

Who stalk the streets are stalked as well.

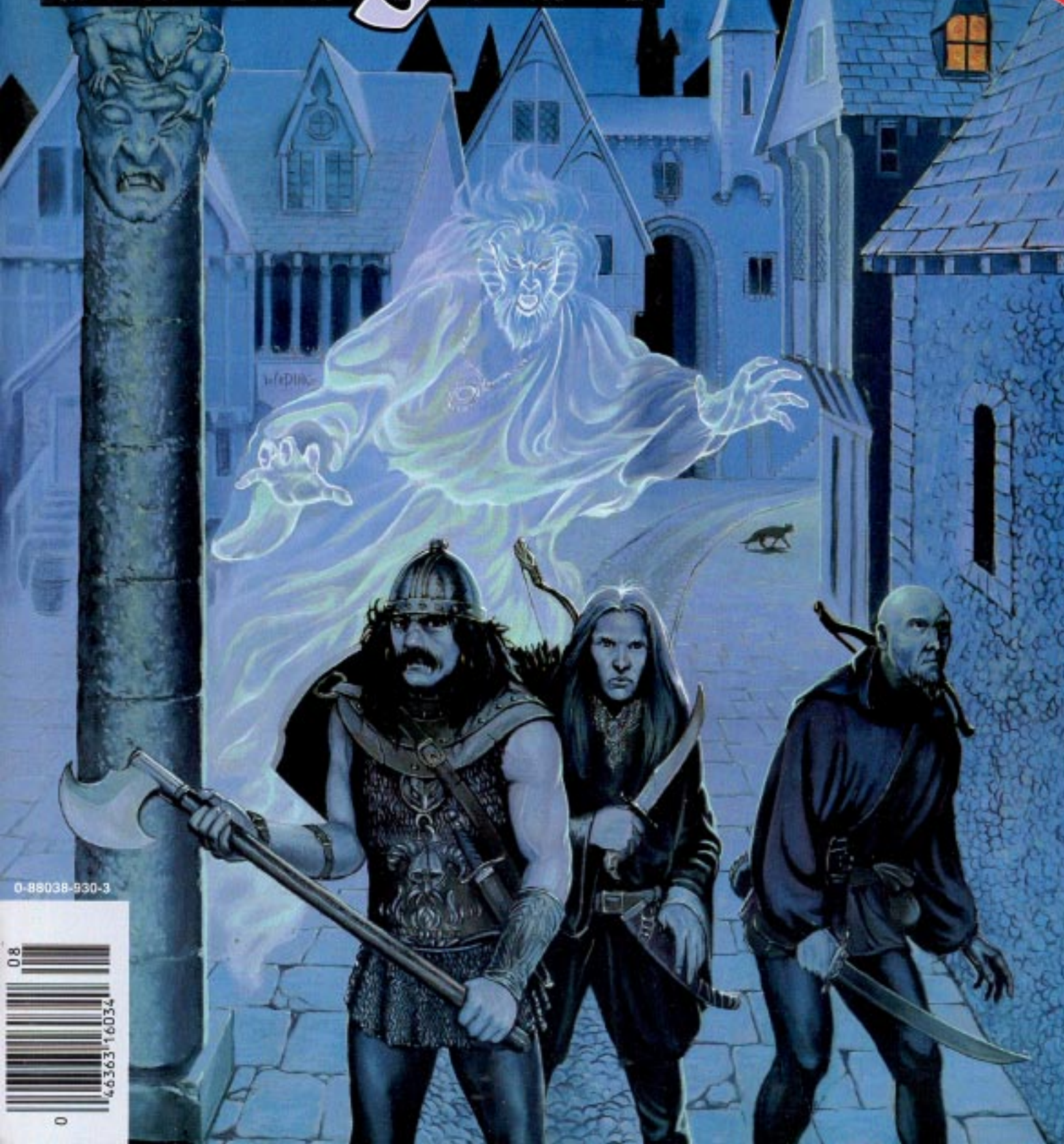
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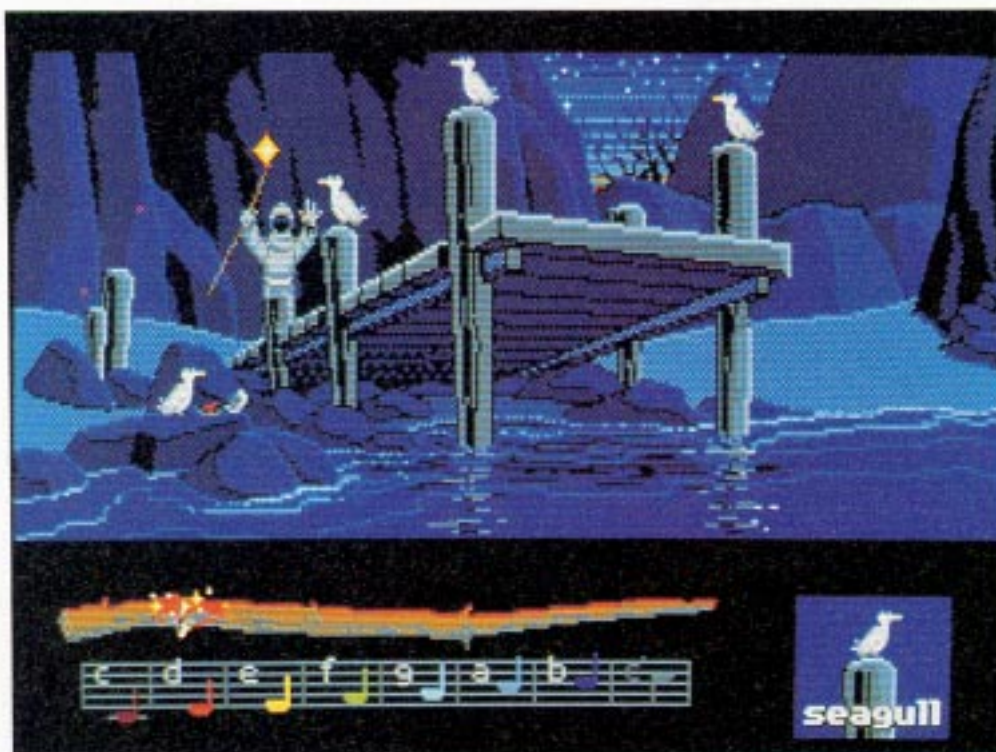
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The game is fantasy. The interface is magic.

Alone on a craggy hilltop, high above an island shrouded in perpetual mist, your quest begins. But tread gingerly, because while the world of *Loom*™ is breathtakingly beautiful, unspeakable danger awaits the unsuspecting.

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siderable experimentation, you may discover the power to see in the dark. Or weave straw into gold. And eventually find the means to leave the island itself.

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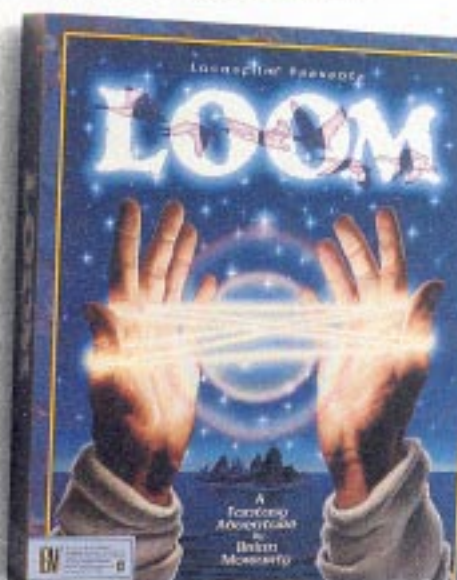
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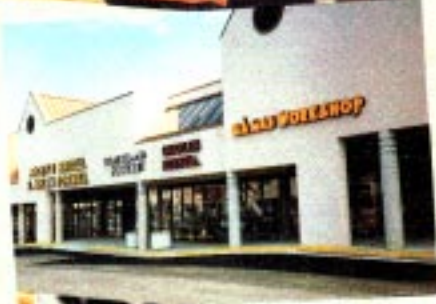


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GAMES WORKSHOP™



US STAFF RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN



Games Workshop is a rapidly expanding medium-sized company employing just over 250 staff in a relaxed but professional working environment. We need people with established skills and abilities to take positions of command and be willing to lead from the front.

The majority of people running our company are gamers but, regrettably, this in itself is not a sufficient qualification. We're looking for determined, flexible people with proven skills applicable to running a medium-sized company engaged in design, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, international shipping, retail, mail order, sales and publishing.

Ideally, applicants should also have a background in some aspect of the gaming or modelling hobby, to give us the best of both worlds: competent, experienced staff, who have both an excellent perspective on and a genuine enthusiasm for our products and our achievements in the gaming hobby.

The list of opportunities which follows is not necessarily exclusive. If you think you genuinely have something special to offer us, you should get in touch!

Assistant to the General Manager

Our American operation is run by Richard Ellard, an Englishman who has been with Citadel Miniatures and Games Workshop for quite some years now. In his time in the industry, Richard has moved through retailing, design, casting, warehouse and studio management and sourcing and purchasing roles. He is now in command of our American operation and is in serious need of an assistant with whom he can work closely. This individual will have a training and familiarization period of some weeks during which he or she will move around the various departments of the American company. The individual will then be required to share some of Richard's burden and will be flung into involvement with sourcing and purchasing, various forms of simple contract work, factory administration, staff management, the paperwork involved with shipping and progress chasing and anything else that comes along.

Appropriate experience at middle management level or higher is required, preferably in a manufacturing and shipping environment.

Retail Management and Administration

Games Workshop currently has twenty one stores in England, with several more about to open. In the U.S. we currently have only three stores, with others under negotiation, but, over the next couple of years, we hope to even up the balance, increasing the number of US stores to equal those in the U.K.

We need an individual whose sole responsibility is managing the growth and development of our American retail chain. Such an individual will be responsible for acquiring premises, recruitment, discipline and motivation of staff, administration and record keeping, sales and cash control systems, and the organisation of marketing and promotion work in the stores.

This is a very open-ended role which will be both challenging and satisfying to the right person. We require real experience in multiple retailing, though not necessarily in a games or hobby related field, and inevitably a willingness to do a great deal of travelling.

Retail and Sales Staff

This is the one category that enthusiastic gamers with no relevant work experience are invited to apply for.

Although no previous experience is necessary, it is, of course, an asset. We also require commitment, energy and the ability to retain sufficient perspective to usefully apply your enthusiasm to your daily work.

Retail certainly isn't a cosy corner to hide in where you can browse through game products and chat to customers all day - it's a dynamic working environment with real potential for personal and career growth. It's also an ideal entry point into a career with Games Workshop, either continuing as a retail or sales professional or moving into other departments. Prospects are excellent for the right people; many of our existing managerial staff joined us at this level.

Games Workshop continues to expand in the United States and is now the dominant force in the American hobby games industry. Our intention is to recruit a strong cadre of American staff around which to build a bigger and better organisation. We need people with the right degree of expertise and enthusiasm to continue Games Workshop's growth through the '90s and beyond.

Successful applicants will take part in a short training program working on phone sales and in our Fairfax store to familiarize them with the company. Initially, they will be based in Baltimore but, in the case of retail staff, will then be relocated to one of our new stores. We are currently opening stores in Pennsylvania, Maryland and California.

Factory Management

We intend to start manufacturing our range of metal miniatures and possibly some of our plastic components in the United States at the earliest opportunity.

We already have casting equipment installed in our Baltimore warehouse, but this will stand idle until we can find someone to run this new department.

We require somebody who will initially start the manufacturing process at a hands-on level, working with molds and molten metal, training staff and gradually building the department.

We hope to find someone who will then be able to move on to manage and control the whole casting and molding process and the staff involved.

Supervisory experience in the solder or pewter casting industry is required and a prior interest in metal miniatures would be a definite advantage.

Management Trainees

This is a new scheme to induct people with maturity and relevant work experience who, over a period of some years, would

like to work their way up to middle management level with Games Workshop. Individuals are likely to be attached to all areas of the American company, working in sales, retail, and on the factory floor.

Essentially, we're looking for people who want an opportunity to prove themselves suitable to a management career with Games Workshop.

Games Designers, Editors and Miniatures Sculptors

Such is the massive demand for new Games Workshop miniatures and game systems that we can't recruit too many staff in this category. The gaming market is clamouring for new Games Workshop products, and we could certainly market and sell a great deal more than we do at the moment. We're very keen to recruit talented individuals to produce work of the high quality that we and our customers demand.

Regrettably, we're not able to train individuals in the United States, so it's no good talking to us unless you already have a strong track record and can demonstrate a considerable level of skill and ability in your chosen field.

We hope to build a US Design Studio in Maryland around energetic and self-motivated individuals. These people will work on existing Games Workshop systems and create brand new games tailored to the American market.

Working for Games Workshop can give you security and a career structure that you never expected to find in this industry.

If you're interested in any of the above positions, then we need to see a resume. You may wish to ring Richard Ellard (301-644-1400) to talk through your individual situation and qualifications. If you do ring, be sure you can leave a phone number at which Richard can get back to you, as he won't necessarily be available at the time of your call! Once he's seen your resume, we'll need you to come up to Baltimore for an interview by Richard and, in the case of more senior positions, also by our President, Bryan Ansell, who spends approximately half of his time in our American office.

Games Workshop Inc. is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

These positions are only open to individuals currently residing in the United States who are legally eligible for employment in the USA. We cannot transfer residents of the UK to America to work for us.

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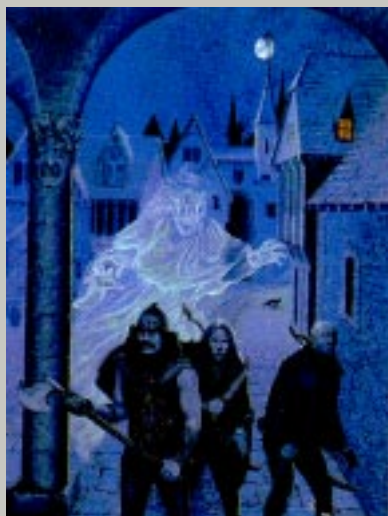
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and U.K. advertising
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COVER

It isn't Halloween, but that isn't going to help the three adventurers in Ken Widing's cover for this issue. Our theme is on city life and city lowlife, as noted above—but one should pay attention to a city's un-life as well.

LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

Can we play?

Dear Dragon:

My parents are very skeptical about allowing me to play the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. Although I play several other RPGs, they still will not allow me to play this one. My sister, her boyfriend, and I had been playing for two weeks when my father said we could not play any longer. Even after reading the editorial "Equal time" in issue #134, we are still not allowed to play this game. I have written to you hoping you could provide me with more facts about this matter, thus allowing us to play.

Name withheld by editor
Stephenville TX

You didn't mention the reasons why you are not allowed to play the D&D® game. I'm aware that some parents feel it is a bad influence, but perhaps that's not the issue here. If it is, and your parents are agreeable to reading other material on gaming, you could show them the editorial in DRAGON issue #158, "Mica Antelope," and the editorial in issue #151, "Laying the blame." The two articles by Tracy Hickman and Frank Mentzer that are cited at the end of the latter editorial would make excellent reading.

But perhaps you should also read the second point I make in issue #151's editorial, on page 86: Be reasonable. If your parents say no to playing the D&D game, you should abide by their decision. Being a parent myself, I'm not inclined to feed arguments in someone else's family. Besides, you mentioned that you are allowed to play other RPGs, and there are many excellent ones on the market that have good support.

Too much punch

Dear Dragon:

I have a question about Janne Jarvinen's "Wrestling With Style," in issue #156. The author discusses the different types of unarmed combat that were used by the Greeks. The thing that bothers me is the damage inflicted by the various styles. A boxer gets three attacks per round and does 1-8 hp damage per attack (as much as a long sword). This means that a boxer can inflict up to 24 hp of punching damage in one round! This doesn't even count the various weapons that can be used. I find this a little too much to believe. The AD&D® 2nd Edition rules

state that punching damage is 1-3 hp damage per hit. What causes the vast difference in damage results, or is this a printing mistake?

Also, what is the meaning of the Special Maneuvers column on the chart? What do the numbers mean after each attack?

Scott Clark
Teaneck NJ

Hmm. Your editors seem to have missed that inconsistency. I see no problem in reducing the damage to 1-3 hp per punch, or to whatever level you feel is appropriate. We'll keep an eye on that in the future.

Special maneuvers are extraordinary actions explained in the AD&D 1st Edition volume Oriental Adventures, on page 102.

Everyone knows...

Dear Dragon:

In DRAGON Magazine articles and in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game material alike, I've noticed something about a certain perspective from which this material is written. It seems that TSR always assumes that the active DM in a gaming group is the only one familiar with the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Monstrous Compendium*. TSR assumes that the all-powerful DM has a knowledge of the game that goes beyond the average player in the group. This isn't so! *Everyone* I know who plays the AD&D® or other games has a basic working knowledge of the gaming system and has both played and DMed an equal amount of times. Honestly, anyone who plays is definitely going to want as much gaming material as he can get his hands on. Am I missing something? Is there supposed to be a permanent acting DM while players are forbidden to buy new DM material? It seems inevitable that players will see a lot of DM info. What fantasy fan wouldn't want to?

Jason Weleby
Oakdale NY

Many DMs do have a broader working knowledge of the game rules than their players simply because the position requires such knowledge in order to construct and run adventures. In practice (as you point out), more than one person may serve as the DM for a group, so lots of people might be familiar with the contents of the DMG. I see this as a good thing, as do you, and I doubt that many people would want to ban players from buying and reading the books and materials used for gaming—so long as reading such materials does not destroy the fun of playing the adventures. I wouldn't want players to thumb through the Monstrous Compendium in search of a way to kill a certain monster that their PCs had just met, and I certainly wouldn't want the players to buy and read the module I was running. But this is an issue separate from basic familiarity with the game rules, which should be encouraged.

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EDITORIAL

Microbursts

The first thing I did after getting back from vacation last night was to play back the messages on my answering machine. The first call was from Dale Donovan, who told me that DUNGEON® Adventures had just captured the 1989 ORIGINS™ Award for best professional adventure gaming magazine. The second call was from Barbara Young, who told me that a freak 110 MPH storm (called a microburst) had damaged the building in Streamwood, Ill., that houses the typesetter for DUNGEON Adventures. This latter problem was aggravated when the police had to evacuate the area because of natural-gas leaks.

Happily, thanks to the heroic efforts of everyone involved, DUNGEON issue #25 will still be out on time (it won an award, after all). The following are a few other microbursts for your reading enjoyment:

Fantasy "Baseball" Cards: This issue contains an experimental selection of trading cards showing characters from both the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ and the DRAGONLANCE® fantasy settings. Cut them out, look them over, and write to their originator (James M. Ward) with your comments.

GENies & Dragons: If you have a computer modem and have been logging into the GENie bulletin-board system lately, you may have seen a lot of gaming articles and news items in the TSR area on page 125 (on the BBS, not in this magazine), including certain articles that have appeared in recent issues of DRAGON® Magazine. We'll have more articles uploaded for you, but we can use only materials copyrighted by TSR, Inc. (so the review columns won't be appearing, but lots of AD&D® and D&D® game articles are there).

We Goofed: The lower photo on page 89 of DRAGON issue #156 is actually from the SSI game *War of the Lance*, not *Champions of Krynn*. Also, the clue for *Hillsfar* on page 70 of issue #152 is for *Heroes of the Lance*. Finally, again in issue #156, the article "Can You Swim? Juggle? At the Same Time?" had references to a couple of tables that were not used in the final version of the article; please ignore those references.

Time Warps: Steve Hunter, of Gateshead, England, wrote in reference to my editorial in DRAGON issue #155. He said: "It appears that not only does my



Artwork by Jeff Easley

DRAGON [issue] have to cross the Atlantic, but it also has to cross between dimensions, as Roger and I live in alternate history worlds. . . . In my world, Cromwell *did* win the English Civil War, finally defeating the Royalists at the battle of Naseby (14 June 1645) and beheading King Charles I (30 January 1649) to prove it." Okay, I'm embarrassed now. Thanks, Steve. I'll check the books next time.

Editor Abuse: Editor abuse is a favorite soapbox topic of mine. I'm not speaking here of the usual sorts of editor abuse, in which your friends spread horrible rumors about you and your haircut, or put sheets of plastic-bubble excelsior under your wheeled chair so it sounds like millions of people popping gum whenever you move your seat, or else hold you down while forcing you to look at their plastic bug collections (all of which have

recently happened to me). No, I'm talking about abuse like the following:

Gamer: "You know, I used to read DRAGON Magazine, but I don't read it anymore. It's not like it used to be."

Me: "Well, what did it used to be like?"

Gamer: "Different. I dunno."

Me (trying different tack): "What would you like to see in the magazine now?"

Gamer: "More interesting stuff."

Me (desperate): "What sorts of interesting stuff?"

Gamer: "I dunno."

Me (crazed): "What do you not like about the magazine?"

Gamer: "It's not like it used to be."

Me: "AAAAAAAGGGHH!!!"

This sort of scene is repeated at least once a month and maybe a dozen times at major conventions. I have some suggestions to make:

First, please understand that everyone on the editorial staff cares about our magazines. We listen to all complaints and give them all the consideration we can. That's our job.

Second, make your criticisms specific. If you hate articles on Goblins & Glaciers, but you'd love to see articles on Spawn of the Space Yuppies, then say so. If you'd like more or fewer cartoons, more or less color, or more or less of anything else, then be as specific as you can in telling us what you do and do not want to see in your magazine. We listen all the more carefully then.

Third, remember that some things are not in the editors' control. If you have a gripe about TSR that has nothing to do with the magazines, you can tell us about it but we won't be able to help you. Questions, praise, and criticism concerning TSR's games or game conventions should really be directed elsewhere.

This is not a plea for you to say only nice things about the magazine. We are seriously interested in feedback, and your comments have helped. We recognize the importance of the comic pages and reviews in DRAGON Magazine because of reader feedback, and we are well in touch with certain touchy issues because of the same feedback (e.g., demons & devils in gaming, AD&D 1st Edition vs. 2nd Edition games, and anti-gaming prejudice). This magazine is your sounding board through the "Letters" and "Forum" columns, and it offers gaming material created by you, the gaming public, for the use of everyone else. We want you to have the best.

Help fight editor abuse. The only donation you need make is a few minutes of thought on a comment or suggestion. Once we have that, the rest is easy. Thanks!

Roger Moore

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The City Never Sleeps





The Enemy at the Gates

The defense of cities
in a magical realm

by James R. Collier

Artwork by Terry Dykstra



Lankhmar. Minas Tirith. Sanctuary. These are familiar names to the readers of fantasy fiction. What world would be complete without its ancient metropolises steeped in mystery and forgotten magic?

So, too, are major cities needed in a fantasy role-playing game campaign world. They provide magic shops, outfitters, moneychangers, and jewelers for the adventurers. They contain inns and taverns in which to meet mysterious strangers. They contain potential hirelings and henchmen. They provide stable points of reference for the campaign.

However, few of the cities in present FRPG campaigns would reasonably survive 10 days in their worlds, much less 10 centuries. A tower-studded wall keeps out humans but would not stop a derro raid from below or a dragon swooping down from above. The AD&D® game world is not the world of medieval Europe; Constantinople was never menaced by foes that flew, *teleported*, burrowed, or turned *invisible*. A city in a campaign world must have defenses that are complete and overwhelming in order for the metropolis to survive for centuries.

This article covers the defenses of typical fantasy cities. The methods of attack that might be used against them (and the defenses used to counter them) are described, as are the duties and placement of character classes, aerial and underground defenses, mundane surface defenses, and other defenses a city might have. Optional city designs are detailed, with the dangers they face and the defenses they need.

Lay a magical siege

Every student of warfare knows that the most difficult, most costly, and usually least successful type of warfare is the siege. An intelligently created and maintained city can withstand assaults for years without falling. Surely, with the addition of magic, there is no reasonable way to attack a fortified city, right? Wrong. There are many things the general of an AD&D game army can do to crush a city besides ordering his barbarians up the ladders.

In general, a city can be attacked in three ways: from above, from surface level, and from below. In a fantasy world, we can add the Ethereal and Astral planes. Invaders can *teleport* in or walk in *invisibly*. Siege is now simply the extended use of one or more of the above methods of attack while waiting for the city's supplies to run out.

To start with, look at the place of siege engines in a world where artillery can be carried in a wand case. Why build a catapult when a hill giant is available?

The first answer is money. A catapult

only costs 200 gp. A hill giant will probably grab everything he can find and leave the first chance he gets, or else become greedier over time.

The second answer is ammunition. A giant hurls only rocks. A catapult, on the other hand, hurls whatever you put on it. Let's say that before the siege, our general sent out a cohort or two to the nearby Troll Mountains to bring back trolls (captives, of course). Once obtained, the trolls are temporarily paralyzed with *hold monster* spells, then shot over the wall into the city. They'll recover quickly from their wounds, to the detriment of the defenders. Other amusing catapult loads include carefully wrapped gas spores, puddings, oozes, green slimes, and jellies. A large sack full of rot grubs might prove interesting as well.

The third answer is loyalty. The catapult won't talk back. Obviously, siege engines have their advantages.

Magic has some advantages, too. Picks and rams can break through the city's walls and gates, of course, but the general of a fantastic army has several other options. Readers of *The Lord of the Rings* may remember the siege of Isengard, in which the ents made short work of the walls by sinking roots into them and growing. A growing plant can break concrete, given time. Why not get a few vine sprouts, plant them next to the wall, and cast *plant growth* spells on them? While the defenders are mistakenly waiting for siege engines, their walls could be crumbling. *Animal growth*, cast on *charmed* burrowing animals, could make a few holes as well. *Charmed* umber hulks are a thought. If the general can requisition a denzelian from some miners, that might help, too.

On the inside, the attackers may have spies and traitors who could open up a passage into the city or demoralize the defenders into surrendering. More sieges have been lost by betrayal from within than by fighters without. A mage could *polymorph* into a fly, go over the wall, and return to normal, ready to open the gate. He could do the same thing astrally, or he could *teleport*. A secret society, set up beforehand, would be worth 10 times its number on the outside. Members could spread rumors and fires, assassinate important NPCs, start revolutionary movements¹, supply information to the forces outside, and even contaminate the water.

Troops to boot

Troops on both sides of urban warfare come in several types. First are the personal contingents of high-level characters and important personages such as priests, guildmasters, merchants, and so on. These

troops sometimes form the heart of a city's defense, though they can be troublesome. Readers familiar with *Romeo and Juliet* remember several scenes in which personal contingents came into conflict. There is also the possibility of a traitorous lord and his army creating havoc in a city. Many articles have been written about troop types for high-level characters². Nonetheless, most personal troops are worth all the trouble they took to assemble and maintain when wartime comes.

Personal troops are often led by or consist entirely of NPCs with multiple levels in their classes, usually the fighter class. Cities that are not run by emperors, kings, or nobility are highly unlikely to have cavaliers or similar noble warriors of any level residing there. Similarly, such warriors will not serve under just anyone in the field. An army that is not commanded by a famous general or a royal personage would not have contingents of knights. In these cases, the army will be made up of mercenaries, mostly zero-level humans, under fighter-type officers.

A second troop type consists of elite guards, usually the standing army of the city or besieging force. This also includes the town watch—the town “police” who are often well trained, fanatically loyal, and well armed. The city guard would logically attempt to stock up on any magical items that come on the market, concentrating on weapons, armor, and devices that can be used by any class. As a result, city defenders would be better armed and equipped than most NPCs. Very ancient cities will have had generations in which to store up arms, so that even the men-at-arms will have *swords* + 1, and *all* the archers' arrows will be magical.

Third are the mercenaries, fighters for hire. With the massive wealth a city possesses, help can be hired that a mere fighter lord could never hope to get. If well paid and carefully monitored, mercenaries can be invaluable.

Keep in mind that whether the ruler is chaotic evil or lawful good, the city itself is often lawful neutral in character; the city's governors must be considered trustworthy and capable of keeping treaties. With this in mind, we see that troops are not limited to humans and demihumans, or even to good beings. City mercenaries may include orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, lizard men, or any race that is willing to serve. Racial difficulties can be solved by the separation of rival groups, having them form up with “buffers” of human troops between them.

Fourth are allied troops. Alliances with other cities, tribes, and races should be a common occurrence in a fantasy world. The aid of other races in certain situations

may be vital. Help provided from allies can include troops, aid in construction, and relief columns in times of siege.

Lawful races such as dwarves and hobgoblins are the most likely ones to ally with a city. Chaotic races like elves would likely change their minds with the first change in government, while gnolls and bugbears would conveniently forget their treaties the next time an opportunity for treachery presented itself. Naturally, tyrants will find it easier to ally with hobgoblins than with dwarves, but both groups will probably honor an agreement no matter who is in charge at the time, assuming the treaty is still in effect.

Not all alliances need be with demi-humans and humanoids. Even individual monsters would make useful allies (who would turn away a helpful dragon?). Powerful creatures such as ottyughs could provide specialized help. The swamp on your flank that discourages human foes from assault would do nothing to prevent a lizard man or orc attack. A swamp loving monster should then be hired to keep out invaders.

Finally, in times of siege or attack, the levy may be called out. All able-bodied citizens will be given arms if they do not already own arms. They will be organized around any fighters above 1st level and will include foreigners who have been drafted. Members of neutral nations will serve in their own noncombatant units or levies. The levied troops, while not as well armed or trained as the previous types, should not always be considered cannon fodder³.

Rangers and barbarians will never be a regular part of a city's defenses, but will fight as partisans outside the walls if they fight at all. (Barbarians might even join the invaders!)

Surface defenses

Most attacks against a city will be launched on the surface or have a surface component. The methods of attack and defense generally follow the methods used in our world, with the addition of tactics that could only occur in a fantasy world:

We'll assume a fantasy city will be guarded by walls studded with towers and gates, as in medieval times. To meet the challenge of giant and dragon attacks, however, these defenses must be much stronger and more magic resistant.

To start with, the city could be built on one hill, like Minas Tirith, or on a series of hills, like Rome. As the city expands, new outer walls will be built. To make the most of their potential, the rings of city walls should become higher as they approach the city center. The increased height gives all the defenders a view of the attackers (necessary for line-of-sight spells). The

defenders will also be able to shoot down onto an outer wall that has been taken, so long as the walls are not too far apart.

Each wall will be fairly thick, most likely being baked-mud brick faced with stone, in order to have the mass and strength to withstand giant-hurled boulders and to have the thickness to overcome *disintegrate* spells. The stone might be *stone shaped* into a solid mass. Rich cities might also have *protection from normal missiles* and *permanency* cast on each section of the wall as it is built.

A wall can have two "stories," the second one often a temporary structure called a hoarding that is built when a siege seems likely. It is usually made of wood and extends over the edge of the wall so that objects can be dropped on attackers. Magical defenses against fire and missiles can be added to the hoarding when it is built. Fighters and clerics will man the hoardings, dropping the usual boiling oil and rocks, and the not-so-usual holy/unholy water, monster acid, and potions.

Cities that can afford or require it may have permanent hoardings. These will be made of stone and magically protected as is the wall. In addition to fighters and clerics, caryatid columns, stone golems, and similar monsters could be set, ready to fight an invader.

Whether permanent or temporary, the hoarding is where the hand-to-hand combat will be waged. Where in our world the siege deck—the bit of standing space at the top of the wall where the defenders stand—is only a couple of feet wide, the deck of our city will be several yards wide, the thickness of the wall. A flying opponent could sweep defenders off a narrow ledge, and a rampaging giant will require a concentration of attackers to repel him.

Archers can man the second story, firing through slits and protected by the wall. Most of the battle will be fought by them and by the spell-casters, so they will need the protection.

Towers can be set in the walls every 100' or so, each with permanent hoardings. Their roofs can be reinforced and studded with stakes to prevent large things from landing on them. The towers could have two stories, the top for magic-users and the lower one for archers. Below the second floor, a staircase can lead down to the wall's second floor; the rest of the tower will be solid.

Each wall can have as many as 4-6 gates, each defended by a gatehouse. Gatehouses are miniature castles with storerooms, arsenals, and garrisons. The main corridor can have a portcullis at each end and murder holes in the ceiling to rain flaming oil, darts, and other lethal things down on those inside. Gatehouses, since they control mundane traffic into the city, might

have illusionists to search out contraband, spies, and smugglers. The senior illusionist on duty will always have a *maze* spell available to stop people attempting to escape.

Special defenses can be quite varied. Rust monsters could be kept handy to search for hidden weapons. Stone golems, stone guardians, and caryatid columns would line the corridors to provide instant reinforcements.

The outer wall is never the edge of the city; there will always be small groups of dwellings, inns, shops, and farms just outside the gates. When these groups have spread and met, a new wall is usually begun. A wall less than 80% complete will not be manned.

A city might have siege engines like catapults and similar weapons for the same reasons as the attackers have them, but it might not have as many. There is limited space available on the walls and towers; given the choice between compact magical devices and bulky mechanical ones, the latter would lose. There is also a matter of keeping face. The City of the Golden Towers might not want to be defended by mere mechanical contrivances, nor would it want its rivals to think that the city's magic could run out and that mundane devices were needed to support them. A strong show of magical force turns away many an invasion.

Finally, a strong city may have sufficient magical weaponry to render little need for siege engines. The size of a city and its age will determine how much "siege magic" has been acquired. The siege engines of a small, young city will be 95% mechanical; those of the oldest and largest cities will be only 25% mechanical.

Death from above

One of the major differences between our medieval world and the AD&D campaign worlds is the presence of flying opponents. The *Monstrous Compendium* contains many flying creatures that make potential mounts or raiders. An image that comes to mind is the scene from the movie *Dragonslayer*, in which the dragon Vermithrax swoops down on a village, breathing fire. A few attacks, of this sort would certainly stimulate the survivors to find effective defenses against air attacks. Our ancestors sitting in their fortresses may have imagined dragons, but they certainly made no preparation against them or against flying invaders in general. We must assume the same defenses against aerial warfare will exist in fantasy as in our own world: early warning, shelters, fighter cover, and anti-aircraft weapons.

Early warning is the art of seeing all aerial invaders at a distance, 24 hours a day, cheaply. Since magic is always at a

premium, many fantasy-based early warning systems will be outposts that do not use magic. Little towers and castles will keep watch for signs in the sky and report any sightings to the city. Mirrors, watch fires, semaphore, lamps, and trained birds can all be used to make reports. So can their absence: A tower might send a pigeon every day if all is well, and withhold it if not. This prevents the enemy from intercepting a warning. Clerics could raise flocks of birds and use *speak to animals* to train and interrogate them⁴.

The final line of early-warning defense must be detection spells, used constantly and painstakingly. You can never tell if a bee might be a *polymorphed* mage, or even an ancient red dragon. *Detect magic*, *true seeing*, and *detect illusion* go a long way toward keeping the city safe. Devices such as *eyes of the eagle*, *crystal balls*, and *gems of seeing* should also be put to use. If by chance the city has an oracle or oracular shrine, this too will be employed.

Shelters should be provided for public defense against bombardment by catapults, arrows, hailstones, lightning, and so on. They should also protect the populace

against wind storms, heat waves, cold waves, rain, snow, and (as much as possible) firestorms and earthquakes. Normal reinforced dwellings will be sufficient for most purposes, but a convenient cavern or dungeon system would help.

Fighter cover in the air cannot be ignored. Magic is great, but even in a great city, the supply of magical carpets, brooms, and other flying devices will be limited, and mages will probably fill their third-level spell slots with *fireball* rather than *fly* spells.

However, chivalrous orders of paladins and cavaliers can raise and train various flying animals and monsters, such as giant birds (rocs), pegasi, griffons, and hippogriffs. The forces could attack aerial enemies or use their mounts to move them behind enemy lines for a rear ground assault supported by their mounts (griffons would love the chance to eat enemy horses). Hastily raised aerial levies could be given instructions, a few giant eagles, and whatever *animal growth* and *charm* spells are available.

The mainstay of the air defense, though, will be big, powerful creatures like drag-

ons. What do adventurers do with dragon eggs? Sell them in the city. What happens to the eggs there? Well, they might become dragon omelets for the nobility, but it's unlikely. It's far more likely that the eggs will be hatched and raised by the city as part of its armed forces. The city will prefer lawful dragons, of course, or at worst neutral ones. As a result, these dragons will be far different from those found in the wild. They will have good educations in combat and magic, from books, sages, and possibly subdued dragons bought from adventurers. A wild dragon might know a few tricks, but a city dragon will have been taught every trick in the book. Magic use will always be present and will consist of the best spells, learned from subdued dragons or even from hired gold and silver dragon tutors. And, as has been pointed out in several articles, dragons can make use of magical items⁵; city dragons will have a selection of the best.

The only ray of sunshine for the besieger is the youth of the dragon. Only the

Continued on page 20

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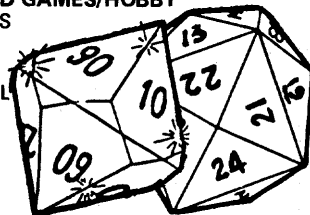
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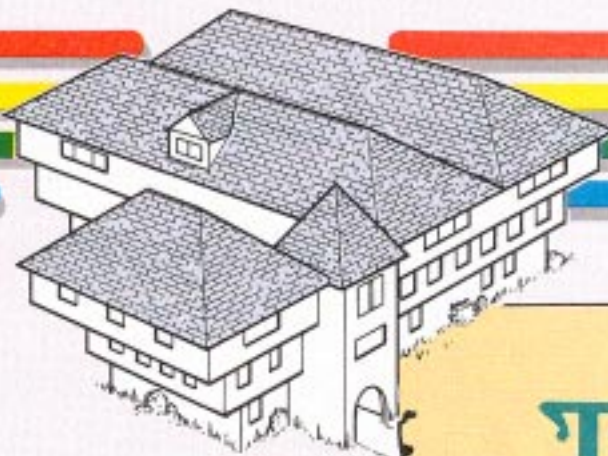

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The Last Call Inn:
Isometric View

by Willie Walsh

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The first stop in all urban adventures

THE LAST CALL INN



The AD&D® 1st Edition Players Handbook has this to say on page 101:

"Cities, towns and sometimes even large villages provide the setting for highly interesting, informative, and often hazardous affairs and incidents. Even becoming an active character in a campaign typically requires interaction with the populace of the habitation, locating quarters, buying supplies and equipment, seeking information. . . . There are usually beggars, bandits, and drunks to be dealt with. . . . The taverns house many potential helpful or useful characters, but they also contain clever and dangerous adversaries."

When a party of adventurers seeks any of the aforementioned services, it turns to the tavern or inn that the Dungeon Master has placed in his fantasy town specifically for this purpose. Having acquired accommodations and spent time and a few gold pieces at the inn, the player characters move on to their next exciting adventure—often as a result of information received in this inn. Although the PCs may return quite often to the same accommodations while the district is interesting, the inn is usually ill defined and glossed over by players and referee alike.

This article sets out to provide a realistic, vivid, and exciting setting that may be used by the DM to flesh out his campaign. The Last Call Inn's game statistics, floor plans, and NPC descriptions may be used in any number of modules. While this article suggests its use as the basis for short scenarios and is similar to a module in format and design, it is not meant as an adventure in itself. It can, however, be used to spice up the periods of rest and training between episodic adventures. These times, when some members of the party of PCs are inactive while waiting for others, may be made more entertaining than hearing the DM say "Okay, your three weeks go by without anything unusual happening."

The AD&D game has its origins in a number of historical and fantasy settings. It would be a mistake to name one time period or one author's works or world as being the best or the most easily played environment. A lot of leeway is given to the DM in creating his campaign world, but certain consistencies and rules must be observed when creating such an environment. A glance at the weapons tables in the *Player's Handbook* indicates a pronounced medieval bias (since balanced by inclusions such as *Oriental Adventures*). The armor, equipment, and character classes most commonly used in play are of this time period—a period whose exact boundaries are blurred and to which modern authors' monsters, magic, and races have been added.

Given the strong medieval flavor of the

game, I have chosen this setting for the inn we shall look at later. But before we reach this section, an understanding of this period is needed before creation of our inn commences.

Historical sources tell us that medieval buildings were of a rather perishable quality. Few were built of stone or brick, as the expense of such construction was far beyond the means of most of the common people. The hazards of flooding or fire (e.g., the Great Fire of London), destruction from storm or other natural disasters, and the low quality of materials used in construction meant that the average peasant hut or house would last no more than about 30 years before having to be entirely rebuilt.

The richer elements of society could afford to build in more durable materials and were often obliged to do so if they were to survive neighborhood quarrels. Thus the manors, churches, and taverns (who all "looked after" the disposal of what little income people had left over) could be stonecrafted, allowing many of their number to survive until today.

With the advent of coach transport and the increase of travelers, the next logical step for the tavern was for it to be enlarged to an inn. In a fantasy setting, an inn could be used by unusual travelers, with provisions made for uncommon forms of transport (griffins, for instance). Quarters for fantastic animals would be placed well away from regular stables.

For the most part, an inn in a fantasy setting would follow the same criteria as in history. It would be situated at a point where it was usual for a traveler to stop off on some long journey such as a crusade, pilgrimage, or adventure. If it took two days to travel from one point to another, an entrepreneurial innkeeper might place his establishment midway between the two sites to create an irresistible stop-over.

An inn, as opposed to a plain tavern, combined both food and accommodations with the comforts of the drinking house. In areas where travelers were numerous, an inn could be both large and prosperous. It would be unseemly for a member of the aristocracy to mingle with common people, so separate quarters were often made available for their needs in much the same way as modern hotels have suites of varying luxury and service. Luxury, however, could merely be the addition of a window or the presence of thick, sound-proofed walls.

The bulk of the inn's constant income, however, would come from local customers. The peasants and laborers who could afford it would meet in the inn or the tavern after a long workday to drink and discuss local issues of particular inter-

est to them—the weather, politics, the price of crops, the latest rise in rent—or to listen to the tales of a local storyteller or news from a stranger. The tavern, whether situated in an inn or not, was the meeting place and forum of the people where they could air their views and argue points. Little notice was ever given to any grievance made by a commoner against any of the higher caste, so most of what was said remained just talk. But sometimes a feud between neighbors could erupt into brawling (or worse) in the tavern.

It has been estimated that the average amount of drink imbibed by the average peasant was up to 16 pints per day! This may seem an extraordinary amount of alcohol, and we may be led to dismiss it either as being physically or economically impossible. However, it is true for three reasons. First, in an age where livestock was allowed to roam freely, water was often polluted and unsafe for human consumption. Alcohol was safer.

Second, the life of the peasant was hazardous. Born to excessive labor, the victim of famine or disease, slaughtered or pressed into service in times of almost continual war, the peasant had a very short life expectancy. Drink solved this problem to a small degree—one could drown one's sorrows for a while at least.

Third, the proliferation of liquor was boosted by its low price. It was so cheap in medieval Dublin, for example, that there was no currency small enough to use when buying it! One instead bought "tal-lies" or used some other credit system.

In AD&D games, though, alcoholic drinks are priced more reasonably, as detailed in the *Player's Handbook*. In comparison with other commoners, the inn keeper or tavern owner could thus have a lucrative income from his trade. In this respect he represents a middle class, even though by aristocratic standards he is still quite poor.

This success, especially in a town where more than one drinking house operated, would depend a lot on the reputation of the landlord and his product to maintain a steady trade. Depending how prosperous the landlord was, one could order one or more types of spirits from him. One would find food served more often in the inn than in a simple tavern, but it is not unusual for food of variable quality to be served in an ale house.

Beer, wine, and spirit prices depend on variables such as the quality of materials available, recent harvests, whether the drinks are homemade or delivered (or imported), and so on. If a landlord makes his own beverages, it is likely that he would sell liquor of differing strengths and flavor, being able to vary the taste and

alcohol content to suit both himself and his customers. A landlord doing this might have a competitive edge over a neighbor who would be receiving only one type of beverage from a supplier. Being able to sell drinks at a lower price, he could attract more customers and make a better profit. Naturally, if trade in beer, wine, and spirits is monopolized or taxed by the government, he could be breaking the law and be liable for severe penalties.

The state, national or local government may have licensing requirements whereby a tavern owner must meet certain standards prior to being given a permit for operating his bar. He might be required to serve liquor only within set hours, or he might keep an "open house" provided that a certain fee is paid to the authorities weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc. The opportunity for officials to earn money through accepting bribes or for illegal organizations to extract protection money from the landlord could make all the licensing laws effectively useless.

Alternatively, the strictures of the law and its effective policing could lead the landlord to the necessity of devising novel and original ways to get around those laws. The tavern may become a speakeasy after a certain hour, or the customers may have to move to safer premises—such as the cellar—to eliminate telltale noise or smoke.

As only some of these areas are touched on in our design for the inn, the DM may wish to consider them in the light of the structures existing in his own campaign world. Some few other considerations in game terms are dealt with in the following section.

Setting up shop

When deciding upon a site for our inn, we must first consider what size the inn shall be. The building herein is a three-story structure with two wings built of timber frames, bricks, and plaster with a sturdy slate roof. Therefore our inn, which we have named The Last Call, is large (indicating a certain prosperity on the part of the owner) and probably well frequented as it is in good repair—constant income is needed to maintain such a large building. The Last Call must be either on an important highway or at a busy port. We'll opt for the latter.

As it is situated near a port—a gateway to other lands and peoples—it can be permitted some unusual customers. The number of foreigners frequenting the inn would not be a cause of concern in the town (as might be the case in an inland area), as trade with all comers would be the norm and would be encouraged. Therefore, one could expect most of the human and demihuman races to be repre-

sented in the inn and its drinking areas.

This leaves the landlord with the problem of interracial and international animosity (a standard fixture in most fantasy settings). It is unlikely that he could afford to constantly replace broken or blood-stained furniture, so if the inn is to be cosmopolitan, some form of segregation must be made a house rule or there must be an "understanding" among the customers to discourage combat, if such is likely.

Such a large concentration of wealth and information will naturally attract certain parties. The thieves' guild will operate among the clientele, using crowded areas to cut purse strings or contact potential customers or victims. Discretion must be used to keep the inn becoming known as a dangerous place. In other words, thieving activities must be limited by the guild itself in case income dries up altogether because patrons choose to go elsewhere. It would be forbidden by the guild to carry out a killing or assassination in the inn for a similar reason. PCs who steal from or assassinate NPCs would receive warnings (at best) or enmity (at worst) from local thieves.

The inn herein has the usual two names of drinking houses everywhere. Its "official" name—that hung on the signpost—is The Last Call. But locals usually shorten or change the name to suit conversation, and in this case the inn is called Forfar's, after its owner, Meredith Forfar.

Ground Floor

The following descriptions are keyed to the ground-floor map on pages 18-19 to give you an idea of the layout and functions of each room of the inn. More detail may be added at the DM's discretion.

1. **Entrance and common room.** There are two entrances to The Last Call (see also area 14). This particular one leads into the Common Room in which customers register, obtain food or simply stop by for a drink. The *Player's Handbook* lists suitable prices for food and drink.

2. **Demihuman's bar.** As it is preferable for some races to be segregated from others (such as dwarves from elves or half-orcs), this bar is for the "minority" races. Halflings, dwarves, and gnomes enjoy the convivial atmosphere and try to outdo each other in drinking and telling tall tales.

3. **Washrooms.** These areas incorporate the latest in gnomish engineering—the flushing privy! The toilets are filled from a giant cistern in the attic that must be hand-filled once each week to maintain a constant water supply.

4. **Kitchens.** The door to this room is marked PRIVATE. Inside, the smoky atmosphere is further enriched by steam from

the stoves. Foodstuffs bought in bulk might include root crops likely to store well. Meats and fish would be brought in fresh, as travelers likely to use the inn after long journeys would not take kindly to eating more dried rations.

5. **Stairway to upper level.** These stairs lead to the next floor and continue on to the upper story where the guest rooms are.

6. **Archway.** The central "tower" structure shows up as two solid lines on the map. Above it are the private apartments of the innkeeper and his family.

7. **Entrance to apartments and beer cellar.** The locked door leads into this narrow chamber where kegs of good beer are stored (wine is found here if the inn is being used in an arid region). The steep stairs climbs to area 8.

Second Floor

8. **Landing.** This is the entrance to the innkeeper's private dwelling.

9. **Reception chamber.** If an innkeeper is obliged to deal with merchants or business inspectors, he must have a reception room, possibly containing a suitable liquor cabinet in the corner. Business carried out here could be important to his livelihood if he has to reapply for a license or permit to run his inn.

10. **Living room.** Naturally, the innkeeper would wish to relax in his own free time without being reminded of the various pressures of work. This living room would be for the use of himself or his family. A bookcase located here might contain some rare or valuable books.

11. **The obligatory broom closet.** The inn must be swept and mopped up daily if it is to maintain decent standards of hygiene. The broom closet contains pails, rags, mops, and brooms for the barmen or cleaners to tidy up whenever necessary.

12. **Stairs leading up.** The stairs here allow guests to climb to their rooms without being inconvenienced by walking by the other barrooms down the hall.

13. **Third bar.** A truly cosmopolitan bar would cater to more affluent customers as well as to the unwashed masses. Perhaps this bar might be more select than the lower taverns, maybe even being restricted to one particular profession such as the mage. If this was the case, PC mages might find information here useful to the character or the party.

14. **Second entrance and fourth bar.** This bar is connected to the ground by a stairway. Again, segregated customers might be allowed to drink here away from potential trouble elsewhere. Imagine this bar full of half-orcs, drinking away up here unknown to the dwarves downstairs. No doubt the appearance of the furniture would be less slightly than elsewhere in

the tavern, while the obscene (and badly spelled) graffiti on the tables or in the washrooms might well be amusing.

15 and 16. Washrooms.

17. *Innkeepers office.* Secure because it can only be accessed from the floor above, this room might serve as an office where the innkeeper would see to his accounts, keep the deeds to the inn, etc.

Third Floor

18. *Guest rooms.* Prices might vary for these rooms. A look at the map shows that some have windows and one or more beds, while others have neither and are rather cramped. Adjust prices accordingly, allowing for the fact that short demihumans might be expected to double up, two or more to a bed, if the inn is crowded.

19. *Private dining room.* Meredith Forfar (the innkeeper) and his wife would be well aware of the pressures placed on their relationship by the constant toil of running The Last Call. The private dining room would be all the more important to them as one of the few times when they can be alone together. If they have a larger family, they might serve the others in the kitchen downstairs, using this room for themselves alone.

20. *Smoking room.* Attached to the office accessway (area 22), this room is where the master of the inn and some few special guests might enjoy a cigar or pipe in relative peace and comfort.

21. *Master bedroom.* This is the private and totally out-of-bounds bedroom of the Forfar's. Here the innkeeper and his wife would keep their most cherished possessions. Any trespass by curious or malicious guests would be taken in very bad grace, possibly worthy of a call for the local constabulary.

22. *Office accessway.* The stairway here leads down to the office at area 17, where Meredith Forfar conducts business.

Suggested NPCs

Pressures of space prohibit a long list of NPCs for the Last Call, but some are needed. The innkeeper and his wife are shown as follows. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide customers, which are for the DM to prepare, subject to his own rules.

Meredith Forfar (AC 10; MV 12; F8; hp 64; THAC0 13; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; S 17, D 13, C 17, I 13, W 14, CH 14; ML 13; AL NG; long sword in bedroom). He wears a leather apron and possesses an *amulet of persuasiveness* that functions up to four times per day (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* under *philter of persuasiveness*).

As an adventurer, the Innkeeper acquired the loot and the magical amulet that together made the Inn such a success. The innkeeper is a prime source of infor-

mation about the area and its rumors that customers might value.

Soracha Forfar (AC 9; MV 12; F1; hp 9; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 15, C 14, I 17, W 12, CH 14; ML 13; AL NG; dagger strapped to thigh). Responsible for the staff, Soracha is a hard taskmaster but an elegant and charming hostess. She is a full partner with her husband in the ownership of the inn.

The staff required for the bars, kitchens, cleaning, etc. should be prepared by the

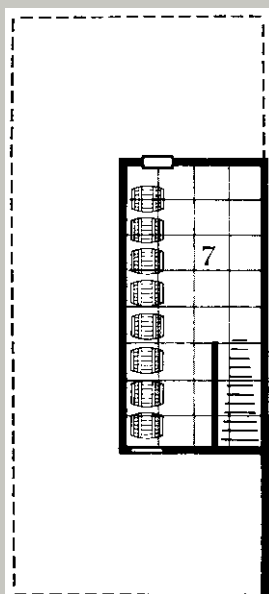
referee. The clientele of the inn can be matched to the types of barmen one would expect to find there.

Have fun with this scenario setting; detail it so that you can describe the lighting, the customers, the smoky atmosphere, etc. Remember that shady characters abound in drinking houses like this one. There should be plenty for the PCs to encounter and strange people with whom they can interact during their stay at The Last Call Inn.

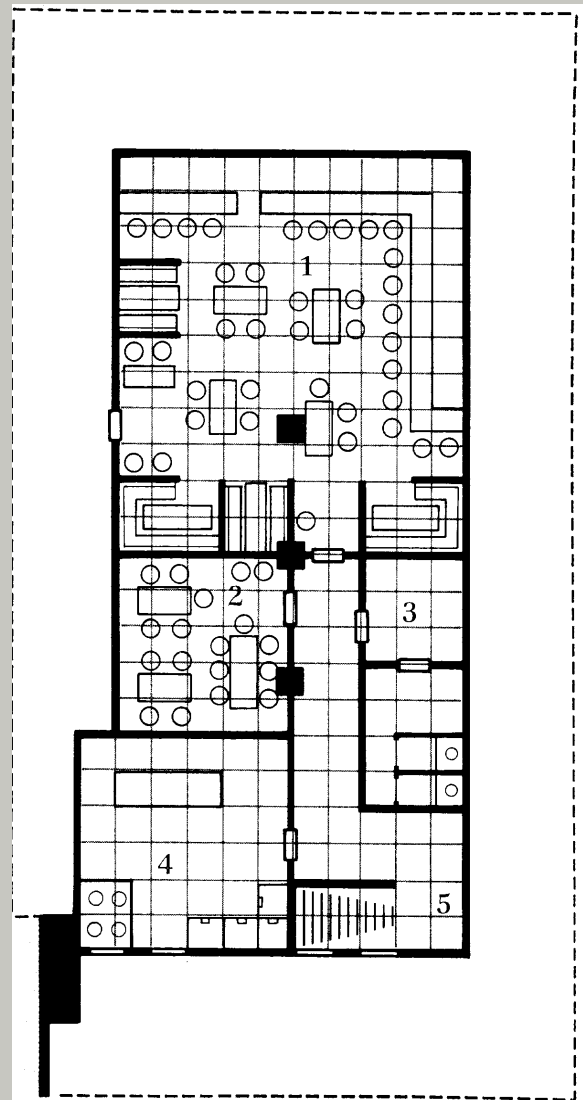
The Last Call Inn

1 square = 3'







Ground Floor

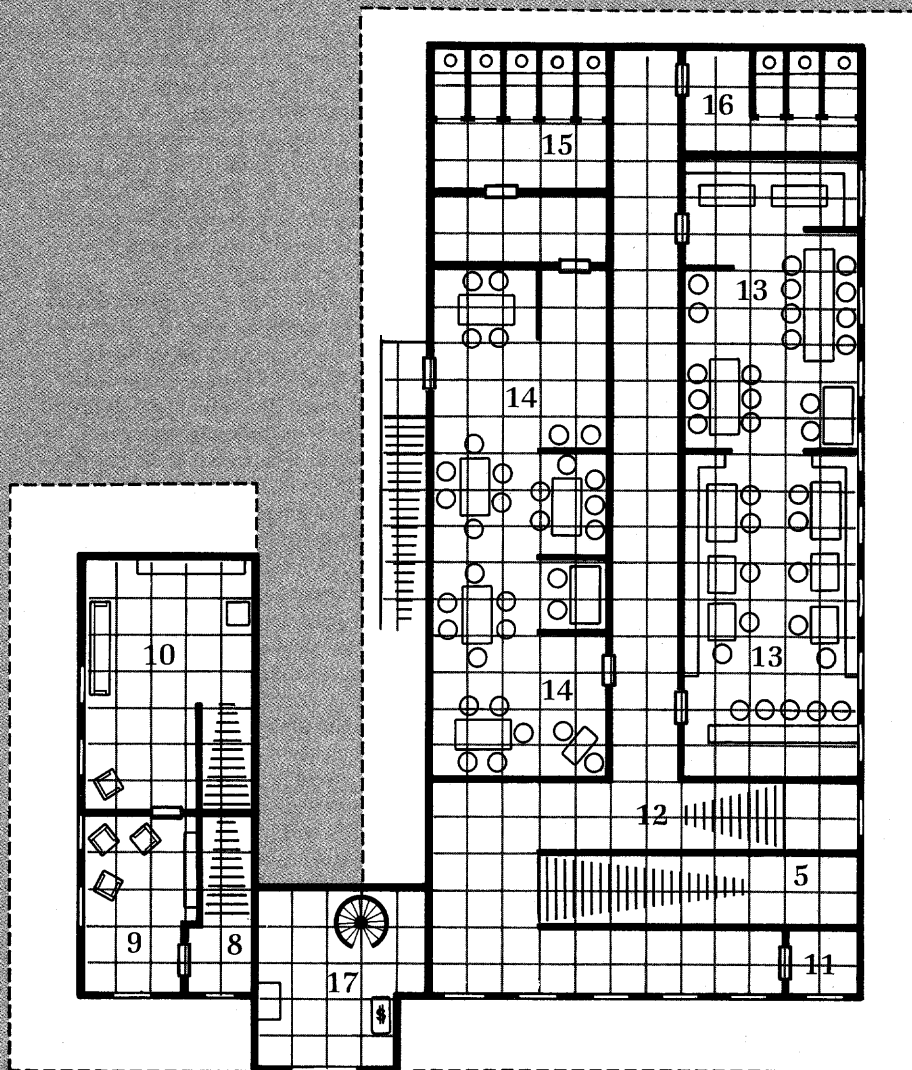


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




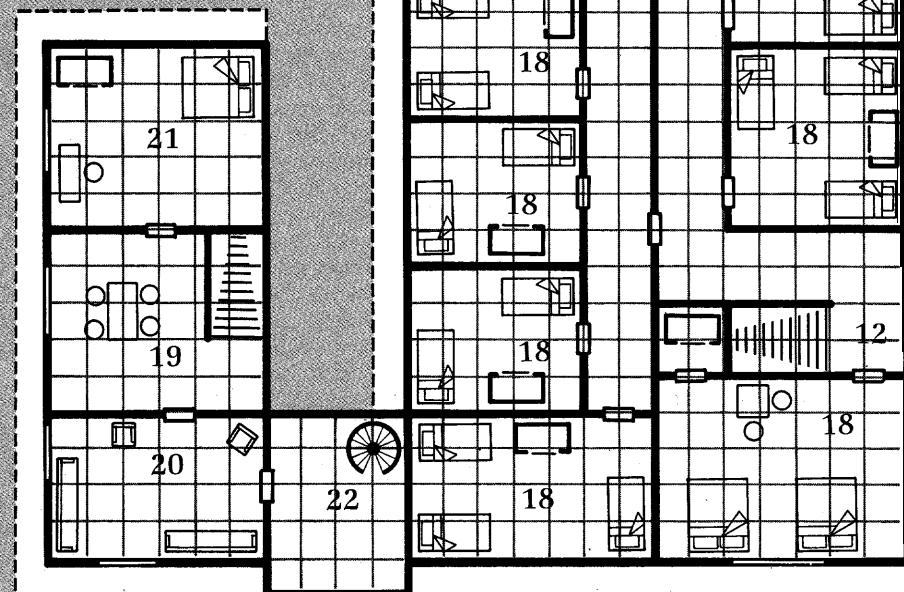
Second Floor

-  Bed
-  Pillar
-  Wardrobe
-  Stove
-  Storage bin
-  Safe



Third Floor

-  Door
-  Window
-  Stairs
-  Armchair
-  Stool or chair
-  Sofa
-  Table or counter
-  Privy
-  Barrel or keg



Enemy at the Gates

Continued from page 13

most ancient of cities would have ancient dragons; most would be young adults (unless a *staff of withering* has been used upon them to age them artificially). Still, their regular and carefully balanced diets should insure good sizes. All in all, the city dragon will be an extremely powerful and versatile opponent.

Purely as an example, visualize a city's air-defense force that consists of one silver and three bronze dragons, 15 allied aarakocra scouts, eight squadrons each with 10 cavaliers mounted on griffons, and 112 miscellaneous troops mounted on magical carpets, brooms, and other flying devices.

Ironwing, the dragon-squad leader, is a mature adult silver dragon who, in addition to his breath weapons of frost and paralyzing gas and his usual silver-dragon spells, has two mage spells of each level from first to third: *sleep*, *magic missile*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *protection from normal missiles*, and *clairvoyance*. He wears a *ring of spell turning* and a *ring of djinni summoning*, and carries a *staff of thunder & lightning*. Ironwing sees himself as the hammer that strikes when the anvil moves itself beneath him. He waits high above enemy forces in a magically created cloud, using *clairvoyance* to get the enemy's measure. He only strikes at leaders and powerful targets, trusting his djinni, spells, and devices to hold off minor attacks.

Sir William of Farcastle, a 15th-level human paladin, is the commander of the griffon cavalry. His mount has a beautiful set of 350-year-old plate barding made specifically for a griffon and commissioned by his order (all griffons in the force are so equipped). Sir William himself wears *plate mail* + 3 with shield, and he carries a *lance* + 4 and a *horseman's flail* +2. He is also armed with a *crossbow of accuracy*, but his honor will let him use it only to save the life of another, not to attack or defend himself.

Miscellaneous troops can assist with aerial defense, too. Clerics can *gate* in hollyphants, ki-rin, and foo-creatures, while mages can conjure air elementals and *charm* flying creatures into helping.

Antiaircraft weapons are usually placed directly around a ground target—as a last-ditch defense against aerial assault. Obviously, the antiaircraft systems we use in our world will not always work in fantasy lands (e.g., most arrows do not have timed fuses and explosive warheads). Furthermore, aerial melees should take place far from the defending city; a dead dragon can cause a lot of damage just by falling on a building. Attackers that break through fighter screens to the city itself should meet new defenses. The trick now will not necessarily be to kill intruders but to simply neutralize them.

The defenders can hurl spells into the air like *polymorph other* to change flying monsters into harmless monsters; *reduce*

and *shrink animal* to reduce their sizes; and *telekinesis* and *Bigby's grasping hand* to grab and safely lower monsters to earth where they can be dealt with by ground forces. Missiles could be fireballs, but they could be even more interesting. Imagine a friendly djinni wandering around the sky with a half dozen vials of *philter of love*, or a *mirror of life trapping*.

The fantasy game version of barrage balloons can ring the city. Contact poison on the ropes is possible, but *avoidance* spells are more likely, as are *curses* activated by touch. Balloon ropes might also probably have *improved invisibility* cast on them to snag and entangle fliers.

Finally, illusions like *phantasmal force* can meet aerial invaders in battle and lure or frighten them away. Illusory ground forces might also cause an attacker to think twice before striking.

Up from below

The two greatest problems that a city faces from underground invasions involve detecting them and defeating them.

In the case of an invading force under the earth, it's usually a case of: "You can't see me and I can't see you," with the minimal advantages going to the tunneller (i.e., he knows his direction of travel, his location, and where his enemy is). Most forms of magical detection will not work through tons of earth and rock.

Then there's that other problem: winning. Until they poke their pointy little heads above ground, there's little you can do about them. Since this usually happens *very* suddenly and in vital areas of the city, it is usually too late.

The trick, therefore, is to create an underground battle zone—an open area where conventional fighting can take place without damaging anything vital. This is where the dungeon comes in.

Deep under most of the inhabited areas of a city might be a series of huge rooms, each about 100' X 100' with walls about 10' thick, all interconnected by corridors. As the city grows older, lower levels will be created and existing levels expanded to cover more area, until a true, monstrous labyrinth forms.

Assuming the city doesn't have an alliance with a dwarven kingdom, a new level of the dungeon is as big an undertaking as a new wall. It may take years of manual digging or spell-casting to accomplish—another burden for the poor mages. When do they get time to study? (An interesting aside: perhaps the reason a traditional wizard is old and gray while a PC gains 10th level before he's 30—the adventurer is a draft-dodger!)

An incomplete dungeon level will contain miners (see the AD&D 1st Edition DMG, page 106, for possible races), wizards (all spells will be chosen for mining work: *dig*, *move earth*, etc.), and guards (zero-level men-at-arms with some adventurers) in case caves or old dungeons are discovered.

Many things beg to be put into dungeon rooms as defenses. My favorite fillings are undead: ghouls, ghosts, and mummies. Just the thing to greet a visiting kobold—an army of ghosts that haven't eaten in generations!

Getting the undead into the outer dungeon levels in the first place is the job of lawful-evil clerics (this being the reason the city will allow them in). After you've "manned" the dungeon levels, a stone *shape* spell seals the undead in. A chute can be used to deposit later reinforcements. The city rulers might even use the lowest dungeon levels for capital punishment: A condemned criminal is dropped down the chute and "joins the guard" (after a grisly initiation).

The city guards mage must check on the dungeon levels every so often (by *clairvoyance*) to see what's happening. After all, once the last kobold is eaten, the ghouls will probably head down the tunnels after the rest. While a visitation by several hundred undead will probably discourage surface raids from the Underdark for generations, the holes must still be plugged and the dungeon levels restocked.

One layer in from the outer "undead" section, the dungeon levels can be filled with oozes, jellies, and fungi to keep out Ethereal- and Astral-plane travelers (more about this in the next section). Some medusas, gorgons, cockatrices, and similar creatures in the dungeons would (if properly cared for) also seal the city from outer-plane assault, though they would also prevent anyone in the city from using those planes as well.

The uppermost dungeon levels, if cleared of undead, might be used as prisons, storerooms, dragon lairs, monster kennels, and disaster shelters.

Adventurers who want to explore such a "city" dungeon sometime, instead of the abandoned ones that they usually enter, should be made aware of the hazards. A party that announces its intentions in the local tavern will get a less than enthusiastic response. Perhaps a dwarf will come over later and introduce himself as one of the miners expanding the top level. He will explain that most of the treasure in the dungeon belongs to the city—stores and bank vaults. The only unclaimed treasure would be that dropped by invaders on the lowest level. He would also point out that in order to get at this treasure, a person would have to break the seal that keeps the monsters down there. While a cleric might keep the party safe, the unturned portion of the wights, ghouls, and what have you would come up the stairs into the inhabited portions of the city. The dwarf would sum up by mentioning how difficult it is to mine when you have to fight off ghouls—pointedly fingering his axe while saying it.

When the dwarf goes, the barkeeper might speak to the PCs, telling them how much business he stands to lose should a band of ghouls punch their way up

through the floorboards and eat the regulars. A paladin might be next, explaining in detail how much trouble his order has gone through to persuade the city fathers to outlaw evil clerics in the city (with only limited success) and how this work might be undone by the party. Good clerics can only drive undead away; evil clerics are required to round them up and herd them back into the lowest dungeon levels.

This fact could be used later if the party does decide to investigate the city dungeons. On the way home, the PCs could run into a lawful-evil patriarch and his bodyguard of paladins! The disgruntled paladins, forced into this situation by the party's act, will *not* be friendly.

Interior defenses

Interior defenses against fantastic foes are difficult to discuss because there is no historical analog in our own world for guidance. Equating giants with catapults is one thing, but what do you equate with a *teleporting* mage, *invisible* illusionist, or astral-traveling cleric? Five kinds of fantastic opponents are covered herein: rabble rousers, invisible invaders, small humanoids, extradimensional invaders, and teleporters.

Rabble rousers: Considering the gain, it would be foolish for an enemy not to try stirring up trouble in the city before an attack. Sabotage, espionage, interracial strife, secret alliances—the list goes on and on. If the agent does no more than empty a jar of throat leeches into the main reservoir, the effort will have been worth it.

Solution: Counterespionage. Illusionists should fill the ranks of the city's counterespionage agents. Disguised as guards, beggars, workers, and merchants (or simply *invisible*), they can probe for intruders and traitors within the city, as well as guard important places, people, and documents. An illusionist can either capture an intruder or deceive him as to the nature of city's defenses and other important data. Since they would also gather information from the enemy, illusionists would fight a hidden war within a war. Tales of two illusionists fighting a secret war of lies and phantasms might rival those of James Bond!

Fans of the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game will find lots of possibilities in magical counterespionage. Agencies consisting of confiscators (thieves) and investigators (illusionists) can be created for running your favorite spy scenarios. The thieves' role will be to acquire information, documents, and useful tidbits like the enemy general's *ring of mind shielding*. Illusionists could spread rumors, scare or confuse people with illusions, and attack important persons with *phantasmal killers*. Expect to find a lot of gnomes in such an agency; this race is the only one that allows fighter/illusionists and illusionist/thieves, and these combinations are too good for fantasy spy agencies to turn down.

Invisible invaders: This involves the

classic situation: "I'll turn *invisible* and sneak past the guards! They're only human, so they've got no bonuses for detecting *invisible* characters!" This category also includes disguised characters.

Solution: Remember that *invisibility* does not mean intangibility. The invader must still go through the front gate. Proper surveillance at the gate will catch most intruders. Stone guardians and similar monsters can be stationed at certain places, primed to attack invisible intruders. *Fog clouds* or steam can fill certain passages, with guards to spot any odd swirling of the air. *Magic mouths* can shout if humanoid shapes appear in the fog. There are also clerics with spells like *dispel magic* and *detect invisible*. Naturally blind or sighted creatures with exceptional sense of smell and hearing could be used as well.

Small humanoids: Imagine how the world would be if rats and mice were organized, intelligent, and armed. This is what a campaign world containing jerm-laine, snyads, and other tiny humanoids is like. Raids on storehouses will be planned and carried out with military precision, and no mousetrap will stop them. In peacetime they would be a major nuisance; during a siege, they are a catastrophe! Essential supplies would soon be unavailable, food would run out—and what if the humanoids were allied with the enemy? An "ambassador," sent in during peacetime to arrange terms, could drop off a few micro-humanoids and create a potential for harm far worse that the army his leader will send later.

Solution: Alliance. Find the biggest, meanest band of killmoulis around and make a bargain. They keep the other pests in line, and they get food and things they cannot steal, like magical and clerical aid. If that doesn't work out, you could always send in lots of trained osquips, giant ferrets, or minimal tigers. *Cloudkill* will remove all such mites, but cannot be used in an otherwise inhabited area.

Extradimensional invaders: *Astral spells* and astral-travel devices are not common, but a powerful invading force could possible scare up some astral capability. The same goes for Ethereal-plane travel. Such items might be expensive, but the cost of putting a few high-level characters next to the drawbridge controls at 2:00 A.M. would be less than that of a six-month siege.

Solution: Plants. Ivy-colored walls have a different connotation in the defense of our campaign metropolis. The living aura of plants act as a barrier to Ethereal- and Astral-plane travelers. The city walls will be covered with plants (on the inside, anyway). Important buildings will also be covered, right up to the weather vanes. Gates and doorways will have curtains of vines, or portcullises, with vines twined around them. Even the humblest dwelling can be shut off from the other planes.

See *Manual of the Planes*, pages 62-63,

for other ways to prevent astral espionage. Pages 11-12 of the same work describes materials that can prevent entry from the Ethereal plane as well.

Teleporters: *Teleportation* is less valuable than the ability to travel astrally, but it is still usable and has the same advantages. It is also more likely to be tried than is outer-plane travel.

Solution: Strategic areas should have low ceilings or narrow passages to make *teleportation* dangerous. Spells like *web*, *guards and wards*, *magic mouth*, *wizard lock*, and *alarm* can cover doors and passages. Illusions can cover many areas, making narrow passages seem wide and safe, storerooms appear to be meeting halls and vice-versa, and so on. Thin wires or webs, strung through empty rooms and corridors, could injure or slay intruders who pop into those spaces.

"I wish for a...?"

A city can count on having about one *wish* per year from one source or another, due to the large number of wizards, worshippers, and money on hand. Over the centuries, this will add up to the point where a truly wondrous place has been created. The city could be covered with a huge dome. The main gate may be guarded by spectres. Indestructible towers coated with gold may reach to the clouds. Many defenses will exist that do not correspond to any known spell, each created and renewed by *wishes*.

A *really* big city, one meant to be the campaign worlds equivalent of Byzantium or Rome, should have a unique defense of some kind. Possible defenses of this type could include an artifact or relic, like *Heward's mystical organ*; live-in demipowers, like the gods of Lankmar (see *Legends & Lore*); and special groups equivalent to our worlds Knights Templar. A special group could have the headquarters of a major trading cartel, the fortress of a widespread order of cavaliers, the sacred Mecca of a religion, or the main guildhall of a magical college⁶. Members on hand would be of extraordinarily high levels and would possess greater-than-usual stores of magic.

Inside looking out

Earlier, we looked at ways a siege can be laid. But how do you fight an enemy who uses magic? You use magic and your wits.

In addition to fighting, there are other considerations in defending against a siege. Food and water must be provided for all. Fires and other damage must be dealt with. Communications must be maintained, and the wounded must be healed.

Food and water are always a problem in sieges. *Create food and water* spells will not be available, since spells of healing must take priority. But water can be stored in underground cisterns, since wells might pierce the underground defenses. Rain can be summoned every so often to keep supplies coming in.

Food may come from trees and bushes in the parks, private gardens, and window boxes. Caverns and dungeon levels can be used to grow mushrooms and to store food supplies. *Preserve* cantrips will prevent spoilage.

Members of character classes can be organized into small groups that rush here and there to take care of minor problems before they become major ones. Examples of jobs would include firefighting, rescue work, street cleaning, and dealing with odd items that the enemy commander has lobbed over the walls (like trolls). Consider a short series of adventures for your PCs based on this theme in your campaign.

If spell-casters can be spared from the fighting, they'll still be busy. *Precipitation*, *fire quench*, *create water*, and *wands of fire extinguishing* are useful in firefighting. *Resist fire* and similar spells aid people and creatures trapped by flames. Rescues are aided by *passwall*, *move earth*, and *disintegrate*. *Wall of stone*, *stone shape*, and *transmute mud to rock* are useful in repairing damage.

Healing is the job of the clerics, but in battle they will be gravely overworked. First-aid crews and herbalists will have to help, providing comfort for those who must heal without magic. Alchemists must take time to concoct healing potions between making batches of flaming oil.

"Spell-casters, report!"

As we have seen in many places in this article, spell-casters are absolutely necessary for the defense of a city, and large numbers are needed for almost every job. City fathers will go to great lengths to attract and keep such people in their employ. Guildhalls for wizards and illusionists can be established, and great pains can be taken to attract high-level spell-casters of all types to live there. Rare spell components and other useful substances can be imported for sale and stored. Rare tomes and scholarly works would be available for sale or in libraries. Skilled artisans can be present to mix potions, craft components and paraphernalia, and build towers and laboratories. Peace, quiet and freedom should be guaranteed.

Major religious edifices of every alignment will dot the city. Temples would line the inside of the walls, with the walls and towers a part of their property. The walls and towers would then be "hallowed ground," and clerics on them would be at the height of their power.

Since cities expand with time, each would have several rings of walls, each with its own guardian temples. PCs who retire to create their own temples might be asked by the rulers of a city to establish the temples on a section of a city wall.

Although the parks within the city might have a few sacred groves, the druids place

is outside the walls. Some major cities might be surrounded at least in part by forests or wilderness (as opposed to farmland). The druids will live and work there.

In return for the above, the spell-casters will be required to defend, support, and benefit their city in carefully defined manners. They will become immersed in local or regional politics. They might have enormous responsibilities. And they'll pay taxes to boot—taxes of a special sort.

A tax of one scroll of spells per tax period could be imposed on high-level mages. The spells would be low-level attack or defense spells, the number and type depending on the level of the character and the needs of the city. These spells, such as *magic missile* and *dispel magic*, will be stored against the day that a siege is laid. Other versions of this tax could include the charging of wands, the mixing of potions, or occasional dungeon- or wall-building work.

The taxation of religions is up to the DM, but it would not be unreasonable for temples to store scrolls of spells in their catacombs "just in case." Stored "taxes" will be heavily guarded; a PC should have little chance of helping himself to them.

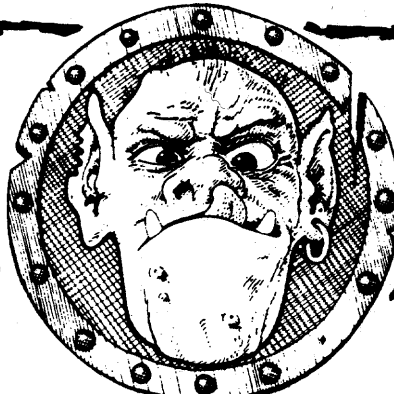
Druids might pay no taxes but could provide services in exchange for peaceful co-existence. Crops and livestock could be improved, forest enemies would be kept at bay or destroyed, and weather patterns could be monitored and controlled.

Low-level wizards would be required to perform magic for the city, the amount depending on the caster's level. In addition to the jobs mentioned already, this could include using *identify* and *legend lore* spells on mysterious objects, *detect* spells on shipments of goods, or *hold person* spells to catch felons.

Some clerics will *not* be asked to provide healing services for the city; instead, they will be asked to serve as guards and ambassadors. The spells *penetrate disguise* (from *Unearthed Arcana*), *detect magic*, *detect evil/good*, and *command* make them excellent choices to watch for intruders at the gates, while *tongues*, *commune*, and the various *speak with* spells allow them to negotiate with any being with which the city leaders need to talk.

A few druids might even live inside a city to "control" it. They would provide aid in order to influence decisions by the city rulers on urban expansion and other "naturally imbalancing" actions.

In combat, many wizards will be found in the towers, organized into small groups. "Foot soldiers" of 1st and 2nd level will stand surrounded by piles of the aforementioned taxed scrolls (kept sealed in labeled scroll tubes in case of *fireball* attack). In battle, these troops will cast spell after spell from these scrolls, usually first-level spells that the caster can't foul up. Each such group's lieutenant, a 5th- or 6th-level wizard, will have scrolls of *dispel magic* along with special-purpose spells.



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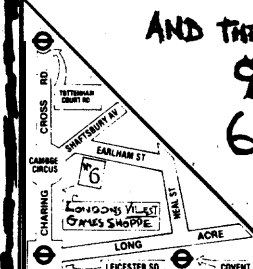
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Lieutenants will protect the walls and troops from damage-causing spells, and control the apprentices who bring up fresh scrolls and remove used ones. Higher-level mages will either remain on the move, casting high-level spells where needed, or stay in the guildhalls as a reserve ready for major problems. Twenty high-level *fireballs* will stop anything short of a fire giant or salamander attack!

Clerical jobs in wartime will differ from wizards' jobs in that the *high* level characters will man the posts. Behind them, out of sight (and out of the line of fire) will be the lesser clerics, ready to help their patriarch with curative magic, *remove curse*, or *dispel magic* as needed. The lowest-level clerics will remain in the temples proper, using their curative spells on important casualties.

Staves and other devices will be given out where necessary. A low-level cleric in a temple is likely to have a *staff of curing* or *staff of resurrection*, while the patriarch uses a multitude of scrolls. Melee staves like a *staff of striking* are unlikely to be used except as a last resort.

Druids will usually be noncombatants in a city; against human foes or monsters of an extreme alignment, they will fight, but only in their own defense. This would not be true if an invading army were to march right through the sacred groves just five miles outside the city, though. Enraged druids are legends in their own times, and an invading force might never reach the city walls.

Exotic cities

Other kinds of cities are possible in a fantasy campaign. Your characters may find cities that float in the air, drift on water, sit underground, or lie anchored to the sea bed. Each will have variants of standard city defenses.

A city in the clouds will have air defenses only, but these will be strengthened. The city itself might resemble an octahedron (like an 8-sided die) with walls all around. Gates and towers would look like flowers blooming on the surface. Many nonhuman races might live or work there, such as storm giants, dragons, and aarakocra.

Dwarves and drow will have underground cities, as might humans. An underground city would essentially be surrounded by its own defensive dungeon, with only a few tunnels for contact with the outside.

Living on a seacoast or riverbank presents another front to worry about. The dangers are much the same as with underground invaders: How do you spot the sahuagin in time? Racial alliances are useful here; a pet dragon turtle or colony of mermen can guard your flanks for a fee, aid, and promises of treasure.

An underwater city will have no surface defenses, and undersea assaults can be treated as air attacks (with defenses like early warning, shelters, etc.). For some

reason, underwater cities in fantasy tales often have domes. If so, these will serve as the city walls. Fighters can ride hippo-campi or simply swim! Under the sea floor, lacedons will replace ghouls as major threats (and as inhabitants of defensive dungeons). Crystal oozes and strangle weeds can be placed in strategic locations.

A floating city would have no walls unless sahuagin were a problem. Surface combat will be with ships and swimmers, and aerial combat must be considered.

Airborne and waterborne cities have a special defense that land-based cities lack: They can flee from attackers! A set of sails or a friendly tow might even let them outrun invasions, or to slam through the midst of an attacking navy on the seas.

Conclusion

The besieged city holds many challenges for PCs, without their having to man the walls. PCs can be drafted into emergency squads, become counterspies, or negotiate with the booka against the snyads. On the attackers' side, PCs could burrow into the dungeons, stir up the citizenry, or negotiate with local neutrals.

This article contains only a few ideas that a city might use to protect itself from the barbarians. Use your own imagination, and crush the hordes at your gates with the contempt they deserve!

Footnotes

DRAGON® Magazine has featured numerous articles in the past that apply directly to the question of city defense (e.g., game products discussing urban environments and their defenses were reviewed in issues #136 and #156, in "Role-playing Reviews").

1. See "The Revenge of the Nobodies," DRAGON issue #112.

2. See: "Tables and Tables of Troops," DRAGON issue #99; "Fighters For a Price," DRAGON issue #109; "Clout For Clerics," DRAGON issue #113, and "Armies From the Ground Up," DRAGON issue #125.

3. See "Locals Aren't All Yokels," DRAGON issue #109.

4. See "Hello, Your Majesty?" DRAGON issue #116.

5. There are many examples, the most recent of which is "Give Dragons a Fighting Chance," in DRAGON issue #134.

6. See: "The Mystic College," DRAGON issue 123; and "Where Wizards Meet," DRAGON issue #139.

Ω

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The Touch of the Black Hand



A thieves' guild for fantasy cities

by **Matthew J. Iden**

This article is a sketch of what a thieves' guild might be like in a mid-to large-size AD&D® game city. Since the sketch is designed to be inserted into any AD&D campaign, there are no references to any particular name or location. It is not intended to be an adventure itself, but it could serve as part of a city adventure, as a model for a player character making his own guild, or as the guild to which a thief PC belongs.

Classes other than thieves should pay attention also, as the thieves' guild does not affect the lives of thieves alone. The guild detailed herein prides itself on its subtlety and its great influence in the city, so a PC party may well find itself being affected by the guild in many ways.



Artwork by Jim Holloway

Table 1
Major Members of the Black Hand

Name	Class	Lvl	hp	AL	Sex	Race	S	I	W	D	C	Ch
Janus Bevren	T	14	72	N	M	H	15	16	10	16	17	17
Even "Lucky" Ilmarel	T	12	67	CN	M	½E	14	16	6	17	17	11
Libbe Halfstock	T	9	37	N	M	½	11	14	11	18	11	13
Vlad "Stilts" Macer	T	9	41	N	M	H	16	14	14	17	15	14

Table 2
Minor Members of the Black Hand

Name	Class	Lvl	hp	AL	Sex	Race	Stats (16 +)
Valo	T	7	33	N	M	H	
Thardin	F/T	6/6	38	LN	M	D	S17, I17, C16
Farasee	T	5	22	N	M	E	S16
Pheyla	T	4	18	CN	F	H	
Beltso	T	4	31	N	M	H	W16, D17, C18
Ferren	T	3	13	NG	F	H	S16
Kayla	T	3	12	N	M	½	D18
Sarven	F/T	2/2	14	N	M	½O	S18/66
Karalt	T	2	12	NE	M	½O	S16, C16
Avrak	T	2	9	N	M	H	D16, Ch17
Harmin	T	2	8	LN	M	D	S16
Alia	T	1	3	N	F	H	Ch16
Delarr	T	1	5	CN	M	½	
Mertz	T	1	4	CN	M	H	D17
Berne	Ill/T	1/1	3	NG	M	G	I16, D18
Sylla	Ma/T	1/1	3	N	F	E	I16
Salshan	Ma	8	18	N	M	½E	I18
Lalo (scribe)	T	2	5	LN	M	H	I16, D16

Classes: T—Thief; F—Fighter; Ill—Illusionist; Ma—Mage

Races: E—Elf; D—Dwarf; G—Gnome; ½E—Half-elf; ½—Halfling; ½O—Half-orc; H—Human

The guild's description

The Black Hand strives to be inconspicuous. Rather than trying to terrorize the city's citizens, the guild does its best to remain totally unseen. Instead of occupying a fortified building in the city square or an abandoned warehouse where comings and goings would be highly suspect, this thieves' guild is located in a trader/provisioner's shop. The owner is the guildmaster, of course. In this manner, the guild acts as its own fence, has sufficient reasons for many people (the guild members) to frequent the place, and imports and exports contraband in the guise of trader's supplies.

The thieves' aversion to being discovered does not keep them from being up to their necks in every kind of money-making scheme possible. Low-level thieves take care of the day-to-day pickpocketing and scouting of new "marks." They also collect the money resulting from the guild's protection racket. The protection racket is the most visible sign of the guild's work (and the origination of its name), as the guild places the tiny brand of an open hand over the doorway of each protected home

or business as a sign of its protection.

Mid-level thieves are in charge of jobs requiring more skill, such as breaking-and-entering and scams. High-level thieves are given free reign, but they usually work in political circles (especially at parties and other social functions) and at high-profit scams. At the guildmaster's behest, powerful thieves also attempt to use their influence to learn of political issues relevant to the guild (the changing of laws and punishments, diplomatic visits, trade agreements, etc.). Any thief is permitted to leave on an adventure, as long as the guild is not short handed.

Janus Bevren, the guildmaster, prefers to be seen as nothing more than a mild-mannered, middle-class businessman. He makes sure that he has no more dealings with politics than any other merchant (at least with the politics people can see). To most citizens, the closest that Janus gets to the noble class is his affiliation with the Traders' Guild.

The thieves' guild's attempt to remain unknown has been relatively successful. The local government is aware of the

guild, of course, but since the thieves stick to nonviolent, nontreasonous crimes, they receive little pressure from the lord mayor. The citizenry, excepting the lower class, fancy themselves untouched by the guild, and many might even deny the existence of a thieves' guild in their city. In this manner the guild has not only escaped reprisals, it has also relaxed the citizens enough that targets are relatively easy to find. In fact, black-clad, sword-swinging toughs are not welcome in the city and are taken care of quickly, quietly, and efficiently.

As a matter of business, the guild regularly bribes members of the city watch, the guard, and the council (or whatever ruling and military bodies there are in the DM's campaign). Anyone who could make a thief's job easier (a maid, a butler, a bodyguard, etc.) by supplying information or by being absent for a certain time is bribed on a temporary basis, usually by the thief committing the crime.

The guild also has connections outside of the city in the form of a large group of bandits. The bandits roam constantly to

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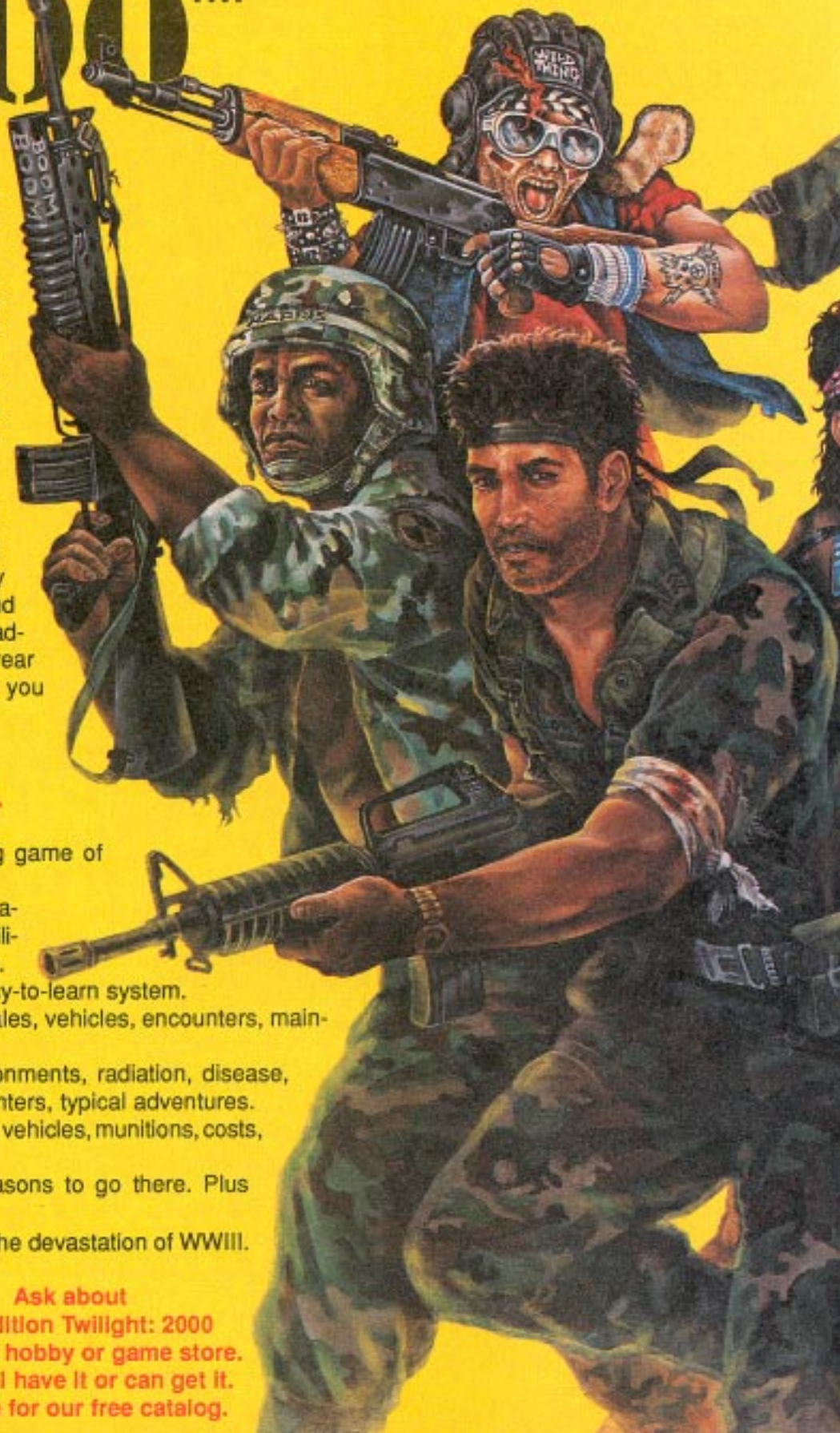
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avoid capture, but they send word to the guild when they are in the area. The guild then either sells information it has on departing merchants (for a hefty fee) or participates in the raid itself, splitting the profits. In the latter case, some of the thieves may join the caravan train to ensure that the raid is successful.

The guild's history

The guild began seven years ago when Janus set up shop in the middle-class neighborhood of the city. Janus's policy of "blending in" kept the ruling thieves' guild totally unaware of the fact that he was a thief himself, and he began to lay down his plans for a takeover.

Throughout his long adventuring career, Janus had been impressed by the power of magic. Although it was terribly expensive, he spent the money for an all-out magical assault on the rival guild, using a wide variety of low-power magical items with a few particularly dangerous ones. His thief henchmen and hired mercenaries, therefore, saw little action in the battle; uninjured and fresh, they gave the survivors the choice to join the new establishment or die.

Approximately half of the Black Hand is made up of these survivors. Since Janus's guild has lasted for several years, these thieves are for the most part content. The rest of the guild consists of Janus's old henchmen and new recruits.

The guild's policies

It should be apparent that the guild's first priority is to keep all of its activities concealed. Crimes are always kept relatively nonviolent. This doesn't mean that thieves shouldn't defend themselves, but killing a target just for its valuables is definitely unacceptable.

The Black Hand never commits treasonous crimes, regardless of the reward. It may, in fact, go to great lengths to prevent such crimes. This policy is not a result of patriotism; it is just good business sense. The guild realizes that it would be cutting its own throat if it committed or condoned such acts.

Clashes between guild members are rare. Since all thieving activities must be approved by the guildmaster, there are almost never any overlapping "jobs." Members are also encouraged to keep a residence in the city (but not at the guild quarters), so even the demihumans who hate each other don't meet often at the guild. Those members who insist on fighting with their fellows get to talk with the guildmaster, and such talks are invariably short and messy.

Guild dues start at 40% for 1st-level thieves and are reduced 5% for each level above 1st to a minimum of 5% at 8th level

and above. This percentage is taken out of whatever the thief purloins in the city and within a 50-mile radius of the town. This does not include adventuring, unless it took place within the 50-mile limit or unless a great deal of help was rendered by the guild. Thieves of 3rd level and above must also help teach the less-experienced members as part of their dues. This instruction is required once every few months for about two weeks.

Breaking any part of the guild's policies usually results in severe punishment, with expulsion from the city (with certain death upon returning) at least. If the guild is betrayed, the guildmaster is certain to take a personal interest in the traitor's (short and messy) future.

The guild's headquarters

As stated before, the guild headquarters is located in a provisioner/trader's shop. It really does function as such and actually provides a small amount of cash for the guildmaster. By having such a cover, the guild is able to fence some of the mundane items that its members have stolen. The goods that would be too noticeable to be sold in the store are shipped out with the regular merchandise. These goods are then sold by guild contacts in other cities. To keep up his facade of businessman, guildmaster Janus lives in the store building. As might be expected, however, the entire building is filled with traps (mechanical and magical) and guards (not all of which are human).

The headquarters maps are on page 29. A separate entrance for guild members (see area #18) leads directly to guild quarters. Members are rarely invited into the guildmaster's quarters.

A brief description of each area and of the major guild members follows. Descriptions have been left sketchy to give the DM room for his own creativity.

1. *Store area.* This is the part that the public frequents. A sign labeled "Bevren's Goods" hangs outside over the street. Inside, a large counter divides the front room into two parts. Generally, any normal piece of adventuring equipment can be found here (prices are 15% higher than in the Player's Handbook). Large quantities of these items can be purchased as well. The order and payment for large orders are made in the office (area 4), and the customer, after being given a receipt, is instructed to go to the back (area 16) to pick up his purchase (possibly at a later date).

A guard (F2, hp 14) and three clerks are usually in area 1. The clerks are normal, zero-level humans who are not aware of the guild's presence. They are permitted to enter only the office (area 4), the storerooms (area 2 and 18), and the compound

(area 3 and 16). The clerks leave the store at sundown.

The front door has two locks, a poison needle trap, and is *wizard locked* (8th level). At night, a rug with a *glyph of warding* (fire, 14 hp damage) is placed in front of the door. It is rolled up and put away before business hours start.

2. *Storerooms.* These contain the goods to be sold in the front room. There is always a guard (F2, hp 16) pacing the corridor between the two rooms and out onto the loading dock (area 3). The storeroom doors are always locked.

The door to the loading dock is double locked. At night, a rug with a *sepia snake sigil* is placed in front of this door.

3. *Loading dock.* This raised platform makes the loading and unloading of wagons much easier.

4. *Office.* This room contains the materials necessary to run the business (tax receipts, petty cash, etc.). One of the three clerks (area 1) is almost always found here during the day.

5. *Guards' quarters.* All guards needed for the security of the shop are quartered here. The night-shift guards (F2, hp 13 and 15) to replace the ones in areas 1 and 2 are normally asleep during the day.

6. *Trap chamber.* This room is specifically designed to trap any invaders. This 10' X 10' room looks like a normal antechamber with a door on the opposite wall. The door, however, can be opened only from area 10. When guests are invited to the guildmaster's chambers, the door is opened to conceal area 7. At any other time, the door is closed and cannot be opened from the east side (there is a fake door handle). Normally, anyone going from the guildmaster's quarters to the shop goes through area 7.

The door from area 5 can be opened easily. The back of the door is *fire trapped* so that exiting the trap room is more difficult. There are poison needle traps on both doors. The fake door has a *sepia snake sigil* on it. Finally, anything touching the fake door sets off a magic *mouth* that screams "Intruder!" for 25 seconds.

7. *Secret corridor.* This is used to bypass the trap room (area 6).

8-14. *Guildmaster's personal chambers.* These rooms were designed so that any intruders must pass through each room in turn to reach area 14. Janus has also had spy holes cut into the wall to observe any intruders that he is aware of.

8. *Kitchen.* The kitchen is well stocked. Two zero-level human servants cook and sleep here. They are aware of the guild and in fact are wanted by the law themselves, so Janus is assured of their loyalty.

9. *Pantry.* Exotic cheeses, breads, wines, meats, and more are stored here. Fine foods are one of the few luxuries in which

the guildmaster indulges.

10. **Lounge.** This comfortable room contains stuffed furniture, board and card games, and several hidden weapons. The door to area 11 can be armed with a poison needle trap but is not usually so armed.

11. **Dining room.** The door to area 12 is *wizard locked* (8th level).

12. **Guildmaster's study.** Being an intelligent man, Janus enjoys reading and studying, so the study doubles as his library. Several statues decorate the room, the largest of which is a stone guardian (hp 31). The door to area 13 has a *magic mouth* programmed to yell "Alarm!" whenever any creature except Janus touches it.

13. **Guildmaster's bedroom.** This room is surprisingly humble, to suit Janus's businesslike personality. He keeps his most useful scrolls, potions, and other magical items here.

14. **Water closet.** This room's only remarkable feature is a secret door that leads to a small room. Concealed in the floor is a trapdoor that leads to the guildmaster's personal office underground.

15. **Dog kennels.** Five large war dogs are kept here. They roam the compound (area

16) at all times and have been trained to respond to any commands from the guards or Janus.

16. **Compound.** Any wagons owned by Janus or brought in by customers are driven into the compound and up to the loading dock or over to the storehouse (area 18).

17. **Stables.** Three stable boys, all fugitives from the law, tend to the six horses here. Two of the horses are light war horses (for fast getaways); the rest are draft horses used to pull the carts and wagons in the storehouse. There is a trapdoor in one of the two empty stables that the thieves use to get to the guild proper after reporting to Janus. The stable boys and all of the thieves know of it.

18. **Storehouse.** All goods too large to store in the main building are kept here. Three carts, all with several secret compartments in them, are kept here, too. In the rear of the building is a small room with a fake door. The clerks, who must do inventories, have been informed that the small chamber contains the few valuables that the store sells, and that they are to leave the inventorying of that room to Janus. Actually, there is no way into the room from the storehouse, only through a

secret door from a small alley outside. This functions as one of the thieves' entrances to the guild headquarters. A concealed trapdoor in the room leads underground to the real guild.

Underground level

19. **Entry room.** This is the room to which the trapdoor from area 18 leads. Since the secret door from the alley cannot be locked, this room is a precaution against the secret door being found accidentally or by invaders. All guild members know where the secret door to area 20 is and that it must be used to continue into the guild headquarters. In front of the obvious door is a pit 20' deep, its bottom lined with spikes. The door is made of iron and, like many in the guild hall, isn't really a door at all, just a facade.

20. **Guard room.** This room is staffed in case the secret door in area 19 is found by intruders. Normally eight guards (four F1 and four F2, variable hit points) are here at all times.

21-22. **Sanctuary rooms.** These rooms are reserved for any guild members who require a hideout from the authorities. Each contains a bed, a desk, two chairs, and a table.

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NECROMANCERS

23. **Prison.** Insubordinate guild members, ransom victims, and enemies of the guild best kept alive are held here. Usually only two guards patrol the front room.

24. **Ladder.** This leads up to the trapdoor in the stables.

25. **Emergency stores.** The door to this room is made of iron and is kept double locked (only Janus and Thardin (see area 42) have the keys). It contains emergency rations and equipment in the unlikely event that the guild is put under siege, and contains as well any equipment that would be incriminating if found in the store-rooms of the store (such as thieves' tools).

26. **Kitchen.** This is the kitchen for the common room (area 34). The servants here have statistics identical to those in Janus's kitchen (area 8).

27. **Training room.** This large area is used for the training of lower-level thieves and to keep the higher-level thieves in practice. The middle open space is used for combat training, and each of the side rooms is used to teach a different aspect of thieving (picking pockets from purses with bells on them, moving silently across leaves or glass, climbing walls with different surfaces, etc.).

28. **Mercenary guard barracks.** One shift of 10 guards (five F1 and five F2, variable hit points) can always be found sleeping here. All guards have been provided the best equipment the guild can afford (missile weapons, metallic armor and shields, and above-average pay).

29-32. **Guild members' quarters.** These rooms contain 1st- and 2nd-level thieves. Although expected to live here until attaining 3rd level, they receive free meals and instruction in thieving and combat.

29. "**Size, Inc.**" This room is quarters for "Size, Inc.," the team of Harmin (a dwarf), Delarr (a halfling), and Berne (a gnome), 1st-level thieves who specialize in—ahem—

small crimes. Berne is also a 1st-level illusionist, a talent in which Janus is especially interested, and he keeps his spell book hidden here.

30. **Half-orcs' room.** Two half-orcs, Sarven and Karalt, stay here. They don't particularly like each other, but none of the other thieves can tolerate them, so they manage to get along.

31. **Females' room.** Allia, a female human, and Sylla, a female elf, live here. Sylla is a 1st-level wizard in addition to being a thief. She keeps her spell book hidden in her chamber. She receives training from Salshan (area 40-41).

32. **Males' room.** Avrak and Mertz, both 1st-level human thieves, make this room their quarters. They work well together, and both will gain a level soon.

33. **Storeroom.** The door to this room is iron, and it's locked (Janus and Thardin have the only keys). Inside are swords, daggers, slings, sling stones, saps, garrotes, and any other type of weapon a thief can use. There are also stores of oil and poison, the latter to replenish the many needle traps around the guild quarters.

34. **Recreation hall.** This room is the most frequently used area of the guild. All members may come here to eat, drink, and gamble, and the thieves who live here (those of 1st and 2nd level) frequently do. The place is usually occupied at all times of the day and night.

35. **Water closet.**

36-39. **Instructors' rooms.** These four rooms are the chambers of the thieves who are required to instruct lower-level thieves.

36. **Pheyla's room.**

37. **Beliso's room.**

38. **Ferren's room.**

39. **Kayla's room.**

40. **Wizard's office.** This small room serves as an office and lounge for the

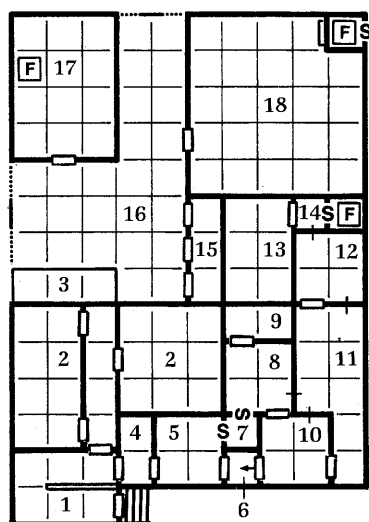
resident wizard, Salshan. The door is **wizard locked** (8th level). Although he is not required to live here, Salshan stays here to take advantage of the guild (such as buying any magical items that they might steal) and for the general excitement. He is paid 800 gp per month (plus material components) to cast any spells needed by the guild, whether offensive, defensive, detection, etc. Sylla (area 31) is also paying him for her tutelage in the arts.

41. **Wizard's bedroom.** A small portion of this room functions as a bedroom; the rest is devoted to desks, tables, laboratory equipment, and clutter. All of Salshan's magical items (including his spell books) are hidden in a wall niche protected by several protective spells.

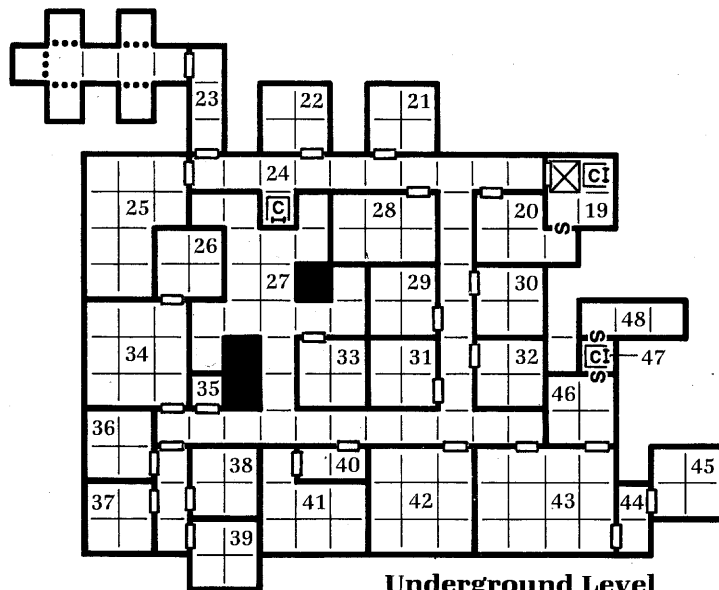
42. **Supervisor's room.** This sparsely furnished room is the home of Thardin, a dwarf fighter/thief, and Janus's closest friend and confidant. He is ultimately responsible for the supervision of the guild underground and the day-to-day training of the low-level thieves. He is gruff and domineering, but his instruction is thorough.

43. **Meeting hall.** This is the largest room in the guild. It sometimes is used by Janus to announce any news that may affect all of the members (in which case all members must be present), but it is more frequently used by the guildmaster and his top thieves (Even Ilmarel, Libble Halfstock, and Vlad "Stilts" Macer) to decide what courses of action the guild will take in the future. Since these top thieves are rarely in the city at the same time, these meetings are infrequent and the area is usually deserted.

44-45. **Scribe's rooms.** Lalo, the guilds permanent scribe (and sometime thief himself), lives in these chambers. The front room is an office where Lalo busies



Store Level



Underground Level



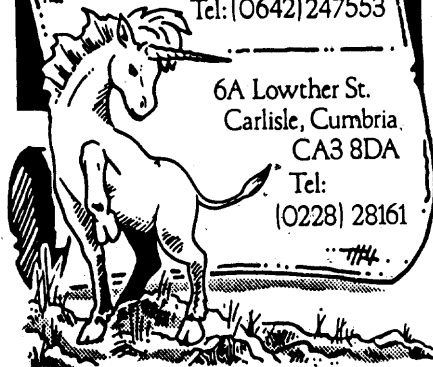
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himself practicing forgery. The back room is Lalo's personal chamber.

46. *Guildmaster's office.* The door to this room is double locked, has a poison needle trap, and is wizard locked (8th level). It is Janus's personal office and contains all of the guild records on contacts, bribes, etc. He can be found here much of the time, planning and scheming.

47. *Ladder.* This goes up to the trapdoor in area 14.

48. *Vault.* The secret door here is trapped with a poison needle and is *fire trapped* (8th level). The secret door opens up to what appears to be an empty

10' X 10' room. There is a pit in the floor, 20' deep with spikes on the bottom. Activating a small hidden catch next to the door keeps the pit from opening. The secret door on the east wall has a *sepia snake sigil* on it and leads into the guild vault. All of the combined cash from guild dues and Janus's personal wealth is kept here, in addition to many magical items and objects d'art. Only Janus, Thardin, and Salshan know of the vault's location, and only Janus knows where all of the traps are.

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Guild members

Following are descriptions of the more important members of the guild, including their personalities, possible magical items, and other related information.

Janus Bevren, guildmaster—Janus is an extremely cautious man who enjoys developing elegant and simple schemes. He is quiet and has never been known to raise his voice in anger, but his abilities are unquestioned. In addition to many minor magical items, Janus owns a *long sword* +4 *defender* a *dagger* +3, and *bracers of defense* AC 2.

Even Ilmarel—Even is the second-most-experienced thief in the guild. He is known as "Lucky" among his fellows because his chronically bad judgment (wisdom 6) is surpassed only by his ability to get out of danger. He is jovial and good natured. He wears *elven chain* +1 and carries a *short sword of speed*.

Lible Halfstock—A halfling of notorious reputation, Lible has probably traveled more than all of the guild members put together. He has apparently settled down, however, a fact that makes Janus happy. Lible has never been known to use weapons other than daggers (his most prized possession is a *dagger* +3, +4 vs. *giants*).

Vlad "Stilts" Mater—Vlad is the only thief skilled in acrobatics in the guild, but since several thieves of lower level have

shown an ability at acrobatics, Janus has Vlad busy teaching. His nickname comes from a crazy second-story job he did at 1st level with the use of 10' stilts. He is proficient with the garrote, short sword, and club.

Thardin—Thardin is a dwarf fighter/thief who is more experienced than his levels may indicate. He is gruff, cunning, and ruthless when the occasion demands. His loyalty to Janus is total but not blind, so he will often take a stand against Janus if he thinks the guildmaster is wrong. Thardin owns a set of *chain mail* +2, *bracers of defense* AC 5, a *hand axe* +3, and many minor magical items. Ω

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SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (old SASEs are being returned with writers' guidelines for the magazine).

This edition of "Sage Advice" looks at the major fantasy settings for the AD&D® game. Note that some of the older materials for these settings were designed for the AD&D 1st Edition game (e.g., *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures*, herein known as *DLA*).

DRAGONLANCE® saga setting

In issue 143, you said that Raistlin Majere's vision shows the effects of time only on living things. But in "Raistlin's Daughter," (in *Love and War*, page 286), Raistlin sees rocks crumbling to dust.

First, there are subtle differences between Krynn as described in the novels and Krynn as described in the game products. This is inevitable, since game materials have to be both self-consistent and playable. So, when you're playing a game set in Krynn, Abeir-Toril, or Oerth, follow the details given in the game products—if they differ from the books, it's probably for a good reason.

Second, if you reread that page carefully, you'll find that Raistlin isn't actually seeing rocks crumble; he just says he sees rocks crumble. Raistlin wouldn't be above bending the truth now and again if it suited his purposes.

"Love and War" also includes a brief encounter with a half-orc. Are there orcs on Krynn?

Krynn has no orcs. The reference is due to an error in the narrative; the character in question probably had some ogre or goblin blood.

Please give the height, weight, average lifespan, and base movement rate for each of the 13 major races on Krynn, including the irda and the minotaurs.

Complete information on each race is given in the *DRAGONLANCE* Appendix to the *Monstrous Compendium* (MC4, volume

4, TSR product #2105). To randomly generate height, weight, and maximum age, use the information given on page 24 of the 2nd Edition *Players Handbook* unless MC4 directly contradicts it. For irda, I suggest the following: base height 62", variable 2d10"; base weight 120 lbs., variable 6d10 lbs.; base starting age 100 years, variable 3d12 years; base maximum age 400 years, variable 2d100 years. For minotaurs, I suggest: base height 74", variable 2d10"; base weight 300 lbs., variable 8d10 lbs.; base starting age 18 years, variable 1d4 years; base maximum age 105 years, variable 2d20 years.

I'm having trouble understanding the Character Racial Minimum & Maximum Table on page 117 of *DLA*. In the "Accepted Classes" column, what do the letters mean?

These are abbreviations for character-class names. The abbreviations and their meanings are from the Character Class Master Statistics Range Table, also on page 117. Note that the barbarian and acrobat classes have been removed from the AD&D 2nd Edition game; if you want them, either use the rules from the 1st Edition game or assign the character the appropriate kit from *the Complete Fighter's Handbook* or *Complete Thief's Handbook*.

Which class's combat chart do tinker gnomes use? How quickly do tinker gnomes gain proficiencies? *DLA* contradicts itself on this point. Also, do tinker gnomes have any alignment restrictions?

A tinker gnome with enough common sense to fight with a simple weapon instead of an outrageous gnomish device uses the magic-user THAC0 chart (see the Rule Book of Taladas, pages 3-4, from the *Time of the Dragon* boxed set). Tinker gnomes gain one weapon and two non-weapon proficiencies every three levels, as indicated in *DLA*, page 117. Most tinker gnomes are lawful good or neutral good, though any nonevil, nonchaotic alignment is acceptable.

Which weapons, armor, and magical items can tinker gnomes use? Can they use proficiencies from the AD&D 2nd Edition game? If so, which ones?

Tinker gnomes can become proficient in any weapon that creatures their size could use, but they wear no armor. Generally they disdain magic, but PC tinkers can use any magical item except those usable only by bards, wizards, clerics, or their sub-

classes. When using proficiencies from the AD&D 2nd Edition game, tinkers can choose proficiencies from the following groups: general, priest, and wizard. Rogue and warrior skills can be selected at double-normal cost.

How many draconians can be produced from a single dragon's egg? Is there a process that produces different kinds of draconians from evil dragon eggs?

One egg produces multiple draconians (*DLA*, page 73). DL9 *Dragons of Deceit*, page 41, area L23, includes a scene in which 4d12 sivak draconians are hatched from a single silver dragon egg. It might be possible to produce new races of draconians from evil dragon eggs, but neither the good nor the evil dragons, nor their deities or servants, have been inclined to look for such a way.

***DLA* says that Krynn has no assassins or monks, yet the deity Majere is said to be a patron of monks. Also, kender are specifically prohibited from being assassins; why would a prohibition be necessary unless there was an assassin class?**

There are no monk or assassin character classes on Krynn. However there are cloistered religious orders of clerics dedicated to the gods, and these clerics may be labeled "monks" in the historical sense of the word. Beings who kill other beings for pay are generally known as assassins; note also that the assassin kit from the *Complete Thief's Handbook* is available for Krynn campaigns.

I've noticed that although wizards of the Red Robes are allowed to cast invocation spells, the rule books list no wizard spells of this type; its use seems to be restricted to clerical spells. Also, the spell kiss of night's guardian is listed as an evocation spell; does this mean that only wizards of the White Robes can cast it?

As shown in the Krynn spell summary (see *DLA*, page 126), invocation and evocation spells are part of the same group. Spells that create something out of virtually nothing or that release raw power fall into this category. Generally, "invocation" implies that the effect comes as the result of a petition to a greater power, while "evocation" implies the effect was compelled. This is why most clerical invocation/evocations are listed as invocations. The fact that the order of the Red Robes calls its invocation/evocation spells "invoca-

tions” could give a clue to its basic approach to magic, or it could be just a clever use of names.

Exactly who can cast *kiss of night's guardian* is unrevealed. It seems to be the personal prerogative of the master of the Tower of High Sorcery at Palanthus.

Do the minotaur and irda races get racial modifiers for thieving skills? Do the other races on Krynn get such modifiers for their corresponding races?

Minotaurs cannot become thieves. Irdra have no racial adjustments to thieving skills. The other races and their subraces get the standard racial modifiers as described in the 2nd Edition *Players' Handbook*, page 39; kender use the halfling modifiers, all subraces of elves use the elf modifiers, and so on.

Please give the weapon statistics for the kender hoopak.

A hoopak is a cross between a bo staff and a staff sling. When used as a staff, its statistics are: type B; speed factor 4; damage 1d6/1d4. As a sling, the statistics are: type B; speed factor 11; damage 1d4 + 1/1d6 + 1; rate of fire 2/1; range 3-6 (medium), 6-9 (long). (The hoopak has no short-range category and cannot be used against targets closer than 30 yards.) Hoopaks weigh two pounds. They usually cannot be purchased; a relative or friend gives an adventuring kender his first hoopak. If found and sold, a hoopak might bring as much as a one steel piece; kender themselves are not prone to purchase hoopaks from nonkender, and they always arrange to “pick up” any hoopak they see in nonkender hands.

Isn't there an error in the River of Time section on pages 86-87 of DLA? According to this chronology, Huma defeated the evil dragons in 2645 PC, but the Knights of Solamnia weren't founded until 1225 PC. Since Huma was a Knight of Solamnia, wasn't he 1,400 years too early?

Actually, the River of time puts Vinas Solamnus, founder of the Knights of Solamnia, 1,400 years too late. The order was founded in 2692 PC. The year 1225 PC is erroneously reported as the year of founding probably because the order's oath and measure were either written or extensively revised that year.

Do clerics of the Holy Orders of the Stars get bonus spells for high wisdom scores? Do clerics of Solinari, Lunitari, and Nuitari get bonus spells? Do they also get magic-user spells?

Clerics of the Holy Orders of the Stars do get bonus spells for high wisdom scores. Solinari, Lunitari, and Nuitari have no clerics.

WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting

Where can I get detailed information about the Valley of the Mage?

The last word on the Valley of the Mage can be found in module WG12 *Vale of the Mage* (TSR Product #9270).

Can zero-level characters, as described in Appendix 1 of the book GREYHAWK® Adventures, retain and use abilities from other classes once they choose a class? Once they pick a class, can they use unspent attribute points for additional abilities?

Once a zero-level character chooses a class, he can keep abilities from other classes only so long as he pays the experience penalty from the table on page 125, and so long as he practices the skill between levels. If the character gains a new level for any reason without practicing the skill at least once, the skill is lost. All unspent attribute points are immediately converted to experience points, at the rate of 10 xp per ap, when the character chooses a class. Once these remaining attribute points are converted, the character cannot gain new skills from other character classes.

How can zero-level characters accumulate so many hit points, then abruptly lose them when “advancing” to first level? Are the experience penalties on page 125 cumulative? If so, what happens to a character who has penalties totalling more than 100%? What constitutes practicing a skill?

Zero-level characters are untried, enthusiastic, and flexible; this gives them leave to obtain a whole range of abilities that less callow adventurers can't get (as explained on pages 117-118). However, the shortcuts, blind stabs, and side explorations beginners make *must* be abandoned if they are ever to become really skilled at anything. Thus characters have to do a little backstepping when they reach first level. The experience penalties *are* cumulative, but optional. A character can drop a skill and avoid the experience penalty at any time. In the case of penalties totalling more than 100%, the character *must* abandon skills until the penalties total 100% or less. DMs are free to set their own standards for skill practice. I suggest the characters practice their skills during nonadventuring time according to the rules on page 119. The character must accumulate as many study points as originally required to learn the skill, and retains the knowledge for three months per study point earned. If a character successfully uses a skill one or more times during an adventure, extend his knowledge one month.

The beginning of the deities section in GREYHAWK Adventures says that clerics get their special powers “during times of special need.” What defines a time of special need?

Clerics of Greyhawk deities get their special abilities when they fulfil the requirements for getting them as described in the section on each deity. However, the head cleric at a temple always can, in time of need, call on spell-like powers granted by the deity—even if the cleric is of insufficient level to have the ability and even if the cleric has “used up” his daily allotment of the ability. The DM must decide what events are times of special need as they arise, but they always should include times when the temple is being invaded and any time the deity's power is in question and the cleric must—or should—demonstrate it.

What deity or deities are venerated by the elves in Celene (including Enstad) and in the Duchy of Ulek?

Ehlonna is the primary deity among the elves in Ulek and Celene, and she has a strong following among elves everywhere else on Oerth.

Who allies with Celene and Ulek against the humanoids in the Pomarj?

Usually Veluna and Furyondy do so.

Are the population figures given for Duchy of Ulek and its capital, Tringlee, for humans or elves?

In any entry, the figure given for population is the area's *human* population. When actual numbers are given for demihumans or humanoids, these are in addition to the human population. Numbers given for city populations are the total number of beings (human, demihuman, etc.) living there; unless noted otherwise, the distribution of races is the same for the country as a whole. In the case of Tringlee, the population is about 55% elvish and 45% human with a smattering of gnomes.

What race is Lewenn, Count Palatine of Ulek?

Lewenn is probably human. Generally it is safe to assume that a country's ruler is human unless his description says otherwise.

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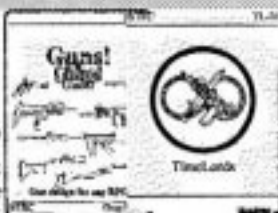
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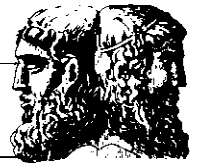
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FORUM



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For some time, we have been collecting letters from gamers concerning the attacks being made upon role-playing in general (and the D&D® and AD&D® games in particular) that charge such games with being harmful to gamers. These letters address the specific prejudices that gamers encounter and suggest ways to overcome that prejudice. We welcome further letters from our readers on this topic.

I have been interested in AD&D games for about four years now. I started out as a DM and later became a player. I am very concerned about the image problem that this game has. I just saw an episode of *Sally Jesse Raphael* about a teenager who got into satanism and then murdered his family. The first question she asked him was whether or not he played the D&D game. The people I know at school either think it's a stupid kid's game or it's satanic. Why don't you [TSR] advertise more or try to explain that D&R games have nothing to do with satanism? When you don't deny it or try to explain more about what it is all about, it makes them think they are right!

Jason Caudill
Cary OH

On January 31, 1989, I was watching a talk show (*Sally Jesse Raphael*) that said that two suicides had been caused by fantasy role-playing games, the D&D game in particular. This show talked to three parents, two whose children had been murdered by a baby sitter who, among other things, practiced devil worship and human sacrifice. After saying all this, they had a satanist on to defend satanism. By doing this, the show's producers tacitly accept that the D&D game does in fact promote satanism, even though they had no one to defend the game. I am a good Roman Catholic and do not believe that your game promotes devil worship or irreligiosity, and you should set the producers and the American public right on this matter.

Paul Shuster
Rahway NJ

On January 22, 1990, I was asked to appear as a member of the audience for a taping of the *Shirley* talk show. I was the founder of a game club, but the show's researchers obviously had strange notions about the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, because the show's topic was on "satanism." The researcher, Jeannette Diehl, wanted to cover D&D games as one of the eight aspects of satanism on this show. When I spoke to her, she became increasingly perplexed ("What, do you mean that D&D game players don't wear costumes?").

Still, I was contacted only three days before the taping. Two guests, however, had been "operating" on the show two months in ad-

vance. They were Mrs. Patricia Pulling (who claims her son killed himself because of a D&D game "curse") and Dr. Thomas Radecki (who claims he has a list of "hundreds" of cases of teen suicides directly attributable to playing D&D games). These are [two] anti-D&D-game crusaders from the U.S., but their statements were full of holes. I was one of the few game-players to research this, but even when I shoved refuting evidence right into the hands of the show, it was ignored. The truth, in this case, was "inconvenient" to a show about to be taped.

The show was taped January 25. . . . The two guests above were given free rein to spout incredible nonsense about D&D games, and as an audience member I could not do much to discount them. Mrs. Pulling [stated that the D&D game] is based on the occult, that "role-playing" is a psychological mind-manipulation technique, and that there are gods and demons in the D&D game books.

The show's producer explained that they wanted to get away from the style of American talk shows. I publicly asked, "Then why do you import American-style lunatics?" This show can be described in no way other than as a scurrilous hatchet-job unfairly linking D&D games with satanism, even more so because ample refutation was available (that they did not expect from the token gamers) but was not allowed on the show.

Written complaints can be directed to:

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Please spread the word among other game fans in your game club, group, or convention. Help stop the slanders against fantasy role-playing games and the people who play them!

CAR-PGa (the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games) is an organization of five directors (four in the U.S., one in Canada) and regional representatives who are drawn from ordinary game fans like you and me. We boast the most complete research available on anti-D&D-game groups and the spurious "controversy" over the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. Requests for information are welcome.

A complete reference file on role-playing games, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, and any controversy over them is available at the Spaced Out Library (Toronto Public Libraries' Special Science-Fiction Collection) at 40 E. George St., 2nd Floor, Toronto, Ontario.

Pierre Savoie, M.Sc.; Director
CAR-PGa Region 5 (Canada)
22 Harris Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M4C 1P4

For the past few years I have been told and have heard that the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is just a form of devil worship. It supposedly brings out the worst in someone, making him want to do evil things or, in some cases, commit suicide.

In my opinion, this is just a lot of hot air being blown around by people with nothing better to

do in their lives. Close to 100% of these so-called "experts" on the subject have probably not seen a good gaming session in progress.

I have played D&D games for seven years now, and my group has played longer than that. Not once in that time have I come under the influence of evil or thought of suicide, and neither has anyone else I know who plays the game (or any other role-playing game, in fact). Role-playing games are meant to be fun. In a single session of play, your imagination and brain are used in various situations. This gets you to think, something that everyone wants today's youth to do. The president is calling for our youth to rank higher in education, and a role-playing game can help with that. Time and time again, math comes into play in a D&D game, making the players use their minds somewhere besides in a classroom. I know that more must be done for our educational skills to be higher than other countries, but this helps.

On the matter of suicide being blamed on a game, I think other matters should be looked at first. Was the person being abused? Were there problems at home or work? These are just two questions that can be asked before the blame is thrown onto a game just because a D&D game book was present in [the suicide victim's] room.

I think it's about time the D&D game was looked upon for what it is: a fun, educational way of using one's imagination with some close friends. People will one day realize that this game has done a lot of good, and all those so-called "experts" will realize how wrong they were. Thanks for listening.

Dennis Gill
Cresco PA

Looking through my rather large stack of DRAGON issues, I came across the editorial, "Is the press doing its best?" by Kim Mohan (issue #102, page 3). This article and others like it anger me. Many people view gaming as an outlet to worshipping Satan and his demons. Like many others, I support the idea of having TSR create a tape to demonstrate to the public (and to potential customers) the enjoyment of the game. In a back issue of *Lake Geneva* magazine, I found an article written about TSR and the games it produces. Nothing negative was said in this article. The writer even pointed out that role-playing games are very educational. Being a student in school, I have based many reports and projects on TSR-produced material. But many people do not see that aspect of role-playing games, simply because they have never played the games. Another piece of literature on this topic angered me even further (and made me write this letter). A recent issue of *Computer Buyer's Guide* (vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 1989, page 7) stated that the effects on children of playing D&D games are: they take no interest in school, become careless with their homework, bypass eating, play all night, and do not relate with their friends anymore. The effects on adults [says the article] are just about the same: [gamers] neglect families, lose their jobs, play into the mornings, and worse. . . . I do hope that TSR produces a tape that shows what goes on during a D&D game session. This may not set the world straight on the topic, but it might give the D&D game a good name to some people.

Rob McNamee
Muskego WI

Of late, I have heard a lot of complaining from critics of the AD&D game. In particular, [the critics say] that the game takes up too much time, and that it is a waste of that time.

A friend of mine had been suffering from a speech impediment for the last four years and had taken up playing AD&D games as an "outlet." The game produced for him a sense of confidence, and after several months of gaming, his problem had all but vanished. He attributes this to the game, and I must agree.

In my nine years of playing, I have learned many words, greatly increasing my vocabulary. My DM makes it a point to add new words to his descriptions, thus insidiously increasing [my fellow gamers'] vocabularies.

Norbert K. Bendriss
Huntington Station NY

I have been accepted to take part in a Youth Science Exchange to the Soviet Union through the People to People organization. . . . I am one of only, 15 Americans selected to participate in the Computer Programming delegation. You may be pleased to learn that I listed the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game as one of my hobbies and as a partial credit to my success.

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is a great game with some great people playing it. Note, however I said some. The rest either sit contentedly at home not caring about the image of the game or else they screw off and become detriments to society and the game. I think it's time for us serious players to start showing people what D&D games are about while excluding the detriments. It is time to purge the ranks. It's time to start a revolution and free ourselves from these detriments. We don't need

them, and we don't want them.

So the next time you go out and get into trouble, tell [the authorities] you did it because you were an idiot, not because you play D&D games. And don't leave a doubt in their minds.

Tim A. Smith
Watford City ND

I was truly impressed to say the least. The editorial in the June issue (#134) entitled "Equal Time" was, for me, the equivalent of a *lifesaver*. My friends and especially my "church-going" friends have always raked on me about my playing D&D games. I have played for about seven years and am still going strong. My friends all say that since I'm a United Methodist

and a Christian, aren't all those gods in AD&D games an antithesis to what you've been taught?

I keep saying no, there's nothing wrong with it, because I don't believe in those gods; they're just part of the game, and it's *only* a game. This got me nowhere until your article came out. I made everyone who was criticizing me read it. After they read it, 100% stopped getting on my case. So, thank you ever so much.

Scott Miller
Columbia SC

Ω

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UP, AWAY, AND BEYOND

Space travel in the D&D® game

by Bruce A. Heard

The Known World on which D&D® adventures are set is slightly smaller than our Earth, with about the same shape and with a similar atmosphere. Outer space is a vast, airless void, with planets, moons, and other celestial bodies. However, there are certain major laws of physics (Unalterable & Universal Principles) that affect the universe of that world:

UUP #1: Magic is omnipresent in the D&D game, which allows DMs to alter "reality" as they like to fit their fiendish schemes and any general game needs of the moment.

UUP #2: The D&D game is first and foremost a game that puts the emphasis on role-playing and simplicity rather than on hard science (the D&D game hardly qualifies as realistic!).

UUP #3: There are no such things as hard rules or preconceptions of any type, including the UUPs themselves, except for Principle #4 (also referred to as the Golden Principle).

UUP #4: This is a game meant solely for your enjoyment. Have fun, folks! It's your game and your world.

Those of you who use the AD&D® game's SPELLJAMMER™ accessory may find it simpler to use that set to handle space travel in the D&D game. The SPELLJAMMER set is generic and straightforward enough to be used much as it stands with the D&D game. But for those looking for a different feel, here's an optional approach.

Gravity in D&D® game space

Planets, moons, and asteroids exert gravity in proportion to their mass. Any object with a mass equal to or greater than 20,000 cn exerts an attraction; smaller objects do not.

In the D&D game universe, the direction of gravitational attraction depends on the shape of the object, specifically on curvature. Gravity on a roughly spherical body is directed toward the center of the body. If the object has no curved surfaces, a gravity plane comes into effect, and you run the risk of falling off the world if you walk too far. To understand how this works, imagine the way that an object would float if it was tossed into a gigantic pool of water. The surface of the water would then show the exact location of the gravity plane in relation to the object. What lies above the surface of the water is within the *positive gravity field*. What lies below the surface of the water is in the *negative gravity field*. The positive field pulls things toward the surface of the gravity plane. The negative field pushes things away from the gravity plane. In other words, everything goes down (see diagram 1). Things that fall off a world, falling "down," continue falling through space until they strike something, which could take eons (living beings would have long since died of air loss). Because space is three-dimensional, the gravity planes of different worlds could be oriented in

different directions and might even be mobile, changing as the worlds themselves rotate or revolve.

There is a second important gravitational effect called neutral gravity. The body of a very large object, such as a planet, generates a cohesive force that holds the object together (friction does the same for smaller objects, such as for ships that are nailed or pegged together). Neutral gravity does not affect anything on an object's surfaces, either outside or inside (in tunnels, on the lower decks of a ship, etc). Neutral gravity has no equivalent with common laws of physics affecting other game worlds. Think of it as "cosmic glue."

Odd examples of gravity

Disk-shaped world: A diskworld would "float" flat on one side, with the gravity plane right across its thickness. This allows the existence of exotic flat worlds, but they need to be slightly concave or have walls or mountains around their edges in order to retain atmospheres. Air currents and atmospheric pressure keep the bulk of the air circulating from the edges down toward the center, then up from the center and back toward the edges (see diagram 2). Some disk worlds rotate as they revolve around their suns, giving them day and night cycles, but some face always toward or away from their suns. Some also spin like records, producing spiral cloud patterns and winds of up to hurricane strength. Flat worlds are loved by cartographers because they are so easy to map.

Planetoid shard: A shard is a roughly conical section that broke away from a spherical planet during a collision between worlds or other planetary disaster. These strange planetoids are often found among asteroid clusters containing debris from the original world.

The sharp edge of a shard's cone points downward. A section of the original planet's surface remains on the round edge on top of the shard. The sharp point of the cone must be made of a material (usually an iron or nickel alloy) dense enough to stabilize that world in an up-down position (see diagram 3).

The shards gravity field is unusual. Having once been a part of a spherical planet, it retains its former gravitational field so that gravity is directed from its rounded top down toward the pointed end of the cone, once at the core of the shards world. This arrangement allows life to exist on the shards top surface if there are mountains or walls ringing the edges of the top surface to prevent the loss of its atmosphere, or if there is a deep valley or crater on top in which an atmosphere can be kept. The lower part of the shard remains in the negative gravity field and is therefore devoid of any atmosphere.

Cylinders: These worlds are partially round, so gravity on the rounded surface of such a world is directed down toward

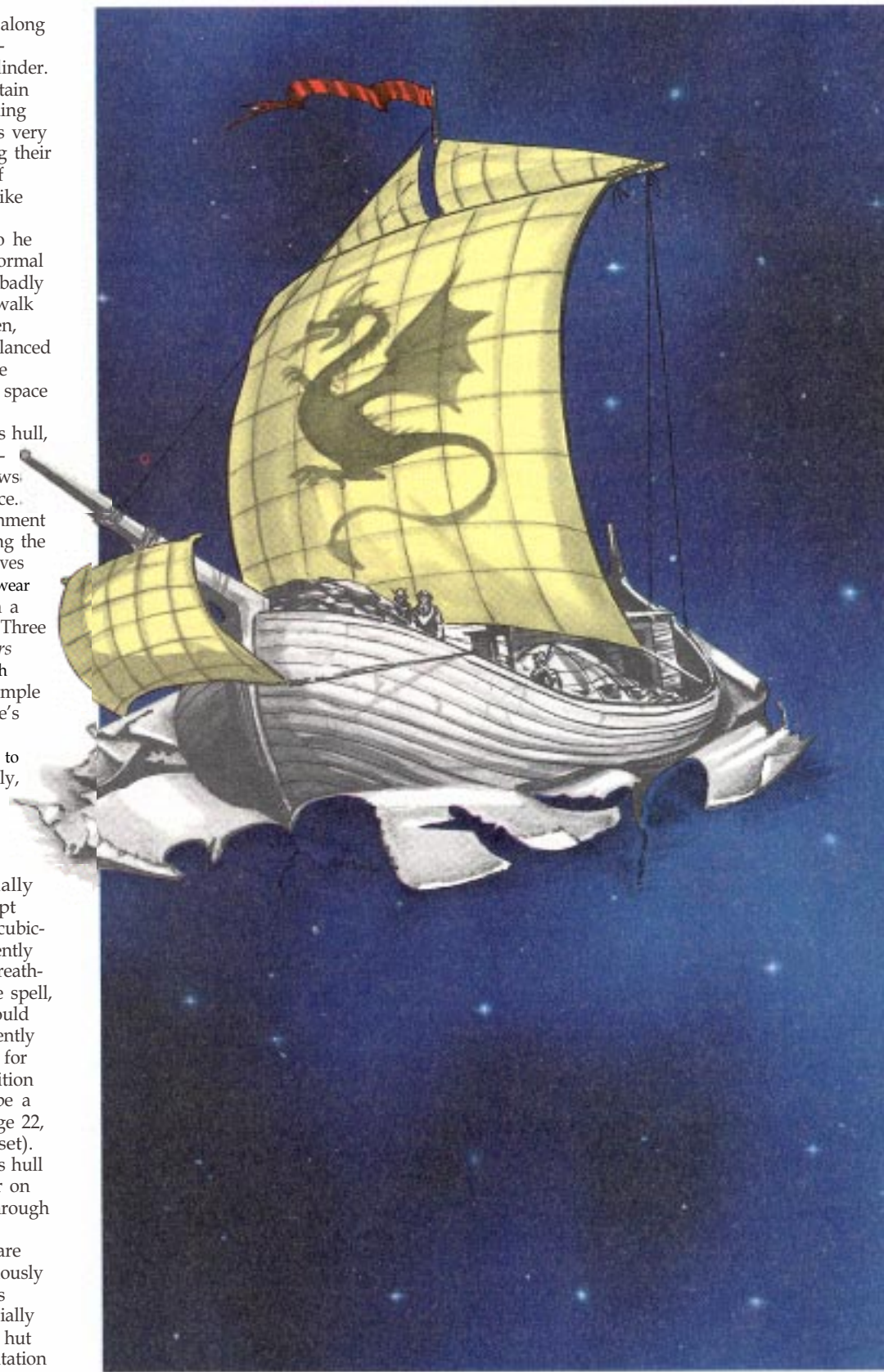
the long axis of the cylinder. Gravity along the flat "top" and "bottom" sides is directed straight down through the cylinder. Like spheres, cylinder worlds can retain their own atmospheres, though walking from the rounded side to a flat side is very disorienting. Cylinders can spin along their long axes, producing day and night if oriented properly. Cylinder worlds, like disk worlds, are easy 10 map.

Ships: A spacegong skyship has to be very carefully balanced, just like a normal seafaring vessel, or else it will list so badly that its hapless crew would have to walk on bulkheads to remain upright! Then, too, the gravity plane on a poorly balanced ship could suddenly shift, causing the crew and atmosphere to fall off into space (see diagram 4).

Air can easily be trapped in a ship's hull, provided the hull is airtight. Unfortunately, the air on the deck slowly flows downward off the deck and into space. One way of retaining a viable environment on the ship's deck—other than making the ship look like an ungainly tub—involves having each crewmember on deck wear an item permanently enchanted with a third-level *create air* spell (see Book Three page 22, in the *Dawn of the Emperors* boxed set) 10 provide supplies of both oxygen and air pressure. A good example is the *airmask* mentioned in this issue's "The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*."

The ship itself could be enchanted to create and maintain its own air supply, but a modified *create air* spell is needed to prevent air loss into space. This new spell is a fourth-level enchantment spell called *create atmosphere*. This spell is virtually the same as the *create air* spell, except that it holds the air within an 8,000 cubic-foot space. The spell-caster conveniently determines the exact shape of the breathable area. For example, thanks to the spell, an 80' X 10' X 10' area on the deck could become breathable. Just as conveniently entire areas could be left in vacuum for security reasons. Of course, the addition of *climate* enchantments would not be a bad idea, either (see Book Three, page 22, in the *Dawn of the Emperors* boxed set). Keep in mind that a hole in the ship's hull would be a catastrophe, since the air on the ship would then escape down through the hole and into space.

Planets and other celestial bodies are most often found in one of the previously mentioned forms, most commonly as spheres, disks, and cylinders. Artificially created objects can be of any shape, but care is required to ensure that gravitation on them performs as expected. Experience with the principles of voodoo astrophysics can be helpful. What is gravity like on a cone-shaped world that is not a shard? As you see, space travel in the D&D game world can be far more bizarre than sea navigation.



Where are the AD&D® game worlds?

Before tackling the connection with AD&D 2nd Edition game, it would be useful to clarify the existence of the D&D game world in relation to the AD&D game universe. The various AD&D game worlds

occupy physical positions in space. These worlds can be reached by spelljammer ships. The D&D world and its universe *do not exist at all* in the AD&D world, which explains why they were not mentioned in the SPELLJAMMER™ boxed set. The two universes cannot be connected by normal space navigation.

This leaves three alternatives:

1. Keeping all D&D and AD&D campaigns separate.
2. Adapting a campaign world from one game system to another game system's rules (e.g., the Known World to the AD&D game, or Oerth to the D&D game).
3. Having existing characters from one game system travel to another game system's world and be converted to the latter game's rules.

The first alternative is by far the quickest—provided that everyone is interested in rolling up new characters and possibly learning a completely new set of rules!

The second alternative is probably the best, but it requires a lot of preparation on the part of the DM.

Finally, moving existing characters from one universe into another by altering those characters to fit the latter system is the trickiest option. Beware: You may not like this! This will involve the alteration of the characters' physical attributes and personal memories to fit the new world. The problem lies in the fact these characters may have certain attributes that do not work with the other set of rules, especially when converting AD&D game characters to the D&D game. For example an elven thief would become either a thief or an elf in the D&D game, and he would forget all past knowledge of the "lost" class!

To travel from one game universe to another, the characters must invoke a reality shift. This is different from opening a magical gate or casting a *wish*. The *reality shift* causes the character to travel not only across space and parallel dimensions, but also across the very fabric of reality, which causes the characters' transformation. The characters would not actually be aware of this alteration. Incompatible aspects of the character's cultural background, personal history, and memory are instantly and painlessly modified to fit the new world.

Characters returning from a trip across a *reality shift* would instantly revert to their former selves. No experience is lost in the process, since the party would be "persuaded" that all of their adventures took place in whatever world they occupy! They simply cannot suspect or even grasp the concept that there are effectively two or more different realities.

For simplicity's sake, we'll establish that time flows in the same direction on both sides of the *reality shift*. A character spending 10 years in one reality before returning to his previous reality would reappear 10 years later and 10 years older as well.

Reality shifts may be effected only by greater gods in the AD&D game or the most powerful Immortals of the D&D game. These deities would first have to discover the another universe that *logically* does not exist—something difficult to achieve even for them. Some of those

divine beings crossed over and were subjected to the unavoidable transformation. Although unaware of their personal metamorphosis, divine beings retain their memories about their previous worlds, unlike mortals.

When a deity leaves for another reality, an alter ego of the deity is created. The alter ego is a metaphysical force whose usefulness lies in its ability to grant spells to worthy clerics in the deity's absence. When the deity returns, the alter ego dissipates (or reappears in the other reality, if the deity gained worshipers there).

Unless they are being worshiped in several realities, divine beings tend to remain in their home realities. They experience discomfort caused by the strange alteration of their senses when crossing realities, and they dislike the vague, unexplainable discrepancies between the two universes' realities. Even deities fear the unknown.

Spelljammers in space

Thanks to *reality shifts*, a spelljammer ship from the AD&D game could end up on the Known World, and a skyship could appear over Krynn or Toril. Fortunately, the *reality* shift allows the transformation of any ship to match its alternate setting.

The main difference between the SPELLJAMMER set's background and the D&D setting suggested here is the way in which gravity functions. Spelljammer ships have a gravity plane, but both sides of a spelljammer's gravity field pull toward that plane. This means that people can actually walk on the underside of their ship's hull. This also means that the crew must walk on the ceilings of the decks located on the other side of their ship's gravity plane.

D&D ships are propelled by *fly levitation*, or similar spells, or through the use of very fine sails that trap particles of energy traveling across open space (also called *solar winds*; see M1 *Into the Maelstrom*). These huge currents of energy could be mapped out like rivers, and great speeds could be progressively attained with those "winds." Since small boats do not generate their own gravity, passengers must use seat belts to stay aboard them!

A spelljammer ship uses a special magical device—the helm—that must be controlled by a spell-caster. This can be easily adapted to the D&D game. Wildspace, crystal spheres, and the phlogiston are not found near the D&D Known World (at least, so far).

Of course, some spelljammer ships would not be suitable in D&D game space, such as the illithids' nautiloid, which would end up with its gravity plane sideways. Outriggers would be a must for that kind of ship to survive.

Cast-off & reentry

Building flying ships is very difficult, even by Alpathian standards. Huge amounts of time, manpower, and gold are required. Building vessels capable of

reaching space is a different (and even more difficult) matter. As a general rule, this requires the careful use of *reverse gravity* enchantments in several areas of the ship's structure. These spells should be triggered when the ship reaches the maximum altitude allowed by her weight and the planet's attraction.

There is a persistent rumor that very large monsters, such as dragons, are physically capable of reaching space. Hooking a vessel to one or more of these creatures might just do the trick. Once in space, the creatures are freed, since the ship can maneuver on her own.

In the case of the Known World, there is a curious phenomenon routinely described in Alpathian schools of air navigation as *tubular breaches*. These dangerous turbulences are caused by an anomaly in the Known Worlds gravity field due to the inner structure of the planet itself. (More on the origins of this phenomenon will be revealed in later issues of DRAGON Magazine.) A tubular breach is an area where gravity reverses itself. The phenomenon is temporary, varies greatly in strength, and occurs only at very high altitudes. A tubular breach was observed once at the peak of a very high mountain in Glantri. The breach was a weak one, but strong enough to pick up rocks and gravel with which to shower a nearby monastery when the breach ended.

A tubular breach can be used to enter space. First a breach must be located, usually by observing the upper layers of clouds (tubular breaches cause a billowing funnel of clouds to rise toward space). Then the ship must enter the breach while performing a barrel roll—a perilous maneuver requiring crack airmen. If the breach is long enough, the ship reaches space safely. If not, the ship goes into a dive and immediately regains a normal flight configuration. Needless to say that: a) heavy warships and cargo ships cannot perform this maneuver; b) all sailors and equipment must be appropriately secured.

Reentry is normally not a problem for relatively slow-moving vessels such as those described in the D&D game. The ship descends rapidly to its maximum air altitude, then slows down as desired.

It is possible to build a simpler vessel made solely for space travel. It would have no limits on its size, but it would have to be either transported to or built in space. This type of vessel would not be able to navigate within a planet's atmosphere. If it somehow reentered an atmosphere, it would tumble, break apart, and crash to the ground at terminal velocity—with no survivors.



By now you should have the basics required for space travel in D&D games. Just remember never to reenter an atmosphere upside down, right? Farewell. **Ω**

The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 7: The *Princess Ark* aims for the stars

by Bruce A. Heard

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.

from the Journals of
prince haldemar of haaken
lord admiral of the Mightiest Empire
Captain of the Ever-Victorious
PRINCESS ARK
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

Eimir 3, 1965: It has been six days since we left N'djatwaland. We are now at the southern edge of the Green Bay, and the weather is getting much cooler—it is well into winter in Aasla, but it is midsummer in this hemisphere. Cold winds blow down a large valley to the south of us, between high, snow-capped peaks. On the west lies N'djatwaland's southernmost borders; to the east is the unknown.

I invited the Heldanner I extracted from the voracious N'djatwas' appetites to dinner (not "as" dinner) at my table. He apparently does not know of my little adventure

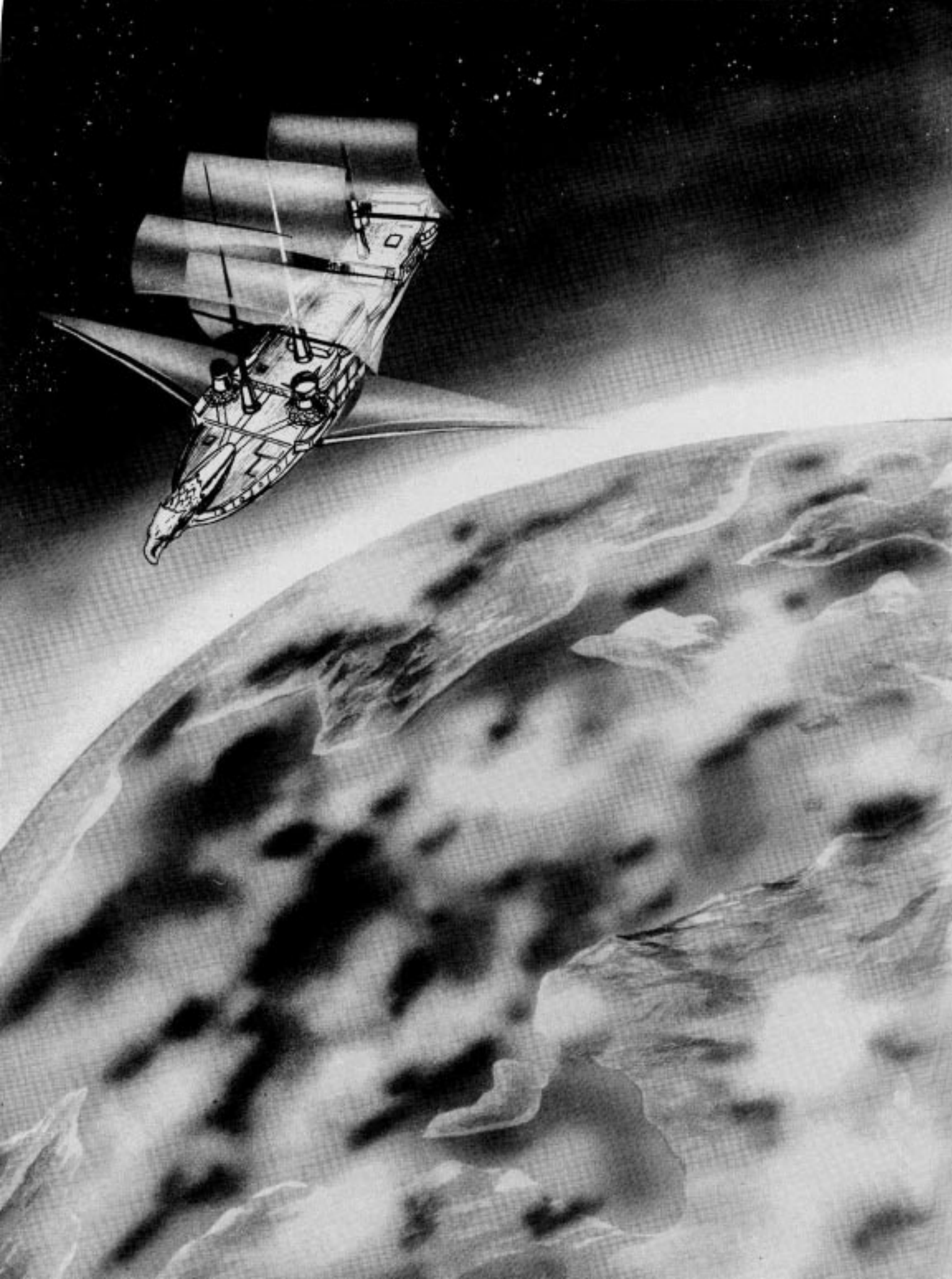
at his order's citadel some time ago. He is neither a very talkative fellow nor a very thankful one. The man, who introduced himself as Rolf Schwartz, is an arrogant Heldanner indeed.

Herr Rolf has been suspicious of my intentions since we took him aboard the *Princess*, tied up like a sausage. How petty. After all, he could have ended up as a package of steaks. He has been treated as befits common gentry, which is more than reasonable for someone who has failed to offer his rank, title, name (other than one that I suspect is false), and a plausible reason for his presence so far from his native land. He claims that slavers captured him near Ostland many years ago; since then he has been bought and sold, every time being moved farther away from Ostland. He admitted studying at the Temple of Freiburg at a younger age, after Lady Abovombe made mention of the conspicuous black-lion tattoo on his chest.

Eimir 4, 1965: This morning we veered eastward. At noon, a dangerous storm rolled down the mountains to starboard, and I ordered maximum altitude to avoid the worst. *Airmasks* have been distributed to all personnel aboard, according to standard procedures. We will maintain this position until the tempest comes to an end.

After several unsuccessful attempts at conversation with Herr Rolf, I simply made use of certain powers at my disposal to pry into his thoughts during his sleep. That proved to be a difficult endeavor. The man is strong willed! Nevertheless, I learned that he is an officer of the Heldannic Order, as I suspected—but he left his citadel on a flying ship! So they *do* have such ships here, after all! His original mission had something to do with the stars. Then his ship was attacked by the





N'djatwas, and he was captured. There is a recurring vision of his ship spiraling away from him into the sky. That annoys me greatly, as I cannot not find a clear explanation for it.

Herr Rolf is free to go about the deck, but he is being watched for his (and our) safety. Just to be certain, I cast a *geas* on him without his knowledge. He will not be able to do harm to the ship nor to any of the crew or officers aboard:

Eimir 5, 1965: The storm is still raging below. Late in the morning, the quartermaster sounded the alarm when several large cloud funnels soared up into the sky, surprisingly close to the *Princess*.

I would have ignored this harmless event—harmless to a seasoned Alpathian skyskipper like myself—had it not been for the Heldanner's reaction. Few people know about this rare atmospheric turbulence, and very rare indeed are those who have actually encountered it. I would not have expected this knowledge of Herr Rolf. However, he calmly secured himself, studying the largest and closest funnel. He seemed surprised, then a bit amused, when I ordered the *Princess* away from the turbulence. Most intriguing this was.

Eimir 6, 1965: I gave great thought to what happened yesterday, and I concluded there is something more about these funnels than is taught at Eriadna High—something that the Heldanners already know. And I was right.

Later in the day, a very large funnel rose near the ship. After ordering everyone and everything secured aboard, I commanded full speed forward—into the *funnel*. That obviously startled Herr Rolf, who got increasingly nervous as we approached the roaring funnel. Shortly before reaching the turbulence, he turned around, staring at me in panic, and shouted, "Fool, you will kill us all! Roll her over!"

Everything became clear to me at that instant. We were on Deaths doorstep. I maneuvered *the Princess* to the limit of her endurance. I heard a low groan rise in her hull, then a shattering shriek as the *Princess* flipped over—out of my control—and hit the funnel like a diving falcon, her wings bent back and almost touching the hull. The wood *should* have splintered, yet didn't. After a dizzying moment of whirling around, the sky became very dark, and the thunderous roar of the funnel came to an abrupt end. And there we were. . . .

What a discovery—the *Princess* has vanquished the skyshield! No Alpathian skyship in recent memory has ever sailed into the dark, unbreathable sky above the clouds. Yet the *Princess* has now done so!

There are legends of ancient Alpathian vessels capable of traveling beyond the skyshield, to moons, stars, and distant mysteries of the universe. That science was long lost—until I rediscovered it for the greatest glory of the Empire!

Eimir 10, 1965: The world below us has rotated already four times since we

passed the skyshield. Fortunately, our crew was wearing *airmasks* at the time we entered the funnel—a good thing, or by now we'd all be dead. What lies on this side of the skyshield is a vast, cold, and airless void. Our speed seems to be much greater than could possibly be reached in the atmosphere of our world. The studies we have now made reveal much about this environment and its laws. Only now do I begin to realize the incalculable consequences of my gamble! I must gather as much information as possible before I return to the Imperial Palace. And there is so much to do, so many questions to answer. . . .

Much to my astonishment, I also suspect there is more to the *Princess* than I once imagined. It isn't the first time that she has maneuvered in some unexpected fashion almost as if she were a living being. I recall the encounter with the night dragons back in Oceania, when the *Princess* seemed to act on her own to avoid a fatal blow from one monster.

And this enigmatic Heldanner! How could he have possibly known about the effects of such a reckless maneuver as I attempted into the funnel? This leads me to believe that we are not alone beyond the skyshield! Now the vision he had while sleeping *does* make sense. I can only conclude that the Heldannic Order is in possession of at least one skyship, and it has acquired the knowledge of reaching past the skyshield. But how? And from whom?

Our *guest*, Herr Rolf, has been totally mute about this whole affair. I had no choice but to clap him in irons and cast him into the brig. For him to know so much, he must be a high cleric of his order and, therefore, a dangerous man. What else does he know?

Eimir 12, 1965: This day we made our first encounter in the Void—and a most unexpected encounter at that. It began while I was conducting research in my laboratory. Without warning, a flock of creatures dropped onto the deck out of nowhere, causing great surprise among the crew.

The fight was brief but fierce. Our as-sailants had not counted on our boltmen's firepower. Most of the attackers were quickly slain, and the survivors retreated. The attackers were catmen, much like the rakasta of our world—but they were mounted on sabre-tooth tigers! Shortly after they took off, the attackers vanished again into the void. But it was not my intention to give up pursuit so quickly.

I ordered the *Princess* full speed ahead after the fugitives. It seemed we had almost caught up with those flying felines when, to our astonishment, an entire world appeared before our eyes—and between it and our vessel were many hundreds of rakasta mounted on their great cats, obviously waiting for us! By the time *the Princess* could come to a halt, we were surrounded.

It would have been stupid to resist their

many bowmen. An emissary flew close to us and gestured for the *Princess* to follow him, as we are doing now. I must close and prepare for the worst.

Eimir 14, 1965: It appears now that we have found a previously unknown moon of our world, called by its natives Myoshima. Myoshima is not a very large globe, but it has its own atmosphere. From what we could see, it is mostly covered with jungle and mountains, a warm world by our standards.

We landed near a mountain city not unlike those of Ochalea. The buildings are elaborately carved with curved pagoda roofs, many dragon sculptures, and mansions made of wood and paper. First Officer Talasar and I followed the emissary to a palace, while rakasta warriors set up camp around the ship.

We were brought before a rather haughty rakasta noble who introduced himself—in very barbaric Alpathian—as Lord Katayama, Imperial Governor of Ichiyoda Province. In our discussion, Lord Katayama did not seem surprised by our arrival; it is clear that many other space-going ships have come and gone in this area! It was also clear to Lord Katayama and his generals that we were unaware at first of their existence, since we, as he said, "were drifting about, bobbing aimlessly in the solar winds like an empty gourd."

We had come very close to their world and were spotted by one of their scouts. He apparently saw a certain person with a black lion tattoo on our ship's deck. That person was wanted there, and Lord Katayama had ordered *the Princess* to be lured closer. Lord Katayama seemed very satisfied with the results of his plan.

In effect, Lord Katayama offered us a trade. He would release the *Princess* and her crew in exchange for the man with the tattoo—our man Rolf. In addition to this, Lord Katayama wished to establish ties with our Empire, and to that end offered to provide a gift from the Emperor of Myoshima to our illustrious Empress. All of this was acceptable to me, although rather abrupt in general approach.

The deal was done, and we stayed at the palace overnight. Clearly, we were "guests" so long as we did not try to leave. We had no freedom to move about the palace, and the governor's guard was very assertive. There were no friendly whiskers among the rakasta nobles. Why, some were at the limits of the most basic courtesy, while others even showed their claws at us!

Much was learned from our host. It appears that this moon, Myoshima, has a very strange nucleus, a core highly magical in nature. It bends rays of light around its atmosphere, causing the moon to be invisible to onlookers outside its atmosphere! This explains how the scouts observed us without being seen, and how we missed seeing such a huge object while being so close. I do suspect the moon of

being visible to those using infravision, though, because of the heat it would radiate. Lord Katayama would not disclose the exact course of the moon around our world, so we are still uncertain of its position at any one time.

These rakasta have good spell-casters among them, since they have developed items very similar to our own *airmasks*. Their tigers wear magical *flying collars*, which makes me believe that rakasta are capable of reaching our world. It is also possible that rakasta settlements in the more remote regions of our world are descended from these Myoshima felines. This would explain how Lord Katayama knew about Alpathia.

The most saddening aspect of our agreement with Lord Katayama is that we do have to let go of the Heldanner at once. He is one prisoner on whom I would have liked to have spent more time and effort. The Heldannic Order apparently committed some act of sacrilege and was outlawed on Myoshima by the Emperor. Lord Katayama would not expound on the subject, and palace etiquette required our tact and discretion.

Eimir 15, 1965: Talasar and I returned to the Princess with the imperial gift carried on a huge palanquin. The thing is a 10'-tall hunk of rock with a few sculptured figures on it. It is far heavier and harder than I had believed it would be. It radiates a pulsating, pale-blue aura. Its magic is so powerful it made the hair on my skin rise when I approached. There is much to study upon my return to Alpathia.

Reluctantly we parted with Herr Rolf, who showed a somber, expressionless face. He still refused to say a thing. The crew secured the imperial gift and prepared for the journey home.

Eimir 16, 1965: Lord Katayama's cat-at-arms boarded the Princess very late this night without warning. Their leader—a minor noble who called himself Kenju, complete with shining katana, do-maru armor, great kabuto helm, and a sabre-tooth tiger on a leash—approached and addressed first officer Talasar in mediocre Alpathian. "Haaken-San, Lord Katayama sends me. Man with lion tattoo has escaped. My master lose great honor if prisoner not brought back to Imperial Palace. Lord Katayama says maybe lion knights' ships set ambush for you if lion man not recaptured soon. Lion man seen flying on stolen tiger toward south of your world. I go with you. Both our empires lose much if lion man succeeds."

At these words, a squad of pole-toting catmen seized Lady Abovombe and moved to take her off the ship. Talasar shouted a word, and every wand on deck came free. Katana-wielding catmen froze, as did we, poised for combat to the death. But Lady Abovombe, I knew, would die first.

There would be better times for battle. At my sign, Talasar accepted the generous "offer." The cat warrior then bowed briefly and stood back as Lady Abovombe was

taken away. He was a bit smug and arrogant, and his tiger hissed in our direction.

Not that I cared about his tale of ambush against ships of Her Imperial Majesty—we can deal with Heldanners—but I want Lady Abovombe back, unharmed. She is important to my mission. And I might yet pry some information from that pretentious Heldanner. Alpathians have more than one way to skin a cat.

Lord Kenju and two of his followers were shown to their cabins while I ordered immediate takeoff. We headed for the south of Vulcania. Soon thereafter, the rakasta army escorted us to the edge of Myoshima's atmosphere. The *Princess* had no difficulty breaking through Myoshima's skyshield, a much weaker one than that of our world. Soon, Myoshima vanished into the dark, starry sky.

To be continued. . . .

If you have already designed the areas covered by the flight of the *Princess Ark*, simply ignore the information given here (the skyship simply went by, assuming that these areas were already well known to the Alpathians). If you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to: Bruce Heard, D&D Column, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they will certainly have our attention. Your input into the development of the D&D Known World is welcome.

The Second Moon: Myoshima

Myoshima is a moon orbiting the D&D game's Known World. It is small, with a circumference roughly equal to 3,000 miles. The central core of Myoshima is extremely dense and magical, allowing a gravity comparable to that of the Known World.

This moon completes a full revolution around the Known World in three days and twelve hours (or two revolutions per week). Myoshima follows an exact polar orbit above the Known World, so that the moon passes above almost every point on the globe. Myoshima does not have a rotation of its own. One hemisphere (nearside) always faces the Known World, and viewers on the opposite side of Myoshima (farside) never see the world they orbit. The pattern of day and night cycles on Myoshima is thus very complex because of the Known World's axial tilt, which provides its seasons. The sun appears to wobble back and forth across the sky over a 3½-day period as it also appears to travel around the Myoshiman globe along a great cycle every 336 days, the Known Worlds year. (Myoshiman calendars take a year of study to be understood, and its inhabitants have no fixed cycle of wakefulness or sleep.) Nearside usually receives a small amount of light reflected from the Known World.

Full daylight on Myoshima is not as bright as on the Known World, being more like twilight. The sky changes color during a "day," ranging from fiery tones at noon to tamer red and purple hues at dusk or dawn. This happens because Myoshima has a light-reflecting shield at the immediate edges of its atmosphere. This shield bends light rays except at the extreme ranges of visible spectrum. In effect, this causes the planet to be nearly invisible from the outside and allows little light to filter in (only the Known World, the major moon, and the sun can be seen from Myoshima's surface). Myoshima's core generates the light shields effects.

Myoshima is mostly covered by steaming jungles and earthquake-prone volcanic mountains that surround three freshwater seas. Rain clouds cover a third of Myoshima at all times, and precipitation is abundant. The two polar areas of the moon offer at worst a temperate climate.

The vast majority of the sentient population is made of various breeds of rakasta (see AC9 *Creature Catalogue*, page 44). Unlike the earthly species, these all have infravision good to 60'.

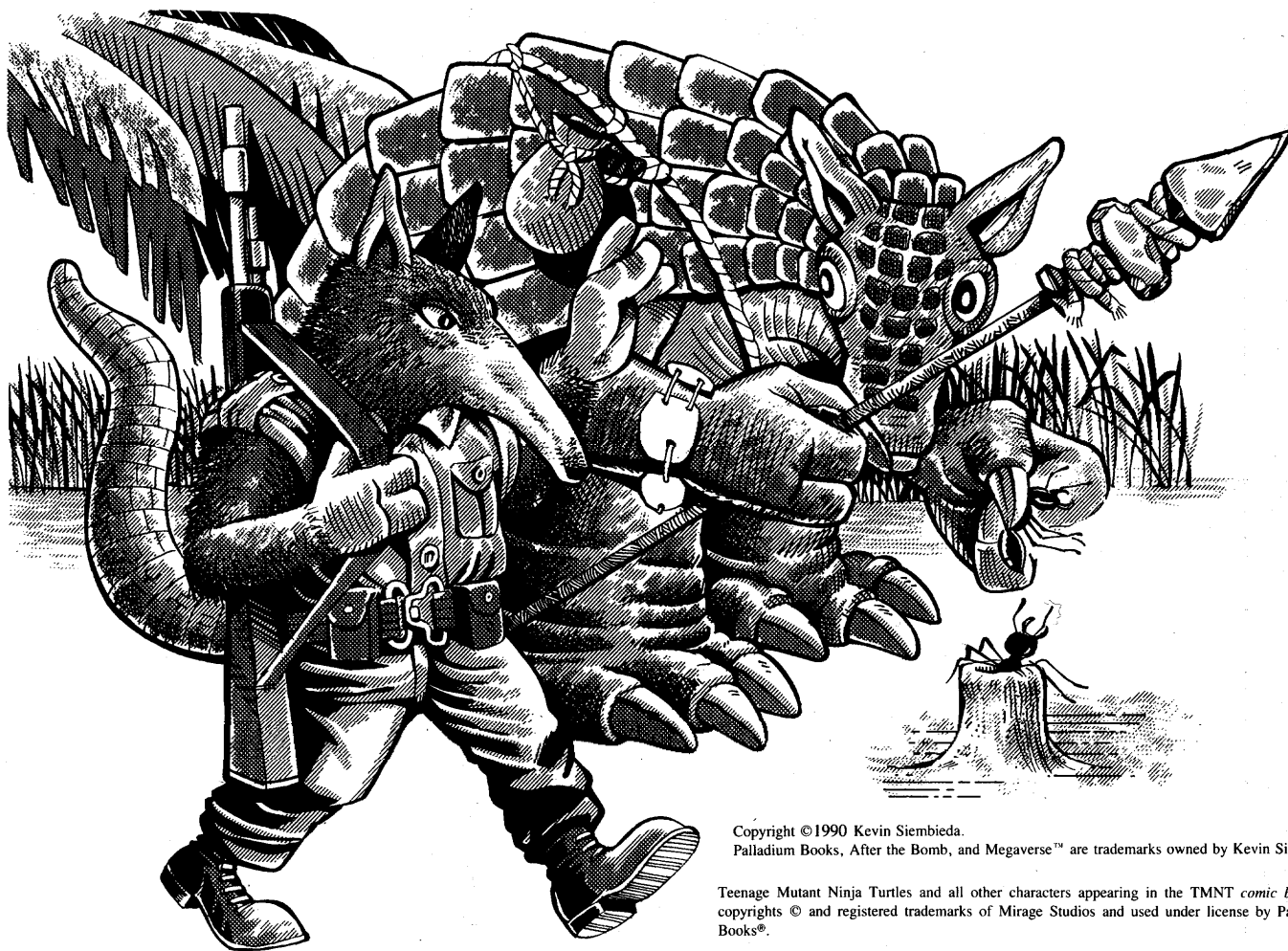
Myoshima is divided into three major political blocks. The largest and potentially most aggressive is the Empire of Myoshima itself, a nation of feudal provinces controlled by daimyos, with a single emperor who rules them all.

Next is the nation of Rajahstan, made up of twelve allied realms. Each realm is a sovereign state ruled by holy gurus (who handle law, education, religion, and internal politics) and maharajahs (who handle the economy, military, and foreign politics). Together these form the Spiritual Council to run Rajahstani affairs as a whole.

The third block consists of many loosely allied petty kingdoms and principalities. Among the more prominent territories are Komporthap (a valley of a thousand hidden temples), Selimpore (a mercantile matriarchy), Malacayog (a nation of headhunters), and Surabayang (fierce island pirates). These territories are politically aligned with placid Rajahstan against imperial Myoshima—when they are not fighting each other. Ω

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Mutants in Avalon will contain new mutant animals, magic, King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table, and a whole lot more. Written by British author James Wallis. Tentatively a 64page item that will sell for \$9.95 (or \$11.95 if expanded any further). Watch for it!

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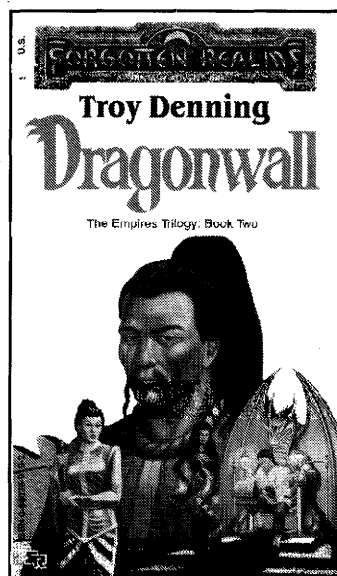
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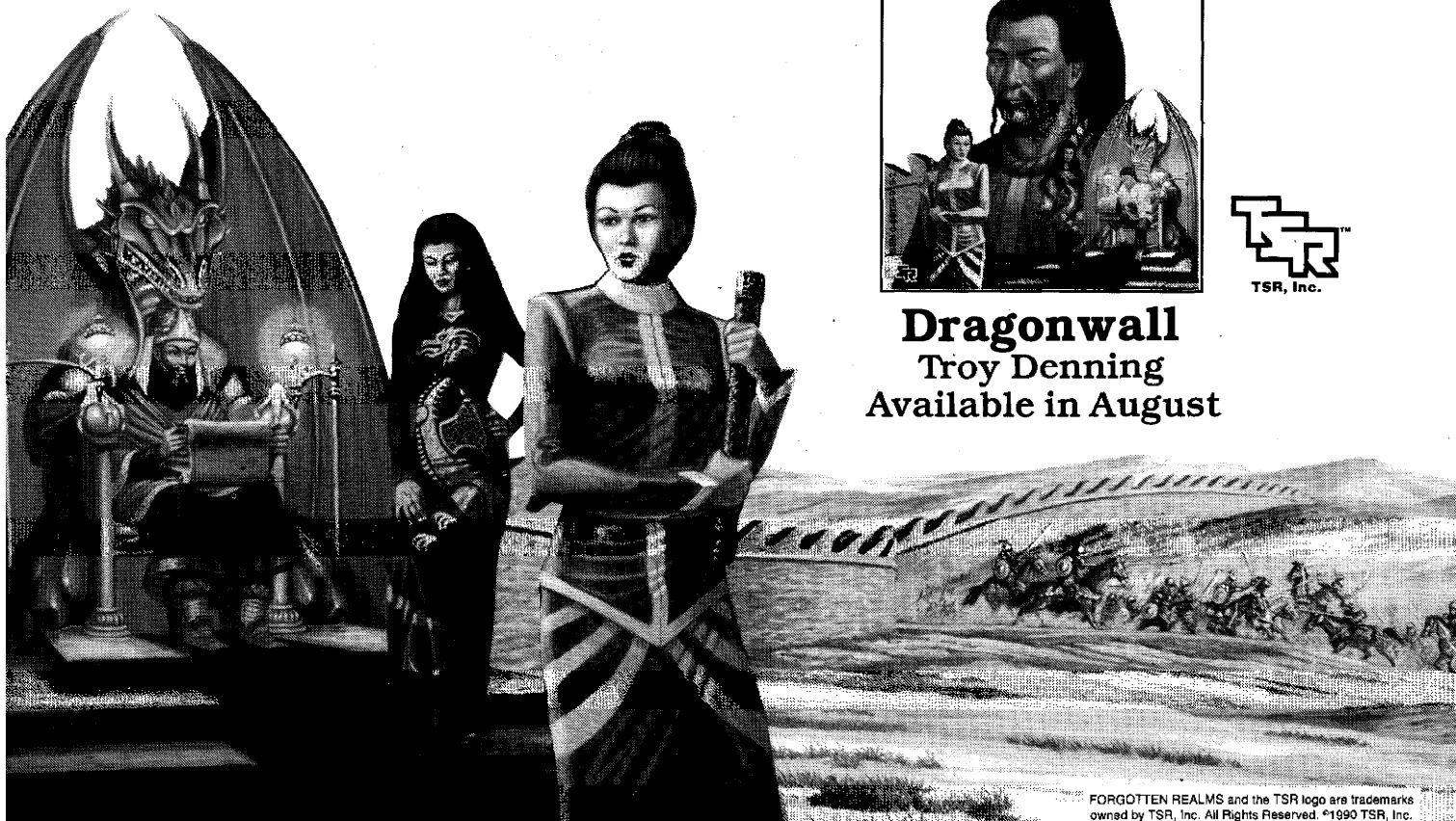
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Computerized Camelot and beyond

One sure sign that computer gaming continues to increase in popularity is the translation of popular board and role-playing games into versions that run on computers. TSR's AD&D® game, GDW's MEGATRAVELLER® game, and others like them are finding new gamers and new adventures through microcomputer and video game systems. We cannot, however, expect computer-based adventures to offer the depth and variety of plot and excitement found in head-to-head gaming with our friends. A microcomputer's memory cannot compete with human intelligence.

We must also realize that computer games are restricted in their ability to replicate entire role-playing environments. We bring up this thought as a result of two letters we received condemning us for our high ratings of two of SSI's AD&D computer adventures: *Curse of the Azure Bonds* and *Pool of Radiance*. However, these highly critical letters couldn't substantiate their criticisms of our reviews.

The first letter stated that the SSI games were far from exact in the manner that encumbrances and experience points were awarded. It noted that combat was excru-

ciating slow (perhaps for *Pool of Radiance*, but successive adventures improved the combat sequences). This letter writer also regarded our review of these games as a conflict of interests, because SSI has signed a contract with TSR and we work (free-lance) for TSR. The second letter condemned these two games because they followed AD&D rules too closely! I guess SSI couldn't win with either writer.

Let us state that we are free-lance writers for DRAGON® Magazine. We have no input as to what contracts or advertising might be purchased by the magazine. The editor of this magazine and his staff have never asked us to review any specific games or to announce any new software programs to augment a TSR-contracted article or a software publisher's advertisement. We are in no capacity employees of TSR, Inc.; with 12 years of free-lance writing and reviews under our belt, we could not, in good conscience, continue in our roles as columnists under such conditions. We rated SSI's games highly because they were entertaining, well planned, and highly playable. The first of SSI's AD&D computer adventures was such an im-

provement over other run-of-the-mill offerings that, despite slow combat and other minor inconsistencies, it was still better than what was then available on retailers' shelves!

We stand by our original reviews. Apparently, the majority of our readers also feel our reviews were honest and just. We constantly receive letters stating how great these SSI games are, and these letters are also full of hints and advice for publication in this column. If *Curse of the Azure Bonds* and *Pool of Radiance* were utterly and dismally inaccurate and unplayable, why did they each receive a Beastie Award, which is given to games that receive the most votes from you, the readers?

Everyone is entitled to an opinion, including us. We rate games on originality, playability, and dollar-to-entertainment ratio. Yes, our ratings are subjective. We don't expect everyone to agree with us. We appreciate hearing your opinions, but for heaven's sake, don't take our opinions as an affront to your own view of a game. After all, it's only entertainment!

Reviews

Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
* *	Fair
* * *	Good
* * * *	Excellent
* * * * *	Superb

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Conquests of Camelot:

The Search for the Grail

**** ½

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This game requires 512K of memory and an IBM compatible computer running at a minimum speed of 8 Mhz. The game supports Tandy graphics, as well as CGA, EGA, MCGA (for the PS/2), VGA, and Hercules Monochrome (HGC) boards. A mouse or joy stick are optional. Also supported are the Roland MT-32, AdLib, Game Blaster, and IBM Music Card sound boards. The game has both 3.5" and 5.25" disks.

Conquests of Camelot is a beautifully crafted animated adventure. Sierra, long recognized as a leader in the animated adventure market, continues to lead the way with offerings such as this colorful journey to the time of King Arthur. Included in the adventure are several arcade sequences that'll have you sitting on the edge of your chair as you attempt to overcome some extremely dangerous situations. One of the most thoughtful features included by Sierra is the ability to save your game under any name you wish at any time. We recommend that, after concluding a particular scene, you save your game immediately. Should you run into difficulty with an arcade sequence in the next scene, you can always Restore your adventure to the time preceding the arcade sequence and try again!

There is always a way to win an arcade



Conquests of Camelot (Sierra On-Line)

sequence. It just takes a lot of practice. For example, one area in the adventure finds you, as Arthur, facing three boars while mounted on your stallion. If you haven't purchased your spear ahead of time, then be prepared for a gory death. However, the hunter is more than willing to sell, you a special spear for this arcade sequence. The trick is in the timing. Watch the first boar and note how it attacks; you may even die a couple of times before you learn when to press the space bar that thrusts your spear forward. Time your thrust to strike the boar just before it reaches your horse. Don't think this is all there is to it—there are two more boars to go! The perspectives for the remaining boars' charges differ as you and your horse move to different areas of the screen. Again, make certain you thrust just before these boars reach your horse.

Your main task is to find the Holy Grail, a bowl reputed to have the power not only to offer endless food and drink, but also to heal. You'll travel through England and abroad through the lands of the Saracens. You'll wield Excalibur to save hearth and


home. You should note the meanings of certain flowers, such as the daffodil, which stands for death.

You interact with the adventure by typing commands on your keyboard. For example, if you want King Arthur to note the information on a map located in Merlin's lower, you type "Read map." If Arthur is not close enough to actually read the map, your command is answered by a statement that what you want done is physically impossible from Arthur's current location. Other commands could range from "Give coin" to "Pray" to "Kiss Gwenhyver."

You move King Arthur by clicking on an on-screen location using the mouse. Or you can use the keypad's cursor keys. We started out using the mouse, but every now and then Arthur would get stuck in a scene no matter how often we clicked in various locations. With the cursor keys directing his routes, he moved from item to item and from scene to scene perfectly.

The arcade sequences demand practice, especially the jousting and Saracen battle sequences. The jousting sequence seemed just a bit too difficult. You have to manage both King Arthur's shield and his lance. The shield is managed by using the S, E, F and D keys, to move the shield Left, Up, Right, and Down. Simultaneously, you must use the 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8 keys on the numeric keypad to direct the lance Down, Left, Center, Right and Up. This became a major coordination problem. We were inclined to concentrate on one set of keys and not the other. This became disastrous, as the Black Knight is quite adept at jousting and enjoys unhorsing King Arthur and finishing him off.

Sword fighting is far easier. To swing Excalibur, you simply press the space bar. To parry a blow, you depress the shift key. To move King Arthur into or away from your opponent you use the cursor keys (North, South, East, and West).



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The encounter with the Saracen demands that you watch your enemy. Take note of his combat patterns, then attempt to strike for the kill. If you strike the keys in a random attempt to defeat him, you'll waste your time. Use the great blows sparingly as they require more time to prepare. If either King Arthur or the enemy suddenly has a flash on a part of their bodies, this means an injury has been dealt. Remember where that injury was sustained, as this could mean a weakness that you can press to your advantage.

Many items can be retrieved. Some help your quest for the Grail, but others do not. It's up to the wise gamer to figure out how to accomplish each various task. If you paid attention when reading the map, you should at least have a fairly good idea of where to start!

Conquests of Camelot is an exceptional 3-D animated adventure. The sound track is the most impressive we've heard for an AdLib board and complements the play extremely well. The puzzles require thought but are not exceedingly hard. The ability to save any number of games is most helpful in completing the quest. If you get stuck, as we did on numerous occasions, we simply went to another saved game to investigate a different course of action. While unravelling clues and hints in other sections of the game, we found materials that unlocked the mysteries that had stymied us in previous scenes.

There is a tremendous amount of detail in *Conquests of Camelot*. The colors are rich and vibrant, and we can only image what this adventure might look like in the 256 colors of VGA. The feel of the adventure is more like that of an interactive movie, one that has been professionally produced by folk who understand what adventure gamers enjoy—a challenge and appreciation of superb coding. *Conquests of Camelot* is yet another "must buy" product from the talented folk at Sierra.

Data East USA, Inc.
1850 Little Orchard Street
San Jose CA 95125
(408) 286-7074

Draconian: Drakkhen * * * * ½
Commodore Amiga version \$59.95

Amazing graphics, enthralling music, and incredible game environment are all found the initial release in Data East's Draconian series, *Drakkhen*. We must also state up front that *Drakkhen* is probably one of the toughest fantasy adventure games for a novice player to survive that we have yet encountered. Were it not for the adventure's originality, the star rating would have been lower because of the frustration factor—the inability to create a party of four characters who can survive the initial onslaughts of this game. We have been playing *Drakkhen* constantly for nearly two weeks and are working on our ninth team combination, learning



Drakkhen (Data East USA)

from past mistakes and forging ahead into new areas. We hope that our characters can earn experience and find better weaponry with which to confront the 150 different monsters that populate this game world. We wish we could award this great adventure five stars, but that wouldn't be fair as the difficulty level is one of the highest we've ever encountered and is bound to discourage novice gamers.

The graphics present quite an array of creatures, including huge dragons, gigantic shades, and tubular creatures with mammoth jaws and razor-sharp teeth. The constellations seem to move as you view the skies. The stars rearrange themselves, and you find yourself confronting one of many flying horrors that can kill with fiery breath, lightning-fast tongues, magical weapons, or snapping jaws, only to fly away before you can give a single, defensive blow.

Drakkhen comes on two disks and includes an instruction guide and a short novelette describing the game's background. The 40 page-novelette is highly recommended reading; should you start the game without reading the novelette, you won't have the foggiest idea of what's going on. Basically, the rather inopportune slaying of a dragon by a paladin in the region known as Nethennia has created havoc. As the great dragon died, it screamed aloud, "ANHAK DRAKKHEN AGHNAHIR HURTHD!" Roughly translated, the phrase means: "The great age of Dragons. The new beginning. The Anhak Drakkhen!"

With the great dragon's demise, magic is disappearing from the world. This is but the first of the signs that eventually lead to the complete destruction of the world itself. The age of the dragon is returning to engulf humankind in its shadow. You and three compatriots have volunteered to travel from the Empire to the island home of the Drakkhen to find a human priest who can offer information on the location of eight jewels, which belong to eight

dragon princes. Then you must resurrect the great dragon and restore the source of universal magic. Otherwise, mankind will be crushed beneath the Drakkhen.

Before starting the game, you must create a characters' disk. Full instructions are provided in the instruction manual. Part of the disk creation involves character creation. The four characters must each be assigned a specific class: Fighter, Scout, Magician, or Priest. (We decided one of each was most useful, and we were correct!) Once the characters are completed, they are saved as a group to the characters' disk, and you are ready to start this adventure.

The main screen is called the action zone. It is here where you decide whether you should be in group mode or character mode. In group mode, the screen becomes the actual visualizations of your entire group. By using the cursor keys on the Amiga or a joy stick, you move through the scrolling landscape. This is real-time movement, not jerky quasi-animation. Trees, rivers, and pathways move toward the screen as your group walks about. You can turn, stop, or reverse; any movement you can accomplish in the real world is handled in group mode. This movement mode is one of the most original modes we used in any game environment and it works extraordinarily well. The only animation pause is when you move from one terrain type into another terrain type. For example, when walking from the marshes into the ice barrens, the disk will access and you'll have a chilly wind whistling through your Amiga as you cross the tundra in search of the Weaponsmith. The smooth animation includes the rising and setting of the sun and moon. As they seem to be directionally equivalent to our moon and sun, you can always determine your heading by noting sunrise and sunset.

The character mode is accessed by striking the **ENTER** key. Your characters move into the action zone. Now nine icons that appear in the lower right section of the

screen come into play. The Open Hand is a greeting gesture used when you encounter a friendly being. The Question Mark allows you to question a being you've just met. The Clenched Fist is best used by a character with high abilities, as it can impress an opposing character into running away! The Grabbing Hand is the Take icon and enables characters to retrieve items they might see when the Magnifying Glass icon (which is used for searching rooms for traps and treasure) has been activated. The Sword is the Combat command. The Pointing Finger is the Activate command, used in areas that require you to activate something, such as a button to turn off a magic force field. The strange-looking icon in the center of the bottom row is the Leave icon; it's supposed to look like a door. When the Leave icon is framed in yellow, it means you can leave the dungeon you've entered. You must find the appropriate door on-screen and approach it before this icon frames itself.

The final icon is the Disk that allows you to save or recall a saved game. One saved game is allowable per character disk. Unfortunately, you cannot save a game while in a dungeon. You must exit the dungeon in order to save your game, but you may recall a saved game at any time.

When the adventure opens, you'll find yourself on a pathway near water. Immediately Equip your characters! Now click on the combat icon to ensure that it is activated. Press the **RETURN** key and enter group mode.

Turn to your right and you'll see a castle. This is the palace of Prince Hordtkhen, the Prince of Earth. He has some information for you that you will need to find the Princess. However, we don't recommend you head straight for his castle. Instead, turn left and walk until you reach the first crossroads. Beware of the cross in the middle of the road; it is a grave and, as most would agree, graves should not be disturbed.

Turn left at the intersection (avoid running into the headstone) and travel south. You'll soon see a cottage to your right. This



Drakkhen (Data East USA)

is an inn, and it is a great place to obtain such information as "Beware of the shark" and "Hordtkhen is very nasty." (By the way, entering residences results in a variety of musical delights. For example, when you enter the inn, you'll enjoy the bawdy crowd and musical surprise that awaits you. Other cottages present more sedate music or sound effects. The sound use within *Drakkhen* is superb, and the sound effects accompanying the monstrous encounters are also top-notch!)

Should you find yourself taking life-threatening wounds when you haven't found the Priest of the Marshes or gained enough experience to have your priest or mage heal everyone, stay in a cottage for a long time so that hit points, protection levels, and magic levels return to normal. The second you are back in topnotch form, leave the cottage and save the game immediately.

Drakkhen is an enormously entertaining adventure once your characters gain experience and levels. It is quite addictive, despite the frustration of seemingly constant death for your party. If you are easily put off by frustration, avoid this



MegaTraveller 1—The Zhodani Conspiracy (Paragon Software)



The Punisher (Paragon Software)



Sorcerian (Sierra)

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adventure. But if a challenge is your desire, and if superb animation and plot are what you want, **Drakkhen** is for you. Though we've completed this review, we are by no means through with this adventure, which will take several more days, perhaps weeks, to complete. **Drakkhen** offers a high dollar-to-entertainment ratio and provides gamers with a chance to experience gaming originality, new programming techniques, and superb sound and music enhancements. We highly recommend **Drakkhen** to Amiga gamers.

Sega of America, Inc.

573 Forbes Boulevard
South San Francisco CA 94080
(415) 742-9300

Phantasy Star II

Sega Genesis 16-bit version Price n/a

Phantasy Star II is the sequel to **Phantasy Star** and is one of the best role-playing games yet to be released for any video game system. This action takes place 1,000 years after Lassie, an evil emperor, has been defeated by a band of hearty adventurers. In this sequel, you must find out what is wrong with Mother Brain, the machine that controls planetary conditions such as rainfall and weather. Mother Brain is also believed to have created monsters that are now rampaging about the planet.

You start the game by creating a character, and you must eventually find eight companions, each of whom adds his benefits to the party. The only problem is that you can use only three of these companions simultaneously. You must use strategy to select which of your companions are best suited to the task at hand.

The weapons and armor systems have been greatly improved and expanded since the original game. The eight characters can individually use only certain weapons and armor. Armor is divided into several categories, such as chest or head protection, shields, and special footwear. Weapons range from swords and slashers to lasers and pulse Vulcans.

Tool shops sell healing aids and other devices, some of which allow for escape from battles and dungeons. You can also trade old weapons and armor for money. The hospital allows one character to be healed of battle wounds or be cured of poison. A clone shop can bring deceased characters back to life, while the teleporter allows access between cities. Finally, you can save a game in progress and find out the number of experience points needed for a character to advance to the next level.

The point of view in dungeons and in the outdoors is from an overhead perspective. The 20 multilevel dungeons are much bigger and harder to conquer than in the first **Phantasy Star** game. Saving your game is essential before you enter a dungeon. When you encounter monsters, the screen fades and is replaced by a battle screen. The perspective changes to

ground level. You can allow the characters to fight using their current hand weapons, or they can try to use strategy to beat the opposition. You can also use a technique (cast a spell), use an object, or run away.

After selecting the characters' actions, the round is played out with superb animation and sound. Each technique (spell) is animated differently. Characters with weapons are animated displaying their attacks against the beasts. The marvelous animation also applies to the enemy's attacks. Damage is indicated at the top of the screen next to the attacker's name. When the characters win a battle, they are rewarded with money and experience points.

This game is well crafted and is worth the purchase price. We have spent three weeks playing it and are not even one-quarter of the way through the adventure. The animation, especially for battles, is superb. There are over 50 spells available. Even weapons and armor can give benefits to characters beyond their normal effects. For example, special armor found in one dungeon allows the wearer to cast a healing spell every so often. The battle system enables more than one type of creature to attack and allows the characters to attack specific creatures instead of idiotically going after one creature at a time.

This game is definitely a winner. The included 110-page hint book allows players to help themselves if the adventuring gets too difficult. **Phantasy Star II** is for those who love role-playing games, and it should be added to their library of Genesis games.

News and new products

Activision (415-329-0800) has released several new games for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), the Nintendo Game Boy, and the Sega Genesis. **Tombs and Treasure** is Activision's first NES title. It has an icon-driven interface, and players confront monsters and solve puzzles as they explore the mysterious Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza. For the Game Boy comes **Heavyweight Championship Boxing** with players fighting their way up the pro ladder. **Ghostbusters II** will also be released for the Game Boy. A third Game Boy offering is **Malibu Beach Volleyball** with two-on-two beach volleyball. For the Sega Genesis comes **Mondou's Fight Palace**, a martial-arts adventure that pits the most bizarre and ruthless aliens in the universe against each other in hand-to-hand combat. Prices have not been set for these games at the time of this writing.

Electronic Arts (415-571-7171) has added another affiliated label. The new distribution agreement is with Logical Design Works, the publisher of California Dreams brand computer software. Other titles include: **Street Rod**, a new '50s racing game; **Blockout**, a 3-D challenge; and **Tunnels of Armageddon**, a high-speed action and strategy game. California Dreams

games are available for Macintosh, Apple IIGS, PC/MS-DOS, Amiga, and Commodore 64/128 computers.

Another offering to be distributed by Electronic Arts is Cinemaware's **Centurion: Defender of Rome**. This game of conquest and diplomacy combines strategy and role-playing. You directly control the movement of troops in battle as you start your climb through the ranks and set out to rule the historically accurate Europe of 275 B.C. There are land and sea battles, gladiator events, even chariot races. The game is being developed initially for PC/MS-DOS computers for \$49.95.

Electronic Arts distributes Interstel games, and Interstel has released an animated graphics adventure entitled **Earthrise**, starting a new Guild Investigation series. As the game's hero, a top Investigator for the Terran Mining Guild, you are sent to an asteroid mining station in answer to a distress call. The asteroid is hurtling toward Earth. Three-dimensional graphics and animation enhance playability, while a feature allows you to assign text commands to single keys. For PC/MS-DOS computers, the price is \$49.95.

Cinemaware, through Electronic Arts, will market MasterPlay's interactive science-fiction games **Star Saga One** and **Star Saga Two**. These games combine a science-fiction adventure story with board-game tactics. The computer moderates the action in which as many as six players can participate. Each player has a unique role with individual goals and experiences. The games are available for the Apple II and PC/MS-DOS machines for \$49.95.

Interplay Productions (714-545-9001) is preparing to release three stunning new games: **Lord of the Rings**, **Future Wars** (which we have just peeked at—awesome!), and the long-awaited **Battle Chess II**, the sequel to the highly acclaimed chess action/strategy game.

Jaleco USA (708-480-1181) has released **Astyanax**, a one-player action game for the NES. The object of the game is to maneuver the title character through horizontal and vertical scrolling levels, each populated with the deadly minions of the evil wizard, Blackhorn. Astyanax is armed with a magic weapon called Bash that changes from axe to spear to sword as the game progresses. He can also cast three different magical spells whenever the need arises. The price is \$44.95.

MicroProse (301-771-1151) has released its first coin-op game, **F-15 Strike Eagle**. The player pilots the supersonic F-15 wherever he wants, implementing critical turns, rolls, and loops against realistic and intelligent enemy actions. Multiple skill levels are used. This coin-op game generates 60,000 polygons per second and regenerates itself at 30 frames per second without sacrificing animation speed. A current sophisticated coin-op game generates up to 12,000 polygons per second.

Paragon Software (412-838-1166) has



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released *The Punisher*, based on the Marvel Comics' star. Additionally, *Mega-Traveller 1 —The Zhodani Conspiracy* is already at your favorite retailer.

NEC Technologies (312-860-9500) is releasing *Bank's Adventure* for the TurboGrafx-16 video game system. It features Bonk the Caveman, the first video game character to turn his enemies into friends instead of destroying them. Bonk utilizes special moves, such as the jumping head-butt and the spinning jump, to battle the bad guys. Eat fruits, meat, and vegetables to keep his energy up, and meet King Drool in the final confrontation. The price is \$54.95.

New World Computing (of *Might and Magic* fame) has moved. Its new address is: 20301 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 200, Woodland Hills CA 91364 (business phone: 818-999-0606).

Sierra has presented *Sorcerian* for PC/MS-DOS computers. Imported through an agreement with Japan's Nihon Falcon, this is a wide-ranging adventure/role-playing game with original Japanese music that has made it a best-seller in Japan. Fifteen separate role-playing adventures within *Sorcerian* send you to strange and beautiful lands. You can visit the Caverns of Ice and the Cursed Oasis, search for the Lost Talisman, sail the Cursed Ship, and battle the Dark Magician. As a fighter, wizard, dwarf, or elf (male or female), you have different abilities and skills to complete your adventure. The decisions you make will decide your fate and the ultimate outcome of *Sorcerian*. There are over 58 different songs included that can be enjoyed through a Roland LAPC-1 or MT-32, AdLib, or Game Blaster sound board. The price is \$59.95.

Sir-Tech Software (315-393-6451) has rereleased the first scenario in the company's classic *Wizardry* series, *Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord*, in a new format for Macintosh computers. Released in 1981 for the Apple II and in 1984 for the Macintosh, this scenario has won numerous awards. The latest version now includes complete dungeon graphics, animated monsters, and in-game mapping

aids (like a crystal that allows you to see all or some of the dungeon on-screen). Additionally, there is no on-disk copy protection, no key disk is needed, and the game runs much faster. This new Macintosh version costs \$59.95.

Clue corner

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

1. When you are in the caves near Hap, you might meet a group of salamanders sporting in the lava pools. If you Wait and then Parlay slyly, you will get a chance to obtain six caskets filled with treasure. There are magical items and a great deal of platinum and gems. You must reach into the lava to obtain these items, so have a Resist Fire spell at the ready.

2. When you are solving the missions, try them in this order: a. Fire Knives-Tilverton; b. Dracandros-Hap; c. Moander-Yulash; d. Zhentrim-Zhentil Keep; e. Tyranthraxus-Myth Drannor.

3. When in Myth Drannor, the Flamed One is your master.

4. When in Dracandros' tower, don't pick up pieces of paper. Also, not all drow lords are real.

5. Beware of hats, robes, and some long swords.

6. Complete everything and see all there is to see before going to Myth Drannor to win the game. Once you win, it's "game over" for your characters. You cannot play the adventure any more.

7. If you are starting your adventure, try this party of characters: one ranger, one human fighter, one paladin, one human cleric, one elfen thief/mage, one human or elfen mage. Keep in mind that elves cannot be raised from the dead.

Jason Dunn
Calgary, Alberta

Thanks for joining us. Please send your letters and hints to: The Lessers, 179 Pebble Place, San Ramon CA 94583, U.S.A. Until next month, game on!



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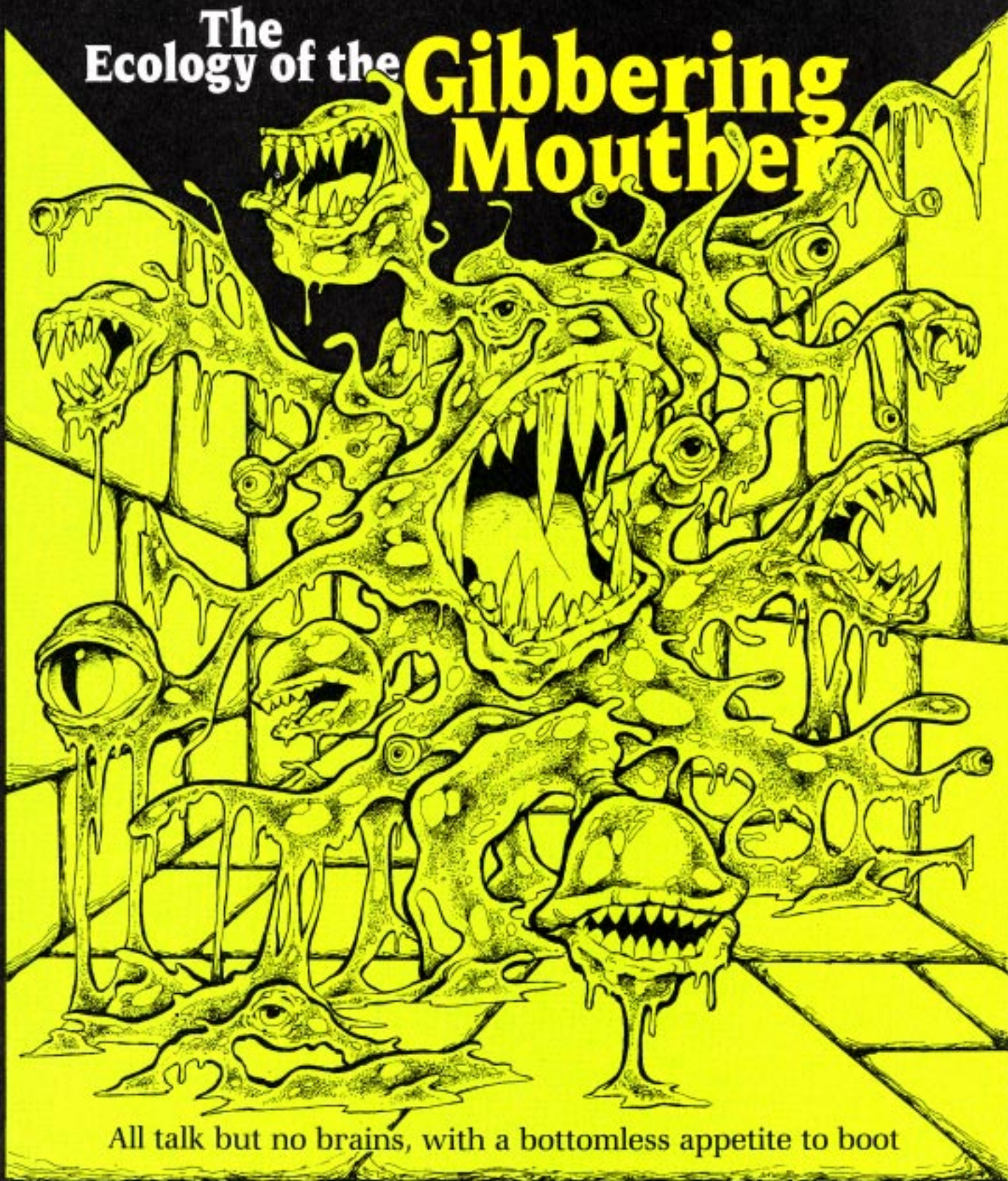
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The Ecology of the Gibbering Mouthers



Artwork by Stephen Schwartz

All talk but no brains, with a bottomless appetite to boot

"Lykan."

There are times when a single word can be more startling than a heavy-handed clap on the shoulder. Lykan is my birth name. The problem? It wasn't the name I was using at the time.

I turned around toward the speaker with an inane grin and a denial on my lips. "I'm sorry, kind sir, but you must have

mistaken me for . . . oh, hell." (That last bit came as I saw who was accosting me.)

I'm a big man—unfortunate, since it's hard to disguise size—but this guy was even bigger. The impression of size wasn't hurt by the fact that he was carrying a mace the size of a small watchtower, and by the fact that he stood a full head taller

than the two fighters in plate mail who flanked him.

I knew his face, of course. Who doesn't know the face of the vice prelate, second-ranking cleric in the Order of the Prelacy? I knew his name too—Reifus endearingly nicknamed "the Pagan Hammer"—and he obviously knew mine, which he proceeded to demonstrate a second time.

by Nigel D. Findley

"You are Lykan," he said in a growl that would make a war dog proud, "the thief."

I glanced over my shoulder at my audience, which was listening with growing interest, and I gestured for him to lower his voice. "Peace, good sir," I said, playing to the gallery. "Perhaps we can clear up this . . . misunderstanding." I stepped closer to him—his bodyguards stiffened—keeping my hands in plain sight and a fawning smile on my face.

"You are Lykan," he growled again. But this time his voice was pitched lower. "I have need of your services."

With an effort, I kept astonishment off my face. "Well, then," I said, "perhaps we can deal."

He scowled. "I talk. You obey. You live." Whatever happened to the fine art of negotiation? I sighed. "All right."

They escorted me to the Prelacy's headquarters, the Basilica—you know the building, the only church built according to the Ancient Barbarian Fortress school of architecture—and into a reception room large enough for the prelate to receive a full battalion, should it strike his fancy. I stood while the Pagan Hammer sat on an ornate wooden throne (the throne normally reserved for the prelate). I raised an eyebrow.

Reifus nodded and answered the unspoken question. "Yes. The prelate has gone to his eternal reward, as the Father wills." He made a complex gesture, but his heart wasn't in it and his presentation was desultory. Then he got down to business. "The Order of the Prelacy keeps its coffers and its treasures within this Basilica," he said—and I could hear the capital letters—"within the Vault of the Holies. You probably know that, considering your occupation."

Though he said it with a sneer, I took it as a compliment to my thorough research. "Of course," I told him. "And I also know that the vault is guarded by a trap that your prelate designed himself. What of it?"

Reifus raised his eyes to whatever heaven the prelate was now occupying, and he controlled himself with an effort. "Yes, the trap. That's where your skills will prove of use."

I caught on then and tried not to giggle. "He didn't tell you how to disarm it, did he? How inconsiderate of him."

Reifus scowled again; he was very good at scowling. "I need—the Order needs to gain access to the treasures. You will disarm the trap and open the vault."

"And if I won't?"

His face was like a rock. "Then I shall kill you."

I sighed, having already known the answer to that question. "I need some information first. What's in the vault?"

"You have no need to know," he said gruffly.

"Well, did the prelate leave any notes behind—personal writings, anything like that?"

"You have no need to know."

Again, I sighed. "When did he set up the trap? Where had he been just beforehand? What had he been reading? Tell me anything that'll give me a clue—"

He cut me off. "You have no—"

"—need to know. Right." I ground my teeth in frustration. "Look, did the prelate know he was dying, and did he tell anyone—anyone—the secret?"

The Pagan Hammer's lips made a single thin line. He stared at me in a new and uncomfortable way. "Yes, he knew he was dying, but no, he didn't tell anyone." There was a strange tone to the cleric's voice. I made a mental note not to ask in any depth *how* the prelate had met his maker.

I gave up. "Okay, you win. Take me to the vault."

He did. Down into the bowels of the Basilica we went, eventually stopping in front of a heavy ironbound door. Reifus dismissed the two guards who'd been dogging my steps. I watched them leave, then turned to the cleric with a nasty grin. "So you think, wearing your armor and packing your mace, you're more than a match for a sniveling, unarmed thief. Is that what you think?"

"Yes," he said.

I glanced him up and down a moment, then put my mind on business and looked at the door. "Is this the vault?"

"The first door."

"And beyond the first door?"

"The second door."

His dialogue was beginning to irritate me. "What if I refuse to go farther?"

"I'll kill you."

"And if I try but fail?"

"If the trap doesn't kill you, I will."

I was as good as dead, so I quit stalling. I pulled out my thieves' kit and turned to the lock—a big, clunky, old fashioned one. I laugh at locks like that. I laughed at this lock, picked it, and swung open the door. Just before I stepped through, I said to Reifus, "Shut the door behind me, but don't lock it. And don't come in, or I just might disarm the trap by letting you walk into it." His expression told me I had no worry on that score; the thought of the trap scared the religion out of him. I grabbed a lit torch from a scone on the wall and stepped through the first door. Reifus shut the door behind me.

There was a short passageway between the first and second doors. I scanned the floor for trip wires, trapped stones—the usual things. There was nothing. But when I rested my hand on the stonework beside the second door, the surface felt slightly warm. Oh-ho, I thought.

I knew something about the prelate—my research was even better than Reifus thought. While he was working his way up the hierarchical ladder, the prelate had been a busy boy with his traps, setting up tricky protections for various church valuables. Like any ambitious thief checking out the prize purses in his territory, I'd read everything I could about the prelate's masterworks, and I was impressed (as

much as I can be by an amateur). The prelate, it seems, favored biological traps. In fact, he might have been the one who conceived that oft-imitated beauty where the trap dumps the victim into a gelatinous cube. With that in mind, I knew exactly what was on the other side of the door.

I pulled a glob of soft wax out of my kit and quickly fashioned a pair of earplugs. Next, out came some gauze from my first-aid supplies (it pays to be prepared); I bound a strip across my eyes. I could still see, but dimly—which is how I wanted to see. I picked the lock—it was as easy as picking my teeth—and swung open the second door. Prepared as I was, I almost choked on the reek of ammonia and other noxious substances that wafted out.¹

There it was, just as expected: a gibbering moulder, the prelate's biological trap, sitting in the middle of a bare room with glass-lined walls.

Gods, but it was ugly in the torchlight—all eyes and mouths, like a bevy of stool pigeons. The moulder lurched its green, slimy body toward me, all its mouths working. Some were biting at the floor, pulling its nasty bulk along; others were babbling nonstop.

Imagine all the inmates of an asylum talking, screaming, and mumbling at once. The noise the moulder was making was even worse than that—or it would have been if I could have heard it through my earplugs. At least madmen speak in voices that are human. The moulder doesn't; its din is a combination of sounds resembling human voices, animal noises, and things you would rather not think about. It's enough to unseat your reason. It's the sound of chaos incarnate—not just the voices of the insane, but the voice of insanity itself. It's the voice of every creature that makes up the moulder, each crying out its torment.

I used to wonder where the moulder got all of its eyes and mouths. One day someone told me. There's a theory—and I've no reason to dispute it—that creatures absorbed by a moulder become part of the moulder.² Their minds merge with its mind, and they exist forever, irreversibly mad, in a horrible form of living death. When I saw this moulder, I believed it all.

I know a little about moulders (it's good business to learn at least something about all the things in the world that want to eat you), but I don't know where they come from. Apparently, no one does. Some cite these hideous creatures as examples of why mages shouldn't be allowed to experiment with magic.

Gibbering moulders are very hard to kill. People will tell you the moulder's brain is buried somewhere in its middle, and that's why it's so hard to land a telling blow. Actually, the creature's nervous system is distributed throughout its bulk; it has no distinct organ that you can point at and call a brain. Hit a small pseudopod and you're just as likely—or unlikely—to hit brain tissue as you are when you run

the beast through with a battle lance. You can't even suffocate it properly.³

One thing I do know about mouters reinforces one of my pet peeves. I've got some advice for people (like the ex-prelate) who do their own traps: Don't. Use a thief to stop a thief. I could have told the prelate the problem with the gibbering mouter. Yes, it'll confuse, it'll kill, it'll eat anyone who comes in to steal your treasure. But if left alone long enough, it'll eat your treasure—that is, if the treasure's not on fire. That's why I wasn't too surprised to find a bare room—once a treasure room—at the end of the passage.⁴

I didn't stop to ponder all of this then and there. I acted. Otherwise, I would have known the mouter's secrets more intimately than I really cared to. I backpedaled fast, just as the monster advanced and one of its mouths cut loose with a nasty gob of saliva. The liquid struck the wall behind me (I duck fast) and exploded impressively. I almost dropped the torch when I felt the heat and pressure from the burst on my back. Even through the gauze, the flash was impressive enough to almost blind me. Mouter spittle contains what alchemists call ammonium iodide, an unstable compound and an effective contact explosive: lots of flash, some punch, and an impressive bang. It's easy to concoct in a lab; I've used it myself on occasion. But the mouter does it naturally.⁵

I kept moving back. The mouter kept advancing. The stone floor around the monster smelled like it was baking; it was probably beginning to soften now that the creature was out of its glass-lined cell. This was just another of the mouter's tricks. Lots of people think a mouter's control over ground consistency is magical. Not really; it secretes a hellish mixture of acids, solvents, and other foul fluids that break down the integrity of stone. The heat I felt was simply the heat liberated by this chemical reaction—an exothermic reaction, an alchemist friend called it. If there's any magic, it's in the fact that the mouter can wallow in this corrosive stuff and not dissolve itself. (Incidentally, that's why the room was lined with glass. The prelate must have known something about mouters. Glass is one of the few substances they can't digest.)

The mouter let fly with another spitball—flash, bang!—but I was out of there, already at the other end of the corridor by the first door. Mouters are nasty beggars, but they're slow. I had enough time to take off the gauze blindfold, remove the earplugs, and pocket the lot. Then I threw the torch at the mouter as it closed in. A mouth opened to catch it, and the flame went out immediately. The mouter shut up, probably startled by the pain. I opened the door just enough to slip through, then shut it calmly behind me.

Reifus was anything but calm, almost hopping from foot to foot. His face was streaked with sweat. I smiled up at his face and said casually, "Piece of cake."

His jaw dropped. "You did it?"

I didn't dignify his question with an answer. "Everything that's in there is yours."

Reifus stared hard into my eyes. But if the eyes are windows to the soul, I'd long ago learned how to close the shutters.

I knew Reifus intended to kill me, but not until he'd made sure of his new-found wealth. He opened the door and stepped inside, striding down the dark hall. I remembered only at the last second to slap my hands over my ears.

His scream was very, very loud—louder than the babble. I wished I'd kept the earplugs in. I won't trouble you with details on my subsequent escape.

I suppose I could have told him the mouter was probably just on the other side of the door—that, I could have done. But then again, I figured he had no need to know.

Footnotes

1. Under ideal conditions, a mouter's pungent reek can give warning of its presence up to 20' away.

2. A mouter drains blood and nutrients from its victim—hence the additional 1 hp damage per round per mouth attached. When the victim reaches zero hit points and falls into a terminal coma, the mouter flows over the body and begins to absorb it. The mouter secretes digestive juices that dissolve the victim's outer tissue. Complete dissolution takes 1d6 + 2 rounds for a human-size body; the body is irrecoverable after 1d3 + 1 rounds. The secretions have an additional effect, however: they supply the nutrients needed by the victim's brain and nervous system to keep the creature alive. The tissues making up the victim's central nervous system and its eyes are absorbed into the mouter, intact and functional. Though the nervous tissues are spread throughout the bulk of the mouter, they remain in contact through thin fibrils of mouter nervous tissue. The victim's brain, therefore, never actually dies, and its anima (its soul or spirit, as described on page 10 of the AD&D 1st Edition *Legends & Lore*) is never freed. Thus, a creature absorbed by a mouter cannot be reincarnated or resurrected, and cannot be contacted through a speak with dead spell, since the victim is not strictly dead. It is only when the mouter is slain that the victim's anima is free to travel to the Outer or Inner plane awaiting it.

Once the absorption is complete, the mouter grows new eyes to surround and utilize the victim's corneas. The victim's teeth are not affected by the enzymes since the enzymes cannot dissolve dental enamel, and these are also "pirated" for use by the mouter.

Absorption by a mouter invariably causes the victim to go incurably insane. The mind of a victim known to have been absorbed by a mouter can be contacted

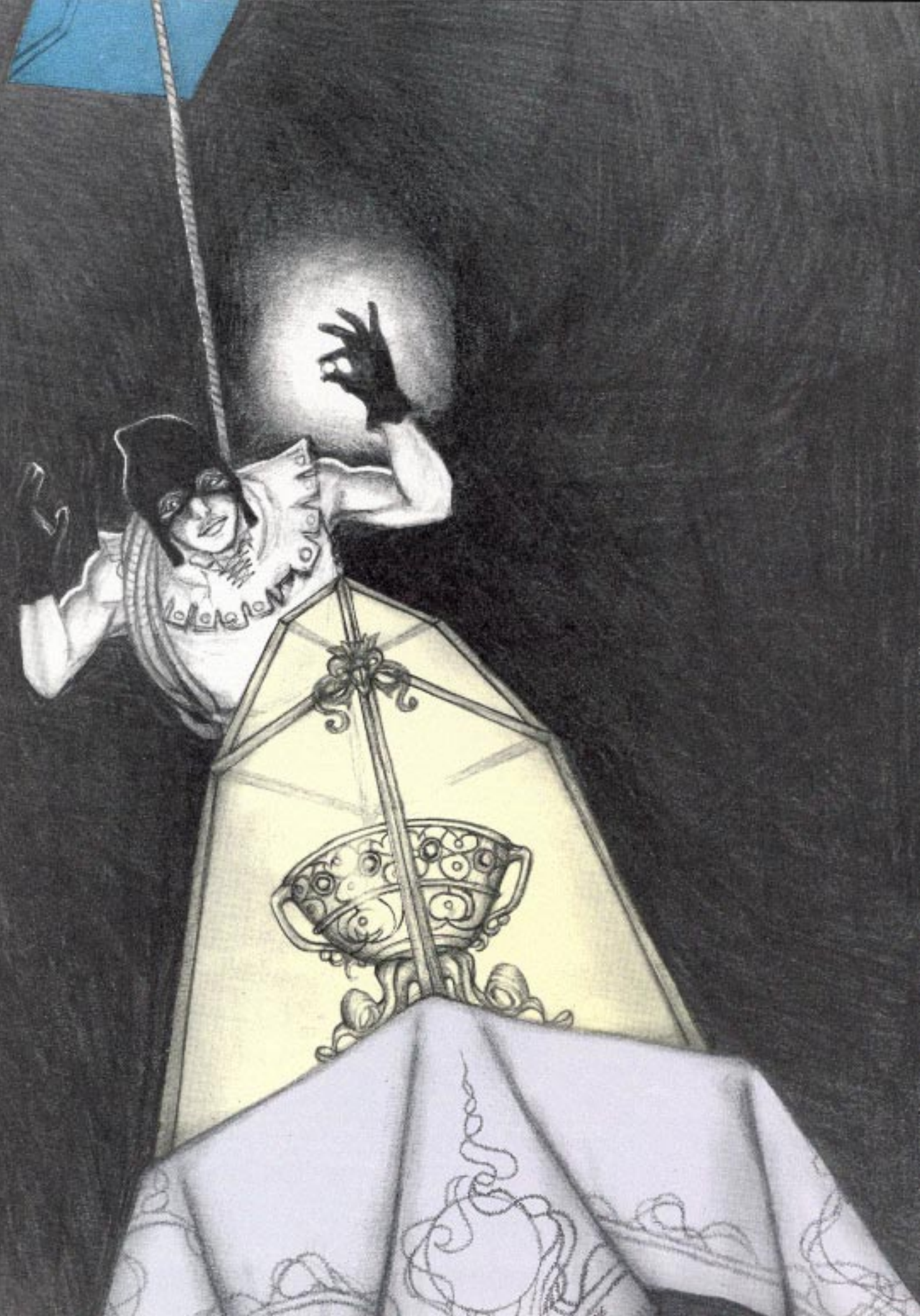
through ESP, telepathy, and similar spells, but with great difficulty (+ 6 bonus to saving throws, for spells that allow them). The mind is totally insane, however, and nothing of use can be communicated to or learned from the absorbed intelligence. In fact, there is a cumulative 25% chance per round of contact that the spell-caster performing such mind reading will become insane for 1d4 + 8 rounds following such contact.

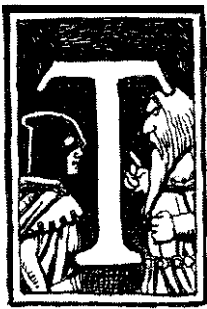
3. Metabolically, the mouter is as confused as its appearance implies. Though it doesn't breathe in the traditional sense, some parts of its body require oxygen and some do not (the latter using other chemicals to respire). As a consequence, it is impossible to asphyxiate a mouter: it simply shifts to anaerobic respiration so that it no longer requires oxygen. Similarly, poisonous gases (e.g., *cloudkill*) are ineffective; the mouter shifts its metabolism to a different system that is unaffected by the poisonous gas. Injected and ingestive poisons are somewhat effective against a mouter (though the creature saves at +6), because these typically cause tissue damage in addition to their metabolic effects.)

4. A gibbering mouter eats virtually anything, whether the food is animal, vegetable, or mineral. While it prefers animal tissue (preferably still alive and kicking) and vegetable matter, the mouter can also absorb and make use of most metals and minerals. This is a consequence of its strange metabolism: Virtually anything can be incorporated into its makeup or used as a life-giving nutrient. If there is no animal or plant tissue available, a mouter can change its metabolism so as to sustain itself by absorbing other material. If they actually swallow or absorb it, mouters can dissolve and utilize any material except dental enamel (i.e., teeth), glass, diamond, adamantite, and mithral. These materials are resistant to all of a mouter's corrosive secretions and are eventually expelled.

When it is well fed, a mouter can reproduce through binary fission, much like an amoeba; one mouter becomes two smaller mouters. The offspring are initially 2 HD but grow to full size (assuming an adequate food supply is available) in 3-6 months. Offspring have the full powers of an adult from the outset. When a mouter divides, its mouths and eyes are shared evenly between its offspring. When a mouter has insufficient food or must live on minerals, it does not reproduce.

5. These secretions are also highly corrosive to flesh. Touching a mouter causes 1d4 hp corrosive damage to bare flesh. Metals are unaffected unless they remain in contact with the mouter for an extended time or are absorbed. Nonmetallic weapons, armor, and other items (e.g., wooden clubs, staves, leather armor, etc.) that come in contact with a mouter for even an instant must save vs. acid or dissolve immediately.





he rope swayed gently, all but unseen in the shadows that filled the room. In spite of the liberal helping of grease that had been applied to the lip of the skylight, the rope gave off soft creaking noises as one of the shadows began sliding down its length.

"This should be close enough," Alcar thought to himself as he wrapped the end of the rope around his waist and tied it off with a secure knot. He then let go of the rope to hang spread-eagled above the display case, his soot-blackened face mere inches from the glass.

The Chalice of Corazor sat on a small velvet cushion within the planes of glass. To the naked eye it appeared a simple golden goblet, giving no hint of the awesome powers that it supposedly contained.

Alcar drew a small black pearl from a pouch on his belt. As he brought it close to the case, the pearl began to glow. By the time it was within an inch of the glass, the pearl was brighter than the thief had ever seen it in the six years since he had "acquired" it, giving off enough light to read by.

Satisfied, Alcar put the pearl away and began clearing all nonessential thoughts from his mind, preparing it for the final assault. For a moment, all he could feel were the throbbing aftereffects of his rooftop battle a few minutes earlier, but he quickly pushed the pain to the back of his consciousness with an ease born of years of experience. Moments later he was ready and reached out with every sense at his disposal.

Using this same technique, Alcar had discovered the demon guarding the roof before it had discovered him. Now his heightened perceptions were once again screaming their warnings at him. The slight asymmetry of the case stood out like a full moon in the dark of night. His fingers traced microscopic scratches in the glass as if they were bas-relief carvings. The faint scent of poison in his nostrils made Alcar feel as if he were drowning in a vat of, almond liqueur.

Alcar soaked up this barrage of sensory impressions, his trained mind distilling from it the fact that there were two traps on the case. One, a poisoned dart of devious simplicity, was swiftly disarmed. The other was magical in nature and was set to go off when the lid on the case was raised. That one would require a bit more care.

"Never rob a mage," the thief mumbled to himself. Those had been the parting words of his mentor, Altimar, when a much younger Alcar had set out to find his fortune in an unsuspecting world.

"But Altimar, old friend, even you would be tempted by stakes such as these!"

Alcar pushed a hard lump of gum arabic into his mouth and began kneading it with his tongue and teeth. Once the wad had softened up enough, he took it from his mouth and gently stuck it to one side of the glass case. A moment later he pressed one end of a short, weighted string into the gum. The other end he tied to his rope.

From out of the depths of his pouch Alcar pulled a wooden stylus with a sparkling gem set into one end. Pressing it against the glass case, he traced out a rough circle centered on the lump of gum. The diamond on the tip of the stylus cut deeply into the glass, leaving a minute

Thief On A String

By Dean Edmonds

Illustrations by Daniel Horne

groove behind it which scintillated eagerly in the moonlight filtering down from above.

The thief next took out a tiny wooden mallet with cloth wrapped around its head and began tapping on the circular cut that he'd made in the glass. After a dozen carefully placed taps, the circle of glass popped free, the weighted string pulling it safely away from the case to where it wouldn't accidentally set off the remaining trap.

Alcar smiled in greedy anticipation. For fifteen years he had been stealing from others for a living, facing death or worse on an almost daily basis as he slowly built up his craft. The chalice represented the end of all of that. Even if he failed to learn the artifact's secrets and was forced to sell it, the proceeds would allow him to retire and live out the remainder of his days in indecent luxury.

He reached out with one hand to grip his fortune. . . .

"Shala-gora," said an unfamiliar voice off to his left, and suddenly the thief found himself unable to move. A moment later the room was bathed in light. Alcar tried to look toward the voice but couldn't make his muscles obey him. Fortunately, his heart and lungs seemed to be free of the disability.

"Foolish little thief," the voice said, moving closer. "Didn't anyone ever tell you that you should never try to rob a wizard?" Alcar didn't bother to answer, not that he had much choice in the matter.

A pair of slippered feet moved into Alcar's field of vision, weaving a complex dance around the lurkers and other traps that covered the floor. Now a pair of gnarled old hands appeared and slipped a slim golden ring onto one of the fingers of Alcar's outstretched hand.

"You will make no attempt to escape," the voice intoned in a formal manner. "You will neither harm me nor touch my person. You will not take off the ring. You will not allow others to break any of my commands on your behalf." There was a pause, then: "Dinro-skeelat!"

With that last arcane phrase, Alcar suddenly found himself in control of his body once more. He took the opportunity to look up at his captor, a tall, slim man in silken robes, his hair mostly white with the occasional fleck of black, remnant of a distant youth. Alcar needed no introduction to know that this was the mage Porozan, owner of the mansion that he had broken into.

The man was close enough that Alcar considered slugging him, but some form of magical compulsion refused to let him complete the motion.

"Congratulations!" the wizard said with a chuckle. "You made it further than any of the others. You might even have succeeded, had I not-taken into account the possibility that someone might manage to defeat Catarilzakptinabliion." He nodded toward the open skylight above. "You see, I had another of his fellow demons, bound to me, waiting on the spirit plane with orders to report to me if Catarilzakptinabliion were ever to return."

Porozan's expression turned grim. "But now that they have both fulfilled their duties to me, their geases are broken and I shall have to summon up two more—a prospect which I do not much relish. Since you were responsible for the loss of their services, it seems only appropriate that you make it up to me in whatever way possible. Untie yourself and follow me."

To Alcar's amazement, he found himself immediately

obeying the man's commands. It was all he could do to keep from tripping over the traps in the room in his haste to follow the wizard out.

"What the hell is going on?" he demanded.

"Lower your voice," Porozan admonished him. "I don't want you waking the neighbors."

"Cork you!" Alcar tried to shout, but the words came out in a subdued whisper.

Porozan looked back at the thief with an annoyed expression. "You will henceforth speak to me with respect," he commanded, "and you will address me as 'Master!'"

"Go kiss a basilisk," Alcar thought, but the words that found their way to his lips were: "Yes, Master."

"That's better." Porozan turned and resumed his journey, the confused thief trotting obediently along behind him.

By this time, Alcar had begun to suspect that the ring on his finger was the source of his sudden, uncharacteristic subservience. He held it up to his eyes as he walked, noting the arcane runes etched into its golden surface. The thief could rotate the ring or slide it up and down his finger at will, but no matter how hard he tried, he could not bring himself to slip it all the way off.

Porozan came to a sudden stop in one hall and pointed at an iron-bound door.

"That is the Vault," he informed his captive. "You are never to, enter it nor is any part of your body ever to come within five feet of it. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Master," Alcar responded meekly, shuffling the requisite distance away from the door and glaring at Porozan the whole time.

The wizard noticed the look that Alcar was giving him and smiled. "You might as well get used to it," he said. "So long as I wear this ring, and you yours, you will be forced to obey my commands." He held up his right hand where a thin band of gold gleamed evilly on one linger.

Porozan moved the hand to stifle a yawn. "After all of tonight's commotion," he added, "I probably won't be getting up until around 10 o'clock, but I'll expect you to have my breakfast waiting for me then. Come along now and I'll show you the kitchen."

Alcar followed his new master down the hallway with a sinking heart.

Over the course of the next week, Alcar came to understand the powers and limits of the cursed ring he wore on his right hand. The ring forced him to obey any command that Porozan chose to give him, no matter how demeaning or self-destructive it might be. But the ring held sway only over Alcar's actions, not his thoughts. Porozan could command the hapless thief to not escape, but he could not command him to not think about escaping.

Alcar began biding his time. Sooner or later, he knew, Porozan was bound to give him contradictory orders. That, the thief hoped, would provide him with a loophole through which he might escape.

The opportunity finally came, late one evening, when the wizard commanded Alcar to give him a back rub. Although this contradicted Porozan's earlier dictum about never touching his person, the thief was dismayed to find that his body swiftly responded, giving the mage a gentle massage, then backing off when done. When Alcar tenta-

tively tried to touch Porozan again, he found that the old rule was firmly back in force. Apparently, the ring resolved contradictory orders by temporarily suspending earlier commands then restoring them once the latest order had been fulfilled.

Alcar had to admit that this approach made sense, but that did nothing to ease his growing despair.

As the days turned into weeks, Alcar learned a grudging respect for the old wizard's intellect. His commandments were all carefully worded and fitted together to prevent the thief from harming him or escaping from him. Alcar was confined to the mansion and banned from communicating with anyone else, be it a guest or a passerby on the street outside. But the one commandment that puzzled the thief the most was that which forced him to give a wide berth to the iron-bound doorway in the mansion's southern hall each time he passed that way.

Alcar had initially assumed that the Vault contained Porozan's valuables, and that the geas placed upon him to stay away from that room was simply the wizard's way of protecting his possessions. But if that was the case, then why did Porozan later issue a commandment that Alcar could steal nothing from him? That would seem a bit redundant and wasteful—unusual traits for Porozan. Furthermore, if the Vault contained the wizard's valuables, then why in Dara's name were the Chalice of Corazor and other priceless artifacts sitting in display cases in a room on the other side of the house?

The mystery of the Vault deepened a few days later when a short, dark-skinned mage paid a visit to the mansion. Alcar had been a prisoner in Porozan's home for better than a month now and, aside from delivery boys, this was the first visitor that the wizard had ever received in his home. Little wonder, too—the two magicians greeted each other warily, sheathing themselves in so many layers of protective magic that the air between them shimmered and sparkled.

"I've come here for the Orb, Porozan," the visitor announced without warmth.

"You know my price, Gillamon," Alcar's captor replied, equally coolly.

Gillamon hawked and spat on the carpet. "It's extortion, you miserable ratbag! The Eggs of Morinar are worth a dozen such Orbs."

"Ah, I see." Porozan rose from his chair. "If you feel that way, then I suppose we've no further business . . ."

"Fossilized dungheap!" Gillamon grated in a low voice. "Spare me your amateurish playacting. I have your price and will pay it."

The visiting wizard snapped the fingers of his left hand. There was a clap of thunder, and a silver egg-carton appeared in the middle of the room with a dozen gray-colored eggs in it, their surfaces giving off an oily sheen. Two hoops of colored light—one blue, the other green—spun about the carton fast enough to make Alcar dizzy.

"Temporal stasis?" Porozan asked with a smirk. "Aren't you being just a bit overcautious?"

Gillamon grunted noncommittally. "Maybe, but I'll bet you don't take the Orb to bed with you at night, either."

"No, but I have my own, less extreme, precautions. If you'll wait here a moment, I'll go get the Orb."

Porozan turned and, gesturing for Alcar to follow him,

left the room and headed toward the Vault. Once they were out of earshot, Porozan stopped and turned to face the thief.

"Stand still a moment," he commanded, then took up the slim black wand which hung from his belt and pointed its silver-tipped end at Alcar. "Shala-gora," he intoned, and for the second time in his life Alcar found every voluntary muscle in his body frozen into immobility.

Porozan lowered the wand and wandered off down the hallway out of Alcar's sight. The thief's keen hearing was able to pick up the sounds of a key rattling in a lock and a door being swung open on infrequently used hinges.

There followed a few moments of indeterminate muffled sounds before Alcar heard the door swing shut and its bolt click into place once more. A moment later Porozan reappeared, now wearing gloves on his hands and carrying a glowing yellow iridescent sphere cupped between them.

"Dinro-skeelat!" he muttered, freeing Alcar from the wand's effects once more, but the thief hardly noticed.

What was so special about the Vault?, he wondered. Why would Porozan use the wand to hold him when a simple command would do? In fact, why bother with any special commands at all? The existing ones seemed to cover all the necessary contingencies.

As he followed Porozan back to the parlor, Alcar decided that it was high time he paid a visit to the Vault.

Above and beyond everything else, Alcar was a thief. That being the case, the litany he kept repeating in his mind was the complete antithesis of everything that he believed in.

"I'm not going to *steal* anything," he told himself for the nth time, "I'm just going to borrow it. I promise to put it back immediately afterward. The ring will see to that."

Alcar was appalled at the degree to which his thieflly skills had deteriorated during his weeks of slavery. He winced at the minute noises his picks made and the length of time that it was taking him to master the simple lock on Porozan's bedroom door. Prisoner or no, he promised himself that in future he would stay in practice.

If the ring had any consciousness of its own, Alcar's mental importunings must have convinced it of his sincerity, for it did not interfere with his attempts to pick the lock. Moments later, he was able to swing the door open and creep stealthily inside.

The thief was already familiar with the layout of his master's bedroom, having been in it twice each day of his captivity: once to deliver breakfast in the morning and a second time later in the day to collect the dirty dishes and make up the bed. Alcar was pretty sure that the old mage would object to this midnight raid, but as he'd made no specific prohibitions in regard to the matter, the ring let the thief do as he pleased.

Being careful not to wake the sleeping wizard, Alcar picked up the old mage's key ring from where it lay beside the wand on the nightstand and stole quietly from the room.

Back downstairs, he took a pair of straw brooms and tied them end-to-end, then strapped one of the keys from the key ring firmly to one end. Holding the whole rig out before him, he was able to slip the key into the lock on the Vault door without coming within five feet of the door.

Alcar's knowledge of locks was such that he'd been able to pick out the correct key right away. Nonetheless, it still took over an hour of jiggling and adjusting his cumbersome rig before the bolt finally snapped back. He had to give his aching arms a few moments of rest before he could find enough strength to prod open the Vault door and peer in from a distance.

The Vault itself was not very impressive. It was a small, austere, ten-foot-square room with shelf-lined walls holding all manner of bizarre and arcane-looking objects. The Eggs of Morinar sat in one corner, looking rather mundane without their twirling hoops of magic.

Alcar spared little attention for the contents of the Vault; he was more concerned with the properties of the room itself. Drawing the black pearl from his pouch, he fastened it to the end of his makeshift pole and extended it toward the doorway.

The pearl glowed a bit as it approached the entrance to the Vault, but not nearly as much as one might expect given that something as powerful as the Eggs of Morinar were inside. At least Alcar *assumed* that the Eggs were powerful, given the way Porozan and Gillamon had treated them.

The pearl did not brighten appreciably as it got closer to the room, but the moment it crossed over the threshold its light suddenly went out. Alcar hastily pulled back on the broomstick, fearing, damage to his precious trinket, but the pearl's gentle glow returned the instant that it was out of the room.

Alcar raised his eyebrows in surprise. Apparently, the Vault was some sort of anti-magic zone. That would explain why Porozan had banned the thief from entering the Vault and why he resorted to the wand whenever he wanted to visit it himself. If either Porozan's ring or Alcar's ring ever entered the Vault, the geas would doubtless be broken, at least temporarily, allowing Alcar to slip off his ring and escape.

"All well and fine," the thief thought to himself. "But how does this buy me my freedom?"

Alcar's eyes flicked toward the Eggs of Morinar once more and a crafty smile tugged at the corners of his lips. Perhaps there was a way after all . . .

When Alcar prepared Porozan's breakfast the next morning, he carefully excluded the boiled eggs which were a regular feature of the wizard's morning meal. The mage noted their absence almost immediately.

"Where are my eggs?!" he squawked.

"They are downstairs, Master," Alcar replied. "Shall I bring them up here for you?"

"Yes, you fool!" he snapped. "Go fetch them! And be quick about it before the rest of my meal goes cold!"

The thief spun about and dashed speedily from the room, more to hide his smile of triumph than to obey his master's request for alacrity. Alcar's intent was to bring Porozan his eggs—his Eggs of Morinar, that is. That, of course, would necessitate entering the Vault.

But the thief's smile quickly evaporated when he reached the bottom of the stairs and found his feet carrying him not toward the Vault but back to the kitchen. Apparently, if there were multiple ways of fulfilling one of

Porozan's orders, the ring would allow him to choose only the one which involved the least conflict with the wizard's previous commands.

Alcar boiled up two eggs exactly the way Porozan liked them, then carted them back up to the wizard's bedroom, cursing the ring the entire time. If the elderly mage noticed his captive's sudden ill-humor, he gave no indication of it, consuming his meal in silence.

Later that night, after he'd finished up all his household chores and dutifully practiced his lockpicking skills, Alcar retired to his room and dropped onto the edge of his bed with a great sigh of relief. His plan with the Eggs of Morinar had required that he leave the Vault unlocked from the previous night. With the plan's failure, he suddenly found himself in danger of discovery. Throughout the day, whenever Porozan headed down the southern hallway, the thief's heart would begin pounding so loud that he thought it would deafen him.

Fortunately, the mage found no reason to enter the Vault, and Alcar's trickery went undetected. Now all that remained was to sneak back into Porozan's room, borrow the keys once more, and relock the Vault. It was going to be another hour or two before the mage settled into deep slumber, and Alcar dutifully spent the time analyzing what had gone wrong with his plan.

Clearly the ring had not been fooled by his deliberate misinterpretation of wizard's command. Alcar was beginning to suspect that the ring had no intelligence of its own but simply relied upon the wearer's understanding of the orders given him. So it wasn't good enough for Alcar to fool Porozan: he had to fool himself as well!

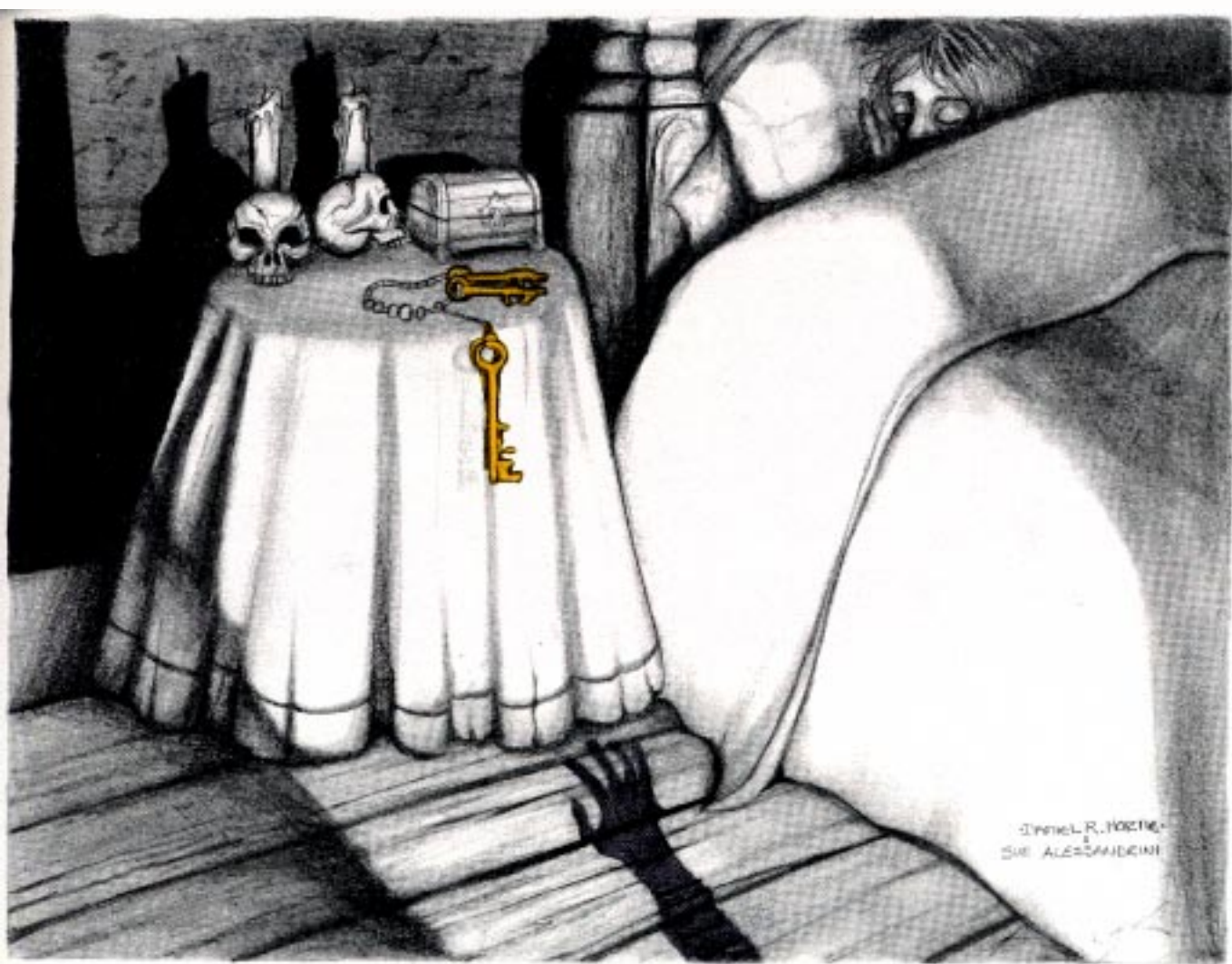
The thief shook his head in despair. He'd heard about some fakirs who were able to put a man into a deep trance and thereby convince him of things that were blatantly untrue, but it was not a technique that Alcar had any mastery of. And even if he did, the ring probably wouldn't let him use it on himself as that would eventually lead to escape—which was clearly against Porozan's orders.

So, if he couldn't get into the Vault himself, maybe he could get the wizard to go into the Vault without using the wand. Alcar's heart skipped a beat. That was it! He could replace the wizard's wand with a powerless stick, then . . . but no, once again the ring would interfere as that would ultimately lead to a violation of Porozan's prohibitions against theft and escape.

And that, Alcar realized, was the crux of the matter. He could lay any escape plans he chose but he would be prevented from carrying them out so long as he wore the ring and Porozan its twin: the wizard's orders would see to that. Therefore, he had to find some hole in the orders themselves. Something that would let him escape without interference from the ring.

Alcar took out a sheet of paper and a stylus and began listing all the commandments that Porozan had ever given him. This was not a simple task, as he had never bothered to commit them to memory; he hadn't needed to with the ring watching over him all the time.

After an hour of racking his brain this way, Alcar decided that he could ignore all of the short-term commands, such as "sit down," "bring me my slippers," etc, and just



concentrate on those that were worded in a permanent fashion. The list he ended up with was surprisingly short:

1. Do not try to escape.
2. Do not harm Porozan.
3. Do not touch Porozan.
4. Do not take off the ring.
5. Do not allow others to break any of Porozan's commandments.
6. Always speak to Porozan respectfully and address him as "Master."
7. Do not enter the Vault or come within five feet of it.
8. Do not leave the mansion.
9. Do not communicate with anyone except Porozan.

Alcar whiled away the night, gazing at his list, looking for some inconsistency, some hole that would allow him to escape. But that was the problem: any hole he *did* find would lead to escape, which would be prevented by rule number one, and probably by rule number four as well.

Growling with frustration, Alcar hurled his stylus down onto the bed with a thud. He had to get moving anyway if he wanted to get the Vault locked up before sunrise. He rose from the bed and had begun gathering together his equipment when a fragment of memory trickled through his brain.

There was something else that Porozan had said that first, fateful night. Something not on the list. When Alcar finally remembered it, he frowned. It wasn't much to work with, but it was all he had.

This time there was no smile on the thief's face as he laid his plans—just desperate hope. That his new scheme would start—as his previous, unsuccessful one had—with

a nocturnal visit to Porozan's room left Alcar with a disturbing sense of déjà vu.

By the time Alcar got back up to Porozan's room the next morning to retrieve the breakfast dishes, the wizard was up and dressed, his wand and key ring hanging from their accustomed places on his belt. The old mage yawned and strode past Alcar and out of the room. The thief hurriedly scooped up the dirty dishes and scurried after his master.

The two of them walked along in silence for a few moments before Porozan paused and turned toward the thief, giving him an irritated look.

"Why do you dog my footsteps like that, man? The kitchen is down the other corridor."

"My apologies, Master. I was concerned that you might have some other tasks for me to perform."

The wizard's face took on a wary look. "You're unusually obsequious this morning," he noted, "What are you up to?"

Alcar gulped. If Porozan had framed the question as a command . . .

"Master, do you realize how *degrading* it is to be pulled willy nilly by this damnable ring? If I can obey your commands quickly enough on my own, I can avoid its coercion and retain at least some semblance of dignity."

"You call this fawning dignified?" The mage laughed cruelly. "Very well then. If nothing else, it should be entertaining to see how long you can keep it up."

They proceeded down the corridor once more, Porozan chuckling to himself and Alcar grinding his teeth in a

mixture of anger and anxiety. When they came even with the Vault, Alcar stopped dead in his tracks.

"What's that?" he said.

Porozan, several paces ahead of him, stopped and looked back, a frown on his face.

"What's what?" he asked.

"That sound," Alcar replied. He held one hand up before the wizard could say anything more and cocked his head toward the door of the Vault as if listening to some faint sound.

"There seems to be something . . ." the thief whispered. He tried to take a step toward the Vault but the ring immediately jerked him back. Alcar shrugged in resignation.

"What is it?" Porozan was whispering now.

"Probably nothing, Master. Just a rat perhaps—put it from your mind."

The wizard shook his head. "I think I'd better have a look," he said, pulling the wand from his belt. "Stand still." He raised the silver-tipped end and pointed it at the thief.

Alcar froze in place at the wizard's command and felt sudden panic course through his veins. "For how long?" he blurted out.

Porozan lowered the wand and scowled in annoyance. "It's just for a minute. Now stop snivelling, you worthless cretin!" He raised the wand once more.

"Shala-gora!" The hallway was briefly filled with tinny echoes of the keyword, then fell silent but for the breathing of the two men.

Alcar shuddered inwardly. If Porozan had left his command at a simple "Stand still," the thief might have remained frozen in place until they both died of hunger.

One minute later the command timed out, and Alcar found himself free to move once more. He stepped over to the motionless form of Porozan, the wizard's lips still parted in the act of uttering the last syllable of the wand's keyword.

Alcar tugged the wand from the mage's extended hand and observed its freshly painted tip. A few flakes of silver had come free, exposing the dark wood below, but the paint job had lasted long enough to accomplish its purpose.

Being careful not to touch Porozan's flesh, Alcar slowly worked the band of gold from the wizard's middle finger.

"You commanded me never to remove my ring," the thief told the statue before him. "But you said nothing about my removing yours." With that, he pocketed the ring and departed, leaving his erstwhile captor to gaze on in helpless rage.

Medrea laughed uncontrollably. "You mean," she gasped between bursts of laughter, "that he froze himself with his own wand?"

"Yup," Alcar replied, taking a sip of his ale. "It was a close thing though; I didn't think the paint on that wand was ever going to dry!"

The female thief controlled her laughter long enough to down the remainder of her drink. "But how come you were able to take his ring from him?" she asked.

"Easy," Alcar said as he refilled both of their mugs from the pitcher that the serving wench had left behind. "Porozan's commandments forbade me from touching his person. But I could still touch his ring, just so long as I didn't

touch him."

"No, no. I understand all that," Medrea reassured him. "But how come you were able to take your own ring off afterward?"

"Once I had the ring off of Porozan's finger, the geas was broken and I was free to do as I pleased."

"Exactly my point!" the woman exclaimed, her mental faculties surprisingly intact considering the amount of alcohol she had consumed over the last hour. "Surely you must have known that you'd be taking off your ring the moment you'd relieved him of his."

"Uh-huh," Alcar agreed. He could see what she was leading up to and was enjoying her obvious confusion.

"Well then, that would constitute a violation of Porozan's commands. So why did the ring let you go through with it?" she asked. "Sneaking into his room, repainting his wand—any of it?"

"Because it wasn't really a violation of his commands," he explained.

"What?"

Alcar smiled. "On my first night, Porozan told me that I would have to obey his commands so long as he wore the master ring. That in itself acted as a sort of modifier to all his other commands. It meant that I could do whatever I wanted to, carry out whatever plans I desired and the ring would not interfere, just so long as any intended violations would not occur while Porozan was still wearing the master ring."

"Holy Dara!" Medrea muttered, shaking her head in mock disgust. "You're no thief—you're a lawyer!"

Now it was Alcar's turn to laugh.

Medrea took another gulp of ale and used the back of her sleeve to wipe the foam from her lips. "So what did you do with him?" she inquired.

"Who, Porozan?"

The woman nodded.

"What *could* I do?" he asked her, spreading his hands out helplessly before him, palms up. "I don't know how to break a wizard's spells."

"You could have dragged him into that special vault of his," she pointed out. "That would probably have dispelled the wand's effects."

"I suppose so," Alcar admitted, "but who knows for sure? It can get dangerous, messing around with magicks you know nothing about."

"So you just left him frozen there?" Medrea asked in surprise.

"Oh heavens, no! That would be cruel. What sort of man do you take me for?" His features took on a look of injured innocence.

Medrea rolled her eyes in exasperation. "All right then, so what *did* you do with him?"

"Well, I figured that it was a matter best handled by another wizard." Alcar smiled as he lifted the mug to his lips. "So, I asked Gillamon to look in on him and see what he could do."

Medrea's howls of laughter filled the tavern once more.

Ω



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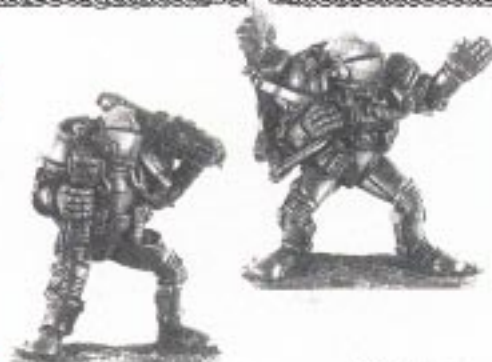
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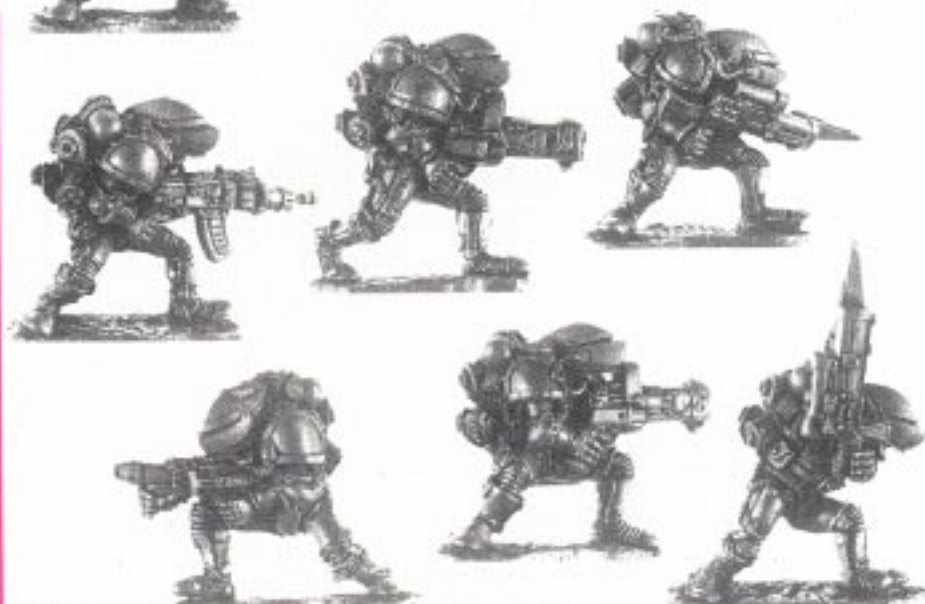
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. 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 standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this 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 and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, 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. 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 worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

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. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 246-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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NOTE: Be aware that there are now at least four SF/fantasy/gaming conventions with very similar names: ICON, held in Iowa; I-CON, in Long Island, N.Y.; I-KHAN, in Colorado Springs, Colo.; and I-CON, in British Columbia. Other duplicated convention names have been noted (e.g., DEMICON in Des Moines, Iowa, and Aberdeen, Md.). Plan carefully!

1990 GEN CON® Game Fair, August 9-12

Make your plans *now* to attend the biggest and best game convention of them all, at the MECCA Convention Center, Milwaukee, Wis. We've brought in over 10,000 people for two years running! Write to: 1990 GEN CON® Game Fair, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

BATTLETECH* : OPERATION GREEN FLAG, August 11-12

This mid-Atlantic regional BATTLETECH* convention is the first official FASA-sanctioned tournament to be held at the Central Penn Business School in Summerdale, Pa. Featured will be a vigorous round-robin and four-person lance competitions. Open gaming will also be available both days. Registration: \$8-12, depending on the date of registration. Attendance is limited. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 Third St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

GAME-FEST XI, August 15-19

This 11th-annual convention will be held in historic Old Town in San Diego, Calif. Over 50 gaming events include AD&D®, D&D®, AVALON HILL CLASSICS*, BATTLETECH*, CAR WARS*, TMN TURTLES*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, MONOPOLY*, and AXIS & ALLIES* games, with painting shows and more. Registration: \$20 before Aug. 10 (includes coupon book for on-site purchases), or \$30 at the door. Write to: GAME-FEST XI, 3954 Harney St., San Diego CA 92110; or call: (619) 291-1666.

KUBLA KHAN '90, August 17-18

Comics Utah presents this convention at the Redwood Multi-Purpose Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. This convention will feature comics, dealers, trading, RPGs, miniatures battles, contests, and prizes. Registration: \$7/day or \$10 for both days. Write to: Comics Utah, 2985 W. 3500 So., West Valley UT 84119; or call: (801) 966-8581.

DRAKCON '90, August 18-19

This convention will be held in the College Dining Room of the Northern College of Education on Hilton Drive in Aberdeen. Activities include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament and other games, all of which will raise money for famine relief. Bed and breakfast accommodations will be available. Write to: Sandy Douglas, 13 Springbank Terrace, Aberdeen, UNITED KINGDOM AB1 2LS; or call: 0224-572128.

ELTANNCON 'SO, August 18-19

This convention will be held at the Henderson Convention Center in Henderson, Nev. Events include AD&D®, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, BATTLETECH*, CAR WARS*, and CHAMPIONS* games. Registration: \$10, which allows the attendee to participate in all events on a first-come, first-served basis. Write to: ELTANNCON '90, 860 E. Twain #128, Dept. 456, Las Vegas NV 89109; or call: (702) 733-8626.

CAMALOT II, August 24-26

This will be held at the Sheraton Inn in Huntsville, Ala. Sponsored by the Huntsville Area Gamers and Role-players (H.A.G.A.R.), this convention's events include a wide variety of RPGs and war games, a video room, an art show, and a costume dance. Registration: \$20 at the door. Write to: CAMALOT II, 4931 B Cotton Row Apts., Huntsville AL 35810; or call: Bryan Jones at: (205) 837-9036.

GATEWAY X, August 31-September 3

This convention will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. Events include all types of family, strategy, adventure, board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming. Activities include flea markets, auctions, a dealers' area, seminars, demos, and special guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808; or call: (213) 420-3245.

NANCON 88 XII, August 31-September 3

This convention will be held at the Marriott Astrodome Hotel in Houston, Tex. Tournaments include AD&D® Open, AD&D® Team, CALL OF CTHULHU*, PARANOIA*, TWILIGHT 2000*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*, BATTLETECH* Open, BATTLETECH* Lance, STAR WARS*, CIVILIZATION*, 15-mm Napoleonic, and NUCLEAR WAR* games, with a miniatures-painting contest. Other events include an auction, along with SHADOWRUN* and STAR TREK TACTICAL COMBAT* demonstrations. Registration: \$18 for a tournament pass until Aug. 11; \$22 thereafter, and \$7/day. Write to: Nan's Games and Comics Too, 2011 Southwest Freeway, Houston TX 77098. Include an SASE.

THE 20TH EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY GAME September 8

This convention will be held at the Century Center in downtown South Bend, Ind. Events include Napoleonic, an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, other games, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$7 at the door. To preregister, write to: Bob Haggerty, 227 N. 2nd ST., Apt. G, Elkhart IN 46516; or call: (219) 293-4398.

ANDCON '90, September 8-9

This convention will be held in the Kent State University Student Center in Kent, Ohio. Events include RPGA™ AD&D® and SUPREMACY* tournaments, with special PBM, DIPLOMACY*, BATTLETECH*, ASL*, CHAMPIONS*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, and miniatures events. Registration: \$4/day or \$7 for the weekend in advance; or \$5/day and \$9 for the weekend at the door. There are no event fees. Write to: Andon Games, P.O. Box 142, Kent OH 44240, or call: (216) 673-2117; or fax: (216) 673-0662.

FANTACON '90, September 8-9

The East Coast's largest comics/collectibles/horror convention will be held at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center in Albany, N.Y. Guests include TMN Turtles creators Kevin

- ❖ indicates an Australian convention.
- * indicates a Canadian convention.
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Eastman and Peter Laird, Jim Starlin, and staff members from many of the nation's hottest comics companies. Also featured is a huge dealers' room with comics and gaming supplies. Registration: \$10/day or \$14 for both days in advance; \$12/day or \$16 for both days at the door. Write to: FANTACON, c/o Fantaco, 21 Central Ave., Albany NY 12210; or call: (518) 463-1400.

CONTEMPLATION '90, September 14-16

This year's convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Jefferson City, Mo. Guests of honor include Octavia Butler, Rick Lowry, Richard Cross, and Tom Seymour. Activities include gaming, video rooms, a computer room, an art show and auction, a masquerade and dance featuring guest artist/DJ Dell Harris, a hucksters' room, panels galore, and a hospitality room. Registration: \$15. Write to: CONTEMPLATION, P.O. Box 7242, Columbia MO 65215. For hotel reservations call: (314) 635-7171, and mention the convention as rooms are set aside for attendees.

TACTICON '90, September 14-16

The Denver Games Assoc., presents this convention at the Sheraton Hotel of Lakewood, Colo. Also participating are the Colorado Springs Gaming Society, and S.A.I.G.E. Events include gaming of all kinds, official RPGA™ tournaments, a large variety of miniatures events, several auctions, and a figure-painting contest. Registration: \$15/weekend. Write to: Denver Gamers Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 680-7824.

A SAUCER FULL OF SECRETS 'SO September 15

Freeform Unlimited presents one of the only freeform conventions in the U.S., at the Portage Howard Johnson in northwest Indiana. You can be an actor, playing your favorite character in a real-life situation! The rooms of the hotel will become the rooms of the Prometheus Space Station, you will become your character, and you will participate in the Intergalactic Peace Talks. Enjoy this innovative form of live-action role-playing from Australia. Prizes for the best costume and best role-playing will be awarded. Registration: \$10 pre-registered; \$20 at the door. Write to: Dave Machin, 719 Juniper Rd., Valpariso IN 46383; or call: (219) 759-2530.

COLONIAL CITY GAMEFEST '90 September 15-16

CCG '90 will be held (again) at the Knox County Memorial Building in Mount Vernon, Ohio. Tournaments and events include AD&D®, GLADIATORS*, WARHAMMER FANTASY* and 40,000*, and other miniatures, board, and role-playing games, as well as a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$5 for the weekend pre-registered; \$3/day at the door. Write to: CCG '90, c/o Mount Vernon Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 1184, Mount Vernon OH 43050.

CALGARY GAMING CONVENTION 'SO September 21-23

This third annual convention will be held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Events will include WORLD IN FLAMES*, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*, SUPREMACY*, CIVILIZATION*, KREMLIN*, SHOGUN*, FORTRESS AMERICA*, TALISMAN*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, CAR WARS*, SYSTEM 7*, BATTLETECH*, and CIRCUS MAXIMUS* games, and a game auction. Registration: \$6 Canadian for the weekend (prior to Aug. 1); \$9 Canadian thereafter; plus a small event fee. Write to: CWG-Convention '90,

207 Bernard Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta, CAN-ADA T3K 2B6.

LEHICON III, September 21-23

The Lehigh Valley Gamers Assoc., is sponsoring this convention at the Easton Sheraton Inn in Easton, Pa. Events include AD&D® 1st and 2nd Edition games, RPGA™ AD&D® Open and Members Only tournaments, and CAR WARS*, BATTLETECH*, ROLEMASTER*, and HARPOON* games. Door prizes and a dealers' room round out the weekend's activities. Registration: \$10/day or \$15/weekend in advance, with at-the-door rates slightly higher. Ask about special hotel room rates and under-17 discounts by calling the Sheraton at (215) 253-9131. Write to: LEHICON III, c/o Lehigh Valley Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 1864, Bethlehem PA 18016-1864.

BORDER WARS II, September 28-30

Sponsored by the Heart of America Historical Miniature Gaming Society, this convention will be held at the Sports Complex Holiday Inn in Kansas City, Mo. Activities include historical miniatures gaming, plus board and role-playing games. Registration: \$10 before Sept. 15; \$15 thereafter. There is a \$2 discount to members of the Historical Miniatures Gaming Society. Write to: HAHMGS, c/o Borderland Game & Hobby, 2550 W. 47 St., Kansas City KS 66103; or call: (913) 384-2519.

CONTACT 8, September 28-30

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Evansville, Ind. Guests include Gary Robe and Dr. Bill Breuer. Activities include seminars, a 24-hour video channel, and a hucksters' room. Registration: \$15 until Sept. 1, \$20 thereafter. Write to: CONTACT 8, P.O. Box 3894, Evansville IN 47737; or call: (812) 428-0549 before 10 P.M. CDT

GEORGIA FANTASY CON 'SO September 28-30

This celebration of fantasy and horror will be held at the OMNI International Hotel and Convention Center, Atlanta, Ga. The guest of honor is Michael Moorcock. Events include four tracks of panels and workshops, a masquerade, an art show and print shop, video rooms, art, and consignment auctions. Write to: GEORGIA FANTASY CON, Box 148, Clarkston GA 30021.

SATELLITE I, September 28-30

This SF convention will be held at the Hotel Bentley in Alexandria, La. Guests include Richard Chaves, Barry Morse, and Robert Asprin. Gaming events are being planned. This is also the official *Space: 1999* International convention, and the Alliance has given this convention its full support. Write to: SATELLITE I, PO. Box 13135, Alexandria LA 71315.

WHITEWATER SF/FANTASY FESTIVAL I September 28-29

Whitewater's first gaming convention will be held in the new Campus Activities Center at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Events include: an AD&D® tournament; BATTLETECH*, CAR WARS*, PALLADIUM*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, MEGATRAVELLER*, AXIS & ALIENS*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, V&V*, and ASL* games; open gaming; a dealers' room; and a movie room. Registration: \$4/day or \$7 for the weekend before Aug. 30; \$5/day at the door. Judges and dealers are welcome! Write to: Whitewater Gaming Assoc., c/o Robert Wadsworth, 523-B South Gault St., Whitewater WI 53190; or call: (414) 473-2192.

COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS 16

October 5-7

Hosted by the Schenectady Wargamers Assoc., this convention will be held at the Albany Thruway House and Convention Center in Albany, N.Y. Guests include Jean Rabe, the RPGA™ Network Coordinator. Events include over 100 AD&D® events (including RPGA™ Grand Masters and Masters), with BATTLETECH*, 1830*, DIPLOMACY*, and miniatures games, and an RPGA™ Network breakfast, an auction, a miniatures-painting contest, a costume contest, and the Gamers' Olympics. Registration: \$12 for the weekend preregistered; \$18 at the door. Write to: Schenectady Wargamers' Assoc., Attn: Role-playing Director, P.O. Box 9429, Schenectady NY 12309.

ROVACON XV, October 5-7

This convention will be held at the Salem Civic Center in Salem, Va. Guests of honor include Forrest Ackerman, John (007) Gardner, Hal Clement, George Alec Effinger, and Allen Wold. Events include a huge open gaming area, a masquerade, an art show, panels and workshops, films, a banquet, Japanimation, and an over-100-table dealers' area. Registration: \$8 for the weekend, preregistered. GMs are welcome! Write to: ROVACON, P.O. Box 117, Salem VA 24153; or call: (703) 389-9400 after 5 P.M. local time.

TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION 8 October 6-7

This convention will be held at the University of Toledo's Scott Park campus in Toledo, Ohio. Events include AD&D® (1st and 2nd Ed.), ALIENS*, ASL*, BATTLETECH*, CAR WARS*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, CYBERPUNK*, GURPS*, MBT*, PARANOIA*, ROLEMASTER*, SHADOWRUN*, SPACE HULK*, SPACE MARINES*, SPACE 1889*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, STAR WARS*, UP FRONT*, and WARHAMMER 40,000* and FANTASY BATTLE* games, as well as an auction, a painting contest, videos, an open gaming area, and a dealers' room. GMs are welcome! Send an SASE to: TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION, 3001 N. Reynolds, Toledo OH 43615.

QUAD CON '90, October 12-14

Sponsored by the Riverbend Gamers Club and the Game Emporium staff, this fifth-annual convention will be held once again at the Palmer Auditorium in Davenport, Iowa. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, BATTLETECH*, CHAMPIONS*, MARVEL SUPER HEROES*, and SHADOWRUN* games. Other activities include historical and computer games, a silent auction, a dealers' room, a miniatures-painting contest, and on-site food. Registration: \$4/day and \$7 for the weekend until Sept. 30; \$5/day and \$10 for the weekend at the door. Send an SASE to: The Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265; or call: (309) 762-5577 (no collect calls).

RUDICON VI, October 19-21

Held on the campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology, this convention is sponsored by the Rochester Wargamers Assoc. and the RIT Student Directorate. Events include a large variety of RPG and war gaming tournaments, miniatures-painting and art contests, SCA demos, a large dealers' room, historical miniatures, an auction, and a con party complete with costume contest. Registration: \$5 for the weekend. Dealers are welcome. Write to: RUDICON VI, c/o Student Directorate, 1 Lomb Memorial Dr., Rochester NY 14623.

Continued on page 78

The TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game offers a world of choices to the novice agent. Does he need a handgun? There are pages of pistols to choose from. Does she want a new set of wheels? Everything from an Aston Martin to a Yugo can be had, although options like air conditioning, tinted glass, and machine guns are extra. Fighting styles? Well, you have boxing, wrestling, and Oriental martial arts.

But what if your agent is a French ballerina with a background in savate, or an Indonesian trained in pentjak-silat? "Oriental martial arts" doesn't cover these possibilities. Even if your agent is trained in a fighting style from the Far East, doesn't he deserve to know which style he's using? Imagine how these lines would sound in your campaign:

Lance: "Go ahead and get the car, Maggie. I'll take care of these guys."

Maggie: "But Lance, there are three of them and only one of you."

Lance: "Don't worry about me. I'm a second-degree black belt in an Oriental martial art. Now go."

Clearly, this is not the stuff of which great dialog is made.

Another problem is raised by the method used by an established character who wishes to gain these fighting skills. Suppose Maggie decides that she's tired of waiting for Lance to rescue her. So she spends three Fame & Fortune points and, come time for the next adventure, she's ready to tangle with the best of them.

What did she do, check out a couple of karate books from the library over the weekend? Not only does this method clash with reality, but it also cheats both player and Administrator out of the fun of role-playing the climb from bumbling beginner to trained fighter with the possibility of specializing in one style.

To avoid these problems, consider the following suggestions:

1. Allow established players to choose a style of fighting and gain zero level one F&F point at a time.

2. Let each player explore the possible martial-arts styles and choose one that fits his character's background.

Let us assume that Maggie wishes to study goju-ryu. She invests one F&F point and now may use this style of fighting at ¼ MOV (after all, she is only a beginner). She now must play at least one adventure before raising her skill level. At this level, she is probably more of a danger to herself than to anyone else, but a kindly Administrator may present her with a chance to try her new skill—on a locked door that must be opened quickly, for instance, or on a generic purse snatcher. It would be easier to just pull a gun and start blasting away, but not nearly as much fun.

Adventure over, Maggie may now invest another point, raising her skill to ½ MOV. Surviving the next assignment, she may invest her third point for goju-ryu at her full MOV value, as described in the *Player's Guide*. For the sake of categorizing her

level of skill, let us assume that zero level is equal to a red or brown belt (the level just below black). This means that she is familiar with the basic forms and movements of her chosen style. Her fighting is good, but she is a long way from being an expert.

At level one, the character is considered a first-degree black belt, able to fight well and perform all basic techniques and some advanced ones. But contrary to popular opinion, he is not considered an expert in his art. Rather, he is regarded as an advanced student.

At second and third levels, the agent is trained in all basic techniques and many advanced ones. He may be able to teach his art at this point, but the title "expert" still does not apply.

A fourth-level agent is almost certainly able to teach his martial-arts style and may, in fact, instruct other player characters. In this context, he may be able to give advice to lower-level characters, helping them to fight at ½ skill level even in the heat of battle. (See "Getting Advice on Skills" in the *Player's Guide*, page 35.)

Only at fifth level can the term "expert" be applied to the agent. Further promotion is not possible, however, unless the agent leaves his organization and devotes his full time to training and teaching his art.

A second advantage of dividing up fighting styles is that agents may study several styles, giving them different skill levels and offering the option of specialization.

There Are No Generic Black Belts

Defend yourself with a variety in TOP SECRETS/S.I.™ games

by Mark E. Smith

Artwork by Bob Dvorak

Case in point: Bill Klinger has a first-degree black belt in judo, but his real love is the Korean art of hapkido, in which he holds a third-degree black belt. While he is able to hold, throw, and choke using judo, he would rather fight with the kicks and strikes of his favored art; he may even decide to specialize in this style, which would give him + 10 to all hapkido techniques and special abilities at the cost of -20 when he uses his other styles. This is a decision that he must weigh carefully.

Another decision the player must make is whether or not to create a martial-artist character. The point cost is high and the present return is low. The *Player's Guide* states that each additional skill level gives the PC + 5 to the appropriate attribute score, which gives the PC a motive to gain levels. For example, a player who wishes his character to have a third-level pistol skill invests 12 points. Now his character can fire any pistol at + 15 and his skill level.

But let's look at the cost of a martial-artist character. Between basic melee, four levels of Oriental martial arts, and three special techniques (two to six points apiece), the cost comes to 30 points, far over the cost of the pistol skill. Clearly, the player who chooses to create a martial-artist character deserves more for his points. For this reason, I recommend that the martial-arts PC be allowed to:

1. Gain +5 per skill level, as per the *Player's Guide*.

2. Gain a damage bonus of one point per skill level. (Relieve me, being kicked by a brown belt is not the same as being kicked by a fifth-degree black belt.)

3. Be able to use spinning and flying kicks for additional damage should their chosen styles utilize such techniques.

4. Gain the advantages of ki, as detailed below.

Spinning kicks are used by several styles of martial arts, notably tae kwan do and hapkido. These kicks are delivered with either a half or full spin of the body. Spinning kicks can be performed from any position and are very powerful because the force of the kick is combined with the force of the spin. In game terms, this amounts to an additional 1-4 points of damage. Unfortunately, spinning kicks are also slow, and the agent must take his eyes off his opponent, if only for an instant.

The disadvantages have these effects: Using a spin kick has a - 10 modifier to the attack roll (with the exception of those arts that specialize in these kicks). Upon throwing such a kick, no other movements, either offensive or defensive, may be used, and the initiative for the following turn is lost.

Flying kicks are the most impressive tools in the martial artist's arsenal. The sight of a karateka sailing through the air toward his opponent usually causes the opponent to either freeze or run backward to escape the attack. (Neither response is effective.)

Unfortunately, should the agent miss his intended target, he has little control of just where he lands. The Administrator should calculate the movement value and see how far past the target the agent flies. Stairways, walls, and office furniture all make interesting collision possibilities. On the positive side, flying kicks are very powerful (add 1-6 points to damage) and look great. To use the flying kick, one must have the special technique Leap. A flying spinning kick can gain damage bonuses for spinning (1-4) and for flying (1-6), but the player would also have to add both penalties as well (- 20 for the leap and - 20 for the spinning kick).

Ki (or chi) means breath or "spirit" and is used in most martial arts as well as in everyday life. Reach down and pick up a heavy box. The first thing you do is grunt as you lift it—you have just used ki. But ki, as used by the martial artist, does much more than that. With ki, more power is obtained for attacks, damage from an opponent's attack is reduced, unusual actions are attempted and achieved, and opponents are startled into immobility. The last is covered under the Surprise Action special technique in the *Player's Guide*, page 79.

Other uses of ki can be put into game terms. A karate practitioner (*karateka*) usually yells (*kiaps*) when he attacks. This concentrates his force, both mentally and physically, on the object being struck. Also, a karateka who is about to be hit can



Knee strike—Muay thai

kiap. This tightens his muscles and reduces the damage from the attack. (Need proof? Poke your finger into your stomach. Now grunt and try it. Feel the difference?) Some martial-arts styles perform breathing exercises that allow this effect to last for minutes rather than seconds.

In TOP SECRET/S.I. games, the game effects of a kiap are as follows:

1. Any character with martial-arts ability may kiap during any attack. This adds one point of damage to a successful attack.

2. Any character with martial-arts ability may kiap as part of his defense movement. The intention to yell must be announced before the opponent's attack roll is made. If the attack is successful, two points of bruise damage are removed from the total damage taken. If the attack fails, the character merely makes a lot of noise. This brings us to another point about the kiap: It is loud. Treat it as a gunshot in terms of attracting unwanted attention.

3. A character with martial-arts training may focus his ki in an attempt to achieve an unusual physical action, such as kicking out the window of a sinking car or breaking a pair of handcuffs. Using ki in this manner gains a 1-5 bonus per skill level, added to whatever roll is being attempted (the bonus is decided by the Administrator). For example, kicking out the window of a sinking car would be at + 5 bonus per level, while breaking handcuffs would probably be at a + 1 per level—an excellent time to invest a luck point.

4. Any character with martial-arts train

ing may attempt to drive off an attacker by using a kiap in conjunction with an attack. Should the attack fail, the opponent must make a WIL check or flee (see the *Administrator's Guide*, page 27, "Thug Tactics"). Should the attack succeed in either killing or stunning one opponent, any remaining opponents must make $\frac{1}{4}$ WIL checks. Note: This may be used only on the first attack of an encounter, and it is effective against only those using Thug Tactics. Against more motivated foes, this technique singles out the PC agent as someone to be dealt with quickly and at a distance.

Now, let's look at several fighting styles, Oriental and otherwise, and at the accompanying special techniques and advantages they offer.

Arnis— Originally known as kali, arnis is the martial art of the Philippines. Techniques are performed empty-handed or using a stick or blade. An *akan* (male black-belt holder; a female of this rank is known as a *dayang*) can use a stick, cane, knife, and kicking and striking techniques in any combination. Agents choosing arnis as a fighting style get both knife fighting and ax/club/blackjack skills at no cost. Also, because the art stresses alertness to the point of learning not to blink for extended periods of time, PCs gain a + 5 bonus to their checks to avoid surprise. Finally, it is a maxim in arnis that "the hands of an opponent are like the fangs of a snake: break them and he cannot harm you." Thus, attacks to areas 6 and 7 are at + 10.

Special techniques: Attack/Defend, Drop, Instant Defense, Multiple Attack, Multiple Defense, Stun Surprise Action, Vital Areas.

Capoeira— The national (though unofficial) gymnastic art of Brazil, capoeira was developed in the 16th century by slaves who converted a ceremonial dance into a form of combat. Unusual techniques include standing on the hands while fighting with the feet (this stems from the slaves' need to defend themselves while in chains). Capoeira makes great use of the Surprise Action technique. Between the spinning kicks and the bizarre attacks, an opponent may not even know that he is in danger until it's too late. For game purposes, the Surprise Action technique starts at - 10 rather than -20.

Special techniques: Instant Defense, Instant Stand, Knock Down, Multiple Defense, Multiple Attacks, Stun, Surprise Action.

Goju-Ryu— This art was developed in the 1930s in Japan, when "hard" and "soft" styles were combined to create a new fighting style. Goju-ryu uses low stances and a circular line of force in combination with all standard strikes and kicks. Goju-ryu uses both flying and spinning kicks, although hand attacks are preferred. Training includes concentration and breathing exercises that give the user the same damage reduction advantage as ki, but the effects last as long as the character maintains his concentration.

Special techniques: Attack/Defend, Blind-fighting, Drop, Instant Defense, Knock Down, Stun, Surprise Action, Vital Areas.

Hapkido— This is a Korean art that combines the throwing and holding tactics of jujitsu with the kicking and striking techniques of karate. Students are trained to avoid an initial attack and counter where most effective. Advanced students train with cane fighting as well. Hapkido uses holding and throwing techniques as effectively as does jujitsu, and spinning and flying kicks are also used. PCs choosing hapkido gain the staff/spear skill for use with the cane only.

Special techniques: Attack/Defend, Blind-fighting, Hold, Instant Defense, Multiple Attack, Multiple Defense, Stun, Surprise Action, Throw, Vital Areas.

Ishinryu— This combat form originated in Okinawa. Fancy techniques, high kicks, and wasted motion have all been eliminated to produce a fast, hard-hitting, no-nonsense fighting style. Agents using ishinryu gain a + 10 bonus on all kicks thrown at body areas 3, 8, and 9; this reflects the practical low-kick approach of this style.

Special techniques: Attack/Defend, Drop, Hold, Instant Defense, Knock Down, Multiple Attacks, Multiple Defense, Surprise Action, Vital Areas.



Side kick—Tae kwon do

Jujitsu— The traditional martial art of Japan, jujitsu employs kicking, striking, kneeling, throwing, choking, joint locking, holding, and tying, as well as the use of certain weapons. The name means “art of suppleness and gentleness.” Jujitsu kicks are generally low (any kicks above the waist are at - 20 to hit), but jujitsu’s greatest effect is in using holding and throwing techniques to do wounding damage to an opponent.

For example: Miko is a third-degree black belt in jujitsu. Using Surprise Action, she succeeds in placing Shepherd in a hold. As she used surprise, she gets a +2 damage bonus. She then does one point of damage, using kiap for another one-point bonus. To this she adds three points of rank bonus for a total of seven points of wounding damage to Shepherd’s arm. On the next turn she plans to throw him, then stamp kick when he lands, leaving Shepherd with a broken arm and multiple bruises. Had Miko chosen to attack Shepherd’s neck instead of his arm, she could have used the unarmed Silent Kill technique as set forth in the TOP SECRET/S.I. supplement, *Commando*.

Special techniques: Blindfighting, Drop, Hold, Instant Stand, Stun, Throw, Multiple Attacks, Vital Areas.

Kobu-jutsu— This is the Okinawan art of using the staff (bo), short sword (sai), sickle (kama), handle (tonfa), and flail (nunchuka). Kobu-jutsu should be taken only as a second form of fighting, as its movements are based on empty-handed movements that it is assumed the student has already learned. Ratings for the weapons of kobu-jutsu are listed in the TOP SECRET/S.I. accessory *The G4 File*, with the exception of the kama (which does 1-6 points of wound damage) and tonfa (which does 1-6 points of bruise damage).

Mu-tau— Developed by Jim Arvanitis from the ancient Greek fighting style of pankration, mu-tau uses low kicks, boxing techniques, holds, and jointbreaks. Mu-tau philosophy advocates free expression, allowing the students to select the aspects of the style most suited to them. As a result, any of the special techniques may apply, depending on the student’s choices. Mu-tau practitioners gain + 10 on all kicks to areas 8 and 9, and gain the ability to use the Hold special technique as does jujitsu.

Special techniques: All.

Pentjak silat— Pentjak silat is a group name for the fighting arts of Indonesia (over 150 styles exist). Head, hands, feet, fingers, and hips are used in this style, much as in karate, but many blade weapons are also employed. Pentjak silat practitioners gain both knife and staff skills. In addition, they also gain the use of the rante, a chain weapon with a sharp, gearlike end.

Special techniques: Blindfighting, Instant Defense, Multiple Attack, Multiple De-

fense, Stun, Vital Areas.

Savate— Created over 200 years ago in France, presumably by French sailors who had visited the Orient, savate has constantly upgraded itself so that it is now a popular and effective sport and self-defense system. Savate uses both high and low kicks, boxing-style hand strikes, and the cane as a weapon. Savate uses the Multiple Attack technique to great effect; this is reflected by reducing the penalty for the Multiple Attack special technique by half (- 10 for the first attack, - 15 for the second, etc.) These abilities are rounded out with the addition of spinning kicks and staff skills (using the cane only).

Special techniques: Attack/Defend, Blindfighting, Knock Down, Multiple Attack, Multiple Defense, Vital Areas.

Tae kwan do— This Korean-based art, once almost unknown, is now the most popular fighting style in the world. Although the spectacular flying and spinning kicks are the art’s claim to fame, it also uses numerous hand-attack techniques. It should be noted that after the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, the chances are excellent that this art will become an Olympic sport. Tae kwan do makes great use of kicking techniques and flying and spinning techniques, which are introduced early in training. For this reason, all kicking attacks are at + 10 and there is no penalty for spinning kicks.

Special techniques: Attack/Defend, Instant Defense, Knock Down, Leap, Multiple Attacks, Multiple Defense, Stun,

Surprise Action, Vital Areas.

Thai boxing (Muay thai)— This is the national fighting art of Thailand. Students work out daily, and all matches are full contact, so this art should appeal to those agents with the Toughness advantage (and the tougher the better). For every level a character gains in this art, he also gains a level of Toughness. However, should the PC break training for more than two weeks, he loses these points at a rate of one per week. Points lost may be regained at the same rate when training resumes. In Thai boxing, both the hands and feet are used, and every place is considered “above the belt.” (Fortunately, practitioners no longer glue ground glass to their hand wraps.)

Special techniques: Attack/Defend, Instant Defense, Instant Stand, Knock Down, Multiple Attacks, Multiple Defense, Stun, Vital Areas.

If one of your players is interested in a style not mentioned in this article, let him research the art and work out an agreement with you. Then maybe Maggie can go off and rescue Lance for a change.

[More information on martial-arts styles may be found in: “Marshalling the Martial Arts,” in issue #122; “Kicks and Sticks,” in issue #124; “Wrestling With Style,” in issue #156; “Where There is One Sumotori...” and “...There’s Bound To Be Another!” in issue #157; and “Rhythm Warriors,” in issue #159. These articles are for the AD&D® game, hut suitable conversions might he made.]



Edged-weapon technique—Pentjak silat

Out of work, Mr. Hero?
Here's an agency you might try

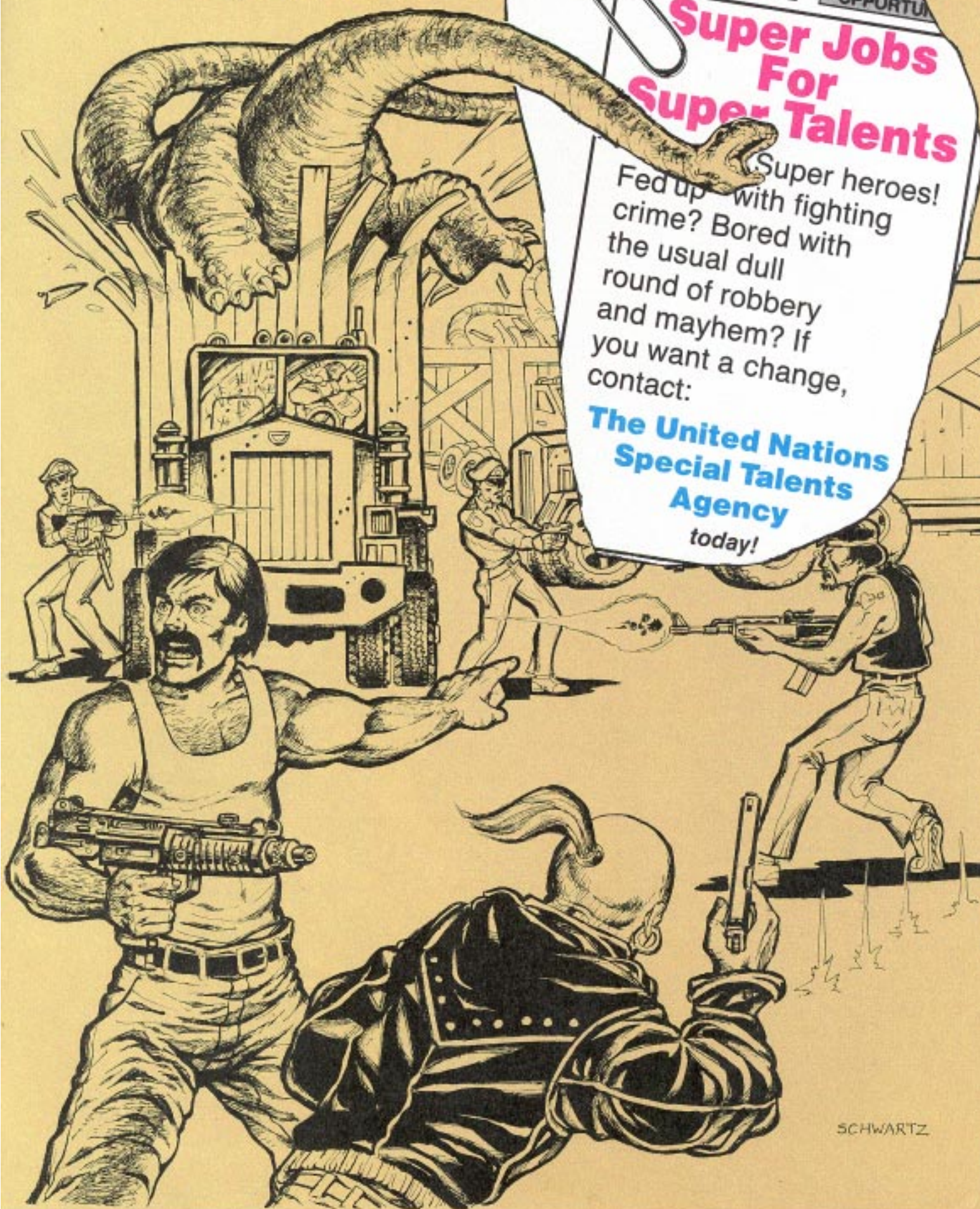
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SCHWARTZ

Super Jobs For Super Talents

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Super-hero RPGs often assume that superpowered individuals have been active for some time, and that governments have developed responses to the most common extraordinary situations. These games also seem to assume that superpowers are fairly common; there certainly seems to be no shortage of super villains and NPC heroes.

Most such games have backgrounds in which super heroes are publicly accepted or tolerated, and they include security and intelligence agencies equipped to handle normal criminal organizations and weak super villains, to obtain super-hero help when needed, and to run special prisons for super villains. Some games add special legal responses to superpowers. For example, Hero Games' CHAMPIONS* and Chaosium's SUPERWORLD* games include probation schemes for super villains in which the criminals' secret identity is published and a year or more must be devoted to community service. However, in most games, an interest in law enforcement often seems to be the only common ground between society and super heroes.

The comics usually ignore military and intelligence roles for super heroes. In role-playing terms, it's logical to assume that international treaties prevent the use of such heroes outside a full-scale war; most governments would probably see someone like DC Comics' Superman as a greater threat than nuclear weapons, and hero control would be part of any SALT treaty (See *The Watchmen* from DC Comics for more on the effects of having super heroes on a nuclear age).

Leaving careers in crime, espionage, and war aside, there are many unusual jobs for those with superpowers. In the past, comics have shown many super heroes putting their talents to spectacular use; Superman, in particular, seems to spend much of his time blowing out forest fires, diverting floods, and saving towns from rock slides and other disasters. Other heroes are scientists, engineers, or philanthropists. Who can forget Doc Savage's charity medical work, or the achievements of the Wayne Foundation in DC Comics' Batman stories?

It seems logical that many public and private organizations would want to take advantage of such new opportunities. This

article describes such an organization, with three generic scenario outlines: the United Nations Special Talents Agency (UNSTA). This organization (which can be altered to become national, worldwide, or universe spanning, depending on the scope of your campaign) was founded shortly after the first super heroes appeared. It is a nonprofit group funded by national governments, charities, and large corporations, and it draws on their resources for information and ideas. UNSTA exists to find talents to fit unusual problems, recruiting personnel for jobs that will benefit mankind. With few exceptions, these jobs are unpaid, requiring minor diversions of heroes' time or energy. There are four main arms of UNSTA; Investigation (the talent spotters), Administration, the Ethical Committee, and Recruitment.

Talent spotters gather data on super heroes and villains, from the press and other sources, and maintain a computer database cross-referenced by powers, names, nations, etc. This arm also records potential uses for superpowers and does most of the work of matching powers to problems. The database could possibly be used to trace the secret identities of heroes by correlating times and locations of their appearances or other details. But a great deal of effort is devoted to eliminating such information from the reports—at least, that's what the agency claims is done. Whether this is true may be a problem for your heroes to investigate.

Administration handles funding, legal problems, visas, transport arrangements, advertising, and other mundane details. An organization as large as UNSTA couldn't possibly function without an efficient office staff, and this arm is essential, though its members rarely come into contact with heroes.

The Ethical Committee ensures that all the jobs found for super heroes are worthwhile. Sometimes this arm will turn down applications for help on the grounds that a project will be ecologically damaging, profitable for a particular company or government at the expense of others, or have other detrimental effects. Rejected applicants often resort to dubious means of enlisting superpowered support.

The Recruitment arm tries to persuade

superpowered individuals to participate in UNSTA projects. This is usually easy, as most super heroes will gladly spend a few days on flood relief or help to transport a heart patient from Australia to Belgium. However, many of the most unusual powers belong to villains, who often demand an exorbitant fee, amnesty, or some other reward for participation. Sometimes it's also necessary to negotiate with governments to obtain permission for super heroes to leave their territories, or with penal authorities to obtain parole for super villains.

These aspects of the agency's operation can easily lead to interesting and unusual adventures. For example, suppose the World Wildlife Fund wants to study Mongolian gerbils in their natural habitat, so UNSTA recruits several super heroes to help the project: using X-ray vision and sonar to guide fiberoptic probes down the gerbils' burrows, reading the gerbils' minds to determine their goals and motivations, etc. The main problems are political and involve persuading the Mongolians, Soviets, and Chinese to allow Western super heroes to visit their territory. It's likely that lots of intrigue will surround this project. Western intelligence organizations may see a chance to put an agent onto the super-hero team, while Eastern-bloc agencies may try to recruit the Western agents as spies, learn their secret identities, etc. It's an unusual chance for Eastern and Western super heroes to meet without violence, and it could pave the way for some interesting adventures.

Another example: Mr Frosty, a convicted super villain with cryogenic powers, is asked to participate in experiments on medical freezing and suspended animation. He demands \$100,000 and a review of his sentence. UNSTA raises the money (held in trust for his release) and tries to persuade the parole board to review his case. The board refuses, so UNSTA calls in well-known super heroes to lobby for a sentence review and, ultimately, to supervise the experiments and make sure that there are no embarrassing incidents.

The scenarios that follow assume that UNSTA has been active for some time and is known to all heroes. Player-character heroes shouldn't be very powerful; beginning characters with limited experience are preferred.

Scenario 1: Operation Krait (for 2-4 heroes)

Players' information: The Republic of Quitana is a modern African state allied to the West. Recently this government captured Krait, a super villain with remarkable powers of poison generation and nullification. UNSTA needs such powers for medical research and development, and it wishes to interview Krait and establish his attitudes to such work. The Quitanese government has flatly refused access, saying that Krait's crimes are too serious to make parole possible. This seems odd because Krait always specialized in crimes against property, using his venom for short-term paralysis or knock-out effects. UNSTA wants the PCs to join its team in Quitana and use their talents and influence to resolve the situation.

Referee's information: Strict human-rights treaties govern the imprisonment of super villains. It is accepted that some villains must be restrained by temporary nullification of their powers, or by the reduction of intelligence and strength, but these changes must be reversible when the prisoner is released. Also, villains cannot have their characteristics reduced below human norms by their restraints.

The Quitanese government has been violating this rule, using a combination of drugs, surgery, and radiation treatment to permanently reduce the IQ of superpowered prisoners and to prevent them from using their powers effectively. Krait has been treated twice, and his mental faculties are now slightly below the human norm. Another treatment will cause irreversible brain damage. The Quitanese police have been bugging the local UNSTA offices for some time, and the police know that the heroes are in Quitana to investigate the situation. On arrival, the heroes are invited to a reception at the Presidential palace. During the reception, government agents attempt to fake Krait's escape and murder him, in circumstances suggesting that he attempted to kill his warders. Exact details of this scenario are left to the referee, who should remember the following points:

1. The prison was built for normal humans, and only a small section has been upgraded to hold super villains.
2. Krait is one of three superpowered prisoners; the others are already irreversibly brain damaged. All retain their powers but are too stupid to use them effectively.
3. The Quitanese government wishes to remain friendly to the West and attempts to avoid any embarrassing incidents. The plot to kill Krait is a desperate measure intended to stop a full investigation into the Quitanese penal system.
4. UNSTA wishes to stay-on good terms with the Quitanese government.
5. The heroes cannot determine Krait's attitudes before beginning their investigation. If rescued, he pretends to be cooperative but seizes the first chance to escape

and continue his life of crime.

Scenario 2: Heavy Rescue (for 4-8 heroes)

Players' information: UNSTA often tries to persuade super heroes to participate in training schemes that will help them deal with the emergencies they encounter. Such courses include first aid, firefighting, basic criminal law, and heavy rescue—the latter being techniques for dealing with large-scale civilian disasters. This is a popular subject, since many heroes are at home with crimefighting but aren't sure how to tackle a train crash, a nuclear-waste spillage, or a landslide. The course takes a week and is given in a big city with a wide variety of industrial sites (e.g., Detroit for American campaigns, Birmingham for British campaigns).

The heroes have managed to arrange a week away from other obligations, such as activities in secret and public identities, and find the course interesting but a little daunting. After four days of theory and demonstrations, the instructor feels that the group is ready to tackle a practical exercise. He is briefing the heroes about a simulated rail crash when the telephone rings.

Referees information: Don't run this episode with telepaths or other super heroes who can easily detect a lie. The telephone call comes from the schools office and is designed to trick characters with superhearing or other special senses. No train crash has been arranged. Instead, the team will be told that a real emergency has developed: An old warehouse has collapsed on top of a demolition crane. The driver is trapped inside the crane cab, and there is reason to believe that gas mains have been fractured. The normal heavy rescue teams are on the other side of the city, setting up the simulated train crash, and the heroes may be the only hope of rescuing the driver before the gas explodes. The referee must prepare a floor plan of a demolished building, using the guidelines herein, scaling the size of the problem to the number of super heroes and the strength of their powers.

Of course, the "real" disaster is another simulation. The crane driver is a realistic dummy, built by a medical plastics company, and is apparently trapped in the cab with severe injuries. Several building workers pretending to remove debris are actually instructors who have not met the team before, aided by disguised super heroes (veterans of the course) who make sure that no one is really injured. There is a strong smell of gas, but this is really inert nitrogen mixed with a smelly chemical, a harmless compound added to real gas supplies to ensure that leaks are easily detected. The collapsed building is carefully balanced to look dangerous, but the wreckage is supported by several strong girders that have "luckily" remained welded together. With care, it's possible to tunnel through the lower part of the

wreckage without disturbing the equilibrium of the pile. Have your players make frequent rolls against dexterity (or whatever characteristic is appropriate) as they move the wreckage, giving bonuses if the players work as a team. If these rolls fail, bits of rubble move slightly, there are ominous groaning noises, and dust cascades into everyone's hair.

The rubble can also be removed from above, but removing more than a ton from any one area without balancing the weight or shoring the pile will also make the wreckage shift.

If anyone tries a short cut, like pulling the debris off the crane without shoring the lower sections, the wreckage will pass a critical balance point and one of the girders will shift to pin the "driver" to his seat with a crushed chest. Concealed remote-controlled explosive charges can make the crane catch fire (harmlessly) or cause parts of the building to collapse. The dummy is fitted with a chemically powered synthetic heart and other internal organs, and it realistically bleeds or "dies" if injured by the rescue attempts. The "victim" appears to be unconscious throughout the rescue.

Fire engines and ambulances will arrive at the same time as the heroes but won't have heavy rescue equipment. Heavy units (equipped with winches, chainsaws, jacks, and drills) appear five minutes after the heroes and conduct a flawless rescue if the team hasn't already saved the driver. The heavy units helped set up the "disaster" and know exactly how the wreckage is balanced and booby-trapped.

Players should be made to feel that this is a real emergency, and it should be followed through until the "driver" is rescued or dead. Obviously, the referee should ensure that none of the super heroes' special powers permit an easy rescue; for example, a character with desolidification powers might want to walk through the wreckage, materialize, pick up the driver, and desolidify to walk out again. The referee should make this impossible by allowing no room for the character to materialize, but should encourage the use of such powers in reconnaissance and planning.

After this incident, the referee (as the course's instructor) should hold a careful inquest on the rescue attempt, pointing out the heroes' mistakes and any particularly good moves. He will also ask the team to keep silent about this aspect of the course. There are no further incidents in the remaining days of the course, just lots of hard work. Skills or experience points should be awarded for success in the rescue only, although in reality it is only a small part of the course. Referees might also use experience of this course as a modifier to the success of future rescue missions.

As an optional epilogue to this scenario, the referee could ask the players to design a fake incident for the next class and run

it with another group of players. The school can supply vehicles, dummies, and up to \$25,000 for expenses and equipment, and it will arrange for the cooperation of emergency services. If no more players are available, the referee can still use the new plan, with the players supervising the site while a group of NPC heroes run through the test. The referee can ensure that the new heroes are less competent than the player characters and run into dangerous problems.

Scenario 3: Breakout (for 4-8 heroes)

Players' information: For several years, scientists at the London Zoo, aided by interested super heroes, have been developing techniques to recreate extinct animals by implanting fossil DNA extracted from bones and other remnants into the reproductive cells of related species. The dodos, sabre-tooth tigers, and mammoths that now grace many zoos were early successes. The most ambitious effort has been an attempt to breed dinosaurs using ostrich and alligator eggs seeded with reconstructed DNA.

Eighteen months ago, the scientists achieved their first success, hatching four diplodocus dinosaurs (three females and one male) from ostrich eggs. They are now slightly smaller than adult elephants. This spectacular success has almost doubled admissions at the zoo, and the sauropods are a great favorite with the crowds. The scientists expect the dinosaurs to continue to grow for many years, but their current accommodation (the elephant house) is already becoming cramped. It's obvious that the dinosaurs must soon be moved to a larger site, a specially prepared paddock and lake at Whipsnade Zoo, a few miles outside London. UNSTA arranged most of the super-hero cooperation on this project, and it has asked the team to accompany the convoy and ensure that no harm comes to the dinosaurs.

Referee's information: The convoy consists of four low-loader trucks, each carrying a 10-meter-long crate containing a dinosaur. All are accompanied by a police escort (two cars and four motorcycles), a repair truck, a crane, and two vets in one pick-up truck. The convoy will leave London Zoo at 5 A.M. to avoid London's heavy morning traffic, taking main roads to Whipsnade Zoo. The diplodoci are herbivorous dinosaurs with long necks and tails, living on a diet of hay, conifer branches, and vitamins. Each is eight meters long and weighs three tons. These dinosaurs are extremely strong, moderately fast, and can attack by biting, by trampling with their forefeet, or by striking with their whiplike tails (the referee should generate appropriate statistics). They attack only if they are frightened, and they usually run from anything that scares them. The experiments that produced these dinosaurs have cost hundreds of man-years, the work of dozens of super heroes, and millions of pounds sterling. At least a third of

this expenditure will be required again if the dinosaurs do not survive the transfer.

Despite their size, the dinosaurs do have their problems. Their lungs will fill with fluid if they are tranquilized, they are horribly stupid, and they will almost certainly suffer gross internal damage if their weight is concentrated on any one part of their bodies (e.g., if a super hero picks up a dinosaur and tries to carry it). They are very nervous and will panic if they hear loud noises, see or smell fire, or smell any large carnivore. Excessive vibration during the move will also panic them, so the low-loaders must crawl along at 10-15 MPH.

Unfortunately, extremist members of a fundamentalist religious organization have decided that these experiments threaten the central tenet of their faith—the belief that the universe was created on the 18th of July 1924, at 3:15 P.M. (GMT). Their religion teaches that all evidence of prior existence was created to test the strength of their faith. Obviously, the recreation of dinosaurs that roamed the earth millions of years ago is the ultimate challenge to their devotion. To prove the strength of their faith, they must destroy the blasphemous reptiles!

These fanatics have stolen two rocket launchers, many grenades, and several machine pistols. They intend to make two attacks on the convoy. One group will make its attack in London, and the other group will strike in the country. To preserve security, the two groups have made their plans separately, and members of one group don't know exactly when or where the others will attack. There should be at least two terrorists per hero in each group.

The move hasn't been kept secret, and the route used by the convoy is predictable. Despite the early hour, the press and hundreds of dinosaur lovers are waiting on the roads near the zoo, hoping to get a glimpse of the monsters.

The first attack will be a relatively crude effort, staged very near the zoo. The terrorists simply block the road with a car, then fire a rocket at the leading truck, blowing up its engine. The remaining terrorists close in and spray the crates with bullets. The explosion and shots panic the dinosaurs, which stamp and thrash about in their crates. Each diplodocus has a cumulative 10% chance of breaking out in each combat round that the fight continues. If the dinosaurs escape, they run through the crowds, trampling innocent bystanders and smashing cars and shop windows as they move and thrash their tails. They are too big to be seriously injured by small-caliber machine-pistol bullets, but they will naturally be very frightened.

The second attack is more sophisticated. The terrorists have stolen a tanker truck that overtakes the convoy halfway between the zoos. As it passes, the driver pulls a cord and a grenade attached to the truck's rear valves explodes. The driver

leaps clear and sprints for safety as burning petrol floods the road along the length of the convoy. The remaining terrorists are in another van behind the convoy and will attack immediately after the tanker explodes. The referee should ensure that at least two of the dinosaurs escape; they are at risk from passing cars and trucks, overhead power cables, and nearby railway lines.

Provided the heroes can handle these attacks, then calm and recage the dinosaurs, the rest of the run to Whipsnade is uneventful. On arrival at Whipsnade, the dinosaurs panic again as the crates pass the crocodile pool. Luckily, their enclosure is at the other end of the zoo, and they won't normally be able to smell the reptiles. The adventure ends as the diplodoci shyly emerge into their new enclosure, tentatively nibbling bushes and conifers as they settle down in the comparative calm of the country. It's possible that the dinosaurs might escape when they are bigger; a fully grown diplodocus is approximately 30 meters long and weighs 11 tons, but will still be prone to panic.

A number of sequels to this adventure are possible. A super villain could use the same technology to breed carnivorous dinosaurs and use them in crimes. Time-traveling heroes might help the project by bringing back specimens from the past, only to stumble into situations that could alter history. As the zoos and parks of the world fill with dinosaurs, more incidents will probably occur involving more challenging species and more determined efforts by extremists to slay them.

Notes and sources

The UNSTA is fictional, but the World Wildlife Fund is real and deserving of support. Games consulted for this article included TSR's MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, Mayfair's DC HEROES*, GW's GOLDEN HEROES*, Hero Games' CHAMPIONS*, Chaosium's SUPERWORLD*, FGU's VILAINS & VIGILANTES*, and SUPER SQUADRON* games. There are no obvious compatibility problems with any of these games. Further sources include: *A Talent for the Invisible* and *Odd Job Inc.*, by Ron Goulart; *Rescue Mission* and *A Fall of Moondust*, by Arthur C. Clarke; the Sector General series by James H. White; and *The Thunderbirds* TV series, by Gerry & Sylvia Anderson. Ω

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Convention Calendar

Continued from page 69

NECRONOMICON '90, October 26-28

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Ashley Plaza in Tampa, Fla. The guests of honor are Jack C. Haldeman II and Lawrence Watt-Evans. Other guests include Timothy Zahn, Richard Lee Byers, Richard Louis Newman, and Prudy Taylor Board. Activities include artist and author panels, a masquerade, a trivia contest, a fan cabaret, gaming, an art show and auction, the Creatures of Night Pageant, and a charity auction to benefit Wildlife Rescue, Inc. There'll also be a dealers' room, a Friday night banquet, a 24-hour hospitality suite, and an Ygor party. Registration: \$15/weekend until Sept. 15; \$20 for the weekend or \$8/day. Write to: NECRONOMICON '90, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569; or talk (813) 677-6347.

STAR CON '90, October 26-28

This convention is sponsored by Star Base Alpha and will be held in Menasha, Wis. Events include a wide variety of games and tournaments, as well as other activities. Write to: Star Base Alpha, 1112 R. Lake St., Neenah WI 54956.

COMMAND.CON TOO, October 27

The convention will be held at the St. Louis Community College in the Forest Park Cafeteria. Events include RPGA™ AD&D® games, a plenitude of miniatures, board, and role-playing games, plus the SAGA game auction. Registration: \$5. Write to: COMMAND.CON TOO, P.O. Box 9107, St. Louis MO 63117; or call: (314) 727-1508 or (314) 721-1155 before 10 p.m. No collect calls, please.

GAMESCON '90, October 27

This convention will be held at the Laindon Community Centre on High Road in Basildon, Essex. Activities include a RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, a painting competition, demonstration and participation games, and traders. Clubs, DMs, and players are all welcome! Write to: Chris Baylis, 67 Mynchens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex, UNITED KINGDOM SS15 5EG; or call: 0268-419933.

HALLOWEEN TOURNAMENT XI October 27

This convention will be held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Tucson, Ariz. Events include an AD&D® tournament, a raffle, and a costume contest. Prizes will be awarded. Food and accommodations will be available on or near the site. Registration: \$5 at Things for Thinkers after Sept. 1; call: (602) 326-7679. For hotel information, call David Orahod after Sept. 1, at: (602) 887-3983.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

NOVEL

I • D • E • A • S

From the 25th century to 1990—and to you

by J. Eric Severson

Excitement for some science-fiction heroes rarely lasts more than a few years. Flying in the face of this notion, however, is Buck Rogers, the comic-strip character created by John Flint Dille in 1929, with the able assistance of author Philip Francis Nowlan and artist Dick Calkins. Like the rocket jock himself, the universe that surrounds him has been given new life in the BUCK ROGERS® XXVc™ games and books produced by TSR, Inc.

"What's kind of fun about it is that it brings science fiction back to its roots," says Michael Pondsmith, who designed the XXVc role-playing game. "It has a sense of what science fiction used to be, which was fun. The genre in the last few years has not been fun," Pondsmith says. "It's been authentic and real, but it hasn't been real fun. I think the XXVc game is going to bring that back."

Encounters taking place the 25th-century setting of the XXVc game world provide realistic, gritty, and exciting adventures for thousands of role-playing and board-game enthusiasts. The XXVc game also provides the setting for full-length science-fiction novels that shape and define the high-tech future world by exploring the trials of the Martian, Mercurian, Venusian, Terran, Lunar, and other beings who live there.

"It's a post-holocaust world that isn't quite post-holocaust," says Pondsmith.

"It's an opportunity to view a future, and it's an exciting future, not a totally grim, bleak future at all," adds Flint Dille, creative director of TSR's West Coast offices. "We want to create a complete, integrated world of the 25th century. We're trying to integrate everything, which is no mean feat when you have so many artists, authors, and editors working on a project. We're creating a whole new world to explore, except this time it's a real world, not a fantasy world."

"Plausibility" is the buzzword here. Authors, editors, and designers try to anticipate the realistic technology of the 25th century, which quite naturally might seem fantastic to us today. As TSR president Lorraine Williams puts it, the XXVc game universe "is real, and continues to be, because it always seeks the outer fringes of the future without violating the laws of science that make future developments a reality."

In fact, one of the joys of working in the XXVc game universe, according to author M. S. Murdock, is being able to toy with this new technology. Holography—the three-dimensional recording and projection of objects, persons, and computer-generated personalities—is perhaps the most intriguing development to her. The digital personalities "look like humans, not R2-D2, who's a little garbage can, or an image that's strictly on a computer screen. They look like us, move and talk like us, but are actually handled totally by computer," she says. This technology and the heroes who wield it were published in stories by TSR in 1989, beginning with the short-story anthology *Arrival*, then Murdock's Martian Wars Trilogy (*Rebellion 2456*, *Hammer of Mars*, and *Armageddon Off Vesta*).

This year brings publication of the first volume in a new book series, the Inner Planets Trilogy. *First Power Play*, *Prime Squared*, and *Matrix Cubed* will focus less on the role-playing game's nonplayer characters (Buck Rogers, Wilma Deering, and so on) and more on new characters and on the XXVc game universe itself.

First Power Play, Book One of the new series, is written by *Wild Cards* and *Fantastic Stories* author John Miller. As the New Earth Organization rebuilds an Earth

shattered by the Martian Wars, NEO ally (and Mercurian prince) Kemal Gavilan receives a corpse and a cryptic message from the asteroids. He enlists master pirate Black Barney to find out what he can, but the answer is too hot for the airways: They've uncovered a weapon that can turn continents to cinders! Kemal is forced to betray the Desert Dancer woman he loves in order to return to the royal family he once rejected. and he learns an awful truth.

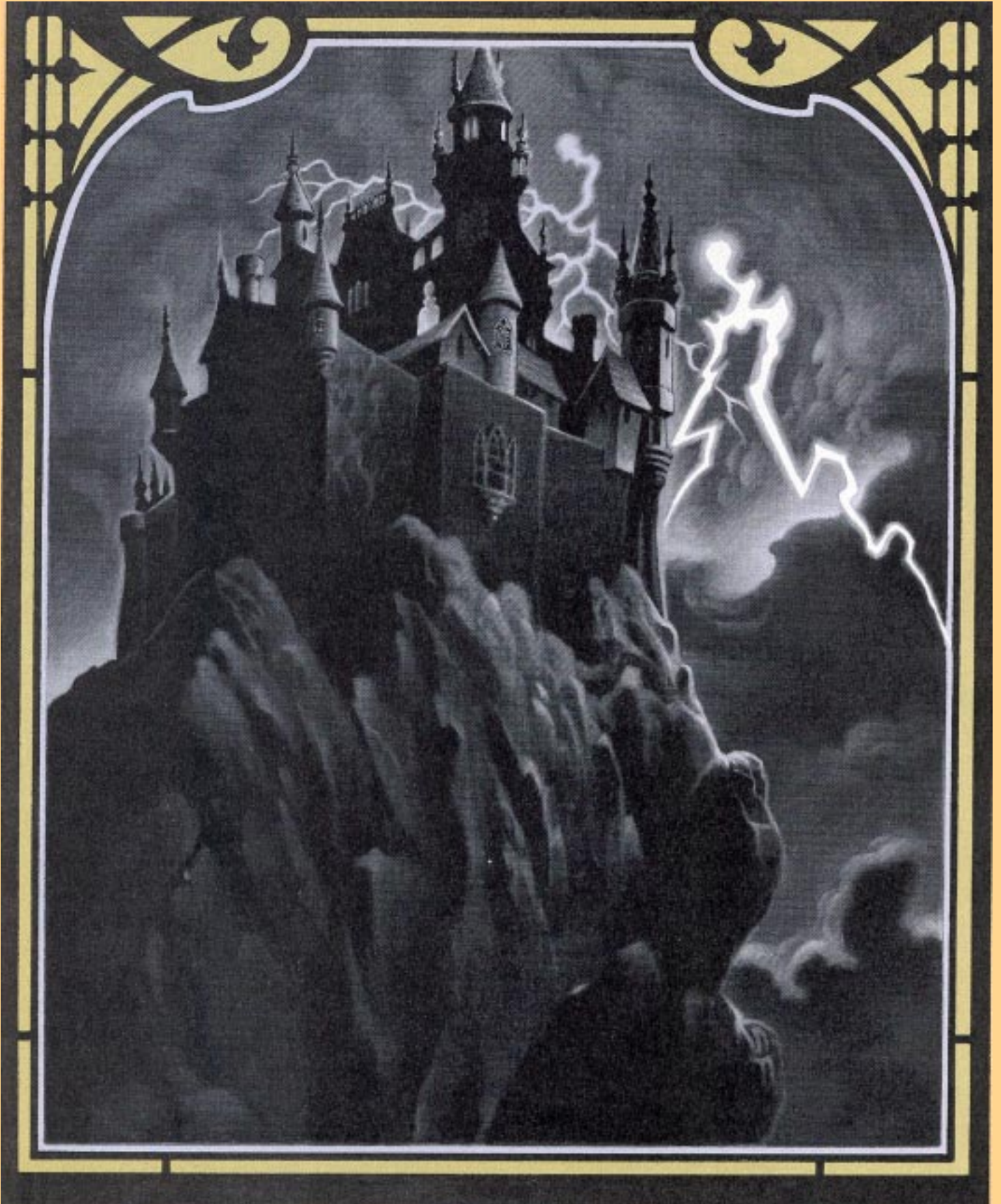
Book Two, *Prime Squared*, is by M. S. Murdock, who is also author of a *Star Trek* novel, *Web of the Romulans*. Having discovered his family's plans for a colossal laser device, Kemal prepares to head back to Earth to inform NEO. The prince learns, however, that Ardala Valmar has snared a prototype of the weapon. Kemal is compelled to stay and destroy the greater of two evils—his family's nearly completed full-scale model. The Mercurian prince maneuvers through one double-cross after another, fighting to regain the Dancers' trust while trying to keep his uncle, the reigning Sun King, from uncovering his true allegiance.

In *Matrix Cubed*, due out in 1991, Kemal's problem is compounded by the fact that others—including RAM—have suspiciously similar plans for laser projects. With help from NEO and the Dancers, Kemal must find a way to cripple the solar laser weapons. As if that's not enough, he's also forced to battle an unknown killer for control of Mercury and its people's future.

The Inner Planets Trilogy is based, in part, on a computer game by Strategic Simulations, Inc. Watch for it!

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The Game Wizards





by Andria Hayday

In the dead of night, as mists cloak the land, a traveler walks a country road. Footsteps echo behind him, in pace with his beating heart. Is it Death who follows? The man turns and meets the phantom—a flash of fang, a bloodcurdling howl, red eyes fueled by a passion from beyond the grave. The traveler discovers what others have learned before him: All roads lead to Ravenloft.

Ravenloft is a new realm of Gothic horror for AD&D® adventures. (TSR's classic AD&D adventure, 16 *Ravenloft*, inspired this world's creation.) It is a dark and deadly abyss, a demiplane whose misty fingers can reach into any other campaign setting and draw you into its midst. Once it holds you in its icy embrace, it may never let you go.

I know. It happened to me. I write this not as a warning, because when the Mists of Ravenloft invite you to enter, it is futile to resist. I tell you only in hopes of dampening the inevitable horror you will feel when Ravenloft calls—when all that is secure fades around you, and a dense, bone-chilling fog takes its place. But perhaps even these efforts are futile. Perhaps no one can diminish your terror.

Jeff Grubb, co-founder of the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ campaign world, once claimed in this column that Elminster the sage appeared in his office after work hours. Though bothersome, Elminster's visits were harmless. As the developer of the RAVENLOFT™ boxed set, designed by Bruce Nesmith, I was not that fortunate. As I haunted TSR on wintery nights, fleshing out the terrors of Ravenloft, I too suffered such visits—but it was not Elmin-

Ravenloft—Gothic horror at its horrifying best

ster who lurked in the dark, lonely corridors around me. It was Ivana Boritsi, poisoner extraordinaire, whose faint laughter lured me from my office and—when I returned—made me question each sip from the cup beside my computer. It was Lord Soth, a death knight now condemned to Ravenloft, whose anguished moans rose and fell with the howling of the wind outside. And it was Count Strahd von Zarovich, master vampire, whose musty breath chilled my face and whose sharp, unseen fangs left me clutching at my throat.

It required no imagination to describe a Gothic heroine's terror as she raced through the labyrinth beneath a castle, trapped but not alone. As I paced the unlit corridors at TSR, long after the sky had faded to black, I too was not alone. Ravenloft's antiheroes were with me.

Before I realized it, Ravenloft had crept into my own "real" world. I was not safe anywhere then. And you are not safe now. When you least expect it, Ravenloft's Mists will appear—snaking round an ankle as you walk, gently encircling your neck as you dream. Without warning, without choice, you will enter the demiplane of dread.

Your guide to this gallery of gloom is the RAVENLOFT boxed set, now lurking at a toy, hobby, or book store near you. Even as you read these words, another adventurer has thrust the box lid aside to discover the horrors waiting within. (In truth, of course, the horrors have discovered *him*.) Here's what the set includes:

- A 144-page book exploring the campaign world;
 - Four big, full-color maps detailing deadly domains and shadowy settlements;
 - 24 full-color cardstock sheets, featuring haunted castles, horrid houses, and fiendish portraits of folks who'd like to have you for dinner; and
 - One transparent map overlay, for measuring distances in the realm of doom.
- Ravenloft is a world like no other. No white knights will ride to your rescue; no friendly mages will intervene on your behalf. In fact, should you play a priest or

wizard, your own magic may not behave as you expect—nor may many of your abilities. Undead, for example, are especially daunting in this realm.

When you first gaze upon Ravenloft's landscape, you may not know it to be anything but ordinary. It is often wondrous and breathtaking, with alpine meadows, soaring peaks, and mountain streams that plunge thousands of feet until they erupt in glittering spray. But as the shadows lengthen and the sun sinks low, the air grows chill. Night falls. Suddenly "breathtaking" beauty has new meaning.

What spawned this realm of terror? Centuries ago, in world that is now forgotten, a warrior king named Strahd von Zarovich moved to a land called Barovia. He desired the woman Tatyana, who was betrothed to his brother. So intense was Strahd's desire that he murdered his brother and made a pact with Darkness to acquire Tatyana, but she spurned him and threw herself from a precipice. Her body was never found. Strahd became the vampire lord of Barovia, undead forever. Barovia became the first domain in the demiplane of Ravenloft, absorbed by forces that remain unknown.

Since that time, other domains have formed, and the demiplane has spread. Barovia sits at the center of the realm like a beating heart, pumping sorrow and pain to even the farthest fingers of land. Like Barovia, each domain is ruled by a lord of darkness—a desperate and deadly creature who is imprisoned in his own small world.

The RAVENLOFT boxed set describes over 30 of these domains and the powerful lords who rule them—from vampires, ghosts, and werewolves to men who are, perhaps, even more monstrous. You'll also find new twists on the AD&D rules, plus tips for putting fear in the hearts of your players.

Twilight is nigh. In Ravenloft, the sun has begun to sink below the horizon, and the fog is rising from the soil. Soon, as easily as these words touch your thoughts, the Mists of Ravenloft will find another victim. In time, that victim will be you. Ω

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The most ancient of the seven houses of the Naugrim, the folk of Durin are the most renowned in Middle-earth. Like all Dwarves they are a secretive people, with a great love of gold and treasure, but possessing also a matchless skill in fashioning both metal and stone. Their smiths and weapon-makers are unequalled in their craft. They possess no magicians as such, but their Alchemists are wise in the lore and enchantments of metallurgy.

Suspicious of strangers, they keep hidden from sight both their treasure and their women. Indeed, the latter are so rarely seen that some claim the Dwarves possess no females, but are born from the very stones themselves.

Dwelling, as they do in subterranean halls and caverns, and shunning where possible, contact with other races, the Dwarves' method of war-

fare is largely defensive. They have little need of light armed, or missile troops, fighting usually at close quarters, and in small numbers. Accordingly, their warriors are heavily mailed, with finely crafted helmets, often in the shape of fierce animal faces. Their favoured weapons are the axe and the Mattock.

These fighting methods proved successful even offensively, during the great War between the Dwarves and Orcs, when King Thrain, his son Thorin, and the host of the Naugrim, defeated and destroyed all the Orc lairs from Gundabad itself to the southern Misty Mountains, fighting a curious underground war in pursuit of the Goblin-King Azog, who was eventually to meet his end in single combat, at the hands of Dain Ironfoot, at the battle of Azanulbizar.



M164 Dain Ironfoot & Azog



M159 Dwarfven infantry



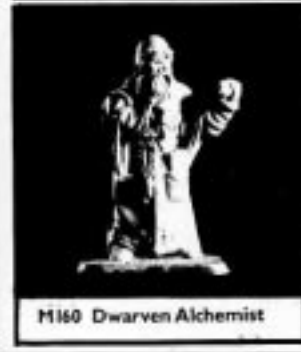
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M156 Thrain Dwarfven King



M161 Dis (dwarf maiden)



M160 Dwarfven Alchemist



M157 Dwarfven Royal Guard

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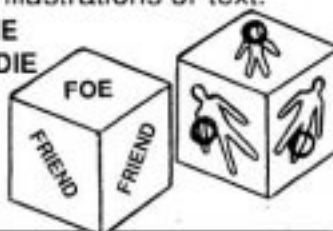
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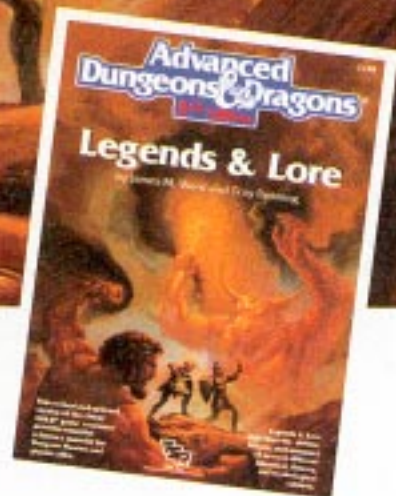
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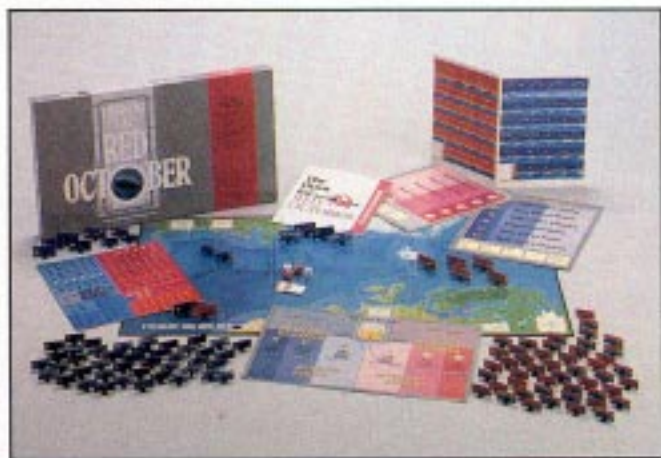
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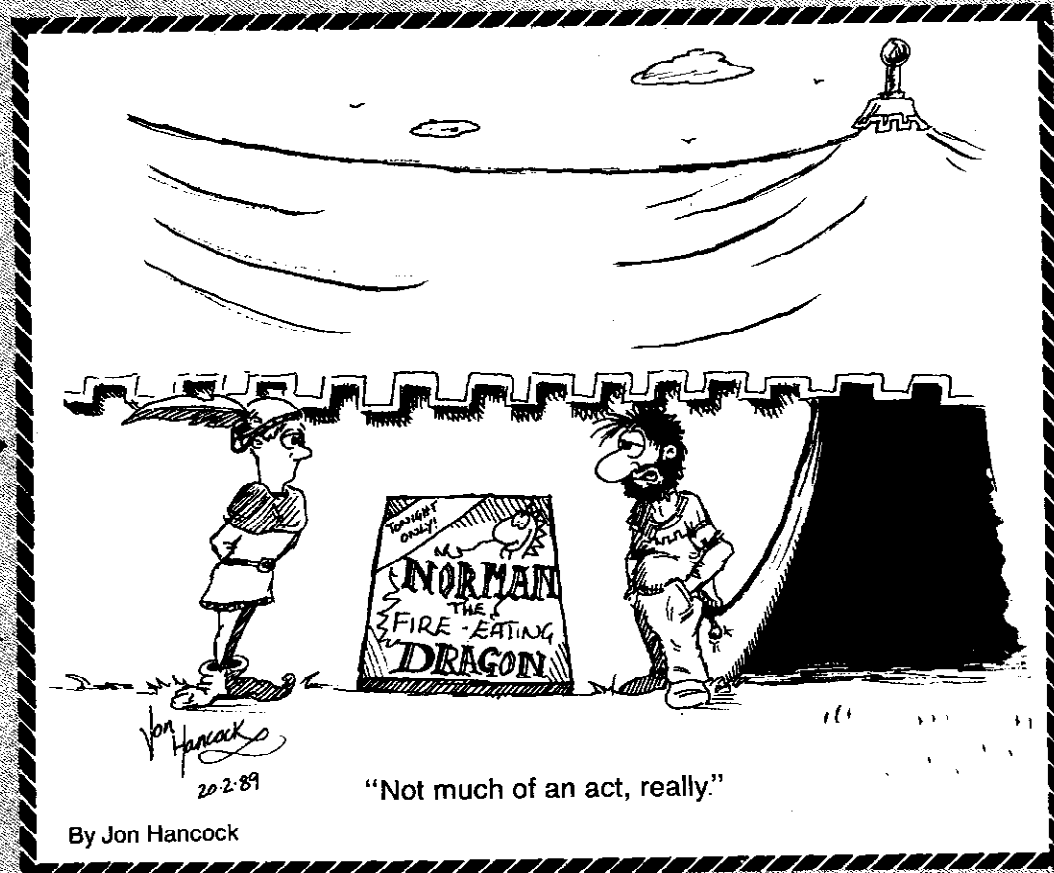
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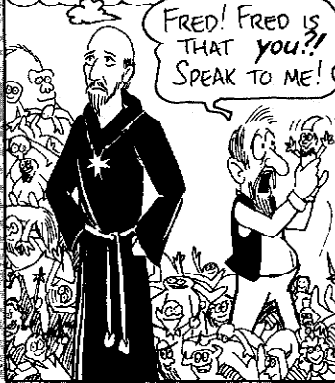


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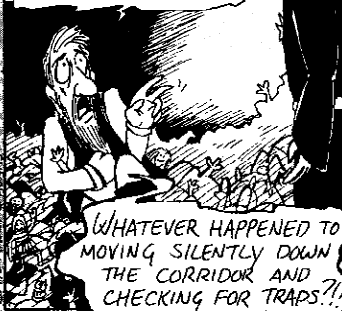
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HEADPIECES OF FRINN...
SOMEWHERE OUT THERE IS
ONE MEAN HABERDASHER...



FEA'S GONE, BLAG. ONLY SHE
CAN RESTORE THESE GOOD
PEOPLE TO THEIR NORMAL,
NON-DOLL-LIKE... UM...



TAKE IT EASY, BLAG—
DO YOU REMEMBER DUNGEONS,
JOE? PARTY ORDER?
REMEMBER THE SIMPLE
JOYS WE TOOK IN
ARMOR CLASS AND
RANDOM ENCOUNTERS?



YOU ENTER A 10'x10'
ROOM—AN ORC IS
GUARDING A CHEST—



"WAIT A SECOND!... I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU... YOU GUYS
AREN'T EVEN LISTED IN THE NEW PLAYER'S HANDBOOK
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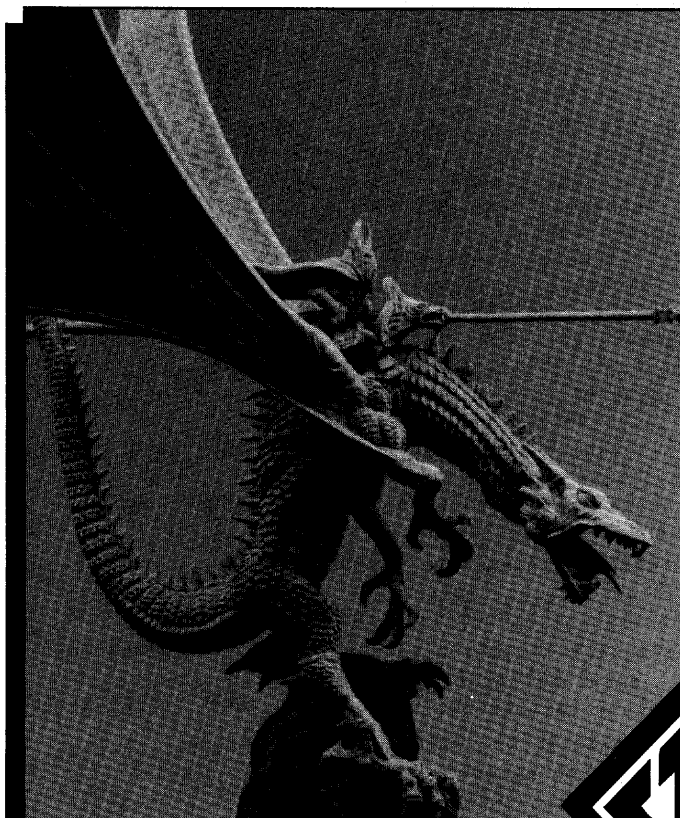
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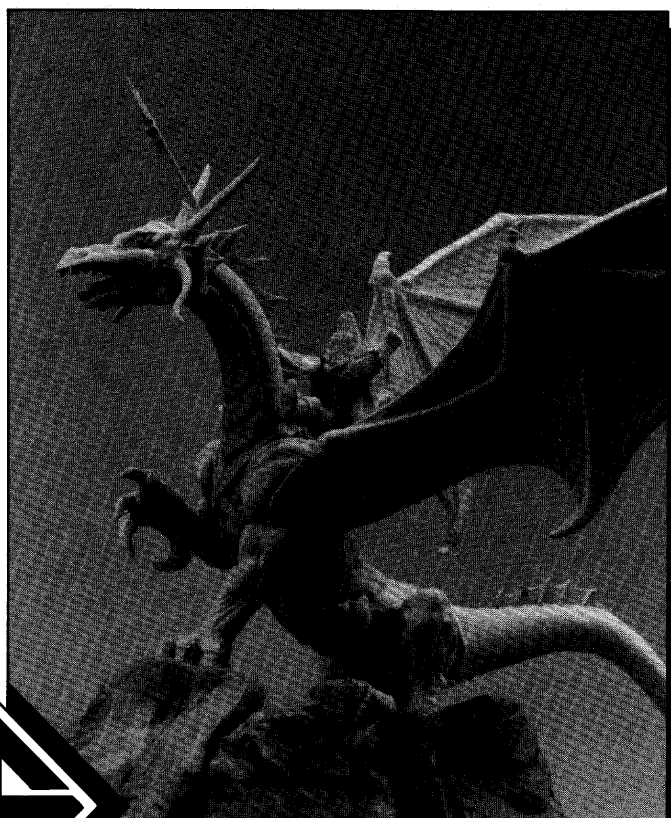
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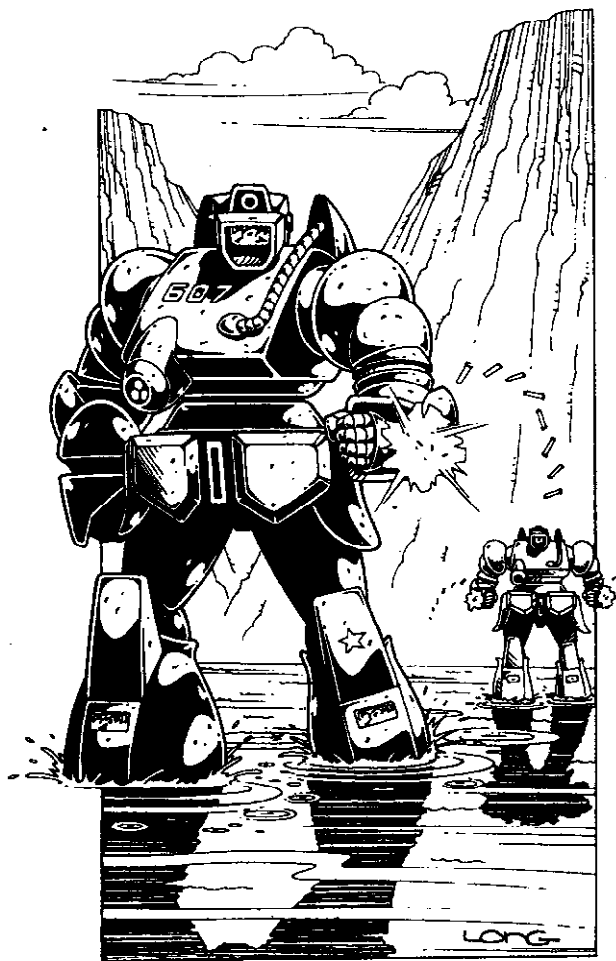
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Through the LOOKING Glass

Photography by Mike Bethke

Giant crabs are great at beach parties

©1990 by Robert Bigelow

As you read this column, you and your gaming friends either are about to go to the 1990 GEN CON® game fair or are recuperating from it. This chance to meet hundreds of other gamers brings to mind some simple ways to build the membership of your local miniatures gaming club.

Before you do anything else, you must answer a few questions. First you have to decide by how much your club is to expand. Traditionally, gaming clubs suffer during the fall and winter because members go off to college or enter the business world. But you can cause unforeseen problems by overrecruiting to make up for any losses. If you are playing in a municipal or donated space, find out how much room you can depend on having for your games on a regular basis, and what the "people" capacity for that area is. Use that figure as your limit for expanding your club and don't exceed it unless you schedule people to play on different days. There is nothing so disheartening to a new member as being told he can't play because there is simply no room for him.

After you have a realistic membership goal, your club should be prepared to spend some money printing flyers. With the many computer programs and printers available today, this is fairly easy to accomplish. The flyers should empha-

size the good things your club offers. If you can teach new games to people, tell them so. If you have a schedule of games that run at set times, give the schedule. People like to plan for events, and your club looks even better if its schedule can be counted on. And be honest! Never make false claims or promises that can't be kept. This destroys any credibility your club has, and people will stay clear of your group. Make sure the flyer has your group's name, the address and phone number of the meeting place, and a contact person and his phone number. If possible, add a schedule of gaming times and a map showing how to get to the meetings. A brief history of the club is nice but not necessary. Your flyer should be one sided, as two-sided sheets almost triple the printing costs. Also, check on the printing costs per thousand versus per several hundred. Frequently it costs only twice as much to print one thousand as to print four hundred.

Once the flyers are printed, your club members should post them on nearby bulletin boards in public libraries, schools, stores, parks, and malls, wherever permission is granted. This does not include places around parking lots unless the permission of the store owner or lot owner is obtained in writing. Getting permission is the responsibility of all club members, not just a few.

The next step is for your club to keep a high profile at all conventions and game-fests near you. This can be done by having all club members wear some outfit or piece of clothing that clearly ties them to their organization. Worn items can include hats, T-shirts, or entire uniforms. Always be courteous when you game, to put your club in the best possible light. Showboating, bad conduct, poor sportsmanship, and fooling around detracts from your club's reputation and destroys your recruiting attempts. Many conventions provide "freebie" tables for club literature, or booths used to promote clubs. Contact conventions early so you can plan your best strategy. Remember to always keep your area neat and attractive, and pick up leftover flyers at the ends of shows.

Following these simple steps keeps your club visible and keeps new members coming in. This, in turn, helps you enjoy your games by giving you more opponents.

Reviews

Miniatures' product ratings	
+	Poor
++	Below average
+++	Average
++++	Above average
+++++	Excellent



Computer Pack (Stan Johansen Miniatures)

Stan Johansen Miniatures

56 Snow Crystal Road
P.O. Box 1304
Naugatuck CT 06770

SM-009—Computer Pack

Stan Johansen Miniatures is one of those small companies that you hear about only through the grapevine or at conventions on the east coast. It rarely advertises except through special shops and magazines, but it has a large selection of miniatures that allows you to expand your collection of special figures.

One of these specialty packages is SM-009 Computer Pack, an accessory to a group of castings called Space Marines. This pack contains six lead castings of various computers and associated boards and panels.

Two of the parts are upright data banks. These two pieces actually form three separate units, each with a different function. The piece with two upright units contains several data screens, vents, buttons, and bar displays. The twin unit is 25 mm high, 20 mm wide, and 7 mm deep. The second casting consists of a magnetic reel-to-reel unit with several buttons and different control panels. All pieces are hollow in the back and bottom.

Parts three and four form a curved control panel and its base. The panel has a central display screen and two complete sets of controls, with toggle switches or pressure pads, buttons, and display screens. The board is angled to face whoever uses it, and the back is rounded. The pedestal is simple and is just the right height for a sitting person's legs.

Part five is part of a command board and contains what could be either a vent or speakers, two screens, and 12 buttons. This is probably an auxiliary command board and could be either a weapons system or a science station.

Part six is a display unit or input station. It is, or should be, a wall-mounted unit. The front is angled and the top is level.

All the pieces have some light flash and mold lines, and they are somewhat rough on the bottoms and backs. They would make excellent scenery for GW's WARHAMMER™ 40,000 dioramas or games, or for cockpit scenes from West End Games' STAR WARS®: The RPG. The price is \$3 per pack.

SMS-012—Krakon Infantry Group

**** ½

Krakons are intelligent giant crabs, originally designed as part of FGU's SPACE MARINES miniatures game. They have remarkable possibilities for use in those SF miniatures games in which large bodies of water exist.

SMS-012 is a sampling of krakon infantry. The pack contains the parts needed to build six complete krakons, five workers and one leader. Each krakon has six normal crablike legs, a crablike body, and two arms holding a single weapon. Each body is an oval about 7/8" long by 11/16" wide made up of a series of joined plates (the exoskeleton), with two molded eyestalks and a belt that goes around the shell (holding a knife scabbard and holster on the turtlelike bottom). A vicious, tooth-filled mouth runs horizontally across the shells front. Also on the front are two holes where you can attach either a pistol or a blast rifle (you get five blasters and one pistol in each pack).

The krakons can be used in any game from the AD&D® game to GW's WARHAMMER 40,000 or GDW's MEGATRAVELER™ system. For fantasy games, it's a simple task to remove the blast rifles from the pincers by using a side clipper. Replace the rifles with swords and shields, and you can commence your attacks on seaside villages. For WARHAMMER 40,000 games,

the crabs carry their own exoskeleton armor. Use the weapons as blasters, add magazines for slug throwers, or remove the weapons and use spare weapons from any of your game sets to arm them.

With the possibilities available for it, this set is highly recommended. The cost is \$9 for six figures.

Simtac, Inc.

20 Attawan Road
Niantic CT 06357

Scotia Micro Models

32 West Hemming Street
Letham, Angus
Scotland DD8 2PU

Gaming in 15 mm continues to gain popularity and momentum in the U.S. As more fantasy figures appear on the market, many people are converting their 15-mm metal medieval miniatures to dual history and fantasy motifs. Gaming in 15 mm also allows you to use larger scale battlefields with a given space than 25-mm gaming does. Now Simtac has announced the release of still more figures to expand 15-mm lines.

FUD-6—Undead Archers

Undead have always been a serious problem for adventurers unless the latter have powerful clerics along. Now the clerics could be in trouble, as the undead have distance weapons.

The pack submitted for review contains 12 lead figures measuring 17 mm top to bottom. Each figure is a skeletal archer with no clothes or coverings except on parts of its legs. A quiver hangs by a strap on its back. Each skeleton holds a bow in its left hand and reaches for an arrow with its right. Many of the bones appear solid and blocky. Ribs and upper-arm bones are clearly visible. The skulls, though, do not seem humanlike.

Out of 12 figures, only one figure had an arm and bow that did not fill all the way. This should not be taken as a complaint, as it is easy to miss something at the quality checkpoint in this scale. There were no other fill problems, although there was some light flash on the figures.

I would recommend these figures for people who have 15mm scale games. I will probably paint my troops more like zombies rather than skeletons to explain their blockiness. The figures are worth their \$3-per-pack price tag.

FHB-3—Halflings with Axes

I always have trouble imagining a halfling fighting unit such as this one. The idea that halflings can stand up to organized enemies seems almost impossible, but this unit of 12 figures represents a unit that can.

The figures are 13 mm in height (about 5' in scale), making them giants of their race. Each halfling wears a jerkinlike

garment and pants. He holds a leather-thonged axe in his right hand, and a round shield is strapped to his left arm. A pouch and waterskin hang from his belt. Each halfling's face looks vaguely rodentlike, with an elongated, pudgy nose and a chinless jaw. His ears almost come to points, and his feet and lower legs are exposed and extremely hairy, as they should be.

All the figures' bases need work as they are somewhat crooked on the bottom. There is flash on some of the figures, but a quick swipe of the knife eliminates this problem.

Except for the size factor, these are good figures with good detail and are well worth \$3 per pack of 12.

FMN-009—Large Griffin

** ½

The griffin is well known to anyone who plays fantasy role-playing games. This mythical creature is a bane to adventurers because of its appetite and vicious temper.

The figure submitted for review from Jacobite (Simtac) is that of a large griffin; in 15-mm scale, "large" is more like "gargantuan." This figure is 67 mm from its base up to its outstretched left claw, or about 27" in scale; the wingspan is about 40". The figure is molded in a rearing position on its hind legs, with wings fully extended and front left claw up as if preparing to strike. The hindquarters are smooth with a tail that wraps around the rear left leg. Halfway up the body, smooth skin becomes large, semi-detailed feathers that continue the rest of the way up the figure to the eaglelike head.

There are a lot of problems with this figure. The figure is molded in three large parts that do not fit together as they come. The base of the bird body is about three-fourths the size of the lion body and needs filling and molding with either epoxy or liquid solder to fit properly, though it appears to flow well into the bird part of the figure. There was extensive flash on the rear legs that cleaned up fairly quickly with a knife and a file. The right front leg also needs work as it ends abruptly and appears to hang from the body; small amounts of fill and a little work fixed this. The wings also required filling. The raised talon is somewhat filled in, and you must be careful how you clean it out. The eyes and ears are well done, though the beak looks more like a pincer.

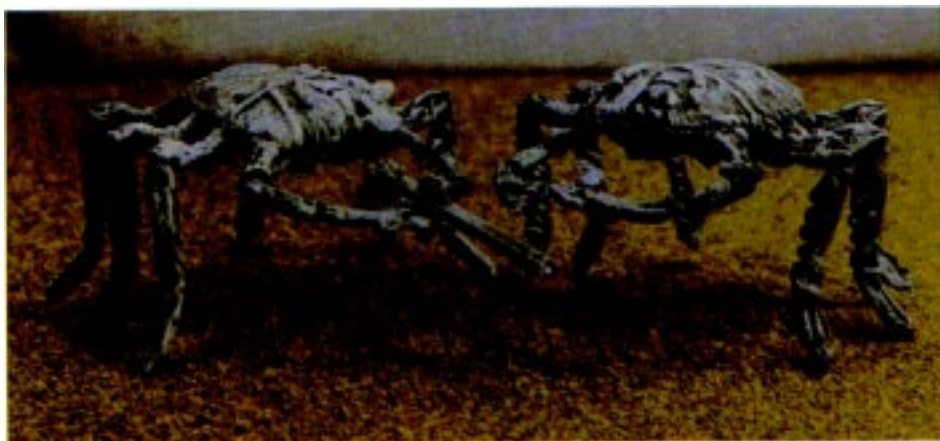
This figure is large and dangerous looking when finished. It can be used as either a 15-mm or 25-mm monster. This figure is good for someone who has done figure work before, but it is definitely not for a beginner. The price is \$4 for one griffin.

GHQ

2634 Bryant Avenue South
Minneapolis MN 55408

W-48—BM 21

High on the priority list of any Soviet unit is artillery. Artillery, provides sup-



Krakon Infantry Group (Stan Johansen Miniatures)



Large Griffin (Simtac/Scotia Micro Models)



Frost Giant (Ral Partha)



Modern-era vehicles and weapons (GHQ)

pressing fire that keeps enemy heads down and cuts down on return fire; it also removes obstructions such as mine fields or buildings, and can lay down smoke screens that protect friendly troops from being spotted by the enemy. Favorites among artillery are multiple rocket launch systems (MRLSs), of which the BM-21 is one. MRLSs are nice because a single vehicle can put as many as 40 122-mm rockets in the air at once. They operate in batteries of six vehicles.

The models sent by GHQ represent the BM-21, based on the Ural 375d chassis. Each casting comes in three pieces: a truck chassis, a swivel mount, and a launch-tube structure. The truck is excellent, with clear tread patterns, wheels, lug nuts, and wiper blades on the windshield. The body has excellent ribbed parts, bumper, and cable. The lights, fuel tank, door handles, rear-view mirrors, electrical box, and spare wheel are all done very well. The only poor spot on the casting is on the front of the missile tubes, where a mold mark must be cleaned.

I highly recommend these miniatures to all modern-era gamers, including those playing GDW's TWILIGHT: 2000™ and FASA's BATTLETECH® games. This is a highly detailed piece that can be converted to a SRM or LRM carrier without changing its form. The package contains four vehicles for \$5.50.

US-61—75-mm Pack

Howitzer & Jeep

As World War II progressed through the Pacific and Europe, an urgent need was felt for a portable artillery piece that could be dropped with airborne forces or carried through the jungles of the Pacific islands. Most artillery then was big and bulky, and needed a truck or similar form of transport to tow the piece and a separate vehicle for the ammunition. Thus was created the 75-mm pack howitzer, small enough that it could be disassembled into six man-portable pieces. The gun packed enough punch to hurt most targets, and each man in the company could carry one extra shell without great encumbrance.

The set submitted for review contains six guns, three in transport mode and three set up for firing, with three jeeps and three gun crews (enough for half a unit, as a unit had six guns). The Willys jeeps have well-detailed headlights, grills, jerry cans, spare tires, and drivers. The gun consists of two pieces, a wheeled trailer and a wrapped barrel. It is easy to set the barrel upside down, so the ribbed area on it should be lined up with the squared sides in the trailer and flat base. The crew consists of four men in uniforms of U.S. Marines or airborne forces. There is an officer with binoculars, a loader holding a 75-mm shell at the ready with an ammo box next to him, a gunner preparing to pull the lanyard, and a generic soldier.

These guns can be used for FASA's

BATTLETECH game by removing the jeeps' windshields and mounting the guns on the vehicles. This set is worth its \$5.50.

W-53—BTS 2T T-55

Recovery Tank

The T-55 is one of the most readily available tanks in the world. On this chassis, the Soviet Union and several of its allies and arms purchasers have built a sturdy vehicle meant to recover and repair damaged tanks.

The reviewed pack consists of three two-piece vehicles. The vehicles are excellent, with no visible defects in molding, no mold lines, and no end caps. Hatch covers even have handles and hinges. Also included are towing cables, a drop spade for anchoring the vehicle, tool boxes, and tools. Even the lights are raised.

This is an excellent casting that provides a solid place in either a modern armor or TWILIGHT: 2000 game. A pack of three vehicles sells for \$5.50.

G-105—SdKfz 251/C 16

Flamethrower

Chief among the German troop carriers of World War II was the 251 halftrack, on which many variants were built. Half-tracks had the ability to move either on roads or cross-country, allowing them to provide fire support for troops. This variant mounted two large flamethrowers that were used against emplacements or areas that gunfire could not damage.

The pack submitted consists of six castings. Each halftrack is built in a basic engineer configuration with extra tool boxes, a reel of hose in the back, and two hoses that extend to the mounted flamethrowers. This version is an early model without the extra front armor added later. The wheels, tracks, and bogeys live up to GHQ's standards with crisp handles, lights, and lug nuts on the wheels. The flamethrowers are mounted on the sides and have longer barrels than the machine guns on the front. Two crew members in German field uniforms man the guns.

This is a quality casting that fills a hole in the German engineer section. It can play an important part in World War II city battles and is recommended for World War II armor games. Five vehicles are in each pack for \$5.50.

N-86—M935 Five-Ton Truck

**** ½

The M935 five-ton truck is seen everywhere in the U.S. and in NATO-associated countries. These vehicles have formed the backbone of the military supply corps and the basis for a variety of engineering vehicles for over 20 years.

The model submitted is a cargo carrier with a canvas top. The vehicle consists of two parts, the frame and the body. The casting has good wheel, cab, battery box, and fuel tank details. Two crew members are in the cab.

One shortcoming of this model is the lack of upward venting stacks on both sides of the cab. These stacks allow the

vehicle to cross shallow streams and rivers up to body height. Another shortcoming is the mold line passing through the tire and lower frame.

W-49—GAZ 66 Light Truck *****

The GAZ 66 is a Soviet two-ton supply truck in use all over the world. This vehicle is a 4 X 4 able to cover rough and muddy ground easily.

The vehicle is cast in a two-part assembly. The frame, body, wheels, bumpers, tanks, and mud flaps are on the lower half, and the laced canvas top is on the upper half. The truck is simple and has windshield wipers and a spotlight. While no mold lines are present, there is a slight separation between body and frame.

This casting is a must for TWILIGHT: 2000 and modern microarmor players. It comes five to a pack for \$5.50.

Grenadier Models, Inc.

P.O. Box 305
Springfield PA 19064

Grenadier Models UK Ltd.

19 Babbage Road, Deeside
Clwyd, Wales
United Kingdom CH5 2QB

9612—Spectral Dragon II *****

(This review is by my dragon friend, Keith Piske.) When you take this miniature out of the box, it looks like the parts of an old car in a junk yard. Assembly doesn't improve the impression because there is considerable flash, particularly in the red dragon's mouth. Large gaps are evident in the chest and where the tail joins the body. Also, a large gob of metal is found at the point where the creature's underside meets the ground, and the metal is brittle (a piece of the base of our sample broke off when we opened the package).

After assembly and priming, however, the overall effect is impressive. The spectral dragon has no wings, but the legends of the five-headed dragon that fought Marduk do not describe it as having wings, even though the spectral dragon from Grenadier's first dragon series had them. If you use the figure in AD&D games as Tiamat, you'll note that the description of her in the *Monster Manual* doesn't mention her having wings either (though the D&D® cartoon version on TV did).

There is rather shallow detail on the dorsal scales, and it is quite difficult to distinguish the heads by dragon type. The red and white heads are obvious, but the rest are a bit vague if you are a stickler for details. The cover painting doesn't help either, as the heads seem to have different details and positions than are present on the actual figure.

Aside from this, this figure is still fantastic, although it needs major work. The miniature stands 100 mm tall, 34 mm wide, and 165 mm long. The tail alone is 65 mm long, and each claw is 14 mm long

and 11 mm wide. The heads range from 19 mm to 34 mm long and 7 mm to 13 mm wide, and the five necks are from 40 mm to 60 mm long. This dragon is very impressive in 25-mm scale.

The female wizard accompanying the dragon is also impressive. Her hair is blown by the wind, and she holds a magic wand in her right hand. She could be used as the human form of Tiamat. There is considerable flash on her legs.

Despite my complaints, I highly recommend this figure. I covered every flaw I could find simply because I like the figure so much. This miniature would make a fantastic display figure, not to mention any of its uses as a role-playing aid. At \$9.95, it is well worth the cost.

Spectral Dragon II (Grenadier Models)



Ral Partha Enterprises

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212

02-414—Frost Giant

***** 1/2

The figure supplied for review consists of two parts that must be joined at the waist. The completed figure is 65 mm from his feet to the top of his central helmet horn. His arms are exposed from shoulders to wrists, where bracers with inscribed runes rest. The battle axe in his right hand has a head 20 mm across, with an eagle shape visible upon it.

The figure wears scale armor front and back, the two sides connected by straps and with six ornamental disks in front. His shorts consist of an animal skin held up by a wide belt. Skins held up by leather straps form his boots. His head is protected by a well-detailed helmet crowned by three horns.

The figure's bare skin is well muscled with appropriate detail, the cording sharp and well done. His beard is full and relatively well trimmed, and his hair falls to his shoulders. The figure needs work at the ends of both halves, though. The edges need to be finished, and the top half is just slightly smaller in diameter than the bottom. There was also some flash between the horns and the shoulders. Otherwise, the figure is good.

This figure is a good addition to your monster collection for \$5.

Design Preservation Models

P.O. Box 280
Crestone CO 81131

More and more role-playing games are based in the present or the near future, with some if not all scenarios taking place in an urban environment. Here are two buildings that have a place in every game from TSR's GANGBUSTERS® game to FASA's SHADOWRUN™ system.

Kit #101—Kelly's Saloon *****

Kelly's Saloon is based on a generic neighborhood bar set in a brick building built in the 1920s and 1930s. The owner usually lived above the bar in one of a group of apartments. Sometimes these apartments were used for illegal gambling or as houses of ill repute, but mostly they served as places to talk, unwind, and gather information—a focal point for the whole area.

The sample submitted by DPM is made of tough polystyrene. The building is 2 3/4" wide, 4" deep, and 4 1/8" high. It has the large front windows known in the 1920s and also features recessed twin doors. A rear door provides for quick escapes. The kit is molded in red with good brick and mortar detail. There are four chimneys, so there are probably supposed to be four apartments.

The kit comes bagged and consists of 10 parts. The instructions are easy to follow, and illustrations show the locations of the



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parts. Some work is involved in finishing the corners, and you must be very careful when trimming the roof so that it will fit correctly. With a little painting, this structure is ready to use.

This bar could serve as a good place for shadowrunners or cyberpunks to gather information or make deals. Bars are places to meet people, and they provide good places from which adventures can be launched. This building is worth its \$5.95 price tag.

Kit #103—Cuttings Scissors Co.

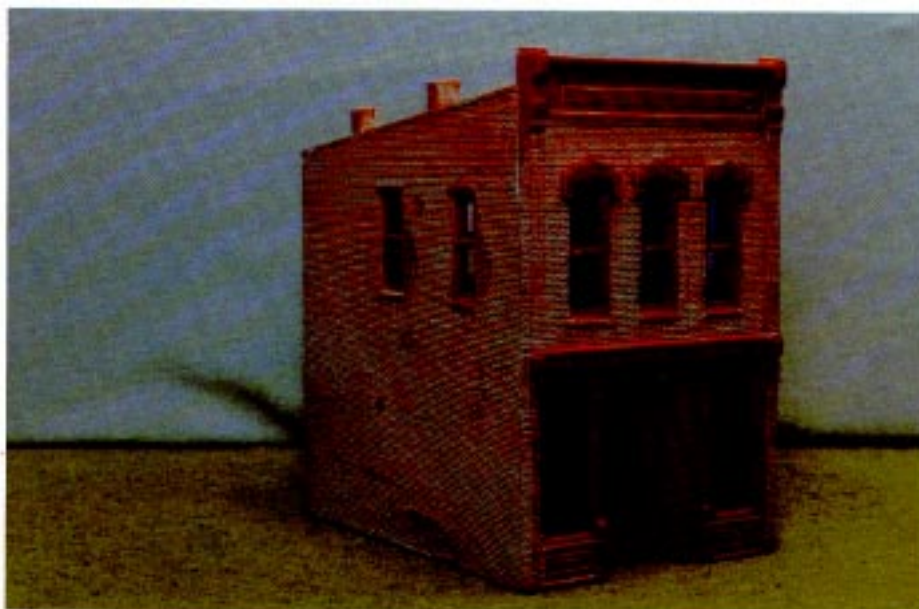
**** ½

Warehouses are popular modern-era adventure settings, being the places where illegal goods are stored or where gangs have their hideouts or manufacturing centers. The kit submitted is representative of such buildings here in the U.S.A. The warehouse is 7¼" wide by 3" deep by 4 ⅜" high (two stories); it has windows

for a basement as well. There are three large loading doors on one side, and a large loading and roll-up door set at ground level on the other side. There are also three regular ground-level doors.

Construction and finishing are basically the same as with Kelly's Saloon. There is some flash. I recommend using Plasti-Zap super glue to hold the pieces together; otherwise each joint will have to dry before another one is done.

This kit is recommended as a scenario setting for TSR's MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ or Mayfair's DC™ HEROES games, or any game set in the present. To add extra value to the buildings, use wood or plastic for the floor supports and cut the floors out of balsa or sheet plastic. This allows you to place figures by windows and add a setup for city fighting using GDW's TWILIGHT: 2000, TSR's SNI- PER™, or other modern-era rules. This is a good value for \$6.95.





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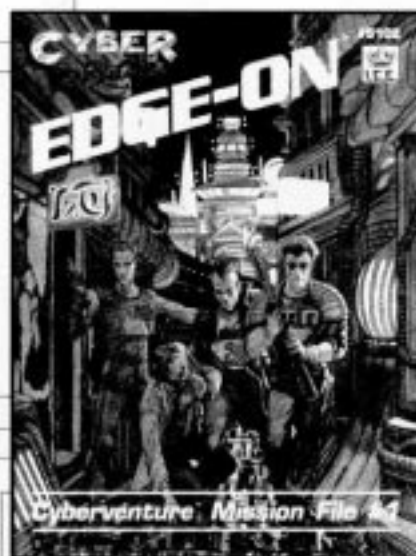
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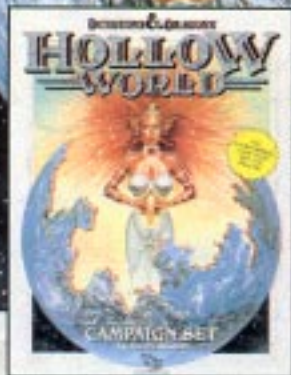
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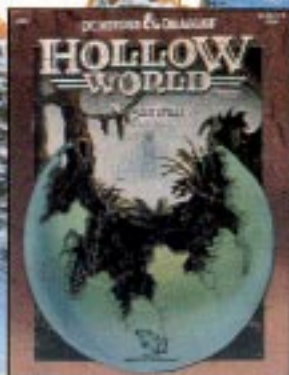
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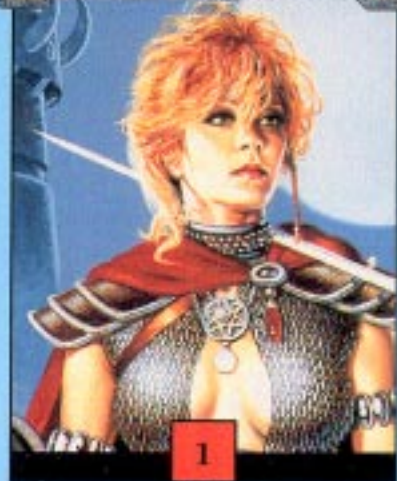


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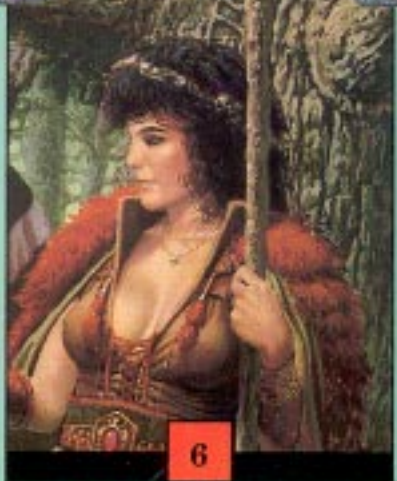
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5

Prince Tristan Kendrick

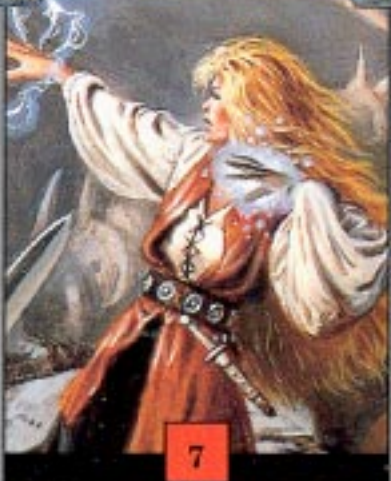
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6

Robyn

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7

Shandril Shessair

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8

Olive Raskettle

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Bruenor Battlehammer

9th-level dwarf fighter

ARMOR CLASS: - 3

MOVEMENT: 6

HIT POINTS: 112

ALIGNMENT: Neutral good

S: 17 D: 15 C: 19

I: 12 W: 15 Ch: 15

MAGICAL ITEMS: *Field plate*

+2, *shield* +1, *axe* +3

BACKGROUND: Bruenor swore to find his long-lost homeland of Mithril Hall.

With the help of several companions he was not only able to find it but to defeat the evil forces within it. He is now the king of Mithril Hall.

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Alias

6th-level human fighter

ARMOR CLASS: 4

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT POINTS: 48

ALIGNMENT: Neutral good

S: 17 D: 17 C: 17

I: 17 W: 17 Ch: 17

MAGICAL ITEMS: None

BACKGROUND: A powerful group of magical beings created Alias as their servant, but she became independent of them and, with her former masters' destruction, now wanders as an adventuress. Her constant companion is the reptile-man Dragonbait.

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Prince Tristan Kendrick

12th-level human ranger

ARMOR CLASS: - 1

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT POINTS: 95

ALIGNMENT: Neutral good

S: 17 D: 18 C: 17

I: 16 W: 14 Ch: 18

MAGICAL ITEMS: *Long*

sword + 4 (*special purpose*)

BACKGROUND: Once prince of Corwell, Tristan and his allies fought the bestial Kazgaroth and many other foes of the Moonshaes. Tristan is now the High King of the Moonshaes, and he leads his people in the turbulent post-war era.

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Midnight

7th-level human wizard

ARMOR CLASS: 10

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT POINTS: 19

ALIGNMENT: Lawful neutral

S: 6 D: 11 C: 10

I: 16 W: 10 Ch: 17

MAGICAL ITEMS: None

BACKGROUND: The daughter of a merchant, Midnight became fascinated with magic and devoted her early years to learning all she could of it. Favored by the goddess Mystra, Midnight took part in the great crisis of the gods that befell the Forgotten Realms.

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Dragonbait

7th-level saurial paladin

ARMOR CLASS: 5

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT POINTS: 50

ALIGNMENT: Lawful good

S: 15 D: 13 C: 17

I: 14 W: 16 Ch: 4/18 to reptilians

MAGICAL ITEMS: *Sword* +5

holy avenger

BACKGROUND: One of a race of intelligent reptiles, Dragonbait is a holy warrior who crusades for good. He is the companion of the heroine Alias. Dragonbait does not speak, but he understands the common tongue and has keen senses.

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Olive Ruskettle

6th-level halfling thief

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT POINTS: 29

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic neutral

S: 11 D: 18 C: 15

I: 12 W: 7 Ch: 13/17 to halflings

MAGICAL ITEMS: None

BACKGROUND: Though she claims to be a bard (and she can sing and play instruments well), Olive is actually a thief who enjoys a carefree life of tale-telling and music-making. Olive is very outgoing and is always finding new adventures.

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Shandril Shessair

1st-level human thief,

5th-level *spellfire* wielder

ARMOR CLASS: 10

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT POINTS: 6

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic good

S: 11 D: 15 C: 14

I: 10 W: 14 Ch: 9

MAGICAL ITEMS: None

BACKGROUND: The sole recipient of *spellfire*, the ability to absorb raw magical energy, Shandril and her husband Narm (an apprentice wizard) are being hunted by the dark forces of the Forgotten Realms because of her powers.

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Robyn

7th-level human druid

ARMOR CLASS: 2

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT POINTS: 76

ALIGNMENT: Neutral good

S: 14 D: 16 C: 16

I: 16 W: 18 Ch: 17

MAGICAL ITEMS: *Torque of the Goddess, Staff of the White Well*

BACKGROUND: Robyn was raised with Prince Tristan from childhood, but she quickly gained experience as a druid in the battles she fought. She is the last of the druids of her land, and is married to Tristan.

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9

Raistlin Majere



10

Caramon Majere



11

Tika Weylan Majere



12

Tasslehoff Burrfoot



13

Tanis Half-Elven



14

Goldmoon



15

Larana



16

Kitiara



17

Dalamar

Tika Waylan Majere

10th-level human fighter
ARMOR CLASS: 0
MOVEMENT: 6
HIT POINTS: 60
ALIGNMENT: Neutral good
S: 14 D: 16 C: 13
I: 9 W: 12 Ch: 14
MAGICAL ITEMS: *Shield +2, short sword +2*
BACKGROUND: Independent and strong willed, Tika was a barmaid before the War of the Lance, becoming a celebrated warrior during the fighting and gaining great fame and respect. She and her husband Caramon operate an inn.

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Caramon Majere

12th-level human fighter
ARMOR CLASS: - 1
MOVEMENT: 9
HIT POINTS: 95
ALIGNMENT: Lawful good
S: 18/63 D: 11 C: 17
I: 12 W: 10 Ch: 15
MAGICAL ITEMS: *Plate mail +1, shield +2, long sword +1*
BACKGROUND: A hero of the War of the Lance, Caramon fought his brother Raistlin after the war, as Raistlin would have destroyed the world. Caramon is married to Tika Waylan Majere, and they operate an inn.

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Raistlin Majere

20th-level human wizard
ARMOR CLASS: -2
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT POINTS: 44
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
S: 10 D: 16 C: 10
I: 17 W: 14 Ch: 15
MAGICAL ITEMS: *Staff of Magius, dagger of Magius*
BACKGROUND: Once a hero of the War of the Lance, Raistlin was a wizard of the Black Robes who wished to become a god. One of the most powerful wizards in Krynn's history, Raistlin forever left his mark on his world and its people.

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Goldmoon

11th-level human cleric
ARMOR CLASS: - 3
MOVEMENT: 6
HIT POINTS: 46
ALIGNMENT: Lawful good
S: 12 D: 14 C: 12
I: 12 W: 16 Ch: 17
MAGICAL ITEMS: *Cloak of protection + 3, staff of striking/curing, shield +2*
BACKGROUND: Goldmoon was the daughter of a tribal chieftain. When she and her beloved Riverwind found their tribe had been destroyed, they joined the War of the Lance and helped defeat the Queen of Darkness.

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Tanis Half-Elven

12th-level half-elf fighter
ARMOR CLASS: - 3
MOVEMENT: 9
HIT POINTS: 79
ALIGNMENT: Neutral good
S: 16 D: 16 C: 12
I: 12 W: 13 Ch: 15
MAGICAL ITEMS: *Plate mail +2, shield +2, long sword +2*
BACKGROUND: A leader in the War of the Lance, Tanis became an advisor, guide, and bodyguard to his wife Laurana. They travel extensively across Krynn, healing the wounds of the war.

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Tasslehoff Burrfoot

12th-level kender thief
ARMOR CLASS: 1
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT POINTS: 44
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
S: 13 D: 16 C: 14
I: 9 W: 12 Ch: 11
MAGICAL ITEMS: *Leather armor +2, ring of protection +3, hoopak +2, dagger +4*
BACKGROUND: Like all kender, Tasslehoff is intensely curious, carefree, and excited by danger. He acquires many odds and ends from his travels, some items being magical and many being taken from his friends.

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Dalamar

13th-level elven wizard
ARMOR CLASS: 0
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT POINTS: 41
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
S: 16 D: 16 C: 12
I: 17 W: 16 Ch: 14
MAGICAL ITEMS: *Ring of healing, wand of lightning*
BACKGROUND: A handsome and skilled young wizard, Dalamar was cast out of his elven homeland for following the ways of evil in order to learn more of his beloved magic. He is attracted to Kit-iara, and he admires and fears Raistlin, his master.

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Kitiara

15th-level human fighter
ARMOR CLASS: - 3
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT POINTS: 68
ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil
S: 14 D: 18 C: 14
I: 13 W: 7 Ch: 14
MAGICAL ITEMS: *Dragon-armor plate mail + 1, short sword +2, spear + 3, dagger + 1*
BACKGROUND: The older sister of Caramon and Raistlin, Kitiara joined the evil forces of Queen of Darkness. After the War of the Lance, she continued to try to conquer the world with her companion Dalamar.

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Laurana

5th-level elf fighter
ARMOR CLASS: -4
MOVEMENT: 9
HIT POINTS: 30
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic good
S: 13 D: 17 C: 14
I: 15 W: 12 Ch: 16
MAGICAL ITEMS: *Plate mail +2, short sword +3, dagger +1*
BACKGROUND: Once a spoiled elven princess, Laurana became a powerful commander in the War of the Lance. She married Tanis Half-Elven after the war and became a diplomat for the Knights of Solamnia.

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