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MAY 1988, #133

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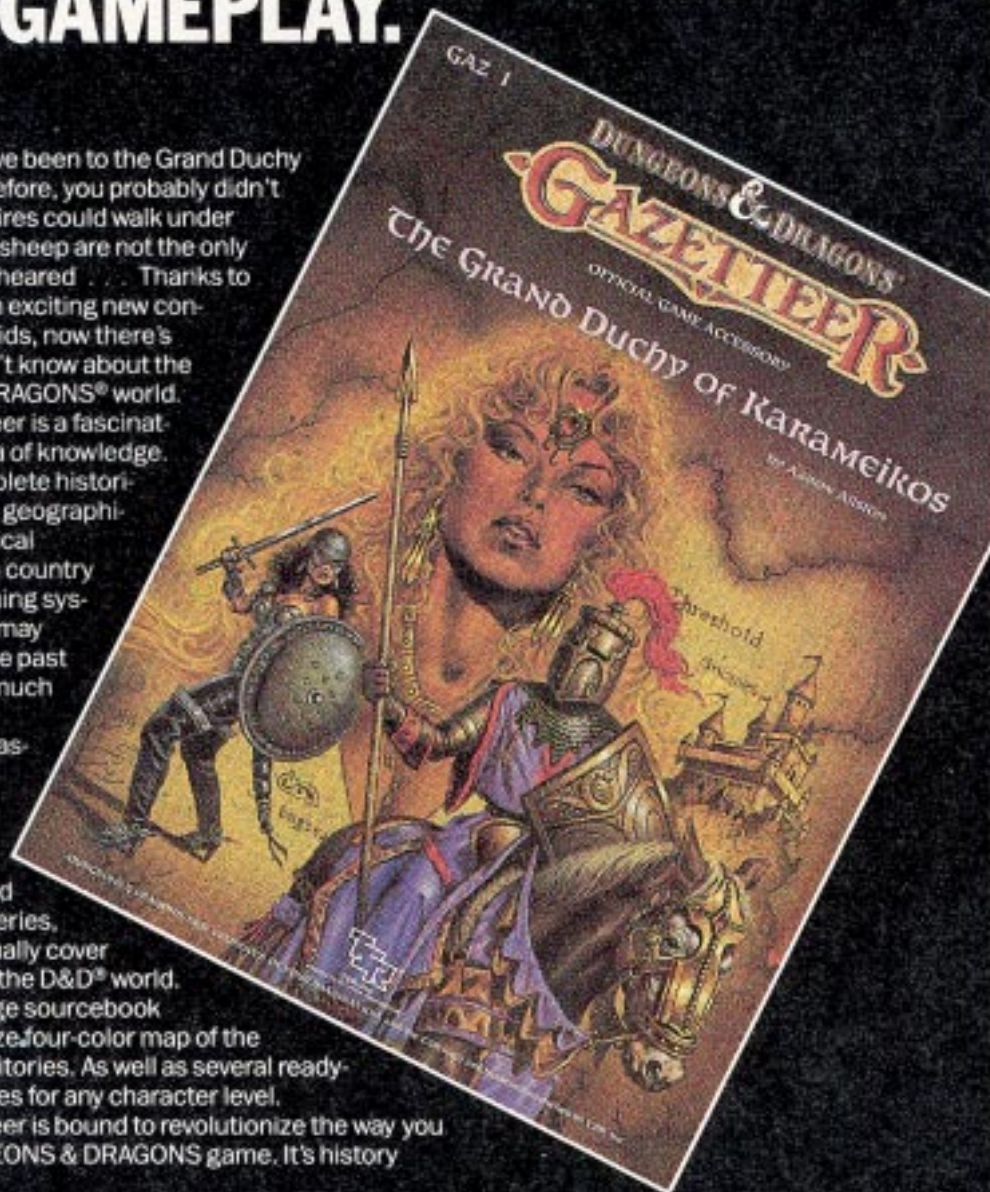
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Dragon[®]

M A G A Z I N E

Issue #133
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COVER

A sudden confrontation between a hot-tempered barbarian and a marauding sea troll is the subject of this month's cover painting by veteran cover artist Daniel Horne. If you have a good (meaning humorous) title for this cover, send it to us. We'll print the best ones in a later issue, as we did for the cover of issue #127.

LETTERS

An artful reply

Dear Dragon:

Your magazine is great! You are doing a wonderful job! The cover art gets better and better every issue! Have you ever thought about creating a portfolio of all your artwork? It would be a great-selling item.

Jason Sauvie
Flint MI

Well, thank you very much! Funny you should ask about an art collection, because we've done exactly that. The Art of DRAGON® Magazine is now on sale from TSR, Inc. This wonderful volume sells for \$16.95 (£9.95 in the UK), and is available from the Mail Order Hobby Shop (see the mail-order address on page 4) or in a hobby shop or book store near you.

Compu-Service

Dear Dragon:

Rather than running your own bulletin board system, why not run (or maybe even share) a forum on the CompuServe® Information Service? There is a very active RPG section on CompuServe that would fit right in with your products. It would save you the capital investment of your own equipment and would provide space for an excellent data library for downloads. Your Mail Order Hobby Shop is represented in CompuServe's Electronic Mall.

Jim Kelker
Hayward CA

You've made a good point. In fact, DUNGEON® Adventures editor Barbara Young and I have been appearing on CompuServe's Gamers Forum for several months now. We occasionally leave messages in the message base or take part in on-line conferences (COs) to answer questions from gamers around the world. We're also uploading our writers' guidelines and other materials into the data libraries (though this is taking some time to do). If any CompuServe subscribers want to leave electronic mail for

either Barbara (70007,2367) or myself (Roger; 70007,2064), we'd love to hear from you. For more information on the CompuServe Information Service, contact:

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(614)457-0802 (if calling from Ohio or Canada)

See "The Island in Your Computer," in DRAGON issue #128 for more information.

Four questions

Dear Dragon:

I am sending this letter to help answer some questions that have been on my mind for quite some time now:

1. When will there be a Best of DRAGON Magazine Anthology, volume VI?
2. When will there be a Best of DUNGEON Adventures Anthology?
3. When will the second edition of the AD&D® game be released?
4. Having a nice day?

Johnny Melton
Toulon IL

1. We are tentatively scheduling an anthology of the best modules to have appeared in DRAGON Magazine for early 1989.

2. A similar anthology of the best modules to have appeared in the first year or two of DUNGEON Adventures is scheduled for release in late 1989.

3. As of this writing, the second edition is still undergoing playtesting by selected gaming groups, which are coordinated through the RPGA™ Network. In July, the game will undergo another editorial revision based on the playtesting results. Limited playtesting will take place after that, and the game should be released in early 1989.

4. So far, it's been okay.

(continued on page 4)

Other guys

Eleven years ago, I wandered into a hobby store and picked up a copy of *The Space Gamer*. I liked it and began hunting for other gaming magazines until I found a purple copy of DRAGON® issue #3. At that point, I became an RPG magazine enthusiast, attracted by the magazines' color, variety, and liveliness — even if I never played the games that they described.

Eleven years later, my interest in gaming magazines has only grown stronger, though for very different reasons. Now, I look at them with an evaluative eye: What does this magazine do that makes it attractive and popular? Why do I like or dislike this magazine? How could it be better? What lessons can be learned from it to improve our own periodicals? Knowing the problems and concerns we face each month to produce DUNGEON® Adventures, AMAZING® Stories, DRAGON Magazine, and POLYHEDRON™ Newszine has deepened my appreciation for the "other guys" when I find a magazine that looks particularly good.

Here, then, are a few of the "other guys" in the fantasy and science-fiction gaming field. Rather than overlapping the coverage of gaming provided by DRAGON Magazine, they complement it with their focus on other areas of interest to RPG players.

American Fantasy: The Magazine of Contemporary Fantasy and Horror. *American Fantasy* previews and reviews new game releases in fantasy, horror, and science-fiction media — novels, anthologies, graphic novels, art books, movies, and VCR tapes are all represented. Game designer Greg Gorden has a brief game-review column, and interviews with noted writers and artists (as well as short stories) appear in each issue. I like "Wolff & Byrd: Counselors of the Macabre," a comic about two defense lawyers who take hilarious cases from supernatural clients. This is a sharp-looking and entertaining publication, edited by Bob and Nancy Garcia. *American Fantasy* is a 64-page quarterly magazine, available for \$16.00 for four issues. The cover price is \$4.95 (\$6.95 in Canada). Write to: *American Fantasy*, P.O. Box 41714, Chicago IL 60641-0714.

Paper Mayhem: The Informative PBM Magazine. One of the

(continued on page 4)

OOPS!

Errata for Hotel Reservations 1988 GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ Game Fair

Important information was left out of the 16-page 1988 GEN CON/ORIGINS Game Fair insert in DRAGON® issue #132. The Official Housing Application form, used for making hotel reservations, is grossly in error. Before you send this particular form to the Housing Bureau, write down your arrival and departure dates in the space above the table listing hotel rates.

This information is extremely vital to insure proper hotel confirmation for you; without it, hotel reservations cannot be made for you and your party. We apologize for any inconvenience that this has caused.

Sincerely, Mark Olson
Promotions/Convention Manager

(continued from page 3)

lesser-known fields of gaming is that of play-by-mail games, in which players correspond directly with a game company to take part in strategic or role-playing games that operate over long periods of time. *Paper Mayhem* is the best established and (as its subtitle suggests) most informative of the PBM game periodicals. PBM game reviews, playtesting notes, announcements, new releases, playing hints, and more are presented in each issue. David Webber, Elaine Webber, Galen Plourde, Mike Scheid, and Jim Townsend are the editors. *Paper Mayhem* is a 40-page bimonthly magazine, available for \$20.25 for six issues (\$26.25 to Canadian addresses). The cover price is \$4.50. Write to: *Paper Mayhem*, 1518 Adams Street, Ottawa IL 61350-4764.

Sorcerer's Scroll: A Publication of the Fantasy Gaming SIG of American Mensa Ltd. *Sorcerer's Scroll* (which is looking for a new name for itself) is a newsletter devoted to role-playing and computer games. Each issue is jammed with short letters, opinion pieces, gaming hints, reviews, and articles from Mensa gamers. Of the few amateur publications I've seen, this one is the most fascinating and "meaty," with a pleasant and informal feel. Mary H. Kelly is the editor and is also coordinator

of the Mensa Fantasy Gaming SIG (special interest group). *Sorcerer's Scroll* is an 18-page bimonthly newsletter, available for \$8.00 for six issues (the subscription also includes two issues of another Fantasy Gaming SIG publication, *The Spell Book*). A free copy of *Sorcerer's Scroll* is available by sending a legal-size, self-addressed, stamped envelope to: *Sorcerer's Scroll*, Mary H. Kelly, 4030 Valley View Lane #233, Farmers Branch TX 75244-5031.

I picked these magazines because they have a particular appeal for me, but they are not the only ones I consider striking in overall appearance, coverage, and quality. Even if I like our magazines best (and I do), it is a pleasure to find other magazines that earn admiration — and an evaluative eye.

A final note: Lately, I've heard some discussion among those in the role-playing industry about the future direction of role-playing as a recreation. What do you think the future of role-playing will be like? What new developments would you like to see? I'd like to hear from you on these topics. Just send a letter or postcard with your opinion on the future of role-playing to: RPG Futures, DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147. You might see a future editorial based on the results of this informal survey.



ADVERTISING ERROR

The price for Columbia Games' "Horn Pilots' Almanac," as advertised on page 13 of DRAGON® issue #132, was misprinted as \$19.95 on the order coupon. The correct price is \$25.00.

LETTERS

(continued from page 3)

RPG Burnout

Dear Dragon:

I didn't think it could possibly happen to me, who has seen six or seven regular gaming groups break up without losing her enthusiasm for the game, but it finally has. The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game is losing its intrigue for me. Over many years, I have played every conceivable combination of class and race, but it doesn't seem to help.

I think my biggest problem is that I started out as a DM, then went to being a player. Because of that, I know all of the books too well to find any challenges in playing. I tried switching to the TOP SECRET® game but that didn't last long, because my group couldn't find any modules. Could you please suggest some way to put life back into playing before another character of mine dies of boredom?

Tracy Field
Calgary, Alberta

Most of the long-time gamers I've known have had periods in which gaming is just not that exciting anymore. If the problem seems to be that everyone is too familiar with the game system, find at least one other person who wants to referee another game (which you've already tried). It's good to develop at least two other potential game masters for different games or campaign settings, so the group gets a lot of variety. If everyone is tired of taking their characters seriously, a switch to a silly RPG might be called for; check the "Role-playing Reviews" column by Jim Bambra in issue #132 for reviews of some light-hearted RPGs; I personally recommend the TOON® game from Steve Jackson Games, and TSR will release the BULLWINKLE & ROCKY™ game this June. Believe me, a little silliness goes a long way. Ω

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FORUM

I must disagree with some of Ed Friedlander's remarks concerning familiars, published in the "Forum" for issue #127.

Throughout the AD&D® game system, we find that any unusual advantage is normally balanced with some disadvantage. Thus, artifacts whose wholesale use would virtually destroy the game always carry unacceptable side effects.

Familiars give the magic-user an advantage, though in some cases that advantage is slight — a very small increase in hit points and superior distance vision, for example. A pseudo-dragon is a different matter altogether. In any event, it is against the philosophy of the game, I think, to allow this advantage while eliminating or vitiating the one major disadvantage of familiars — their vulnerability and subsequent hit-point penalty for the magic-user if they're snuffed.

True, at lower levels this disadvantage can be extremely damaging if not fatal. In fact, most players seem to avoid familiars altogether for this reason. The answer to this is that although *find familiar* is a first-level spell, it should not be used until the magic-user has achieved a relatively high level and can stand the loss, if it occurs.

But I think it would be a mistake to virtually eliminate the disadvantage by beefing up the familiar's hit points or by some other method, and I think it would be unwise to allow a familiar to be used as a permanent *commune* spell; that is, as a vehicle for friendly advice from the Dungeon Master. According to my understanding, a toad that is a familiar may be an exceptional toad and "abnormally intelligent" — for a toad — and in any event possesses wide angle vision (shared with the magic-user), which could prove very handy in detecting a potential ambush or in warning of attacks from the flank. But it is not a sage or a wise counselor, and its use as such raises the question of how its magic-user ever qualified for the class if the poor sap isn't even as bright as a smart toad.

David Godwin
Dallas TX

We were sitting around waiting for a couple of overdue players the other day when the subject turned to familiars. We more or less came to a consensus that with the exception of special familiars, having a familiar was more of a hindrance than a help to all but the lowest-level magic-users.

The only benefit such a familiar gives is a few extra hit points at the risk of hit-point loss if the (usually) easy-to-hit familiar takes damage. A 2-hp toad is of little value to even a 1st-level magic-user. Admittedly, back when this game began, it was the only way a magic-user had to get some extra hit points. But since the publication of *Unearthed Arcana*, the spell *armor* has made this unnecessary.

More to the point though, familiars in game terms have always provided hand-to-hand combat potential to characters who have always been specified as noncombatants. The familiars

of legend and fiction have always enhanced the magical power of the caster.

What we decided was to redefine the familiar so as to give a magic-user a reason to have one. From experience with trying to rewrite characters and spells and dealing with the sort of problems inherent in the process, I think the best way is to create the first-level spell *find other familiar*. This spell is identical to *find familiar* except that the mystic link between the magic-user and the familiar is different. (A magic-user can have one type of familiar at any time.)

Instead of giving the caster extra hit points, the familiar stores extra spells. The familiar carries the extra spell capacity a cleric with a wisdom score of 18 would have (two first, two second, one third, and one fourth, usable only if the caster is able to carry spells of such levels).

Hits on the familiar cause it to save vs. spells or lose a memorized spell (highest level first). The death of the familiar does not cripple its master, but causes him or her to make a system shock roll or die, lose all remaining memorized spells, and be unable to cast spells for 1-4 extra days (devices and scrolls may be used). The familiar has to be in range at both the time of memorization and the casting of the spells for this to work.

S.D. Anderson
Whittier CA

Many letters to the "Forum" in past months have been on the subject of "Monty Haul" parties. I would like to add my own thoughts and experiences to this discussion.

If a DM suddenly realizes that his or her party has too much magic and gold, certain encounters can be thrown in to rectify the problem. I had a character in a powerful but small 4th-to-6th-level party a few years ago. We could, without magical armor, weapons, and other items, quickly slaughter any ogres or minotaurs that came our way. When we began to set our sights on dragons, our DM reacted. In the next dungeon, our once-fearless characters actually ran screaming from a solitary monster. The DM didn't throw an "Armageddon" creature at us, either; we ran from a *rust monster*. It posed a threat to our armor and weapons, which we prized highly, and the narrow, twisting dungeon corridors made it impossible for us to use powerful spells like *fireballs* and *lightning bolts* on it. Fortunately, we found and secured behind us a heavy wooden door that had its hinges on our side. DMs can use similar monsters, such as disenchanters, xorn, and xaren. These beings, attacking with surprise or from ambush, can greatly reduce the veritable arsenal that some parties carry.

Another way to eliminate too much magic and wealth or "unique" magical items from other campaigns is used by a DM friend of mine. He sometimes starts adventures by putting the party in the middle of the dungeon with no equipment or provisions and offering no idea of how or why they are there. Not only does this

provide an interesting puzzle and cut out Monty Haul situations, it also tends to increase cooperation between party members — another problem often faced by DMs.

An afterthought on the complaints about the flood of new rules: If you don't like them, don't use them. If you want, give them a trial run or take a vote on them, or simply ignore them. Some people, myself included, find various new rules to be interesting and helpful. I *do*, however, agree with Timothy J. Cunningham's letter in issue #128 (this is my first "Forum" letter, too), as I find the addition of all of these rules confusing. Thus, I decided that I would pick and choose which ones I would use and which I would put to a vote. Remember, the D&D game is what you make it. It can be free and full of "guesstimations," all statistics and charts, or anything in between, as long as the DM and the players enjoy it.

Denise L. Voskuil
Sheboygan WI

I am responding to a letter in the "Forum" from issue #128, written by Steve Shewchuk. I disagree with him; magic-users are indeed much like a one-charge magical item at lower levels (especially 1st). I find a few flaws in Mr. Shewchuk's "improvement" for magic-users.

First of all, the use of cantrips. Page 45 of *Unearthed Arcana* clearly states that a magic-user may memorize four cantrips in place of one first-level spell. If a 1st-level magic-user does this, how does he cast his first-level spell? While they may be effective in given situations, cantrips do not have the power to equally replace that one important spell.

Second, the reference to double-classed mages. If you allow a person to become double-classed, he is no longer a magic-user alone. I have no trouble with fighter/magic-users surviving in my campaign, simply because they are not just magic-users.

Removing the memorization rule, however, seems drastic. The system of spell points used by some has been suggested as giving a spell-caster too much power; I am inclined to agree. Mr. Shewchuk asks, "When has any spell-worker in popular fantasy forgotten a spell just because he put forth the power to use it?" In the DRAGONLANCE® books, Raistlin certainly forgot his spells after casting them!

Don't get me wrong. I love magic-users and couldn't do without them. But there are easier ways to keep them alive longer. For instance, what about that character you roll up every once in a while with more than one high ability score? If he were a magic-user, he could have a better armor class due to dexterity. Or put a staff in the hands of a magic-user with a 17 strength. This will make certain that while he is not as good as a fighter, the magic-user can take care of himself to a degree.

Also, use that one spell carefully. If a party has a few fighter types, they should be able to handle four or five orcs without the magic-user trotting out his *magic missile*.

Finally, what's wrong with hit and run? Every character I've ever played has had to earn his levels by taking on one group of monsters and then going home to heal for a few days. There's nothing wrong with it. Some people get the impression that you should be able to get into several battles the first time out.

The magic-user is a lowly person, but with a little work and patience, he can be that high-level mage everyone dreams of having.

Jason Greff
Regent ND

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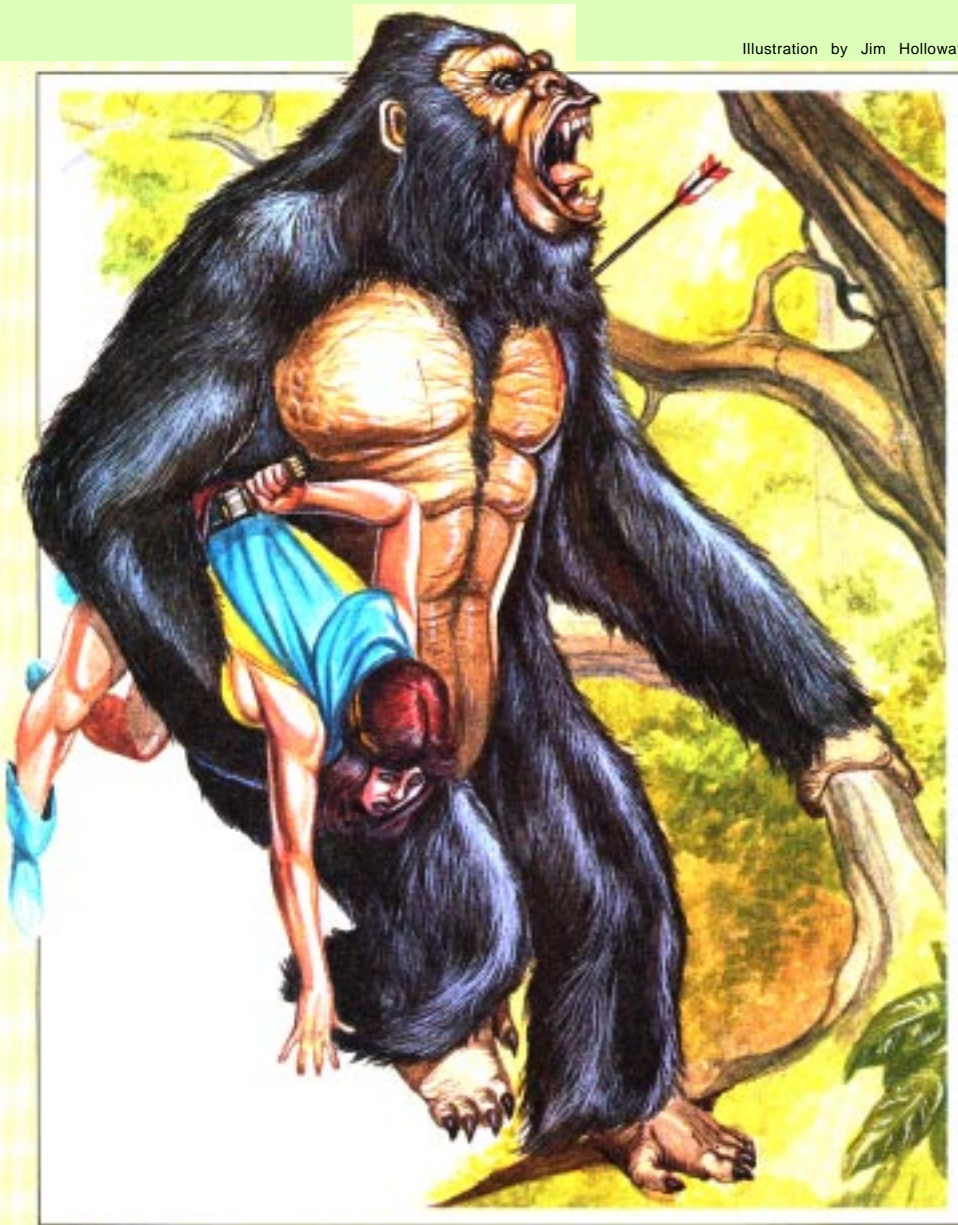
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The Ecology of the Carnivorous Ape

Illustration by Jim Holloway



Excerpt from "Beasts of the Far Southlands," by the sage Fabius:

There are many types of apes in the tropical lands, but the carnivorous ape is the most notorious and legendary. Many fables are told of this primate's ferocity and lust for human flesh. The truth is less fantastic, of course; the carnivorous ape lives in remote areas and has rarely been studied. At one time, it was thought that apes were all vegetarian and that the carnivorous ape was an anomaly. Now it is known that all apes will eat meat to varying degrees, just as bears do. The carnivorous ape is simply a carnivorous member of an otherwise omnivorous family.

It was my good fortune to have made friendship with a clan of Watanga tribesmen. These so-called savages live on the fringes of the southern Hepmonaland jungle, and my temporary residence there gave me an excellent opportunity to study a family group of carnivorous apes that roamed the nearby wilderness. The results of these two years of research are given here.



Description

As is well known, carnivorous apes have a superficial resemblance to gorillas. They are tall, broad, heavily built, and covered with long, black hair. Albino carnivorous apes are occasionally seen. Male apes stand up to 7' tall and weigh up to 625 lbs. Females are somewhat smaller, averaging 6' and 500 lbs.¹

It is the physiology of the jaws that shows the greatest distinction between carnivorous apes and gorillas. The mouth of the carnivorous ape is a bit longer and drawn out than in gorillas, almost becoming a muzzle. The teeth are long and sharp, with pointed incisors and canines designed to cut and tear flesh. The ape is a gluttonous eater, tearing off and swallowing chunks of flesh with every bite.

This ape has very keen senses, as befits a carnivore. The senses of sight and smell

The lords of the savage jungle

are comparable to those of the great cats. The ape's hearing is also keen, making it hard to approach a group of these beasts undetected.

The arms and legs of the carnivorous ape are longer though nearly identical to those of the gorilla. Surprisingly, this ape has bony nails which curve into the form of claws; this is unusual in a primate.

Like all apes, the carnivorous ape is incredibly strong. An adult male is capable of dragging a buffalo carcass for miles into the jungle. One ape was seen rolling an elephant's carcass over in an attempt to get it closer to a group of protective trees. Carnivorous apes can thus easily carry off a man, if they choose to do so.

Life and habits

Female carnivorous apes give birth to single young (rarely two) once every five or six years. The young are fully dependent on their mothers for three years. During this time, they cling to the hair on their mothers' backs, only rarely moving away from them. At the age of four to seven years, the young gradually learn to move around in trees and hunt, gaining full independence at age eight. Full maturity comes at the tenth year.

As far as is known, carnivorous apes may live up to 40 years of age. The elderly are easy to pick out; as the apes get past 30 years of age, their hair gradually turns gray at the tips. The oldest individuals have a dark silvery coat, and with practice an observer may note distinctive facial and bodily characteristics of individual apes.

The life habits of the carnivorous apes are an odd mixture of those of the leopard, lion, gorilla, and bear. This is a result of their size, diet, and intelligence. Like other apes, the carnivorous ape lives in small family groups, usually numbering around eight adults but sometimes reaching numbers as high as 20. Within these groups, there is about a two-to-one ratio of females to males. The leader of the group is the largest male. The leader is often challenged by young males in nonlethal wrestling matches; defeated challengers are driven off and usually (but not always) join another family group. Defeated leaders leave the group and live a solitary existence for the rest of their lives, becoming a particular danger to humans dwelling nearby.

Within the family groups, the males are dominant. They get the choice parts of killed game and the best sleeping areas. When a kill is brought in, the males eat their fill first, followed by the females; the young are last to feed. In times of scarcity, many of the young starve to death.

Carnivorous apes do not establish actual lairs, but family groups do have large territories over which they widely roam. The size of the territory is about one to three square miles per adult in the group. The male apes mark their territorial boundaries by scarring tree trunks with their nails, and also by releasing a musky

scent from glands in their cheeks (carnivorous apes releasing this scent appear to be hissing with open mouths at trees or objects they are marking).

Since carnivorous apes are not vegetarians, they do not live in the depths of the jungle where little game is found. These apes roam areas where the jungle is broken by hills or by the edge of the savannah, where much more game is found than deep in the rain forest.²

The diet of the carnivorous ape is varied. The apes will take almost any kind of meat they can get. Rodents make up nearly one-third of their diet. Another third is made of things like carrion, snakes, tortoises, eggs, lizards, fish, and the larvae of giant insects. Thus, two-thirds of the carnivorous ape's diet comes from individual foraging. The apes depend greatly on such foraging because of their size, which makes it necessary to have a large intake of high-protein food.

The remainder of these apes' diet comes from killed game. In this respect, the carnivorous apes are like lions; they drag the kill back to the group so all may eat. The apes may hunt either in groups or singly. Whenever a herd of large game such as buffalo or wildebeest wanders close to the apes' territory, all adult apes join the hunt, except for nursing mothers. More often, the only game available consists of antelope and warthogs. One group of apes was seen attacking a giraffe, although the intended prey viciously kicked several of the hunters and was able to run away.

Carnivorous apes do not wander very far from their protective trees, due to their fear of lions. Although one ape is a match for one lion, the apes generally act to protect the weaker members of their family groups. Leopards do not seem to be a major competitor, even though the leopards and apes are both tree climbers. Where they coexist, the leopards usually take the smaller, faster prey that the apes can't catch. However, it should be noted that carnivorous apes are capable of short bursts of speed and can easily outdistance a running man.³

When hunting alone, the apes depend on stealth. They often hide in trees overlooking trails or water, then leap out at creatures passing by.⁴ At other times, the apes hide in grass or bushes, dashing out at their prey in hopes of catching it by surprise. Whatever method is used, the prey is doomed once the ape's great strength and sharp teeth come into play. Rending and breaking limbs is an often-seen tactic when a carnivorous ape means to incapacitate a foe.

Carnivorous apes and men

The carnivorous ape has a reputation for man-eating. While this is true to some extent, by no means do they all eat men. The apes can be compared to tigers in that individuals will occasionally turn into man-eaters, while the majority do not. Most of

the man-eaters are solitary apes who were injured in some way, so as not to be able to catch other prey; such apes are usually defeated leaders cast out of their tribe.

Occasionally, however, an entire family group will turn into man-eaters. These groups are greatly feared by the native tribes. The apes' cunning allows them to make devastating raids on villages and caravans. Palisade walls are no protection against climbing apes. One group of 18 carnivorous apes attacked a slaver camp at night, silently climbing the walls. Once inside the camp, the apes tore apart huts and smashed tents flat. Out of 32 slavers, 28 were killed, along with 50 manacled slaves. The other six slavers saved themselves only by fleeing headlong into the jungle, somehow escaping undetected.

Although carnivorous apes may hunt men, men may also hunt the apes. Unscrupulous natives search out small family groups, spear the adults, and capture the young. The young are sold to similarly unscrupulous traders. This is how carnivorous apes end up in places far from their native jungle, such as hobgoblin lairs and hill-giant clans. Carnivorous apes appear to be more adaptable than their gorilla cousins, and they may even thrive in foreign, temperate areas where old forests are found.

Even stranger are the natives who worship carnivorous apes. One tribe believes that killing a carnivorous ape brings great luck and courage to the slayer; thus, one of their rites of manhood is to kill a carnivorous ape. Another tribe is known to regard the apes as sacred. This latter tribe keeps carnivorous apes as pets and feeds captives to them; such apes wander the tribal village freely and are said to be well behaved and friendly — to the villagers only, of course.

In summary, it should be seen that carnivorous apes are merely another jungle predator, instead of the bloodthirsty man-eaters of legend. However, their size and intelligence make them creatures to be wary of. Wandering through their territories is a perilous undertaking, for a single male ape is the equal of a half-dozen men-at-arms.

Notes

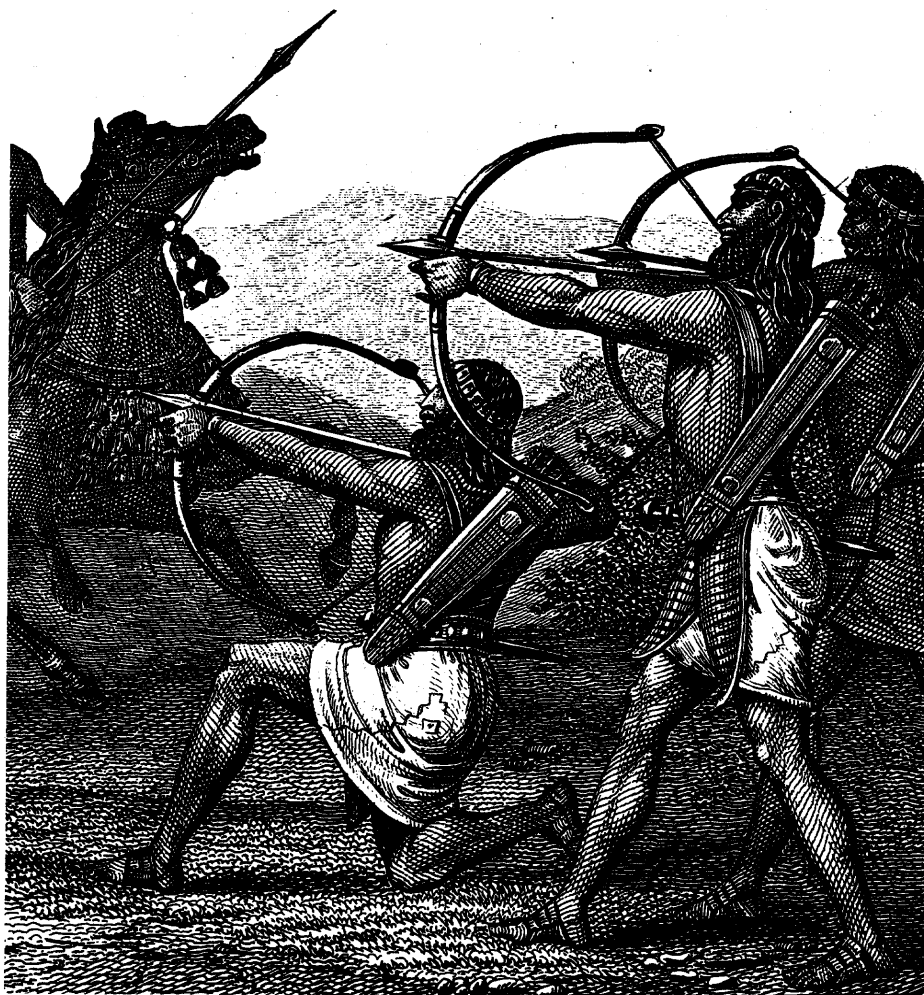
1. Treat female carnivorous apes as gorillas for hit dice and attacks, but allow them the same keen senses as the males.

2. Carnivorous apes can move through trees (brachiation) at a rate of 10". They can also run an 18" sprint, but only for one round. This sprint is used when the ape leaps out of an ambush; if attacking in the same round as it sprints, the ape's attacks are at +2 to hit for that round, but its armor class drops from AC 6 to AC 7.

3. When hiding in ambush (in grass or up in trees), the carnivorous ape has a 50% chance of surprising its prey.

4. When the ape hides in a tree and leaps down on its prey, the prey (if hit) takes 2-8 hp damage from the impact.

Bazaar of the Bizarre



In DRAGON® issue #127, we presented an assortment of magical bows for eagle-eyed archers. This month, more archery equipment is offered — some strange and unusual quivers with magical powers of their own, and some nonmagical but specialized arrows for creative bowmen.

Magical quivers

Frief's magical quiver

Frief's magical quiver looks like a normal quiver, but radiates magic. If found on a captured or slain opponent, it contains 3-12 normal (70%) or magical +1 (30%) arrows. If found in a treasure hoard, it contains only 3-12 normal arrows, as the magically created ones lose their powers if they haven't been used for four weeks. *Frief's magical quiver* functions as a normal quiver until it contains only one magical arrow of any sort.

When only one magic arrow is left, that arrow disappears and is replaced by 12 arrows with a magical bonus one less than that of the original arrow; e.g., an arrow +2 is replaced by 12 arrows +1; an arrow +1 is replaced by 12 magical arrows with no "to hit" bonus (but useful against monsters like lycanthropes or gargoyles); a magical arrow with no bonus is replaced by 12 normal arrows; etc. This continues until only normal arrows are left, but only one replacement occurs per day. The quiver does have one drawback; if an *arrow of slaying* is the arrow that would be replaced, 12 cursed arrows -1 appear. Also, under no condition can the character get experience points for the created arrows.

XP Value: 1,100

GP Value: 4,500

Created by: Ed Knight

Quiver of arrow storing

This quiver appears to be a normal quiver, although it has magical properties much like a *bag of holding*. Up to 200 arrows can be held in this quiver without adding any further encumbrance to the bowman (the quiver itself weighs as much as a normal quiver without any additions from the quiver's contents). The arrows within the quiver are easily accessible and may be of any sort — though finding the exact magical arrow desired may prove difficult.

XP Value: 1,000

GP Value: 4,000

Created by: Andrew Salamon

Specialized arrows

No experience-point values are given for any of these arrows, as they are not magi

Magical quivers and unusual arrows

cal. An expert craftsman is required for many of these arrows, as some ironworking, fletching, and carpentry skills are needed.

Flaming arrow

This type of nonmagical arrow has had its tip coated with pitch, a highly flammable substance that was used in sieges during medieval times. For game purposes, allow the PCs to purchase (for 5 gp) or find a jar of pitch containing up to 20 applications. Once set alight, these fiery missiles cause an extra point of damage to any creature hit. If contact is made with a flammable, nonliving object, the object is set afire within one turn. Creatures especially susceptible to flame attacks (e.g., trolls) take 2 extra hp damage when struck. It takes one round to prepare a pair of flaming arrows, which can then be lighted and shot in one round.

DMs should discourage players from carrying prepared arrows for two reasons: the mess and the potential danger. If the players insist in spite of warnings, the DM might consider having another character come too close with the torch he is carrying.

Spiral arrow

This nonmagical arrow has its flights (feathers) set in a diagonal fashion to its shaft. When fired, the angled flights cause the arrow to spin, thus creating a drilling motion which is quite effective in penetrating armor (doing 1 extra hp damage as a result). An arrow of this type can only be fashioned by an expert fletcher.

GP Value: 1

Blunt-headed arrow

This is another type of nonmagical arrow — one that may allow players to take prisoners alive by rendering them unconscious. The arrow has a bulb-shaped, wooden head which is sometimes covered with metal. A blunt-headed arrow does only 1-3 hp damage, with a 5% chance per point of damage of knocking the victim unconscious for 1-4 rounds (whether helmeted or not).

GP Value: 1 sp

Barbed arrow

This nonmagical arrow resembles a normal arrow except for its barbed head. A barbed arrow does normal damage when it hits and penetrates the flesh; when removed hastily, however, this arrow does an additional 1-2 hp damage. Often, the head of the arrow has a small ring to which a light line can be attached for shooting fish. Proper removal of this arrow from a wound takes 2-8 rounds to avoid further injury.

GP Value: 1 ep

Arrow of sleep

This normal arrow is coated with a poison that renders the victim unconscious if he fails his saving throw vs. poi-

son. This effect only occurs if the arrow has penetrated the flesh; the poison takes three rounds to put the victim to sleep. Each round, the victim then suffers a -1 to hit until a maximum of -3 has been reached. This "to hit" penalty lasts for 1-8 hours. Sleep lasts 1-4 hours. Though possession of poisoned arrows is considered evil, this sort of arrow might be allowable for some good characters.

GP Value: Variable; usually 50 and up

Broad-headed arrow

This nonmagical arrow has a wide, triangular head that inflicts terrible damage to those struck. A broad-headed arrow does an extra point of damage when it hits. Players attempting to sever a rope by shooting a broad-headed arrow at it should be given a +1 to hit because of the width of the arrowhead.

GP Value: 1 ep

Wooden arrow

Though this wooden-tipped arrow does -1 hp damage against a normal opponent, it inflicts special damage against vampires. If the archer is able to hit a vampire in the heart with such an arrow (on a "to hit" roll of 20), the vampire "dies" (as per the *Monster Manual*, page 99) immediately. This arrow is good, too, against rust monsters.

GP Value: 5 cp

Corded arrow

This type of nonmagical arrow has a small ring set in a thick shaft near the flights. When used with a light but strong cord, a corded arrow can be used to cross gaps between buildings or to recover small inanimate objects from a distance. This sort of arrow is not worth using as a method of creating a swing that can support a human-size character, but very small creatures might use it in this manner (if they weigh less than 20 lbs.). The range of this arrow is cut to one-tenth normal because of the weight of the cord. This sort of arrow is typically sold with 120' of strong cord.

GP Value: 6 (with 120' cord)

Grappling arrow

Similar in many ways to a corded arrow, the tip of a grappling arrow is fitted with a small, strong grappling hook. (The bow is merely used as the method of propulsion for this device.) When an attempt is made at snagging the hook, the DM should decide on an armor class to represent the difficulty of the maneuver. A successful hit means the hook is in place. A tug then sets the hook and breaks the unnecessary shaft. There is a 10% chance that the hook will dislodge during this action. A hook usually supports up to 200 lbs. of weight before collapsing. This arrow's range is as for the corded arrow.

GP Value: 10 (with 120' cord)

Arrows created by: Gordon R. Menzies

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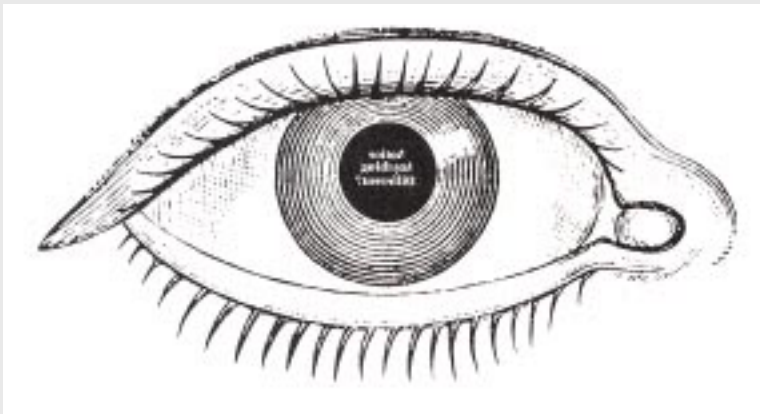
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Notice Anything Different?



The perception score: a new way of looking at things

His Honor the Lord Mayor was naturally quite interested in the adventurers who took temporary residence in one of the finer inns of the town — especially when he learned that one of their aims was to find the local assassins' guild and settle an old score with it. The guild had caused the Lord Mayor many problems in the past, and he welcomed the possibility that the guild might soon suffer problems of its own. The adventurers, however, were close-mouthed and were cool toward his offers of assistance.

His course of action was to rely on the capable services of Ferd, his halfling informant. Ferd began to tail the adventurers whenever they ventured into the city reporting back to the Mayor on their activities.

At this point, the DM creating this scenario must pause. Obviously, the game is going to develop in different ways depending on whether or not the adventurers notice that a nondescript halfling is follow-

ing them around. How should he determine if the characters notice or not?

The official AD&D® game rules have no provision for dealing with most situations like this one. The *Players Handbook* contains rules for elves or dwarves discovering secret doors or pits, and for thieves detecting traps, but it has nothing that applies in general to situations in which characters might or might not notice something.

Each DM seems to have a slightly different method for dealing with this sort of situation. Some roll a die and let players "roll higher" to see whether or not a discovery is made. Others simply require the players to "roll high" to acquire the information. Some suggest that the players make ability checks (as described in *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*) against intelligence, wisdom, or dexterity. Still others never design such ambiguous situations into their games — whether the players notice an unusual event or not is simply determined in advance. But none of these solutions seems satisfactory. Dealing with

them one at a time:

1. Purely random die rolls assume that all characters are equally sharp-witted — not a very realistic assumption.

2. Saving vs. a character's intelligence, wisdom, or dexterity score is also unrealistic. Why isn't it possible to have an intelligent, wise, or dexterous individual who also happens to be less than alert much of the time? Basing this saving throw on those abilities seems about as appropriate as making a *bend bars/lift gates* roll on the basis of charisma — the ability score was not designed to include this attribute.

3. Restricting game design to exclude these situations takes the interaction out of the game. In advance, we know if the party will obtain information or not, so the game becomes more of a story told by the DM, with players' actions and characters' abilities having less effect on the outcome.

The RUNEQUEST® game has a character ability score called Spot Hidden, which covers the detection of anomalous situations and objects. The closest thing the AD&D game has to this is the surprise roll, but this applies most strongly to combat situations with living foes. So far, no official AD&D game rules have been published to deal with "general detection" powers, so individual DMs and game designers have had to come up with individual ways of coping with this shortcoming. As a result, different games still lack consistency in this area. We need new rules that would provide general guidelines for all of these possibilities.

My own solution has been to create an eighth character ability score: *perception*. It is similar to the original six ability scores for strength, intelligence, wisdom, dexterity, constitution, and charisma, each of which is normally a number from 3-18 used to describe a range of related abilities that an AD&D game character might possess.

Perception describes the quality of a character's vision and hearing, as well as mental habits such as attentiveness, visual and aural memory, and interest in his surroundings. Perception is important to all character classes, as it affects the character's chances to notice things that might be important in the course of the game (and not merely surprise in combat).

Normally, a character's perception score is between 3 and 18. However, a character with a perception of 3 or 4 would suffer from severe vision or hearing impairments — such a character should probably be an NPC, since he probably would not last long as an adventurer. (Survival is unlikely when the character has a hard time seeing or hearing whatever is attacking!) A character with a perception score of 9-11 would have normal (20/20) vision, hearing, and habits of observation. Characters with scores above 15 would be exceptionally observant individuals, gifted with particularly sharp eyes and keen ears, and being habitually attentive.

Most characters should be able to survive with average or even low scores in perception, assuming they could compensate with other abilities or by depending on other characters. A few character classes, however, require above-average perception scores. For example, thieves excel at hearing noises; rangers can find tracks that are not apparent to others; assassins and ninjas are skilled at disguise and counterfeiting. Each of these activities requires highly developed powers of perception. Therefore, it is appropriate to set minimum perception scores for these character classes.

Doing so gives even more legitimacy to perception as a character ability — all of the other abilities except comeliness take turns as requisite abilities for several classes. Also, such an attribute addition forces players to make the choice between different types of character abilities. For example, a player who rolls moderately well under the established rules might choose to play a ranger instead of a fighter, because the ranger can fight just as well as the fighter and gets more hit points at the outset; furthermore, the ranger's tracking and survival skills might help the party in unique situations. But if a high perception score is required, then the player realizes that there must be a trade-off between fighting skills and detection skills, and the fighter class may become an attractive option for the player who wants only to hack and slash.

Minimum ability scores

These guidelines are for official character classes only, but gamers who use additional character classes (like those that are introduced every so often in DRAGON® Magazine) should be able to adapt this information easily enough. Keep in mind that a perception score of 9-11 is average, 12-14 is above average, and 15 or over is exceptional.

Ranger and ninja. Minimum perception: 15. Both of these classes depend heavily on perception. The ranger is skilled at tracking, woodlore, pathfinding, and spying, and is surprised only on a roll of 1 on 1d6. The ninja is also difficult to surprise and is the most skilled of all the character classes in disguise. All of these skills demand superior perception; in particular, the ranger's better odds for being surprised must depend on perception, since the class has no minimum score for dexterity.

Barbarian, druid, thief, assassin, thief-acrobat, and yakuza. Minimum perception: 12. Barbarians and druids both depend on the ability to "tune in" to nature, which would be difficult without good perceptual ability. Thieves and related classes obviously need to notice things about their intended victims and potential witnesses, and there is a strong relationship between perception and many of their specific skills. Assassins have the added power of disguise, but their thief-

type skills are practiced at lower levels than normal thieves use them, so this balances out.

Monk and bard. Minimum perception: 9. High perception would benefit either of these character classes, but their other minimum scores are already so high that requiring an above-average perception would make it almost impossible to roll up such a character using any fair method. We can conceive that the monk makes up for an otherwise average perception by high dexterity and careful mental discipline; the bard can get through the mandatory thieves' training period with a lower-than-normal perception score because the character can compensate with experience as a fighter.

Other character classes have no minimum requirements for perception, but a character with a perception score lower than 5 should be severely handicapped as an adventurer.

Bonuses for high perception

Since characters receive benefits for having exceptional scores in the other abilities, the same should be true for perception. On the other hand, in order to maintain playability, the bonus system should be simple. Two sorts of bonuses are suggested here (one with a complementary penalty).

First, characters of any class with a perception of 17 or 18 should receive a personal bonus of +1 to surprise rolls. This bonus should not apply to other members of the party; it simply reflects the individual's ability to hear or see things a split-second earlier than the average person. This bonus should not apply to encounters with creatures that are perfectly silent or invisible, depending on the situation. This bonus also does not apply to initiative rolls, since perception is of limited value when a character is locked in combat with an opponent. In the same way, a character with a particularly low perception would be easier to surprise. Characters with a perception score of 3 or

4 would receive a personal -1 penalty to all surprise rolls.

Second, several skills that are related to certain character classes should receive bonuses for high perception. The bonuses for each of these specific skills is +5% for a perception of 17 and +10% for 18. These bonuses would apply in addition to any others. These skills are:

- Rangers: tracking
- Thieves, assassins, monks: hear noise and find traps (but with no bonuses to improve the odds for removing traps)
- Barbarian: back protection, detect illusion, detect magic, and tracking
- Ninja: disguise, escape, and find traps (but not removing them, as above)
- Yakuza: hear noise

The bonuses from various perception scores are presented in the Perception Score Table.

Generating perception scores

Generating a perception score should be easy for existing characters in classes that require minimum scores for this ability and for new characters in games that follow the liberal Method V for generating ability scores (page 74, Unearthed Arcana). The same solution works for both of these problems. If a minimum perception score is needed, the player gets to roll extra dice: 6d6 for a minimum score of 9, 7d6 for a minimum of 12, and 8d6 for a minimum of 15. If the three highest dice in this roll do not add up to the minimum score or above, the character automatically receives the minimum score.

For a character who does not need a minimum perception score, the player should simply make one additional roll with however many 1d6 the DM normally allows (for Method V, use 4d6). However, the player should be allowed to reroll any total score below 5.

Perception in play

Most players and DMs have probably already thought of dozens of obvious situations in which an ability check vs.

Perception Score Table			
Ability score	General information	Adjustment to surprise	Bonus to specific skills
3	Serious perceptual impairment exists	- 1	- 10 %
4	Perceptual impairment exists	- 1	- 5 %
5-8			
9	Minimum score for bards and monks		
10-11	Average		
12	Minimum score for thieves, thief-acrobats, druids, assassin, yakuza, and barbarians		
13-14			
15	Minimum score for rangers and ninjas		
16			
17		+ 1	+ 5 %
18		+ 1	+ 10 %

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perception would be appropriate. One of the most common situations would be attacks against the PCs when some members of the party are sleeping — the usual arguments about whether or not a character is or isn't a light sleeper are avoided with a simple 1d20 roll against perception. Characters who want to search for hidden items, clues, or persons in a crowd may also use this 1d20 perception roll. Characters should likewise be given some odds for success if searching for secret doors, traps, and other things even if they have no previous skill at finding such items; a 1d100 roll vs. perception would probably be appropriate in most situations. Other possible applications are boundless.

To find the appropriate check in these situations, the DM must consider the relative difficulty of the act of perception in the game. If an average perception is represented by a score of 10, and if individuals with really bad perception scores are logically not going to be adventurers, then players with characters of average perception will pass a 1d20 check against perception slightly more than half the time. Checks against perception using 2d20 will succeed about one time in four, while 1d100 checks will succeed only slightly more than one time in every 10 tries. Also, the DM needs to consider whether or not the character can appreci-

ate what he has perceived — which may involve other ability checks vs. intelligence or wisdom, as the situation dictates.

Applying perception to the example that started this article, we get this conclusion:

Whenever several members of the party venture out together, the DM instructs the players whose characters are along to roll percentile dice — the odds that any of them notice the halfling are slight, so a 1 in 10 chance is appropriate. In fact, in the course of tailing the party many different times, Ferd is noticed by two of the adventurers, each on different occasions.

However, just noticing Ferd once is not enough — there is no reason to suspect that he is following the party unless a party member notices him more than once. Both party members who succeeded at the 1d100 checks subsequently fail the 1d20 checks that would have meant they noticed Ferd on a later occasion — so there is no reason to even attempt the 1d20 check vs. their intelligence scores to suspect the halfling is a spy.

Unable to locate the headquarters of the assassins' guild, the frustrated party goes on to other adventures. In the future, the PCs may return to the city and try again — at which point, there is still a slight chance that one of them might notice and begin to wonder about that halfling that keeps following wherever they go. . . .


Ω

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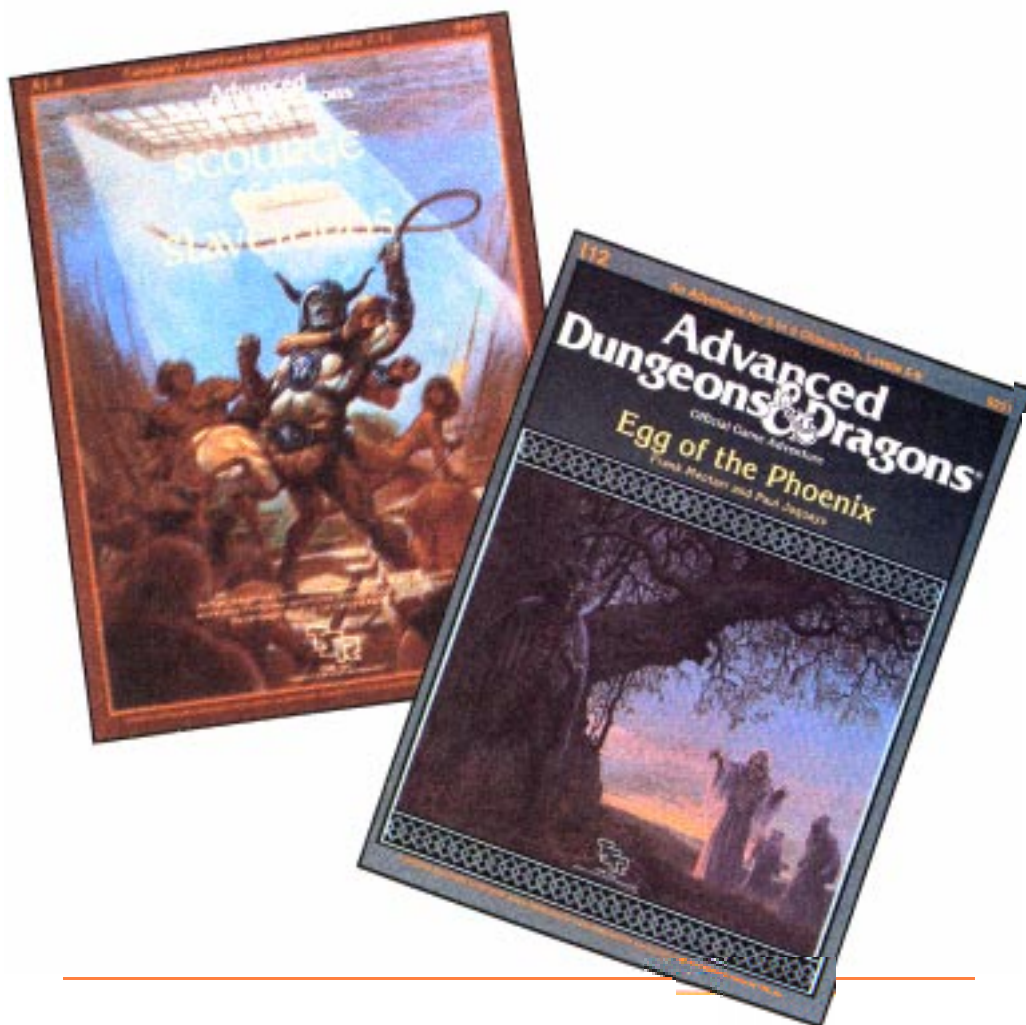
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Role-playing Reviews



Into the tournament arena

Back in 1980, I played on a team in the AD&D® Open Tournament at the GEN CON® XIII Game Fair. This was a big deal for me, since I had never played in a large AD&D game tournament before. When my team managed to cruise through the first three rounds in spectacular style, it seemed very possible that I could be among the winners of the largest FRP tournament in the world. No Super Bowl or World Series contender could have felt

greater excitement and anticipation as our team entered the room to begin the fourth and final round.

Well, my team didn't win. In fact, we finished a distinguished but unequivocal second. Oddly, I can't recall any great feeling of disappointment. Perhaps it's because I'd thought, "For rookies, we've done quite well, thank you." Perhaps it was because we'd had such a good time in the earlier rounds. But I suspect it was

more because the final round was an excellent dungeon — so unanticipated, original, and satisfying a challenge that it didn't matter who won.

The four rounds of that 1980 tournament were later published as the A1-4 Savelords series of modules. The publication of a revised, one-volume edition of these four modules, reorganized and developed as an epic campaign adventure in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® fantasy setting, prompts reflection on the competitive model of fantasy role-playing gaming, and the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of adventure supplements based on AD&D game scenarios originally designed for competitive play.

Playtesting

One preeminent virtue of tournament-based supplements is the amount of playtesting they often receive during design and before development and publication. I regret to inform you that many fantasy role-playing supplements are not rigorously playtested before they are published. There are plenty of good reasons for this. It takes a lot of time and effort for a designer or developer to present and playtest even a single session's worth of a supplement, and a single supplement may contain 10-20 sessions' worth or more. Furthermore, a single playtest doesn't tell you very much, because of the very nature of role-playing — there are many different ways to tackle a single problem, and many different gamer personalities and playing styles. Perhaps the worst problem is that designers and developers prefer to play with expert players, who are often no indication of how the majority of players would handle a scenario. Are designers then condemned to play numerous FRP sessions with undistinguished players? I'm not sure I'm willing to make that kind of sacrifice for my craft.

I don't want to get into a critical discussion of supplement playtesting here, though I should note that certain companies (Chaosium, Inc., and Steve Jackson Games, for example) have exceptionally energetic playtesting programs. My point here is that tournament-based supplements tend to be much more carefully playtested, for the following reasons:

First, in the earlier days of TSR, a greater emphasis was placed on the competitive model of AD&D games. The AD&D game was regarded as a set of universally accepted rules which permitted and supported competitive AD&D games, and the company's resources were dedicated to supporting that model of FRP gaming. As a result, first-class professional staff designers created and developed the tournament scenarios for the large convention tournaments, and many of the early published AD&D game modules were based on tournament adventures.

Second, tournament designers are a lot more sensitive to DM and player feedback

on the playability of their scenarios. At a convention tournament, an army of experienced DMs earnestly and critically review each scenario, making sure they won't be called to task during a session by a design flaw. No designer wants to submit a flawed design to this kind of scrutiny. Often the designers are present at these tournaments, particularly at GEN CON Game Fairs. Designers can see and hear the players' responses to their work, and often get to read comments on feedback sheets that are filled out right after a session. There's something about this live, critical, and emotional audience that heightens a designer's desire to produce a perfect scenario.

Third, the tournament is a perfect device for getting large numbers of people of various talents, styles, and personalities to test a scenario, both as players and as DMs. Initially, the designers know they have to be clear and specific in their instructions to the DM, and are likely to test their designs at least once before they hand it over to the DMs. Then the DMs go through it with a fine-tooth comb, trying to prepare themselves to perform respectably in the tournament session. Then comes the game session, in which DM and players really test the scenario. Afterward, the designers may get feedback from the DMs and players, usually from written evaluation forms, and sometimes from the DMs and players directly. (Of course, in practice, things are rarely this smooth. Often the designers just don't have time to do as much as they'd like, the DMs receive the scenarios at the last minute and have little time to review them, and the sessions themselves can be spoiled by poor gaming environments, weak designs, and poorly prepared DMs.)

Finally, at its best, the process of dialog among designers and developers contributing to the design of a tournament produces a challenging and supportive creative atmosphere — one in which the collaboration yields a product greater than any of the contributing individuals might have created on their own.

Competition vs. campaign

The competitive model of FRP gaming, as represented by tournament-based scenarios, places greater emphasis on strategies and problem-solving methods than it does on setting, character development, and narrative values. In the competitive model, the DM as designer plays the role of adversary, creating tactical and strategic problems for the players to overcome. Ideally, with his knowledge of the player characters' abilities, he creates a fair test of the players' knowledge, skill, and wit. Then, during the game session, the DM plays the role of referee — an impartial rules arbiter. He is careful to be fair in his application of the rules, favoring neither his design (and the nasty beasts and traps featured there) nor the player characters. He prefers not to intervene to save imper-

iled characters; neither will he intervene to save his plot or campaign. "The dice never lie," he says.

In the campaign model of FRP gaming, the DM is more concerned about preserving the story line, the characters, and the setting than he is in serving as an impartial rules arbiter. He is encouraged to fudge dice rolls and orchestrate events to keep the party intact and the story moving toward its narrative climax.

I admit a preference for the campaign model, though it is subject to abuse, particularly when players find themselves little more than pawns in the DM's story and when the thrill of the challenge is dulled by the suspicion that the DM is pulling his punches. The competitive model contains some valuable lessons for all DMs and scenario designers, and the special excitement of competitive tournament play can sometimes be achieved with great effect in a house campaign. The supplements reviewed in this months column contain a number of specific tricks and general strategies that could easily be adapted to enhance a campaign.

Monetary gain

Tournament-based scenarios are often rich in useful loot for the PCs. Particularly in older, dungeon-style tournaments, PCs were expected to outfit themselves with magical ordnance discovered in cesspools or scavenged off the corpses of evil villains. Cheapskate DMs like myself are likely to balk at handing over valuable or useful stuff to PCs, but as long as the awards are prominently featured in the text, we may get careless and decently reward our PCs for risking their lives (but don't hold your breath).

Detailed DM materials

Other virtues of tournament-based adventure supplements are the extensive and detailed DM materials and tactical notes. Because tournament DMs can't fumble around in rule books during a tournament session, the tradition is to provide compact but comprehensive notes on all monsters and NPCs, organized for quick reference. DMs who run campaign sessions from modules are bound to appreciate having this stuff all at their fingertips during a game session. And, because time is at a premium in tournaments, it is also common to provide player maps and other PC materials, to avoid wearisome mapping and other secretarial activities.

But the nicest features of tournament-style DM presentations are the explicit discussions of opponent tactics. The psychology and resources of the chief villain are often well considered, and details like the defensive response to sounding the alarm and even the specific sequence of a villain's spell choices according to tactical situation are developed for the DM. Seldom do we have time to prepare our own adventures so thoroughly.

One specific example: In one of the supplements reviewed in this column (*The Official RPGA™ Tournament Handbook*, page 19), an NPC villain casts three *monster summoning I*, two *monster summoning II*, and one *monster summoning III* spells. Digging through the rule book to find out which critters appear, when, and for how long could be the start of a DM's nightmare; he then has to keep track, round for round, of the sequence of appearances and disappearances of the rent-a-horrors. But this tournament's designers have thoughtfully done all the bookkeeping and have prepared a "rounds counter" chart summarizing the monsters' arrivals and departures. (Without this, I suspect I'd look around for a spell other than the *monster summoning* type that was cleaner to referee, regardless of its tactical virtues.)

A critical summary

I wish I could report that all three supplements reviewed in this column are coherent, consistent examples of state-of-the-art adventure and campaign design. Unfortunately, that isn't the case. Only one, *The Official RPGA Handbook*, has an especially clean design. Though disappointing in a few particulars, *Scourge of the Slavelords* is generally quite good, a commendable development of the classic A1-4 series, and it is highly recommended. *Egg of the Phoenix* contains numerous original and appealing features, but is disappointingly uneven in execution.

It's hard to compare these products with each other and with other FRP products, but an analogy may suffice. *The Official RPGA Handbook* is like a brand-new compact car — modest but very reliable, in perfect shape and satisfying on its own merits. *Scourge of the Slavelords* is like a classic 1957 Chevy, restored and fitted with the latest in accessories — a nice job, but the restorer and redesigners didn't go quite far enough in adapting the Chevy to its modern accessories. *Egg of the Phoenix* is an attempt to build a hot rod out of parts from various fine components — the components are powerful and impressive, but the engineering in cobbling them together is dubious, and prospects for performance uncertain.

C6 The Official RPGA™ Tournament Handbook

An AD&D game supplement
64-page booklet

TSR, Inc. \$10.00
Design, development, and editing: Daniel Kramarsky, Jean and Bruce Rabe, Penny Petticord, and Harold Johnson

Twelve pages of this 64-page module are devoted to essays on how to design, run, and judge your own tournaments. The text on running and judging tournaments is of little interest to most DMs, but the five-page section on designing tourna-

ments is perhaps the finest guide to designing and refereeing AD&D game adventure sessions I've ever seen. The section "Tournament Design Goals" (page 60) offers excellent advice for all scenario designers. Many of us would instantly recognize the value of these goals, but just as many of us are likely to ignore them in the design of our adventures, often to the detriment of ourselves and our players.

For example: "The adventure should be capable of being completed within the allotted time by a competent group of players. Experience has shown that players feel that finishing an adventure is the best reward for play!" Obvious, you say, but how many times have your scenarios taken far more time than you anticipated, either requiring an anticlimactic halt in the middle of a scenario or forcing players to play on after their energy and enjoyment are fading into fatigue and restlessness? (I consider myself an experienced DM — but how often do I carelessly ignore or forget the hard-won lessons of experience? I'm ashamed to say.) This collection of practical observations and guidelines is an excellent summary and reminder of those fundamental principles.

The scenarios: Both scenarios are first-rate, original, well-motivated and plausible, and tactically challenging. The first, "Honor Guard," is a two-session treatment of the progress of an exalted but

irascible holy personality and his sacred relics from one town to another. The PCs are detailed to protect the prophet and his possessions. The second, "The Long Way Home," is utterly offbeat in conception, and telling anything about it would spoil the surprise.

These two scenarios represent a more modern approach to tournament scenarios than the other two products reviewed, which are primarily in the "big dungeon" tradition. "Honor Guard" and "The Long Way Home" both have minor dungeon-style sequences, but most of their action depends on wilderness and campaign-style settings and plot devices. Their themes are also more modest in scale, as contrasted to the epic, save-the-universe themes of *Scourge of the Slavelords* and *Egg of the Phoenix*. Veteran campaigners know that a little of that save-the-universe stuff goes a long way.

With the scenarios, 20 pages of pullout materials are provided. Eight of those pages are devoted to predesigned PCs, six PCs per scenario. Some folks whine about the inclusion of elaborate predesigned PCs, preferring more adventure stuff, but I love them. I seldom use them as PCs, except when whipping up a night's diversion with a bunch of out-of-towners, but I often use them as NPCs and villains. I don't mind working for hours on scenarios, but I hate working up the statistics and equip-

ment for important middle- and higher-level NPCs. This way I get all the spells for the spell-casters, magical items, equipment, even saving throws and "to hit" tables, all worked out for me.

Evaluation: This is the only one of the three products reviewed here that warrants my unreserved enthusiasm. Ironically, it may be the least pleasing for the average gamer. Its small scale makes possible the fineness of its presentation, but less fussy tastes may prefer something with more "stuff" and epic grandeur, like *Scourge of the Slavelords*.

A1-4 *Scourge of the Slavelords*

An AD&D game supplement
128-page booklet and 16-page map booklet
TSR, Inc. **\$15.00**

Design: David Cook, Allen Hammack,
Harold Johnson, Tom Moldvay,
Lawrence Schick, and Edward Carmien

Revision: David Cook

Editing: Harold Johnson, Jon Pickens,
Brian Pitzer, Edward G. Sollers, Stephen
D. Sullivan, and Steve Winter

This is a redevelopment of the classic A1-4 module series based on the 1980 AD&D Open Tournament sessions that I described earlier. The action of the four modules now takes place in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting, and a more elaborate campaign narrative frame is provided.

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ADD AN ELEMENT OF DANGER TO YOUR NEW FIRESTORM™ CAMPAIGN

Professor Stein™ is dead. However, the new Firestorm has powers which are remarkably similar to the old. There shouldn't be any difficulty in running him through Mayfair's AN ELEMENT OF DANGER.

The set up is one of the few things that needs to be changed. Briefly, Hawkman™ and Hawkwoman™, recommended PCs, should *definitely* be Firestorm's companions. (They would be called when Matter Master™ escapes prison.) To introduce Firestorm to the adventure, have "the Hawks™" pick up Ronnie Raymond™ (the American half of Firestorm). The villains are not only in his stomping ground, but rumor has it Silver Deer™, his old adversary, is involved.

This scenario is only slightly different than the adventure as it stands now, but should work well.

We also recommend that you add an extra dimension to the role-playing by having "the Hawks" justify their own actions and their need for his involvement to the new Firestorm, who is ignorant of "heroic action" and knows very little about his own history.

THE NEW FIRESTORM

FIRESTORM™ *alias Ronnie Raymond & Mikhail Arkadin™*

DEX: 6 STR: 8 BODY: 12
INT: 6 WILL: 5 MIND: 4
INFL: 6 AURA: 4 SPIRIT: 6
INITIATIVE: 18 HERO POINTS: 40

Powers:

Dispersal: 10
Energy Absorption: 6
Flight: 7
Matter Manipulation: 12



Radar Sense: 10
Regeneration: 5
Sealed Systems: 15
Bio-Energy Blast: 8
Starbolt: 5

Skills:

(Raymond) Acrobatics: 2
(Arkadin) Scientist/Nuclear
Power Plants: 2

Limitations:

1. Matter Manipulation does not work on organic materials.
2. Matter Manipulation, Bio-Energy Blast, and Starbolt do not work when Firestorm is dispersed.
3. Bio-Energy Blast only works when Firestorm is in physical contact with the ground, and manifests itself as miniature exploding volcanoes.
4. Minor Irrational Attraction to confusion about the world.
5. Miscellaneous: Firestorm is a third personality distinct from the two men who combine to form him. Raymond and Arkadin can mentally advise Firestorm, but cannot directly control his actions.

Motivation:

Responsibility of Power
Wealth: Struggling
Connections:
JLI™ (Low)
Soyuz™ (Low)

Race: Human

Job:

(Raymond) Unemployed
(Arkadin) Unemployed,
prisoner of the KGB

Background: When Martin Stein learned he was dying of an incurable disease, it seemed Firestorm would die with him. As their final act as Firestorm, Ronnie Raymond and Stein agreed to try to force the world to rid itself of nuclear weapons.

The great military powers of the world refused to give in, and Firestorm became a hunted hero. On the Nevada desert, Firestorm met and fought the Soviet nuclear hero, Pozhar™. In the battle, Pozhar's containment suit was destroyed, and Firestorm split into his original personae, Martin Stein and Ronnie Raymond. Pozhar (Mikhail Arkadin) refused to fight them, but the U.S. government already launched a nuclear missile hoping to destroy both heroes. In a desperate attempt to reform Firestorm, Raymond, Arkadin, and Stein joined hands, hoping their combined efforts would be enough. At that moment the missile struck.

Firestorm did not die. Rather, he was reborn. After

absorbing all the energy of the nuclear blast, a new Firestorm emerged. He seemed to have no memory of the past, and had all of Firestorm's and Pozhar's powers as well. After a brief confrontation with the U.S. military, Firestorm left the site of the nuclear blast. He later split into two people again; this time, however, the people were Ronnie Raymond and Mikhail Arkadin, each in his own country. Martin Stein was presumed dead.

It has since been revealed that Firestorm is now a separate entity from the men who make up his physical body. Raymond and Arkadin are conscious of what happens to them as the Nuclear Man™, but they cannot control his actions.

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Theoretically, this campaign pack is supposed to follow T1-4 *The Temple of Elemental Evil* and lead into GDQ1-7 *Queen of the Spiders*. It sure wasn't originally designed that way, and the narrative transitions between the three books are thin and unconvincing, but I doubt that many experienced DMs would take such a sequence literally anyway.

Quite a bit of new material has been added to develop the Slavelords campaign. A lot of it is quite good, particularly the first two new chapters of campaign material which bring the characters up to the original A1-4 scenarios. Setting, plot, and characterization are dense and plausible, and the DM gets plenty of guidance and staging tips for presentation of the main and secondary encounters. Unfortunately, the later chapters providing transitions between the old tournament scenarios are not as convincing, and are sparse and less coherent. The conflicts and obstacles in Chapter 4, a wilderness transitional sequence, do little to support the central campaign in plot or theme, and the remaining transitional material gets progressively thinner and more undeveloped. The resolution of the campaign is particularly awkward and disappointing by comparison with the stronger initial materials.

However, I'm not particularly bothered by the weaknesses of the later transition and resolution materials. The real work of

establishing the tone and texture of the campaign comes at the beginning; knowing how campaigns tend to diverge from their original outlines, elaborate development of later transition sections is likely to be wasted. The DM can easily improvise and develop these later materials as the campaign develops.

The scenarios: The tournament scenarios are essentially unaltered from the original A1-4 modules. A few minor details have been adapted to the additional campaign material, but the scenarios, encounters, and dungeons are not significantly changed. Here, these old-style dungeons are presented in their most flattering light, as a change of pace, interspersed as they are between chunks of wilderness and campaign adventuring. Success in these scenarios depends on shrewd problem-solving, effective use of game resources, efficient party organization, and solid FRP wargaming tactics. Character and plot development are secondary to short-term goals — gathering loot and bashing villains without being incinerated, pulverized, or sucked into dry husks.

All four of the original tournament designs are superior examples of their genre, though some are more suited to campaign play. Certain popular elements of dungeon-style tournament scenarios — fiendishly elaborate traps and unusual monsters — are less plausible in a cam-

paign setting. The first and third tournament sections (Chapters 4 and parts of 6 and 7) fit smoothly into the campaign in tone and content. The second section (Chapter 5) is devilishly clever, with tricks and traps that are real gems of misdirection and reversal of expectation, but the level of subtlety and energy invested in these defenses contrasts jarringly with the primitive crudity of the dungeon's defenders. Such is not a fault in a tournament, but it may weaken the tone of a well-established campaign.

The fourth tournament section (Chapter 8) is the classic dungeon adventure. A little railroading is required to set the PCs up for this scenario, but the payoff is more than worth it. The conception behind the scenario is relatively simple. Like many brilliant FRP conceptions, you can only use it once in a lifetime, but it's priceless and ought to please even jaded adventurers.

Evaluation: *Scourge of the Slavelords* contains some classic dungeon and tactical FRP scenarios. If you don't own the original A1-4 modules, that's reason enough to own this. The quality of the new campaign material varies from excellent to acceptable, but at its best, it's really satisfying. As a campaign pack, we're talking a minimum of nine big gaming sessions (and probably more; if the DM develops the campaign outlines and additional encounters). It's occasionally clumsy and unconvincing, but

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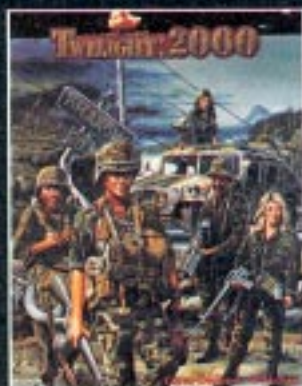
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what it lacks in polish and refinement it makes up for in sheer mass, energy, and fiendishness.

112 *Egg of the Phoenix*

An AD&D game supplement

80-page booklet, 20-page map-and-PCs booklet

TSR, Inc.

\$12.00

Design: Frank Mentzer

Design, development, and editing: Paul

The core of this supplement is a group of scenarios designed for RPGA Network tournaments by Frank Mentzer. Paul Jaquays, a veteran designer and developer, provided the campaign framework and developed and edited the product.

The scenario: Suppose, just for a minute, that the AD&D game made sense, and that all the spells and magical powers worked together as plausibly as our current understandings of physics.

Of all of the better-known designers of AD&D game modules, Frank Mentzer comes closest to creating scenarios in which the protagonists behave as if the game's rule books were physics texts describing the laws governing the workings of the universe. Part of this comes from Mentzer's intimate familiarity with the AD&D game; part of this also seems to come from a persistent interest in finding or creating a logical coherence in the bewildering hodge-podge of AD&D game rules.

As a result, the distinctive feature of Mentzer's scenarios is that no matter how bizarre and offbeat their conceptions, they are all peculiarly persuasive and logical, as long as you accept the rules of the AD&D game. Furthermore, they are often pretty weird and strikingly original. For example, anyone who has ever played an illusionist character knows how subtle and potentially powerful the power of AD&D game illusions are. In the hands of a gifted and unconventional thinker, an illusionist is an incredibly complex and unpredictable opponent. And given what is suggested

about the infinite variations in Outer Planes, and the peculiar logics that may form the physical laws there, the common availability of planar-travel magic is bound to place adventurers in some very strange settings.

I won't discuss the tournament-based scenarios in any detail for fear of weakening their impact. I have my reservations about the final scenario which, despite having a plausible game rationale and logical self-consistency, strikes me as gross and overly busy rather than lean and elegant. Individually, however, the other scenarios are original, challenging, and entertaining, particularly in their exploitation of the peculiar logic of the AD&D game universe.

However, the assembling of these various former tournament scenarios into an epic campaign is not very successful. To start with, unlike the A1-4 modules on which *Scourge of the Slavelords* is based, the tournament scenarios in *Egg of the Phoenix* were not originally designed as a sequence by Mentzer; in fact, they had nothing to do with one another at all. Developer Paul Jaquays was given the difficult task of taking the disparate pieces and providing the narrative glue to join them into an epic campaign.

Well, the pieces do stick together, but the seams are rather evident. The narrative frame isn't particularly persuasive, nor do the supplemental encounters or transitions match the tone and theme of Mentzer's original tournament designs. Little wonder, actually — no matter how professionally you weld together chunks of different automobile models, it's hard to persuade a viewer that they were designed to be welded together. However, the introductory motivations for involving the PCs in the epic quest are rather arbitrary. The contrasts in tone between the new materials and the scenario text are unnecessarily jarring. Tongue-in-cheek names from the campaign frame (Mikael Gorchaboff and Grisson Oyle, for example) fit awkwardly with the otherwise straight detective-fantasy-adventure tone of the

tournament scenarios. In general, the new campaign material for *Scourge of the Slavelords* is more persuasive.

What went wrong? We have some basically strong individual scenarios by a clever and original designer, and additional design and development by another first-class designer. In my opinion, however, publishing these scenarios as an epic campaign was a bad idea, though I can understand the logic behind the decision. Epic campaigns and campaign supplements sell well, while anthologies of scenarios sell less, and an anthology of tournament designs sells even less. Publishing these as separate, unrelated scenarios would have been a much cleaner design, but I doubt it would have sold.

Further, some careless production errors are evident. A number of annoying typos are found in the first few pages, a sign of lapsed editorial vigilance. Moreover, what was finally published as the map book was obviously designed as a 20-page center pullout. In the introduction, the text refers specifically to the nonexistent pullout; for a random encounter table, the reader is given a page reference rendered nonsensical by the elimination of the center pullout. None of these or other production goofs are particularly discouraging to most DMs, who can generally figure out the proper state of affairs in seconds, but such errors in the opening pages of a product are not very reassuring.

Evaluation: There's some very good stuff in here: nine sessions or more of solid and occasionally brilliant material. The tournament-based adventures may be the strongest of Mentzer's peculiarly original AD&D game designs. However, the campaign frame and the production quality are not satisfactory. I can recommend much of the distinctive wit and plausibility of the tournament scenarios, but fussy campaign DMs will find a lot to pick at.

Who reviews the reviewers?

Thanks for your letters. I appreciate the encouraging words, and you've made some persuasive observations that require Responses.

Carl Sargent, a British FRP designer, called me to task for my review of I1-3 *Desert of Desolation*. I was personally disappointed in the revised edition for various reasons, but I meant my capsule review to be a recommendation of a revised edition of classic FRP supplements, particularly for those who do not own the original editions. "Classic" in Ralston-speak means "worthy of the attention of most sensible fans!" That a fussy, pedantic critic like myself was disappointed may only imply that other similarly fussy, pedantic critics may be disappointed. In the future, I'll try to be clearer in my evaluations.

Another, more general comment: Unless specifically stated otherwise, "Short and sweet" reviews should be considered recommendations, no matter how reserved they are. The "Short and sweet"

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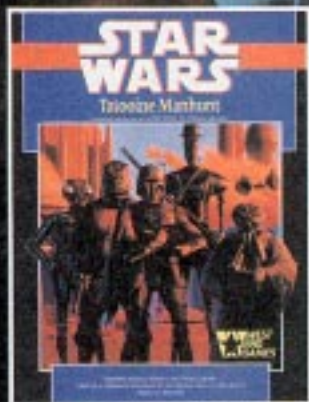
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section was intended to offer more timely notices of interesting products that either did not fit the theme of the current or future reviews, or that I didn't have time to give a rigorous analysis. I may grumble or kvetch, but I basically think you'll find the product worthwhile.

Daniel Molod, of Evanston, Illinois, observes that I don't often speak of products to avoid — that is, that I don't do many negative reviews. First, conscientious reviewing is an exhausting and time-consuming task. I greatly prefer reviewing products that give me pleasure rather than products that annoy or disappoint me, so I generally only review materials that strike me positively on a first scan. Second, there are so few reviewers, and so many unreviewed products, that I can afford to pick only the products that I enjoy reviewing. Third, most of the damage is done long before a negative review reaches print. The bulk of a product's sales come within the first three to six months after its release, and there's no way I could properly study a product, agonize over the writing of a review, and get it published in time to warn you. Jason Park observes that I generally confine my reviews to FRP supplements, and he wishes I'd review various role-playing games supporting other adventure genres. Arghh! Do you know how much work it is to thoroughly test a role-playing game so you can review it? Have mercy! Besides, fantasy role-playing is my specialty and area of expertise; though I have experience with many systems and genres, I'm most confident of my background and judgments in the fantasy role-playing field. Further, my friend and colleague Jim Bamba is also writing game-review columns; his interests in other adventure genres should nicely complement my narrow focus on FRP products.

Again, I'm pleased and grateful for your responses. Your friendly comments are encouraging, and your criticisms keep me from growing smug. If you have further comments, write to me at this address (no phone calls, please):

Ken Rolston
P.O. Box 28
Mount Tabor NJ 07878

Short and sweet

Dragons, by Cory Glaberson. Mayfair Games, Inc., 5641 Howard Street, Niles IL 60648 (\$10.00). Given the popularity and money-drawing of dragons as a fantasy feature, it's surprising how few decent treatments of dragons have been produced for FRP games. This supplement is exceptional, with lots of detail on dragon statistics, biology, and culture, all with an original campaign setting and three adventures. Glaberson's version of dragons and dragon-riders is distinctive and idiosyncratic, and may not fit with many established campaigns. But compared to the relatively drab and generic dragons of most FRP systems, it may be worth adapting your campaign to fit this supplement.

Operation Seven Swords and *KViSR Rocks!* by Barry Nakazono and David McKenzie. Leading Edge Games, Box 70669, Pasadena CA 91107 (\$7.95 and \$8.95, respectively). These are adventure/campaign supplements for the LIVING STEEL™ game system, a sort of punk mercenary and post-apocalyptic science-fiction RPG. These dramatic adventures are stylishly presented, and the theme and tone feature an appealingly ambivalent mixture of honorable heroism and grim cynicism that reminds me of *The Road Warrior* (the campaign setting has nothing to do with that movie, however). There are numerous habitable worlds, a corrupt Imperial establishment, warlike but honorable alien invaders, less warlike but definitely dishonorable alien invaders, and a motley assortment of pragmatic, more-or-less honorable, tarnished heroes struggling to preserve their own peculiar ways of life. This is good stuff.

HIDDEN KINGDOM game, by Jon McClenahan and Stanley Dokupil. New Rules, Inc., Box 7971, Berkeley CA 94707 (\$32.95). This is an Arthurian role-playing

game designed from a distinctly Christian point of view. I have not tested its extensive and comprehensive rules systems, being deeply committed to Chaosium's PENDRAGON system and campaign. However, HIDDEN KINGDOM contains a wealth of detail and scenario ideas for an Arthurian campaign. The encounters section alone should provide enough Arthurian adventure ideas for a lifetime. The two full-color hex maps of Arthur's Britain are also very attractive. The hefty price tag may discourage the casual purchaser, but Arthurian fans and collectors should be quite pleased with this purchase.

Different Worlds Publications (2814 Nineteenth Street, San Francisco CA 94110) has acquired and is distributing game products formerly produced by Gamelords and Judge's Guild. For those of you relatively new to the hobby, these two companies created some classic FRP supplements in their time. Here are a few of my all-time favorite FRP products — and the price is right:

Ready Ref Sheets. Judge's Guild (\$2.99). Here are 56 pages of neat junk. My favorite is the Offensive Locution (verbal melee) rules, providing characters with a means for engaging in "witticism" and "repartee." Another great piece is the Non-Player Character Cutups table, where you roll dice to see what horrendous social gaffe your hirelings have just committed ("This is to be used at judge's discretion, in large crowds, taverns, on the street, etc."). This supplement contains lots of other wacky and even relatively useful stuff, like the elaborate Crime, Trial, and Punishment rules. *Ready Ref Sheets* deserves a six-star rating.

Sea Steeds and Wave Riders. Judge's Guild (\$6.50). Two 22" x 28" sheets printed two sides with 25mm-scale deck plans for 18 different styles of boats and ships, from rafts, fishing skiffs, and coracles to a Viking longship and a merchant trade vessel. Nicely rendered drawings of the deck plans, and a 32-page booklet describing the various boat and ship types make up this useful component.

Village Book I and *II* and *Castle Book I* and *II*. Judge's Guild (from \$2.75 to \$3.00). Each book contains the layouts of about 50 different villages, small towns, and castles, all drawn on hex sheets. There are no details for the functions or contents of the individual buildings, but it's nice to have the layouts when whipping up an adventure setting on short notice.

The Undersea Environment, *The Mountain Environment*, and *The Desert Environment*. Gamelords (\$5.95, \$5.95, and \$6.95, respectively). Designed for the TRAVELLER® science-fiction RPG by J. Andrew Keith and William H. Keith, Jr., these are exceptional treatments of nature as the antagonist in role-playing campaigns — and they are my standard references when designing wilderness encounters or adventure elements for *any* RPG.



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1) Plastic skeleton with white undercoat. 2) A mix of brown and yellow ink washed over the figure. It's striking enough to leave at this stage.; 3), but with further washes on sword and base, a little highlighting with Citadel Colour and, voila!

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- 7 - BROWN - Shading tunics, flesh, equipment, fur and weathering and rust effects, skeletons.
- 8 - CHESTNUT BROWN - As above but a richer and warmer tone good for fur and beasts, horses.
- 9 - BLACK - Steel armour & equipment - lining and detailing.



1) Fighter with base colours of Citadel acrylic; 2) ink shading washes are immediately effective; 3) but the figure can be taken further with a return to Citadel Colour for final shading and highlighting.

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The Imperial Gods

The Roman pantheon for AD&D® game campaigns

Perhaps the best-known pantheon presented in the AD&D® *Legends & Lore* book is that of the Greeks. To this day, most general works on mythology concentrate on the gods of the Greeks, with a few nods in the direction of Norse mythology. However, most of the Greek influence on our culture comes to us by way of the Romans, who also influenced our views of Greek deities. Certain works on Greek mythology survived because the Romans liked them well enough to preserve them. The attributes of many major Roman deities are similar to the Greek gods upon which the former were based. Some Greek gods from *Legends & Lore* and their Roman-named counterparts follow:

Greek	Roman
Zeus	Jupiter
Aphrodite	Venus
Apollo	Apollo
Ares	Mars
Artemis	Diana
Athena	Minerva
Demeter	Ceres
Dionysus	Bacchus
Hades	Pluto
Hecate	Hecate
Hephaestus	Vulcan
Hera	Juno
Heracles	Hercules
Hermes	Mercury
Nike	Victoria
Pan	Faunus
Poseidon	Neptune
Tyche	Fortuna

Minor changes should be made in the descriptions of the *Legends & Lore* Greek gods when they are used for the Roman versions. Jupiter, Juno, and Mars should be lawful neutral, and Mars (a god of both war and agriculture) has the powers of a 12th-level druid. Sylvanus, listed in *Leg-*

ends & Lore as a Celtic deity, was actually a Roman god and may be used much as described in the book.

Most Roman deities serve as patrons of the state, supporting and defending the nations that honor them. The gods are apparently not jealous ones, however; their worshipers often follow numerous particular gods depending upon their particular needs and their situation at any given time. Many gods and spirits were worshiped in the Roman Empire, some having widespread cults, huge temples, and hundreds of priests and priestesses. Even foreign deities were adopted into the religion of the empire.

But some particularly Roman gods, even ones who were often more important to the average Roman than Jupiter and company, are not widely known today. Many of these lesser-known Roman gods would make interesting deities for a classically oriented campaign world, either in addition to or replacing the Greek pantheon in *Legends & Lore*. The PCs could be attached to a temple of one of the local gods (e.g., Zeus) and be sent to investigate reports of a new cult springing up in a nearby province — a cult following a Roman deity. Or voyaging PCs could encounter a previously unknown empire, modelled on that of Rome, which is aggressively expanding its borders across the world at the orders of the empire's patron deities.

Some of the later historical Roman deities were deified emperors. The Roman Senate deified emperors by vote, usually because a particular emperor was felt to have performed well. These emperor-gods would certainly make interesting additions to any pantheon. Of course, there aren't mythological stories about them, but stories of the real lives of some emperors make quite bizarre reading by themselves.

Roman clerics as PCs

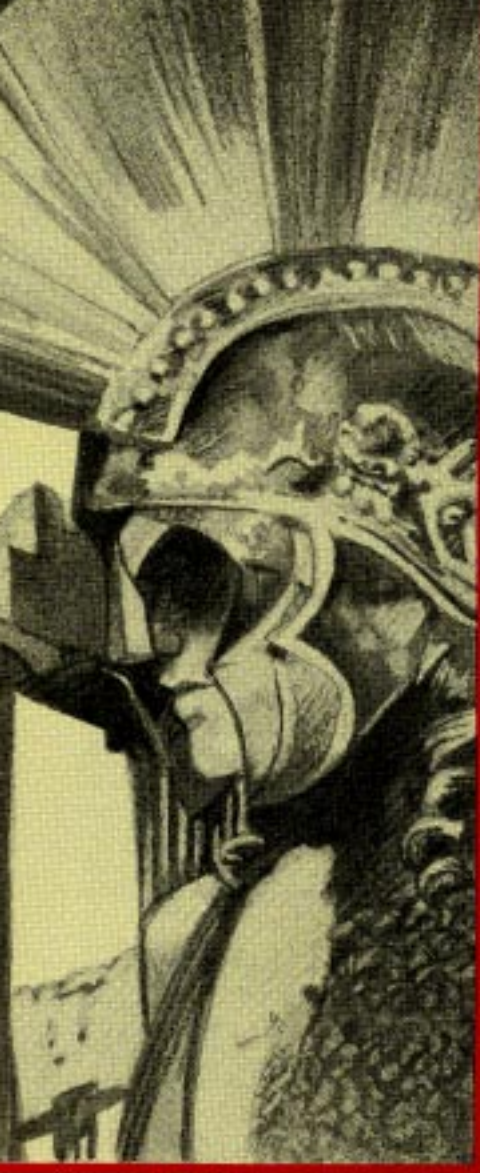
The Roman attitude towards religion and the gods was very pragmatic. To the Romans, religion was basically an exchange of favors. If a god came through for a worshiper, the worshiper reciprocated with sacrifices; if the god did not respond, no sacrifices were forthcoming. Priests were very much a part of the world around them, and most men in public office were also priests of at least one god (and sometimes more). Thus, Roman-religion clerics should, at the start of play, designate at least one Roman deity that they will serve; two or three deities may be served, but only if their alignments are the same and their fields of interest contribute to the goals of their clerics.

In game terms, this also means that a PC cleric would usually not operate under any restrictions other than those that apply to the cleric class as a whole. (In particular, armor would be chosen by the Roman cleric with complete freedom.) Weapons are as per the cleric class, with preference usually given to clubs, staves, and maces having elaborate decorations and engravings. There are no druids in Roman religions, but clerics of any alignment may pray for and receive one druidic spell per spell level each day, in exchange for a clerical spell of the same level. All Roman clerics are dedicated to their state and people, and tend to be aggressive in their work to expand their state's influence — though they are remarkably less concerned about expanding the influence of their patron gods.

If a cleric's god became displeased with the cleric for some reason, the cleric would first notice the problem by noting an increase in unfavorable omens. The Romans took omens very seriously and looked for them while "reading" the livers of sacrificial animals. The gods would be rather reluctant to do anything drastic to an offending cleric, such as cutting off all spells, unless the cleric's offense was particularly heinous. After all, the Roman gods depend on their worshipers' sacrifices at least as much as the worshipers depend on the gods' protection!

To a Roman cleric, interpreting omens and oracles is very important. No Roman would willingly start on an important task or journey without getting either an oracle's advice or trying some method of divination. This can be used by the DM to steer the cleric in a particular direction, as well as to plant clues to future adventures. Of course, oracles were famous for ambiguous answers; game oracles need be no different in this respect.

Temples to a Roman deity are usually as ornate as the cult can afford. The focus of the interior is the statue of the deity, which is made of the most precious materials available. The worshipers sacrifice animals or pay to have sacrifices made for them. The rarer and more expensive the animal sacrificed, the more the god is



AENEAS



Cybele

pleased. This in itself can provide a powerful motivation for worshipers of these deities to go on adventures. Sacrificing an ox is all very well, but who wouldn't be impressed by worshipers who regularly bring in beholders, dragons, and other impressive creatures?

Finally, it is not uncommon for even a Roman-religion cleric to have a markedly casual attitude toward the gods, even to the point of being openly cynical about their worship at times. So long as the proper sacrifices and rituals are observed, the gods are generally pleased. But the mercenary nature of exchanging sacrifices for divine assistance sometimes has a negative influence on the transactions between mortals and gods.

Some major Roman deities and heroes are described here in *Legends & Lore* format. DMs are urged to consult books on Roman mythology and religion for further information.

AENEAS (hero)

ARMOR CLASS: -1 (armor, dexterity bonuses, and shield +5)

MOVE: 9"

HIT POINTS: 111

NO. OF ATTACKS: 5/2 with spear; 2 with short sword

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type (+6 strength bonus; +3 specialization bonus with spear)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Magical shield

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard

SIZE: M (5½')

ALIGNMENT: Lawful good

FIGHTER: 14th-level fighter

MONK/BARD: 3rd-level monk/4th-level bard

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

S: 18/00 I: 17 W: 16
D: 16 C: 18 CH: 18 CO: 18

Aeneas, the heroic Trojan, is the son of Venus and the ancestor of the Latin peoples. Fleeing the city of Troy after its fall, he and his companions eventually made their way to the city of Carthage, after dangers and delays set up by Juno, who hated Trojans in general. The Trojans were welcomed into the city, and Aeneas fell in love with the queen, Dido. The two were happy until the gods reminded Aeneas that his destiny lay elsewhere. Faithful to his duty, Aeneas sorrowfully parted from Dido and set sail. Looking back at Carthage, he saw a plume of smoke. It was Dido's funeral pyre; she had promised to kill herself if Aeneas left, and she kept her word.

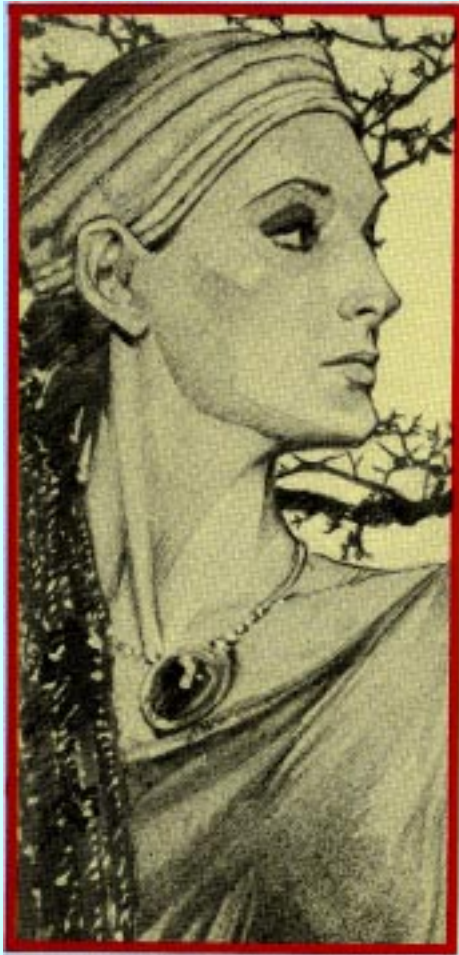
Aeneas later descended into the underworld, meeting unimaginable terrors, and learned more of his destiny to found the Roman people. He was continually opposed by Juno in his later quests, but

triumphed with the help of Neptune and Venus, growing in skill and power. Aeneas and his companions eventually founded the city of Lavinium, from which the people that became the Romans eventually came. He and his Trojans were welcomed by the people of Latium, whose ways the Trojans eventually adopted.

Aeneas wears a set of bronze Trojan armor equivalent to normal ring mail, and he carries a *shield* +5 forged by Vulcan, as well as a normal spear and short sword. Aeneas has double specialization with the spear (+3 to hit and damage). He is usually accompanied by Achates, his shield-bearer (AC 6; MV 9"; F7; hp 50; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; AL LG; armor equal to ring mail, spear, short sword). Aeneas may be found leading a military force on some mission for one or more of the gods; the size and power of this force is left to the DM's discretion.

Aeneas will be polite to PCs, but will not usually aid them for long, unless what they're doing directly aids him in fulfilling his destiny and his duty to the gods. He is admirable, but rather distant, stiff, and dry, and will not let anything interfere with his destiny and duty for long. Achates and his other followers are fiercely devoted to their chief and fight fanatically to defend him.

CYBELE



CYBELE (*goddess of the earth*)
"Great Mother"

Greater goddess

ARMOR CLASS: -3
MOVE: *Infinite*
HIT POINTS: 320
NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 *hand slaps*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 5-50/5-50
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spells*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See *below*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 50%
SIZE: *Variable*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*
WORSHIPERS' ALIGNMENT: *All who are not evil*
SYMBOL: *Black stone*
PLANE: *Elemental plane of Earth*
CLERIC/DRUID: 11th-level cleric/14th-level druid
FIGHTER: 10th-level ranger
MAGIC-USER/ILLUSIONIST! 14th level in each
PSIONIC ABILITY: VI

S: 20 I: 23 W: 25
D: 19 C: 24 CH: 20 CO:18

Cybele is the Earth Mother who is worshiped through her symbol, a sacred black stone (often a meteorite). When she appears to mortals, it is either as a handsome, mature woman wearing farming clothes or as a black stone resembling the ones in her temples. She has many clerical servants (nearly all women), and the rituals to honor her involve loud shouts and clashing symbols and drums. She is a major defender of cities that depend upon agriculture. Any being of less than demigod status that attacks her must make a saving throw to avoid petrification.

DIVIS IMPERATOR (*deified emperor*)

Demigod

ARMOR CLASS: -3
MOVE: 20"
HIT POINTS: 180
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (+10 strength bonus)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 35%
SIZE: *M*
ALIGNMENTS: *Varied*
WORSHIPERS' ALIGNMENT *Varied*
SYMBOL: *Image appropriate to each particular emperor*
PLANE: *Depends on alignment*
CLERIC/DRUID: 9th-level cleric
FIGHTER: 10th-level fighter
MAGIC-USER/ILLUSIONIS: 6th-level magic-user
THIEF/ASSASSIN: 14th-level assassin (only if evil)



DIVIS IMPERATOR

MONK/BARD: 4th-level bard (if appropriate)
PSIONIC ABILITY: VI

S: 22 I: 21 W: 23
D: 20 C:24 CH: 25 CO:22

Certain Roman emperors were deified, either during their lives or after their deaths. These "deified emperors" were the foci of cults in Rome and in any place with which the deified emperor had been particularly associated. These emperors had temples, priesthoods, and worshipers, just as any other deities. In most cases, though, their cults were purely formal, and few people actually believed that a vote in the Senate could turn a man into a god. This attitude was reinforced in the case of Caligula, who forced the Senate to vote him divine honors in his own lifetime, only to be later assassinated and overthrown.

If a DM wishes to use actual deified Roman emperors as gods, they should be assigned spheres of influence. Listed here are some deified emperors, with activities they could be expected to patronize:

Augustus: The Empire and the emperors; by extension, any Roman-style ruler or government.

Caligula: Insanity, evil, poisoners, and murderers.

contemporary Illustrations
by John Lakey

ERIS





Saturni

MITHRAS



Claudius: Sages, history and historians, and cuckolded husbands.

Vespasian: Generals, armies, and military matters.

Antoninus Pius: Peace, good order, and beneficent rulers.

Hadrian: Travelers.

DMs wishing to use these deified emperors in their campaigns are urged to read up on their lives in order to present them authentically. Unique deified emperors could also be created to fit in with the DM's campaign; such beings need not have Latinized names, though it may add to their "authenticity." Any deified emperor will manifest himself to mortals in the form he bore when he was mortal. Though all Roman emperors were male, this need not be true of deified rulers in fantasy campaigns.

ERIS (goddess of discord)

Greater goddess

ARMOR CLASS: -3

MOVE: 24"/12"

HIT POINTS: 355

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (+5 magical bonus)*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Cause chaos (see below)*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Cause chaos (see below)*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 65%

SIZE: M (6½')

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic neutral*

WORSHIPERS' ALIGNMENT: *Any chaotic alignment, though rarely evil*

SYMBOL: *A golden apple inscribed "For the Fairest"*

PLANE: *Gladshiem*

CLERIC/DRUID: *21st-level cleric*

FIGHTER: *16th-level fighter*

MAGIC-USER/ILLUSIONIST: *10th-level magic-user/25th-level illusionist*

THIEF/ASSASSIN: *13th-level thief*

PSIONIC ABILITY: VI

S: 11 I: 23 W: 22

D: 25 C: 21 CH: 24* CO: 20*

* -7 to lawful-evil beings.

The only god with whom Eris, the goddess of discord, is on friendly terms is the Roman god Mars, her brother. She will often follow this god into battle, using *cause chaos* to stir the warriors into frenzies of slaughter. In return, her cult and worshipers are protected by their association with the worshipers of Mars. Eris was originally from the Greek pantheon and retained her Greek name in Roman mythology.

Eris has the ability to *cause chaos* at will. This unique power involves throwing her *golden apple* into the midst of her foes, who will individually *see the golden apple* as the one thing they desire most. Her foes



JANUS

then turn on each other, fighting for the *golden apple* until they are all dead. Beings allied with Eris will see the *golden apple* as an apple only. This power has a 90' range and takes effect on those who fail a save vs. spells at -4.

Eris demands that her worshipers and clerics (collectively known as "Discordians") value freedom and practice what they preach. If any of her clerics enslave other beings or deal in a friendly and willing way with any devils, demons, daemons, or lawful beings (particularly lawful-evil ones), they must pay the cult 1,000 gp/level, go on a difficult *quest*, and either free the slaves or kill the evil beings. Eris sees lawful evil as particularly repugnant.

Discordian clerics are not restricted in their choice of clothing or armor; Eris feels that her clerics are themselves the best judges on those matters. Accordingly, Discordian clerics can be distinguished only by their avoidance of edged weapons and their holy symbols. They serve their goddess by spreading freedom (ie., chaos). Eris's clerics *must* adventure to please the goddess and advance in level. Gaining the requisite experience points and not deviating from alignment are all that is required to gain levels; nothing else is forbidden these clerics. Eris is even willing to admit

that circumstances sometimes alter cases; a low-level cleric of Eris confronted by a powerful opponent is perfectly free to lie, flatter, or pretend to agree with the creature to escape from its clutches.

Eris usually appears as a carelessly dressed young girl, holding a golden apple

JANUS (*guardian of gates*)

Lesser god

ARMOR CLASS: 0

MOVE: 15"

HIT POINTS: 260

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (+8 strength bonus)*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Cannot be surprised*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 45%

SIZE: M (6')

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful neutral*

WORSHIPERS' ALIGNMENT: *Guardians of all alignments*

SYMBOL: *Profile of a man's head with two faces*

PLANE: *Nirvana*

CLERIC/DRUID: *13th-level cleric*

FIGHTER: *17th-level ranger*

MAGIC-USER/ILLUJSIONIST: *Special*

S: 20	I: 21	W: 23
D: 20	C: 25	CH: 24
CO: 23		

inscribed "For the Fairest." In battle, if she chooses not to use the *golden apple*, she may use any weapon at hand. Her touch grants these weapons a +5 magical bonus in addition to strength, dexterity, and other magical bonuses.

Janus is the protector of gateways and doors. If a fighter guarding a portal, passageway, or the like is *blessed* by a cleric of Janus, he has a percentage chance equal to his level of receiving the gods attribute of not being surprised. This increases (at the DM's option) if the guard is a faithful follower of Janus or has helped his cult. The duration of this ability is a full day from the moment the guards shift begins.

Janus usually appears as an old man with a beard. He can cast any magic-user spell he wishes, at whatever level he wishes, if it is a protective spell; one of his favorite spells is *wizard lock*. When forced to fight, he battles with savage fury. Any thief within 30' of him has a percentage chance equal to 100 minus his level (roll on 1d6) of: 1-2, becoming *insane* (as per the symbol) each round; 3-4, becoming *feebleminded* (as per the symbol); or, 5-6, forgetting *all* his thieves' skills and starting over again in a new class, retaining only his original statistics.

MITHRAS (*patron of soldiers*)

Greater god

ARMOR CLASS: -6

MOVE: 18"/36"

HIT POINTS: 300

NO. OF ATTACKS: 4

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (+5 magical bonus; +14 strength bonus)*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 50%

SIZE: M (6½')

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful good*

WORSHIPERS' ALIGNMENT: *Warriors of all alignments*

SYMBOL: *Youth stabbing a bull*

PLANE: *Twin Paradises*

CLERIC/DRUID: *24th-level cleric*

CAVALIER/PALADIN: *21st-level cavalier*

MONK/BARD: *14th-level monk/10th-level bard*

PSIONIC ABILITY: VI

S: 25	I: 21	W: 21
D: 24	C: 25	CH: 25
CO: 24		

Mithras, the patron of warriors, is the most popular god in almost any Roman army. His priests are often found in army camps, sometimes in positions of command. Though historical Mithraist cults were open only to males, this need not be

so in fantasy game campaigns. Mithras was originally a Persian sun god, but in time grew to encompass light, loyalty, soldiers, warfare, discipline, truth, justice, and celibacy.

Mithras looks like a beautiful young man wearing the best armor available in a given campaign. For instance, in a campaign where the best armor available is scale mail, Mithras will be wearing a perfect suit of *scale mail* +5. He will use any weapon, since his touch gives any weapon a +5 bonus to hit and damage. If a Mithraist fighter with a cursed weapon takes it to the nearest Mithraist priest, he can have the weapon's curse removed with no charge (if the fighter's faith has been exemplary) or at half the usual charge (if



SATURN



VESTA



Vesta

faith hasn't been too evident). Nonworshippers of Mithras who bring in cursed weapons to be destroyed often receive a *bless* or *cure* spell as payment, since Mithras, as patron of warriors and fighters, sees cursed weapons as perversions deserving instant destruction.

Mithraist temples are usually underground. To have a curse removed, to be blessed, or to advance a level (for clerics), a Mithraist must supply a sacrificial animal (an ox is acceptable, but a more spectacular sacrificial creature is better at high levels). The Mithraist must then stand underneath the altar while the sacrifice takes place, to be bathed in the blood of the sacrifice. This is seen as washing away all sins, curses, and mistakes.

Mithraist priests willingly engage in adventuring and warfare to further the causes and policies of their nations. Priests who have broken a minor rule are sent to seek and destroy all local cursed weapons; more serious infractions may produce orders to perform great deeds of military strategy and might in order to improve the might of their nation. Losing a battle is a serious offense and can only be rectified by entering combat with the victorious opponent at a later date and destroying the foe.

SATURN (*greater titan; patron of agriculture*)

ARMOR CLASS: -3
 MOVE: 24"
 HIT POINTS: 350
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 punch
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 5-50
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: 30%
 SIZE: L (100')
 ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*
 WORSHIPERS' ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good, neutral, and farmers of any alignment*
 SYMBOL: Plow
 PLANE: *Happy Hunting Ground*
 CLERIC/DRUID: 14th-level cleric/unlimited
 FIGHTER: 16th-level fighter
 MAGIC-USER/ILLUSIONIST: 8th-level magic-user/6th-level illusionist
 PSIONIC ABILITY: VI

S: 25 I: 25 W: 20
 D: 21 C: 25 CH: 24 CO: 22

Saturn, the father of Jupiter, is the greater titan who gave men the art of agriculture. As such, he is particularly honored by farmers and has an extensive cult following in rural areas.

Saturn appears as an old, white-bearded titan who wears no armor and carries no weapon. If attacked, he fights back with spells and whatever weapons are available. Anyone attacking or seriously offending Saturn might (2% chance per level of offender) receive a mark of Saturn's dis-

favor which is visible only to clerics of Saturn's cult. The bearer of this mark is unable to come within sight of any person dependent on the bounty of nature without sustaining an all-out attack by the person approached. This attack continues until the offender or the avenger is dead, and is pressed home with maniacal fury (+2 to hit). The attacker will also call upon any help he can to destroy the offender.

Saturn is just as pleased by small, rustic temples in agricultural districts as he is by large, urban temples. When he is called upon by his followers to end a drought, famine, flood, or other natural disaster, he does what he can, even to the point of pleading with other deities to leave his worshippers alone.

SERAPIS (*god of the underworld, fertility, and healing*)

Greater god

ARMOR CLASS: -5
 MOVE: 24"
 HIT POINTS: 360
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: 70%
 SIZE: M (6½')
 ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*
 WORSHIPERS' ALIGNMENT: *All who are not evil*
 SYMBOL: *Image of the god*
 PLANE: *Twin Paradises*
 CLERIC/DRUID: 15th level in each
 FIGHTER: 16th-level paladin
 MAGIC-USER/ILLUSIONIST: 13th-level magic-user/9th-level illusionist
 THIEF/ASSASSIN: Nil
 MONK/BARD: Nil
 PSIONIC ABILITY: VI

S: 24 I: 22 W: 24
 D: 20 C: 25 CH: 23 CO: 21

Serapis is worshiped in several aspects. As the god of the underworld, he guards and protects the souls of the dead. As a fertility god, he is appealed to by farmers for a good crop. As a god of healing, his temples function as "hospitals" where the sick and injured are treated.

Serapis's clerics are primarily interested in healing. They may join adventuring parties if the adventurers need regular healing or if the party is devoted to fighting evil beings. Like the clerics of many other Roman gods, these clerics are recognizable only by their avoidance of edged weapons and by their holy symbols.

Serapis appears as a majestic, bearded man wearing long, flowing robes. Although he is primarily benevolent and peaceful, he fights mercilessly when enraged by evil. His usual weapon is a staff +5.

VESTA (*guardian of women, the home, and domestic concerns*)

Greater goddess

ARMOR CLASS: -4

MOVE: 18"

HIT POINTS: 290

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type plus bonuses*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 65%

SIZE: M (6')

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful good*

WORSHIPERS' ALIGNMENT: *Women of all alignments*

SYMBOL: *Brazier with fire*

PLANE: *Seven Heavens*

CLERIC/DRUID: *18th level in each*

CAVALIER/PALADIN: *8th-level paladin*

MAGIC-USER/ILLUSIONIST: *10th level in each*

MONK/BARD: *5th-level bard*

S: 25 I: 22 W: 24
D: 20 C: 25 CH: 25 CO: 25

Vesta is the protector of married women, the home, women in childbirth, and domestic matters in general. Her cult is one of the most widely loved and revered in the Roman mythos. Even confirmed evildoers are shocked by any attack made on it.

Vesta's clerics (Vestal Virgins) are all female, and unlike other Roman clerics, subject to various restrictions. During their 30-year terms of duty, these clerics may not break their vows of chastity, under penalty of death. They may not, in an AD&D game setting, use their clerical spells for other than healing purposes except in the defense of their temples. Their rituals revolve around tending Vesta's sacred hearth-fire. Other duties they perform include acting as guardians of wills and other important legal documents.

Their personal probity is so high and the mere thought of burgling the temple of Vesta so shocking that they are eminently suited for such guardianship.

If PCs encounter a Vestal Virgin, she will be a cleric of at least 6th level with spells selected by the DM (with accord to the restrictions listed above). In a setting using the Roman mythos, any PC assaulting or annoying a Vestal Virgin may expect to be the victim of savage mob action if he is found out. This will be a preliminary to the most stringent penalties the law can impose. Vestal Virgins cannot be PCs, but any female PC follower of the Roman mythos will revere Vesta. Vesta seldom manifests herself; when she does, she appears as a tall, stately matron sedately dressed and veiled.

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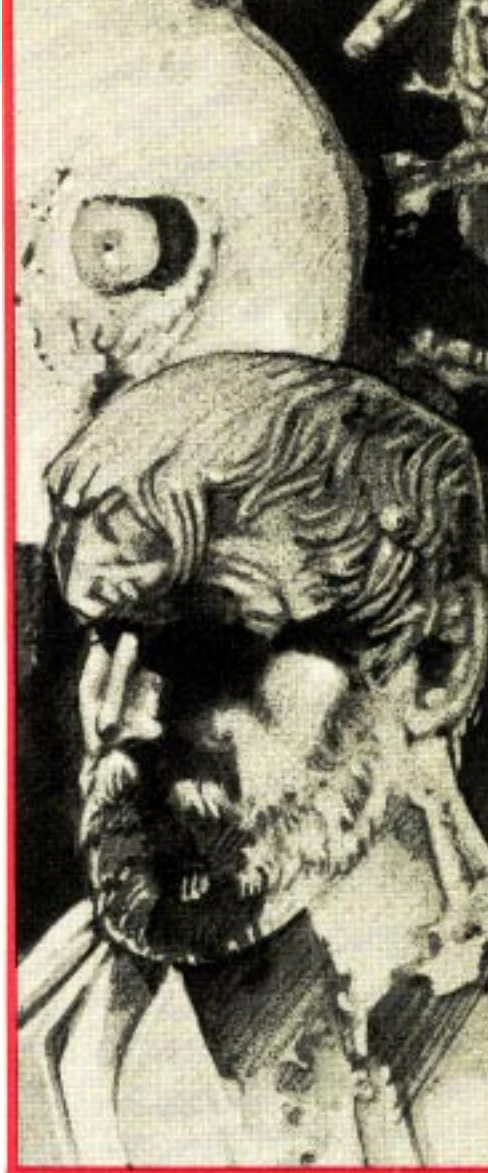
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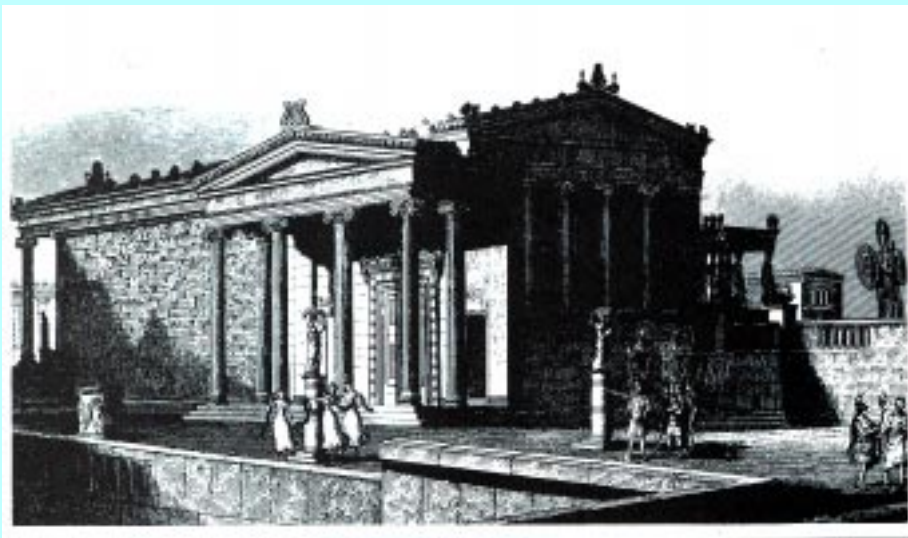
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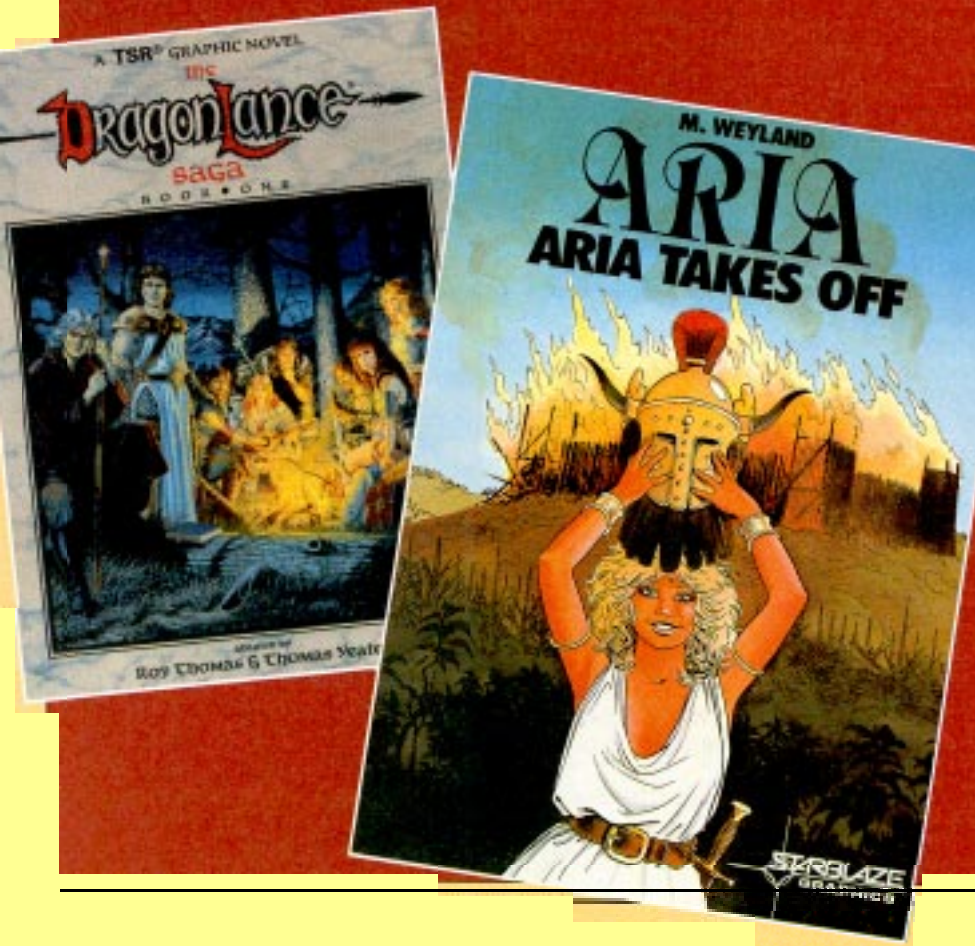
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SERAPIS



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ARIA TAKES OFF

Michel Weyland (Chris Tanz and Jean-Paul Bierny, trans.)

Donning 0-89865-468-8 \$6.95

THE DRAGONLANCE® SAGA, BOOK ONE

Roy Thomas and Thomas Yeates

TSR 0-88038-528-6 \$9.95

Those who enjoy graphic novels describe them as works of art, while the form's detractors call them no more than expensive comic books. Amid the debate, graphic novels are gaining a growing audience around the world, and

translator/publisher Chris Tanz accurately noted in the letter enclosed with *Aria Takes Off* that fantasy and science fiction are natural topics for graphic storytellers.

That creates problems for a critic whose background is mostly literary; I draw a mean stick figure, and I can tell Whistler's mother apart from the Mona Lisa, but that's about all. To further complicate matters, *Aria's* European origins make any comparisons between it and the more traditional DRAGONLANCE® graphic novel somewhat unfair. On the other hand, I have read quite a few comic books over the years. . .

Aria Takes Off doesn't look like a comic book. For one thing, it's hardbound, though the binding and covers are not as sturdy as those of a regular novel. In addition, its art differs in style from that of the average comic book — it's softer, with few bright colors or sharp corners, and comes in neatly organized, box-shaped panels. Oddly, the only full-page scenes in the entire volume are the covers, which is a surprise in a book that should take better advantage of its size.

By contrast, the DRAGONLANCE graphic novel seems almost garish; it's crowded with sharp, powerful hues and layouts sprawled widely over its pages. Artist Thomas Yeates and colorist Steve Oliff make extensive use of light and shadow effects, especially in their characters' faces, and "sound effects" are liberally sprinkled throughout. (This last touch is somewhat overdone; it's disconcerting to have the saga's smooth, slightly medieval dialogue peppered with noises like "Whompf!" and "Sshrrreeee!" in large square letters that clash with the type of the chapter headings.)

As for the stories, the DRAGONLANCE plotline may be familiar (as it is based upon Book 1 of *The Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman), but veteran comics writer Roy Thomas has generally done an excellent job of transforming the original text into this format. In particular, Raistlin's dialogue is well rendered, and if there is a weakness it's that Tasslehoff Burrfoot doesn't have enough good lines. (It's worth remembering, though, that the kender didn't really come into his own until later in the series.) *Aria Takes Off* is rather tame by comparison, as author/artist Michel Weyland offers a plot involving a disreputable troop of soldiers turned into a well-drilled fighting team by Aria, who must disguise herself in order to accomplish the task. Part of the problem is that *Aria Takes Off* is shorter (44 pages of art), and it doesn't help that Weyland sometimes injects annoying authorial asides in his narrative.

Despite its distinctive visual appearance, *Aria Takes Off* thus comes across as an expensive comic book — not far enough beyond the norm to justify its price. The same can't be said of the DRAGONLANCE graphic novel. While it owes more of its heritage to the likes of *Superman* and *The Fantastic Four*, it delivers solidly on the promise of a carefully crafted, compelling adaptation of the novel from which it's drawn.

THE SERPENT'S EGG

Caroline Stevermer

Ace 0-441-75912-2 \$2.95

If an element of magic identifies a fantasy novel as such, then *The Serpent's Egg* barely qualifies. But if the key ingredients are a convincing atmosphere and a full measure of romantic intrigue, then Caroline Stevermer's tale of vaguely Elizabe-

than adventures and court protocol is a captivating fantasy several times over.

The Duke of Tilbury, it seems, has designs on the throne of Dwale, currently held by Queen Andred and destined for her nephew and heir, Prince Bertram. Two strategies are central to the Duke's plans: remain as loyal as possible to all public appearance, and remove all obstacles by untraceable treachery and the use of hirelings and agents. In this latter endeavor, the disquieting servant Souriant takes to spending long hours in the royal library researching the powers and uses of the Serpent's Egg, said to possess scrying abilities and the power to warp minds.

But the Duke's intent is discovered by Lady Margaret Yewesley, though not soon enough to prevent an important murder or to keep Bertram from being implicated in a manufactured scandal. Together with the castle librarian, a minor courtier aptly named Michael Random, a marginally respectable minstrel, and several other more or less noble conspirators, Lady Margaret finds herself plotting to expose Tilbury's schemes despite his influence with the queen.

There is little in the tale for clerics and wizards to do, though the Egg holds secrets that ripple through the plots and counterplots. Swordsmen and rogues, however, have a field day smuggling messages and spies back and forth through the streets, and half the fun comes from the wise, understated wit with which Stevermer's characters are gifted. Prince Bertram's devotion to writing mediocre sonnets is one refreshing aspect of the yarn, and Michael Random has an appealing sense of dramatic humor. ("What are you doing here?" Margaret asks him on finding him in the shrubbery at a court party. "Lurking," he replies cheerfully.)

If there is a discordant element in *The Serpent's Egg*, it is that Chrysafer Woodland, the librarian, gets rather short shrift considering her role in the unfolding intrigues. Stevermer seems at times to treat her as a major character, only to cut away from Chrysafer again for long periods shortly thereafter. The result is a rather detached quality, as if there are two parallel stories being told in one relatively slim novel.

Still, Caroline Stevermer admirably succeeds in weaving a finely stitched, stylish story that does an expert job of capturing the texture of a world with echoes of Shakespeare and the Three Musketeers. Certainly, there is little else like it available at present, and it is as comfortable and attractive as a silk handkerchief in a jacket pocket. *The Serpent's Egg* is definitely well hatched.

NAPOLEON DISENTIMED **Hayford Peirce**

Tor 0-812-54898-1 \$3.50

In order for science fiction to be convincing, it needs to be internally consistent. The operative word, after all, is

"science," which implies the rule of logic and the discipline of ordered thought — all of which are necessary if the reader is to suspend his disbelief and become immersed in the story. Similarly, another axiom of successful science fiction is that it insists on only one "impossible wonder" in any given narrative, in order to minimize confusion and give coherence to the plot.

All of this explains why *Napoleon Disentimed* is a disappointing first entry in a series of novels edited by respected SF authority Ben Bova. There are too many gimmicks, twists, and technological left turns for the story to do more than

confuse as it attempts to entertain.

Gimmick number one is the GODHEAD, an exotic and electronic jeweled crown that is supposed to be a prop for a phony religious cult. After being damaged by a stray bullet during a theft, however, it becomes capable of transporting its wearer into an alternate universe — then it teleports at irregular and usually inconvenient moments onto its owner's head from points around this new world.

Then there's the time machine being developed by a team of peculiar scientists in the alternate world, in hopes that they can send a man back in time to prevent





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Napoleon from building France into the worldwide empire it has become in the early 1990s. There's an English resistance movement out to reclaim the British Isles from French rule, and there's at least one other cadre of mad scientists wandering around in the woodwork.

Through all this, Peirce traces the adventures of the MacNair of MacNair, a debonair con artist who adopts new identities as easily as he changes his socks. To add to the complications, it turns out that the MacNair has a double in his new universe, one Kevin Frost, who is twice as ruthless and only half as charming. Between the political intrigues, the double and triple romantic triangles, and the unpredictable technology, *Napoleon Disentimed* barely has time to establish the rules and histories of the worlds in which it is set.

The problem is not that Peirce writes badly — he has no trouble at all with the task of keeping his story moving swiftly and his characters interesting. It's simply that there is too much going on, and not enough of it hangs logically together. Any one of Peirce's themes could sustain an absorbing novel or game campaign (Pacesetter's TIME MASTER™ game comes to mind) all by itself; in combination, they instead cloud events so much that there's no rational basis for picking heroes and villains, let alone trying to achieve any specified goal. *Napoleon Disentimed* aptly illustrates what happens when a writer tries to explore too many ideas at once. It may be amusing, but it doesn't make much sense.

SOULSTRING

Midori Snyder

Ace 0-441-77591-8 \$2.95

This story is a variation on one of the oldest fairy-tale plots in the book, with three handsome brothers seeking to free a lovely princess from her trapped destiny so that one of them can receive her hand in marriage. The suitor faces the obligatory three impossible tasks, overcomes them, then falls victim to the inevitable curse when the girl's father decides not to play fair.

The story's execution, on the other hand, mixes the traditional with a decidedly modern interpretation. Narrator Magda de'Stain is the princess, but the kingdom of Moravia is neither overly wealthy nor particularly attractive. Magda is a practical girl, and part of her pragmatic world view says that it's folly to oppose the dark power her father wields, even though she herself has the potential for sorcery. Nor is she impressed by most of the suitors who attempt to win her hand — until Severin of Thall, heir to a family of gentleman farmers in the next kingdom, arrives.

Author Midori Snyder does not spend much time on the business of the three impossible tasks, instead sketching in a mildly drawn but graphic picture of

Magda's grim life before she chooses to flee for Thall with Severin and his brothers. The real meat of the novel is in the race for Thall, especially after Severin is transformed into a stag by one of Magda's father's spells. Only the magic of the soulstring eventually enables the lifting of this curse, leading the way toward a happy ending that is light without being fluffy or out of character.

Snyder's treatment of the stag curse will require some adaptation if it's to be applied in a gaming context (the soulstring, being purely a love-bonding form of magic, probably isn't practical in typical campaigns), but it is nonetheless a solid example for those looking for guidance in handling curses — and the mechanics of polymorphing, for that matter.

Better still, *Soulstring* is good reading despite its roots in overused fairy-tale forms. Snyder's choice of viewpoint, and her use of a personal, realistic style rather than a high, formal tone, give the novel a character different from most of the other fairy-tale fantasies in vogue nowadays. While not all readers may be attracted to what is essentially a romantic tale, those who are will find it more than worthy of appreciation and respect.

THE BURNING REALM

Michael Reaves

Baen 0-671-65386-5 \$3.50

Michael Reaves' new novel is the sequel to *The Shattered World* — a book that is old enough that I don't remember where I first ran across it (with luck, Reaves' publishers will reprint it in the near future). But *The Burning Realm* provides enough background detail to keep new readers from getting lost, and it tells a rousing and complicated tale of demons and heroes in the process.

The premise of the world in which *The Burning Realm* is set is that fantastic magic enabled Earth to survive being blown into asteroids after being struck by a rogue comet. Now hundreds of fragments of Earth of various sizes float in a magically created bubble of atmosphere, held in their orbits by mystic runestones. Unfortunately, there are two major crises brewing: The runestones are gradually running out of power, and the light-hating demons of the fragment of Xoth are only too eager to wipe out the sorcerers who are mankind's only hope of continued survival.

Even in this bizarre setting, the cast of characters is easily identified and well fitted to a magically sophisticated society. There are the powerful mages Pandrogas and Amber, caught on opposite ends of a romance even though they haven't seen each other for a year. There's the werewolf who tries to apprentice herself to the assassin's guild. There's a cloakfighter, Kan Konar, with a powerful Oriental sense of honor that he never abandons even when he's stranded on a fragment infected with a deadly plague. And there are the

demons, whose factions and internal rivalries defy mortal comprehension even as they threaten to make some very strange alliances in the process of destroying each other — and possibly all humanity.

Reaves juggles all these story elements with skill and finesse, gradually bringing his cast together for a grand finale of epic proportions. The unusual setting is somehow not at all hard to visualize — but then, Reaves is also a TV writer (with credits including the animated DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® show and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) who is experienced at portraying worlds for the eye as well as the mind. The situation is also entirely compatible with an RPG campaign, though the task of adapting the Shattered World itself as a gaming environment promises to be a challenging one.

The conclusion of *The Burning Realm* leaves no doubt that another volume is forthcoming in this series, yet avoids most of the problems usually associated with the middle books of trilogies. Reaves may not be quite the virtuoso writer described in the cover quotes, but he has certainly produced a rousing and idea-filled adventure that should keep gamers busy long after they finish reading the novel.

GREENBRIAR QUEEN

Sheila Gilluly

Signet/NAL 0-451-15143-7 \$3.50

Somewhere in its advertising or in an early review, *The Greenbriar Queen* is said to have begun life as a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. Knowing that bit of information goes a long way toward explaining the frustrating parts of Sheila Gilluly's story about quests, lost heirs, and wizardry both tame and wild.

Ideally, an RPG adventuring party doesn't need a leader. Role-playing at its best evokes teamwork rather than a leader-follower dynamic, and each individual emerges satisfied with his or her contribution. Novels don't generally work that way; in a written adventure, a strong central character is needed to give readers something on which to focus. Even the exceptions to this rule, in which a strong novel emerges with a true ensemble cast, allow readers to identify with one individual in a group of well-drawn characters.

The Greenbriar Queen has an ensemble cast, but Gilluly hasn't managed to give the characters enough depth to let readers pick a favorite to follow. We know a good deal about some of the characters (Imris the Yoriandir feels deeply for the trees which it is his heritage to guard, and Alphonse the apprentice is trapped in a larger role that forces him into a sort of psychic solitude), but we can't empathize with them, because Gilluly's choice of viewpoint is mostly wide-angled in order to keep the focus on the group rather than on any one character.

Unfortunately, the characters are probably the most distinctive aspect of what is

otherwise a very ordinary novel. The setting is a standard evil-occupied kingdom sprinkled with pockets of resistance — the wooded realms of the Yoriandir and an isolated village retreat here and there. Word unexpectedly arrives that a true heir to the kingdom lives, having been given to peasants as a baby. A company of heroes therefore forms, to find and rescue the heir and to orchestrate the needed magical operation so that the kingdom can be restored.

It isn't that Gilluly tells her story badly. Indeed, the Yoriandir mythos is fairly well rendered, and there is some interesting interplay between Dendron, the enemy king, and Rasullis, his court wizard and occasional rival. The problem is simply that in managing a large cast and presenting a good deal of needed background at the same time, Gilluly has given herself too much to do and too few pages in which to do it.

The Greenbriar Queen is a hard novel to dislike. Its intentions are good and there are some fascinating bits to be found every so often. At the same time, it's a hard novel to truly enjoy, because so much of the tale is clearly buried in the imaginations of those who took part in the games from which it was drawn.

Recurring roles

Once again, the ranks of continuations and the like swell nearly to overflowing, with many titles worth mentioning. The progress reports run as follows:

Web of Wind (Ace, \$2.95) continues J.F. Rivkin's stories about Corson and Nyctasia, a female warrior-and-sorceress team, with an agreeable yarn involving a merchant family and legends of hidden knowledge that is no less swashbuckling for its often domestic qualities. The vague disquiet that seemed to haunt its predecessor, *Silverglass*, has entirely vanished, leaving an enjoyable narrative intact.

Mercedes Lackey manages to add an unsettling element, though, in *Arrow's Fall* (DAW, \$3.50), which concludes her trilogy about the Heralds of Valdemar. The good

news is that she delivers in full measure on the promise of action, intrigue, and magical fireworks that has been pending since the series began. The catch is that a sequence which has been, up to this point, more dashing than graphic suddenly puts its heroine through a good deal more suffering than seems necessary to make the story work. As a result, the novel seems out of synch with its companions. One plus for folk-music followers: The lyrics to a number of songs from *Heralds*, *Harpers*, & *Havoc* (reviewed in DRAGON® issue #131) are included in the back of the book. (There must be a novel lurking behind "Kerowyn's Ride" somewhere.)

A host of complex factors has kept comments on the DRAGONLANCE short-story collections out of this column till now. *Love and War* (TSR, \$3.95), brings the series to a solid conclusion — at least in terms of quality, since "Raistlin's Daughter" leaves a large if somewhat peculiar door ajar for future expansion. The stories stand by themselves rather than relying on shared-world interaction, and the mix of amusement, adventure, and tragedy has been well blended. Many new writers were featured in these books, and other projects from many of them will bear watching.

Also concluding is Jack Chalker's Rings of the Master series, and *Masks of the Martyrs* (Del Rey, \$3.95) is easily the most satisfying of the four, even if it does turn out that Chalker's twist ending is the same one he gave away two books back. At least Chalker generally plays fair with his clues. It's irritating, though, to read his blatant sales pitch in the front of the book and realize that many of today's best-selling writers don't feel a need to tell a complete story in a single volume.

The Robot City books cannot be criticized for not telling complete stories — each one has had a more or less self-contained puzzle — but they are starting to become wildly uneven. *Cyborg* (Ace, \$2.95) is generally credible, though it again adds a technology to the Asimov universe that seems not to belong there. But where

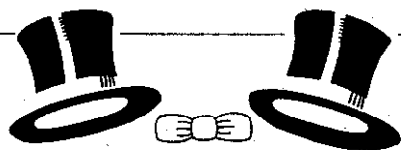
William Wu is mostly successful, Arthur Byron Cover is badly misguided in *Prodigy* (Ace, \$2.95). Cover has demonstrated elsewhere that he has almost no talent for writing dialogue for other people's characters, and the pattern continues in this very odd episode involving robots and the creative arts. Further, unless the next volume does some serious back-pedaling, the ending of Cover's tale and the appearance of the elusive Dr. Avery make very little sense.

After Long Silence (Bantam, \$3.95) is Sheri Tepper's newest novel and one of her most impressive. This one is pure science fiction, set on the planet of Jubal where the possibly sentient crystal formations are only one of the book's major surprises. It's a swift, multi-faceted tale of dark intrigues, and it puts Tepper firmly on the map as a writer skilled both in conceiving daring ideas and putting them into book form. There is also (at last) a biographical note about the prolific Tepper, who turns out to be a grandmother from Colorado (but one doubts that she is the sort who sits in a rocking chair and knits).

Ru Emerson continues her tales of Nedao in *In the Caves of Exile* (Ace, \$2.95). Again the book is narrated in layers by Nisana, a cat of more than normal heritage, and again the style is an interesting blend of the lyrical with the down-to-earth. The focus here is on political wrangling, but there is still time for an old prophecy and a romance to surface. Emerson gets high marks for *not* bringing the romance to full fruition in this volume, instead merely laying enough groundwork so that matters can be more fully addressed in the next book.

The Gauntlet of Malice (Tor, \$7.95) is a less impressive middle volume. Author Deborah Turner Harris has forgotten one of the cardinal rules of successful fantasy: Breaking the rules of magic is only allowed if there is a good explanation for it, not as a means of bailing the characters out of imminent disaster. *The Burning Stone* established that a magestone was necessary to work spells, but renegade wizard Caradoc can now draw on his powers somewhat at will, and his non-mage sister can work magic on locks. Even if these puzzles are resolved in the next book, Harris is guilty of sloppy writing.

Not so Charles de Lint, whose *Greenmantle* (Ace, \$3.50) is (as usual) an expertly told tale of ancient magic crossing paths with modern civilization. This time, the setting is rural Ontario, and the meeting brings together the disparate elements of organized crime, quiet family life, and the Wild Hunt out of Celtic legend. De Lint continues to have the knack of telling an utterly convincing tale even when his characters espouse wildly different views of reality, and few writers can match his ability to portray both lyric and gritty moments with equal authority.



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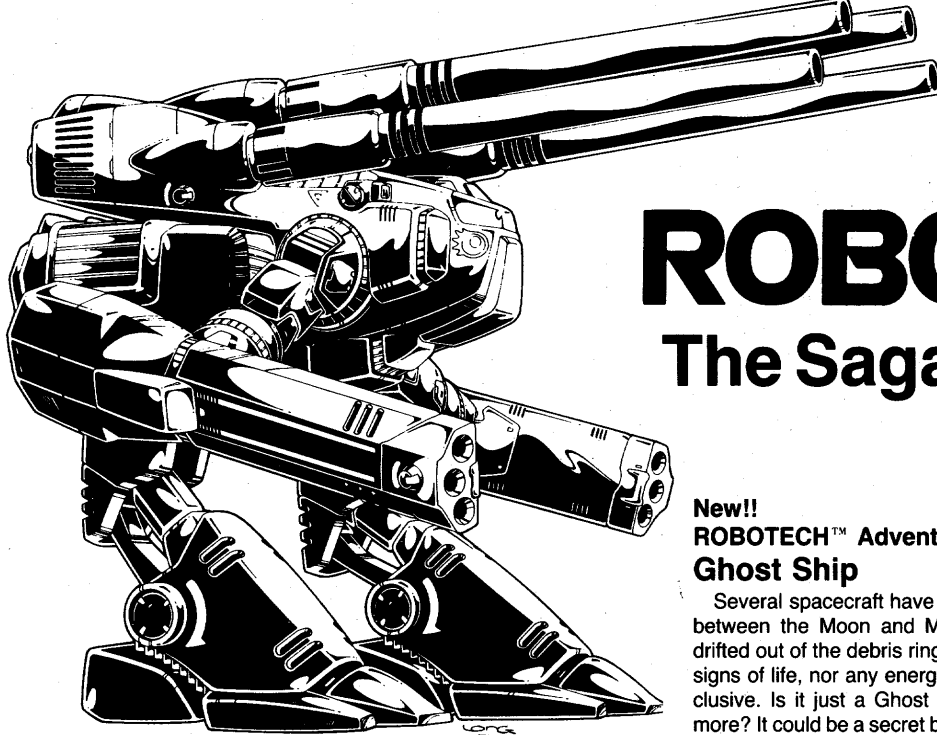
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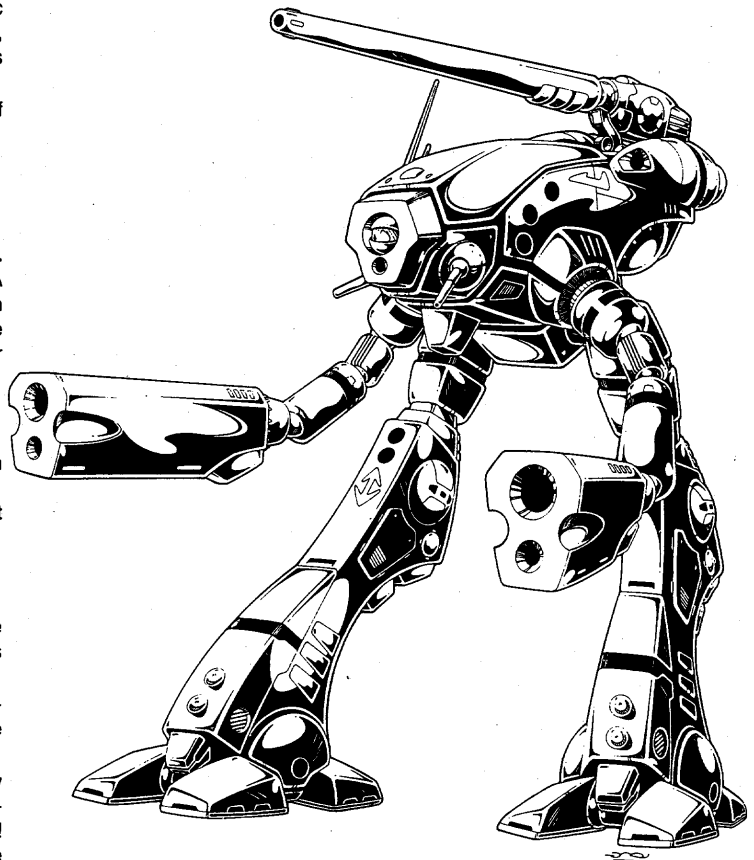
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Wards Against Evil

Boosting the shukenja's power against spirits

In his article, "Oriental Opens New Vistas" (DRAGON® issue #104), David "Zeb" Cook informs us that "dealing with spirits is the shukenja's equivalent of the cleric's turning undead." So how does a shukenja deal with spirits? From *Oriental Adventures* (page 23), we know that a shukenja is trained to perform the basic ritual of purifying, to ward off evil spirits: "The shukenja can sanctify an area with a radius of 5 feet (75 square feet). At the end of the ritual, everyone within the area gains

a +1 bonus on all rolls to hit and saving throws when fighting evil spirits."

Well, a +1 bonus is nice, but it is not the equivalent of turning undead. This article's suggestion is to improve the shukenja's warding away of evil spirits by adding the additional power to turn undead as used by clerics [which does not occur in *Oriental literature*, as David Cook has pointed out]. To achieve this, the rules covering the turning of undead in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* (page 65) must be followed, and the

Matrix for Shukenjas Affecting Evil Spirits

Spirit class	Level of shukenja attempting to ward									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-13	14+
I	10	7	4	T	T	D	D	D*	D*	D*
II	13	10	7	T	T	D	D	D	D*	D*
III	16	13	10	4	T	T	D	D	D	D*
IV	19	16	13	7	4	T	T	D	D	D*
V	20	19	16	10	7	4	T	T	D	D
VI	—	20	19	13	10	7	4	T	T	D
VII	—	—	20	16	13	10	7	4	T	D
VIII	—	—	—	20	16	13	10	7	4	T
IX	—	—	—	—	20	16	13	10	7	T
X	—	—	—	—	—	20	16	13	10	4
XI	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	16	13	7
XII	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	16	10
Special**	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	13

Roll 1d20; if the number rolled matches or is greater than the number on the matrix, the spirits have been warded off. From 1-12 spirits are affected.

* This affects 7-12 spirits.

** This affects 1-2 spirits.

Oriental Evil Spirits by Class

Spirit

class Creatures

- I Lesser nature spirit (2 HD)
- II Einsaung nat
Lesser nature spirit (3 HD)
- III Jiki-niku-gaki
Kuei (3 HD)
- IV Lesser nature spirit (4 HD)
Hkum yeng nat
Kuei (4 HD)
- Lesser nature spirit (5 HD)
Shinen-gaki
- V Kuei (5 HD)
Lesser nature spirit (6 HD)
P'oh
Shikko-gaki
- VI Con-tinh
Hu hsien
Kuei (6 HD)
Lesser nature spirit (7 HD)
- VII Bajang
- VIII Common oni
Greater nature spirit (8 HD)
Jiki-ketsu-gaki
- IX Greater nature spirit (9 HD)
Lu nat
- X Bisan
Greater nature spirit (10 HD)
- XI Greater nature spirit (11 HD)
Me-zu oni
- XII Go-zu oni
Greater nature spirit (12 HD)
- Special This group covers greater nature spirits with 12 +4 HD or more, and all greater spirits.

Matrix for Shukenjas Affecting Evil Spirits (given here) must be used when an area is purified by a shukenja.

When a spirit has been turned or warded off, it cannot enter the shukenja's purified area, although it can still fire missiles and magical spells into that area. If the symbol "D" appears on the matrix, the spirit flees the area in terror for a number of rounds equal to the shukenja's level. If the spirit returns later, it need not flee again but cannot enter the sanctified area.

A character possessed by an evil spirit fights inside a purified area with a -1 on all rolls to hit and on saving throws. If the type of spirit causing the possession is turned or warded off, the possessed character grows ill and tries to leave the purified area; any attacks or saving throws made then are at -2. If the spirit received a "D" result, the possessed character tries for two rounds to flee the purified area; if he cannot, he falls and goes into a coma for a number of rounds equal to the level of the shukenja who purified the area (after which time the possessing spirit returns). If the spirit causing the possession stays within the purified area, the spirit makes a saving throw vs. spells. If the save is made, the spirit remains within the area but fights with a -1 to hit. **Ω**

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The Game Wizards

Turning on the TSR/SSI connection

There is an unusual amount of work associated with being the Manager of the Creative Services department at TSR (I had no idea how much until now), but sometimes the boss gets a pleasant change of pace. Several weeks ago, I visited our friends at Strategic Simulations, Inc. in Mountain View, Calif. SSI is the company to which TSR has given the license to produce all sorts of AD&D® game computer material. The official reason for my California visit was to take a look at what SSI has produced so far for TSR; unofficially, it was a chance for me to leave the frigid Midwest and soak up some rays in sunny California. Naturally, California was cloudy and cold, the weather much like it was in Wisconsin.

Producing these computer games is a task that both companies are realizing is a huge job. Everyone is concerned with getting the job done right the first time, and a great deal of time and effort is being spent by both companies on all the AD&D game computer projects.

SSI's first and biggest effort comes out in June and is called *The Pool of Radiance*, an official AD&D computer game. It is a wonder to behold. Not only will you be able to enter your favorite low-level character into the computer game system, it also allows you to set up new characters and have them be completely accurate according to the AD&D game rules. It was great to set up character after character in a quick and easy fashion. Then the designers of the first module told me that I could change the colors and stances for each of the character icons I had set up on the

screen. I made up a fighter named Jim o' the Green Wood and was able to give the icon a green uniform. The game looks wonderful on the screen; SSI has spent a great deal of time on the artwork and graphics of the product to produce a state-of-the-art game with more fun and adventure in it than any computer game to date.

The adventure for *The Pool of Radiance* takes place in the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ fantasy setting in a section of land that will be officially developed only by SSI. Adventurers begin in the ruins of the city of Phlan. A small settlement of humans is trying to build a new city out of the ruins of the old, and is hiring all comers to reclaim the land from the evil monsters that inhabit the area. If that wasn't enough for a skillful set of heroes, there is a large track of land around the city that is being poisoned by some evil being; this must be stopped before the adventure.

SSI is working on several other fascinating things for the AD&D game. An SSI-allied company by the name of U.S. Gold is going to market the first DRAGONLANCE® computer game, to be distributed by SSI in America. The DRAGONLANCE Action Strategy game is based on the DL-1 module and takes the DRAGONLANCE team into the heart of Pax Tharkas, to the lair of the black dragon. When I saw Flint and Caramon running and jumping over some of the dangers in the pits, I was amazed at the detail of the figures on the Atari ST. The animation quality was like a high-grade Saturday morning cartoon show. This game will come out this summer, and I

guarantee all DRAGONLANCE saga fans are going to go wild when they actually see their favorite characters dealing with the dangers that the players had only read about.

Next on the drawing board is a Dungeon Master Assist program. When it's done, this program will be one of the most useful things a DM with a computer can own. A computer's primary function is to make work easier for its user, and this program does just that, producing thousands of random encounters in thousands of different ways. Imagine the work involved in using paper and pencil to fill 10 different levels of a dungeon with creatures that get tougher as the levels get deeper. Now, with a few key strokes on your computer, all the monsters for each level are generated using the *Monster Manual* and *Monster Manual II* format, complete with all statistics, experience points, and treasure. If you don't like what the computer has selected, you can go into the program and make the monsters weaker or tougher. You can also add your own monsters with their own abilities to the program.

The second in a trilogy of AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS computer games comes out in early 1989. It's called *Azure Bonds* and is closely tied to an AD&D game module and a FORGOTTEN REALMS novel by the same name. In this story, the player characters wake up one morning to discover strange, magical symbols etched into their arms. All attempts to remove the marks or discover their magical nature cause great pain to the characters. Finally, the player characters are forced to adventure into dangerous parts of the Realms to discover why they have been so marked. During the adventure, their markings generate surprising magical effects that cause unforeseen dangers to occur.

Another addition to the SSI line of AD&D game computer products will be a strategy wargame based on the wars of the DRAGONLANCE saga. This product is scheduled for late fall of this year and will allow a novice general to move armies of dragons and elves against each other on the plains of Krynn. SSI is one of the world leaders in computerized historical wargames, and this product should be a new high-water mark in a growing list of best-selling strategy wargames.

Finally, a group called Westwood Associates (which is working through SSI) is creating the first computerized Training City. This AD&D game product comes out this summer and promises to be fascinating. Player characters begin as 1st-level fighters, magic-users, clerics, or thieves, coming to a city in the Realms to learn their trade. During the adventure, they rise to 9th level by facing difficult encounters all through the city. The young thief who enters the thieves guild finds a huge room full of locks, which he must pick using his thieves' tools. Some locks have treasure behind them or traps on them, but all of them must be picked



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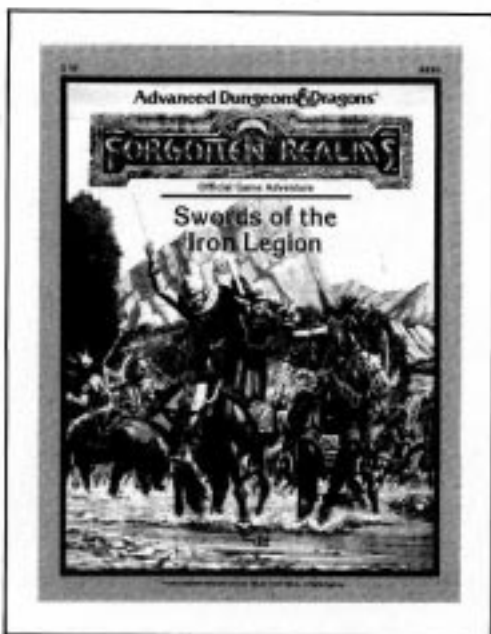
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within a certain amount of time or alarms go off. The young cleric must enter the graveyard and practice his undead-turning ability; otherwise, he must practice his fighting ability against the skeletons and zombies he finds there. The fighter has a huge arena in which to meet opponents in single combat, and his foes get tougher and tougher as the fighter gets better. The lucky magic-user has a huge tower with many doors to explore. Through a combination of skill in spell choice, spell-casting, and dagger-use, the magic-user overcomes dangers of increasing difficulty. The best part of all is that when you get six characters up to respectable levels, you can enter them into the AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS setting games.

Much more went on during my visit besides seeing SSI's exciting computer products. I got a chance to look at the programming work of other companies, and I was pleased to see how much better SSI's material was. SSI had a great pizza party, too, and I was delighted to see that California pizza is as good as Wisconsin pizza, even if the cheese is a bit strange.

All in all, I think that we are going to see some exciting AD&D game products from SSI in the near future. Those who love TSR's role-playing products will also love our electronic-gaming products from SSI. Look for them.

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MINIATURES

The Role of Computers

Fantasy at its finest

We have been asked why we do not review all of the recreational software programs we receive for examination. In our opinion, some software is not suited for publicity. Regardless of the paid publicity a game receives, which can be extremely slick and expensive when involving advertising, it takes far more than a good advertising copywriter and an advertising designer to produce a good game — it requires good programming, good user manuals, and consistent company support for the product.

Too many times the product hype overwhelms the product itself. Publicity, whether positive or negative in nature, can be good ink for a company. Several months in the future, a reader may recall that he read a review of a certain program being contemplated for a purchase, yet not remember whether the review was favorable or not. He may simply buy that product based on a past, slight remem-

brance of our review. We generally do not wish to cover products that hold neither excitement nor adventure for the user.

Our feature review this month, *Quarterstaff*, is an example of an adventure role-playing game that benefits from continually improving programming and from a company's dedication to its product. *Quarterstaff* is, without a doubt, one of the finest fantasy role-playing adventure games.

This review also features information on the latest game conversions to new computer systems. Those we have been able to play are rated (as usual) with from one to five stars, with five stars given to the best games.

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Quarterstaff

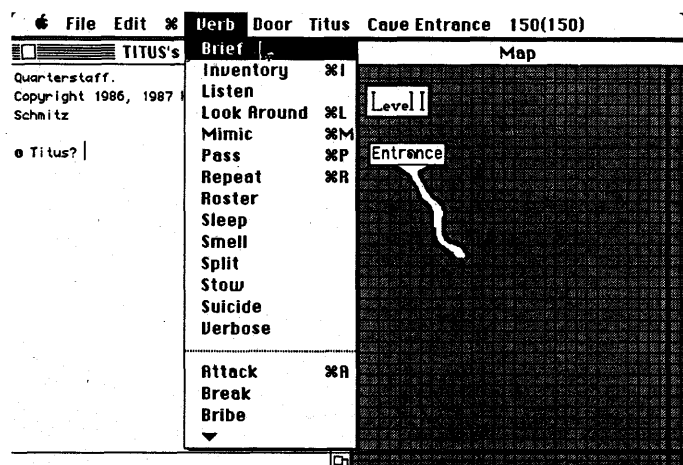
Apple Macintosh version

Macintosh users, count your blessings! *Quarterstaff* has been released for the Macintosh computer and is, in our opinion, among the finest fantasy role-playing games available for *any* computer system. Too bad other operating systems do not have this offering available to tickle their CPUs. Scott Schmitz, the game designer, has informed us that an Apple IIGS conversion is currently being worked on, as well as a second game titled *Storm Giants*.

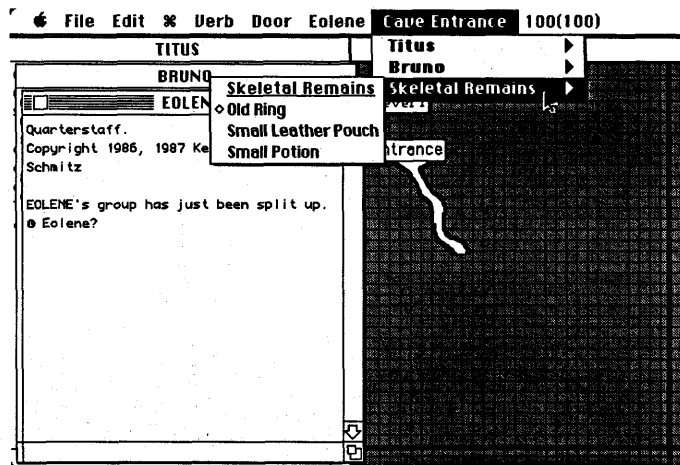
Quarterstaff goes beyond current FRP games in that the coding is based upon artificial intelligence that enables the denizens of the game to react to the player's moves and decisions in various ways. The beasts that populate this game's environment are driven by their needs, be they hunger, anger, or the like. For example, a monster that would not normally hunt and destroy a player's character unless hungry does not automatically attack in *Quarterstaff*. Adversaries react to the player in different ways; if your characters react negatively to the creature's appearance, the odds are that the creature will itself turn hostile and attack. Try a little friendship and you might be surprised at the results.

The game revolves around the disappearance three months ago of the Tree Druid colony; those Druids sent to investigate by other Druid colonies have not been seen since. Your intrepid band of adventurers is now assigned this task and possesses a weeks worth of provisions. The player controls three characters named Titus, Eolene, and Bruno. Titus begins the game as the leader and is so designated onscreen with an "L" in front of his name. (A character following the leader has an "F.") However, Eolene and Bruno can issue Split commands and leave Titus to explore areas on their own. This is extremely helpful when there is a large area to map; it can also be quite dangerous, as no one single character can defeat certain adversaries, and each must be able

When the going gets tough in the *Quarterstaff* game, you reach for your trusty verb menu. Here, Titus makes his move.



Using the unique hierarchical file structure of *Quarterstaff*, Eolene is able to check out the skeleton (and its treasures) at her feet.



to help a less-fortunate character who has slipped into a trap. For example, having passed through a secret door and entered a new room, a character may find the door will close and vanish, leaving him inside the room with no way out. Normally, secret doors are triggered by a device found on the outside of the door; one of the other characters must be free to retrigger the secret door and let his partner out. (Teamwork is the key to success.)

Both weapons and treasures have listed sizes and weights, and are breakable. The character menu displays the characters' current encumbrance and health so you can remain informed of their current situations. Encumbrance determines not only how much an object weighs but also how bulky it is; it helps to figure out the best method to carry treasure around. Placing objects inside a bag or other carrying device distributes the weight so that more can be carried. An even better idea is to select certain caches near the entrance to the Tree Druid Colony as areas for depositing riches; you can transport the wealth out of the dungeon later.

As in most FRP games, there are turns and rounds of play. With *Quarterstaff*, a turn is one character's individual action; a round is the collective actions of the characters and the creatures. The computer awaits the input from each character before deciding the rounds outcome. The round is then processed by the computer, and the results are posted on the screen.

Communication with the game is handled by typing commands into the computer. A sentence that possesses a verb, a verb followed by a noun, or a verb followed by a noun modified by a second noun will usually be understood. The player's manual also lists 15 prepositions that can be used in a sentence. An appropriate sentence would read "Give the rock to George," while an inappropriate sentence would be "Give George the rock."

Combat is interesting and encompasses not only the hack-and-hew method but missile fire as well. Thankfully, Eolene

possesses a short bow and a quiver of flight-stabilized arrows of many hues. Arrows of different colors (like the multi-colored potions to be found later) each have different effects. Prior to testing a potion or an arrow, it makes a great deal of sense for a player to save the game at that point. With a few careful saves, a backpack full of colored potions can be tested and their effects determined for future use with little trouble. The same process applies to the arrows. In fact, one of the first creatures that you might wish to test your arrows on happens to be a huge spider not too far down in the dungeon. This spider poisons those it encounters, so another good idea is to make certain one of your potions happens to be an antidote for poison.

Early in the game, the adventuring group will encounter the game's first two characters, the Chief Torturer and a Druid Guard. Considering that Druids are adamant in their opposition to torture, one might well wonder what a Druid Guard is doing assisting a Chief Torturer, but neither is prone to be friendly to your party. The two are in the so-called Recreation Room, which has a variety of goodies to examine and obtain, including some carried by the Chief Torturer himself. To the south of the Recreation Room is a Guest Room (little more than a prison cell) containing an interesting specimen called the Crazy Druid. What he wears on his finger may be a clue to his odd behavior.

When your characters are sleeping, be advised that others aren't so peacefully inclined. They are preparing for your entrance into their parts of the dungeon (and they plan well indeed).

The latest version of the game, *Quarterstaff 1.2*, incorporates several enhancements. These include faster recovery from a stunning encounter, a magical object that enables its wearer to levitate, text and graphic windows that can be printed, objects that can be stacked atop one another, objects that can be shaken, food and liquid that can be tasted before being

consumed, and the ability to copy and paste information from any player window to another player window.

We are still learning many of the game's intricacies and will pass them along as we pursue the quest. This is the most true-to-form computerized FRP game we've found, and we are thoroughly enjoying the adventure. The game goes beyond the level of seeking treasure and killing monsters; it requires an enormous amount of coordination and team effort between the three major characters and the denizens of the dungeon who are encountered in the game. Lastly, the player can turn the digitized sound effects on or off; you'll never forget the blood-curdling scream of a character who has suddenly found the hole located in the Spiral Death. . . .

Electronic Arts

1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo CA 94404
(415) 571-7171

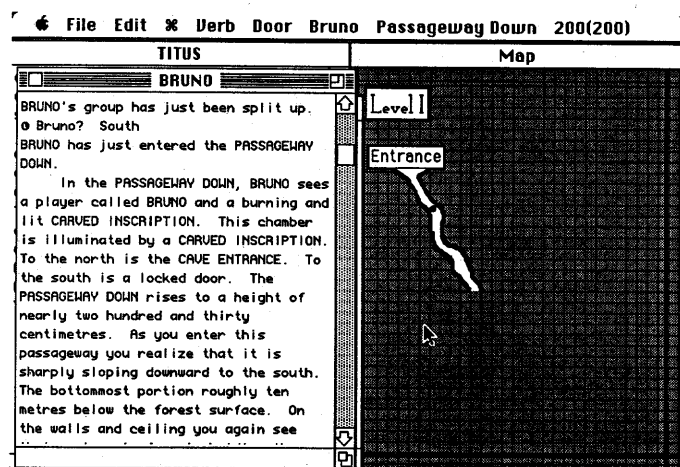
Dragon's Lair

Commodore 64/128 version

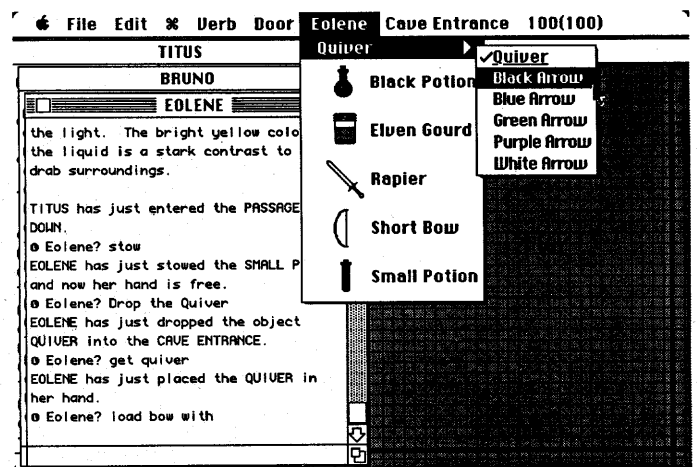
Think back to the good old days when video games were hot. Every mall and hotel proudly boasted an arcade center. Some laserdisc game authors became exceedingly rich. Like most good things, laserdisc games eventually came to an end, but not the dreams those games created. Electronic Arts has released one of our favorite laserdisc games, *Dragon's Lair*, for Commodore 64/128 computers.

In *Dragon's Lair*, you play Dirk the Daring, who has to rescue Daphne, a maiden captured by Singe, an evil dragon. Before you can even face Singe, however, you must deal with that dragon's minions and traps. On the laserdisc, each scene required the player to overcome a sequence of obstacles to enter the subsequent scene. This was no easy chore; we saw players spend nearly \$50 in a single afternoon's outing just trying to get from scene to scene.

Bruno has left his group and has become his own leader, wandering through the dungeon while the computer automatically maps the way.



The contents of Eolene's quiver are revealed, again using *Quarterstaff's* hierarchical file structure.



Electronic Arts has created a good adaptation for the C64/128 from the original laserdisc version. The graphics, of course, are not of laserdisc quality, but they do push the Commodore's graphics, sound, and music capabilities to their limits. Some scenes still retain the laserdisc's sequence mover, in which there is only one right sequence of moves to escape an otherwise deadly trap. Other scenes require a steady hand just as they required an arcade's steely nerves to get past the same traps in the laserdisc version.

Side one of the floppy game disc features "Dragon's Lair." The famous Falling Platform is the first obstacle. Here, you have to fight gusts of wind that try to push you from the platform into the bottomless pit. The Skull Hallway is a sequence room; once you know all the right moves in the room, you can get through without getting yourself killed. The Burning Ropes sequence is a variation of that in the original game, with about 20 ropes to use in swinging across a pit. The Weapons Room is another sequence, in which Dirk has to fight weapons that come to life.

The Giddy Goons area differs from the arcade version. This is the most poorly constructed room in the entire game, as the graphics are not well presented. Dirk has to jump ramps and kill giddy goons to survive. The Tentacle Room is a sequence room in which Dirk fights tentacles. After making spaghetti out of the tentacles, Dirk faces another Falling Platform, just as in the first sequence. The deadly Checkersboard sequence is extremely hard to master. Dirk must kill the black knight and, at the same time, avoid the knight's electrical shocks. Finally, the showdown between Dirk and the dragon comes. We never managed to arrive at this final scene, but we hear from other gamers that this sequence is spectacular.

On the second side of the game disc is "Dragon's Lair Two, Escape From Singe's Castle." These are rooms taken from "Dragon's Lair" and rewritten as a second part of the game. Singe's castle has been

taken over by the Lizard King. Dirk must return to retrieve the treasure for Daphne, then try to escape. He starts in Ye River Caves and has to fight whirlpools and waterfalls to get to the next scene. Boulder Alley is a very well done scene: Dirk is running from a large boulder but also has to watch out for smaller boulders that cross his path and nasty pits that appear out of nowhere. Electronic Arts has added some different patterns to this scene that make these obstacles hard to notice. The Throne Room is the first sequence room. Dirk must dodge supernatural hands and rays while trying to find a secret exit.

The Dungeons of the Lizard King come next, featuring a maze of rooms. The Magical Flying Horse is another well-done scene. Here, Dirk avoids walls and slow-moving energy balls as he tries to make it out of the castle. Doom Dungeon is the second sequence room, in which Dirk dodges flames and squishes tarantulas. The Mystic Mosaic is another hard scenario, as you manipulate Dirk to make it to the safe squares before the squares become electrified. Also, a vampire bat makes movement difficult as it tries to knock you into an adjoining pit. The last scene presents the mud monsters (which we never managed to reach). You have to find a sword and get over a mud bridge before the mud monsters get you. Dirk must get his sword and kill the Lizard King.

Electronic Arts has managed a more than passable adaptation of the laserdisc arcade game for C64/128 gamers. This is an offering in which you can show off your dexterity with the joystick and enjoy the graphic and music capabilities of the C64/128. The only problem is that once you've mastered all of the sequence rooms and have finished both quests, the game is all over! Pricing by Electronic Arts is a bargain for the dual-sided disc at \$24.95.

Skyfox II: The Cygnus Conflict ***
Commodore 64/128 version

If you enjoyed the original version of *Skyfox*, you'll praise this sequel arcade and strategy adventure. Of all the arcade/strategy/flight simulation games we've played on the C64/128, this is by far the finest as far as flicker-free animation and special effects are concerned. A couple of scenarios, especially "Intruder Alert," are a little weak, but the remaining scenarios and ease-of-flight commands make this program a must-buy for C64/128 arcade gamers.

Mindscape, Inc.

3444 Dundee Road
Northbrook IL 60062
(312) 480-7667

Indoor Sports

Commodore 64/128 version

For the C64/128 computer, this is a decent attempt to simulate bowling, darts, Ping-Pong, and air hockey. Of the four, Ping-Pong and air hockey are the best. Bowling is a disaster, because you cannot aim your ball directly at the pins — you have to guess at the best floor spot to initiate the throw of the ball. Darts leaves everything to be desired. If you enjoy a good Ping-Pong simulation and a decent air hockey simulation, then buy the game.

PBI Software

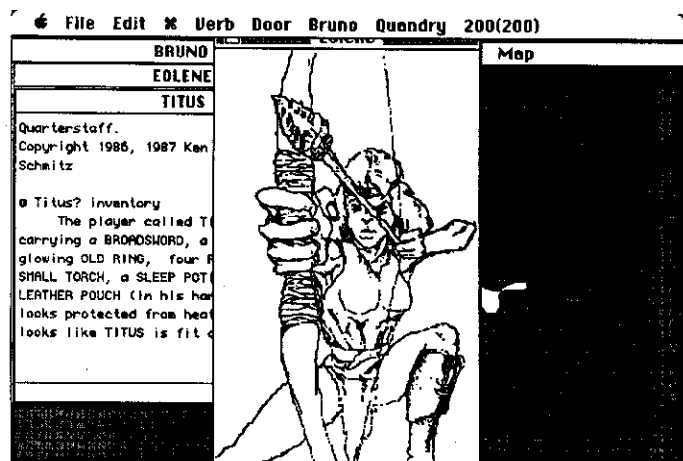
1163 Triton Drive
Foster City CA 94404
(415) 349-8765

Monte Carlo

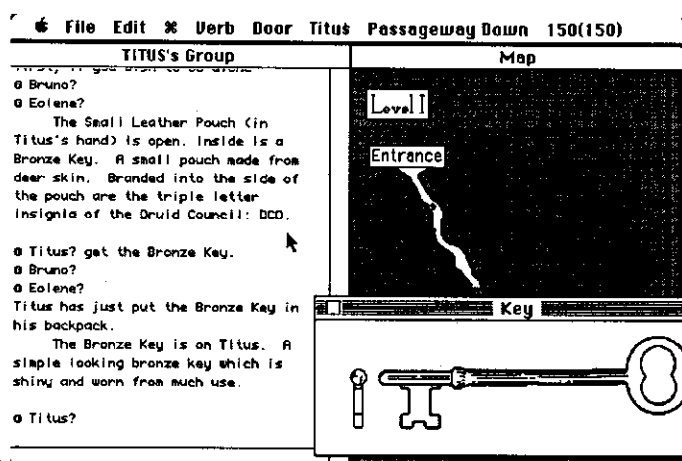
Apple IIGS version

Incorporating the Apple IIGS's sound and graphics capabilities, this offering is for one or two players who enjoy the art of wagering. *Monte Carlo* incorporates baccarat, blackjack, video poker, craps, slots, trente et quarante, and roulette. All are extremely well-designed and easy to play, although the odds continue to rest with the house. *Monte Carlo* is highly

When a character requests an inventory of another character, the likeness of the target character appears on the screen.



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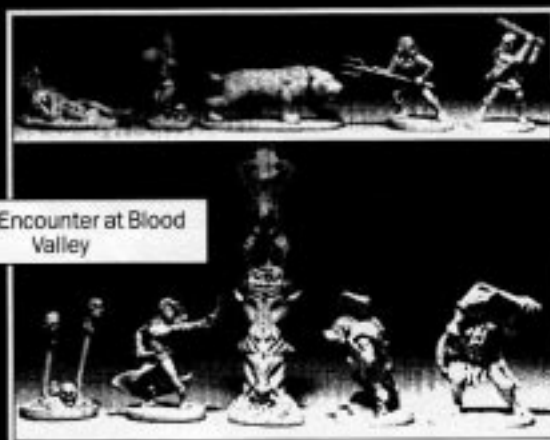
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News and new products

Baudville

5380 52nd Street SE
Grand Rapids MI 49508
(616) 957-3036

An exciting new graphic-adventure game designed for the Apple IIGS has been released by Baudville: *Dream Zone*. What makes this offering of particular note is that the developers of the game are two high-school students who used Baudville's own graphics programs to create the game. Full advantage has been taken of the IIGS's stereo sound and graphic capabilities. The player becomes a prisoner of his own dreams and travels to exotic locales to meet unique creatures and characters in attempts to escape from the *Dream Zone*. Watch for a review of this offering soon. The company lists the game pricing at \$49.95.

Datasoft (IntelliCreations)

19808 Nordhoff Place
Chatsworth CA 91311
(818) 886-5922

Worthy of any FRP gamer's heart is this company, which recently held an *Alternate Reality: The Dungeon Awesome Character* contest. Contestants forwarded characters that were built using the aforementioned program. These characters were judged on moral alignment, wealth and provisions, spells, magical items, clothing, weapons and armor, number of quests solved, number of riddles answered, and number of hard-to-find items possessed. Two winners were named. The first was Tim Patrick of Kailua, Hawaii, whose "Dragon Slayer" character was on the good side of morality and reached level 13. The second winner was Jeff Towich, whose "Orion" is extremely evil with a primary guild of the Wizards of Chaos and is a level 13 character. Those of us who have played *Alternate Reality: The Dungeon* know that building these characters was no easy task. We heartily congratulate the winners. Watch for upcoming reviews of both *Alternate Reality: The City* and *Alternate Reality: The Dungeon* in a future review column.

Electronic Arts

Electronic Arts has just released two new offerings. The first is *Demon Stalkers: The Raid on Doomfane* for C64/128 computers. We have just started playing this arcadelike strategy game and have found the graphics to be excellent. There are 100 dungeon levels, and the game includes a construction kit so the player can build his own dungeon levels.

The other offering is *Strike Fleet*, a

combined effort by Electronic Arts and Lucasfilm Games. You control as many as 16 naval craft and four helicopters. Operations can be conducted in major hot spots around the globe (such as the Persian Gulf). The price for each game is listed at \$29.95. Again, we hope to have reviews of these offerings within the near future.

Some exciting new offerings expected from Electronic Arts in the not-too-distant future include *Wasteland* (from the same folks who developed the *The Bards Tale* adventure series), *The Bards Tale III*, the *Sports Legend* football simulation, *Ferrari Formula One*, and *Return to Atlantis*.

Epyx, Inc.

600 Galveston Drive
P.O. Box 8020
Redwood City CA 94063
(415) 366-0606

This company has been designated as an official licensee of the 1988 U.S. Olympic Team. This agreement grants Epyx an exclusive license to use U.S.O.C. Olympic designations on computer, video, and interactive VCR games. Guess what sorts of recreational programming we are going to see from Epyx in the next several months?

MicroProse Software

180 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley MD 21030
(301) 771-1151

This company is doing so well that a move to larger quarters was required. Their new address, listed above, now gives MicroProse 36,000 square feet from which such greats as *Pirates!*, *Airborne Ranger*, and *Project: Stealth Fighter* can be issued.

Paragon Software

600 Rugh Street
Greensburg PA 15601
(412) 838-1166

Paragon has joined the group of software game developers who have become part of Electronic Arts' Affiliated Label program. Electronic Arts now has exclusive distribution rights to Paragon's *Master Ninja: Shadow Warrior of Death*, *Alien Fires* — 2199 A.D., and *Twilights Ransom*.

Polarware (Penguin Software)

1055 Paramount Parkway, Suite A
Batavia IL 60510
(312) 232-1984

Polarware, long known as Penguin Software and dating back to a time when software companies were few and far between, has released two new adventure games with pricing under \$20 for each. The first is *Talisman: Challenging The*

Sands of Time, wherein Apple II and IBM microcomputer users become involved in a classic adventure in ancient Persia. The King's magician has vanished, and an evil genie is wreaking havoc. Wielding the *Talisman*, the player must destroy the genie. The second new offering is *The Spy's Adventures in South America*, which is not only an exciting chase adventure to locate Dr. X, but also an educational one that teaches the customs and geography of the game's setting. This game is part of Polarware's *The Spy's Adventures Around The World* series. The latter game is also for the Apple II and IBM microcomputers.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.

1046 North Rengstorff Avenue
Mountain View CA 94043-1716
(415) 964-1353

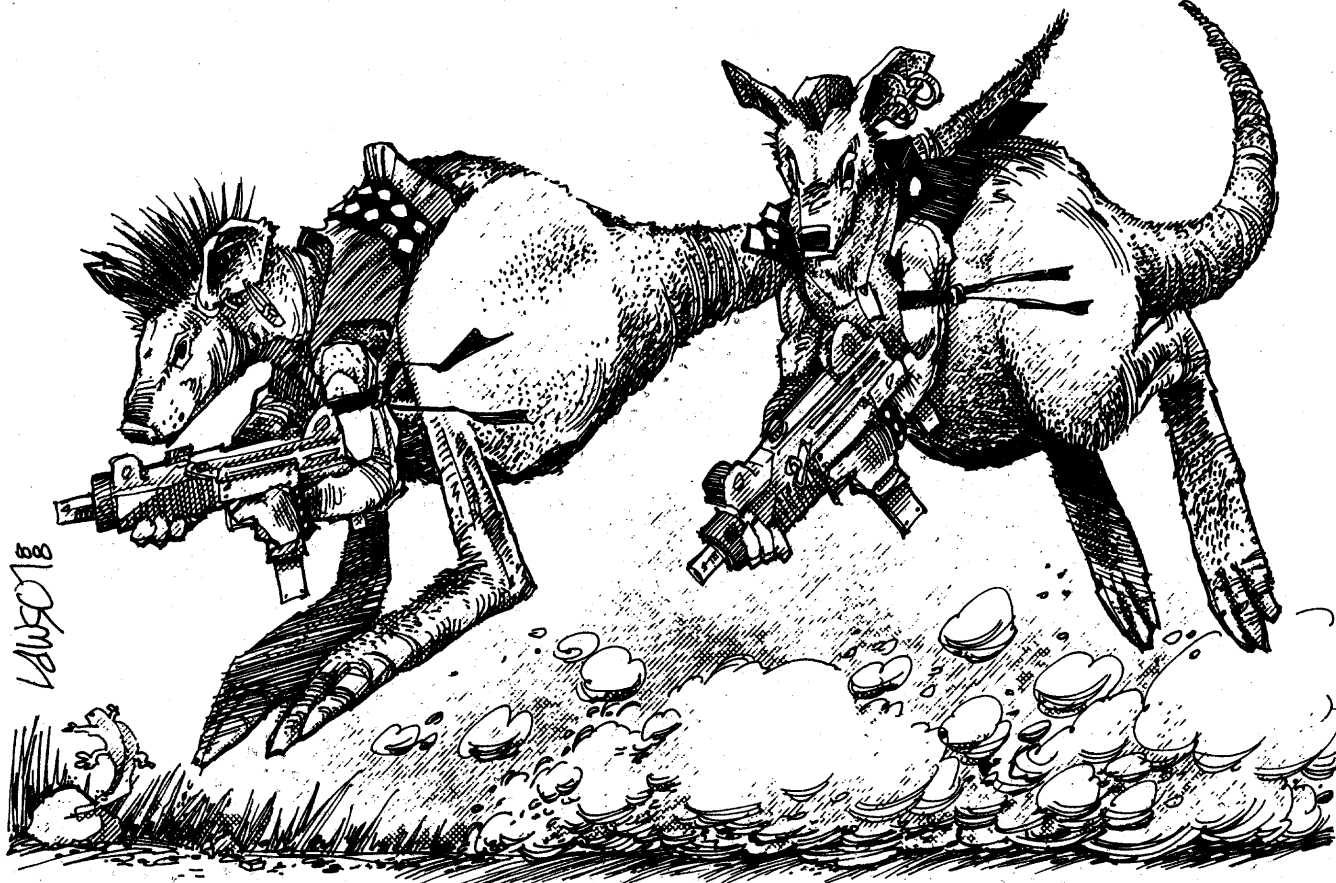
In DRAGON® issue #127, we conducted interviews with several of the folks at SSI regarding their computerized ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® fantasy role-playing games. The first game is set to be released in June of 1988, with three AD&D® game products planned: an FRP game, a joystick-controlled action game, and a Dungeon Master's utility program. The company will show sneak previews of these AD&D games at the upcoming Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, and is also previewing *Questron II*, the sequel to the company's best-selling *Questron* game. As more information becomes available, we will publish it in this column.

Clue corner

Joshua Burke of Springfield, Oregon, sends a hint dealing with *The Bards Tale II* from Electronic Arts. (For those who might be interested, it seems as though both *The Bards Tale* and *The Bards Tale II* are among the most popular computer games being played today. We receive more hints for these offerings than any other recreational software.) "The hint concerns Dargoth's Tower," Joshua explains. "This is, by far, the hardest and longest dungeon. On the fourth level of the tower, you should encounter walls that disappear, as well as one-way walls. As you are walking around this level, you might turn and suddenly find a wall where there wasn't a wall before. This creates a problem with mapping; if you are not careful, you could end up trapped. I suggest that you have enough spell points to cast the Safety Spell or possess the Ring of Return before entering this level."

From Jon Bluett of Ewa Beach, Hawaii, comes a hint for *The Eternal Dagger* from Strategic Simulations, Inc. "The key is there; you just have to go through some walls to get it." Jon also writes regarding *Phantasie III*, another SSI best-seller: "If the lava is too hot, water may be your ticket."

Alternate Reality gamers will be glad to



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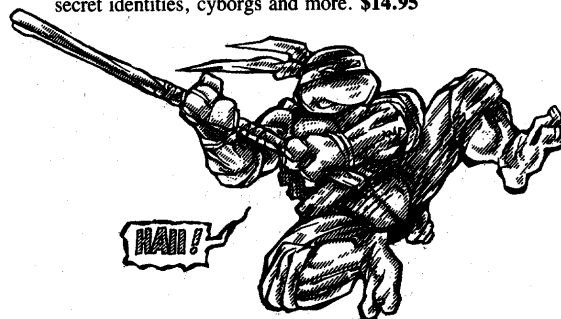
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know that we have finally been able to determine the effects of some of the game's potions. Do not believe for a minute that once you have figured out the effect of a colored potion, that a similarly colored potion found later will have the same effect; some potions with the same color have different tastes, indicating different effects. Don't sip a potion until you have a good idea of its capabilities — a sip can kill! For example, we have figured out three of the orange potions (at least we *think* we have). We have two sweet orange potions, and one of them struck the tester with a case of stupidity (a point of intelligence was deducted). However, the bitter orange potion causes nothing more than a hangover. The other two orange potions you'll find add bonuses to your character's protection. By all means, try to find the plain-tasting yellow potion, as it can do wonders for wounds.

For *Maniac Mansion* players, here are a couple of useful hints: There is a way to get the radio without getting wet, but the method used is a grating experience. Unfortunately, unless you are quick, the vegetables in your freezer may not be the only items irradiated. Second, don't overlook the Edsel as a utilitarian place for storing something as you tool around.

Game conversions

Program conversions are important members of any company's product line, and programs should receive careful work and consideration when being ported to another system format. Unfortunately, many conversions are completed without thought given to the new target system. The conversion is quickly accomplished to take advantage of a certain buying trend (such as consumer purchases of IBM clones or the Apple IIGS) and do not make additional use of the target system's capabilities.

An example of one of the most disappointing conversions we have played of late is one from PBI Software of a tactical-warfare game called *Strategic Conquest II*. Loosely based on the Parker Brothers' RISK® game, the game has been available on most systems. No attempt was made to take advantage of the Apple IIGS's sound and graphics capability. In fact, the user must also enter the Control Panel of the Apple IIGS operating environment and change the display mode from color (its normal mode) to monochrome. The resulting play is far less pleasing on the Apple IIGS and is an indication of a quickly ported program that should not have been attempted without some additional reprogramming of the code. The original versions of the game are fine when operated on the original computer systems. This is a pity, as PBI has been responsible for several fine games, such as *Tower of Myrarglen* (reviewed in issue #129 of DRAGON Magazine).

See the Computer-Game Conversions

Computer-Game Conversions Table
Ratings are given as they are available.

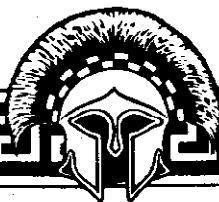
Accolade, Inc., (408) 436-0900	***
<i>Ace of Aces</i> to IBM and compatibles format	
<i>Apollo 18</i> to C64/128 format	
<i>Mini-Putt</i> to IBM and compatibles format	
<i>Test Drive</i> to IBM and compatibles format	****
<i>Test Drive</i> to Atari ST format	
Activision, Inc., (415) 960-0518	
<i>Gee Bee Air Rally</i> to C64/128 format	****
<i>Might and Magic: Book One</i> to C64/128 format	****
<i>Might and Magic: Book One</i> to IBM and compatibles format	
Advantage, (phone number not available)	
<i>Project: Space Station</i> to C64/128 format	
Electronic Arts, (415) 571-7171	
<i>Adventure Construction Set</i> to IBM and compatibles format	****
<i>Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer</i> to Apple II format	*** 1/2
<i>Earl Weaver Baseball</i> to IBM and compatibles format	**** 1/2
<i>Marble Madness</i> to Apple IIGS format	
Epyx, Inc., (415) 366-0606	
<i>Coil Cop</i> to C64/128 format	
<i>SpiderBot</i> to C64/128 format	
Firebird Licensees, Inc., (201) 444-5700	
<i>Jewels of Darkness</i> to Apple Macintosh format	
<i>Jewels of Darkness</i> to IBM micros and compatibles format	
<i>The Guild of Thieves</i> to Apple Macintosh format	
<i>The Guild of Thieves</i> to IBM micros and compatibles format	
<i>The Pawn</i> to Apple Macintosh format	
<i>The Pawn</i> to IBM micros and compatibles format	
Mindscape, Inc., (312) 480-7667	***
<i>Defender of the Crown</i> to Apple Macintosh format	*** 1/2
<i>Defender of the Crown</i> to Atari ST format	
Sir-Tech Software, Inc., (315) 393-6633	
<i>Deep Space</i> to IBM and compatibles format	
<i>The Legacy of Llylgamyn</i> to IBM and compatibles format	
<i>Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord</i> to C64/128 format	
Spectrum HoloByte, (415) 522-3584	****
<i>Soko-Ban</i> arcade game to C64/128 format	
Strategic Simulations, Inc., (415) 964-1353	****
<i>Roadwar 2000</i> to Apple IIGS format	****
<i>Roadwar 2000</i> to IBM and compatibles format	*** 1/2
<i>Shard of Spring</i> to IBM and compatibles format	

Table for details on what games are now available for which computer systems.

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We ask that you make no telephone calls to us. We continue to receive some marvelous tips from DRAGON Magazine readers regarding other computer games being played, and we would like to see your hints as well. Just mail them to the same address listed above. The best will be published in an upcoming column.



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Agents for Hire

Lone wolves in the espionage wilderness

Many types of agents are described in the original TOP SECRET® game system. There are stealthy detective types, killers, and agile second-story people, not to mention a wide range of shady enemy agents, traitors, and assorted evil goons. Unfortunately, one of the most interesting types of agent has been left out in the cold (my apologies to John Le Carre). This is, of course, the free-lance or contract agent.

Contract agents are by no means new to the world of international espionage. As their name suggests, contract agents are mercenary spies who work for the highest bidder. These agents are usually hired for only one mission, but long-term contracts are not unknown. Of all the types of contract agents, the assassin-for-hire is perhaps best-known. Novelists from Frederick Forsyth (*The Day of the Jackal*) to Ian Fleming (*The Man with the Golden Gun*) have used hired assassins as major characters in their works.

Aside from their fictional exploits, contract agents have come into their own in the real-world intelligence community. Many agencies and nations use contract agents to carry out missions these groups don't want traced back to them. In some cases, the contract agent is simply the best person for the job. Contract agents come from all over the world, and their numbers are growing rapidly. Thus, contract agents should be added to the TOP SECRET game system as more than handy NPC villains. It is time to let the players run them as well.

This article allows Administrators to include contract agents in their existing campaigns. These rules can be used to run NPCs, if an Admin feels that PC contract agents have no place in his campaign. Some of these rules (especially those dealing with contacts and the black market) can be used with or without contract agents, so Admins can choose which to use in their particular campaigns.

Players who want contract agent PCs can have characters of either sex and from

any country. However, a character must meet the following prerequisites to become a contract agent:

1. The character must be 2nd level or higher.

2. The character must belong to one of the following bureaus: Assassination, Confiscation, or Investigation. (If an Admin is using the TOP SECRET Companion rules supplement, the character can also belong to the Protection, Infiltration, and Special Agents divisions. The demand for free-lance Admins simply isn't there.)

The reason for the requirement of being 2nd level is that job experience is necessary, especially in espionage. Any espionage agent needs some training in his field, and the best training comes from experience. No agency worth its salt is going to hire a 1st-level rookie to do a job; chances are the agency already has too many of those running around. Only experienced agents get hired, and the more experienced an agent is, the more he gets paid. This will be explained in detail.

Before your players decide to have their characters "go private," you should make sure that they know what they are getting into when they play contract agents. Contract agents lead a hard, dangerous life, even by espionage standards! Since they aren't connected with any of the organized agencies, contract agents have a rough time getting weapons and other equipment needed to carry out their missions. Unless a contract contains a clause that allows a contract agent to purchase any needed gear from agency sources (a very rare clause), contract agents must buy some of their gear on the black market. This procedure is often risky and always expensive. Contract agents also have to have excellent contacts to locate black marketeers and to get missions. Espionage agencies rarely deal directly with a contract agent; if the agent gets caught, the agency that hired him doesn't want any visible connection between it and the unlucky agent. In addition, there

is one basic problem that most contract agents must deal with: If they don't complete their assigned missions, contract agents don't get paid!

Getting a job

Once an agent has reached 2nd level and gone private, getting contracts (jobs) becomes very important. No longer will an agent's superior officer walk into his office and hand the agent a mission. A contract agent must actively look for missions or else give up the business. Before an agent can start to look for work, he needs some idea of who hires contract agents and what the agents are hired to do.

As one would expect, the main user of contract agents is the intelligence community. Espionage agencies hire contract agents to carry out hazardous missions or missions they don't want traced back to them — like the assassinations of politicians and high-ranking government officials. Occasionally, an espionage agency will take on a contract agent on a semipermanent basis; this only occurs when the contract agent is an expert in his field (8th level or better in game terms) and is too dangerous to be left alone (meaning someone else may hire him). This sort of hiring is very rare, however.

The private sector is also a heavy user of contract agents. Industries often hire them to steal information from competitors. Wealthy people will occasionally hire contract agents to even a score, including the assassination of an old enemy, gathering damaging information on someone, or stealing a valuable piece of art that a collector wants very badly.

Terrorist groups are also included here, as they will hire contract agents to carry out jobs that they are unable to do. This often includes infiltrating a country and other similar activities. Please note that terrorist groups are the worst employers, as they often kill the contract agent after the mission so they don't have to pay him. This fact is known to all contract agents, so be sure to inform your players.

Now that you know who will hire your players, it's time to look at how they are hired. There are, for game purposes, three main ways an agent can look for work. He can contact old friends both inside and outside of the espionage community (i.e., an ex-boss, a businessperson the character once saved, etc.) and tell them that he is available for hire. If this method is somehow distasteful to or impossible for the agent (maybe he left the Agency under a cloud), he can just sit back and use contacts to get him jobs. As a final option, the agent can combine the two methods discussed above. Contacts, as noted above, can be used at any time during this process, but their success depends on what level they are and who they know (see "Contacts").

Once an agent has either located or been located by someone with a mission, the Admin needs to prepare a mission briefing

and a contract. A sample contract can be found at the end of this article. When preparing the briefing, you should first decide if the agency or person who is hiring the agent wants the agent to know who is hiring him. If the answer is no, the briefing should be carefully worded so the agency or person (or company or country, in some cases) isn't obvious. These briefings should be as complete as possible but should only contain information as suggested in the TOP SECRET game rules (second edition, pages 12-13). Missions should be planned so that they fit into one of the categories listed on those pages.

Payment

Contract agents, like mercenaries, work mainly for money. You *must* make sure that your players are aware of this when they are running contract agents. In fact, many contract agents set limits on what their minimum contract fee is (at least \$500 per mission, for example).

How much a contract agent is paid depends on the usual formula (see TOP SECRET game rules, second edition, pages 12 and 18), but with some additions that are unique to contract agents. One is the simple fact that contract agents get paid for their assigned mission *only*. An example of this is when a Confiscator is hired to steal some papers and is forced to kill a

guard and pick a lock in the process. The agent would only be paid for the theft of the papers, since that was the assigned mission. This allows you to calculate an agent's pay in advance contracts.

The second factor that must be dealt with is the contract agent's bonus. This bonus is equal to the contract agent's level x \$100 (thus, a 7th-level agent would receive a \$700 bonus). As might be expected, this bonus is added to an agent's pay *after* the base mission pay has been determined using the procedure described above. Only contract agents get this bonus. I included this bonus to make up for the fact that contract agents only get paid for their assigned mission and to make sure that these agents have enough money. This need for money is discussed in the section on the black market.

As mentioned above, a contract agent's pay must be calculated before an agent even hears about the mission. The main reason for this is the simple fact that contract agents have to be hired. The amount of money offered is often the difference between a "yes" and "no" answer, especially if the agent in question will only work for a certain sum. Players who run contract agents don't have to take any mission offered to them, unlike normal agents. Admins should also be prepared to raise the mission pay (10% at the most) if a

mission is more dangerous or important than usual.

Contracts

Before a contract agent begins his mission, some sort of contract for that mission must exist. This contract should contain: a brief description of the mission, its goals, and the target; the total amount the agent will be paid; any special instructions regarding payment (i.e., half now, half later, money deposited in a numbered Swiss bank account, etc.); the currency or form (diamonds, rubies, etc.) in which payment will be made; and any other special clauses either the player or the Admin feel are necessary.

In the world of espionage, such written contracts are rare, but they make things much easier on both you and your players in the long run if such written records are kept. The contract eliminates disagreements about payment, the exact mission, and other such questions. *Both* the player and the Admin should have a copy of the contract. A sample contract is included with this article.

Experience

Experience for contract agents is calculated in the same manner as for other agents. There are no special bonuses or penalties gained in experience just because the agent is a contract agent. Contract agents, like other agents, get experience for everything they do. They also receive any bureau bonuses that apply. Unlike their pay, contract agents receive experience based on everything they do, not just on the assigned mission. Refer to the TOP SECRET game rules for more detailed information on both experience-point and level advancement.

Contract agents advance normally in level, using the experience-points chart that goes with their bureau. There are no special level titles or ratings for contract agents.

Contacts

As many readers might have noted, contacts play a big part in the life of contract agents. This section contains rules and charts dealing with contacts that can be used in a TOP SECRET campaign that takes place with or without contract agents.

Contacts can literally be anyone. A contact is usually an individual who has connections to a group or person that could be useful to an espionage agent. Contacts serve as go-betweens or middlemen in the espionage community and the criminal underworld. This link is why they are important to all agents but especially to contract agents. They give contract agents access to information, goods and services, and other such things that contract agents lack because they have no agency membership. Contacts are usually (but not always) NPCs controlled by the Admin. In some very rare cases, a player character

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can act as a contact, but a contact's functions are quite limited in comparison with those of an agent.

There are two main ways you can assign contacts to your contract agents: by giving them to the PCs randomly through role-playing situations, or by simply having contract agents gain contacts on a level basis. Each method is discussed herein, with some hints and guidelines for running contacts and charts to help you generate them.

If you decide to have your players meet their contacts at random through role-playing, some basic factors have to be taken into consideration. One of the most important decisions you will have to make is how many contacts you want a particular agent to have. Keep in mind that the contacts your agents meet during this process must be useful to the agents in some way or another: arms dealers, forgers, information dealers, and contacts in the various intelligence agencies. Your agents should meet these contacts during the course of a mission, and the contact should be recognizable as someone that the character could use. While this method has its good points, it isn't recommended that you use it very often. It is too easy to succumb to temptation and saturate your agents with all sorts of high-powered contacts. This would make their

lives too easy.

Now we come to the second method for assigning contacts — a system that is based on the level of the PC in question. With this method, a PC gains one contact for every two levels the PC has (level ÷ 2, round down). For example, a 4th-level agent would have two contacts. This way, a PC gains one contact the moment he reaches 2nd level and is able to become a contract agent. All contacts assigned in this way are major contacts, as described in the preceding paragraph.

No matter which method you choose, keep in mind that all contacts gained must be of a level equal to or lower than the PC who gains them. This makes it impossible for a 4th-level agent to have a 6th-level contact, but it is quite possible for that agent to have contacts of 4th level or lower. Note also that you don't have to tell a player what level his contact really is. Thus, it is quite possible that a 1st-level contact might try to pass himself off as a 5th-level contact. It probably won't work, but the results will be very interesting. Don't pull this trick too often. Vengeful players can be nasty. . . .

Once you've assigned contacts to your players, it is time to place them, to determine what sort of contacts they are, and to give them personalities. There are two ways to place contacts — you can either

roll on Table 1 with this article or you can place them yourself. Note that Table 1 only gives general locations (continents or regions). If you decide to place contacts without using Table 1, the first contact should always be placed in the character's home continent and be of some immediate use. If you use the chart, don't hesitate to throw out any roll that doesn't fit.

If a contact is an NPC, careful thought must be given to his personality. Due to the clandestine (and often illegal) nature of their work, contacts are by and large suspicious, close-mouthed individuals. They, like contract agents, work mainly for money, in many cases on a commission basis. If a contact finds a job for an agent, the contact will want from 5-10% of the agent's pay as a commission. If equipment, weapons, etc., are purchased through a contact, he might want from 1-5% of the book list price as a commission. This last isn't very likely, since it doesn't earn the contact much money. In spite of this mercenary trend, agents and their contacts often become close friends. This friendship will not affect the contact's commission percentage, however!

As mentioned above, it is possible for other players to become contacts. This can only occur if the Admin decides that such an arrangement would be useful or practical in his campaign. If this is the case, such

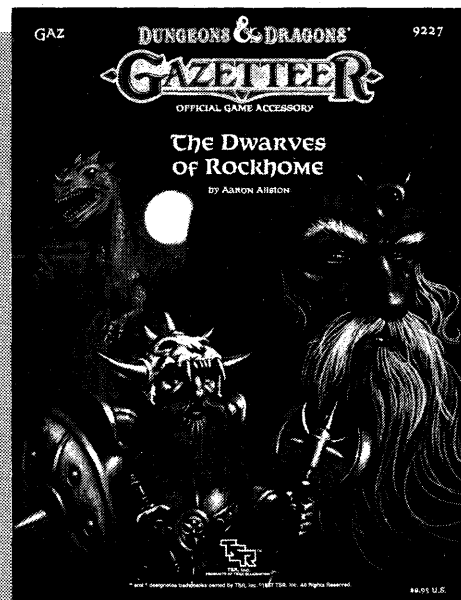
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player contacts can only be used to find jobs for contract agents. Under no circumstances should a player contact be allowed to become involved in the black market as an arms dealer or the like. Getting established in this area takes years, and the money involved is beyond the reach of most PCs. Besides, the work is quite dangerous; there is a very good chance that a well-established black marketeer would get annoyed at the advances of some young PC upstart and might decide to have this pest removed in a very direct and final fashion.

Now that you've given your players contacts, the inevitable question comes to mind: What do you and your players *do* with these contacts? Fortunately, for our purposes at least, the answer is fairly simple. As far as contract agents are concerned, contacts exist to help agents buy weapons and tools of the trade and to help them get information on jobs. We will look at the last function (getting jobs) first.

As pointed out earlier, there are three main ways a contract agent can find employment. For our purposes, let's assume that no one has come looking to hire our agent. Now what? This is where a contact, either another player or an NPC, comes into play. If the player wishes, the contact(s) in question can try to find a job for the player. The chance of this quest being successful is equal to 10 times the

player's level +10 times the highest level of the contact(s) being used -10 times the lowest level of a contact if more than one is being used. For example, a 4th-level agent has a 4th-level contact and a 1st-level contact looking for a mission for her. The chance of them finding such a mission is $(10 \times 4) + (10 \times 4) - (10 \times 1) = 70$. This number or less must be rolled on percentile dice by the Admin for the search to be successful. In our example, the roll was 52, so the contacts succeeded. Negative modifiers (due to a current glut in the contract agent market, for example) can be used if you think they are necessary; these negative modifiers shouldn't exceed 50 in any case. Higher-level agents may often have a 100% chance of being hired. This reflects both their reputations in the intelligence community and the skill of their contacts.

A second use for contacts is gaining access to the black market. For game purposes, *all* contacts have some ties to this market. Some contacts, however, have strong ties to a specific area of the black market, making them *specific contacts*. The more common kind of contacts are known as *general contacts*. Tables 2 and 3 allow you to determine what type of contact a particular NPC is and the area in which he specializes. The effects of these contact types are detailed in the section dealing with the black market. In any case,

an agent will have access to some part of the black market regardless of which type of contact he has.

The Administrator can also determine both where a contact is located (Table 1) and what sort of ties that contact has (Tables 2 and 3). Use of Table 1 is optional, but it is recommended that Admins use Tables 2 and 3 when creating contacts. Doing so removes any bias that might exist and speeds up the process.

All contacts, both general and specific, are able to buy and sell normal equipment to the agents. Since some of the fields listed for specific contacts are somewhat vague, a description of each follows:

Medical facilities. These contacts have access to doctors, private clinics, and discrete surgical facilities that give confidential treatment to anyone. Plastic surgeons are included in this category. The medical personnel involved here are very good at minding their own business once money has changed hands. They are also very expensive.

Explosives. These contacts specialize in selling explosives of all types and other associated gear (detonators, timers, etc.) needed for demolitions. Most explosives dealers are also experts at demolitions and can occasionally be hired by PCs.

Drugs and poisons. These contacts sell anything from aspirin to cyanide and other exotic poisons. In some rare cases (at the Admin's discretion), they also sell dangerous, illegal drugs (cocaine, heroin, etc.). Any kind of poison (see TOP SECRET game rules) may be available from these contacts.

Arms dealers. One of the most common types of specific contacts are arms dealers. These contacts sell anything from pen guns to flamethrowers. In some cases, they also sell explosives, but without the specialized knowledge available to specific contacts in explosives; this is reflected in the fact that arms dealers only have access to grenades. Special or heavily modified weapons must be purchased from a special devices contact, as detailed elsewhere.

Transportation. These contacts have two main functions: They arrange transportation (chartered planes, etc.) for agents, and they sell "sterilized" vehicles (those with no identifiable markings) to agents. This is often an important consideration during the course of a mission.

Information. These contacts gather and sell information about people, places, and events. An order (request for certain information) must be placed before any gathering can begin. More details about this part of the black market can be found in the section dealing with the black market.

Forgers and counterfeiters. These contacts are specialists in false documents and counterfeit money. As a result, they are fairly common specific contacts. Some of these contacts are more specialized than others, so feel free to experiment (contacts that only forge passports, etc.).

Hideouts. These contacts deal in a rather

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unique area — they provide safe hiding places for agents who need to lie low for a period of time. These hideouts are usually safe and well-guarded apartments. For an additional fee, these contacts can place the agent in question in a house.

Other agents. These contacts arrange for any NPC assistants a PC feels he might need. These helpers are usually of low level and ability. In some special cases, a higher-level agent might be available. In either case, the assistants can be from any bureau.

Special devices. These agents deal in exotic or heavily modified pieces of equipment. They often have ties to the scientific community. Anything from a special rifle to a heavily modified airplane can be purchased from these contacts. These are the rarest specific contacts.

Black market

Before plunging into the game mechanics of the black market, a brief discussion of this economic phenomenon is called for. The exact origin and founding date of the black market are unknown and unimportant, since the basic purpose of the black market has remained unchanged throughout history. A black market exists to enable trade regardless of local (or international) laws or trade regulations. This has made the market quite popular with criminals and espionage agents, as well as

with more respectable clients. In simple terms, anything can be purchased on the black market — for a price, of course.

Black markets, in some form or another, exist in almost every community in the world. The larger markets, though, exist mainly in the free world. Port cities, for obvious reasons, are the locations of the most varied and largest markets. Western Europe, especially Belgium, is famous for its extensive black markets. The Soviet Union is famous for its consumer-oriented market, which is of little if any use to an espionage agent.

Prices on these markets are as varied as the markets themselves. In general, any currency is accepted, although British pounds, Swiss francs, and American dollars are often preferred. More guidelines can be found later in this article, but a simple rule of thumb is: The smaller the market location, the higher the price. This rule also applies to special or exotic devices (such as heavily modified cars) and other rare items and equipment. Admins should decide ahead of time what types of equipment fall into the above categories.

The game mechanics of the black market follow. Before starting campaign play, Admins should decide what sort of black-market activity will exist in the areas to which the contract agents are going. For ease of play, black-market activity is broken into three general levels. Explanations

of these levels follow, along with examples of cities and countries considered to have a particular level of activity.

Low level. Black-market activity in this area is quite limited. Small, consumer-oriented goods usually come up for sale here, and the prices are quite high. This sort of market is often of little use to agents, but an enterprising team might find some useful items here. Pistols are the only weapons available at this level. It is very hard to find specific or exotic devices at this level, and they are very expensive when available. The cities in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, along with some Asian and African cities, are good examples of low-level areas.

Medium level. This level of activity is the most common. A fair variety of equipment, weapons, etc., comes up for sale on this type of market, and prices are moderate. In addition, small arms and other sorts of espionage gear become commonly available at this level. Special and exotic devices are still hard to come by, as are some of the larger and more complex pieces of equipment (including airplanes). Many, if not all, North, Central, and South American cities would be considered medium-level areas. War zones are also good examples of this level, although some might fall into the next category.

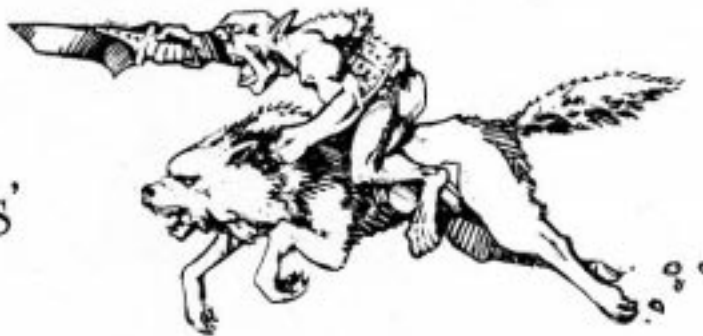
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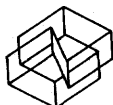
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wishes to buy is available on this sort of market. The price of such gear varies depending on what the agent wishes to buy; the price goes up for rare equipment (special devices, etc.), but it actually goes down on the more common items (pistols, lockpicking sets, etc.). Admins will have to use their own judgment as to what devices fit into the common or special categories. As you might expect, this sort of market is rather rare. Most major European port cities, as well as some of the largest cities worldwide, fit into this category. Some of the larger war zones (Vietnam in 1968, for example) also belong here.

As can be seen, the activity level of a market affects both the availability and cost of items purchased on that market. If an item isn't available in a certain area, tell your players so if they try to buy that item. No amount of persuasion, money, or the like can change the activity level of a market or magically cause the desired item to appear. This system makes your agents think and forces them to work with what they have.

Once the activity levels for your campaign have been set, it's time to determine the prices and availability of items on your markets using Tables 4-6. Before you use this system in your campaign, take some time to study these tables and become familiar with their uses. They might seem cumbersome at first, but they speed things

up with practice.

Before you can determine how much a black-market item will cost, you need to find out if it is even available in that area. The availability of a particular item should be determined for many markets, as your agents are free to find a desired item on as many markets as they have contacts. There is no limit to the number of markets an agent can try, but only one try per week can be made for a particular item on the same market. Thus, an agent could try to find a sports car on the black markets of London, Paris, and Zurich, but only one try can be made in London for that car during that one week, and so on.

The availability chart (Table 4) is used like the other charts in this article, but with one main difference: It exists to determine availability, so you *must* refer to it before making the availability roll. For example, Agent Rollens wishes to purchase a Luger pistol on the local black market. The Admin consults Table 4 and finds that there is a base 50% chance that this (or any other) item is in fact available. Before rolling, though, the Admin must go through and add or subtract any and all modifiers that apply to this base 50% chance. The resulting number is the actual chance of a particular item being available. In our example, the actual chance was 80% (50 + 25 (pistol modifier) + 5 (medium-activity modifier)). This proce-

dure must be repeated for each item an agent wishes to buy on the black market. If an item becomes unavailable, the supply of that item on the market in question is exhausted. Rolling for such items cannot be done again for one week; the item can then be rolled for normally. This represents the limited resources of the black market.

Prices for goods on the black market vary, but as a rule they are *higher* than rule-book prices. The prices for both weapons and tools of the trade (TOP SECRET game rule book, second edition, pages 8-9, 11, and 21-23) as well as the various poisons (page 46) are \$100 above book prices. This is only the basic increase; it can go up or (in rare cases) down depending on your roll on Table 5. Special weapons and equipment prices are left to the Admin's discretion, but it is strongly suggested that you use the system outlined on page 10 of the TOP SECRET game rules. Then proceed as you would with other equipment (see above). As mentioned above, the resulting prices are not final. Demand, the strictness of local customs laws, and other considerations also affect the price of black market goods (see Table 5 for details).

When rolling on Table 5, remember to add or subtract all modifiers that apply. The resulting roll is then located, and the result is added to or (in rare cases) subtracted from the black market price you determined above. The result is the actual price a contact will demand for the desired item. As Table 5 shows, prices on the black market are quite high. This is why contract agents (remember them?) get a pay raise.

This is one example of how to use Table 5. Agent Rollens wishes to purchase a Luger. Consulting her records, the Admin determines that the area Rollens is in (Central America) has a medium level of market activity. She then consults the rule book and learns that a Luger costs \$350. She adds \$100 to this price (\$450 total) and consults Table 5. The following modifier applies: -5 (Rollens is using a specific contact — an arms dealer in this case — to purchase the gun). The Admin rolls 55 on percentile dice; this is modified to 50. Consulting Table 5, she learns that the price Rollens' contact will want for the Luger is \$500 (\$450 + \$50).

The price for information is handled differently. Table 5 is still used, but the base price depends on the type of information desired. There are, of course, many types of information available. For game purposes, the main types have been lumped into three categories:

Category 1: General information. This is the most basic type. It includes general histories or locations of well-known people or objects. This could include, for example, a basic profile (background, etc.) of a world leader, the location of a public research center, and the like. Information that is classified or not common knowl-

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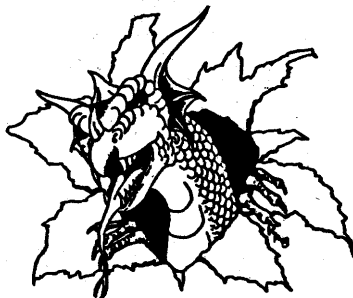
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edge (Admins should decide what sort of information falls into this class) is not included in a general-information package.

Category 2: Specific information. This is similar to the first category of information but is more detailed. Some classified details are included in a specific-information package. This could include a detailed history of a world leader, street maps and building locations to a normal military base, and the like. Highly secret information (as determined by the Admin) is not included in a specific-information package.

Category 3: Secret information. Any information that doesn't fit into either of the two previously listed categories belongs here. This includes floorplans of secret instalations, *very* detailed histories of top espionage agents, and other such information. This is the rarest type of information and is the most expensive.

This brings us to the cost of information. There are three base prices, one for each type of information. Consult Table 6 for the base price, then roll on Table 5 as usual to determine any increase or decrease in the base price. The final figure is what the contact will demand for the information package. As with all black-market deals, prices are not subject to discussion! Contact commissions are figured into this and all black-market prices.

There is one final area of the black market that must be dealt with: *selling* goods on the black market. This topic is skimmed over in the TOP SECRET game rules (second edition, page 38, "Fencing Purloined Goods"), but it needs to be explored further and tied to the rules herein.

To sell goods on the black market, an agent must have access to any sort of contact. Once this is established, the Admin must determine if there is a buyer for the goods the agent wishes to sell in the market in question. This is a judgment call, so no charts are provided. You should take the market-activity level into account when deciding if an item will sell, though; the lower the level, the better chance an agent has of selling an item that normally isn't available on that level.

When determining the price an item will command, use the table found in the TOP SECRET game rule book (page 38) to determine the base price. Next, roll on Table 5 found in this article and modify the price accordingly. The resulting figure is the price an agent will get for an item. A figure of 10% of this must be subtracted for the contact's finder's fee. Note that it is possible for astute agents to make a fair amount of money in this fashion. If sales by agents start getting out of hand, however, the Admin should feel free to modify the cost of items purchased by these agents accordingly or have no one willing to buy their goods. Selling goods on the black market is a privilege — not a right! Make sure the agents understand this, and things should move along without trouble.

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Table 1
Contact Location

Roll Result

01-30 United States, North America
31-70 Western Europe (or the Far East, depending on the campaign setting and preference)
71-80 Middle East, Africa
81-94 South and Central America
95-00 Eastern Europe, USSR

Table 2
Type of Contact

Roll Result

01-60 General contact
61-00 Special contact (roll on Table 3 to determine type)

Table 3
Contact's Specialty Area

Roll Result

01-05 Medical facilities
06-10 Explosives
11-20 Drugs (medicines included) and poisons
21-40 Arms dealing
41-50 Transportation
51-67 Information
68-85 Forgery and counterfeiting
86-90 Hideouts
91-95 Other agents
96-00 Special devices

This must be stated in the contract, and the mission must be planned accordingly. NPCs' reactions must also be taken into account.

There is a difference between leading the team and planning the actions the team will take. In the latter case, the contract agent is only given an objective. "You must kill Agent X" is an example of an objective. Note that no location or other data is given. The agent has to locate Agent X, determine what the agent's vulnerabilities are, and plan accordingly. The resulting plan is then forwarded to the agency for approval. If this is forthcoming (and it usually is), the agent takes command of a team and proceeds to eliminate Agent X. Such jobs are only given to high-level contract agents, and usually garner lots of money and experience points for these agents (points for a Full Investigation and an Assassination, plus some other things). These are choice contracts and shouldn't be given out very often (and then only to the best agents).

This brings us to the subject of NPCs in a campaign containing contract agents. Special care must be taken here due to certain opinions held by many regular agents concerning contract agents. Most agencies in the world use contract agents in one way or another. This has created a certain amount of resentment and an occasional degree of hatred against contract agents amongst some of the regular agents, who resent the fact that contract agents are highly paid and especially dislike taking orders from such agents. This

dislike doesn't extend to the agencies themselves; after all, they never know when they might need a contract agent for an important job. Agency vengeance is usually directed at the agency that hired the contract agent, not the agent personally — depending on what the contract agent did to anger the agency, of course.

It should also be said that this feeling of resentment doesn't extend to all regular agents. In fact, there are many regular agents who enjoy working with contract agents. When creating NPCs to work with contract agents, Admins should try to maintain a 50-50 balance between those agents who like contract agents and those who don't. Also note that contrary agents won't try to kill the contract agent or try a similar serious action. They will simply gripe, carry out orders under protest, and perform other minor harassments to drive a contract agent to distraction.

This does not mean that contract agents don't have enemies. Though regular agencies value these agents too much to dislike them on a personal basis, a contract agent's enemies could include other contract agents, disgruntled regular agents, terrorists, and private citizens. Be creative with these enemies. Since contract agents get around, they have plenty of opportunities to meet vicious foes. Each contract agent should have at least one personal enemy before reaching 4th level.

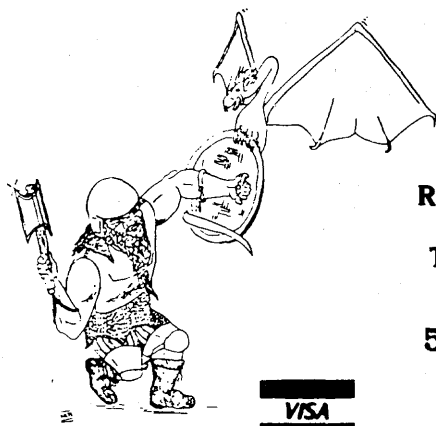
Why do these enemies hate your contract agents? The answer can be as simple as the foiling of a villain's brilliant scheme or as complicated as a family vendetta. Be creative. The reason for the hatred need only be important to the NPC. It is very possible that the PC will never know why a particular NPC hated him. Whole missions can be designed around an NPC's desire to kill a contract agent.

One other thing should be added in a campaign containing contract agents: a personal code of conduct. Every contract agent should have such a code in writing, created by his player. This code can amount to a refusal to work for some countries, a dislike of firearms, or some-

Contract agents in campaigns

The role of contract agents in a TOP SECRET game campaign is multifaceted. Such agents act as independent operatives, working as lone agents under the control of a regular agency member (usually the agent or contact who did the hiring), or they can work with other agents (contract or regular agency) as part of a team of agents. A final role contract agents can assume is either that of team leader or as a planner for a team of agents. This role should be determined by you as soon as you begin planning a mission for a contract agent or team of agents. This role should not be given to contract agents who are below 4th level, since the role of planner is only given to an expert in his field. The role a contract agent is to play in a mission must be written as clearly as possible into the agent's contract, so that misunderstandings regarding this role can be avoided.

Missions for contract agents must be designed with their roles in mind. At the same time, the agent's role must be planned around the mission. For example, you start outlining a contract mission that calls for an assassination. Since this mission is specifically for a contract agent, you must plan the agent's role accordingly. Since the assassin must plan the mission once the team is in the field, you decide to place the agent in command of the team.



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Table 4
Black Market Availability *

Positive modifiers	+	Negative modifiers	-
Pistols, knives, etc.	25%	Automatic weapons	20%
Item legal in area	10%	Military (heavy) weapons	30%
Common item	10%	Item illegal in area	10%
Forged item (passport)	40%	Explosives, rare drugs	25%
Special bonus	1% per \$1,000	Common drugs	5%
Using special contact	5%	Special (modified) items	40%
High-activity market	10%	Uncommon item	10%
Category 1 information	5%	Low-activity market	10%
Hiring other agents	10%	Category 3 information	30%
Counterfeit money	5%	Vehicles (cars, etc.)	5%
Medium-activity market	5%		

* Base availability is 50%. All modifiers are cumulative.

thing similar. Both you and your players should agree on the choice of a code. While these codes aren't absolutely necessary, they can flesh out characters and may even serve as the basis for an exciting mission. It is possible for a character to change his code before any mission, but never during play. Note again that this code *must* be in writing, with both the player and the Admin having copies. Violation of a player's code requires that player to come up with another code and lose 100 experience points *immediately*!

While agents normally get their jobs through contacts, it is possible for them to work for what is in effect a free-lance agent employment agency. This makes getting jobs for your contract agents much easier, but it also cuts down on the NPC interaction involved with contacts. For Admins who wish to go this route, such an agency is included at the end of this article. It is presented in the format found in DRAGON® issues #93 and #97-99. Agents who work for this agency can still turn down missions, so be prepared.

Very little preparation is needed to bring contract agents into an existing campaign. With some simple changes and additions, it is quite simple to add these varied and exciting agents to your campaign. What follows is a sample contract. This contract has been filled out and should give you some idea about how to fill one out. Also included is a sample employment agency for free-lance agents: the "Diversified Employment Agency."

Sample contract

Mission: To locate and silence Dr. Walter Lossenstein. The Doctor is staying in one of Munich's finer hotels with four guards.

Location: Munich, West Germany

Payment: \$1,000

Currency, etc.: British pounds sterling

Special conditions for payment: Half in advance, half upon successful completion of the mission. Money will be deposited in a Swiss bank account.

Additional clauses: Agent will be in charge of a team consisting of two other contract agents. All planning will be done by the leader agent. Any weapons needed will be provided by the employer. Other gear must be purchased by the agents.

Agent: Sabrina Hollengund

Employer: Thomas Hanson (acting for an unnamed agency)

Diversified Employment Agency

Nature of agency: Provides contract agents to prospective employers

Governing body: Board of 10 directors, identities unknown

Personnel: 100 agents

Annual budget: Not known, estimated to be around \$1,000,000

HQ: Geneva, Switzerland

Established: 1984

Activities: Finds jobs for contract agents, pair suitable contract agents with agencies and missions

Policies: Money talks; they will try to help their agents as much as possible

Objectives: To provide good agents to their clients

Areas of involvement: Worldwide

Allies: None

Table 5
Price Modifiers

Roll	Result
01-10	-\$50
11-30	No change
31-50	+\$50
51-60	+\$100
61-70	+\$200
71-80	+\$300
81-90	+\$350
91-00	+\$400

Modifiers

-10	High activity
-10	Low activity
+20	Special equipment/devices
+5	Using general contact
-5	Using special contact
+5	Poisons and explosives
-5	Common, nonweapon items
+5	Specific information
+25	Secret information

Table 6
Information Base Prices

Category	Base price
1	\$500
2	\$1,500
3	\$4,500

Additional data: All the agents in this organization are for hire — the group has almost no staff. If an agent somehow betrays a contract, this agency will send its best team (all 10th level) after the agent for a "permanent" settlement.

Bureaus: All

Alignment profile: 01-00/01-00/01-00

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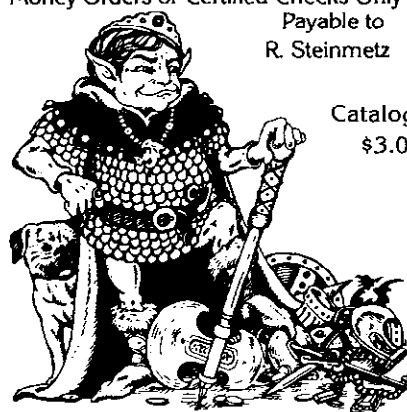
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Success by Conventional Means

Run a wargames convention right — the first time

Otto von Bismark once said, "Some men say that they profit from their mistakes — I prefer to profit from other's mistakes." While Prussia's "Iron Chancellor" never organized a wargames convention, his comment is still valid for those who would. You can run a successful convention on your first attempt; however, starting from scratch is not easy, and a little advice is helpful.

With that thought in mind, this article provides a convention example I'm familiar with: Gold Con, South Florida's longest sustained effort (we're now on number five). By presenting both the strengths and weaknesses of this convention, it is hoped that other organizers may enhance their efforts and avoid our problems.

The basics

Here, it is necessary to define a "successful" convention. There are three main facets involved in any convention's success: finances, a positive reaction from the public, and a satisfied convention staff. The most important issue concerns financing. You *must* break even to have a successful show! Nothing does more to dampen enthusiasm for a second effort than taking money out of your pocket to pay the bills for your first con. Because money is the most crucial issue at stake,

most of this article is devoted to making money.

Unless you have a wealthy patron in search of a tax shelter, you have to end up in the black. First, you must prepare a budget showing the total cost of the convention. Complementing this list of expenditures should be one for expected revenues. Promotional and rental costs, prizes, and postage represent a substantial sum of money. Gold Con III had projected costs of nearly \$2,200 — but don't let this figure scare you. Read on and you'll see how we cut the costs to \$865.

Second, and an important ingredient if you wish to stage a sequel to your con, is customer satisfaction. Did the participants have a good time? Was it worthwhile for the dealers to show up? If "yes" is the answer to those questions, then a sequel convention should be even more successful than your first effort. As satisfied consumers are major factors in your financial equation, it is vital for the con's growth that your patrons leave with positive attitudes.

Third, see if the convention staff members were pleased with their efforts. These people put forth a lot of work and probably financed the event. If they're looking forward to the next show, then you've had a successful convention.

Getting the word out

Take time to determine how many gamers will pay to see your first effort. This will allow for a reasonable budget estimate and may give an idea as to your minimum attendance fee. Don't be afraid of "low balling" such a figure. This writer, carried away by South Florida population statistics, thought that hundreds would attend Gold Con I; the real figure was 107.

The next step toward success is organization. To begin the project, you'll need a committee that will delegate the important jobs of promotion and preparation on a fair and equal basis. Never allow one individual to take on an extra-heavy work schedule (even if he wants one!), as something could (and usually does) come up that leaves the con in a jam. Gold Con once faced this problem when some of our people were burned out from work by convention day.

The committee's primary efforts should be aimed at promotion. The cardinal rule here is: "An event can never have too much publicity!" Important sources of publicity are the convention listings found in many hobby magazines. Your show will receive national attention here, and such advertisement is usually free. [See the "convention Calendar" in this issue of DRAGON® Magazine for details.]

With few exceptions, editors are happy to give you a space in their convention listings. All they require in return is lead time; this represents the time between the moment your information reaches the magazine and the magazine's own deadline for publication. Some magazines require up to four months advance notice before information can be added to their listings.

Other sources of advance publicity include local hobby shops. Most have bulletin boards for gamers, and owners usually allow you to place flyers there which advertise the show. Do not limit yourselves to *local* shops, however. Gold Con took place in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, but shops as far away as Alabama put out our flyers.

Three weeks before the convention is a good time to hit the local media sources for publicity. Many local newspapers and magazines have a "What's Happening?" calendar. As with the hobby magazines, the editors may print your announcement free of charge but with a lot less lead time. Attempts should be made to convince editors that your convention is a newsworthy item that will interest the general readership. Many people will read the local-events calendar, but even more will be sold by a feature story on your con.

Your best source of last-minute publicity is television or radio promotion. It is, however, difficult to obtain expensive airtime. Your job is to convince the station's management that viewers would enjoy hearing or seeing your convention in progress. If coverage can be arranged for the first day of a two- or three-day convention, attendance will pick up and you

will impress potential sponsors with your organizational abilities.

How about paid advertisements? Advertising space in national magazines or even local papers can be expensive. One of our local papers asks \$400 for a one-shot advertisement at a 2" x 4" space! These rates can kill the budgets of most cons. What can you do instead?

Well, does your area have an official group to promote tourism? Too late, we discovered our local Tourist Development Council, which funds advertisements for some events that draw out-of-town visitors. Other local groups have obtained thousands of dollars from this entity, and you'd better believe that Gold Con will be in line at TDC next year!

Money talks

While free publicity is available, other commodities are not, and here the money angle really enters the picture. Experience shows that the convention committee members must foot the bills and hope that enough cash will be generated at the show for reimbursement. How can you keep such investments small?

The largest expense will usually be the rental of a facility to house the convention. I can't quote national averages, but to rent convention space from a Fort Lauderdale hotel runs about \$800 per day. Gold Con didn't have this kind of money, but we avoided the dilemma by affiliation with a nonprofit organization — Broward Community College. Such a union is highly advantageous, as organizations of this kind are more interested in community service than in a profit-and-loss sheet.

Gold Con received the use of the school's 19,000 square-foot Omni Auditorium — at no charge. Without this assistance, the convention may very well have been cancelled. While a college or university is your best source for inexpensive or rent-free accommodations, churches, civic groups, and large corporations (if correctly approached) have also been known to help out.

Remember that bit about "correctly approached." Even if you've found an organization that grants free rental, it probably won't do this for everyone. Show the people in charge that you are well organized and that you are going to present a successful production. And keep "Ralph the Orc" and that strange little guy who wears an SS uniform out of sight. The hall manager probably doesn't hate wargamers, but he doesn't want kooks in the building and may figure the easy way out is to just say "no."

Another major advantage of affiliation with a large institution is insurance. For no charge or for a vastly reduced rate, you can gain a great benefit. If you cannot tie up with a larger group, insurance could be a problem. It would be wise to consider all the angles here. Can you afford to "stay the course" without such protection? While there is little chance of

lawsuits slinking out of a well-run show, the committee members should be well aware of their legal obligations, in case that one-in-a-thousand accident comes up.

Even if you have obtained a rent-free hall, some costs are unavoidable. Having defined a successful convention as one that at least breaks even from a financial point of view, the committee's next task is fund-raising. How will you repay those members who have put money into the enterprise? Two immediate sources of revenue present themselves for this purpose: entry fees and dealers' tables.

Entry fees vary from convention to convention and are often based on your "nut" — how much money must be obtained for the show to break even. This author has paid between \$3 and \$30 for various two- and three-day conventions (Gold Con IV charged \$7 for two days). Most of these shows had a per-day charge, but it was always made advantageous to purchase a ticket for the entire event. This is a good idea, as it encourages sales and gives your best friends (the customers) a break.

One point to remember when involved in discounts is control. If you have standard per-day fees, then life is simple for your ticket-takers and gate guards. If, on the other hand, you have both per show and day rates, a degree of sophistication is necessary. Different tickets must be prepared for each price; in addition, day tickets must be distinct enough to prevent duplication or reuse by patrons.

Some shows charge an entry cost, then add fees for each game entered. This practice may generate more income, but it can also create bad vibes. Individuals often complain about such practices, feeling that having paid once to get in, they should not be charged again. This can be countered by those committees wishing to reward game masters through splitting this fee. While a good intention, it would probably be better to raise the entry fee and purchase awards for your game masters.

On the other hand, there are those patrons who come only to look. Gold Con offers a nonparticipant entry fee of \$1 for the curious family members who often accompany gamers to conventions. Here you get extra revenue (they would probably walk out if you asked full price), and you might even make a few converts.

Other important sources of revenue are members of the hobby industry. Dealers are often among the greatest supporters of wargames conventions. Many conventions set up tables in a separate area where vendors may display their wares. Such events allow manufacturers to publicize new merchandise and allow retailers to meet new customers. Many participants gain as much enjoyment from visiting the dealers' tables as they do from playing the games.

Dealers' tables are usually rented for a figure between \$20 and \$100. Sometimes a discount per table is offered if more than

a certain number are purchased (our past cons started the discount at three tables). While larger conventions may charge big bucks per table, excessive fees scare off many people. Your committee must keep the overall economic picture in mind.

Most dealers try to make a living from the hobby and work on discount rates between 30-40%. To pay for meals, accommodations, transportation, and a \$100 table charge requires a volume of sales that most shows simply don't generate. Also, if this is your first attempt, some people will be leery of paying a high table fee; after all, they don't know what kind of job you'll do in bringing in gamers with money.

Past Gold Cons offered dealers the chance to pay half of their fees in retail merchandise. This represented a savings for the merchants, who could replace the stock at wholesale prices. The deal also helped Gold Con by providing items that were needed for prizes. Of course, this limits your cash flow. When you settle your accounts, most merchants will be less than excited at the thought of being paid with 25mm figures, so be careful!

Prizes can also be obtained at no cost to your convention. The Flying Buffalo, Ral Partha, Mike's Models USA, and Grenadier Models all provided great prizes for past Gold Cons. Grenadier Models went as far as to present a special trophy for the best painted figure/diorama from their line. Most companies are happy to send you something; all they ask in return is a little publicity.

Local individuals and clubs are other sources of trophies and prizes. These groups often have interests in a particular era — colonial wargames or World War II, for example — and are often willing to sponsor a prize for the best player in a particular event.

Some final notes on finances. Remember Napoleon's maxim that an army travels on its stomach. Food sales can help take care of your "nut." The committee can do the selling, or you can farm out the effort for a cut. It is probably better to try the former, as outside sources can be expensive, causing bad vibes with your players (a public relations no-no!).

Having seen how to make money, let's now see how to lose it. Gamers may, like soldiers, march on their stomachs, but they are not interested in uniforms. This writer did not understand this and thought that fancy T-shirts were a great idea for Gold Con I. We printed 144, priced them at \$5 each — and sold six! Here is an example of (pick one): greed, overextension, or delusions of grandeur. Whichever one you picked, you're right. We got carried away, spending money in an area that was not vital to making our first convention a success. The results were T-shirts to last a lifetime and a profit for the entire show of \$5. The cost of the shirts would have been better invested as seed money for our next production.

Even more questions

At this point, you've established your committee, taken care of the publicity, and found the money. Now that the easy work is completed, you can prepare for the hard job: the actual convention. Early questions you'll face will include: How many workers will be needed to set up and run the show? Are refreshments available? Will signs be needed to help gamers find your location? Can discount rates be arranged with the local hotel? And so forth.

The most challenging questions involve your convention "menu." What will your participants want to see? The Gold Con committee was quite surprised with the popularity of some games and wargaming eras, and the disinterest shown in others. Although one show does not create entirely reliable statistics, the following conclusions may be of some value in picking games for your convention.

Modern conflicts, especially sea battles, were by far the most popular wargames category. A 1/2400th-scale Argentinian-British naval wargame and numerous 1/285th-scale World War II and modern armored battles drew the largest numbers of players. Right behind these were 1/1200-scale World War I and World War II naval battles using SEEKRIEG rules. A 15mm Napoleonic battle (EMPIRE rules)

was also popular and attracted favorable interest from the press. Much less interest was seen for colonial, ancient, and Seven Years' War games in 1/76th scale. Almost no interest was shown for skirmish and aerial simulations.

Role-playing games were equal in popularity to miniatures battles. The convention favorites included STAR TREK®: the RPG, and the D&D® and RUNEQUEST® games. While there were no "official" board-game events, many were played; World War II and American Civil War titles came out on top.

A serious problem that hit the last Gold Con was a lack of game masters. Individuals who had promised to run some events failed to show. Staff members were often used to fill the gaps; in many cases, volunteers appeared among the gamers' ranks. Unfortunately, some games had to be cancelled. Since your staff will already be hard at work controlling the convention, and most gamers have come to play rather than work, it would be wise to have a pool of back-up game masters.

Now that you have game masters, what about a points system to evaluate the best players? This is a very difficult question. The Gold Con committee feels that tournament play and intensive competition are great for showing weak points in human character but are not conducive to good

games. As such, our next show will feature plenty of games, but no complicated tournament-style elimination system. If you decide to go the other way, spend some time on a fair system that rewards intelligent play rather than bravado.

Even with numerous games and a detailed set of tournament rules, you must still combat "slack time." Some players desire breaks or may not be pleased with one session's venue. How will you entertain these people? One answer could be a large TV or, better yet, a TV with a VCR hook-up and movies. Another idea is to contact a local military post for an equipment display. Gold Con has been very successful with the latter concept. Local Army units have provided weapons displays and an armored personnel carrier. In exchange, we provided a free table for recruiting purposes.

Your convention may also wish to present a "high-profile" game. Role-playing simulations do not lend themselves to this, but miniatures competitions serve well. Ingredients for such a production include: easy-to-learn rules, detailed terrain, and nicely painted miniatures. Examples of such can be seen at all the big conventions. (Remember the Alamo game at the ORIGINS™ '85 convention?) Gold Cons of the past have also featured this type of activity. We try to have historic and fantasy/science-fiction games of this type. Such efforts appeal not only to gamers but also to newsmen. Your monster game might sell some editor on a photo spread or a news director on some precious minutes of airtime.

What about a miniatures-painting competition? You may be wise to limit coverage here on your first event, as judging and finding room for entries can be difficult. Help may be obtained from people in groups like the International Plastic Model Society. These people run their own shows and should be able to get good judges. Whatever you do, make sure the miniatures area is secure. A rather nice 90mm figure was destroyed at our last convention; to avoid bad feelings, the committee coughed up \$50 for the figure's owner. Protect yourself from similar problems!

Final words

Despite such slip-ups, our Gold Cons have been successful. We went from 107 entrants our first year to 400 at the third. While our shows have never made a lot of money, we have never had a loss. As such, Gold Con is victorious, and there is no reason why your efforts cannot produce a convention as good or better.

Wargames conventions, if properly run, assist the growth of our hobby. Gold Con brought gamers together from as far away as Arizona and Great Britain. Although the hobby has made significant gains in the last 10 years, we're still a fairly small community. A convention in your area is not only fun but also helps the hobby grow. Think about it!

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by Skip Williams

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Magic-user spells

Can a creature such as a demon that is captured by an *ensnarement* spell use its innate *teleportation* abilities to escape? Can it use *gate* to summon help? Can it do anything to escape?

The *ensnarement* spell neither strips the victim of attack abilities nor protects the caster from them. An ensnared creature could launch missiles or attempt ranged magical attacks, but such attacks will never damage the diagram that holds the creature. The creature could charm the caster into letting it go. The caster, however, is free to employ other protective spells which will work normally with regard to the *ensnared* creature. An *anti-magic shell* is most effective for this purpose. The ensnared creature is trapped by the spell until the caster chooses to let it go, or some other creature releases it — either on purpose or by accident. The creature is totally cut off from its own plane, and it cannot summon aid (e.g., *gate*) or escape from the diagram by any

means (e.g., *teleportation*) except by attacking or serving the caster. Demons are extremely difficult to hold with this spell due to their *telekinesis* abilities. Any spell-caster who fails to guard against such powers will most likely be dragged into the diagram and suffer accordingly.

How about some guidelines on the *wish* spell?

In one Lake Geneva campaign, *wishes* were sometimes used to gain treasure. A random amount of 5,000-40,000 gp (5d8 x 1,000) was the usual range. Experience was never awarded for this treasure, and a few local campaigns now actually deduct experience ($\frac{1}{2}$ -1 xp per 1 gp gained). A *wish* may **never** be used to gain experience or levels.

A *wish* will produce a magical item (not of artifact quality) of up to +5 enchantment, lasting for one hour. The item is not actually created; it is just "borrowed" from somewhere. When the duration is up, the item disappears, returning "home." (Such an absence might anger the item's owner, of course.)

The *Dungeon Masters Guide* says that a *wish* can be used to permanently gain one ability score point as long as the score is not raised above 16. If the score is 16 or higher, it takes 10 *wishes* to raise it one point. Thus, it would take 20 *wishes* to raise an ability score from 16 to 18.

A *wish* can temporarily raise an ability to 18. In some Lake Geneva campaigns, the duration for this effect is anywhere from 1d6 turns to 1d6 hours (6-36 turns), depending on how low the original score was to begin with.

A *wish* can change a character's race,

but it can't remove a racial class or level restriction entirely. Thus, an elf made into a human can rise as high as a human can in levels, but an elf (as itself) can at best only slightly exceed racial restrictions on maximum levels using a *wish* spell.

A *wish* can duplicate other spells. One Lake Geneva campaign allows *wishes* to duplicate any other spells; another limits this to first- to seventh-level spells.

Wishes can usually negate or change bad events. This can range from the previous hour to the previous week, depending on how many creatures are involved, the creatures' relative power, and how specific the change is. A bad adventure involving a few adventurers could be wiped out completely after as much as a week, but a *wish* that negated the bad effects of the same adventure while preserving everything gained would have to be made within a day. The results of a minor battle involving normal troops could be changed after as much as a day. If the fate of a whole empire hinged on the battle, however, and there were powerful demons present, the *wish* would have to be made within the hour and be limited to changing the result a single key melee (which might or might not change the outcome of the battle).

A *wish* which shows excessive greed or promises to be a campaign-buster should be twisted so that the exact wording is met, but the intent is not served. For example: "I wish to know everything there is to know about this dungeon," would result in the character getting deluged with information which is quickly forgotten. If the party is being lazy and trying to avoid a piece of campaign business with which it ought to be concerned, it is incumbent upon the DM to see to it that the *wish* winds up costing the party more than it gains. If a *wish* is to be used in a tricky situation, players should limit the number of words in the *wish*.


This list could go on. Ultimately, the DM must decide on his own guidelines for using *wishes*. A useful article on this topic appeared in the Best of DRAGON Magazine Anthology, volume 5: "Best wishes!"

Can a ring of spell turning turn a *wish* spell?

This depends upon how the *wish* is used. If the *wish* is used so as to have a personal effect (one not involving a broad area) on the ring's wearer, and the effect is not delivered by touch, then the *wish* is subject to *turning*, and the wearer and wisher each get saves (unless the *turning* fails or is total). See the ring's description in the DMG, page 131.

Can a magic-user who is already at his maximum spell level remove a spell from his book in order to research a new spell?

I assume you mean maximum at that spell level due to his intelligence. Dropping a spell from a spell book is allowable.



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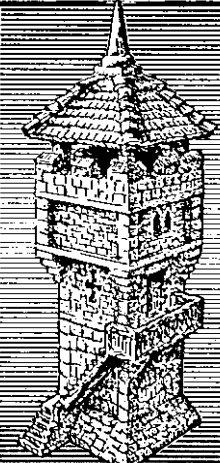
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Some campaigns even allow the magic-user to exceed the intelligence limit as long as the character is spending all that time and money on spell research, though this should be used only in campaigns in which money is scarce.

Are there any limits on the *polymorph other* spell? It seems that this spell is easily abused. For example, a magic-user could turn himself into a gold dragon. Since the spell grants all the abilities of the new form, the magic-user could assume human form again whenever it wasn't convenient to be a dragon and still be able to fly, use breath weapons, etc. Would such a character lose his character class abilities? Can he still earn experience? Would an adult magic-user be turned into an adult dragon by this spell? Would the character then age as his original race, or would he age as a dragon? Could he reproduce with other gold dragons? What would happen if a fire lizard or other unintelligent creature were *polymorphed* into a gold dragon?

To start, *polymorph other* means just that; a caster may not use the spell on himself. A *polymorph other* spell can turn any creature into any other creature type that is not unique. Remember the *system shock survival roll*; the DM must assign the *polymorphed* creature a constitution score if one isn't listed. Even if the *system-shock* check is successful, the *polymorphed* creature retains its own mind and tends to act like the original. Exceedingly stupid creatures might not even notice the change.

This fourth-level spell is not powerful enough to establish a connection between a recipient creature and another plane, nor can it bestow magical abilities (a character turned into a vampire, for example, could not drain energy levels). It cannot give the recipient any skill or ability that must be learned — such as spells, psionic abilities, or languages. The recipient, however, physically becomes the creature into which he has been *polymorphed*, and he could breed with others of his new ilk. Furthermore, the recipient can think like the type of creature into which he has been *polymorphed*, and has certain instinctive knowledge such as what he should eat, how to use the new body's locomotion and physical attack capabilities, and how to interpret what his new senses tell him. This is not the same as actually becoming the creature in mind, which happens with a failed intelligence check as noted in the spell description on page 78 of the *Players Handbook*.

As long as the recipient keeps his mind, he can use his character class abilities (provided that this is physically possible) and may draw upon his own knowledge. The *Players Handbook* indicates that a *polymorphed* player character can

hold and use tools and weapons only if his new "hands" have digits. Items carried by a character when *polymorphed* become part of the creature when the change takes place, and cannot be recovered until the creature reassumes its normal form. A *polymorphed* character can earn experience as long as he keeps his own mind.

In the example you have provided (assuming that the recipient of the spell is another magic-user), the caster of the spell would have to decide how big a gold dragon the recipient magic-user will become. When the spell takes effect, the recipient must make a constitution check. As you suggest, the adult magic-user would become an adult dragon with appropriate hit points (if he makes his constitution check). When determining the character's chance to assume a gold dragon's mentality, divide the dragon's total hit points by 4 to determine its effective hit dice (see the *Monster Manual*, page 31, Dragon's Saving Throws). There should be at least a 1% chance per day that the recipient will assume the creature's mentality, regardless of adjustments.

This magic-user would be able to speak (in the magic-user's languages only), fly (and carry passengers), and use the dragon's breath weapons. The magic-user could use his spells provided that material components were still at hand, and he could still read his books and renew spells. He does not gain the ability to speak a gold dragon's native tongue, nor use any of an adult dragon's spells, and he cannot *polymorph* himself as a gold dragon can. A fire lizard cannot be *polymorphed* into a gold dragon because it is not as intelligent as a gold dragon (see the second sentence of the spells description in the *Players Handbook*); the spell would fail. In the example involving the magic-user above, the recipient is assumed to be at least as intelligent as an average gold dragon (intelligence 17 or better).

If a *polymorphed* creature assumes the mentality of his new form, however, all of the originals abilities and memories are lost, and the creature gains the full spectrum of its new form's abilities. You may rule that the acquisition of these abilities will take time and perhaps instruction, but you can assume that the creature will eventually learn them. If the new gold dragon in the above example ever learned to use a gold dragon's *polymorph self* ability, however, any change of form will dispel the *polymorph other* spell. The creature will return to normal and must make a *system shock survival roll*. Shape-changing creatures who are the unwilling recipients of *polymorph other* spells can negate the spell in a similar manner (see the DMG, page 45).

The *polymorphed* gold dragon in our example would grow as a gold dragon would, but he would age as a human as long as he kept his mind. Aging in the AD&D game is sometimes a function of the mind, not the body.

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(continued from page 67)



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Surprise!

Determining who gets the drop on whom

Balin, the fearless svirfneblin, moved quietly down the corridor. Somewhere ahead lurked his foe, a drow elf. Balin carefully edged around a corner and was suddenly face-to-face with his foe. . . .

Player 1: "Okay, Balin surprises on 9 in 10. Is he surprised?"

Player 2: "Hey, wait a minute! I've got a drow elf who's only surprised on 1 in 8. How can Balin surprise my drow on 9 in 10?"

DM: "Well, uh, um. . . ."

With the expansion of player characters into new racial types and character classes with unusual surprise values, the time-honored method of determining surprise can quickly become a headache for many DMs. A scan of the *Dungeon Masters Guide* (pages 61-62) or the *Players Handbook* (pages 102-103) reveals what to do in those cases where both the surprised value (How often am I surprised?) and the surprising value (How often do I surprise the other guy?) can be expressed using a six-sided die. However helpful this discussion may be when a ranger encounters a wererat, it doesn't answer the question of what happens when you have an encounter between a drow elf and a svirfneblin.

The solution lies in converting die rolls into decimal percentages. For example, a

"normal" surprise roll is 2 in 6, or approximately 33%. The value for a party that is surprised on a 1 in 6 is approximately 17%. A reduction value of 17% is constant in all surprise conditions not using 1d6 rolls; the *DMG* (page 62) illustrates this by showing that a 5-in-6 chance to surprise is reduced to 4 in 6 when the party being surprised is normally surprised only on a 1 in 6 (4 in 6 = 67%, 3 in 6 = 50%; therefore, 67 - 17 = 50%).

So, if the character who is surprised on a 1 in 6 has a constant reduction of 17%, then a character who is surprised on a 1 in 8 should have a constant reduction of 21%. If the svirfneblin surprises normally on a 9 in 10 (90%), then he would surprise the drow elf 90 - 21 = 69% of the time. For those who claim that this number is too low (after all, *Unearthed Arcana* does say that the deep gnomes surprise 90% of the time), counter with the position that the drow elf picks up 21% more clues (sounds, odors, that little prickly feeling on the back of your neck when someone is watching, etc.) than the average individual. For those who say it is too high (since drow are surprised only on a 1 in 8), repeat that a svirfneblin normally surprises 90% of the time and that the *DMG* (page 62) firmly states that a party surprised on a 1 in 6 has only an additional 17% (1 in 6)

in their favor "and not a 50% better chance."

Table 1 lists a matrix of surprise conditions. Since monks (from either the *Players Handbook* or *Oriental Adventures*) lower their chances of being surprised for every level above 1st level, they should use the normal 2-in-6 line and subtract their surprise bonus from this value. Also, since the application of *silence* (as per the second-level cleric spell *silence 15' radius* or a magical item) or *invisibility* (by whatever means) adds an additional 1-in-6 chance of surprising each (as per the *Players Handbook*, page 103), characters using such powers should increase the values shown in Table 1 by 17% apiece.

If the player rolls less than or equal to the listed percentage value, his character is surprised. If both or neither party is surprised, then the encounter progresses normally. However, if one of the parties is surprised, the number of surprise segments lost to this party must be determined. This is done by cross-referencing the same roll used to determine surprise for each party and its surprise factor using Table 2. The surprised party subtracts its factor from the surprising party's factor. Treat all negative results as zero.

Consider the following example: Balin the svirfneblin encounters the drow elf. Balin is normally surprised on a 1 in 12. However, the drow, being an elf and not in metal armor, surprises on a 3 in 6. According to Table 1, the drow elf has only a 25% chance of surprising Balin. Likewise, the elf, who is "normally" surprised on a 1 in 8, has a 70% chance of being surprised by Balin. The drow rolls 15 and Balin rolls 37. This means that the drow is surprised. Checking Table 2, we find that a roll of 15 yields a surprise factor of 1 and a roll of 37 gives a surprise factor of 3. Therefore, the drow is surprised for 2 (3 - 1) segments. Of course, this result may be modified by the PCs' dexterity reaction scores, as per page 11 of the *Players Handbook*.

Changing surprise values from straight fractions of die rolls to percentages does cost a little in terms of complete accuracy. However, it also allows the DM to handle better those surprise conditions which cannot be translated into fractions of 1d6 without compromising game play. This enables a DM to tailor surprise conditions and encounters to the circumstances, and not fudge the surprise factors. Ω

Table 1
Chances of Being Surprised

	Surprises on a							
	2/6 (33%)	3/6 (50%)	4/6 (67%)	6/8 (75%)	8/10 (80%)	5/6 (83%)	7/8 (88%)	9/10 (90%)
Surprised on a								
1 in 20 (5%)	5%	22%	39%	47%	52%	55%	60%	62%
1 in 12 (8%)	8%	25%	42%	50%	55%	58%	63%	65%
1 in 10 (10%)	10%	27%	44%	52%	57%	60%	65%	67%
1 in 8 (13%)	13%	30%	47%	55%	60%	63%	68%	70%
1 in 6 (17%)	17%	33%	50%	59%	64%	67%	72%	74%
2 in 6 (33%)	33%	50%	67%	75%	80%	83%	88%	90%

Notes

Monks use the 2-in-6 (33%) row. Subtract 1% if the monk is 2nd level or ((2% x (level - 2)) + 1) if 3rd level or greater.

If the encountered creature is *silent*, add 17% (1 in 6) to the value in Table 1.

If the encountered creature is *invisible*, add 17% (1 in 6) to the value in Table 1.

Table 2
Surprise Factors

Surprise roll	Surprise factor
1-17	1
18-33	2
34-50	3
51-67	4
68-83	5
84-00	6

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The Wild Warriors

The ultimate hack-n-slashers: berserker NPCs

The berserker was a prominent figure in Scandinavian culture in the Middle Ages. In DRAGON® issue #3, a short article was written to place this figure into the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game as an NPC. That article, while containing many worthwhile ideas, approached the berserker from the idea that the name came from the idea of “bear sarking,” a state of madness induced from wearing shirts made of bear fur. (This state was similar to lycanthropy.) This article attempts to include these fascinating people in AD&D® games as NPCs from a more historical perspective. Their use as player characters is limited because berserkers would not adapt well to cooperative adventuring, and their chances of survival may be low despite their extraordinary combat skills.

The Norse berserker

The berserker was a fascinating figure in Norse history up through medieval times. The name “berserker” was derived from a hero in Scandinavian mythology. Berserker, the grandson of the great eight-handed Starkadder and the beautiful Alfhilde, was known for his fierce battle madness and his habit of charging into battle with no armor but a shield. It was this habit of fighting in his bare sark, or tunic, that earned him the name Berserker (Baresarker). He had 12 sons by the daughter of King Swafurlam (whom he had slain in battle); all of his offspring inherited his temperament as well as the name Berserker. From these warriors came the wild, Odin-worshipping berserkers of history and legend.

In appearance and attitude, the berserkers were a menacing group of people. Typically, they were huge and strong but quite ugly. Considering cleanliness unmanly, they were proud of their unwashed and unkempt state. Surly and bullying, they were thought by many to be victims of mental imbalance. Their tendency to

assault and murder at will kept most people terrified of these “beast-men.” Even the bravest warrior would give way, if his pride and status would allow it.

Many Norwegian kings were fond of having a few berserkers among their followers as bodyguards and shock troops, and at times the kings gave berserkers to one another as gifts. As is frequently mentioned in Icelandic sagas, berserkers decided the outcome of many a battle.

The characteristic that set these people apart from the other warriors of their time was their famous berserker fury, the *berserkergang*. This state was induced by the berserker when he worked himself into a terrible frenzy by biting the rim of his shield (much as a dog worries a stick or rag), stomping his feet, and growling like a bear. A medieval chess piece found in the Hebrides (a common site of Viking raids) depicts such a warrior biting the edge of his shield. Once in this self-induced state, the berserker’s eyes seemed to blaze with unnatural light, his body trembled, and his mouth worked up a terrible frothing. His face became swollen and purple. Once the berserker was upon him, he would rush forward, howling and making other animal noises.

While under the berserker gang, the berserker was reputed to gain superhuman strength and immunity to fire and pain, ignoring all but the deadliest wounds. The mere appearance of a berserker in this state would often drive his enemies away in terror. Personal safety was all but forgotten in the rage to kill; the berserkers would not stop until all enemies were dead or driven away. The orders of their leaders were either unheard or ignored. In this battle-madness, friends were sometimes forgotten or even mistaken as enemies. The price paid after the battle was that the berserker would be exhausted and helpless until well rested.

Berserkers as NPCs

In AD&D game terms, the berserker is a subclass of fighter based on the Viking berserkers of the Middle Ages. This subclass, which is related to the barbarian subclass and is unable to wear heavy armor or cast spells, has special abilities that compensate for its restrictions. The berserker is adept at direct combat to the extent of suffering in defensive and planning capabilities, and shares few of the barbarian’s talents for survival. It is not unusual to find berserkers living among barbarian communities or (more rarely) among humanoid tribes, and they are occasionally seen in large groups, roving the countryside in search of battle. They are very rarely encountered elsewhere.

The berserker must have strength and constitution scores of no less than 15 each. His wisdom, charisma, and comeliness scores cannot be greater than 9. Berserkers receive no bonuses on earned experience, as they have no principal attributes. They cannot have more than one class. Table 1 has information on level progression for berserkers.

Humans and half-orcs are the only races which may become berserkers, and they are limited in level advancement only as per the fighter class in this respect. All berserkers must be of chaotic alignment, whether good, neutral, or evil. Like barbarians, berserkers speak only their tribal tongues and the common language of the area in which they live. Berserkers refuse to learn other languages, and disdain the arts of reading and writing.

Like barbarians, berserkers use 12-sided hit dice, have a base movement rate of 15”, and use the combat and saving-throw tables of fighters. They have the same ability to attack creatures struck only by magical weapons, much as barbarians are able to do. From 1st to 5th level, berserkers attack once per round; from 6th to 10th level, they attack three times every two rounds; at 11th level and above, they attack twice per round. Berserkers have the same saving-throw bonuses that barbarians have (i.e., +4 vs. poison; +3 vs. paralyzation, death magic, petrification, and polymorph; +2 vs. wands, rods, staves, and breath weapons; and, +1 per four levels attained vs. spells). They are additionally immune to magical *fear*, such as cause *fear*, *scare*, *fear*, etc.

Berserkers refuse to wear any armor other than nonbulky furs or leather, and they use the normal defensive adjustments for high dexterity as opposed to the adjustments used by barbarians. Shield use is permitted. Berserkers absolutely hate magic other than that practiced and used by the clerics of their tribe, and they refuse to utilize magical items of any sort — particularly magical armor, shields, weapons, and protective devices. Berserkers have no use for rings, bracers, and similar “fine” decorations, and they avoid using well-kept weapons, selecting ones which appear to be “obviously” nonmagi-

Table 1
Berserkers Table

Experience level	Experience points	Level title	12-sided dice for accum. hit points	Armor class
1	0-3,000	Shieldbearer	1	10
2	3,001-6,000	Madman	2	9
3	6,001-12,000	Shieldbiter	3	8
4	12,001-24,000	Howler	4	7
5	24,001-48,000	Feyman	5	6
6	48,001-96,000	Rager	6	5
7	96,001-200,000	Hewer	7	4
8	200,001-400,000	Battlelord	8	3
9	400,001-800,000	Berserker	8 + 4	2
10	800,001-1,600,000	Berserker, 10th level	8 + 8	1
11	1,600,000-2,000,000	Berserker, 11th level	8 + 12	0
12	2,000,001-2,400,000	Berserker, 12th level	8 + 16	- 1

400,000 experience points per level are required for each additional level above 12th. Berserkers gain 4 hp per level after 12th.

Table 2
Berserkergang Bonuses and Penalties

Condition	Bonus/penalty
For gnawing on shield or weapon	+20%
For being cornered	+20%
For each melee round after the first	+10%
For each friend or follower killed	+10%
If the berserker is alone	+10%
For each level of experience	+1%
For each hit point lost	+1%
For each previous berserk that day	-10%

cal. For protection in battle, berserkers depend on their gods and their personal prowess, and this strength of will affects their armor class.

A 1st-level berserker has a natural armor class of 10, but his armor class drops one point for each level gained thereafter. This armor class may be lowered by using a shield and by dexterity bonuses. Leather armor becomes useless at 3rd level and after, when the berserker gains AC 8 or better.

The arms usable by a berserker are: battle axe (two-handed), hand axe, club, dagger, hammer, knife, mace, morning star, scimitar, spear, spiked buckler, bastard sword, broad sword, falchion, khopesh, long sword, short sword, and two-handed sword. The battle axe and two-handed sword are used without a shield because they require two hands. A berserker will never use any sort of missile or thrown weapon, these being too cowardly to consider; they never use

poison or flaming oil for the same reason. Berserkers initially learn six weapons of proficiency, have a -1 nonproficiency penalty, and may learn a new weapon at every odd-numbered level (3rd, 5th, etc.). They are unable to gain specialization with any weapon, as this requires a level of skill and finesse that berserkers cannot grasp. Berserkers, unlike barbarians, have no required weapons.

Berserkers have some of the abilities of barbarians, as outlined in *Unearthed Arcana*, pages 19-21. They are able to use the following primary skills: *climb cliffs and trees*, *back protection*, *leaping and springing*, and *detect magic* (the latter ability sometimes being sufficient to trigger the berserkergang in tense situations). No other primary skills are used, and berserkers have none of the barbarian's secondary or tertiary skills, as they care only for battle. Berserkers are often supported by their tribe to keep them in shape (and pacify them) when no battles are being fought. Though they cannot summon hordes as barbarians can, they gladly respond to such a summons.

Special abilities

As the berserker rises in levels, he gains special abilities. These are:

1. At 1st level, the berserker can go berserk (as described herein). He also has a +2 bonus to save against fire-based attacks of any sort (in addition to any

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Table 3
Berserker Followers Table

Dice score	Result
01-60	See Table 4
61-80	See Table 5
81-90	See Table 6
91-95	See Table 7
96-00	See Table 8

other bonuses) and takes one-half damage from normal fires.

Additionally, the berserker has a 5% chance per level to *detect hidden and invisible beings* within a 30' radius around him. Berserkers usually attack such beings at once. Nonliving objects which are hidden or invisible cannot be so detected.

2. At 3rd level, the berserker's chance of being surprised is reduced to 1 on 1d6.

3. At 4th level, berserkers can attack creatures struck only by +1 or better magical weapons.

4. At 5th level, the berserker is able to continue fighting while berserk (as described in the following section) until he reaches -10 hp, at which point he dies immediately. If his berserk state ends while he is at negative hit points, he collapses and loses 1 hp per round until he dies at -10 hp, unless he is given aid.

5. At 6th level, berserkers can attack creatures struck only by +2 or better magical weapons.

6. At 7th level, the berserker becomes immune to nonmagical fire. His saving throw against magical fire-based attacks gains a +4 bonus.

7. At 8th level, berserkers can attack creatures struck only by +3 or better magical weapons.

8. At 9th level, the berserker gains 2-12 special henchmen, as determined by the DM from the table in this article. A berserker can never employ hirelings, as no one will follow such a person willingly, even for large sums of money. Berserkers, however, are often hired as mercenaries or bodyguards.

9. At 10th level, berserkers can attack creatures struck only by +4 or better magical weapons.

10. At 12th level, berserkers can attack creatures struck only by +5 or better magical weapons.

The berserker gang

Going berserk is not an automatic ability for berserkers. A base 10% chance (modified as per Table 2) exists that a berserker

NPC goes berserk when the DM deems the conditions are suitable for the arousal of battle-lust. Typical causes for this are: a direct threat to the personal safety of the berserker or his henchman, patron, or companion; a feeling of extreme helplessness; or a sensation of being strongly ridiculed. Additionally, any magical situation or effect meant to produce *fear* automatically calls for a die roll to see if the berserker enters the berserker gang. It takes only one melee round to go berserk, during which time the berserker calls upon his inner rage, bites on his shield, and so on. If a berserker lacks a shield, he may bite other objects, such as his weapons. If the berserker gang is not summoned, the berserker fights as a normal fighter. A surprised berserker has no time to summon his battle fury, though he may willingly step back (risking a free attack from opponents for that round) and attempt to call upon the berserker gang.

Though a berserker is not obligated to call upon the berserker gang in every fight in which he is involved, he will have a strong tendency to do so. Numerous



Table 5
Berserker's Demi-human Henchmen

Dice score	Character class and race	Level range	Number
01-15	Dwarven fighter/thief	1-4	2
16-31	Dwarven fighter	1-4	2
32-37	Dwarven fighter/cleric	1	1
38-42	Gnome fighter/thief	1	1
43-47	Half-elven bard*	1-3	1
48-52	Half-elven fighter/cleric	1	1
53-58	Half-elven fighter/thief	1	1
59-63	Half-elven fighter	1	1
64-79	Half-orc berserker	1-4	2
80-84	Half-orc fighter/cleric	1	1
85-95	Half-orc fighter	1-4	2
96-00	Half-orc fighter/thief	1	1

* If bards are not used in a campaign, then a cleric or shaman is received.

Table 4
Berserker's Human Henchmen

Dice score	Character class	Level range
01-05	Bard*	1-3
06-30	Barbarian	1-3
31-55	Berserker	2-5
56-69	Cleric/shaman**	1-4
70-00	Fighter	1-6

* If bards are not used in a campaign, then a cleric or shaman is received.
** Humanoid shamans are received only if the berserker is a half-orc.

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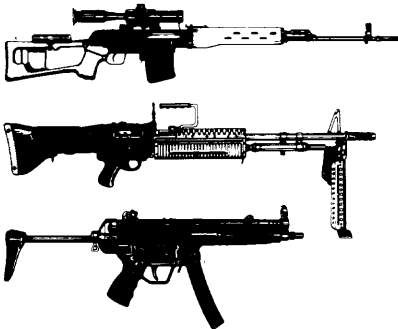
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Table 6
Berserker Mounts

Dice score	Mount	Number
01-35	Centaur	1-3
36-71	Hippogriff	1
72-87	Griffon	1
88-00	Pegasus/wyvern/ dragonnel*	1

* Applies to WORLD OF GREYHAWK® fantasy setting only; also depends on the berserker's alignment

Table 7
Berserker's Minor Creature Allies

Dice score	Berserker's alignment		
	Chaotic good	Chaotic neutral	Chaotic evil
01-50	War dog	Wolf	Huge ravens (2)
51-75	Black bear	Gorilla bear	Worg
76-80	Giant owl	Giant otter	Ogre
81-90	Pseudo-dragon	Al-mi'raj	Galltrit
91-00	Faerie dragon	Firedrake	Ice lizard

Table 8
Berserker's Major Creature Allies

Dice score	Berserker's alignment		
	Chaotic good	Chaotic neutral	Chaotic evil
01-05	Brass dragon*	Shen lung*	White dragon*
06-10	Storm giant	Mountain giant	Ettin
11-30	Werebear	Wereboar	Werewolf
31-75	Moon dog	Verbeeg	Hill giant
76-00	Weretiger	Korred	Giant troll

* Roll 1d4 +1 to determine the age category of the dragon. It will, of course, possess no treasure.

advantages and disadvantages come with the berserker gang. The advantages include:

1. The berserker gains a +2 "to hit" bonus on all hand-to-hand combat attacks.
2. The berserker is immune to psionic attacks and to all forms of *charm*, *fear*, and similar will-force attacks. These magical attack forms are listed in the wisdom table on page 7 of *Legends & Lore*.

3. The berserker gains a +2 bonus to initiative rolls.

4. Subtract 1 hp from all damage a berserker takes from each single attack made against him. This represents the berserker's ability to ignore his wounds and continue fighting.

5. Due to the horrible aspect of this ability and the berserker's appearance while berserk, all opponents of zero level and those having less than one hit die must immediately check morale when viewing an enraged berserker, or else flee.

6. The berserker feels no pain or exhaustion while berserk, becoming immune to spells such as *symbol of pain*.

The berserker gang includes these disadvantages as well:

1. The berserker cannot withdraw from melee or parry blows while berserk, and he remains berserk for as many rounds as he has constitution points — even if the opponents are slain, at which point the

berserker attacks the nearest living being on a 10% chance. Otherwise, he continues to attack fallen enemies until the rage passes.

2. The berserker is immediately exhausted (as per rules in the *Dungeons Survival Guide*, pages 21-22) after going berserk, and cannot go berserk again until completely recovered. He thus suffers a -4 penalty to all attributes, saving throws, and combat abilities ("to hit" and damage rolls); his movement is reduced to 11", slightly slower than a normal walking man. Recovery can only be made after an hour of complete rest and a successful constitution check; this reduces the penalty to -2 until another two hours of com-

plete rest and another constitution check bring the berserker to full power. Constitution checks are made using the modified constitution scores for the NPC.

3. Because of the noise they make and their mental condition during the berserker gang, berserkers cannot hear any orders, suggestions, or warnings from their companions while in this state.

Berserker henchmen

Use Tables 3-8, along with the ranger followers tables (see the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, pages 16-17) to determine a berserker's special henchmen. Use Table 3 to substitute for the ranger followers table at the top of the first column of page 17 of the DMG. Roll only once on Tables 6-8.

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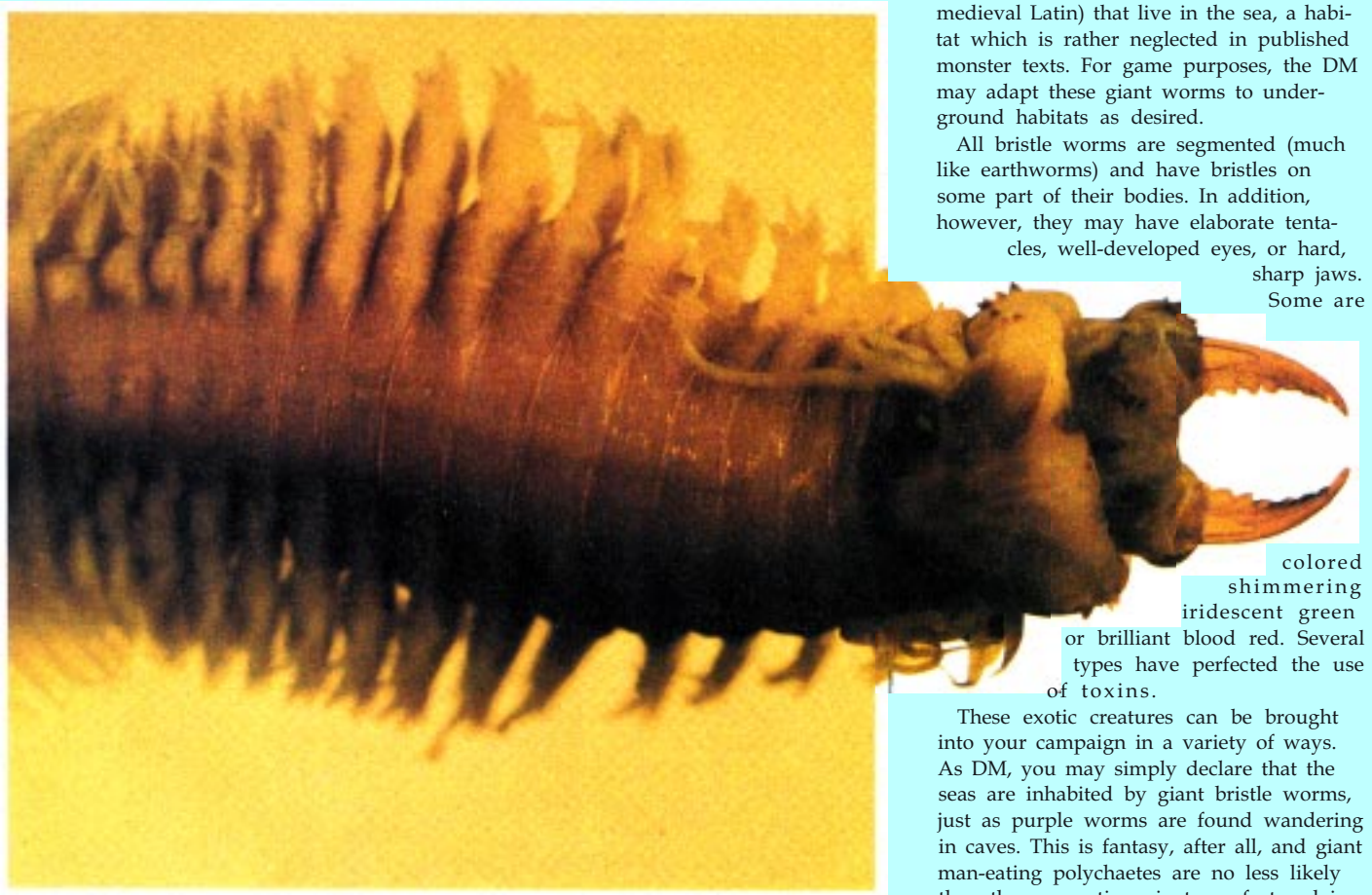
The Dragon's Bestiary

In the course of world affairs, worms get short shrift. Generally ignored (if referred to at all), worms are described in the most derogatory terms. *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* lists at least 50 references to worms, not a single one of them complimentary. Worms are at best humble; at worst, vile.

This antiworm bias extends even into the world of the AD&D® game. If a dungeon adventurer turns to his comrade and spouts, "Ygrane, ye have the soul of a veritable worm!" he's probably not extending a warm compliment. Even the dreaded purple worm is an unhappy sort of creature — a mere earthworm writ large, with a sting arbitrarily stuck on its tail. Aside from the medieval description of dragons as "great worms" or "wyrms," worms just don't get no respect!

All worms are not alike, however, and there's no reason giant worms should be, either. Described herein is a set of creatures that the enterprising DM can use to keep even the most jaded characters on their toes. All of these creatures are bristle worms (or polychaetes, if you prefer good medieval Latin) that live in the sea, a habitat which is rather neglected in published monster texts. For game purposes, the DM may adapt these giant worms to underground habitats as desired.

All bristle worms are segmented (much like earthworms) and have bristles on some part of their bodies. In addition, however, they may have elaborate tentacles, well-developed eyes, or hard, sharp jaws. Some are



The Nereis is not just another pretty face, as this view from above shows. The bristle worm's jaws are partially extended. Photographs are courtesy of Kent Colbath.

colored
shimmering
iridescent green
or brilliant blood red. Several
types have perfected the use
of toxins.

These exotic creatures can be brought into your campaign in a variety of ways. As DM, you may simply declare that the seas are inhabited by giant bristle worms, just as purple worms are found wandering in caves. This is fantasy, after all, and giant man-eating polychaetes are no less likely than the man-eating giant gar featured in the *Monster Manual*.

For those who are sticklers for accuracy, the alternatives are to shrink the player characters or enlarge the worms. The spells involved may not need to be particularly powerful. The largest specimen of *Eunice* (q.v.) on record is almost 20' long and 2' in diameter. Enlarging such a creature or shrinking the characters by a factor of from three to five would defin-

All giant worms are not alike

itely get people's attention.

Giant bristle worms are likely to be encountered guarding the undersea entrances to castles staffed by magicians powerful enough to sustain a permanent *enlargement* spell. The DM may also wish to establish a cult of island inhabitants who guard their realm by the same means. The *enlargement* spell might be focused through an icon, and may require annual replenishment through a sacrifice of crushed pearls mixed with elven hair (preferably that of some stray adventurer).

Otherwise, giant bristle worms are rare in inhabited areas, having been killed off by the local fishermen. (Titans and various demi-gods use them for bait!) They are most likely encountered on deserted beaches or lonely stretches of ocean far from civilization.

Bristle worms (polychaetes)

The bristle worms considered here share characteristics which can be dealt with collectively. First, all of them live in the sea and are largely confined to salt water (although some of them can stand several hours exposure to air).

Second, all of them have two sexes, unlike earthworms. Consequently, the mad mage who would establish a breeding population in his coastal moat has to bring back more than one giant worm. And how does said mage tell what sex of worm he has? Easily: By waiting until the breeding season, cutting open one segment from the middle region of the worm, and seeing what sort of reproductive organs are inside (perhaps a good job for the local druid).

Third, all of these worms are capable of regenerating lost hit points if they retain at least 50% of their original hit points (in the real world, regeneration takes several weeks; for AD&D game purposes, however, it is far more rapid). One-half of the lost hit points will be recovered the first night, and 1d6 hp are recovered per day thereafter. As a result, the DM might rule that a 32-hp Diopatra (q.v.) which takes 15 hp damage in one round suddenly flees combat, withdrawing deep into its dwelling tube to emerge the next morning (to the surprise of the characters) at nearly full power.

If a *sword of sharpness* or *vorpal weapon* neatly cuts a worm into two parts, both parts flee (each having half the hit points the worm formerly did, counting the damage it took from previous attacks and from the attack that cut it in two). They each then regenerate into two separate worms, but each new worm recovers only one-half the total hit points the original worm possessed after one night, and no new hit points are gained thereafter. Thus, a 40-hp worm might be cut into two parts after taking other damage as well; each half is assumed here to have 12 hp. Each half regenerates after one night into a new, smaller worm with 32 hp. If either new worm is wounded, the usual rules for

regeneration are followed.

Finally, those worms that live in tubes or burrows have a giant nerve cell which runs the length of their bodies. This cell triggers the escape response, enabling the worm to withdraw in a flash at the first hint of danger. In general, worms are alarmed by looming shapes that are larger than they are.

There are literally thousands of different kinds of bristle worms. Representatives from a number of different habitats are described in the following section.

NEREIS

FREQUENCY: *Common*
NO. APPEARING: 2-12
ARMOR CLASS: 9
MOVE: //9" (3")
HIT DICE: 1-4
% IN LAIR: 95%
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 *bite*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-4 or 1-6
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Withdraw into lair*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: L (1-2' diameter; 5-10' long)
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

The Nereis constructs mucous tubes in debris or loose sand and mud, from which it moves to capture prey. If threatened, the Nereis attempts to withdraw deep into its tube, becoming impossible to hit; otherwise, it attempts to swim away. The Nereis only fights if cornered, using its pair of jaws to do 1-4 hp damage for 1-2 HD worms and 1-6 hp damage for 3-4 HD worms. This worm prefers plant material for food, but it does attack animals small enough to swallow in one gulp (1' or less in size). It avoids attacking adventurers unless disturbed. The Nereis also eats carrion, if available.

The bristles on the Nereis are primarily used to gain purchase while the worm is moving. These bristles may cause minor damage to an attacker, however, doing 1-2 hp damage to anyone who touches the worm. The Nereis is among the most widespread of the bristle worms, and is found on muddy or sandy bottoms from deep water into estuaries, and also lurking about the bases of giant kelp.

DIOPATRA

FREQUENCY: *Rare*
NO. APPEARING: 5-50
ARMOR CLASS: 8
MOVE: //9" (3")
HIT DICE: 2-10
% IN LAIR: 98%
TREASURE TYPE: *Jaws (see below)*
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 *grasp*, then 1 *bite* per round

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-8 or 1-4, then 1-6 per round

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Grasping; surprise on 1-4 from tunnel*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: L (2-4' diameter; 12-25' long)
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

The Diopatra has a much more complex jaw apparatus than does the Nereis, having both upper and lower sets of jaws. The upper jaws consist of a pair of pincers with subsidiary shearing jaws. The upper jaws work as a single unit: If the upper jaws make a successful roll to hit prey, they hold the prey steady while the shearing jaws rip into it to hold the prey in place for the lower jaws to work. The upper jaws cannot chew. The initial attack by the upper jaws is made at +4 against all armor types rated as bulky or fairly bulky because of the speed of the worm. Damage is only 1-4 hp against such heavily armored prey, however, compared to 1-8 hp against characters wearing nonbulky or no armor.

The lower jaws consist of two large, fused, chisel-shaped mandibles which move forward and backward independently of the upper jaws. After the first attack, the lower jaws are used once per round in an attempt to chop off a bite-sized piece of the prey; this piece is then swallowed whole. Attacks by the lower jaws do 1-6 hp damage, and are made at +3 due to the immobilization of the prey by the upper jaws.

In addition to the jaws, the Diopatra has four sets of hooked bristles under its first two pairs of fleshly lobes (called parapodia). These hooks are used to position the captured prey and are automatically considered to score a hit on the round after a successful attack is made by the upper jaws. No damage is done by this initial grasping.

To escape, a captured creature must either kill or severely damage the worm (reducing it below 50% hit points), or break free of the pincers and hooked bristles simultaneously. The pincers are AC 1 and have 4 hp, although blunt weapons may strike at the pincers at +2 to hit; reducing the pincers to zero hit points destroys them, though this does not reduce the worm's normal hit points. A strength check on 1d20 will allow a PC to pull free of the hooks, which do 0-2 (1d3-1) hp damage in the process. Pulling free of the pincers requires a *bend bars/lift gates* strength roll, which may be made once per round and causes 1-6 hp damage if successful. Pulling free of both pincers and hooks may be done in the same round if no other actions are taken.

The Diopatra lives in vertical tubes in soft sand, generally in shallow water or lower tidal flats. While feeding, it lurks near the top of its tube, using its long

antennae to sense for vibrations and to "smell" chemicals emitted by possible food. The worm can distinguish the presence or absence of light, but is otherwise essentially blind.

The Diopatra eats anything (plant or animal, living or dead) that doesn't appear too big and menacing. These worms lunge forward from their tube at a distance equal to one-third of their length to capture prey. The Diopatra are generally found in colonies rather than in isolation, with tubes spaced far enough apart so that the larger worms can't have the smaller

for lunch. Consequently, it is possible for a character to be attacked by two worms simultaneously if he is midway between two tubes.

The jaws of the Diopatra are hardened by thick deposits of aragonite (mother-of-pearl) and are of some value to knowledgeable jewelers. The upper jaws generally bring 5-10 gp per lb. depending upon their quality, with the whole set weighing 5-8 lbs. The lower jaws are highly prized, and may bring as much as 15 gp per pound, weighing 3-6 lbs.

Eunice

The Eunice is essentially identical to the Diopatra, except that it has shorter antennae, and may reach a larger size (up to 16 HD). Unlike the Diopatra, however, the Eunice lives in tunnels bored into coral reefs, and is likely to be encountered under ledges on the flanks of the reef. Its jaws are of equal value to those of the Diopatra.

Lumbrineris

This worm is another type with complex jaws similar to those of the Diopatra, but is longer and thinner per hit point (1-3' diameter and 20-30' long). Because the Lumbrineris burrows actively through mud or sand, it lacks the elaborate antennae and parapodia of the Diopatra, and looks rather like an earthworm. The Lumbrineris feeds by snapping up whatever morsels of organic material are to be found.

The jaws of the Lumbrineris are hardened with calcite (limestone) rather than aragonite, and are worth no more than a few silver pieces — except, perhaps, to a magician who needs them for a spell.

VANADIS

FREQUENCY: *Rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1-12
ARMOR CLASS: 6
MOVE: //12-15"
HIT DICE: 2-8
% IN LAIR: 0%
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *Special*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Swallowing whole, continuous damage*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Bristles*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *L (1½-3' diameter; 10-20' long)*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

The Vanadis is a bristle worm that does not build a burrow. It is a good swimmer (it is AC 8 if motionless) and has large eyes with lenses in them, which afford this worm excellent vision.

The Vanadis feeds by everting its proboscis and swallowing its prey whole. It is not equipped with jaws, and thus the success of an attack depends only on the size of the prey (not the armor class). A Vanadis with 5 HD swallows a halfling on a roll of 14, an elf or dwarf on a roll of 15, a human on a roll of 17, and an ogre on a roll of 20. For each hit die which the worm has above five, subtract one from these values; add one for each die less than five. Creatures which require a roll above 20 are too large to swallow and will not be attacked. On the third round after swallowing, the prey is digested at a rate of 1-2 hp per round. Note that the prey is held tightly within the stomach, and is

Below is the head of Diopatra, viewed from above. The unusual jaw structures of this bristle worm are not visible, but the sensory antennae are clearly shown.



able to cut its way out from the inside only with great difficulty; only the use of a dagger is permitted.

EURYTHOE

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*
NO. APPEARING: 1-6
ARMOR CLASS: 9
MOVE: //3"
HIT DICE: 2-8
% IN LAIR: 0%
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-2
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Poison*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *L* (2-4' diameter; 5-7' long)
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

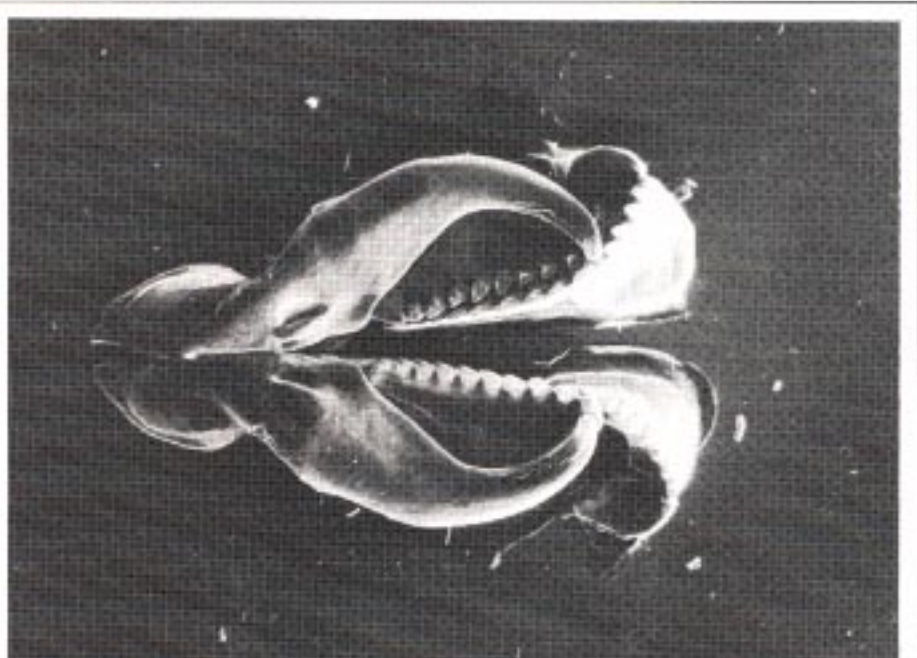
The Eurythoe lives in shallow, tropical waters where it feeds on corals. This worm is also called the "fire worm," because it has hollow bristles filled with an irritating toxin. If attacked at close range, the Eurythoe automatically counterattacks. A hit does 1-2 hp damage, plus causing unbearable pain in the victim as per a *symbol of pain* for 2-12 turns. A successful saving throw vs. poison reduces the agony to 2-12 rounds.

The Eurythoe is a slow-moving worm that generally ignores other creatures, rarely attacking unless it is provoked.

GLYCERA

FREQUENCY: *Rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1-3
ARMOR CLASS: 6
MOVE: //9" (3")
HIT DICE: 2-8
% IN LAIR: 95%
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-3 hp
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Poison*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *L* (2-3' diameter; 10-20' long)
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Also known as the "blood worm," the Glycera lurks within a system of galleries with multiple openings which it digs in sandy areas on the sea floor. Although blind, the Glycera can sense even small pressure differences or vibrations near the gallery openings. When possible prey is detected, the Glycera sticks the end of its snout out of the burrow and squeezes out its long pharynx. The tip of the pharynx is armed with four small, sharp jaws which clasp onto the prey. As the worm pulls in the prey, venom is squeezed



Diopatra's upper jaws are shown here, viewed from above. The large pincers extend out and snap together to capture prey. See the complete description on page 83.

through the tips of the jaws. The venom is similar to that of the black widow spider, and causes paralysis within two rounds unless a saving throw vs. poison is made at +2.

The Glycera is exclusively carnivorous, feeding primarily on crustaceans and other worms (and the odd adventurer, of course). It is found on shallow sea floors from the tropics to the poles, but never in large numbers.

SABELLA

FREQUENCY: *Common*
NO. APPEARING: 2-20
ARMOR CLASS: 8
MOVE: *Nil*
HIT DICE: 2-4
% IN LAIR: 100%
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *Nil*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *Nil*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *M* (1-3' diameter; 5-7' long)
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

The Sabella feeds by filtering small particles out of the water with its fanlike tentacles. This worm is harmless; its only defense is to withdraw into its tube. When the worm has withdrawn, the tube might be mistaken for one of the Diopatra. These worms are common on the bottom in all habitats.

TEREBELLA

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*
NO. APPEARING: 1-10
ARMOR CLASS: 8
MOVE: *Nil*
HIT DICE: 3-10
% IN LAIR: 100%
TREASURE TYPE: *See below*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *Nil*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *Nil*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *L* (*see below*)
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

The Terebella is a fat, short worm with a jumble of stringy tentacles extending out of its head. The 5' body is concealed in a tube, while the tentacles may extend up to 40' in all directions. These tentacles feel for small objects, which are then transported back to the mouth along a ciliated groove in the tentacle. At the mouth, the objects are sorted; edible items are ingested, and the others are dumped in a pile near the tube. When prodded, this worm withdraws into its tube, while slowly retracting its tentacles.

Worms of this type are relatively harmless, although a character might become entangled within the tentacles for 1-4 rounds. Coins are occasionally found in the pile of discarded rubble near the mouth of the tube (8% chance of 1d20 gp). A large concentration of coins might indicate the presence of a buried shipwreck nearby.



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PECTINARIA

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*
NO. APPEARING: 2-20
ARMOR CLASS: 2
MOVE: //1"
HIT DICE: 2-6
% IN LAIR: 0%
TREASURE TYPE: *See below*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *Nil*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *Nil*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *M (see below)*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

This peculiar worm is sometimes called the "ice-cream-cone worm." It constructs a portable, conical tube by cementing small pebbles together into one all-encompassing layer. The cone may be up to 5' long and 2-2½' wide at the mouth. The worm lives head-down in the sand, with only the upper 1' of the cone protruding from the surface. The Pectinaria sorts through the sand with golden, fan-shaped bristles, ingesting organic debris as it does so.

There is a 5% chance that the Pectinaria will have cemented 1d6 precious or semi-precious stones into its cone. The golden bristles are also of value to magic-users and to some primitive tribes, although the value of these items varies widely. The Pectinaria is found only in shallow water, buried in loose sand. Ω

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The Marvel-Phile

Four years later



This month marks the fourth anniversary of the release of the original MARVEL SUPER HEROES® role-playing game. Since that time, we've chronicled the changes in the ever-evolving Marvel Universe, with the demise and rebirth of heroes and villains alike. Some villains have become forces for good (Magneto), and some heroes have fallen from grace (Quicksilver). Longstanding heroes such as Captain America, Thor, the Thing, and Iron Man have all gone through a number of basic changes during our stewardship.

It's been two years since our last update on everyone we've covered in magazine articles, adventure modules, and supplements. Therefore, we're kicking off our fifth year with a complete list of all the heroes and villains we've covered so far.

This index notes each character from the Marvel Universe that was described in one or more MARVEL SUPER HEROES game products. The abbreviations used herein follow. A single number indicates that the character was mentioned in that issue of DRAGON® Magazine (issues #88 to present). The letter P, followed by a number, indicates the given issue number of POLYHEDRON™ Newszine in which a character was mentioned (issues #27 to present). Some products listed did not mention specific heroes or villains, but are included here to show the complete line of MARVEL SUPER HEROES game products.

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CC.....ME-1 *Cosmos, Cubed*
RR.....ME-2 *Ragnarok and Roll*
—.....ME-3 *Left Hand of Eternity*

Some entries are different races of creatures from the Marvel Universe, and others are groups of heroes or villains. Brief clarifications are given for characters with the same names or with multiple names to help tell which entry is for which character. Additionally, some characters presented here are variants that are either wholly original or are drawn from alternate worlds and divergent futures. These are noted using the abbreviations here:

(af): Alternate-future character.
(du): Divergent-universe character.
(oc): Original character created by TSR.

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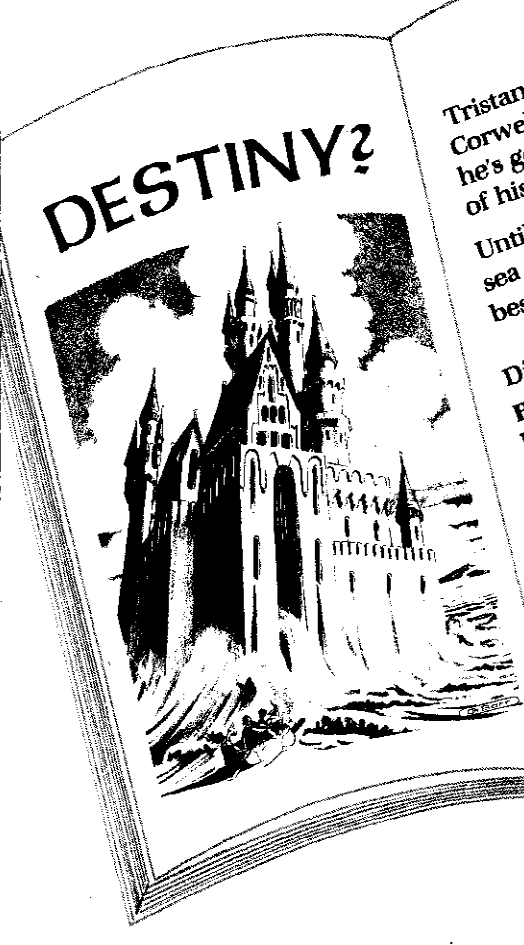
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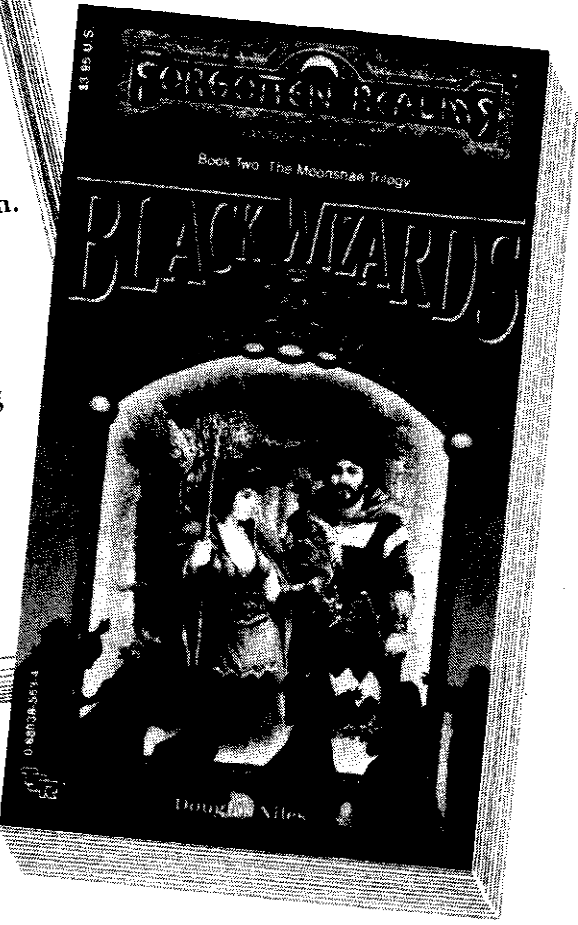
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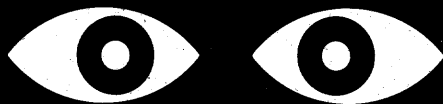
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MacTaggart, Moira.....CA, PW
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 Madame Masque.....CJ
 Madcap.....MA
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 Madrox.....CA
 Maelstrom.....AC
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 Magma.....CA, PW, SW2
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 Magneto.....BB, CA, MA, PW, SW, SW2
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Mutant Force (group)CA
 MysteryCJ
 MystiqueCA, PW
 Mystique (af)FD

 NamoritaFF
 NebulaAC, SW2
 NekraAC, CA
 Nelson, Franklin "Foggy"CJ
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 Nermani, LilandraCA, PW
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 Spider-Man's alien suit94
 Spider-Woman IICA, SW, P27
 SpinneretteFF

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 Spirit of '76.....104
 Squadron Sinister (group).....AC
 Stankowicz, Fabian.....AC
 Starfox.....AA, AC, SW2, TT
 Starjammers (group).....CA
 Starshine I and II.....112
 Steeplejack II.....130
 Stick.....CJ
 Stilt-Man.....NY, WL
 Stinger.....CA
 Stingray.....FF, WL
 Stonewall.....P39
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Postscript

Okay, that was the past. What do you guys want to see in future issues of DRAGON Magazine? Send your suggestions and comments to:

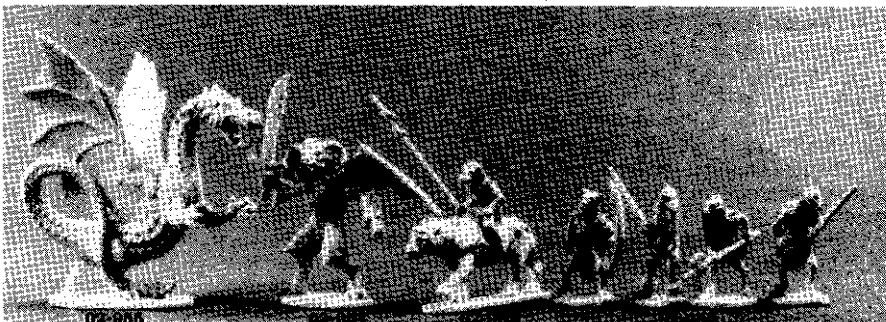
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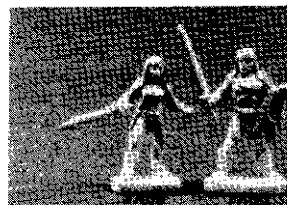
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is offered as a service to our readers around the world. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on 8½" x 11" paper. The contents of each listing should be short, succinct, and under 150 words long.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following information, in the following order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, brochures, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Domestic and foreign conventions are welcome. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Convention listings should be mailed by the copy deadline date to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147. Copy deadline dates are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. For example, the copy deadline for the December 1988 issue is the last Monday of October 1988. Plan ahead; early listings pay off!

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, **please contact us immediately!** For any questions or changes related to this column, please call either Robin Jenkins or Roger E. Moore at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625.

- * indicates a Canadian convention.
- indicates a European convention.

MISCON III, May 13-15

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn in Missoula, Mont. Guests include TSR designer David "Zeb" Cook, author Greg Bear, and artist David Cherry. Special events include a masquerade dance, a hucksters' room, gaming, and an SCA demonstration. Registration is \$18 at the door. One-day memberships will be available for \$10. Write to: MISCON III, P.O. Box 9363, Missoula MT 59807.

CONQUEST VIII, May 14-15 (see below)

Circumstances have forced the postponement of CONQUEST VIII. For further information, please contact: CONQUEST, c/o Janice Gamalski, 126 Woodmere, East Lansing MI 48823.

VALLEYCON '88, May 14th

Sponsored by the Game Players Association of Northeast Wisconsin, this gaming convention will be held at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. Events include role-playing tournaments, strategic board games, miniatures events, science-fiction and fantasy films, a costume contest, and an 11th-anniversary celebration and presentation for *Star Wars*. Events for the celebration include STAR WARS® role-playing and board-gaming events, a *Star Wars* poster and art gallery, memorabilia booths and displays, free feature films, costume contests, poster competitions, and a raffle featuring loads of games as prizes; entrants may win a free year's subscription to DRAGON® Magazine. Prizes will be awarded for every event at the convention.

If you wish to submit a game campaign, contact the VALLEYCON '88 headquarters as soon as possible. There is a \$1 charge for each event, but judges will be paid by each player attending that gaming session. Display booths are available for \$1. Admission is \$1.50 for the entire day. Write to: VALLEYCON '88 Headquarters, 1211 Morris Avenue, Green Bay WI 54304; or call: (414) 494-7313.

CANGAMES '88, May 20-23 *

Canada's oldest and largest gaming convention will be held at the Carleton University Commons in Ottawa, Ont., Canada. RPG, miniatures, and board-game tournaments will be offered, along with an auction, a dealers' room, and a miniatures-painting contest. Tournament play is free; trophies will be awarded for best players. The convention starts at 4 P.M. Friday and ends at 4 P.M. Monday. Registration fees are \$16 at the door. Write to: CANGAMES '88, P.O. Box 3358, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K1P 6H8.

KEYCON B-CANVENTION 8 May 20-22 *

Sponsored by WINSFA, the Winnipeg Science Fiction Society, this science-fiction convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Downtown in

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Gene Wolfe will be the guest of honor, Charles de Lint will be honored guest, Fran Skene will be fan guest, and Kevin Davies will be artist guest. In addition to all regular events (art show and auction, dealers' room, movies, etc.), a selection of CANVENTION programming will also be presented, including French and bilingual programming as well as the presentation of the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Awards (the CASPAR Awards). Convention rates are \$25 Canadian at the door (\$22 U.S.). CANVENTION 8 voter supporting fees are \$5 U.S. for nonmembers. Write to: KEYCON 5-CANVENTION 8, P.O. Box 3178, Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA, R3C 4E6.

KUBLA KAHN '88, May 20-22

Held at the Rodeway Inn in Nashville, Tenn., this annual science-fiction convention will host many gaming tournaments, including RPGA™ Network AD&D® and MARVEL SUPER HEROES® game events. Also featured will be company-sponsored tournaments for CYBORG COMMANDO®, DC® HEROES, and STAR FLEET BATTLES® games. A local game store will sponsor the following events: PARANOIA® and TOON® games (run by former Steve Jackson Games member, Gerald Swick), ROLEMASTER® games (run by Randell Doty, MERP® module designer), microarmor games (run by Bob Duncan), and BATTLETECH® games (run by Doug Cobb). A special gaming panel or seminar is also planned. Guests of honor include Karl Edward Wagner, Andrew J. Offutt, and Ron Miller. Registration fees are \$22. Write to: William Tracy, c/o KUBLA KAHN, 647 Devon Drive, Nashville TN 37220.

LINCON 5, May 21-23 •

One of the oldest and largest conventions in Sweden, LINCON will take place at the Institute of Technology in Linköping, Sweden, a city 700 years old. Featured role-playing game tournaments include the largest AD&D® game tournament in Sweden, with CALL OF CTHULHU®, TRAVELLER®, CIVILIZATION®, DIPLOMACY®, and BATTLETECH® games. Prizes will be awarded in all events. There will also be a fantasy art exposition, fantasy miniatures-painting contest, and dealers' room. Registration fees are \$10 at the door. Write to: The Dragon's Den, ATT: Tess Printzen, Box 10031, 58010 Linköping, SWEDEN.

NI-CON II, May 21-22

This two-day gaming convention will be held once again at the College of DuPage SRC Building at 22nd and Lambert in Glen Ellyn, Ill. Tournaments will include a three-round RPGA™ Network AD&D® game, a two-round AD&D® game Master's tournament, a two-round TOP SECRET® game, and: historical, fantasy, and science-fiction miniatures battles; board games; AD&D® game events; BATTLETECH®, TITAN®, TALISMAN®, and SHOGUN® competitions; and other events. Other features include a dealers' room, our famous silent auction, and more. Special guests will be announced later. Entry fees are \$8 for the weekend, or \$5 per day. Write to: NI-CON II, c/o Eric Ortega, 306 Belmont Drive, Romeoville IL 60441; or call: Eric at (815) 886-5940, or Randy at (312) 894-3435. For RPGA™ Network tournament information, call: Keith Polster at (414) 338-8498.

ADVENTURE GAMEFEST '88, May 27-29

SKIRMISHES presents this role-playing and war-gaming convention at the Holiday Inn-Ashley Plaza at 111 West Fortune Street in Tampa, Fla. Room rates are \$50 for single or

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double occupancy. Events will include AD&D®, TRAVELLER®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CAR WARS®, and SEEKRIEG® game events, board gaming, a KILLER® tournament, dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, demonstrations by the SCA, and other role-playing and historical game events. Reservations may be made by calling (813) 223-1351. Registration fees are \$18 for the entire weekend. Write to: SKIRMISHES, P.O. Box 2097, Winter Haven FL 33883; or call: (813) 299-6784 or (813)293-7983.

GAMEX '88, May 27-30

This gaming convention will be held at the Pasadena Hilton Hotel. Role-playing, wargame, computer game, and family board-game tournaments are offered, as well as seminars and demonstrations, a flea market, a game auction, and an exhibitors' area. Write to: GAMEX '88, c/o Jeff Albanese, DTL, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808; or call: (213)420-3675.

V-CON 16, May 27-29 *

Hosted by the British Columbia Science Fiction Association, this convention will be held in Gage Residence on the University of British Columbia campus in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. This event will host Hal Clement, James P. Hogan, and John G. Cramer as guests of honor. Events include panels on this year's theme: "The science in science fiction." Other events will include D&D® games and other role-playing games, a masquerade and dance, an art show and auction, a dealers' room, movies, authors' readings, and a writer's workshop. Weekend memberships are \$20 Canadian (\$16 U.S.), and may be paid by mailing a check or money order to: V-CON 16, P.O. Box 48478, Bentall Centre, Vancouver, B.C., CANADA, V7X 1A2. Children under 12 get in for half-price and those under six get in for free. For more, leave a message at: (604) 738-8356.

INTERDIMENSIONS '88, June 3-5

Sponsored by the SouthEastern Indiana Gamers' Association, this gaming convention will be held at the Batesville Middle School in Batesville, Ind. Events include an RPGA™ Network AD&D® game tournament, an RPGA™ Network TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game tournament, a Hack-N-Slash tournament, open gaming, a miniatures-painting contest, an art show, and much more. Guests include Shawn McKee (co-creator of Hack-N-Slash), Gary Williams (artist guest), and others. Registration is \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. Special reduced fees will be offered to senior citizens. Tickets for the Sunday brunch are \$5. Send an SASE to: INTERDIMENSIONS '88, P.O. Box 266, Batesville IN 47006-0266.

FRON II, June 4 *

This second-annual role-playing gaming convention will be held at the Gaertnerweg in Frankfurt, Germany (near Alte Oper, St. Ignatius community). The convention will run from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. on Saturday. Admission is 2,50 Deutsche Marks (see exchange rate for U.S. equivalent). Game masters and club members are admitted free of charge. For enrollment as a GM, write to: Role-playing and Simulation Game Club "252" r.a., c/o Martin Kliehm, In der Roemerstadt 164, D-6000 Frankfurt am Main 50, WEST GERMANY; or call: 01149/69-574 579.

CONGREGATE 88, June 10-12 *

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the Moat House Hotel in Longthorpe, Peterborough, U.K. Terry Pratchett is the guest of honor. Supporting membership fees are £5 and attending membership fees are £11. Write to: A.D. Smith, P.R. Officer,

CONGREGATE 88, 25 Cavendish Street, Peterborough, PE1 SEQ, UNITED KINGDOM.

HOSTIGOS, June 10-12

This science-fiction convention, which is sponsored by the Penn State Science Fiction Society, will be held in the Hetzel Union Building on the University Park campus of Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pa. Hotel accommodations are available at the Sheraton Penn State located at 240 S. Pugh Street in State College, Pa. Jerry Pournelle will be the author guest of honor and John Carr will be the editor guest of honor. This convention will be held in honor of Pennsylvania's most famous SF writer, H. Beam Piper. There will be numerous panels concerning Piper's life and works, as well as several gaming events, an art show, a dealers' room, and more. Registration is \$22. Write to: HOSTIGOS, 400 S. Gill Street, State College PA 16801; or call: (814) 237-5333.

MICHICON GAMEFEST '88, June 10-12

This gaming convention will be held at the Southfield Civic Center in Southfield, Mich. Events include 60 board games, 25 role-playing games, and 60 miniatures events, as well as a BATTLE FOR MOSCOW® tournament, 35 dealers' booths, three used-games auctions, and open gaming. Advance admission is \$12 for all three days, or \$7 for one day. Write to: Mike Bartnikowski, Metro Detroit Gamers, Box 656, Wyandotte MI 48192; or call: Barry Jensen at (313) 591-2300, ext. 325 (days) or Mike Bartnikowski at (313) 928-7744 (evenings).

ROSECON '88, June 10-12

This science-fiction and gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Portland Airport in Portland, Ore. Special guests will include Larry Niven (author of *Ringworld*), George Takei (Mr. Sulu of *Star Trek*), D.C. Fontana (*Star Trek* writer and producer), Rick Sternbach (illustrator for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*), and Richard Arnold (*Star Trek* archivist at Paramount). Special events include an afternoon masquerade, two live-music dances, a western buffet banquet, an art show, all-night casino games, movie previews, open gaming, panel discussions, a dealers' room, and free transportation to Portland's Rose Festival. Membership rates are \$30 until June 1, and \$35 at the door. Hotel rates are \$62 a night, and may be arranged by calling (800) HOLIDAY or (503) 256-5000. Write to: ROSECON '88, P.O. Box 69373, Portland OR 97201; or call: (503) 777-2377.

X-CON 12, June 10-12

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held at the Red Carpet Inn, 4747 S. Howell Avenue in Milwaukee, Wis. Special guests include: Somtow Sucharitkul as author guest, Bruce Pelz as fan guest, Dell Harris as artist guest, and Wilson "Bob" Tucker as first fandom guest. Scheduled events include an art show, ice-cream social, a huckster's room, masquerade party, and blood drive. Registration is \$15 until May 10, or \$20 at the door. Terry Carr Memorial Memberships are also available at \$18 (this includes a \$2 donation to the American Diabetes Association and a listing of your name in the program book). Write to: X-CON, Ltd., P.O. Box 7, Milwaukee WI 53201.

DAGA, June 12

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. at the Fiesta Motor Inn Ballroom, less than one mile south of exit 27 on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, in Willow Grove, Penn. Scheduled events include model-

building, look-alike, sound-alike, costume, and trivia contests, with discussions on role-playing games, figure painting, and more. Dealers will display their wares, and various science-fiction and fantasy models and dioramas will be on exhibit. Dealers' tables are \$40 and registrations are \$8 at the door. Send an SASE to: DAGA Conventions, Daniel A. Aunspach, 105 Alison Lane D-15, Horsham PA 19044.

BOREAL 10, June 16-19 *

The 10th-annual Francophone science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held in Chicoutimi, Quebec, Canada. Guests include William Gibson, Judith Merrill, Gerard Klein, Daniel Fernine, Wojtech Siudmak, and many others. Feature events include a two-day seminar on Francophone science fiction and fantasy, workshops, computer demonstrations, three different art shows, and four showings of *Le theatre sans fil's* production of *The Lord of the Rings*, done with giant puppets and laser effects. Usual activities include: panels, movies, a masquerade, a few cocktail parties, the Boreal Awards ceremony, a brunch, a dealers' room, and much more. For gamers, a role-playing tournament and game demonstrations are included. Low-priced accommodations are available. Registration fees are \$50 for the two days of seminars, \$35 for the convention, and \$70 for both. Write to: BOREAL, 10,266 Belleau Street, Chicoutimi, Quebec, CANADA G7H-2Y8.

THE INTERNATIONAL SUPERMAN * EXPOSITION, NEOVENTION VII, and 1988 STARFLEET* NATIONAL CONFERENCE June 16-19

Ohio's largest gaming convention proudly sponsors a once-in-a-lifetime event: The International Superman® Exposition at the Cleveland Convention Center. This once-only exposition will take place at the annual NEOVENTION normally held at Kent State University. This major summer happening will also include the STARFLEET® National Conference. Special attractions include: an RPGA™ Network AD&D® game Open Masters tournament; BOOT HILL®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, CHAMPIONS®, and CAR WARS® tournaments; over 100 AD&D® game and other role-playing game events; over 50 miniatures competitions, including Ancients, Napoleonic, and Civil War events; a games auction; a figure-painting contest; a masquerade ball; a city-wide parade; television and movie presentations; major *Star Trek* and other science-fiction movie displays and floats; and much more. Dozens of science-fiction and fantasy authors and a score of television and movie personalities will be in attendance. In addition, design workshops, panel discussions, and several other events will be featured. Limited preregistration pass prices are \$6 per day and \$15 for the weekend. Write to: NEOVENTION VII, c/o Neverending Battle, Inc., Suite 852, Hanna Building, Cleveland OH 44115.

POLYGON VI, June 17-19

This science-fiction and fantasy gaming convention will be held at the Santa Lucia Dormitory on the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, Calif. Featured events will include fantasy role-playing and war gaming, a games auction, seminars, a miniatures-painting contest, game demonstrations, and a dealers' room. Registration rates for the weekend are \$18 before May 15, and \$24 at the door. One-day registration fees are \$12 at the door. Write to: POLYCON VI, Box 168, Julien A. McPhee University Union, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo CA 93407.

SL RALLY '88, June 25

For the third year in a row, On All Fronts holds its annual SL RALLY with tournaments in SQUAD LEADER* and ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* games. Held at the Holiday Inn in Conway, Ark., this year's convention will feature \$100 cash prizes to be awarded in the ASL tournament. Other prizes will include terrific discounts on wargames at the Game Booth. Preregistration fees are \$15. Write to: On All Fronts, P.O. Box 265, Marshall AZ 72650.

SCIENCE FICTION ART EXHIBITION

June 27-August 22

The Orlando Science Center in Orlando, Fla., will feature a collection of art and artifacts from Michael Whelan, Vincent Di Fate, Kelly Freas, and other artists. The show will also have motion-picture artifacts, a film lecture series, and a film festival. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$3 for children, and \$10 for entire families. The Orlando Science Center is located in Orlando Loch Haven Park, just off Interstate 4 in downtown Orlando. Write to: Orlando Science Center, 810 East Rollins Street, Orlando FL 32803-1291; or call: (407) 896-7151.

DALLAS FANTASY FAIR, July 1-3

Bulldog Productions presents its largest show of the year. This comic-book, science-fiction, and film convention will be held at the Sheraton Park Central, 12720 Merit Drive, LBJ at Coit, in Dallas, Texas. This event will feature more than 200 dealers' tables, 100 guests of honor, an art show and auction, a masquerade, 24-hour gaming sessions, 24-hour Japanimation and video rooms, artists and writers workshops, readings, a dance, an open convention suite, and much more. The anticipated attendance for this convention is 3,000. Tables are available, but write for prices. Admission fees are \$20 for all three days if paid in advance or \$25 at the door. Write to: Bulldog Productions, P.O. Box 820488, Dallas TX 75382; or call: (214) 349-3367.

NANCON-88 X, July 1-3

The 10th anniversary of this gaming convention will be held at the Ramada Inn N.W. Crossing in Houston, Tex. There will be a large dealers' room and an open gaming room available to registrants. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, SQUAD LEADER®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, TRAVELLER®, and TWILIGHT: 2000* tournaments, naval and 15mm Napoleonic miniatures competitions, and CIVILIZATION®, PARANOIA®, NUCLEAR WAR®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, CAR WARS®, FEDERATION AND EMPIRE®, and team head-to-head AD&D®

games. Other events include a miniatures-painting contest, a costume contest, and more. Send an SASE to: Nan's Game HQ, 2011 S.W. Freeway, Houston TX 77098.

CAPITOL-CON IV, July 9

This gaming convention will be held at the Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield, Ill. Board, miniatures, and role-playing gaming will be featured at this one-day event. Write to: Bill Wilson, 3320 Gaines Mill Road, Apt. 4, Springfield IL 62704; or call: (217) 787-7092.

COLONIAL CITY GAMEFEST VI

July 9-10

GAMEFEST will again be held in the Memorial Building in Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Role-playing and wargaming events will be sponsored. Admission is \$2 per day or \$3.50 for both days. Write to: Mt. Vernon Gamers Association, 205 W. Gambier Street, Mt. Vernon OH 43050.

EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY CONVENTION

July 9

This gaming convention will be held at the Brookdale Country Club in Elkhart, Ind. Featured events include AD&D® game and MARVEL SUPER HEROES® game events), BATTLETECH®, and miniatures competitions. Write to: Bob Hagerty, 227 North 2nd Street, Apt. C, Elkhart IN 46516.

WINDSOR GAMEFEST VI, July 16-17 *

This gaming convention takes place at the Ambassador Auditorium in the University Centre at the University of Windsor in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Special guest of honor is science-fiction and fantasy artist Gideon. Featured events include role-playing, miniatures, and board games, a dealers' room, free movies, an art exhibit, and several door prizes. Preregistration fees are \$10 Canadian for the weekend and \$7 Canadian per day. Write to: Windsor Gaming Society, P.O. Box 2055, Walkerville Station, Windsor, Ontario, CANADA, N8Y 4R5.

DOVERCON IV, July 16-17

This year's DOVERCON will be held at the University of New Hampshire's Memorial Union Building (MUB) in Durham, N.H. Features include an RPGA™ Network AD&D® game Open Tournament, along with many other events. A film festival, miniatures contest, and art competition will also be held. Registration is \$15 for both days and must be received no later than July 1 (this includes entry into three events). Registration at the door is \$15 for both days and

\$10 for one (no free entry to events provided). Each event costs \$2. Vendor and game master enquiries are welcome. Write to: Information, DOVERCON IV, P.O. Box 753, Dover NH 03820.

MEMPHIS FANTASY CONVENTION

July 22-24

Sponsored by the Memphis Fantasy Convention Association, Inc., this fifth-annual event will be held at the Garden Plaza Hotel in Memphis, Tenn. Scheduled guests include John Ostrander, Tom Yeates, Gary Spiegel, and Allen Hammack. Activities will include extensive gaming, an art show and sale, dealer exhibitions, panel discussions, a costume contest, and a banquet. Daily admission is \$10; the entire weekend costs \$21. Send an SASE to: MEMPHIS FANTASY CONVENTION, Box 11081, Memphis TN 38111.

KINGCON IV, July 30

KINGCON IV will be held at the Best Western Inn in Mt. Vernon, Ill. Sponsored by the Knights of the Griffon, this gaming convention will feature a two-round RPGA™ Network AD&D® game tournament, a three-round ILLUMINATI* tournament, a miniatures contest, and lots of gaming. Preregistration is \$3 until July 20 and \$5 thereafter. Send an SASE to: KINGCON IV, 501 S. 19th Street #3, Mt. Vernon IL 62864; or call: (618) 242-7920.

PROJECT...GENESIS III, July 31

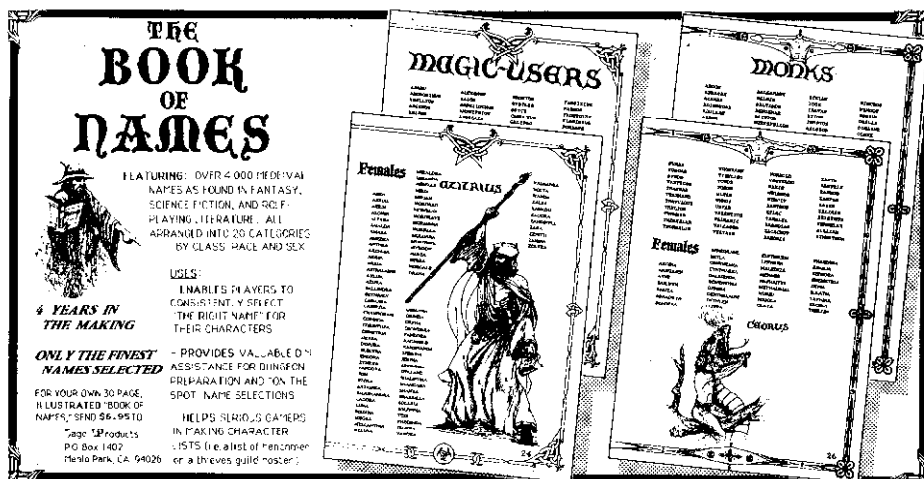
The people from PATCO bring yet another fantasy gaming convention your way, this time to Chiminello's Hall, 2221 N. Webber in Fresno, Calif. This one-day event will run from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. Featured events include BATTLETECH®, AD&D®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, and CHAMPIONS* games. Both tournament and open games will be available to all, along with dealers' tables and a swap meet for those wishing to buy, sell, or trade old games and books (table space is required). Preregistration for this event is \$3 for the day if paid before July 20, and \$5 afterward. Swap meet tables are \$5 for the whole table and \$3.50 for half. Dealers should call or write for details. Judges are still needed for several events; those accepted receive a refund on their convention registration fees. Write to: PATCO, c/o Phillip S. Pittz, 5415 E. Washington, Fresno CA 93727; or call: (209)255-4682.

OMACON 8, August 5-7

This major Midwest science-fiction, pro-space, and gaming convention is sponsored by Nebraskans for the Advancement of Space Development (NASD), and will be held at the Holiday Inn Central, 3321 S. 72nd Street, in Omaha, Nebr. Write to: OMACON 8, P.O. Box 37851, Omaha NE 68137; or call: (402)476-7176.

EASTERN N.C. TOY AND HOBBY SHOW August 6-7

This show will be held at the New Cumberland County Agro-Expo Center, just off Highway 301 South, in Fayetteville, N.C. This event includes a swap meet for collectors of comic books and antique and collectible toys, games, model kits, and baseball cards. Daily admission fees are \$3. Write to: Carolina Hobby Expo, 3452 Odell School Road, Concord NC 28025; or call: (704) 786-8373.



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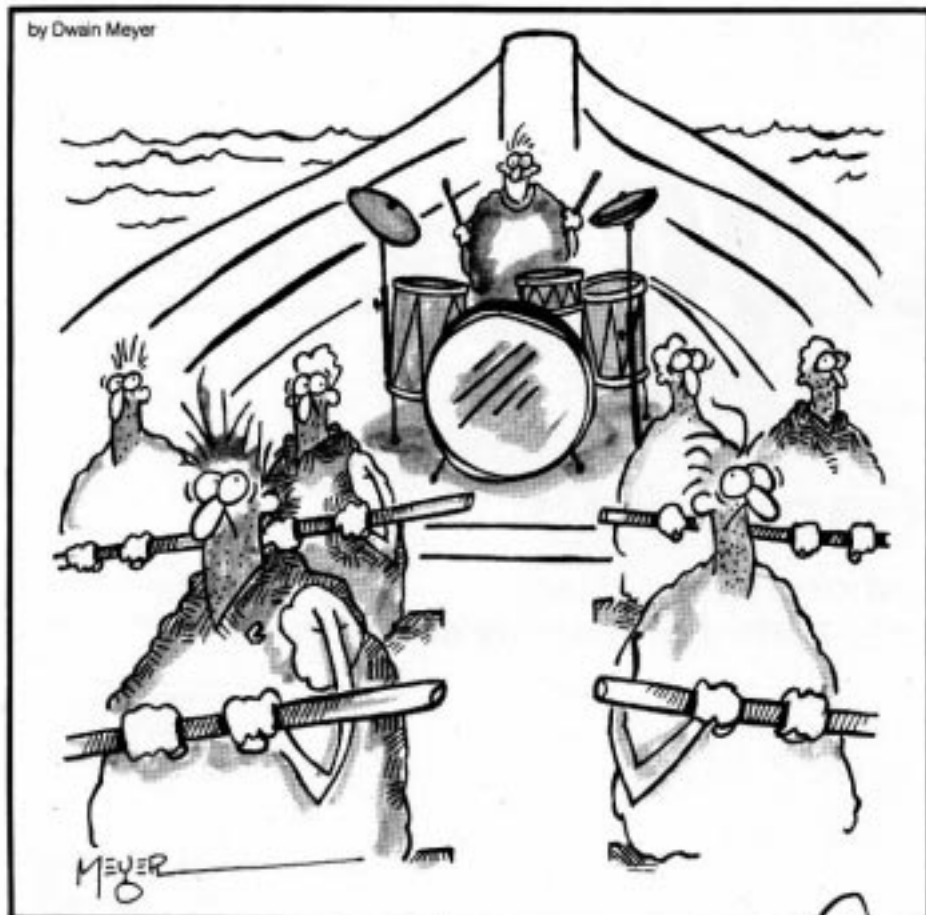
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DRAGONMIRTH

by Dwain Meyer



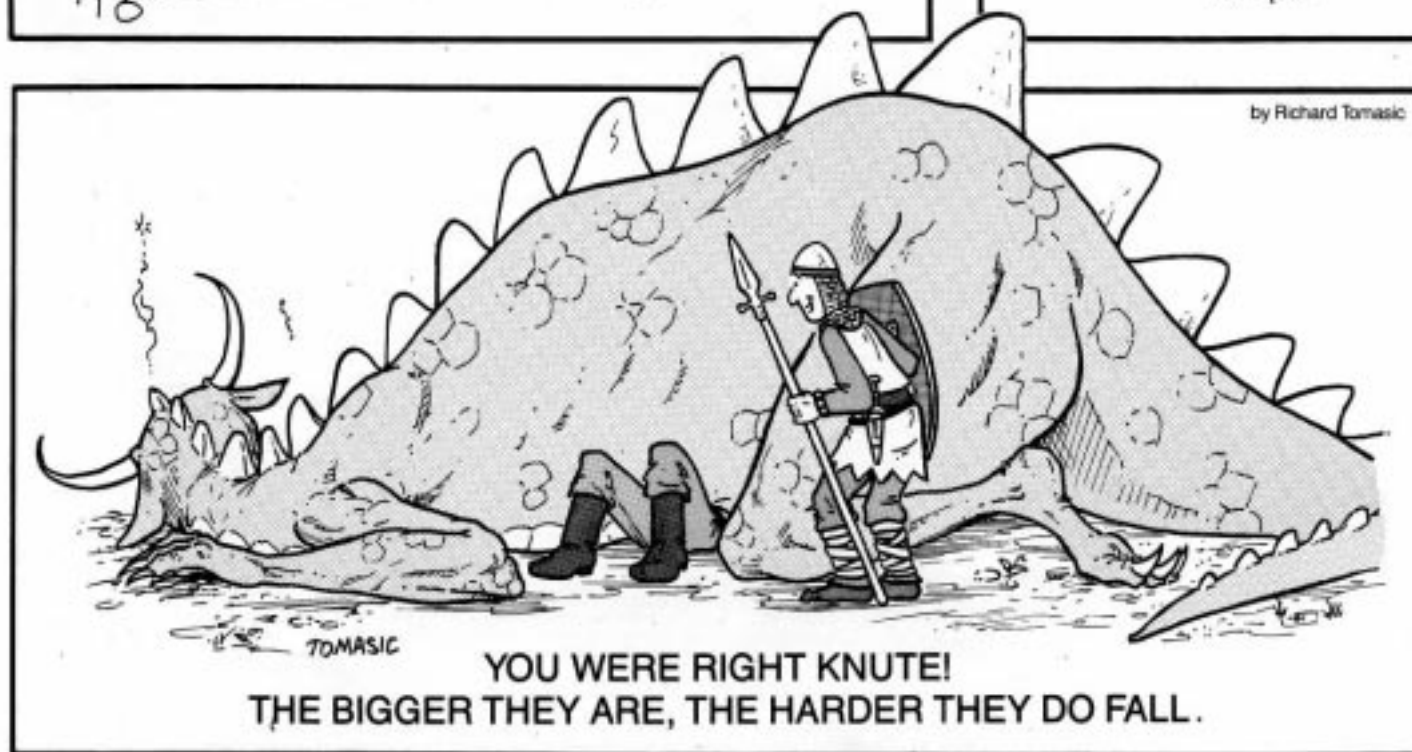
by Ray Nadeau

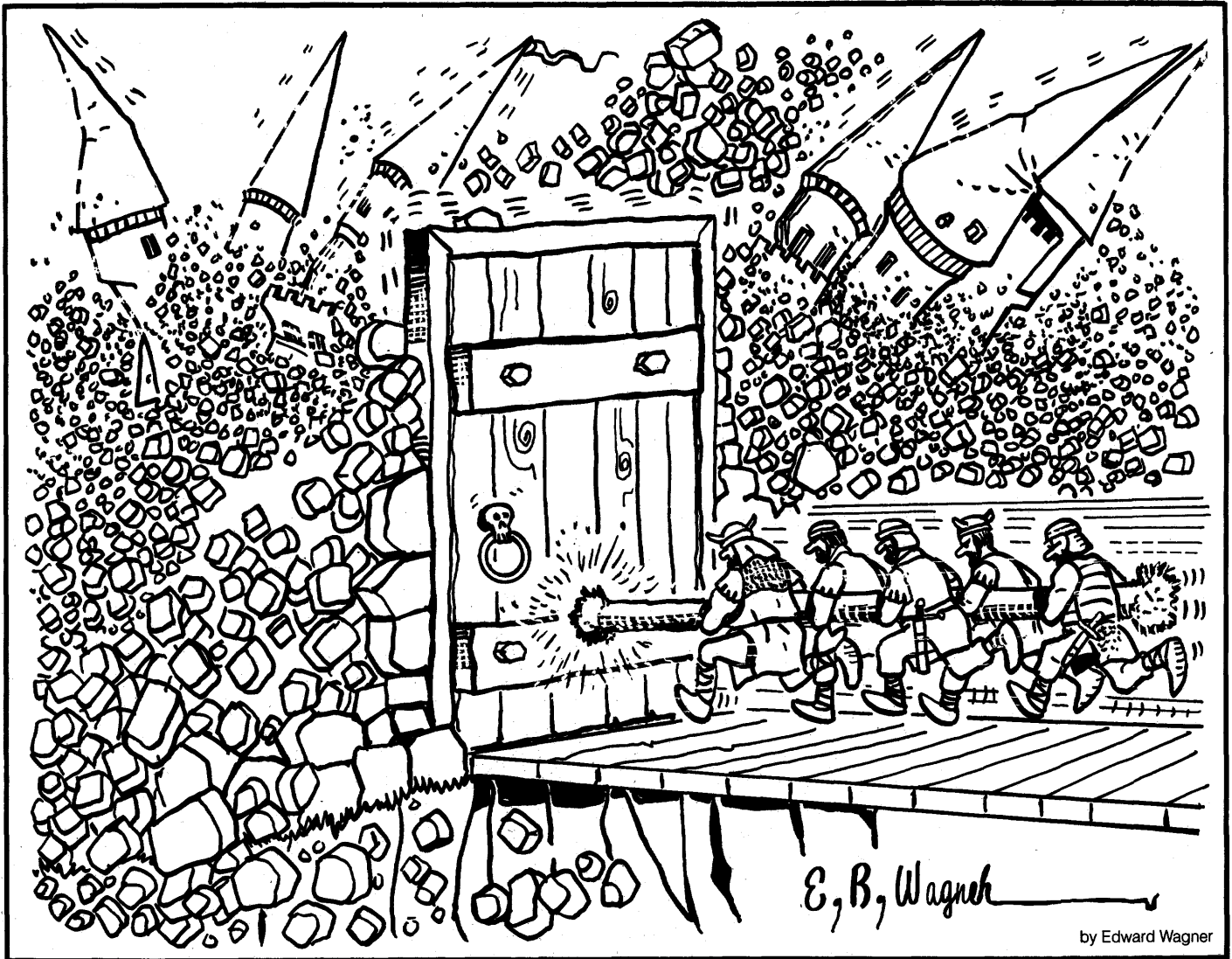
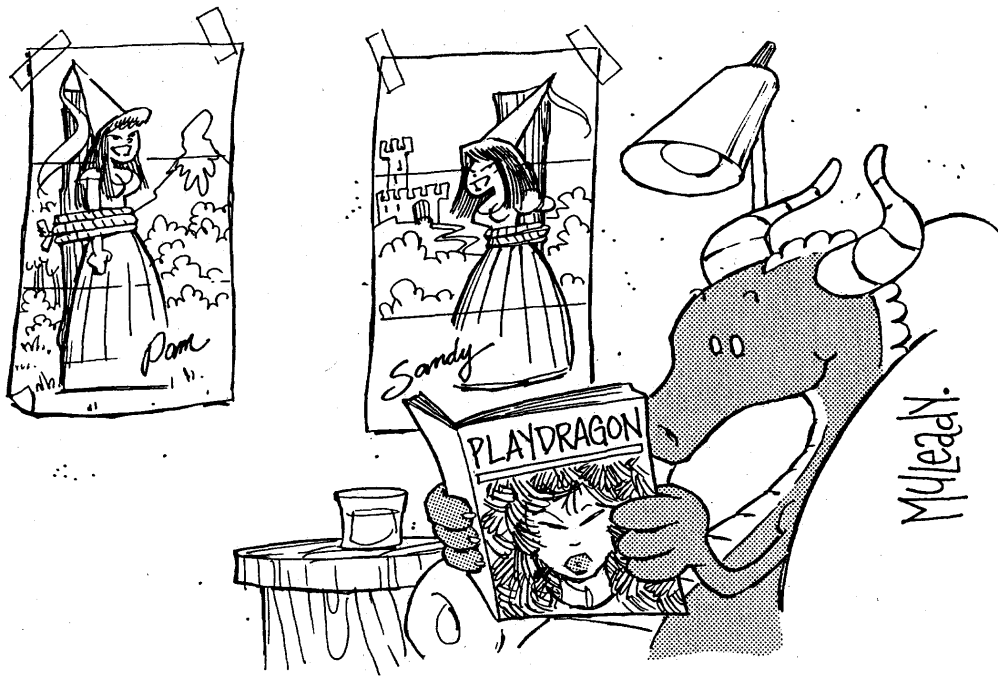


by Mike Taylor



by Richard Tomasic





SNARFQUEST

#57

EVERYBODY IN,
WE'RE OUTTA HERE!

I'M GOING TO KEEP EFFIM UP
FRONT WITH US.

YEEEEEE HAAAAA!!

WAAA

HEY,
LOOK!

STOP!

SCREEEEEECH

WE MADE IT... DA GREAT
YUKETOOTH MOUNTAIN RANGE
AND DERE'S GOLD!!

I MUST CHECK
THE MAP,
SOMETHING IS
NOT RIGHT!

THE MOUNTAINS
LOOK PRETTY
SMALL TO ME.

BUT LOOK, TEL,
IT'S GOLD...
HUMMM, SORT
OF LIGHT FOR
GOLD.

SOMETHING FUNNY
IS GOING ON...

... TALKING ROPES,
TINY MOUNTAINS,
LIGHT GOLD.

IT'S PAINT!
FAKE GOLD.

DIE MONSTER!

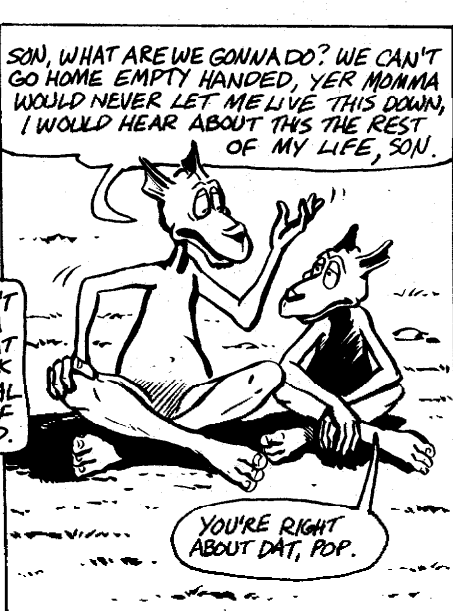
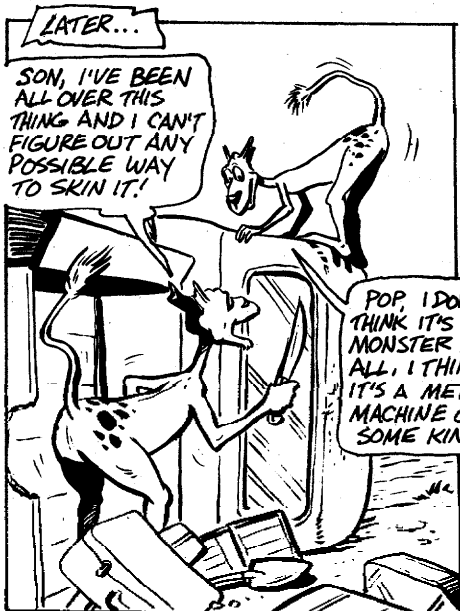
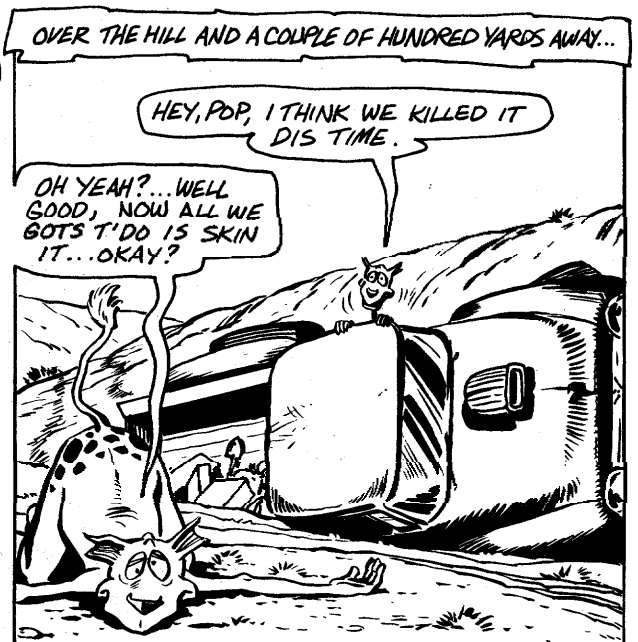
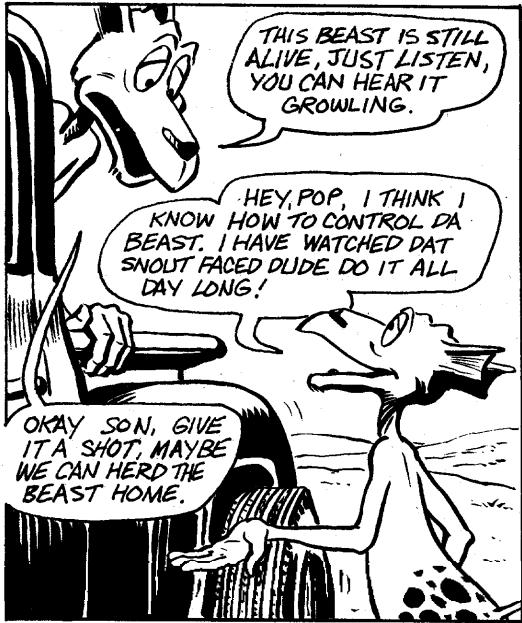
WHAM

HUH?

WHAM
WHAM

WHAT DA?





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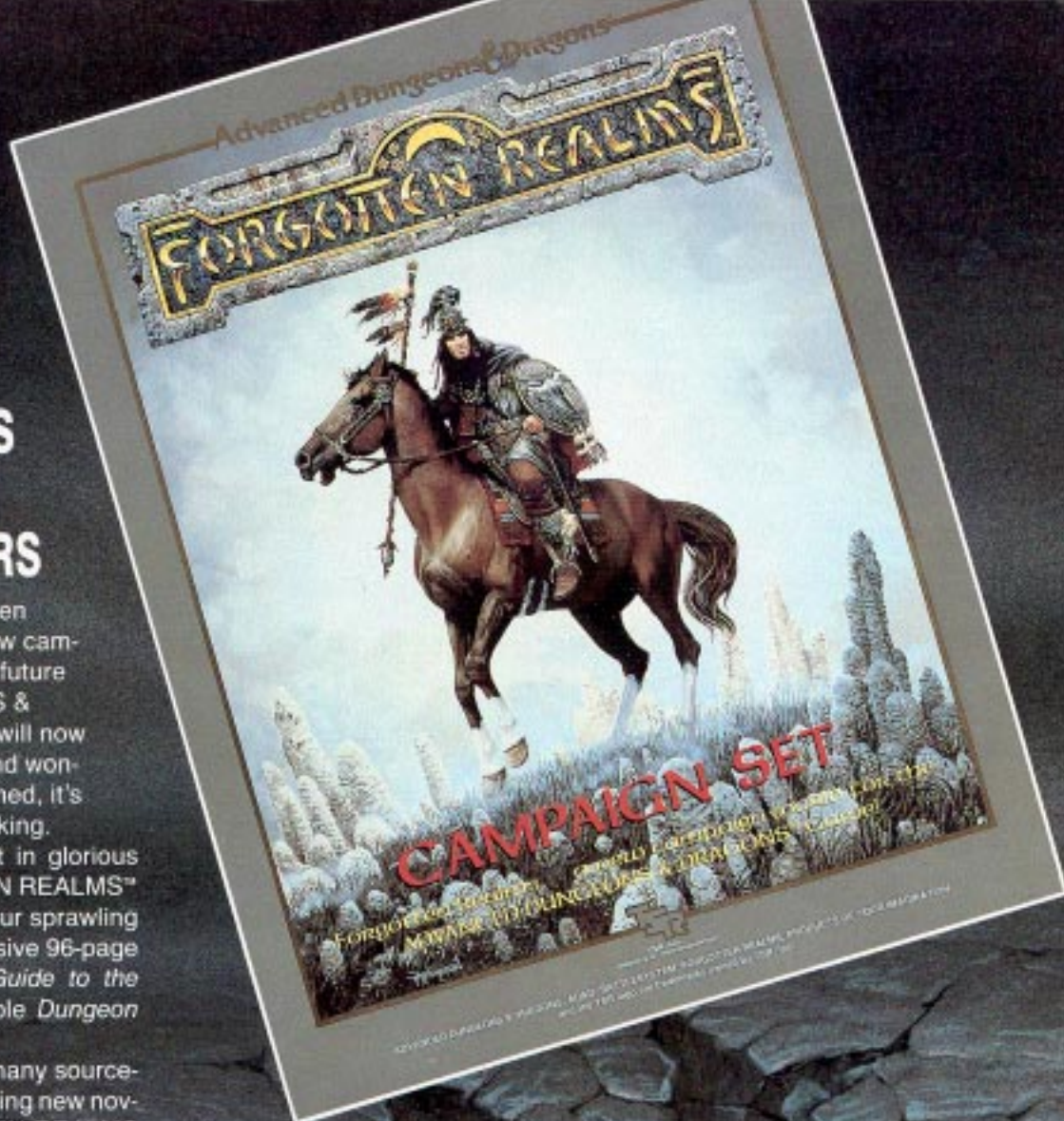
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The illustration depicts a group of soldiers in a desert environment. In the foreground, a soldier is shown from the waist up, wearing a blue uniform, a headband, and goggles. He is holding a large, futuristic rifle. Behind him, several other soldiers in similar uniforms are visible, some holding rifles. They are standing in a field of tall grass. In the background, there are rolling hills and a large, full moon in the sky. Two bright, parallel lines of light descend from the top of the frame towards the horizon. The overall style is reminiscent of classic science fiction magazine art.

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