS® combat rules are excellent, but some areas were omitted — the most unfortunate omission being vehicle-mounted weapons and armor. Armed and armored vehicles would be used extensively by the Frontier mega-corps, Star Law and other law-enforcement agencies, explorers of planets with hostile native life, and those earning a living by illegal means. Since these categories include virtually all player characters, the need for vehicle combat rules is obvious. This article attempts to rectify that problem.

### Defenses

The basic vehicle defense is armor. Its effectiveness depends on its composition, method of fabrication, location, thickness, and angle of slope. For the game, all these considerations (as well as details like bulletproof windshields and wheelguards) are neatly integrated into *coats of armor*. Each coat provides a -2 modifier when rolling on the appropriate Vehicle Damage Table (Expanded Game Rules book, pp. 32-33). Every 5 coats will reduce crash injuries to occupants by -1 point per die. The cost per coat and the maximum coats applicable vary for each vehicle type; these are

noted on the Vehicle Table below. Also noted (after the slash) are the number of coats that are concealable (i.e., that an observer will not notice as armor on the vehicle). Likewise, the price after the slash is the price for a concealed coat.

A vehicle can be painted with reflective paint. This costs the same as an armor coat and provides an additional modifier of -10 from vehicle damage rolls due to laser attacks. Note that these coats are not concealable.

A defensive screen can also be added to a vehicle. There are two types of vehicle screens:

*Albedo*: This screen uses 1 SEU per minute of operation, and it absorbs all laser damage at a cost of 2 SEU per die of damage absorbed.

*Inertia*: This screen uses 1 SEU per minute of operation, and it reflects half the dice of damage done by ballistic attacks (and crashes) at a cost of 1 SEU per die of damage reflected.

Example: A hovercar and a jetcopter are slugging it out. The car's universal turret fires a heavy laser (set at 20d10 damage) straight up and hits the jetcopter. The jetcopter's albedo screen absorbs it at a cost of 40 SEU. The jetcopter then drops a heavy bomb (50d10 damage) which hits the car. The hovercar's inertia screen reflects half the dice (25) at a cost of 25 SEU. Its driver now rolls on the Damage Table with a +25 on the dice.

Power screens are powered by the power econopack — 250 SEU, 25 kg, 1250 Credits; 4 weapons adapters, 1 screen adapter, 5 miscellaneous adapters. The cost for a screen varies with the size of the vehicle, as shown on the Vehicle Table.

### Weapons

Many new weapons are available to mount on vehicles, as detailed on the Weapon Table below. All headings are the same as found in Expanded Game Rules statistics (p. 271, save for spaces and *mounting fee*, described below.

*Spaces*: Each vehicle's capacity to carry weapons is rated in spaces, as shown on the Vehicle Table. All weapons mounted in the vehicle's body or in turrets have their space rating subtracted from this number. When a vehicle's rating reaches 0, no more mounted weapons can be added to it.

*Mounting fee*: This is the cost to mount this weapon on a vehicle. All mounts are recessed, and it must be decided when mounting whether a





weapon faces the front, back, right, or left side of a vehicle.

Descriptions and notes for these weapons are presented below.

**Portable weapons:** These include heavy lasers (HL), machine guns (MG), recoilless rifles (RR), and rocket launchers (RL). They can also be mounted on a post or swivel mount; this only costs 150 Credits, but these weapons cannot be fired by a gunner inside the vehicle. Normal ranged combat is used if somebody hangs from a hatch to use one of these, but anybody doing that and wearing a screen will interfere with the vehicle's defensive screen (if any). Post-mounted weapons are not charged against the vehicle's space total — but reasonable limits should be placed on this by the referee.

**Flamethrowers:** These were omitted from the rules. The version here is the one-man backpack sort. Vehicle-mounted versions should not face the front of the vehicle. If fired while the vehicle is traveling faster than 40 meters/turn, the flamethrower will subject the vehicle to an attack from its own flame.

**Vehicle MG:** A larger calibre (12.7 mm) weapon with a greater muzzle velocity than a portable MG. Baffles surround its barrel so that the muzzle flash is not visible at night.

**Vehicle RR:** This is similar to the version in the Expanded Game Rules book, but it has a larger calibre.

**Vehicle RL:** This uses longer, larger rockets than the Expanded Game Rules version. Note the different rocket calibres; one vehicle RL cannot fire both. Also note that in jetcopter and aircar weapon pods, the rockets are each mounted in a separate tube; any number of rockets may be fired in a single turn.

**Vehicle HL:** Lacking a clear prototype, the heavy laser statistics were designed to keep it competitive with other weap-

ons. It runs off the same powerpack as screens.

**Vehicle FT:** The tank version. Remember the caveat above about front-mounting flamethrowers.

**Cannon:** This is your basic 30 mm cannon.

**Howitzer:** This tank weapon is included for the sake of sheer overkill.

**Guided missiles:** GM platforms come in four sizes. The smallest holds 1 missile, takes up 1 space, and costs 300 Credits to mount. The largest holds 4 missiles, takes up 4 spaces, and costs 1200 Credits to mount. All GMs available can be fired in one turn if so desired. They are an exception to normal combat rules. The cheap missile 1000 Credits/30d10) is guided by joystick movements of the gunner and finalizes its own aim with infrared sensors. The basic chance to hit is the gunner's DEX +20, as a percentage. All modifiers are applicable; range modifiers are reduced three categories if the gunner is wearing magnifying glasses. The expensive missile (3000 Credits/60d10) is programmed with a target before launching, and is totally self-guided. Programming takes three turns during which the gunner can take no other action. The chance to hit is 95%, and no modifiers are applicable. Missile acceleration is 150 meters/turn/turn, top speed 1500 meters/turn; a jetcopter or aircar with a head start might be able to outrun a missile for its 10 km range.

**Bomb:** This is a dropped weapon, mounted on jetcopter or aircar pylons. Statistics for light and heavy bombs are given.

**Minedropper:** A shot from this weapon drops 5 mines on the road behind the vehicle. Distribution is determined by speed and maneuvers during the dropping turn. If any vehicle subsequently passes over them, the mines will detonate on a 50% activation roll. The

5d10 damage figure is per mine. This is a generally useless weapon for flying vehicles; the mines spread too much when dropped and explode on impact if dropped over 5 meters.

**Sprayer:** Various vile substances can be loaded into this. The most useful three substances are smoke, paint, and oil. A smokescreen forms a 50-meter-diameter cloud, blocking vision and IR sights but not radar. It lasts 5 turns; any vehicle going through it is sightless for 1 turn.

**Paint sprays** cover an area 10 meters x 3 meters behind the vehicle, and they block vision (but not IR or radar) by coating windows with paint. The paint lasts until scrubbed off. Paint will also completely ruin a coat of reflective paint; it cannot be removed without also removing the reflective paint beneath it.

**Oil jets** form a 20 meter x 2 meter slick. The driver of a vehicle traveling faster than its Turn Speed who encounters a slick must make a Reaction Speed check or lose control of the vehicle. An Explorer has a +20 on the control roll. Hover vehicles are not affected at all.

A limitation of recessed mounting is that weapons can only face one direc-

## Equipment Table

item	mass (kg)	cost (Cr)
Cyberlink	5	5000
Ejection seat	15	500
IR cameras	8	800
IR jammer	4	500
Radar	10	1500
Searchlight	8	500

## Turret Table

size	spaces	cost (Cr)
Small	1	2000/2500
Medium	2	4000/5000
Large	4	8000/10000

## Vehicle Table

vehicle type	maximum coats	cost/coat(Cr)	cost (Cr)	screen spaces	maximum turrets
Hovercycle	2/0	1500/n.a.	n.a.	1	1S
Groundcycle	3/0	1500/n.a.	n.a.	2	1SM
Hovercar	6/3	4000/6000	10000	4	1 SM
Groundcar	8/3	4500/7000	10000	6	1 SM
Hover transport	15/5	10000/13000	25000	16	2 SML
Ground transport	18/5	11000/15000	25000	20	3 SML
Explorer	15/5	7000/9000	15000	12	1SML
Jetcopter	12/3	8000/10000	15000	2	1 SM
Aircar	20/5	11000/13000	25000	4	1 SML

## Weapon Tables

<i>weapon type</i>	<i>spaces</i>	<i>mounting fee (Cr)</i>	<i>damage</i>	<i>ammo</i>	<i>SEU</i>	<i>rate</i>	<i>defense</i>
Flamethrower	1	500	3d10*	10	—	1	none
Vehicle MG	2	750	15d10	20	—	1	inertia
Vehicle RR	2	750	18d10	15	—	½	inertia
Vehicle RL	2	750	20d10	20	—	¼	inertia
	2	750	30d10	10	—	¼	inertia
Vehicle HL	2	750	1d10/SEU	500	5-30	1	albedo
Vehicle FT	2	750	8d10**	10	—	1	none
Cannon	4	1250	25d10	15	—	¼	inertia
Howitzer	8	2500	75d10	10	—	¼	inertia
Guided missile	1-4	300-1200	30d10	1-4	—	1-4	inertia
	1-4	300-1200	60d10	1-4	—	1-4	inertia
Bomb	1	50	25d10	1	—	1	inertia
	2	50	50d10	1	—	1	inertia
Mine dropper	2	500	5d10/mine	10	—	1	inertia
Sprayer	2	500	variable	10	—	1	variable

### Range (meters)

<i>Weapon type</i>	<i>PB</i>	<i>Short</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>long</i>	<i>extreme</i>
Flamethrower	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-45	46-70
Vehicle MG	—	0-100	101-350	351-750	751-1500
Vehicle RR	—	0-200	201-1250	1251-3000	3001-5000
Vehicle RL	—	0-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000
	—	0-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000
Vehicle HL	—	0-150	151-750	751-1500	1501-3000
Vehicle FT	—	0-25	26-50	51-100	101-150
Cannon	—	100-1000	1001-2000	2001-3000	3001-5000
Howitzer	—	—	250-3000	3001-7000	7001-15000
Guided missile	50-500 ***	501-1000 ***	1001-2000 ***	2001-5000 ***	— ***
Bomb	0-10	11-30	31-60	61-120	121+
	0-10	11-30	31-60	61-120	121+
Mine dropper	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Sprayer	varies	varies	varies	varies	varies

### Ammunition

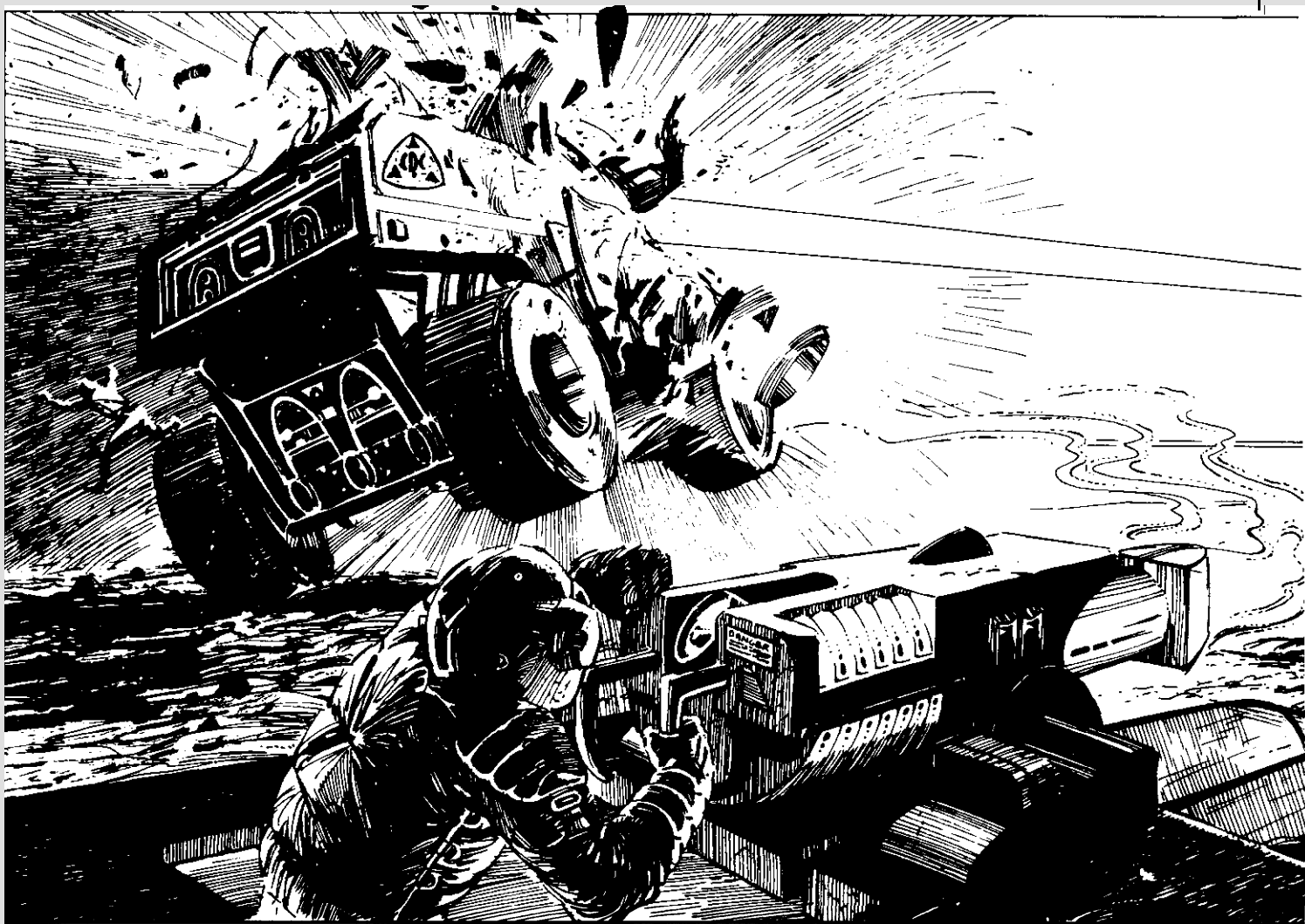
<i>Weapon type</i>	<i>cost (Cr)</i>	<i>mass (kg)</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>cost (Cr)</i>	<i>mass (kg)</i>	<i>rounds</i>
Flamethrower	3000	15	napalm	50	10	10
Vehicle MG	3000	22	bullet belt	125	12	400
Vehicle RR	5500	20	shell	15	2	1
Vehicle RL	6000	17	rocket	25	6	1
	8000	20	rocket	40	10	1
Vehicle HL	7500	25	pack	1250	25	500
Vehicle FT	5000	25	napalm	150	30	10
Cannon	10000	100	shell	50	5	1
Howitzer	25000	350	shell	200	20	1
Guided missile	200-800	5-20	missile	1000	30	1
	200-800	5-20	missile	3000	60	1
Bomb	n.a.	n.a.	bomb	50	15	1
	n.a.	n.a.	bomb	100	30	1
Mine dropper	750	10	mine	250	25	50
Sprayer	1000	20	varies	100	10	10

Note: Any portable weapon may be mounted in a turret; it will take up one space, and will have a mounting fee of 500 Credits. All other statistics are as per the Expanded Games Rules.

\* — Fire from a portable flamethrower will do 1d10 damage/turn to a target for the next three turns after the turn in which it was fired.

\*\* — Fire from a vehicle-mounted flamethrower will do 1d10 damage/turn to a target for the next five turns after the turn in which it was fired.

\*\*\* — The second kind of guided missile has no range modifiers, and is good out to a 10 km range.



tion. To get around this, weapons are installed on turrets. Turrets have a 360° field of fire, and can spin the full 360° and still fire each turn. Universal turrets can also elevate from -15° to +90° (straight up). Turrets have a minimum range of 10 meters due to their elevation from the ground (this does not apply to universal turrets).

Turrets come in three sizes, as shown on the Turret Table. The second price (after the slash) is for a universal turret. These prices include the mounting of a turret in a vehicle, but the regular weapon mounting fee must still be paid to mount a weapon in a turret. Concealing a turret costs double the price shown, but weapons in the turret are automatically concealed.

The maximum number of turrets on each vehicle type and their possible sizes are shown on the Vehicle Table. Note that cycle turrets are actually sidecars, and only have a 180° field of fire on one side. Also note that putting weapons in a turret does not add to the spaces in a vehicle.

Example: Simba is mounting a turret on his groundcar. According to the

table, he can mount a small or medium turret. He chooses a medium universal turret (2 spaces) and decides to mount a vehicle machine gun (2 spaces) in it. It costs 3000 Credits to purchase the vehicle MG, 750 Credits to mount it in the turret, and 5000 Credits to buy a turret and mount it on his car. If he wants a pop-up turret, it will cost him another 5000 Credits. (The vehicle MG is automatically concealed.) Either way, he now has 4 spaces left to mount a cannon (or whatever in his car.

Jetcopters and aircars are a special case. Their weapons are most commonly mounted not in the body or in turrets, but in weapon pods attached to pylons. These pods add space to a vehicle. A jetcopter can have two pods, each holding 2 spaces worth of weapons, while an aircar can have 4 pods, each holding 4 spaces of weapons. A small (1-space) pylon with post costs 200 Credits; a medium (2-space) one costs 400 Credits; and, a large (4-space) one costs 800 Credits. (Of course, regular weapon-mounting fees must still be paid.)

Example: Dandel is arming his aircar. He mounts a vehicle MG and a vehicle

FT coaxially in a large, underbody turret. This fills up the vehicle's body spaces (as shown on the Vehicle Table). However, he can still add up to 4 pylons of up to 4 spaces each, under the wings, so the total weaponry on his aircar could be 20 spaces.

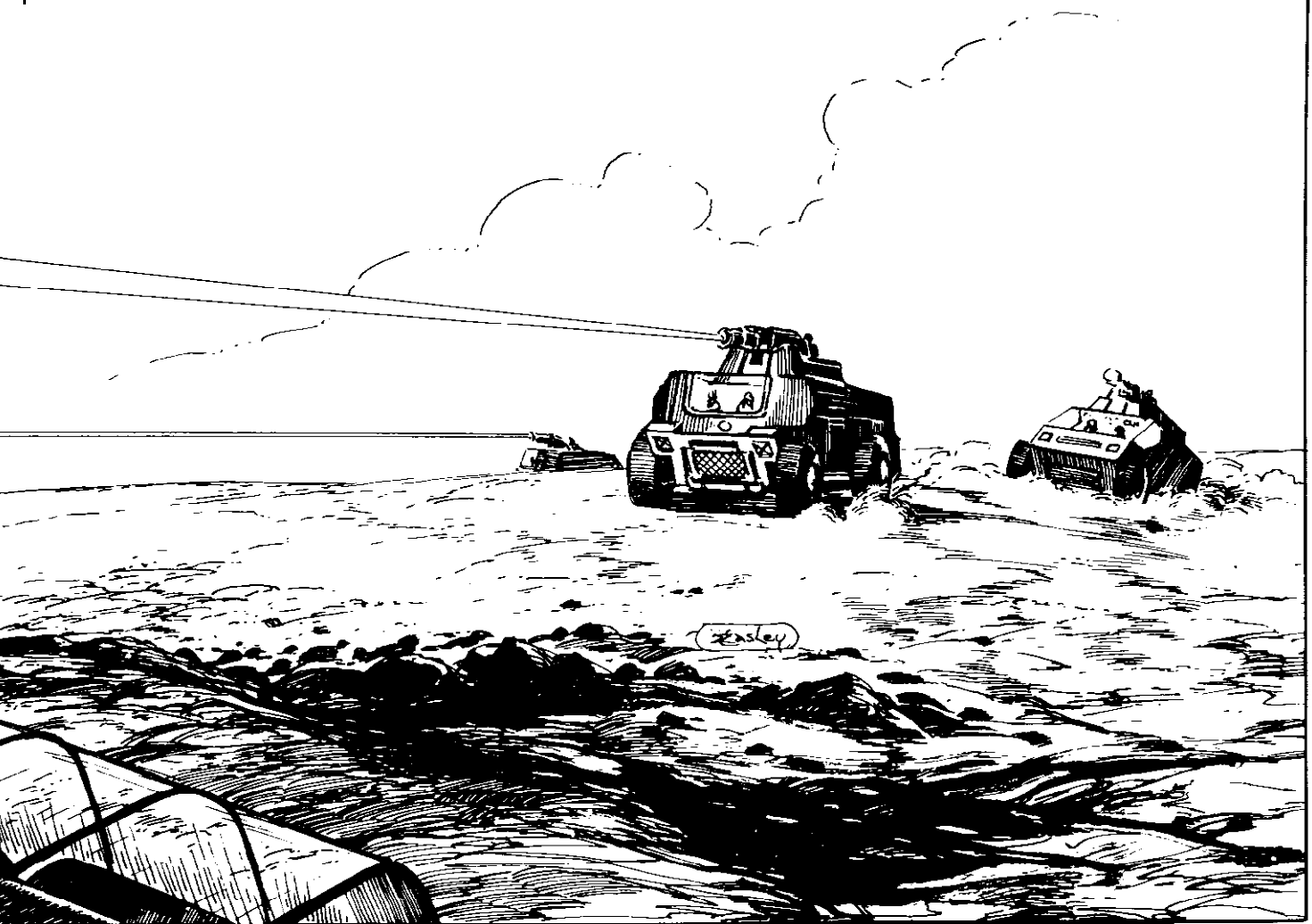
Note that pods are fixed, forward-firing weapons.

## Equipment

Other pieces of equipment that are useful in vehicle combat are given here. These are listed on the Equipment Table and described below.

*Cyberlink:* This is a direct mental hookup (by computer) to a weapon to control its firing. Up to 5 weapons can be controlled by one person (3 by a driver) at no penalty for firing multiple weapons, but each weapon requires a separate link. Each link also guzzles 2 SEU per turn of operation.

*Ejection seat:* Upon manual activation, this slides back a roof panel and ejects the seat 20 meters straight up, where a para-wing opens to carry the passenger to safety. Safety features prohibit activa-



tion when the vehicle is not upright.

**Infrared cameras:** IR cameras project a 360° image of heat sources around the vehicle, to permit driving without lights at night and seeing through a painted windshield. They use 1 SEU per minute of operation.

**Infrared jammer:** IR jammers make the vehicle invisible to IR sensors, and they give guided missiles a -20 modifier to hit. They use 2 SEU per minute of operation.

**Radar:** Radar enables sight through any interference, but objects show up only as blips on a screen. It uses 1 SEU per minute of operation.

**Searchlight:** One can be mounted in a turret for 200 Credits (using 1 space) and can be used as a weapon to blind opponents. Blindness duration is 1d10 turns, or 1d10-3 if the searchlight is over 500 meters away. Light range is 1 km. SEU use is 3 per minute.

## Combat

The Combat Sequence for vehicle combat is the same as for all other STAR FRONTIERS combat, the only difference being in the procedure used to deter-

mine hit probability. This is given below.

1. 1/4DEX / 1/2 DEX. The basic percentage chance to hit is 1/4 the gunner's Dexterity, since he has no control over the aim (only when to fire). If he is controlling a turreted weapon, the base percentage chance increases to 1/2 his Dexterity.

2. + 5% / Tech level. If the vehicle is moving, 5% is added for each Technician level of the driver, since he can position the vehicle for the most favorable shots.

3. + 5% / skill level. 5% is added for each skill level the gunner has with the weapon being fired.

4. -x% range. See Expanded Game Rules book for range modifiers.

5. +x% size. Cars, Explorers, air vehicles: + 5% (Large). Trucks: + 10% (Giant).

6. -x% movement. -10% if speed is 10. 150 meters/turn; -20% if speed is over 150 meters/turn. This applies to both attacker and target.

7. -x% cover. See Expanded Game Rules book for cover modifiers.

8. -x% dodging. The driver can weave and otherwise try to present a harder target. Subtraction is -5% per Tech level

of the driver. This applies to attacks on and by his vehicle, and it eliminates modifier #2 above.

9. -10% / extra weapon. If firing multiple weapons, a gunner has a -10% penalty "to hit" per weapon, for every extra weapon over and above the one weapon he considers his main weapon. A driver has a -10% penalty "to hit" per weapon on each weapon he fires.

Example: Simba and Dandel are trying to bring down a Streeel jetcopter. Simba (the driver) is firing two weapons; he has a -20% on each roll. Dandel (the gunner) is firing three weapons; he also has a -20% on each roll.

Once an attack succeeds, apply screen effects (if any), and find the number of dice of damage caused by the attack. Roll 2d10, add the number of dice, and subtract 2 for each coat of armor the vehicle has. Finally, add vehicle modifiers ( + 2 for cycles; -2 for Explorers), and consult the appropriate Vehicle Damage Table (pp. 32-33, Expanded Game Rules book).

Best wishes in your dueling, and may you never find yourself staring down a howitzer barrel.



# Psybots and Battle Mechs

*A look at the PROTON FIRE™ game*

by Michael Breault

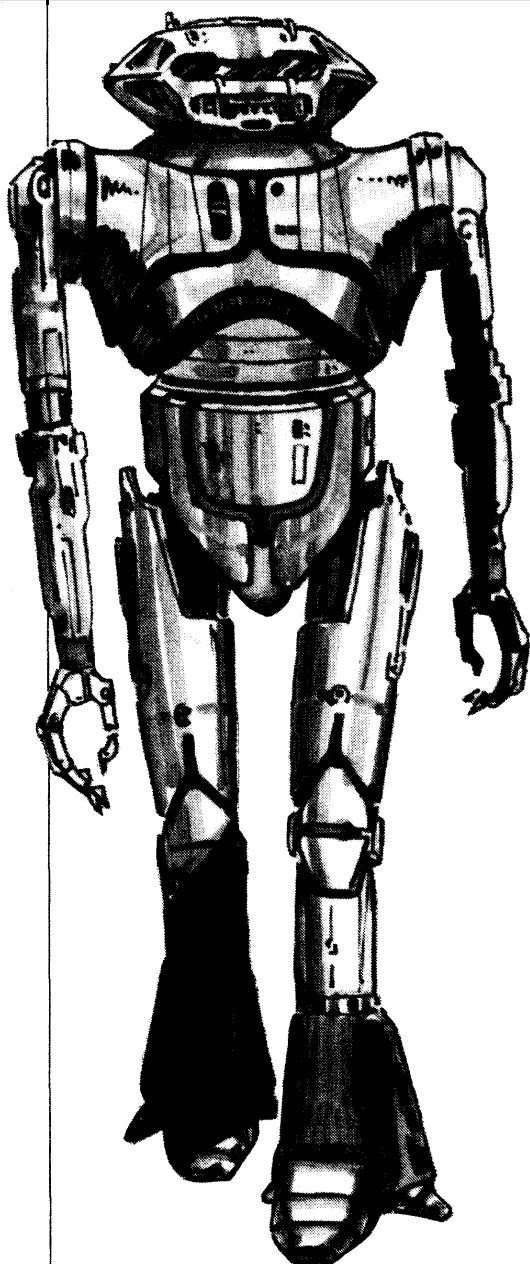
Have you ever wondered what to do with the model robots you and your friends have collected? Wonder no more — TSR, Inc., will shortly bring out the PROTON FIRE™ robot role-playing game.

The PROTON FIRE game centers on the planetary system of the star Matri, located approximately 100 light years from our own solar system. Here, the characters will wage a system-wide battle, racing against time to save the remnants of humanity left on Matri's planets.

The two opposing factions are those of the University and the Corporation. The University is seeking a new home for the war- and plague-ravaged humans of the Matri system. The Corporation, ruled by the corrupt and immortal Quintad, is desperately trying to foil the University's efforts, to regain the total control it enjoyed during the early days of man's arrival in the Matri system.

Man is not native to these planets. In the dim past, humans journeyed to Matri in an interstellar colonization ship sent out from Earth. Landing on Coreworld, the fourth planet out from Marti, the colonists quickly established themselves and began to explore and colonize the rest of the system.

The Quintad, through the Corporation, ruled Matri humankind in the colony's first centuries. Originally, the Quintad was a body of five elected officials, and the Corporation was only a means of trading goods and services among the struggling colonists. But, as memories of Earth faded into legend, the Quintad and the Corporation became more powerful, assuming more and more control over the lives of Matri's humans.



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The final step in the Quintad's corruption came when the science of cybernetics was perfected. The ability to graft mechanical parts onto a living body opened the door to immortality. The Quintad attempted to suppress this discovery, desiring to keep the secret of immortality to themselves. They were unsuccessful, but the murders of innocent scientists, technicians, and their families set the tone for the Quintad's subsequent dealings with all who crossed them. The five immortal cyborgs in the Quintad now had an eternity in which to savor their dominion over ordinary humans.

The downfall of the Quintad came with the accidental release of a deadly virus from a secret laboratory conducting biochemical experiments. Plague decimated the population of Coreworld and the food supply for much of the system. The power of the Quintad vanished as 90% of Coreworld's people died.

Fortunately, there were outposts of humanity spread throughout the system, isolated from the effects of the plague. One of these was the University, a colony inside a moon of the fifth planet. Originally under the control of the Corporation and devoted solely to research and teaching, the University gained independence during the tumult of the post-plague years. The University's leaders stood up against the Quintad and began a search for a new home for Matri's humans, away from plague-decimated Coreworld and the grasp of the Quintad.

To this end, the University began training agents in the arts of combat as well as research and exploration. Teams of

agents are now sent throughout the system to serve as the ears and eyes of the University. In addition, the University itself must be guarded against subversion from within and attack from outside. Arrayed against the University's agents are teams of Corporation agents. Of special concern to the University are the Quintad's deadly task forces of Eliminators — highly-trained cyborgs whose only purpose is to kill all who oppose their masters' wills.

PROTON FIRE players are cast into the roles of University agents, opposing the plans of the Quintad while searching for a new home for Matri's humankind. Players choose the type of characters they wish to be: psybots, cyborgs, or humans.

Psybots are the final step in robot evolution. Their minds are every bit as flexible and inquisitive as those of humans, yet they lack the empathy and insight of humans. Psybots also have feelings and experience pain much like humans.

Cyborgs are part man, part machine — humans who have had portions of their bodies replaced by mechanical devices. Some human empathy is lost, but gains in physical prowess help offset this.

Matri humans are much like Earth humans. To protect them in battle, the University provides each of them with a mech — a giant battlesuit, armored and armed to the wearer's specifications.

Each character may be either a warrior, ranger, or engineer. A wide range of talents exists for characters to use, and new talents may be created to cover any abilities the characters wish to have.

This is a complete role-playing game system. You design every detail of your character: the size and shape of the body, the number and types of limbs, a unique personality, any abilities you can imagine, and virtually any type of equipment.

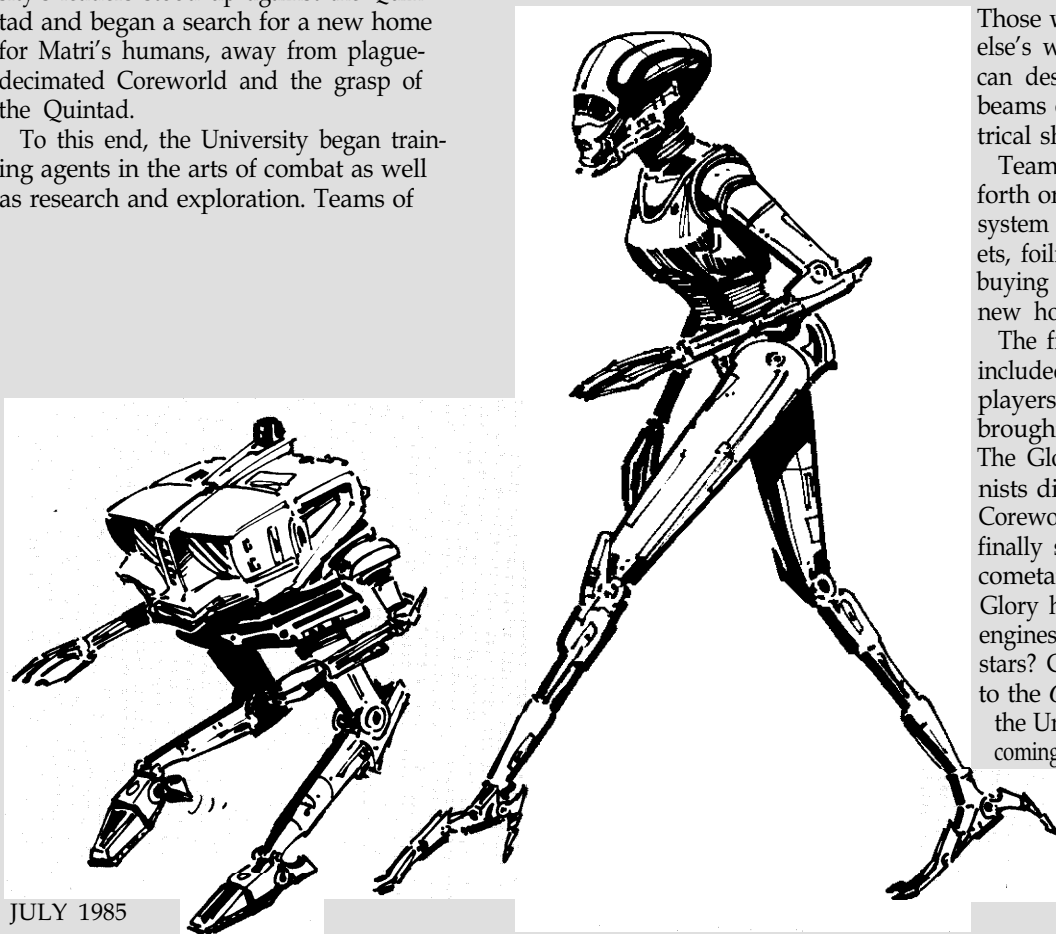
Your character can have multi-jointed arms, tentacles, extendable arms that stretch out to twice their normal length, and built-in jets, helijets, or hoverjets to fly across alien landscapes. For the pedestrians, any number of legs, tracks, and wheels are available. You can also build a character who can skim across liquid surfaces or travel under the waves.

In terms of equipment, the game has space ships, scanners, communications, cryogenic units, armored space suits, tool kits, computers, and much more. Characters can choose from a wide assortment of lasers, particle beam weapons, flame throwers, personal missiles, and self-delivering mines.

Those who are worried about someone else's weapons can buy defenses that can destroy oncoming missiles, deflect beams of charged particles, absorb electrical shocks, and reflect laser energy.

Teams of slaver characters are sent forth on missions throughout the Matri system and beyond: exploring new planets, foiling the Quintad's designs, and buying time in the search for mankind's new home.

The first PROTON FIRE adventure is included in the game box and sends the players off to the *Glory*, the starship that brought mankind to the Matri system. The *Glory* disappeared after the colonists disembarked onto the surface of Coreworld. University astronomers have finally spotted the ancient ship in a cometary orbit about Matri. Does the *Glory* hold the key to hyperdrive engines and rapid transport among the stars? Can your team of agents make it to the *Glory* and coax it into orbit about the University's moon? Your chance is coming soon!





# THE CHRONICLES continue:

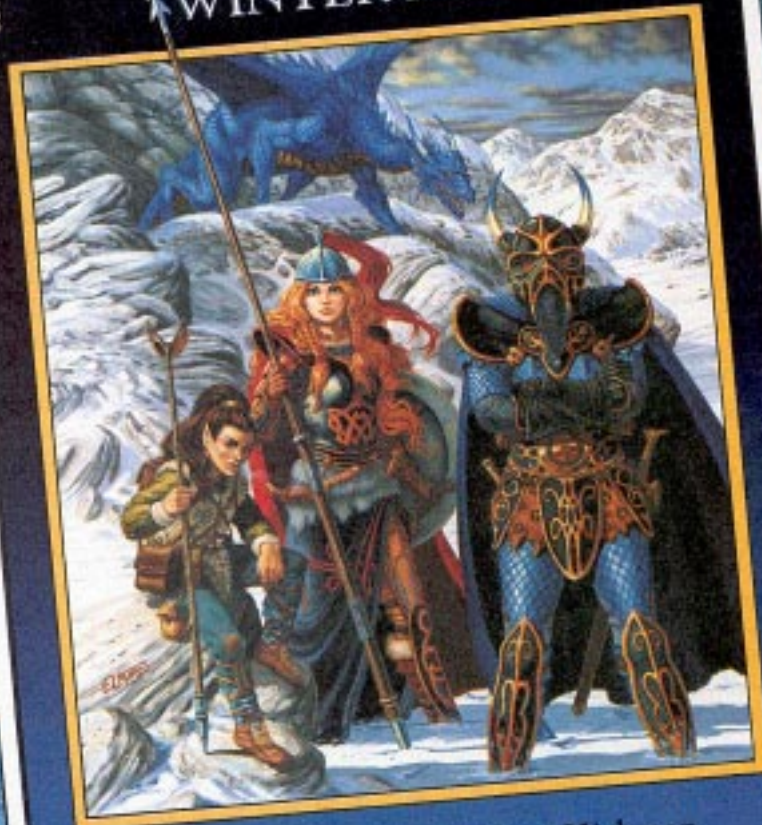
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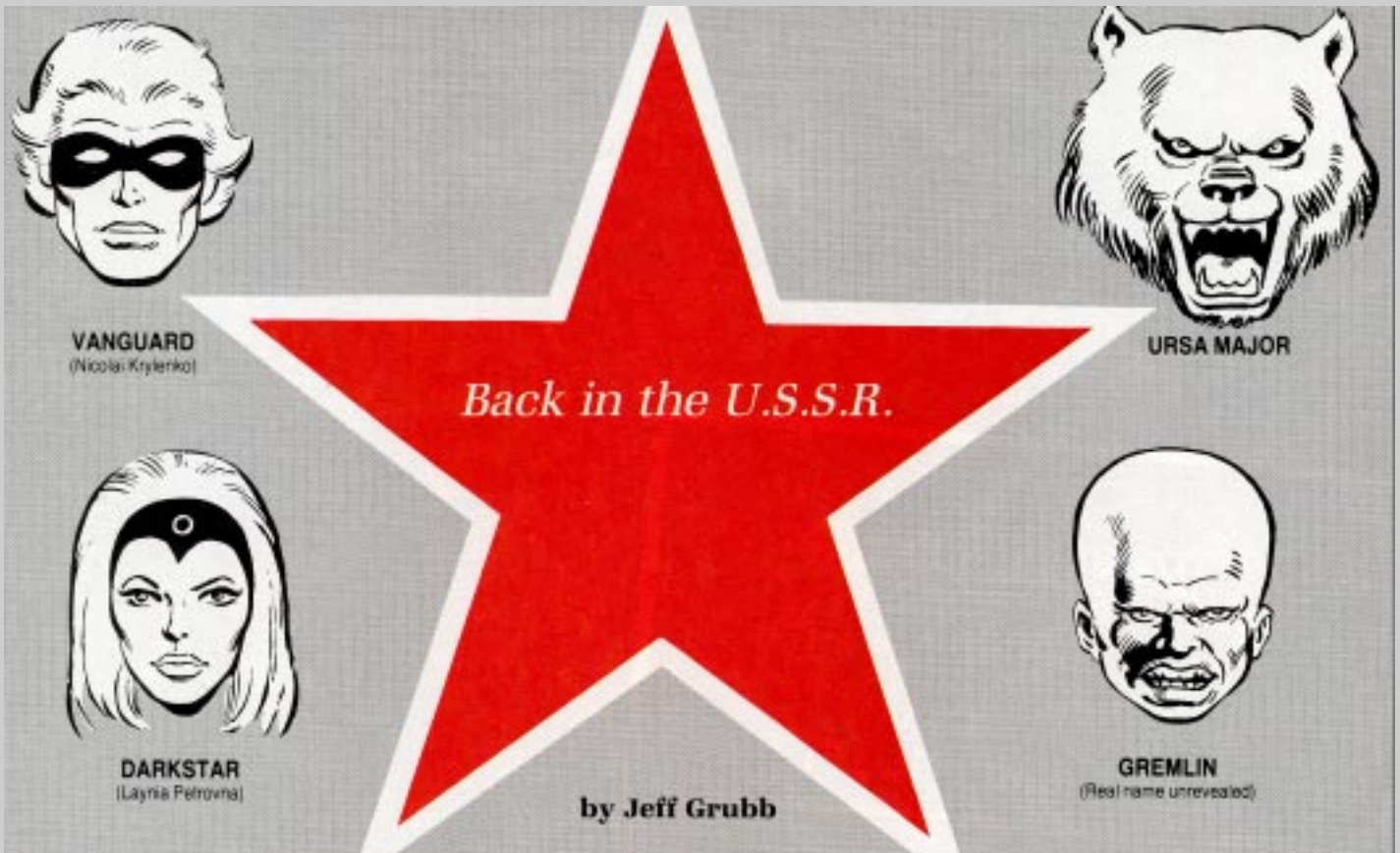
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# The MARVEL®-Phile



These articles start in the oddest places. Last month, we ran an index of all the heroes we've published so far for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game. Among the listed characters were the Soviet Super-Troopers™, a brigade of crack Russian troops in powered armor

that previously battled the Hulk™ and Ram™. A footnote spelled out the difference between the Soviet Super-Troopers and the Soviet Super-Soldiers™, a team of super-powered Soviet heroes who hadn't yet been published.

ARES™ editor Roger Moore read over

the article and flexed his eyebrows. "Gee," said the Noble Editor, "why haven't you said anything about the heroes of the Soviet Union?" (or words to that effect).

Hence this month's article. Footnotes can get you in all sorts of trouble.

## VANGUARD™

**Nicolai Krylenko**

Fighting: EXCELLENT (20)  
Agility: EXCELLENT (20)  
Strength: EXCELLENT (20)  
Endurance: INCREDIBLE (40)  
Reason: GOOD (10)  
Intuition: GOOD (10)  
Psyche: GOOD (10)

Health: 100

Karma: 30

Resources: GOOD

Popularity: 5 (65 in the Soviet Union)

### Known powers:

**FORCE FIELD.** Vanguard has the mutant ability to repel any form of energy, including physical attacks, gunfire, and energy weapons. He does so naturally at the Amazing rank, ignoring all damage for that rank and lower ones. If concentrating on his foci (see below), Vanguard

can defend himself against attacks of up to Monstrous rank. All reflected attacks return to the attacker, inflicting one less rank of damage. (For example, an attacker using an Incredible-rank laser will take Remarkable damage from the reflected attack.) Such reflected attacks hit on the Good column — unless reflected through Vanguard's foci, in which case they hit on the Remarkable attack column.

**WEAPONS.** Vanguard carries a hammer and sickle, symbols of his government, to focus his reflective powers. In addition, he may attack with the hammer and sickle at the Remarkable Fighting rank, inflicting Remarkable slugfest damage with the hammer and Remarkable hack 'n slash damage with the sickle. Finally, Vanguard's hammer contains electronic guidance devices and gyro-stabilizers that allow him to throw it up to three areas and have it return to

his hand (requiring an Agility FEAT to catch it).

## DARKSTAR™

**Laynia Petrovna**

Fighting: GOOD (10)  
Agility: EXCELLENT (20)  
Strength: GOOD (10)  
Endurance: AMAZING (50)  
Reason: GOOD (10)  
Intuition: EXCELLENT (20)  
Psyche: INCREDIBLE (40)

Health: 90

Karma: 70

Resources: GOOD

Popularity: 5 (50 in the Soviet Union)

### Known powers:

**DARKFORCE MANIPULATION.** Laynia has the ability to wield a form of extra-dimensional energy known as the Darkforce. The Darkforce is a heavy,

black material that may be related to the black energy used by Shroud™ and Cloak™. Darkstar can form simple shapes such as spheres, columns, and rings by mental command. She can affect up to 2 areas at any time, and increase the density of the Darkforce to Amazing material strength. If using Darkforce material as a weapon, Darkstar can inflict up to Incredible damage. Finally, the Darkforce can be used to support structures as if they were composed of Incredible strength material.

**TELEPORTATION.** Darkstar can enter the Darkforce and use it to teleport across small distances (12 areas) with Remarkable accuracy. She may take up to three individuals with her on a teleport. Anyone using this form of teleportation may not perform any other action during the round when teleportation occurs, as transit in this fashion is disorienting (even for Darkstar herself).

**FLIGHT.** Darkstar can also manipulate the Darkforce to partially neutralize the effects of gravity, allowing her to fly at 8 areas per round. She cannot carry any additional weight while flying, as such weight will break her concentration and force her to land immediately.

## URSA MAJOR™

### Mikhail (Urlokovitch) Ursus

*[Statistics to the left are for Mikhail Ursus in human form; those to the right are for Ursa Major in bear form.]*

Fighting: GOOD (10)/REMARKABLE (30)  
 Agility: EXCELLENT (20)/  
 EXCELLENT (20)  
 Strength: GOOD (10)/INCREDIBLE (40)  
 Endurance: REMARAKBLE (30)/  
 INCREDIBLE (40)  
 Reason: TYPICAL (6)  
 Intuition: GOOD (10)  
 Psyche: EXCELLENT (20)

Health: 70/130  
 Karma: 36  
 Resources: GOOD  
 Popularity: 10 (60 in the Soviet Union)

### Known powers:

**TRANSFORMATION.** Ursus can transform himself into a large brown bear. This transformation takes a single round and gives Mikhail the alternate abilities and Health above. In addition, Ursa Major has Good Body Armor in bear form, may attack on the hack 'n slash column, can walk upright, and retains his human intelligence and ability to speak when transformed into a bear.

Any damage inflicted to Mikhail in bear form comes from the additional 60 points difference in Health between human and bear forms first, then from Mikhail's original health. No apparent limit exists on the amount of time Mikhail can remain a bear.

## GREMLIN™

### Real name unrevealed

Fighting: TYPICAL (6)  
 Agility: GOOD (10)  
 Strength: POOR (4)  
 Endurance: REMARKABLE (30)  
 Reason: INCREDIBLE (40)  
 Intuition: GOOD (10)  
 Psyche: REMARKABLE (30)

Health: 50  
 Karma: 80  
 Resources: GOOD  
 Popularity: 5

### Known powers:

**INVENTION.** Gremlin is a brilliant scientist and has, in addition to his super-human intellect, a natural ability towards invention. Gremlin is well-versed in electronics, physics, genetics, and medicine; his Reason is Amazing in those areas.

**The Soviet Super-Soldiers:** Official policy on mutants in the Soviet Union had been immediate euthanasia for any child showing mutant powers. This policy continued until the government, concerned with the growing number of powerful American mutants, reversed that decision and set up the Soviet Super-Soldier School under the auspices of the Dr. Piotr Phobos™.

Vanguard and Darkstar are the twin children of nuclear physicist Sergei Krylov, who was irradiated, along with his wife, in a nuclear accident. As it was likely his children would be mutants, the twins were abducted by the KGB at birth and placed in Dr. Phobos's care; their mother died at childbirth. Krylov was informed that his children were dead. At the school, the children were joined by Ursa Major and other young Soviet mutants.

Unfortunately, Phobos was not interested in raising mutants for the Soviet state. Instead, he drained their energies to give himself super-human powers. The siphoning process killed the subjects, but those deaths were reported as training accidents. Phobos's plans were exposed by the Soviet hero Red Guardian™, and the school was closed

down. Ursa Major, Darkstar, and Vanguard were the only survivors of Phobos's school.

Vanguard and Ursa Major entered the army, while Darkstar accompanied the Crimson Dynamo™ to America. This American mission was aborted, but Darkstar remained in the United States for some time after that, joining the super-powered team known as the Champions of Los Angeles™ (which included Iceman™, Angel™, Ghost Rider™, Hercules™, and the former Soviet agent Black Widow™). With the folding of that team, Darkstar returned to her native land.

The twin's father, Sergei, had meanwhile conducted research in the Forbidden Zone, a region of the central plains that was the site of many failed atomic and genetic experiments. Sergei Krylov had become the super-human Presence™ through his research. When he discovered that his children still lived, he turned against the state. Vanguard, Darkstar, and Ursa Major were dispatched, under false orders and the leadership of the Crimson Dynamo, to battle the Presence. They were told that Sergei wished to expand the Forbidden Zone across Asia, but the Super-Soldiers discovered that their former mentor, Phobos, was the one attempting to expand the zone. The team also discovered their true parentage and learned that the Crimson Dynamo was a KGB plant. These discoveries caused the expulsion of the Crimson Dynamo from the team and led Darkstar, Vanguard, and Ursa Major to dissolve their ties with the government in Moscow.

Operating as free agents within the Soviet state, the three heroes were joined by Gremlin, a super-intelligent dwarf with grossly distorted features. Gremlin was the son of the original Gargoyle™, a Soviet scientist transformed by a gamma bomb explosion in much the same way as the Incredible Hulk had been transformed. Gremlin, too, served for the good of the state, lending his intellect to many projects, until he realized that the government had been responsible for his father's death. He turned against the state and joined the Soviet super-team.

Though operating apart from the Soviet government, the Soviet Super-Soldiers act for the good of their people, protecting their nation from internal and external threats in much the same way as the American Avengers™ and Canadian Alpha Flight™ protect their countries.

# Danger on a Budget

## *The unexpected and the unknown in GAMMA WORLD® adventuring*

by Bruce Humphrey

Why "on a budget?" Because certain dangers in the GAMMA WORLD® game should be doled out sparingly. Swarms of mutant monsters bleed off the excess firepower of an adventuring group, but are seldom deadly to heavily armed adventurers. The *real* dangers are the unseen, the unexpected, and the unknown.

The Gamma World is a land where instant death is commonplace, and a careless move can bring an entire party to grief. Frequently, players will react to this with extreme paranoia, and their characters will blast anything that moves — and even some things that *don't* move. This "blast and burn" mentality can turn a campaign into a constant war in which the player characters expend amazing amounts of firepower in each encounter. One reaction to this on the part of the Game Master is to increase the frequency by which weapons malfunction. This is a halfway measure at best, and often increases the value the players place on those weapons. This leads them to work all the harder to acquire more, which leads the GM to further increase the breakdown frequency, and so on.

Concealed or disguised dangers force players into a different style of play. When the real threat is neither visible nor certain, a laser rifle or torc grenade will no longer solve every problem. The campaign becomes more involving, as players find their brains challenged more than their die-rolling abilities.

There is more to danger in GAMMA WORLD gaming than a tribe of Arns or an automated military complex. While entirely new adventures can be created using the techniques given below, old locations can be rejuvenated as well. Re-using old adventure sites in new ways can lessen the preparation involved in game mastering, allowing you more time to concentrate on the adventure itself.

Likewise, when players become complacent or begin to rely on their equipment or mutant abilities too often, toss one or two of these options into the situation and see what happens.

### **The unseen**

Invisible dangers can be extremely difficult for players to handle. Radiation, mutations, force fields, poisons, and bacteria are all present in the Gamma World in large quantities. In fact, characters frequent those ruins and ancient technological sites where these dangers are most often found. Some of these dangers will mimic others, further confusing and misleading the players. Not all need be deadly, but every one is a challenge, and players are not likely to find out which are dangerous until after the fact. It is important, however, to provide clues to alert PCs, allowing them to use their minds and role-playing skills to check for dangers. This encourages them to think.

Radiation is probably the most common of all dangers in the Gamma World. Weapons fire it, ruins retain it from the time of the Social Wars, and creatures use it for defense. But, radiation is not always detectable; it does not have to glow to be dangerous. Many high-tech items scavenged from ruins may still be deadly to their bearer, since metal retains radiation over long periods. It may not cause instant death, but it may lead to radiation sickness (manifested by a loss of a hit point or two per day until the item is discarded). The same thing goes for the ruins proper. And what about leakage from the nuclear batteries used in many high-tech (level III) items, or the runoff from streams and lakes filled with Barl Neps?

Just as radiation is often invisible, so are the workings of most mental mutations. A single intelligent mutant with

just one long-range mental attack can ambush a group while remaining safely hidden. Simply announcing the effects of such an attack, without stating the source or cause, can throw a group into mass confusion as the players try to deal with the situation. Many of the Gamma World's inhabitants are supposed to be intelligent (and have to be to survive), but they seldom exhibit even this level of forethought in game play. How many of the weaker species would survive if they always acted like they are often played, with massed attacks on high-tech player groups? When setting up encounters, the GM must note both the powers and intelligence of the creatures involved, then play them accordingly.

Poisons and bacteria in the Gamma World may be played similarly. Both are frequently the result of either high technology or mutation, both are usually invisible, and both may be defeated with similar countermeasures. Poisons and germs do not have to be deliberately set by nasty mutant foes. Many high-tech items, if malfunctioning, can be poisonous or give off toxic gases.

Poisons and germs may provide clues to their presence. Toxins may be barely visible on certain surfaces, and the presence of a plague zone may be indicated by sick or dead victims with evidence of the disease upon them. Thinking groups will be able to avoid these dangers, while unthinking ones will push on ahead to their own detriment. Many advanced types of armor give at least some protection against both, as do simpler precautions such as gloves or cloth worn over the face. Also, exposing susceptible areas, surfaces, and bodies to radiation, high heat or cold, or certain mutational energies can neutralize most poisons and bacteria.

It should also be noted that the Gamma World will have produced many varieties of poison and bacteria. (Read-

ing *The Andromeda Strain*, by Michael Crichton, can give you a good idea of what a mutant germ might be capable of doing.) Strange disease or poisoning symptoms can puzzle players as much as any other invisible danger can.

Functioning artifacts can create invisible effects. Force fields are a common feature of many military artifacts, but they are also rarely dangerous (unless a flying character happens to swoop into one). Other force-field-type mechanisms might include energy-draining rays which affect power packs, mutation energies, or even the characters themselves (similar to a *life leech*). Another relative of the force field is the damage field, which causes PCs or items within its confines to take a certain amount of damage per action turn. Certain kinds of damage drained or inflicted might may be treatable medically, or lost hit points might only be recovered by rest.

Such attacks may also cause other damage, from wiping out computer memory to causing artifacts to malfunction. Characters might receive some warning or premonition of the danger confronting them. Perhaps they become uncomfortable (from the sonics or rays

affecting them or their possessions), are aware that some energy source is nearby, or find ancient warning signs and ruins.

Dust is a natural and generally imperceptible threat which may easily be placed in an area. The advantage of this particular danger is that it can be noted in clues presented by the GM without making the danger obvious. Dust can be found in long-enclosed areas, or it may be expelled by exhaust systems or ventilation ducts in suits of armor, vehicles, or complexes. Aside from aggravating allergies, dust may be poisonous or radioactive, making it doubly dangerous and even life-threatening. Dust may be more subtly used in situations in which it will be dangerous without being inherently deadly; a dust cloud may be blown in the characters' faces by a draft, blinding or choking them as they are escaping from or about to be attacked by other opponents. A large amount of inhaled dust may lower Constitution temporarily.

### The unexpected

While natural events are not invisible, they are not usually detected until it is

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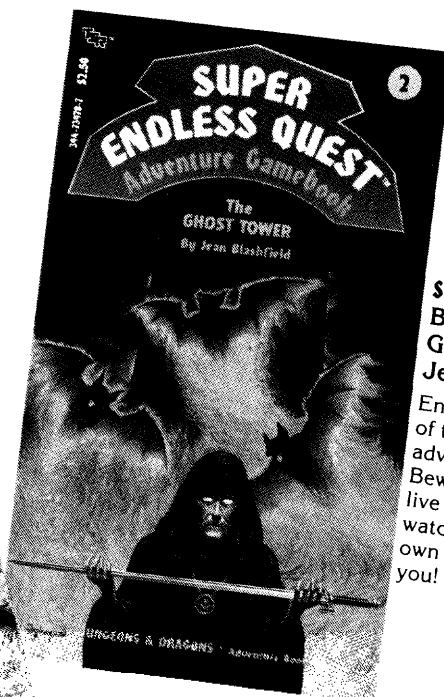
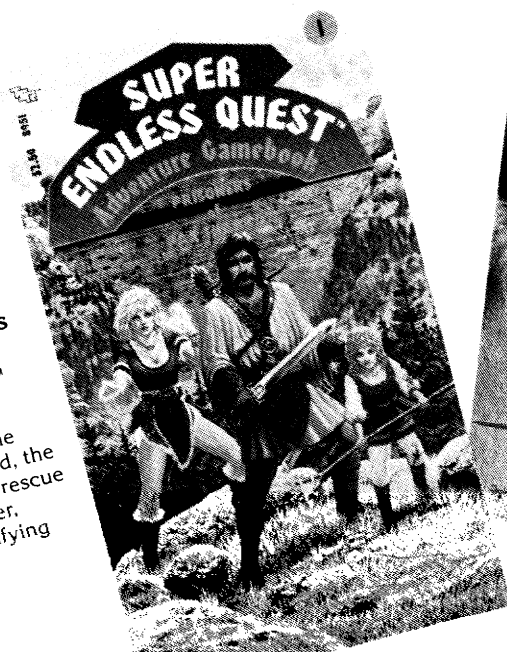
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far too late to avoid their effects. The disasters and geophysical imbalances generated by the Social Wars can also be used to create sudden disturbances which can plague the PCs. Players are geared toward expecting their problems to come from mutations and technology, making a good tornado all that much more effective.

Earthquakes and volcanoes may be common events in the Gamma World. More frequently encountered dangers include fires, storms, floods, and avalanches. Quite often, the approach of one of these disasters may be signaled by the sudden flight of creatures from an area. This is common before forest fires and bad storms even in our own time. At times, the characters themselves may set off one of these disasters by firing weapons in a dry forest or under an unstable cliff. Whole adventures can be constructed around natural disasters, as PCs struggle to escape or save their village from a brush fire, investigate a ruin before it is flooded or the cliff above gives way, or race against time and a terrible storm to accomplish their objective.

### The unknown

High-tech ruins are favorite places for the Gamma World adventures. They are also excellent places to introduce unknown dangers. The reasons for the prevalence of creature-related threats in a ruin should be obvious, since ruins are not only more sheltered than the wilderness, but they can also hold vast treasures of items and weapons (a fact known to intelligent creatures throughout the Gamma World). Ruins are, however, more like dragons' lairs than store-rooms, as such treasures contain not only treasure but also guardian creatures.

High-tech ruins should not be in the best of repair. A century of invaders' depredations and attacks, mutants' curiosity, vegetable overgrowth, and natural erosion will surely weaken even the best preserved and protected military complex. Less fortified sites may be completely hidden or leveled. Many base defenses will be inactive, but some (the most centralized and heavily armored) will remain. However, man-made defenses aren't the half of it.

Ruins are natural traps. Crumbling concrete and rusting metal allow roofs to collapse, floors to cave in under a simple footstep, or walls to slump from a simple weapon blast. Whole buildings

may turn to rubble through carelessness by PCs — not the best fate for those fragile high-tech items within. Many of these structures will be obviously dangerous and crumbling, and they may give warning of their condition in the form of sounds, cracks, and falling dust. Then again, they might not. It is good policy to give some type of alarm if the players indicate that they are alert for the signs of danger which an impending collapse might generate.

High-tech items, too, will probably not be in the best condition when found. Radiation and poison contamination may come about as a result of deterioration in containers and generators. As chemicals degenerate, they leave hazardous residues. A weapon might work not at all, only intermittently, or simply explode. Suits of powered armor can malfunction and trap or injure the wearer, since they contain sensors and feedback mechanisms which can be misadjusted. Force fields can suddenly collapse on the user, squeezing him like a tube of toothpaste. Seemingly sound boats may turn turtle or come apart at the seams. Flying and land-roving vehicles can lose power at the most embarrassing moments. Even in the best of circumstances, unfamiliar tech items can be as dangerous to the users as live grenades. Such accidental events usually do not happen without some warning, but poison gas or a failing circuit seldom make much noise.

Other dangers found in ruins include malfunctioning or damaged equipment which is part of the buildings themselves. Gas lines are common and may be leaking or ruptured. In a research installation, such conduits may carry explosive, corrosive, or poisonous gas which will be around for torch-carrying groups to find. Pipes may still contain liquids which they once transferred from place to place, including water, acids, poisons, and flammables. Damaged electrical systems might electrify whole walls or corridors. Smells often indicate these dangers exist; ozone around electrical shorts is a common example.

Ruins can also create other dangers. Elevators can fall or stop between floors. The elevator doors can malfunction and close on a PC, or not open or close at all. Robots may attack, have a short and be electrified, or blow up when asked to perform some difficult action. Underground complex tunnels might fill with water from a nearby lake when a wall cracks. One-way doors can leave characters in particularly difficult situations with no retreat. A large

nuclear plant could malfunction creating areas of intense heat and radiation if it doesn't just up and blow up altogether.

Computers can keep up a running patter of conversation, most of it useless but some potentially valuable or misleading. Rubble will often conceal dangers, such as small mutants, snakes, bombs, and electrically charged wires. Characters might even run into a secret military spy complex, with a lab similar to Q's in the James Bond movies; everything looks mundane, but most items are deadly (exploding pencils, laser-firing shoes, etc).

While there are many dangers in a ruin, the real hazards are the inhabitants and other looters. Any permanent residents would probably be familiar with the majority of the dangers in the ruins and may have set up a few of their own. Many of these booby traps should be suitably primitive, but some may be technological and of advanced design, possibly making use of the complex's own defenses. Looters in the ruins might steal warning signs guarding dangerous areas, or they might actually attack the characters in order to protect their finds. Seemingly natural hazards, such as falling walls or explosively malfunctioning items, could actually be well-planned traps set by other creatures.

There are other ways to convince players that blasting everything in sight is not healthy. Frequent use of high-tech weapons by characters will attract the curious and covetous, just as flashing gold will do on any street today. Firing weapons may also attract other similarly destructive creatures, or it may gain the attention of high-tech computers. If used in a complex, such weapons and items might trigger defensive systems better left inactive. At the same time, such things frequently scare off the more friendly and peaceful creatures. Trigger-happy characters can also be goaded into destroying useful items or blasting creatures who will give them information. The results of these actions should be made clear to them later, after they have suffered as a result of not having the item or information.

Players faced with the above may be persuaded to cut down on their destructive tendencies much more realistically than by increasing the breakdown frequency of their characters' weapons. In any case, by reducing their use of firepower, the GM will force the players to think more carefully, be wary, and be less likely to solve all their problems with the attack dice.

## **GAMEX '95, July 5-7**

This convention will take place at Chapman College in Orange, Cal. Contact: GAMEX '85, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808, or telephone (213)420-3675.

## **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 \$15. For more details, contact: SEAGA, Inc., K. Scott Filipek, P.O. Box 930031, Norcross GA 33093.

## **COLONIAL CITY GAMEFEST '85 July 13-14**

This convention will be held at the Mt. Vernon High School in Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Activities will include board games, role-playing game tournaments, and a miniatures painting contest. Contact: Colonial City Gamefest, 1003 1/2 East Gambier St., Mount Vernon OH 43050.

## **MINDCON II, July 13-14**

This gaming convention will be held at the Scottish Rite Temple in San Antonio, Texas. For more details, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Craig Pierce, 7107 Blanco Road, San Antonio TX 78216, or telephone (512)349-6620.

## **WINDSOR GAMEFEST III, July 13-14**

This convention will take place at Ambassador Hall at the University of Windsor. Fantasy, science-fiction, and miniatures tournaments will be featured. Preregistration fees are \$10 (in Canadian funds); registration fees are \$12. For details, in Canada, contact: WRPA Head Office, 584 Brighton, Windsor, Ontario, Canada N8N 2L6; or, in the U.S.: U.S. Office, 8675 Sarah Lane, Grosse Isle MI 48138.

## **DOVERCON, July 17-19**

To be held in the Dover Municipal Building in Dover, N.H., this convention will feature role-playing games and tournaments as well as an art competition and a miniatures contest. Costumes will also be judged. For more details, contact: Dovercon, 95 Glenwood Ave., Dover NH 03820, or telephone (603)742-3858.

## **SPACECON 8, July 19-21**

To be held at the Stouffer's Concourse Hotel in Arlington, Va., this convention will feature presentations by representatives of NASA and Universal Pictures. Guests of honor include Richard Herd and Frank Ashmore of "V," Robert Colbert of "Time Tunnel," and Angelique Pettyjohn of "Star Trek." Admission fees are \$20. For details, contact: SpaceCon 8, 230 Denfield Drive, Alexandria VA 22309.

## **EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY™ CONVENTION XIV, July 20**

To be staged at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., this convention

# Convention Calendar

will feature an assortment of historic miniatures events, role-playing game tournaments, a painting contest, and a flea market. Preregistration fees are \$5.75; admission at the door is \$6.25. For more information, contact: R. Hagerty, 905 W. Franklyn Ave., Elkhart IN 46515, or telephone (219)293-4398.

## **THUNDERCON I, July 20-21**

This gaming convention will be held at Hammarskjold High School in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Featured events include science-fiction and fantasy role-playing games, board and war games, and miniatures events. Dealers' booths, a flea market, movies, and a figure painting contest will also be provided. Registration is \$5 per day, or \$8 for the weekend. For more details, contact: Thundercon, c/o The Gamer's Attic, 777 Red River Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada P7B 1J9, or telephone (807)345-2411.

## **ATLANTA FANTASY FAIR II, Aug. 2-4**

This gaming convention will be held at the Omni Hotel & Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Ga. Leading guests will include authors Robert Asprin, Lynn Abbey, and Frederik Pohl, artist Jim Starlin, and special-effects creator Jim Danforth. Featured events include a costume contest, a short story competition, a graphic story contest, an amateur film festival, and an art show. Registration fees are \$28 (with club and family discounts available). For more information, contact: Atlanta Fantasy Fair, P.O. Box 566, Marietta GA 30061, or telephone (404)425-8095.

## **KAL-KON, Aug. 2-4**

This fantasy role-playing convention will take place at Eason Hall in Westfield, N.Y. Featured events will include fantasy and science-fiction role-playing games, the Trivial Pursuit® game, and miniatures events. Dealers' booths will be available. For preregistration information or for just more details, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Gamer's Connection, P.O. Box 822, Jamestown NY 14702-0822.

## **CAPITOL-CON, Aug. 3**

This convention will be staged at the Public Affairs Center of the Sangamon State University in Springfield, Ill., from 9 A.M. to 9 P.M. Featured activities will include role-playing, historical, science-fiction, and board games. For more information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Bill

Wilson, 2 Candletree, Apt. 6, Springfield IL 62704, or telephone Bill Wilson at (217)787-3386.

## **OZARKON I, Aug. 3-4**

This gaming convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Joplin, Mo. Proceeds for this charity event will be donated to the local PBS station. Guests of honor include game publisher Steve Jackson and sculptor John Fischner. Scheduled events include a variety of gaming tournaments, an amateur film contest, computer software demonstrations, and panels on a wide range of topics. Registration fees are \$8 for the entire weekend and \$4 for a single day. For more details, contact: Ozarkon I, P.O. Box 2151, Joplin MO 64803, or telephone (417)781-5326.

## **GAME-FEST VI, Aug. 9-18**

San Diego's 6th annual game festival will be held in the Old Town district, and it will feature over 60 different gaming events with more than \$1500 in total prizes. This convention will also include special game demonstrations and instruction sessions, figure painting, diorama design, and costume contests. Registration fees, which include a \$20 coupon book for game purchases, for all 10 days are \$15 until August 8, and \$20 at the door. For more details, contact: Game-Fest VI, c/o Game Towne, 3954 Harney St. (Old Town), San Diego CA 92110.

## **VALLEYCON '85, Aug. 17**

This science-fiction and fantasy gaming convention will be held at the Tulare Community Center in Tulare, Cal. Films, trivia and costume contests, and open gaming are among the scheduled events. Admission to this convention is free. For information, contact: Valleycon, c/o Big Mikes Video, 1766 E. Tulare Ave., Tulare CA 93274.

## **GEN CON® 18 GAME CONVENTION, Aug. 22-25**

This gaming convention will be staged at the MECCA Convention Hall in Milwaukee, Wis.

## **MEMPHIS FANTASY CONVENTION, Aug. 23-25**

This benefit convention will take place at the Rodeway Inn West in Memphis, Tenn. All proceeds will be donated to St. Jude's Children's Hospital. The convention will feature an RPGA™ Network AD&D™ tournament, plus many other games. Contact: MFCA, 3336 Scenic Terrace, Memphis TN 38128, or telephone (901)454-5098.

## TERRA-CON '85, Aug. 23-25

This convention will be held at the Hilton Inn East in Wichita, Kan. Guests of honor include Poul and Karen Anderson and David Le Anderson. Registration fees are \$8 until August 1, and \$10 thereafter. For more details, contact: Terra-Con '85, P.O. Box 947, Wichita KS 67201.

## TRIANGULUM, Aug. 30 - Sep. 1

This convention will be staged at the Marc Plaza Hotel in Milwaukee, Wis. Guests of honor will include Harlan Ellison and David Gerrold; Isaac Asimov will be guest speaker (via teleconference). Activities will include gaming, films, a masquerade, a writing workshop, and a trivia contest. A Saturday morning brunch is planned; cost will be \$9. Registration fees are \$25 until July 15, and \$29 thereafter. For more information, contact: Triangulum, P.O. Box 92456, Milwaukee WI 53202.

## GATEWAY '85, Aug. 31 -Sep. 2

This convention will be staged at the Airport Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles, Cal. Role-playing games, family games, seminars, and a game auction will be featured. For more information, contact: Gateway '85, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808, or telephone (213)420-3675.

## FANTASY FAIRE, Aug. 31-Sep. 2

This annual convention will feature films, panels, filksinging, workshops, a costume

contest, and a cabaret/talent show. Guests of honor include science-fiction writers Poul Anderson, Fritz Leiber, Evangeline Walton, and Paul Edwin Zimmer. Registration fees are \$20 until August 5, and \$25 thereafter. For more details, contact: Fantasy Publishing Company, 1855 West Main St., Alhambra CA 91801.

## AUTUMN CAMPAIGNS, Sep. 7

This convention will take place at the Holiday Inn North Bluegrass Pavillion in Lexington, Ky. Featured activities will include role-playing and board games, tournaments, and miniatures events. Registration fees are \$5. For more information about this convention, contact: Tim Wisner, c/o The Rusty Scabbard, 513 E. Maxwell St., Lexington KY 40502.

## 1985 COI/COD FALL MANEUVERS, Sep. 21-22

For more details about this wargaming convention, contact: Bill Thomson, 7081 NW 16th St., Apt. 114, Plantation FL 33313, or telephone (305)587-3315.

## VALLEY CON 10, Sep. 21-22

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Fargo, N.D. Guest of honor will be fantasy author Patricia Wrede. Featured activities will include videos, an art show and auction, panels, a Tarot reader, and a wide variety of gaming events. Registration fees are \$5 for

adults and \$3 for children under the age of 13. For additional information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Valley Con 10, P.O. Box 7202, Fargo ND 58111.

## NOWSCON '85, Sep. 28-29

Sponsored by the Northern Ohio Wargaming Society, this convention will take place at the National Guard Armory in Brookpark, Ohio. The convention will feature an official RPGA™ Network-sanctioned AD&D™ tournament, and the winner will be awarded the coveted Golden Pegasus trophy. For more information, contact: NOWS, P.O. Box 29116, Parma OH 44129.

## CRUSADER CON V, Oct. 4-6

This gaming convention will take place at the Metropolitan State College in Denver, Col. Tournament events will include Diplomacy™, Kingmaker™, Champions™, Squad Leader™, and AD&D® games, and much, much more. Registration fees are \$8 until September 15, and \$10 thereafter. For more details about this event, contact: The Auraria Gamer's Club, P.O. Box 13395, Denver CO 80201-3395.

## COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS XI, Oct. 11-14

This gaming event will take place in Schenectady, New York. Featured activities will include costume and miniatures contests, an auction, and around-the-clock gaming. Though role-playing games are emphasized, all gaming activities are welcome. Contact: Pamela Boynton, Council, P.O. Box 4086, Queensbury NY 12801.

## KING CON 1, Oct. 5

Sponsored by the Knights of the Griffon, this convention will be held in the community building at the Mt. Vernon city park. Featured events will include role-playing game tournaments, seminars, a painting competition, a fantasy and science-fiction art show, and much more. Registration fees are \$5 in advance, or \$1 entrance fee for each scheduled gaming event. For more details, contact: King Con 1, c/o The Dragon's Lair, 1311 N. 13th, Mt. Vernon IL 62864.

## FALLCON, Oct. 19-20

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held at the newly built University Centre Hotel in Gainesville, Fla. Guest of honor will be Piers Anthony. Events will include videos, an art show, a cocktail party, and a costume contest. Registration fees are \$8 until August 1, and \$10 thereafter. For more information, contact: Bill Hatfield, c/o Novel Ideas, 1122 W. University Ave., Gainesville FL 32601.

## ADVACon '85, Oct. 20

This gaming convention will be held at the Polish Falcon Hall in Depew, N.Y. Fantasy and science-fiction role-playing games, board games, and miniatures tournaments will be among the featured events. For details, contact: The Advacon Fellowship, 101 Floss Ave., Buffalo NY 14211.

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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%  
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#### MILE HI CON 17, Oct. 25-27

Denver's oldest science-fiction convention will be staged at the Sheraton Inn in Lakewood, Colo. Guests of honor include Somtow Sucharitkul and Leslie Fish; Edward Bryant will be toastmaster. Featured events will include a computer game room, a trivia bowl, and a filk concert. For more information, contact: Mile Hi Con, P.O. Box 27074, Denver CO 80227.

#### NECRONOMICON '85, Oct. 25-27

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Riverview, Fla. Guests of honor will include Andre Norton, Robert Adams, Robert Bloch, and Roger Zelazny. Autograph sessions, a caberet, a costume contest, alien cooking, and a banquet are among the featured activities. Registration fees are \$10 until October 1, and \$15 thereafter. For more details, contact: Necronomicon '85, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569.

#### RO VA CON 10, Oct. 25-27

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be staged at the Roanoke Valley Civic Center in Roanoke, Va. Guests of honor include Richard Pini, Hal Clement, and Angelique Pettyjohn. Activities will include filk singing, a variety of gaming tournaments, and a costume contest. For more information about this event, contact: Ro Va Con, P.O. Box 117, Salem VA 24153.

#### UNICON II, Nov. 8-10

This convention will take place at the L.A. Pittenger Student Center on the Ball State University campus in Muncie, Ind. Guests of honor will be David Gerrold, Nancy Springer, and Buck and Juanita Coulson. Movies, seminars, workshops, tournaments, and miniatures competitions will be featured. Registration fees are \$10 until October 15. For more information, contact: The Quetors' Society, Unicon II Preregistration, L.A. Pittenger Student Center Box 279, Muncie IN 47306.

#### CONTACT, Nov. 15-17

Sponsored by the River City Science-Fiction Association, this convention will be staged at the Airport Sheraton Inn in Evansville, Ind. Guests of honor include author Jack L. Chalker and RPGA™ Network coordinator Penny Petticord. Panels, an art show and auction, seminars, a masquerade, and comet gazing will be among the featured events. Registration fees are \$8 until September 15, \$10 until November 1, and \$12 thereafter. For further details, contact: RCSFA, P.O. Box 3894, Evansville IN 47737, or telephone (812)858-5419.

#### TROPICON IV, Dec. 6-8

This science-fiction convention will take place at the Holiday Inn in Ft. Lauderdale West, Fla. Guests of honor will include Robert Bloch, Lee Hoffman, and Gary Alan Ruse. A large variety of activities are plan-

ned for this event, including panels, readings, films, an art show, a costume part, and a banquet. Registration fees are \$10 until November 1, and \$15 thereafter. All registrants are eligible for a drawing of a \$50 value carton of books. For more details, contact, Joe Siclari, c/o South Florida Science Fiction Society, 4599 N.W. 5th Ave., Boca Raton FL 33431.

#### RUSTYCON III, Jan. 17-19

To be staged at the Executive Inn in Seattle, Wash., this science-fiction convention will feature a number of activities. Guests of honor include author Vonda N. McIntyre and artist Ilene Meyer. Registration fees are \$12 until July 4, \$16 until December 31, and \$20 thereafter. For more information, contact: Rustycon III, P.O. Box 47132, Seattle WA 98146.

#### ORCCON, Feb. 15-17

This gaming convention will take place at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. Activities will include role-playing tournaments, war games, seminars, and an auction. For more information, contact: Orccon, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808, or telephone (213)420-3675.

#### L.A. ORIGINS '86, July 3-6

This convention will be staged at the Airport Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles, Cal. For more details, contact: L.A. Origins '86, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808.

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# Gamers' Guide

## PBM

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TOP PBM GAME of 1983 and 1984

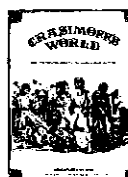
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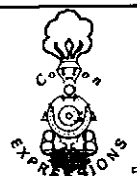
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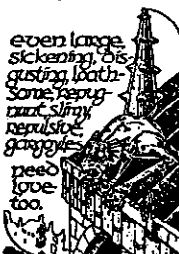


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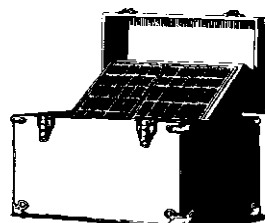
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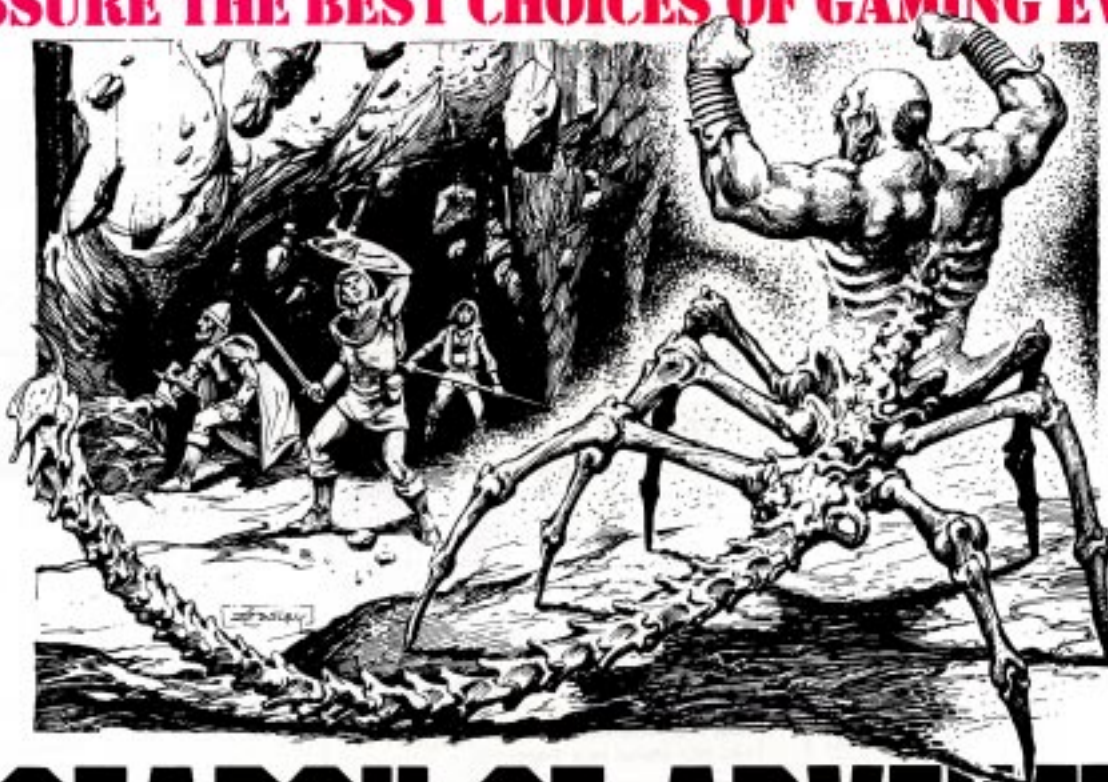
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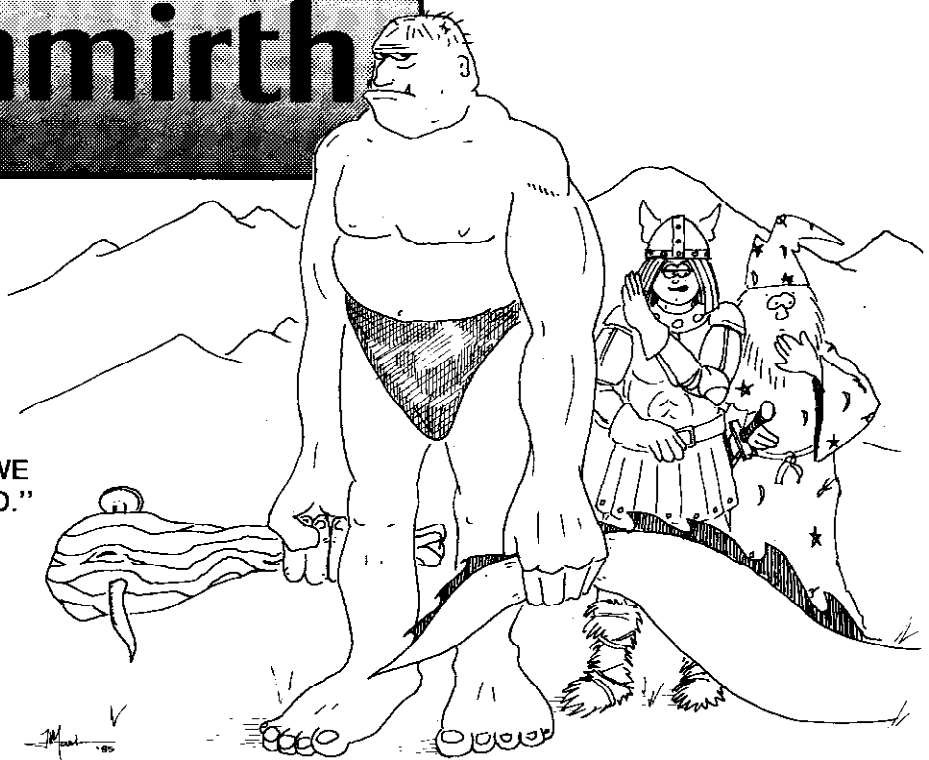






# Dragonmirth

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CONVERSATIONALIST, BUT WE  
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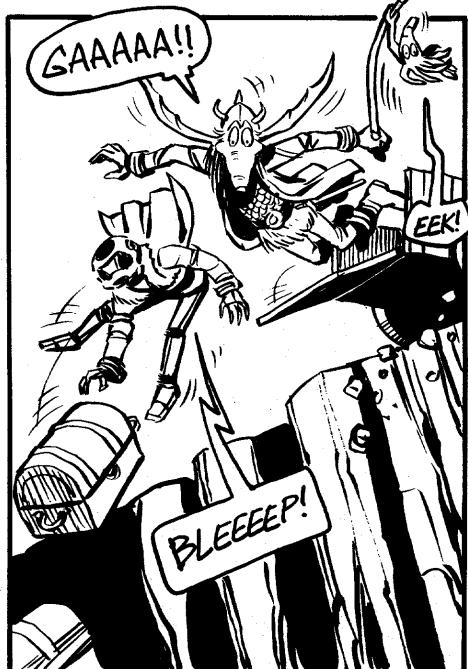
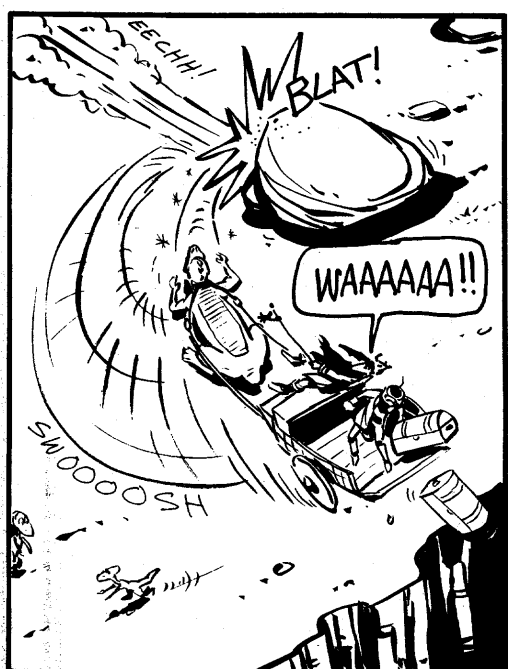
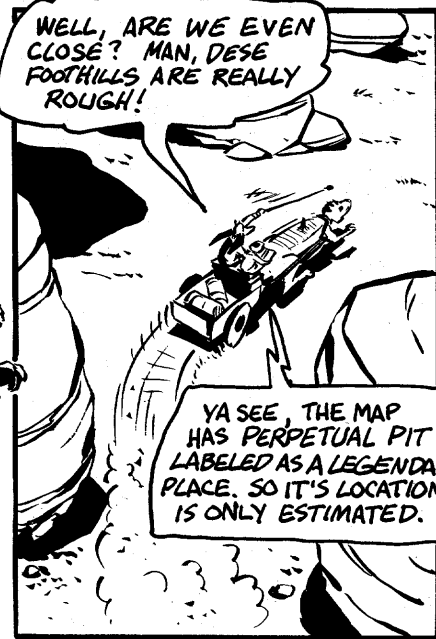
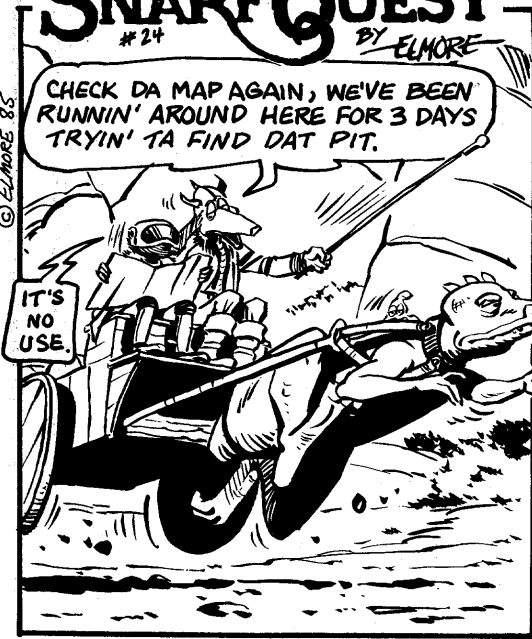
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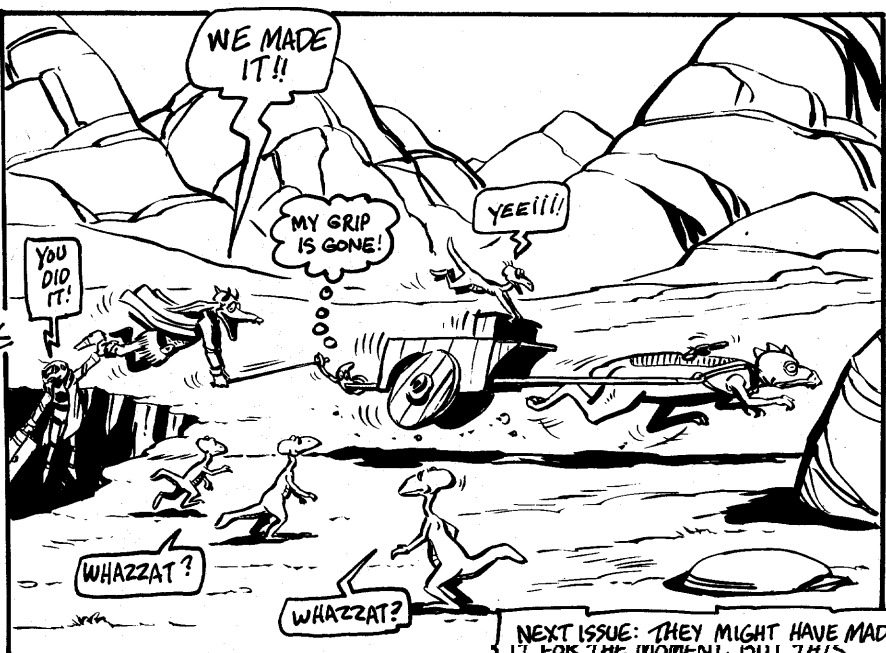
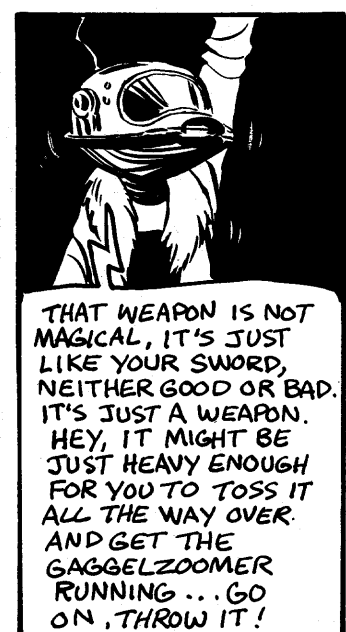
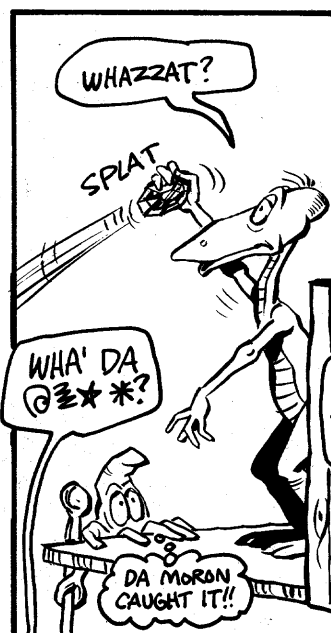
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