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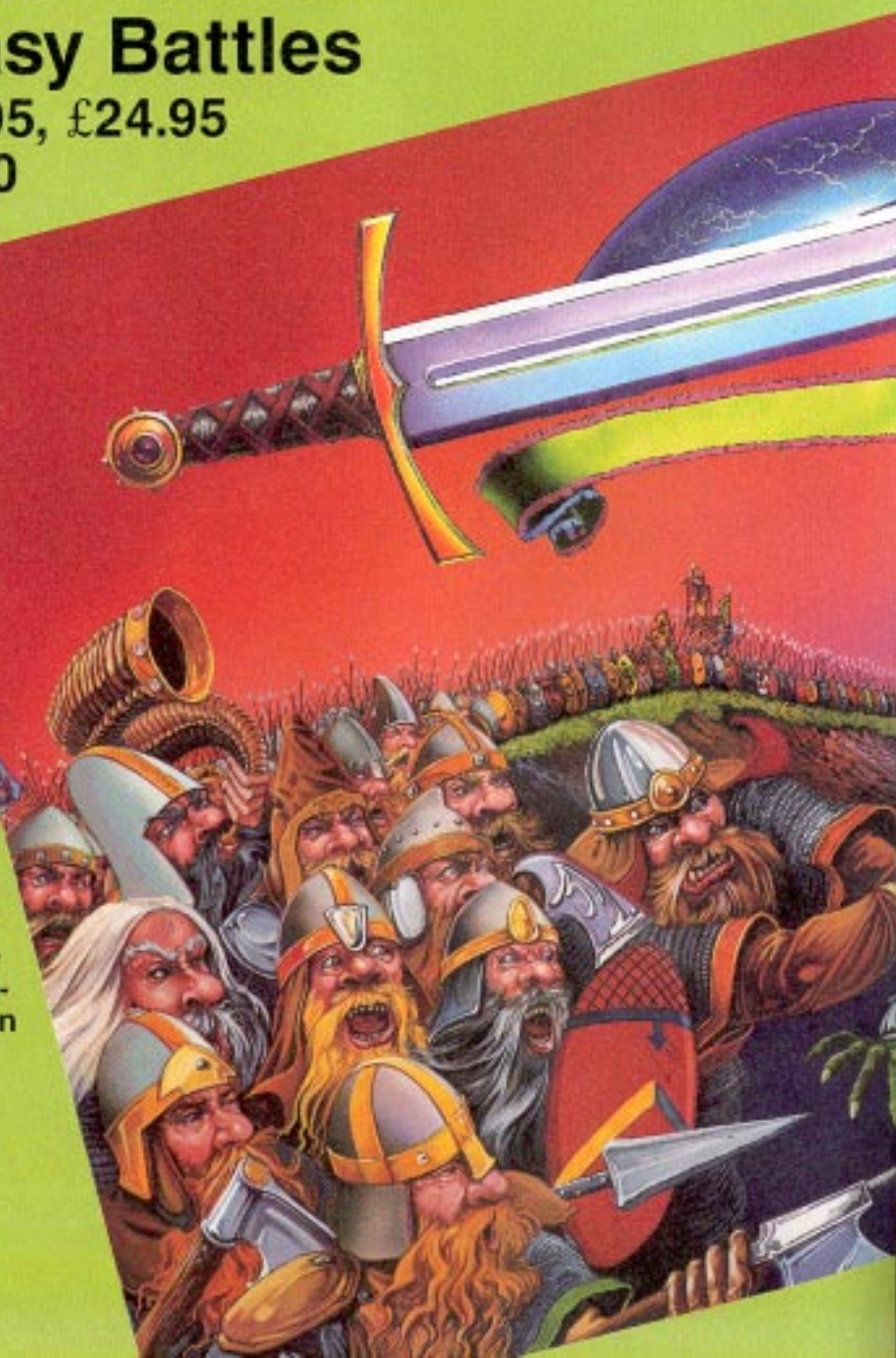
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COVER

Teenage swamp-dwelling ninja zombies—who could ask for more? Jim Holloway leads us off on another Oriental adventure with a cover painting that was turned in so quickly, he couldn't think of a name for it. We like it anyway. We were informed that the clothing and weapons in this scene are in authentic styles (down to the eyepatch), so Jim did his homework as usual.

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.

No, we are not...

Dear Sirs and Madames,

I would like to introduce myself as a second-year student at Winnipeg Bible College. I'm taking a course called World Religions II. In this course, an assignment is to compile a file of the different religions of North America.

Since your organization belongs to this category, I hope that you will see fit to send me some literature, brochures, or other information about your organization. . . . Thank you for your aid in completing this assignment and helping me to broaden my knowledge about this very essential aspect of life.

Name withheld by editor
Winnipeg Bible College
Otterburne, Manitoba

In late September and early October of this year, I found in my stack of mail five different letters from Bible college students in Manitoba; each was much like the above letter, asking for information on "your particular religious organization" (i.e., TSR, Inc.). I've received a letter like the above in the past, from someone who was taking a course on world religions at some unidentified school. This was the first big flood of such requests, however, in recent memory. I've responded to all of the Manitoba students in writing, and here I'd like to repeat some of what I said to them:

I read your request for information with great interest and some confusion, amusement, and anger. I haven't the vaguest idea of how TSR, Inc. came to be known as a religious organization, and I find the idea both silly and irksome. But I can set you straight on some basic facts, at least as I see them.

TSR, Inc. is a company devoted to producing games, books, and other entertainment products. This company does not advocate any particular religious belief. Its sole purpose is to create recreational materials to make money. If you were to spend a few minutes investigating TSR's product line, you would be certain to come to exactly the same conclusion.

I strongly believe that you should investigate your own sources of information as to what TSR, Inc.'s purpose is. I assume that, as students, your goals in life are to investigate, to learn, to understand, and to take your discoveries and apply that knowledge to your own lives. If you do decide to find out why TSR, Inc. is listed as a "religion" in whatever resource you are using, please inform me of the results. I would greatly appreciate hearing from you. We all may benefit from learning the truth.

Get some class!

Dear Dragon:

I may have been reading DRAGON Magazine for only a couple of issues, but can I ask this: Where are the scenarios? Additional character classes? Campaign cities and countries? We don't all have huge, long-running campaigns. If you say you don't have the space, I'm sure you'd find a few things to get rid of. If not, I don't mind paying more. The usual reply to that is: "Get another magazine!" but I like the interesting articles and short stories in DRAGON Magazine. I just think that if you add some of these things, you would make your magazine even better.

Paul C. M. Wilson
Alloway, Ayr, Great Britain

We publish scenarios for the AD&D® and D&D® games in DUNGEON® Adventures, our bimonthly module magazine; see the advertisement and subscription card in this issue for details on ordering it. We don't have a lot of room to publish all-new campaign cities and countries in DRAGON Magazine (DUNGEON Adventures often has those, however).

However, as for new character classes, we can certainly help you out. We ran a list of all of the unusual AD&D 1st Edition game character classes published in this magazine in "Letters" in issue #161, and we even had another new class in that issue: the scout.

If anyone is interested in creating a new character class for the AD&D 1st Edition game for publication, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. The class must make sense, and there should be a good reason for it to exist within a campaign setting. Give a solid background that tells how the class came about (making the text generic enough to be used in almost any campaign world), and make the background and class explanations logical and clear. If the class's functions could be duplicated by an existing character class with a few spells and skills, then it is redundant.

2. The class should be complete. Make sure the class description covers these areas: permitted races and alignments; level limits; limits on primary characteristics (strength, intelligence, etc., including ability scores required for bonuses to experience points, if allowed); allowable armor, shields, weapons (including oil and poison), and magical items; combat information (to-hit and saving-throw tables used, attacks per round, and weapons proficiency data); non-weapon proficiency data (including special nonmagical skills); henchmen and hirelings; an experience-point table covering level titles, hit dice, level limits, spell use, etc.; all spells cast (with new spells explained); and all other special tables, charts, and class information as required. Magical powers, new abilities and disabilities, unique magical items used, and role-playing notes should also be present.

Continued on page 7

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EDITORIAL

What you are in the dark*

Most people are content to play an AD&D® or D&D® game and enjoy it without fiddling with that sense of enjoyment, but once in a while someone will get the urge to so fiddle, and will start to ask questions like, "Why does Bob play only halflings?" "Why does Jane like to play male characters so much?" "What's Pete's thing about thieves?"

What the questioner hopes to learn are all the deep, dark secrets that make up Bob, Jane, and Pete's personalities, that explain why they prefer playing certain fantasy character types. Does Bob have a weak or childlike self image? Does Jane have sex-role confusion? Is Pete actually an untrustworthy guy?

I've played this little mind game on numerous occasions, and after years of informal research I can report that I am a terrible guesser at people's real motives in doing almost anything. People very often do have specific reasons for playing certain character types—but if you're fishing for deep, dark secrets, you're going to be frequently disappointed.

People play the roles that they find most comfortable. Certain aspects of these roles appeal to them a lot, and the connections may be interesting but they are hardly deep and dark. Some people choose roles because those roles offer challenges, like turning a halfling into a dangerous fighter, or a thief into a skilled survivalist. Some choose roles for even more basic reasons related to game mechanics or mood quirks.

For example, I like playing fighters but dislike wizards. My reasons are pretty simple: I find wizards to be too complicated to play. I can never keep track of all their spells nor remember how best to use them in different situations. Fighters, on the other hand, are uncomplicated and direct. I like intelligent fighters who improvise attacks and defenses using basic weapons and materials, but who carry little magical or spell-casting equipment. (In fact, if I play a cleric, I play him exactly like a fighter, using his spells as an afterthought or as combat support). Humans and half-ogres are my favorite races because they fight so well; Vikings are my favorite character culture for similar reasons.

I also like gnomes, who quickly de-

velop exaggerated, comic personalities. If I'm in the mood to be obnoxious and silly during a game, I'll run a gnome like Cyragnome DeBergerac, who insults everyone and speaks with a horrible French accent (courtesy of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*), or Bluto Arglebargle Dorfman III (actually a dwarf, but who cares), who is modelled somewhat on John Belushi's character in *Animal House*.

Anyone who knows me knows that I am not a fighter in real life; I was in the Army

for five years, but as a mental-health counselor. I keep in good shape at a local YMCA but am not remarkably strong, and I don't keep weapons of any kind. As a general rule, I'm also not especially disruptive or obnoxious (nor short like a gnome). But I love the chance to be someone that I am not, and role-playing games give me that chance.

I know many other people who feel the same way. One friend of mine, a doctor and fantasy writer, loves playing thieves;



she is also one of the most scrupulously honest and trustworthy people I know. Another friend, a military officer, played halfling thieves because they could get away with so much by being cute (this seems to be a major rationale for playing halfling thieves, at least in my experience). The few people I recall who played rigid, hard-driving, no-nonsense paladins were fairly relaxed (and even carefree) in their day-to-day lives. I've heard that some people are attracted to kender from the DRAGONLANCE® saga for their disruptive and thrill-seeking characteristics, and I imagine that these people (whom you would dearly love to throttle during an adventure) are probably fairly placid otherwise. (If they aren't, they should be shot.)


Playing opposite-sex characters is fun for the same reason: You can be someone you are not. I've noticed that many opposite-sex characters have high charisma and comeliness scores, so maybe something else is at work here—but I'm the last one who would know about *that*.

There are similarities between characters and players, of course—how could there not be?—and these are interesting as well. I'm not as disruptive as Cyragnome DeBergerac, but I love to keep people amused and entertained, as does he. The halfling character of the military officer quickly took on leadership and command

responsibilities in the bogus religious organization he had started. Some paladin players have struck me as unusually motivated and dedicated to their jobs, and the doctor/writer enjoys doses of excitement in her life, much like her adventurous thieves.

The pages of "Forum" have seen numerous battles over why evil characters are good or bad for you; I suspect that, again, many people love playing evil characters because it's a chance to take on roles that the players are not normally like. Many otherwise "lawful" people also prefer chaotic characters for the chance to break rules and be unrestricted.

What character types do you like best, and why do you like them? What character types do you dislike most, and why? Maybe this would be a good topic for the "Forum" column. Get out your typewriter or pen, and let's see what character type makes a role-playing game click for you. (Non-fantasy entries are welcome, too.)



* From the saying, "Character is what you are in the dark" (courtesy of Dr. Emilio Lizardo, *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*).


Letters

Continued from page 5

3. The class should be balanced for game play if it is meant to be a player character class, though as an NPC class it might be particularly dangerous (as were the berserker, death master, ninja, and witch) or weak (as were the scribe and astrologer). Playtest the class as often as possible to work out any unclear or poor-playing areas.

4. The class should be reasonably simple and preferably short, coming to about 20 typed, double-spaced pages at most. In our experience, spell-casting classes are of necessity longer than others as they include descriptions of new spells, which is still a point against them (we don't have a lot of space to use per article).

We've seen a lot of AD&D 1st Edition game character classes in our time, but we are still open to printing more; they are quite popular, as our mail indicates.

We are also open to new AD&D 2nd Edition game character kits, as per the four-part Complete Handbook series for the four major classes. We leave it to you, the readers, to use your creativity and surprise us all. 

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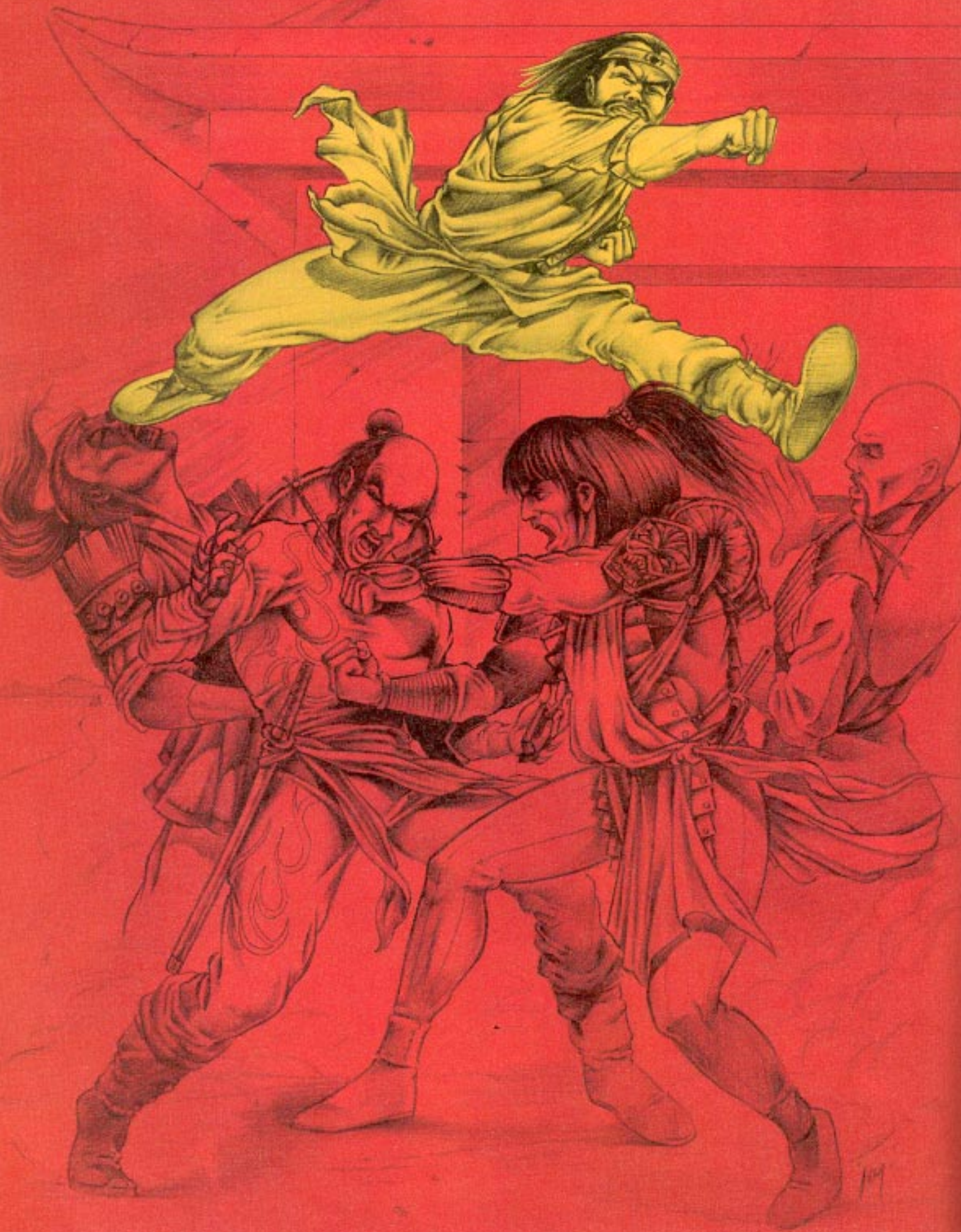
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Return to the Orient







Flying Feet and Lightning Hands

Special maneuvers for *Oriental Adventures* martial arts

by Len Carpenter

The martial-arts system is one of the finest features of the AD&D® 1st Edition *Oriental Adventures* book, but it can still benefit from more variety. Presented herein are new special maneuvers that may be introduced into martial-arts styles in the campaign.

Some of these new maneuvers expand existing categories into more advanced special maneuvers, such as the Scissors Kick and Crushing Drop. A second mental and physical training category is added to give the DM more choices in the maneuvers that may make up a martial style. Three of the new special maneuvers presented here were mentioned in previous articles on the sumo wrestler and new martial-arts styles for the AD&D game: Crushing Hug (issue #157, page 351, Arrow Cutting (issue #127, page 55), and Flowing Water (issue #127, page 50). They are repeated here in the list of new special maneuvers for easy reference.

These new special maneuvers should be introduced into the campaign gradually, especially the more advanced maneuvers. Some of these new maneuvers may be tacked onto existing styles, and others may be used to form new martial styles in the campaign. Others might be cherished techniques jealously guarded by martial-arts masters who are reluctant to pass them on to player-character students. Sumo wrestlers will certainly not be keen on teaching the Crushing Hug maneuver to non-sumotori.

New special maneuvers should not be made available to PCs without careful consideration by the DM. Some special maneuvers are best suited for NPC martial artists. A PC's first experience with a new maneuver should often be at the hands—or feet—of an NPC antagonist. These maneuvers may add new thrills to an Oriental campaign without being toys for player characters to exploit.

Below are the new special maneuvers, followed by an explanation of each maneu-

ver. The list continues the information given in Table 70, on page 103 of *Oriental Adventures*.

Kick

4. Scissors Kick (hard/soft)

Lock

5. Crushing Hug (hard)

Strike

4. Double-fist Punch (hard/soft)

Throw

5. Crushing Drop (hard)

Weapon

4. Arrow Cutting (soft)
5. Throwing Mastery (hard/soft)

Mental and Physical Training

7. Slowed Aging (soft)

Mental and Physical Training II (new)

1. Light Step (soft)
2. Controlled Breathing (soft)
3. Pause and Silence (hard/soft)
4. Quick Strike (hard/soft)
5. Flowing Water (soft)
6. Resuscitation (soft)
7. Suppressed Desire (soft)

Scissors Kick: This extremely difficult kick enables a martial artist to leap upward and deliver powerful head or upper-body kicks to two separate targets simultaneously. The two targets must be within 6' of each other for both targets to be attacked. Each attack is made at -2 to hit. A successful kick does normal martial-arts damage. If the attacker misses both targets, he loses his next melee attack while he tries to regain his footing and balance. This maneuver works well with styles similar to tae kwan do.

Crushing Hug: This maneuver is used primarily by sumo wrestlers but may be permitted for other martial-arts styles if the DM so decides. This maneuver is a powerful bear-hug hold that inflicts 3-30 hp damage per round until the victim is slain or breaks free. The held character may break the hold by making a successful to-hit roll at -4. An unsuccessful Crushing Hug results in a -4 penalty to the martial artist's next attack roll. The martial artist employing the hold must be strong and massive, having a minimum strength of 16 and a minimum weight of 250 lbs.

Double-Fist Punch: This strike is a two-fisted attack aimed to land simultaneous blows to two separate targets on a single opponent. Each such punch is delivered at -1 to hit on its attack roll. Each punch that lands scores normal damage. If both blows land, then the defender must save vs. paralyzation roll at -4 or else suffer a stun or incapacitation result as explained on page 105 of *Oriental Adventures*, as if the martial artist rolled a natural 20 on an attack. After the -4 penalty is applied to the saving throw, the result is compared to the hit dice or level of the defender to see if a stun or incapacitation is the result of the failed save. If the result is a stun, the defender is stunned for 2-12 rounds. If the result is incapacitation, the character is incapacitated for 1-3 hours.

If the Double-Fist Punch is aimed at the opponent's head and torso, the maneuver is called a U-Punch or Parallel Punch. If the blows are aimed at the front and back of the opponent, the maneuver is known as a Scissors Punch.

Crushing Drop: With this throw, instead of just throwing the opponent a

certain distance, the opponent is dropped to the ground, head and shoulders first, with crushing force. On a successful attack roll, the foe is thrown 1-2' away from the thrower. The thrown character suffers double damage from the drop, and, unless a save vs. paralyzation roll is made, the character is knocked unconscious for 2-8 rounds. If the attack is unsuccessful, the attacker is instead thrown to the ground and automatically loses initiative for the next round while he regains his feet.

Arrow Cutting: This maneuver is similar to the Missile Deflection (Movement 4) maneuver, but the art of Arrow Cutting requires the use of a martial-arts weapon to block or deflect missile attacks. If the martial artist attempts to block a missile attack without the use of a martial-arts weapon he has studied, the attempt is made at -4 on the saving throw. Monks automatically possess this skill as part of their Missile Deflection ability.

Missile weapons caught or trapped by the martial artist's weapon may often be used by the character. A blocked shuriken may be pried free from a bo stick and thrown back at the attacker, or a spear may be caught in the chain of a nunchaku and saved for future use. One melee round must be spent in prying free any missile weapon caught in the martial-arts weapon.

Throwing Mastery: This demanding skill enables the character to throw a martial-arts weapon not normally considered a missile weapon. The weapons that may be thrown with this skill are: fang, jitte, jo stick, kiseru, nunchaku, sai, siangkam, and tonfa. All such weapons have the same range as a thrown dagger. The weapon does normal damage when it strikes. A master of this art may throw a sai with the ability of a skilled knife-thrower, or toss a bo stick like a light club.

Slowed Aging: Through various exercises and exotic breathing techniques, the character slows down his own aging process as if he were wearing a *phylactery of long years*.

Light Step: The martial artist possessing this ability is able to walk with a feather-light step. When moving at one-half his normal movement rate, the martial artist is able to walk with the effect of

a *pass without trace* spell.

Controlled Breathing: The martial artist has studied intensive breathing exercises that allow him to relax his mind and body and moderate his body's other functions. The martial artist gains a +2 bonus to save vs. all forms of fear. The martial artist also acts as if under the effect of a permanent *endure cold/heat* spell because the technique enables him to moderate his body temperature.


Pause and Silence: When using this skill, the martial artist gives up one martial-arts attack to pause and study his opponent. The martial artist makes an ordinary attack roll; success indicates the martial artist has found a weakness in his opponent's style and thus gains a +1 bonus on all attack rolls against that particular opponent for the duration of the melee. Failing the Pause and Silence attack roll bestows no penalty other than the loss of a melee attack. The character may perform this maneuver as many times as he wishes, but once the weakness is found in the opponent's style, repeated attempts do not improve the attack bonus above +1. If the same opponent is fought again in a different melee, the +1 bonus is not gained automatically. The Pause and Silence maneuver must be tried anew to find an opponent's weakness.

Quick Strike: This maneuver bestows a +1 bonus to all initiative rolls made by the martial artist. Since kensai already possess this ability at 1st level, they are unable to improve their initiative bonus any further by taking this special maneuver.

Flowing Water: This maneuver was presented as a variation of the Ironskin maneuver in issue #127, but is repeated here as a new maneuver unto itself. This maneuver improves the martial artist's armor class by +2 through great speed, agility, and evasion techniques.

Resuscitation: The martial artist with this skill is able to resuscitate a semiconscious or unconscious person by stimulating the body with gentle taps to spinal nerve centers. The martial artist is able to awaken a person who is stunned or paralyzed by a martial-arts attack if the martial artist makes a successful dexterity check on 1d20. The martial artist can also revive an unconscious or incapacitated person by making a dexterity check on 1d20 with a +2 penalty. This maneuver requires one melee round to perform on a single person. This martial skill is sometimes known in the Orient as *katsu*.

Suppressed Desire: This special maneuver is similar to a minor psionic discipline in the AD&D 1st Edition game, *mind over body* (*Players Handbook*, page 113). The martial artist is able to suppress the need for food, water, rest, or sleep for a period of time of two consecutive days for every level of experience of the martial artist. After using this ability, the character must spend an equal number of days in rest and peaceful meditation to recover the ability to use this maneuver again. ♫



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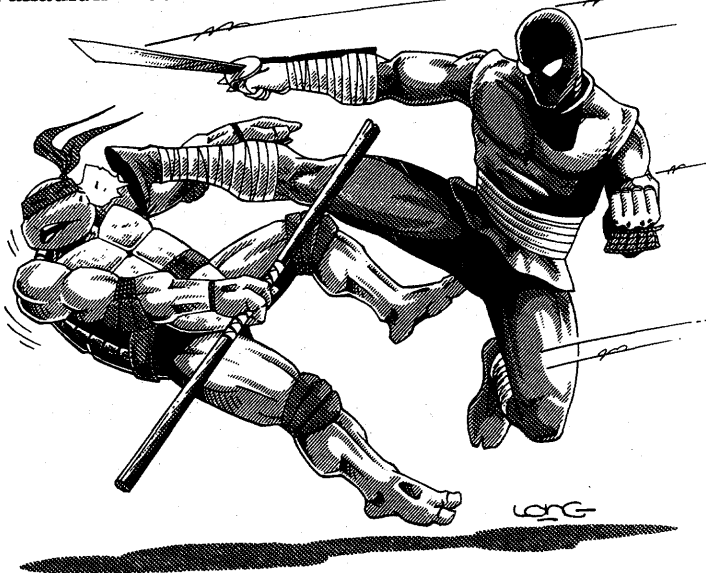
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Things Your Sensei Never Taught You

Add some kick to *Oriental Adventures* martial arts

by Rudy Thauberger

Creating martial-arts styles for AD&D® 1st Edition *Oriental Adventures* campaigns can be tricky. Too often, created styles are bland, one-dimensional shopping lists of special maneuvers. Ideally, a style should have a life of its own, some qualities that make it unique and allow it to fit into the social and historical context from which it developed. This article provides a few suggestions for rounding out created styles, including a number of new special maneuvers.

Fleshing out a style is not as difficult as it sounds. There is no need to detail centuries of history and tradition in order to create an interesting style. A few notes on the aesthetics, social background, and availability of the style will do.

Start by imagining what the style looks like. Picture the style in general aesthetic terms. Unless you are very familiar with

martial arts, don't worry too much about specific visual details. Concentrate on the feelings the style evokes. Is it an extravagant and showy style, or is it simple and ruthlessly efficient? Is it fast-paced and reckless, or slow and deliberate? Is the style well-respected for its beauty and its simplicity, or is it considered ugly and crude? Keep in mind that the popularity of a style varies from region to region and from era to era. A style can be considered old fashioned in one province and be revered for its tradition in another.

To add character to a style, decide what social class it originates from. Since the average peasant would have little time to devote to martial arts, common peasant styles would be simple and practical, with few special maneuvers. Noble or courtly styles, on the other hand, would be more complex and artistic, valued as much for

their aesthetic qualities as for their practical applications.

Character classes as well as social classes may develop their own styles. Yakuza and ninja would almost certainly have their own special, secret styles. Certain styles might be preferred by wu jen or by samurai. Geisha, archers, actors, carpenters—any of these groups might develop its own martial-arts style.

Defining the background of a style necessarily involves putting restrictions on the degree of access characters have to specific styles. Commoners will have difficulty finding teachers of noble styles, just as nobles resist learning styles favored by peasants. In addition, styles will tend to vary in availability within a social class, depending upon a character's location and the fashion of the times. Some styles will be common, with several masters in every



province. Other styles will be rare, with perhaps only one or two living masters who are usually difficult to find. A few styles may even be legends or myths.

To further clarify the background of a created style, attach to it a common, artisan, or (in the case of noble style) court proficiency. These proficiencies should involve mechanical skills that require discipline, such as weaving, pottery, dance, or origami. Practice of these skills helps to focus and discipline the mind and body of the character, preparing him to learn the martial art itself. The proficiency can be considered a prerequisite for learning the style, or it can be acquired as a part of the martial-arts training, free of charge. This procedure has the added benefit of forcing those players solely interested in spending their proficiency slots on martial arts to acquire more practical skills.

To keep things interesting, make some of your martial-arts styles unique by including your own special maneuvers. This should be done with care. A good special maneuver should not be more powerful than a good first- or second-level spell. Saving throws should be plentiful, and particularly powerful maneuvers should have bad or at least awkward consequences if they fail, although nothing too severe.

Finally, you have to choose a name for the style. This name naturally should be tied to some aspect of the style's background, evoking its appearance, social class, or both. A name should be descriptive. *Oriental Adventures* suggests animals as role models for styles. Other possible role models include mythical beasts (like dragons), forces of nature (e.g., wind, rain, lightning), or even articles of clothing (imagine a "kimono" style).

Once the style has been named and its background created, list the details in rough form alongside the style's special maneuvers and weapons, using categories like appearance, social background, availability, and so on. List the mental discipline (proficiency) that has been assigned to the style as well. Here are three examples to show how this system works.

Tin Hat

Appearance: Rough, simple, practical
Social background: Developed by peasant farmers, popular with bushi
Availability: Very common in all areas
Mental discipline: Cooking (preparation, patience)

Pen and Ink

Appearance: Graceful, precise, beautiful
Social background: A nobleman's style
Availability: Uncommon among the nobility, very rare among the lower classes
Mental discipline: Calligraphy (style, appearance)

Howling Monkey

Appearance: Outrageous, humorous
Social background: Developed by traveling entertainers
Availability: Rare in all areas
Mental discipline: Juggling (coordination, quickness)

New special maneuvers

A note of caution: Some of these maneuvers, particularly those under the categories of Blunt and Slash, are very powerful. DMs may wish to restrict access to these maneuvers if they decide to allow their use at all.

Slash maneuvers are a subclass of weapon maneuvers. They can be performed only with hand-held edged weapons, such as daggers or swords. The character must select a specific weapon for his slash maneuvers and can perform the maneuvers with that weapon only. If the character wishes to perform Slash maneuvers with other weapons, the maneuvers must be studied again.

Blunt maneuvers are designed for staves, clubs, and blunt martial-arts weapons, such as the tui-fa (hands and feet do not count). These maneuvers can be applied to only one weapon at a time, as per Slash maneuvers.

Maneuvers placed in already existing categories are listed according to the number they would receive if added to the existing maneuvers described in *Oriental Adventures*, page 103, Table 70. (This system is also used in the article "Flying Feet and Lightning Hands," in this issue, as well as in previous articles; thus some maneuvers will have the same number.)

Kick

4. Double Kick (hard/soft)

Movement

8. Featherwalk (soft)
9. Great Shield (hard/soft)

Push

4. Reflection (soft)

Strike

4. Thunderpunch (hard)
5. Thunderclap (hard/soft)

Vital Area

5. Shattertouch (soft)

Mental and Physical Training

7. Stillness (soft)
8. Balance (soft)
9. Summon Strength (soft)
10. Contortion (soft)

Slash

1. Blind (hard/soft)
2. Vein (hard/soft)
3. Artery (hard/soft)

Blunt

1. Heavy Blow (hard)
2. Limb Paralysis (hard)
3. Stunning Blow (hard)
4. Great Blow (hard)

Double Kick: With a single movement using one foot, the attacker may strike two opponents at once, providing that both are within range at the same time. One to-hit roll is made and must be sufficient to strike the opponent with the lowest (best) armor class. If the attack roll misses either opponent, the kick fails utterly and the attacker loses all his actions in the next round. This attack does normal damage to both opponents.

Featherwalk: A character using Featherwalk is able to cross any surface capable of supporting his weight, moving in complete silence. He also subtracts 25% from an opponent's ability to track him. This maneuver requires concentration and allows only half the normal rate of movement.

Great Shield: When using Great Shield, the martial artist bursts into a frenzy of activity, blocking or deflecting blows and missiles with complete success. Up to three attacks per round can be deflected, plus an additional attack per level of mastery. This maneuver lasts one round per level of mastery, during which the character can neither attack nor move from the spot where he is standing. Great Shield works only against blows from bipedal creatures less than 10' in height (e.g., snakes, giants, and dragons are not affected).

Reflection: This maneuver, which must be declared at the start of a combat round, allows the martial artist to turn the force of a blow back upon his opponent, provided the opponent's blow is delivered with a blunt weapon (this includes hands and feet, of course). The opponent's attack roll is automatically successful, and he rolls damage normally. If the martial artist using Reflection then makes a successful attack roll in return, all damage is redirected away from the martial artist back to the opponent, or even toward another adversary within striking distance. An unsuccessful attack roll results in the martial artist taking normal damage from the blow.

Thunderpunch: This strike, which is the only action possible in the round in which it is used, does triple normal damage and forces the opponent to save vs. breath weapon or be stunned for 1-6 rounds. A miss leaves the attacker unable to attack or defend for one round.

Thunderclap: Martial artists using this maneuver clap their hands together with great force, duplicating the effect of an *elemental burst* (air) spell (*Oriental Adventures*, page 75). Items made of glass or pottery within 10' of the martial artist must save versus crushing blow or be shattered.

Shattertouch: With a light touch, the martial artist locates flaws in wood or stone after one round of concentrated study. With a single blow in the following round, the material may be shattered if the martial artist makes a saving throw vs. paralyzation (failure leaves the material unharmed but does 2-8 hp damage to the martial artist). Up to one cubic foot of

material may be affected.

Stillness: Requiring great discipline, Stillness allows the character to remain utterly motionless for one hour per level of mastery. Characters using this ability are 80% undetectable if some cover is available. The transition from a still state to an active one is instantaneous. With the proper makeup, the martial artist could easily pass for a mannequin or painted statue.

Balance: This maneuver improves the martial artist's sense of balance, giving him a 20% chance of walking tightropes plus 5% per level of mastery (ninja simply add 5% per level). The character can also gain perfect balance, temporarily, after a round of concentration. This perfect balance lasts for two to five turns and improves the character's chance to walk tightropes to 100%. With perfect balance, he can also carry large awkward objects on the tip of a finger, balance on one hand, or walk on both hands at half normal speed.

Summon Strength: After one round of concentration, the character can increase his strength to 18/00 for 1-4 rounds. One turn of rest is required immediately afterward.

Contortion: Those characters who have studied Contortion have achieved the ultimate in flexibility. They can fit their bodies into spaces as small as four cubic feet or through holes as tiny as 12" in diameter. This maneuver can also be used to slip out of bonds or shackles with a 90% chance of success. One turn of concentration is required before attempting a feat, and one turn of rest is required afterward.

Blind: The attacker using Blind inflicts a cut above one of the victim's eyes. Normal damage occurs, but there is also a 25% chance of the victim incurring temporary blindness, reducing armor class (+2 penalty) and attack rolls (-2 penalty). If both eyes are blinded, the victim takes further penalties to armor class (+4) and attack rolls (-4). Blindness lasts until the wound is treated. There is a 2% chance that the blindness will be permanent.

Vein: With this attack, the victim suffers only 1 hp damage at first, but will lose 1 hp per round thereafter due to blood loss. Successive hits result in cumulative blood loss. Blood loss continues until the wound is bound or healed.

Artery: A major artery is nicked using this maneuver. The victim loses 1 hp initially but will lose 3 hp per round thereafter until the wound is attended to. If the attacker misses, he does no damage and loses his following attack.

Heavy Blow: This blow inflicts double damage. A miss results in the loss of the martial-artist's next attack.

Limb Paralysis: This maneuver is identical to the Lock maneuver, Incapacitator (*Oriental Adventures*, page 103), in that the victim stuck by the blunt weapon suffers paralysis of a finger, hand, arm, foot, or leg for 24 hours, with double normal damage from the weapon. The

effects of a paralyzed limb are explained under the wu jen spell *withering palm* (*Oriental Adventures*, page 94). If the victim makes a saving throw vs. paralyzation when struck, he takes only normal damage from the weapon.

Stunning Blow: Recipients of a Stunning Blow suffer normal damage but must save vs. paralyzation or be stunned and unable to attack for 1-4 rounds. A miss results in the loss of the martial artist's next attack.

Great Blow: This, the only attack available in the round in which it is used, does triple damage and forces the victim to save versus paralyzation or be knocked unconscious for 3-6 rounds. A miss causes the attacker to lose his next two attacks.

That concludes the list of new special maneuvers, but the possibilities are by no means exhausted. Martial arts, after all, deal with the vast potential of the human spirit. In the realm of fantasy at least, that potential is limitless.

[Other articles on creating martial-arts styles for *Oriental Adventures* campaigns include: "Marshalling the Martial Arts," in issue #122; "A Menagerie of Martial Arts," in issue #127; and "New Kicks in Martial Arts," in issue #136. See also "Flying Feet and Lightning Hands," in this issue, for more special maneuvers.]

Ω





Bonds of Brotherhood



Give your monks a brotherhood – and a purpose in life

by Tom Griffith

With the publication of the AD&D® 1st Edition *Oriental Adventures* book in 1985, the monk class was finally placed in its proper environment. Still, big questions remained: What purpose does this class serve, and what separates this class from the other Oriental classes? Why are monks “monastic aesthetics” (1st Edition *Players Handbook*, page 30)? Do all those monastic temples serve a purpose, or are they just martial artists’ hangouts?

Until I began playing the AD&D game, my only source of information about monks was the television series, *Kung Fu*. Since *Oriental Adventures* came out, I’ve discovered different examples of monkish organizations in modern fantasy fiction. All of these examples have one thing in common: a specific goal or mission, a reason for being.

The purpose of this article is to share some helpful ideas to give purpose and reason to the workings of monkish brotherhoods. DMs should create orders of monks for their campaigns, rather than having monks merely quote poetry and wise sayings while they kick the tails of those who exploit the weak

Examples from fiction

One of the finest examples of historical fiction having a monk as a central character is Robert Shea’s Shike series, consisting of the books *War of the Dragons* and *Last of the Zinja*. The main character, Jebu, is a monk from an ancient Japanese brotherhood known as the Zinja. The book reveals the sect’s secret mission: to direct the new class of elite warrior, the samurai, into becoming a civilized soldier instead of a bloodthirsty killer in the changing Japan of the early 1200s. To justify their day-to-day existence, the Zinja use the excuse of being the finest bodyguards and mercenaries around.

An example more familiar to readers of fantasy fiction is Stephen R. Donaldson’s *Bloodguard*, from the *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*. Originally, the Bloodguard was an army of fierce mountain-dwelling tribesmen who came to the Land bent on conquest. Once these warriors met the Lords, the gentle guardians of the Land; and saw the many wonders of that magical place, they swore the Vow to serve the Lords and the Land. Thus the Bloodguard began their self-appointed task to serve in roles that ranged from bodyguards to messengers.

Anyone familiar with the AD&D game’s *WORLD OF GREYHAWK®* setting knows of the Scarlet Brotherhood, a ring of assassins and thieves ruled over by a powerful order of evil monks, whose goal is the establishment of the Sue1 people as the master race of Greyhawk. The module *WG8 Fate of Istus* dealt extensively

with this organization and its destiny.

A lesser-known example of this class comes from the book, *Witchblood*, by Will Shetterly. Although the setting is more medieval European than Oriental, the main character, Rifkin, can still be classified as a monk. His order, the White Mountain School of the Warrior Saint, was formed when his world was ruled by a cruel race of witches. Because the witches denied them weapons, the followers of the warrior saint learned to make anything into a weapon, even their hands and feet. Eventually they overthrew their evil masters, but, because the followers were tired of bloodshed, they let the witches live. A group of men still follow the Warrior Saint, working to perfect The Art and watching the witches should they again threaten humanity.

And don’t forget the Shaolin of the *Kung Fu* TV series, whose primary duties, in addition to perfecting themselves physically and spiritually, seemed to be to teach and aid the local populace.

Orders to order

From these examples, you can get some ideas on creating the basics of a monastic society. Some guidelines on inventing original monkish brotherhoods follow.

The first and most important item is to establish a reason for the order’s existence. What are these monks trying to accomplish? In many cases, a simple one-line explanation will suffice. Once the primary mission is established, often a secondary purpose comes to mind, usually a means of accomplishing the primary goal (e.g., working as bodyguards as a means of defending the rightful rulers of a nation). Monks cultivate an appreciation of art and beauty in their training, seeing their mission as divine and proper and one that demands perfection from those who must separate themselves from society to train for it (hence “monastic aesthetics”).

Directly tied to the sect’s ambitions are the special skills or equipment necessary to accomplish those goals. A Shaolin might need healing or calligraphy skills, while a Bloodguard might need running or survival skills.

Training styles of the order are closely related to its special skills, but are separate enough to warrant special consideration. The Shaolin of *Kung-fu* delegated menial tasks to its initiates to teach them humility, while the Scarlet Brotherhood made its recruits vie for the superior training of the monk. Bloodguard receive their martial-arts training in the fierce tribal wars of their mountain homeland. Zinja are trained from the beginning not to fear death from any source (the first chapter of *War of the Dragons* gives a good example of monkish training methods).

Once the monks’ mission has been outlined and their skills and training considered, the alignment of the monks in the order should become obvious. This is usually easy to work out, as monks can only be one of the three lawful alignments. One can assume that the Shaolin are lawful good, and the Scarlet Brotherhood is certainly lawful evil.

After this has been established, think about the specific martial-arts style that is practiced and perfected by these monks in order to achieve their sect’s goals. Are they peaceful, gentle protectors who prefer to subdue opponents, or are they vicious warriors concerned only with putting foes down quickly and permanently? [See “*Things Your Sensei Never Taught You*,” in this issue, for details on creating martial-arts styles.]

Once the brotherhood has been created, give some thought to its history. Who founded the order, and why? An order might come into being because of the dream of one man. Or a group of men might decide there is something vital that needs to be done, and so selflessly devote their lives to the fulfillment of that goal. (The Shaolin of *Kung-Fu* make it their mission to train men to accomplish their own self-appointed tasks.) During its history, has the order made allies of a particular sect or deadly enemies of others? Is there a certain symbol or object associated with the order? The branded forearms of the Shaolin priests and the willow tree of the Zinja are examples of such symbols.

Finally, after everything else has been established, think about why any of the monks would leave their temples to go out into the world as adventurers. Kwai-Chang Caine runs from his impulsive murder of a prince, the Zinja hire out as mercenaries and bodyguards, and the members of the Scarlet Brotherhood are spread out all over the lands of Greyhawk as information gatherers and spies. Usually, with a little thought and imagination, you can find several good reasons for any order to send its brothers into the outside world.

The following three examples were created for my Dragonhead campaign, using these guidelines. These illustrate how easy it is to create interesting monastic societies.

The Order of the Enlightened Seekers

“You may go in now,” announced the arrogant-looking seneschal. Kwim-Lu stood up from the lotus position he had assumed for the past hour’s wait, straightened his short robe, and accompanied the servant out of the small waiting room. As he silently padded down the long, cold hallway to the meeting, he mentally pre-

pared himself to accomplish his mission or return in shame. As he reached the door, the large, hairy warrior who was guarding it ushered him inside without a word.

Kwim-Lu stepped into the smoky chamber and tried to ignore the strong odor of ill-cooked meat, unwashed bodies, and strong wine. The men here were all of a type—dirty, unkempt, blonde giants, a direct contrast to the short, immaculate Yai-Kang monk.

The figure on the large stone chair beckoned Kwim-Lu forward. The monk stoically hid his distaste as the leader leaned forward and addressed him. "Who are you, and why do you interrupt my feasting?"

Kwim-Lu bowed deeply and responded. "My lord, I am Kwim-Lu, a member of an order who was sent to deliver an offer to you for our mutual benefit."

Lord Kirken sat back as he considered the black-haired easterner before him. "What kind of offer, little man?"

"You are said to have acquired a book of ancient Aridia, a tome of the history of bygone days. My masters wish to have this information. We are prepared to pay you handsomely for this book, in gold or whatever else you wish."

Dirken stared at the slight Yai-Kang in disbelief. "A book? You risked your life on a dangerous journey for a book? What kind of people rule this order of yours?"

The Order of Enlightened Seekers is an organization of lawful-good monks founded in Yai-Kang following the first Darke Invasion. Because of the terrible destruction of artworks and written documents in this war, this order came into being to prevent such a tragedy from happening again. These monks travel the length and breadth of Dragonhead collecting histories, artworks, music, cultural notes, and other literature. These are then stored in a massive stronghold, the location of which is known only to the Masters of the Order, where they will be safe for future generations of artisans and historians to enjoy. As a secondary duty, these gentle monks work as librarians in their temples, which are known as centers for learning, reference, and the arts. Anywhere the symbol of the shining dove is found, so too shall knowledge and culture reside.

The training of these ascetics is long and involved. From an early age they are given a general education in culture and the arts. Whichever cultural aspect the student is most adept at and interested in is the one in which he receives advanced training. Selecting his field of mastery is the most important decision a young Seeker must make, as knowledge is as important as physical perfection to these benevolent monks. It is not surprising that the style of self-defense used by this order

is the "Fist Within Glove" style of martial art (see "A Menagerie of Martial Arts," in DRAGON® issue #127), as this gentle style fits in well with the Seekers' philosophy of nonviolence. Those initiates who show shortcomings or flaws during their training are given monastery-based positions, such as teachers, librarians, scribes, or other scholarly jobs.

As a novice, a monk character from this order gains a minor sage ability. The player selects one of the sage special categories found on page 32 of the 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, such as Human-kind Art or Demi-Human Laws and Customs. He is treated as a sage with a minor field of study in that specific category only. Any special equipment necessary to perform that function is presented to the 1st-level character by his masters as he sets out.

The most obvious reason for a Seeker to leave his temple is to become a collector. Assigned by his order to a particular region or country, he could work for a ruler as an indentured servant to pay for a needed article, explore dangerous ruins in that area looking for ancient treasures, or be assigned to observe a group of locals and record their customs and lifestyle. Buying art objects from greedy owners is expensive, so many Seekers are also needed to collect funds by seeking contributions, tutoring, or adventuring.

The Brotherhood of the Black Lotus

Kasigi, Daimyo of Iraquis, stepped into his sunlit balcony and into the full view of his people. Peasants crowded together, respectfully distant from the daimyo's powerful samurai warriors. After a moment of silence, Kasigi spoke.

"My people, I stand before you today to guide you on a holy mission. On this very land, blessed of the gods themselves, is being built a false temple by honorless dogs who call themselves priests. Their sohei walk openly about this wicked monastery, as if brazenly challenging my brave warriors.

"But no more. Their challenge will be met by the steel of my samurai. Soon their evil forces will be destroyed, and their house of corruption burned to the ground. Such a war will be costly. You, my people, will be expected to aid this holy mission in your own small way. All taxes will be raised to one full koku of rice to fund this war, effective immediately."

He smiled a beatific smile. "May the gods of our ancestors bless us with their glorious wisdom."

He returned to his chambers. The people, surprised at this announcement from their normally peaceful and slothful leader, wandered home, wondering how to pay this large increase of taxes.

Kasigi, now sweating heavily, sat down wearily on his sleeping mat and looked at the small figure seated opposite him. "Did I do well?" the overlord asked anxiously.

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Fiction

Watch for the Watchmen™ Sourcebook

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This comic-sized delight is a must for anyone who has ever read *Watchmen*, a 12-issue mini-series published by DC Comics Inc. in 1986. The sourcebook cover shown here, a portrait of Rorschach™ was done by series artist, David Gibbons, specifically for this book. Ray Winninger worked in cooperation with *Watchmen* series author, Alan Moore, to produce much of the all-new material inside.

The *Watchmen Sourcebook* has the same narrative style as the comic series, in which readers progressively piece together the story as they go along. Said a DC Comics spokesperson after reading the sourcebook manuscript, "Over all, this is a really nice piece of work. The writer obviously knows the WATCHMEN series well and does an admirable job of interweaving new material [with] the text-page material in the original series...."

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See Winninger, pg. 8

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"Very well indeed," purred the small man. "Now rest. Soon you will need your strength as you become master of twice the land you now hold."

Kasigi licked his lips as he smiled. "I hope things go as you say they will, Shosogi. Now, perhaps you could aid me to see the lovely visions of the place the gods have set aside for me should I succeed?"

The small man smiled as he reached a surprisingly muscular arm into the folds of his dark robe and pulled out a small black flask. "Of course, sire. Merely a sip of this magical elixir, and the dreams shall be yours."

As the daimyo greedily drank from the flask, Shosogi smiled. Soon the soldiers of this weak puppet would destroy the rival order's temple, breaking the order's only hold on this region. Then Shosogi's own order could move in. Of course, the extra taxes would be spent by Kasigi to obtain more of this lotus juice, thus enriching Shosogi's brothers. Shosogi knew that his masters would be pleased by his success, and his smile broadened.

The origins of the Brotherhood of the Black Lotus go back only a few decades. Its founder, a poor and lonely florist, ached for power and riches. Then, during one of his flower-gathering trips, he discovered the rare and beautiful black lotus and learned its deadly secret as a narcotic

(see "The Deadliest Perfume," in DRAGON issue #121). Always a religious man, he soon made plans to found his own temple devoted solely to raising this rare flower, and to these ends gathered a small group of devout monks who shared his love of religion with a love of power and beauty.

However, as the small monastery grew and prospered, there also grew a number of brothers who desired political power more than spiritual power. One night they disposed of the old founder and instituted their own ruthless methods and goals. They kept the symbol of the black lotus to represent the beauty, grace, and deadliness the new order came to possess.

The primary goal of the Brotherhood became control of the government through the use of drugs, bribes, and assassinations. Its eventual goal was to become the sole source of religion in its land by destroying or discrediting all other monastic societies. This evil goal incorporates a harsh and severe training style focusing on cruel, rigorous physical training and ego building. An incredible arrogance and hatred of other orders is ingrained into the young initiates; kindness and mercy are causes for severe punishment, death, or dismissal from the order. The style of martial art taught is the cobra style (see "A Menagerie of Martial Arts," in DRAGON issue #127), as this hard, ruthless style reflects well the Brother-

hoods debased society. The cruel members of this sect often select swords and other deadly weapons for weapon proficiencies and have no qualms about using them. As the final part of their training, all initiates are automatically taught the herbalist skill, to properly handle and process the deadly black lotus.

Two good reasons for members of this lawful-evil order to adventure outside the monastery can easily be generated. An organization that thrives on bribery and assassination needs exorbitant amounts of money to finance such activities. Many of the adepts go adventuring simply to collect treasures for the order's masters. Other members of the Brotherhood of the Black Lotus are assigned to influential or wealthy PCs or related NPCs to control them or sway them into the dangerous embrace of the black lotus. This order functions well as an NPC group against which the PCs must fight—or else become its victims.

The Lawgivers

Drahka-Khan and his riders sat immobile on their wiry desert horses and watched the lone figure plod steadily through the desert sands. Despite the greater numbers of the desert raiders, the man headed straight toward them, unarmed and apparently unafraid.

The Khan raised his hand and made a



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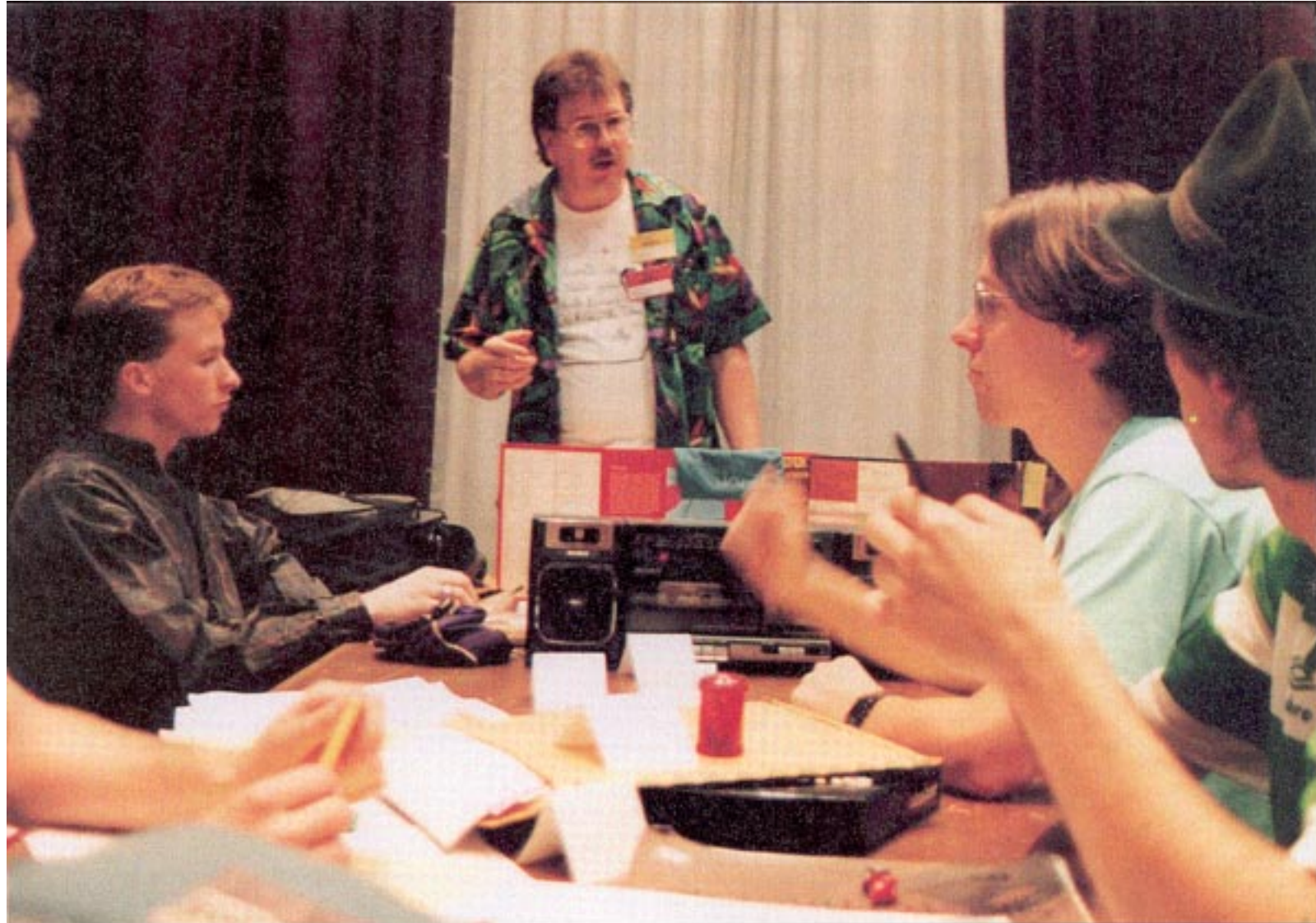
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short, chopping gesture. Three men to the leader's right raised their razor-sharp yari and hurled them at the stranger. Although all of the deadly missiles flew true, none hit their mark. With a series of darting movements and flying hands, the man deflected the spears and stood unscratched.

Drahka-Khan then issued a sharp, barking order. Five of the raiders to his left dismounted and warily approached the warrior, who now stood at ease with a slender baton held easily in each hand. Once they reached him, one of the bandits darted forward with his tau-kien flashing in the hot sun. With a move quick as lightning, one of the stranger's sticks easily parried the blade while the other rapped the man sharply on the head. As the raider crumpled, the other four attacked.

It was all over in the space of a few seconds. Whirling, his sticks flying with breathtaking precision, the lone warrior soon had all five of the Temujin warriors stretched senseless in the sands. Putting his sticks in his belt, the stranger walked over to the Khan, bowed deeply, and said, "Greetings, Khan. I am Jhengi, sent here to be your servant."

The Lawgivers were created when a small group of monks survived the destruction of their temple by a tribe of forest barbarians. These monks decided that the barbarians were not bad or even evil—just undisciplined and uncivilized.

These surviving brothers made it their mission in life to convert all barbarians in their homeland to a civilized, lawful lifestyle. They planned to accomplish this through demonstrating the advantages of civilization, through kindness, force, intimidation, demonstrations of physical prowess, or whatever it else it took.

The new order called itself The Lawgivers. Its members adopted a symbol of two crossed sticks inside a circle of chain, to represent law and discipline inside the neverending cycle of life. Over the centuries, these monks have had limited success with individual tribes, enough to keep the sect hopeful, but the mission has been found to become more difficult as civilization becomes more complex for the barbarians. The order has no interest in whether the barbarians' outlook is good or evil; its total interest lies in the savages' acceptance of order and law. Naturally, this order's alignment is lawful neutral.

In order to survive and prosper while living under the harsh lifestyle of the barbarians, members of this order are trained to the peak of both physical and mental perfection (to demonstrate that civilization can make tough warriors, too, and to inure the monk to the confusion of a chaotic lifestyle). These monks are taught to endure physical hardships and discomfort, and to use independent decision-making during long periods of living with certain barbarian tribes. The Lawgivers teach escrima (see "Mar-

shalling the Martial Arts," DRAGON issue #122, and "Kicks and Sticks," in issue #124) as their style of martial art, and a Lawgiver is never seen without his two escrima sticks (treat as jo sticks).

A useful advantage of this training is that monks of this order can select their nonweapon proficiency skills from the barbarian table (*Oriental Adventures*, page 53, table 59) as well as the other tables. Often, after they retire from their missions, monks of this brotherhood will serve the barbarians as ambassadors, guides, and counselors.


Another facet of this fairly militant order is well known: It is extremely vengeful toward anyone who has unjustifiably killed or injured one of its members. An entire tribe of the Temujin raiders was killed by the members of a vengeful Lawgiver temple because the bandits defended the killer of a Lawgiver monk. This trait is seen as necessary by the brotherhood to let the barbarian leaders know that this monastic society is not to be trifled with.

Several good reasons for this type of monk to seek adventure as a PC can be found. For instance, the PC could be attached to a barbarian PC as a bodyguard, teacher, or guide. Perhaps the chief of the tribe to which the monk is appointed sends the monk on a long and difficult mission as a test or service, or to simply get rid of the monk without rousing the considerable ire of his order. Or maybe the PC monk was sent out by his monastery to track down and punish someone who has killed one of his fellows.

Conclusion

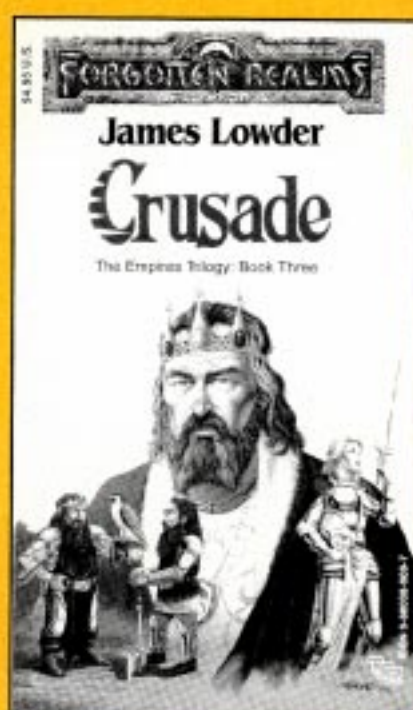
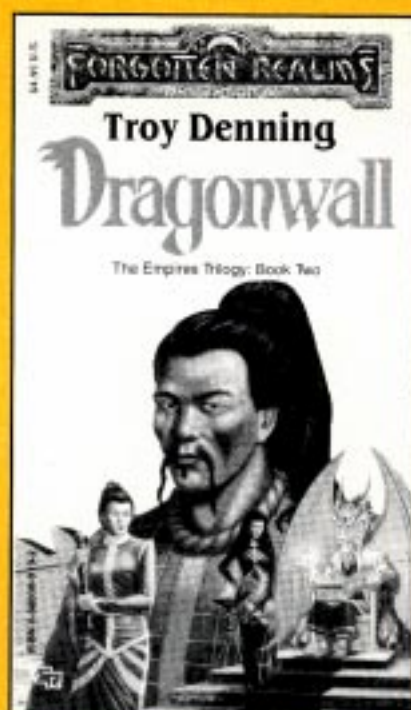
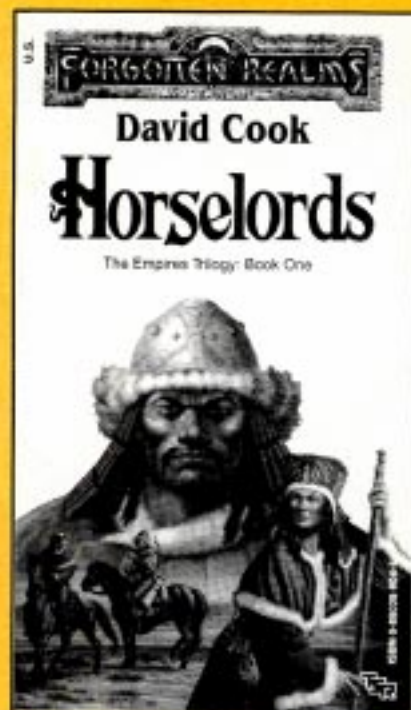
The ideas and examples set forth in this article show that the monks of the Oriental world can fit into society as well as any other classes. With a little planning, light reading, and imagination, some wonderful monastic orders can be created for use as PCs, interesting neighbors, or deadly foes who will enrich any campaign.

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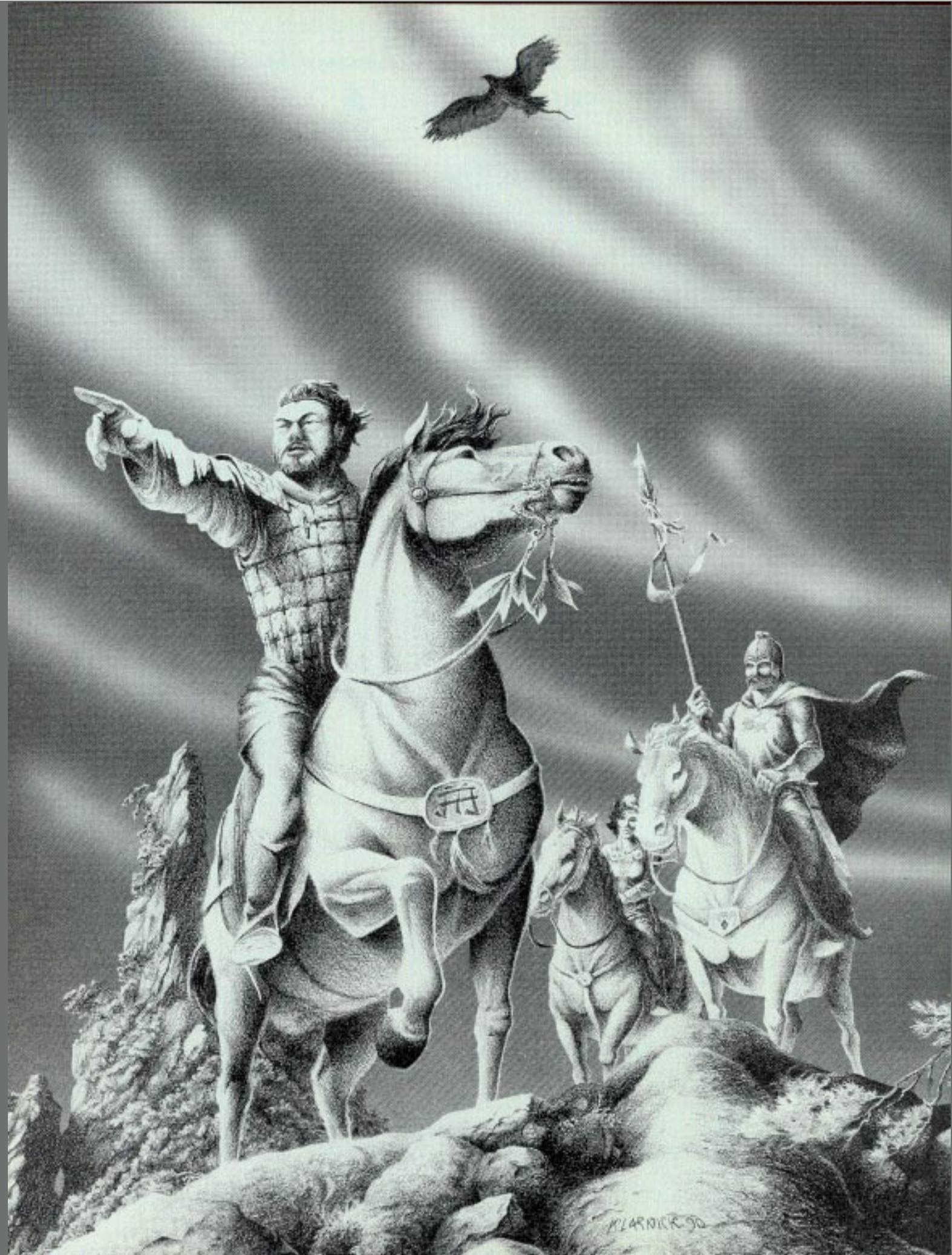
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Born to Defend

The piao shih for Oriental AD&D® campaigns

by Joseph R. Ravitts

In real-world China, from antiquity through the 19th century, the vast distances that merchants and officials had to cross required the existence of professional caravan guards who were martial artists worthy of comparison with any Shaolin priest. Such a guard was called a *piao shih*, which meant literally "dart-master" for these escort warriors tended to be experts in throwing heavy darts at bandits. Many Chinese-language adventure movies have been made about piao shih.

The inclusion of piao shih in an AD&D® *Oriental Adventures* game can serve several purposes. First, travel scenarios may be enlivened for the players if there is a new character type to be encountered specifically in connection with the journey. Second, the very existence of highway escorts, implying the whole situation of a hard-to-police expanse of territory, will remind those concerned of how big Kara-Tur is supposed to be. Third, if characters of non-Oriental classes are visiting Kara-Tur or any equivalent thereof, the DM can provide the visitors with a hireling or ally qualified to shepherd the uninitiated.

Only humans and spirit folk can become piao shih, each with unlimited advance-

ment. The piao shih is a mixture of bushi and monk, with a dash of ranger mixed in. He cannot have any ability score lower than 12, and he must have at least one score of 15 or better in strength or dexterity, plus at least one score of 15 or better in wisdom or charisma. No bonus in earned experience is gained. Most piao shih are lawful neutral, but they may be of any lawful or good alignment. Lawful-evil piao shih exist only under an evil government; piao shih can never be chaotic (except chaotic good), because a tendency to betray or abuse clients would ruin their reputations, turn away future business, and prevent them from advancing further in this profession.

Piao shih have eight-sided hit dice. They can use any sort of armor or shield but generally choose leather, studded leather, or padded armor. Piao shih use the combat and saving-throw tables of fighters, making as many attacks per round as bushi. Each starts with four character proficiencies, gaining one every two levels thereafter and applying a nonproficiency penalty of -2 to weapons used. Proficiencies may be chosen from the artisan, barbarian, common, and court tables. Any sort of magical items permitted to all classes and those permitted to fighter types may be used by them, as well as any magical weapons or armor. Oil may be

used in combat, but only lawful-evil piao shih use poison. Piao shih start with a base honor of 20 and have 1-4 ch'ien and 1-10 tael (ch'ao). Treat piao shih as bushi for determining their birth rank and family status. Henchmen and hirelings are permitted, and additional followers will be gained as the piao shih rises in level (as explained later).

Every piao shih possesses the following special abilities:

- A +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls (cumulative with any strength and dexterity bonuses) when hurling the darts that are the trademark of this class (these are the thrown darts described in *Oriental Adventures*).

- The tracking ability of a ranger, as per *Unearthed Arcana*.

- The ability to fight bare handed as a monk of equal level (using the martial art kung-fu, with level-based martial-arts attacks/round and damage from Table 21, page 18, *Oriental Adventures*), as long as they wear no armor heavier than leather, studded leather, or padded.

- The ability to climb walls as an *Oriental Adventures* monk of equal level (Thieves Table II, page 22, from *Unearthed Arcana*, is applied to their ability to climb walls when wearing armor).

- The ability to discern if a person is wearing a nonmagical disguise. The base

chance of successful detection is 15%, plus 5% for every experience level the piao shih has above the first. This is rolled upon the first meeting with a disguised person; if immediate detection fails, the piao shih still has a normal chance of seeing through the disguise later, as per the rules covering disguised assassins (page 29, 1st Edition *PHB*).

—The capacity to learn twice as many spoken (but not written) languages as would normally be ruled possible on the basis of the individual's intelligence score.

Advancing rank brings other benefits, some fixed in nature and others involving choices between special interest areas. The following benefits are the same for every piao shih:

—On reaching 4th level, a piao shih gains a marked ability to negotiate with robbers or intelligent monsters whose total hit dice and/or levels is no more than twice and no less than half the hit dice/level total for the piao shih's party. Treat such negotiations as per the AD&D 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, page 63 ("Encounter Reactions"); however, for every point of combined wisdom and charisma possessed by the piao shih, grant a 1% greater chance of an outcome favorable to the piao shih and his clients (though this may involve paying a modest tribute to the other side). At repeated encounters with any potential enemy with whom a piao shih has successfully bargained for safe passage before, there is a further 5% chance for a peaceful settlement—provided that, in the time since their last meeting, nothing has happened to cause irreconcilable enmity between them. (This, more than competition with other piao shih, is why a piao shih team stakes out one route or territory for its business and sticks to that.) Of course, the higher a piao shih rises in rank and the more colleagues he accumulates, the less any bandit dares to demand from him.

—At 5th level, the piao shih's superiors consider him competent to recruit and train one zero-level youth to be a piao shih. If the 5th-level piao shih ever rises high enough to start his own organization, this first pupil will be allowed to come along as second in command of the new group (though stealing large numbers of personnel from the parent group would be dishonorable). Also, at this level, a piao shih is usually allowed, by his organization and by escorted clients, to assume more authority over the party he guards than is the case for lower-level piao shih. The piao shih is considered to be equal to the highest social class present in the party, with regards to decisions that affect the course of the journey.

—At 9th level, a piao shih has the right, when assuming responsibility for any sort of caravan, to exercise complete control over any "servant" non-piao shih in the party (e.g., a bushi who is the long-time bodyguard of a nobleman being escorted by the piao shih, or even a monk who has been teaching martial arts to the noble-

man's son). It is also usually at this rank that the piao shih can gain a permanently organized troop of piao shih under his command. (This troop typically contains two lieutenants of 4th-6th level, and 10-12 more piao shih of 1st or 2nd level.)

—At 10th level, the piao shih is allowed to command a force of three or more piao shih (and these may even be from different organizations, if the organizations are friendly), so as to protect major caravans several miles in length. Also, at this level, he acquires an ability to sense approaching danger once per day, as if he had the psionic talent of *precognition* (page 113, 1st Edition *PHB*). This ability is unconscious, allowing the piao shih to sense danger when normal methods (scouting, etc.) fail. Also, this ability functions only in wilderness areas the piao shih travels regularly.

—At 11th level, Master of Escorts, the piao shih is entitled to found an independent escort business, provided he can find a reasonably open territory or can take the leadership, if vacant, of his present organization. The new organization will usually attract 4-16 zero-level men-at-arms of compatible alignment. Half of these will be qualified to become true piao shih; the rest will be retained to guard the new organization's headquarters. The new Master of Escorts should promptly have a banner designed for his group, usually bearing some slogan like "Our darts bring lightning from the clouds," or "All serpents are crushed beneath our horses' hooves."

—If a piao shih makes it to 15th level without having suffered a humiliating defeat (in the DM's judgment), his banner becomes an object of profound respect. Any hostile beings (short of outer-planes beings) who see and recognize that banner, so long as it is borne by some person or group that looks capable of defending itself, must check morale before coming within 100 yards of the bearer. Members of the Master's own piao shih organization, or of any piao shih friendly to that Master, gain +10% on morale when seeing that banner in friendly hands. If the banner is visible to a person attempting a psychic duel with the piao shih, this antagonist is treated as being two levels lower than his actual experience level.

—Any piao shih of 17th level or above can be sure of carrying at least as much weight as a minor nobleman in his national government's decisions affecting travel and commerce. He essentially enters nobility at this point.

In addition to the above talents, each piao shih, in the course of his career, can select four specialties—two tactical and two strategic—as indicated in the level-advancement chart. Improvements in these specialties are counted from the time of acquisition, rather than by the character's current experience level. Thus, if a 3rd-level piao shih takes up the Ground Fighting specialty, while another character adopts this specialty for the first

time at 7th-level, both use this specialty skill at the same level of expertise.

Tactical specialties

Base Defense: This specialty benefits a piao shih who must defend a fixed location against possible attack (such as an inn at which the piao shih's party is staying, or the headquarters of the piao shih's organization). The skill is usable in any building or dwelling more complex than a small tent or unfurnished hut. At the DM's option, it may also be applicable in certain outdoor settings, such as a graveyard or an elaborate palace garden.

The specialty works as follows: Before any threat arises, the piao shih must study the location to be guarded, much as a blind person learns to "navigate" at home—getting a feel for such details as the positions of furniture, the distance across a room, and the width of doorways. If combat occurs in the memorized area, the piao shih gains a +2 defensive bonus to armor class and saving throws against any form of attack that can be hindered by material barriers, for he is prepared to dive behind furniture, duck around corners, etc., more quickly and skillfully than would normally be possible. He also gains a +1 bonus to his to-hit rolls against the enemy by keeping them off balance with such moves as yanking rugs out from under their feet or slamming doors in their faces. These benefits are doubled if the area is in total darkness, unless the attackers are able to offset the darkness by *infravision* or similar powers. At the DM's discretion, this talent should lessen the chances of the piao shih hitting any of his own allies while fighting in the dark by a to-hit modifier of -2.

Upon first taking up this specialty, a piao shih must spend at least 24 hours in a dwelling or other base (more for larger places—e.g., complete castles) before being able to enjoy the above advantages. Only one location can be so used at a time; settling into a new base drives out the tactical memories of the place previously defended. When the piao shih has gained a level after acquiring this specialty, the area-memorizing time is cut in half; when a second subsequent level has been gained, the piao shih need only spend 1-4 hours in a place in order to have the layout sufficiently memorized. At the third subsequent level, he can keep two area layouts freshly in mind at once (one will usually be his permanent headquarters). At the fourth subsequent level, if the character has an intelligence of 16 or better, he can add another simultaneous "base memory" for each point of his intelligence above 16. This could be used to create a string of emergency refuges along the piao shih's customary route—though the bandits might get wise and burn the places down in the character's absence!

If the piao shih having this specialty also has the Trap Construction specialty, combining the two skills in defense of the

same spot will have this result: Thieves, assassins, or hostile monks entering the defended area will have a -35 modifier to their chances of detecting the traps the piao shih has placed inside the area, while they are engaged in melee combat. This occurs because the piao shih is often able to maneuver his opponents into triggering the devices upon themselves. Whenever succeeding in this, the piao shih gets to make an extra melee attack upon his unfortunate enemy at a +1 bonus to his attack roll.

Combat Horsemanship: All piao shih are assumed to be able to travel and fight on horseback. But with this specialty, the character can coax a +1 bonus in movement speed out of any horse he rides without causing an increase in fatigue. Moreover, when the piao shih has gained a level of experience after acquiring this specialty, he can prevent a mount from panicking at any ordinary cause of fear (and the animal saves at a +2 against all magical fear effects). When the piao shih has gained two levels after acquiring this specialty, the character gains a +1 bonus on his armor class when fighting from horseback, due to an ability to hang alongside the horse or make other evasive changes of position. When the piao shih has gained three levels after acquiring this specialty, he gains a +2 bonus on armor class from horseback. (The DM can treat this bonus as cumulative with regular dexterity bonuses to defense, but it will

not add to die rolls for monkish missile-dodging.)

Ground Fighting: This specialty allows the piao shih to fight efficiently while crouching, prone, or otherwise low to the ground. This amounts to an advantage in all situations where combatants have difficulty standing upright (e.g., in caves, on ice, or at night on ground covered with obstacles). When fighting in such conditions against foes lacking this ability, the piao shih gains a +1 on armor class. He never takes more than half-damage from being tossed or thrown down, and for every level gained after this specialty is acquired, he gains a 5% chance to escape all trampling damage in situations like being caught in a stampede of horses. When gaining two levels after acquiring this proficiency, the character gains a +1 defense bonus against the first attack by any flying creature diving from above (unless there was complete surprise).

Scaling: While a piao shih can climb sheer cliffs and walls as a monk of equivalent level, this specialty enables him to help other characters make such climbs. The piao shih must have climbing equipment to lend to the person or persons he helps; having this, he can get one client to the top with the same chance of success that the piao shih enjoys. When the piao shih has gained a level after the one at which this specialty was gained, the piao shih can help two clients scale at the piao shih's odds for success. When three addi-

tional levels are gained, the piao shih can efficiently help one client scale even when no special gear is used by either of them. For the piao shih's own benefit, if he has a constitution of 14 or better and has been active in high-altitude regions, he can function normally at altitudes where others faint from lack of oxygen.

Water Skill: Choice of this specialty means that the character initially gains these benefits: the ability to swim 50% faster than would otherwise be possible; the ability to hold his breath underwater 50% longer than would otherwise be possible; and the ability to handle any small boat of a type to be found in the character's home region. At the level following the one at which this specialty was gained, he adds the ability to fight on a wildly swaying ship's deck without losing his footing. At the next additional level, if he falls into water while wearing a normally fatal weight of armor or similar encumbrance, he can (unless unconscious) get free of the encumbrance in time to escape drowning. At the third additional level, he can perform expertly all the tasks of crewing a large seagoing vessel (if possessing intelligence of 14 or better, he can also become a navigator). At the fourth additional level, he can swim or paddle a boat in perfect silence, enhancing odds of surprising enemies.

Weapon Mastery: This specialty gives the piao shih superior skill with one weapon (not counting darts, with which all



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piao shih already have an edge). To have this specialty, the piao shih must be trained either by a senior piao shih specializing in the same weapon, or by a kensai who uses that weapon. No attack bonus is gained, but the piao shih enjoys a +1 bonus on his armor class against opponents using the same weapon type. And, for every level the piao shih gains after acquiring this specialty, the character has a 1% chance of instantly killing any man-size or smaller foe he strikes with his specialty weapon, up to a maximum chance of 10%. No instant kills are possible against giant-class beings anyway. Weapon types should be narrowly defined for purposes of this specialty, but more narrowly for purposes of the offensive benefit than for the defensive benefit. For instance, a one piao shih chooses to specialize in the great bow (daikyu). This bow is drawn with the thumb in a fashion very different from Western long bows; consequently, he would not gain the instant-kill chance if he used an unfamiliar Western bow. But he would enjoy his armor-class bonus equally against all arrows fired at him. If the specialty weapon is of the blunt sort (staff, mace, etc.), the piao shih can change the instant kill to nonlethal subdual if desired. A piao shih with a dexterity of 16 or better can make both of his tactical specialties Weapon Mastery, thus enjoying advantages with two weapons in addition to his darts.

Strategic specialties

Crowd Control: This specialty does not apply to combat-morale situations except that, if the piao shih's party is fleeing from overwhelming odds, this skill will serve to maintain some order in a retreat that might otherwise become a panicked rout. The main purpose of this specialty is to prevent quarrels, accidents, and panic (in dangerous situations other than bandit or monster attacks) among the non-piao shih in a caravan. The piao shih having this skill can influence any caravan member whose experience level does not exceed the piao shih's own. The number of persons who can be so influenced equals the piao shih's charisma score, plus two more for every level gained after acquiring Crowd Control. This ability can be called upon in many situations, as when caravan members wish to explore an area that the piao shih knows to be dangerous, or when the caravan's food supply is short and requires rationing.

This specialty is not magical; thus, any characters being protected by the piao shih retain their free will regardless of this persuasion. (By the same token, if PCs voluntarily obey their piao shih, their cooperation is treated as an addition to the piao shih's extent of influence as described above.) If two or more piao shih having this specialty work together, their influence will be cumulative as to number of persons "controlled," provided that they give no contradictory orders. At the DM's

discretion, actions done in obedience to a piao shih for the safety of the caravan can be exempt from loss of honor they could otherwise entail.

Environment Augury: This skill is like the druidic spell *predict weather*, only it includes an ability to predict earthquakes and avalanches. The base chance for success is 30%, adding 5% for every level gained after acquiring this specialty.

Graphology: In real-world China, martial artists of any sort (unless they were also priests) were never highly regarded socially, even if the nation benefited by their deeds; accordingly, they often lacked opportunities for nonmartial education. To reflect this, every piao shih below Master's rank should be considered to be illiterate, unless he has a 16 or better intelligence or has had some special stroke of luck (e.g., the piao shih saves a scribe's life, getting reading and writing lessons as a reward). If a piao shih is literate, he can choose Graphology as a specialty. This allows him to comprehend unfamiliar written languages at a success probability of 1% per point of intelligence, adding 2% at every subsequent proficiency level. Also, if there is any person whose handwriting the piao shih frequently sees (merchant, official, etc.), he will be able to spot forgeries of that person's writing. At the level after the one at which this specialty was obtained, the character has a 5% chance (adding 5% at each subsequent level) to detect invisible ink or other hidden forms of writing. Four levels after gaining this specialty, he becomes able to create a limited private vocabulary of marks and symbols that he can teach to colleagues for secret-message purposes.

Pass Without Trace: This ability works like the druidic spell of the same name. The character has a 90% success probability if traveling on foot, or 60% if riding a horse or similar-size mount; this assumes that the piao shih is not under direct observation at the start of using this specialty. Success indicates that normal beings will not be able to follow the piao shih's trail; rangers and others with special tracking skills treat the use of this talent as if they were tracking the piao shih through the next-worst terrain type (as per the appropriate terrain modifiers tables). Piao shih are also able to cover the tracks of others accompanying them. Every person on foot accompanying the piao shih (unless also having this skill) subtracts 2% from the chance for successful trail concealment; each horse or similar animal subtracts 6%; and wagons, or very large animals, make things hopeless unless the caravan is crossing terrain that makes trail erasing easy, such as open fields covered with snow.

Four levels after gaining this specialty, the piao shih can boost the success probability by taking one movement turn to plant a false trail for pursuers. For every level gained from this point on, this maneuver adds 5% to the chance of disguis-

ing the party's true direction; at any level, the chance of deceiving a tracker is enhanced another 10% if an animal from the caravan is sent running in the false trails direction. (Note, however, that magical methods of tracking can still defeat all these tricks.)

Poison Warding: To acquire this specialty, a piao shih must have access to an alchemist or other character who knows and will teach the piao shih how to detect and remedy poisons. For every level gained after taking this specialty, the character has a 6% chance to detect the presence of poison in food and drink, on weapons, etc. (reduce the chance to 3% per level if the poison is of the sophisticated "split components" variety—e.g., one component in the wine, another in the meat). Also, from the start, the character learns to concoct preventive medicines that cure 2 hp of poisoning damage, with an additional 2 hp damage cured per level after that at which this specialty was gained. Each antidote must be specific to a particular poison (an antidote good against scorpion stings is useless against snake venom or poisonous mushrooms).

Recruitment: This specialty helps a piao shih in two noncombatant activities: recruiting low-level persons as piao shih trainees, and persuading merchants, officials, and others to do business with the piao shih's organization. For these purposes, the piao shih's charisma is treated as three points higher than normal, even if this means going above 18. (If the piao shih uses his superior persuasiveness to defraud people in any way, he may become a target for revenge, both by the victims and by scandalized piao shih.)

If new piao shih are trained by a character who has gained two or more levels after gaining this specialty, they will enjoy a 10% bonus on earned experience throughout their careers, provided that their choices of tactical and strategic specialties do not greatly differ from those of the character who trained them. Finally, at whatever time a piao shih having this talent first begins his own organization, 8-32 new recruits will be attracted, plus any compatibly aligned piao shih whose own original captains have been slain.

Sensitivity to Scrutiny: This specialty cannot be acquired unless the character has a 15 or better in wisdom and has had some contact with beings possessing some type of psionic or magical means of information gathering. Such a character has a bonus of +20% to his chances to detect magical scrying, using the information in the 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, page 141. The piao shih's base chance to detect scrying is 4%, so a piao shih just gaining this specialty has a 24% chance to detect scrying, with bonus points for his intelligence and level of experience.

Trap Construction: This specialty allows the piao shih to install traps around a campsite, at the entrance of rooms his party may use at an inn, and on chests or

other portable containers. Each character having this specialty will develop a specific repertoire of traps from among the many possible types (snare, pitfalls, poisoned needles, fixed crossbows, etc.); certain traps may become "signatures" for a particular piao shih organization. The number of trap types that a character can produce (not counting the rudimentary covered pit trap that anybody ought to be able to make!) equals the number of points of intelligence he has above 10, plus one for each level gained after this specialty is acquired. The character is not allowed to use poison or acid in a trap unless he is evil. Four levels after acquiring this specialty, the piao shih will have become so expert at trap-setting as to increase the difficulty in disarming them; for every level gained afterward, a thief has a 5% penalty on the chance to disarm this character's traps.

Rules and restrictions

The piao shih class may seem powerful and complex. The complexity, however, is chiefly felt by the DM; the players' experience of piao shih skills should be easy enough to take in, while providing a feel for the kind of talents Oriental characters possess. As for being powerful, the piao shih operate under balancing restrictions, much as paladins do.

Piao shih gain their experience points primarily by the safe delivery of the people, merchandise, and treasure they undertake to protect; this is calculated on the same basis as experience credit for any other sort of characters if they were to kill or capture the people and goods being convoyed (subject to a DM's adjustments). If a piao shih team does not have to cope with any kind of danger, its members gain only one-quarter experience credit for the people and goods delivered. The safety of

the caravan counts more than killing enemies; thus, piao shih get experience for enemies killed or captured only if such actions are directly in the line of duty. Otherwise, only half the usual experience points are gained. For every person under their care who dies or is lost or kidnapped, all piao shih above 1st level in the party involved lose experience points equal to the experience-point value of the casualty, and the leading piao shih loses double that amount. This loss never causes a piao shih to lose a level, but it can certainly delay his attainment of the next level. Loss of extremely valuable items belonging to clients is treated similarly, unless it was necessary to sacrifice the treasure to ensure the safety of the clients themselves. (Only non-good piao shih ever value cargo above lives.)

The abilities of the piao shih put very little emphasis on secrecy and stealth, as opposed to spotting the tricks of others. Piao shih, while not soldiers in the usual sense, identify with the established order in their land and operate mostly in an aboveboard way. All piao shih are forbidden to tell lies or do anything deceitful, unless this is necessary for the safety of fellow piao shih, clients, or the piao shih's own loved ones, in that order of priority (piao shih organizations of non-good alignment make no allowance for loved ones). Piao shih can be expelled from their organization for getting drunk on duty, as well as for mistreating clients or for disobeying superior piao shih. Any piao shih who willingly helps bandits or actually joins them is subject to a death sentence accompanied by the most frightful available tortures; he also gains no further experience points.

Negotiating with bandits and monsters for a caravan's safe passage is not counted as treachery (unless the piao shih is

secretly enriching himself by "kickback" deals that cost the client excessive amounts of treasure). Similarly, under some circumstances it may be permissible for piao shih (whose element is the open road) to exchange information and favors with yakuza (whose element is city). Piao shih do not consider it their duty to rid their world of criminals altogether; they only protect, by realistic and pragmatic means, the people under their guidance. In certain cases of strong provocation, the piao shih will take aggressive measures against bandits or monsters. If assassins try to kill a piao shih Master, and the Master learns that they were hired by a robber chieftain with whom he had always negotiated in good faith, the Master can rally not only his own organization but all compatibly aligned piao shih organizations with which he has any contact, for an expedition to slay the offending chieftain.

This potential for intergroup cooperation is dependent on piao shih groups respecting each other's rights. As a general rule, a new escort organization is forbidden to work on a trade route already handled by another organization, unless the entrenched organization gives its consent. This rule will be enforced not only by the piao shih subculture but by local governments, merchants' organization, and possibly even by thieves' guilds that fear increased trouble from the newcomers. A formal duel between escort captains might settle a dispute over territorial rights. Any piao shih leader who uses treachery to take over another's route is liable to the same penalty as one who turns to banditry (and, unless he is an evil-aligned character displacing a good-aligned one, may be deserted by his own followers as an expression of their disgust at their unworthy leader). Ω

Piao Shih Level Advancement Table

Level	Level title	8-sided dice for accum. hit points	Additional abilities	Experience points
1	Lookout	1	—	0-2,000
2	Sentry	2	—	2,001-4,000
3	Outrider	3	First tactical specialty	4,001-8,000
4	Escort	4	Special negotiating ability	8,001-16,000
5	Senior Escort	5	First strategic specialty	16,001-32,000
6	Thiefstopper	6	—	32,001-64,000
7	Banditslayer	7	Second tactical specialty	64,001-128,000
8	Wayclearer	8	—	128,001-250,000
9	Troopleader	9	Second strategic specialty	250,001-500,000
10	Marchleader	10	Precognition of danger	500,001-750,000
11	Captain of Escorts	11	Create own organization	750,001-1,000,000
12	Master of Escorts	11+2	—	1,000,001-1,250,000
13	Master of Escorts	11+4	—	1,250,001-1,500,000
14	Master of Escorts	11+6	—	1,500,001-1,750,000
15	Master of Escorts	11+13	Banner morale effects	1,750,001-2,000,000
16	Master of Escorts	11+10	—	2,000,001-2,250,000
17	Master of Escorts	11+12	Acceptance into aristocracy	2,250,001-2,500,000

250,000 XP are required for each level beyond 17th. Piao shih gain 2 hp per level beyond 17th. A piao shih with a dexterity of 18 can acquire tactical specialties one level sooner than indicated in this chart; one with a wisdom of 18 can acquire strategic specialties one level sooner.



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 month, the sage takes another quick spin around the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. All rule book references are taken from the 2nd Edition versions.

Will magic resistance stop gaze attacks? Can magic resistance stop protection from evil spells? How would magic resistance affect a paladin's protection from evil ability?

Magic resistance applies only to spells and spell-like powers that directly affect the magic-resistant creature. Consequential effects, such as collapsing masonry resulting from an earthquake spell, ignore magic resistance. Magic resistance applies to any effect created through the memorization and casting of a spell, and to spell-like effects from wands, staves, rods, rings, and miscellaneous magical items. It does *not* apply to breath weapons, gaze attacks, energy draining, psionic abilities, and similar special attack forms; nor does it apply to effects that are intrinsic to an item, such as the magical "pluses" on an enchanted weapon or piece of armor. There are many cases where effects fall into a gray area, and the DM must rule on these as they come up. When in doubt, treat any effect that behaves like a spell (i.e., that operates when the user does something special to create it—concentrates, expends a charge from an item, etc.) as a spell.

Magic resistance can work against *protection from evil* spells; see the section on "in place" spells in the DMG, page 67, and in the PHB, page 102. However, many DMs rule that *protection from evil* is a special case, especially in campaigns where *protection from evil* is the only readily available defense against magic-resistant creatures. This is perfectly acceptable, since the power of *protection from evil* can be considered a consequential effect

of a spell. A paladin's *protection from evil* power probably should be considered a special ability not subject to magic resistance, but it could be treated as a permanent magical effect (also see the DMG, page 67, and the PHB, page 102).

If the last charge in a staff of the magi is used, are those powers that don't require charges still operative?

No, the staff becomes completely non-functional. If you interpret the rules governing magical staves (see the DMG, page 153) strictly, once a staff is drained of charges it becomes permanently non-magical. However, some DMs allow even totally drained *staves of the magi* to regain charges by absorbing spells.

The rules on scrolls in the DMG (page 145) say that a read magic spell must be used to discover a scroll's contents. According to this rule, even a map is unintelligible until a comprehend languages spell is used to decipher it. Since priests have neither read magic nor comprehend languages in their spell lists, how do priests discover what's on a scroll?

You seem to have found a genuine "hole" in the rules. The DM can handle it in several ways:

1. Assume that the *read magic* and *comprehend languages* spells can be bestowed upon the item itself. The caster touches the writing, and any single creature who can read (in the case of maps) or cast the type of spell written on the scroll can decipher the writing. Alternately, the caster can copy the map or simply explain the spell to another caster, who can then read the writing himself.

2. Assume that a *tongues* spell can be used by priests to decipher scrolls, one scroll per spell.

3. Introduce clerical versions of *read magic* and *comprehend languages* spells into your campaign. I recommend that you make them both first-level spells in the All sphere.

4. Assume that all priests have a limited ability to decipher priestly scrolls on their own. A priest who does nothing else during a day might have a chance to petition his deity for help in deciphering one or more scrolls, provided he can read and write.

Where can I get information on herbs for the herbalism proficiency? Just what can a character do with this proficiency? How strong are the poisons and medicines the herbalist makes?

Check out the article "Wounds and Weeds" in DRAGON issue #82 for a quick description of several herbs with fantasy-game applications. The reference section of your local library should also help. Herbalism mainly is used to identify plants and fungi. A successful proficiency check might reveal a plant's most common names and whether or not it is edible, poisonous, or medicinal. A successful proficiency check might also allow the herbalist to know where a certain plant grows and to find it if any are growing nearby. The DM must decide how powerful an herbal concoction is. In normal circumstances, I suggest that the herbalist be limited to mild poisons and weak healing balms. Mild poisons include types A, G, K, and O (see the DMG, page 73). Herbal healing balms might include poultices that heal 1 hp damage when applied to wounds, salves that allow a resting character to gain one extra hit point each day, and the like; characters with the healing proficiency might be able to use these products with greater effect, say to heal 1-4 hp damage or gain an extra 1-4 hp per day of rest. Of course, if the herbalist has access to extraordinary plants (such as those found in rain forests), he would be able to produce more potent concoctions.

There is a player character in my campaign who has spent several years of game time and thousands of gold pieces learning everything there is to know about poisons. What skills would he have? How many proficiency slots would he have to use? (I don't think the character should have to give up all his nonweapon proficiency slots after all that effort.) How would you simulate this skill in a game where the original AD&D game rules are used?

The DM should have been thinking about this while the PC was busy doing all his research. Since the game does not contain a poison-manufacturing proficiency *per se* (herbalism gives an incidental understanding of plant poisons, but many poisons are derived from animals or minerals), you'd have to create a new



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proficiency.

Such a proficiency might require two proficiency slots and be based on Intelligence -2. Depending on the campaign, this proficiency would fall under one or more of the following categories: wizard, priest, rogue. The character would have to expend at least two slots to get the skill; the time and effort the character is devoting to learning all about poisons is not going to be available for learning languages or other skills. However, you might allow the character to purchase extra slots for improving the proficiency once it has been bought, but only if the character has no other slots available and the proficiency score is not raised above 16. The proficiency might allow the character to do one or more of the following, at the DM's option: concoct any poison on the DMG's poison table (see previous question); create entirely new poisons; prepare poison antidotes; recognize the "poison potential" in any plant, animal, or mineral encountered; recognize a poison by its effect on a victim.

The DM must control such a proficiency very carefully to maintain play balance. Manufacturing poisons should be a long and difficult process (check the section on potion manufacture in the DMG, page 87). Making poison under field conditions should require a substantial penalty, and failure under any circumstances should

result in at least a chance for the poison maker to poison himself ("Ouch! I've just nicked myself with the knife I used to skin that tree frog."). Many poisons, particularly the very potent ones, should have a "shelf life" and would thus lose potency over time. They also might be destroyed when exposed to heat, cold, light, or electricity. Note that poisons are very dangerous to store ("Fine, your thief is carrying that batch of puffer-fish venom in a leather bladder on his belt. But did he remember to wash his hands before eating?").

The current proficiency system works fine with the original AD&D game rules. You can use this new proficiency, and any other one, with no modifications at all.

What abilities does the caster of a polymorph self spell gain when he assumes a new form? I understand that the spell-caster gets the new form's movement but not its attacks. What about extraordinary movement such as tunneling or phasing? What about types of movement that might double as attacks? For instance, can a wizard polymorphed into a giant frog leap onto an opponent?

Basically, the polymorph self spell grants the caster the adopted form's shape and

ordinary locomotion. The spell does not grant the adopted form's special attacks, senses, or magical abilities. The caster is not granted enough strength to perform extraordinary maneuvers, and the DM must decide where to draw the line when deciding what abilities the caster does get. In your example, a caster who assumed the form of a giant frog would be able to swim and hop about, but would not have a frog's all-around vision or full use of the creature's remarkable tongue. It is reasonable to deny the caster the ability to make spectacular leaps, as the spell description specifically limits the caster to "normal" movement. However, a frog's form is well suited to jumping, and the occasional long hop isn't out of the ordinary for a frog. The caster could jump, but he probably wouldn't have the strength or coordination to make very long jumps (a reduction of one-half or one-third would be about right—60-90' for a person polymorphed into a 50-lb. giant frog) or to make several leaps in succession. The caster certainly can belly flop onto opponents; resolve such attacks using the wrestling table (see the DMG, page 59). Similarly, a caster who changed into an umber hulk would have a very limited ability to burrow through solid rock. A caster who took the form of a phase spider would get the ability to crawl along webs, but not the ability to shift phase or to spin webs of his own. Ω

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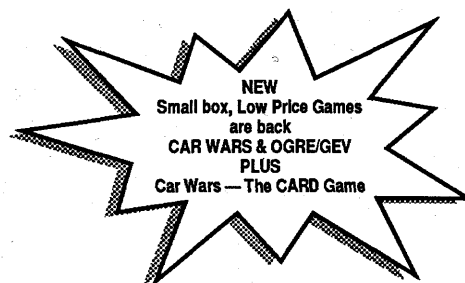
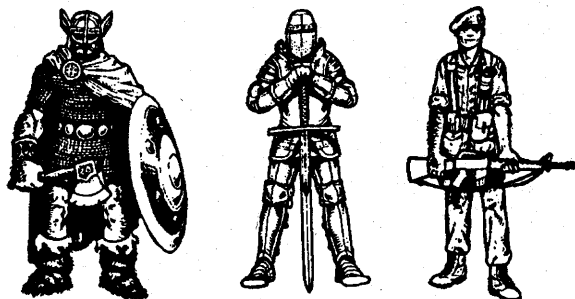
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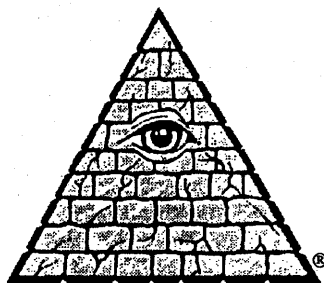
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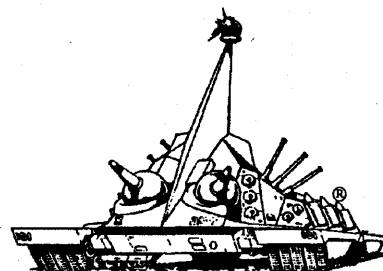
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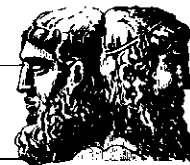
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In issue #159, Dan Howarth wrote in to say that computers are going to be a part of this world. This basic idea I agree with, and I also enjoy playing fantasy computer games such as *The Bard's Tale*. The idea that computers as GMs are equal to or even better than humans is harder to swallow. And a statement like, "Plenty

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of imagination can be used while playing a good computer RPG" is in need of challenging.

By definition, the computer program can allow one to do only what has been allowed for by the programmers. Have you ever tried to write a module detailing contingencies for every possible or probable character action? That is one good reason to have GMs: They have the spontaneity and common sense to deal with a player's desires. How can you tell a computer you want to use a *stinking cloud* spell defensively instead of offensively, or that you want to try a different bargaining tactic, or that you want to tie up a prisoner with your whip and ask him who he works for, what his job is, what his boss is up to, and who the new king in Carminos is?

Computer games, in my experience, are fun for fighting monsters, hoarding treasure, and maybe solving some brain bogglers that have been programmed in. Games like *Ultima V* that include limited conversation go slightly beyond this level, but there is no way you could tell the computer you wanted to set up a bar in one town in order to bring in rumors and keep a close watch on a citizen you suspect of murder, while paying a beggar to bring in news from an adjacent town, just in case. This would be a very easy thing to do in a regular campaign world. Computer games work only along set lines.

In an actual campaign with a human GM, when the players go off following a false lead, the GM might remember and insert a plot he saw in a movie. In the middle of this side adventure, the party gets into a fight with orcs in a lark alley. One adventurer wants to fly over the orcs and land on one. Another casts *light* on the inside of his mouth, opens wide, and tells the

orcs to flee or face the wrath of the great demon Tsek'corfath. The third adventurer hefts his shield and wants to pin an orc to the wall. The GM can deal with all of these creative ideas quickly and readily. Depending on how play has gone so far, the amount of caffeine he has recently consumed, and countless other factors, the DM could decide almost anything. The computer would flash up on the screen, "How do I 'Let's fly over the orcs and land on one?' " So much for that idea.

One's relationship with one's character is part of the interaction in the game, of course, as stated in Mr. Howarth's letter. Interaction with the other players and characters adds another dimension to the game. ("That %&*#@#! kender glued my sword into my sheath again!") In a game like *The Bard's Tale*, all fighters fight, hour after hour, and I really can't see how you can identify with the distinct vacancy where a personality should be. In a game like *Ultima IV*, one has a personality, but if one wishes to win the game, the personality must be a perfect one and therefore the same as the next person's, and the next, leaving only small room for role-playing in comparison to a regular game.

I would like to say again that I enjoy computer games, as each is a complete world different from the next, and there are some very interesting problems and creatures in each. However, I feel that they fulfill an entirely different need than actual participation in an RPG.

Toby Myers
Hamilton NY

I agree with your editorial on "Ten Good Things About Demons" in issue #157. They are the baddest of the bad. I am a mother, and I for

one would like to see one of these "Angry Mothers" [see "The Game Wizards," issue #154] try to play a paladin and see if she could stay on the straight and narrow path without messing up, as I have seen the kids do. I mean, you [TSR] took the best reason for a paladin character to exist and threw it out the window over some narrow-minded mothers with no control over their kids. You can put the undead to rest only so many times before it gets boring. Yes, there are other evils to conquer, but the cream to a paladin's career is the ultimate evil: a major devil or demon.

I became interested in the D&D game and the AD&D game when my oldest child was seven and wanted to play this role-playing game called "Dungeons and Dragons." Well, I bought the beginner boxed set, and we both learned together with the help of my husband. I now DM a game once a week for my husband and our friends; sometimes its just the family with the youngest now playing. If parents take active parts in their kids' likes and dislikes, they may find a tool with which to teach their kids morals and right from wrong instead of trying to blame a big company for their own shortcomings.

I was upset when I learned that there weren't going to be any demons and devils for the AD&D 2nd Edition game. I was looking forward to some new nasties from the lower planes. Couldn't you go ahead and put out a *Monstrous Compendium* appendix of just demons and devils, and print a warning label on the outside of the package? That way, if these mad mothers don't want their children to have it, then they just don't let them buy it. And if they haven't the control over their children's buying, then it's their own problem and no one else's. Please take

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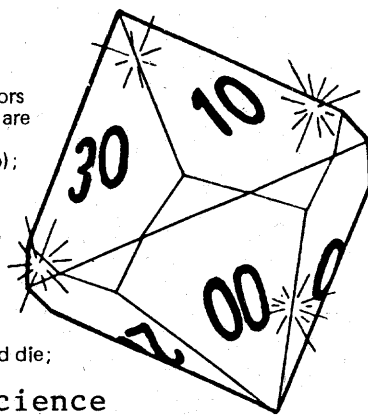
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my idea under serious consideration. Thank you for your time and trouble.

Jeannine Cochran
Edwards AFB CA

I write chiefly in regard to a couple of ideas within "Forum" of issue #155. The first one is Gregg Sharp's excellent idea of incorporating Japanimation into campaigns. Many gamers are also involved in Japanimation, with the explosion of giant robots into facets of gaming, comics, television, and collectibles. However, Japanimation remains a mystery to all but the stoutest of fans. Therefore, I commend Mr. Sharp for his well-written and helpful thoughts. He mentioned *anime* that I'm not familiar with.

I can't speak for all coasts, but up here in Massachusetts we've got some new anime clubs, including the Boston Japanimation Society that meets regularly on the campus of UMASS Amherst. And, concerning the other coast, every fan dreams of attending a BAYCON. Anyway, I'd like to clear something up concerning transformable mecha and RPG robots: Who came first, and who was "inspired" by whom?

The original version of *Robotech* (or as close as one can get because the original was in fact three different Japanese series) in RPG form was produced by R. Talsorian Games and was called the MEKTON* game. Now there is a revised MEKTON II* game. Then Palladium came along and started marketing the official ROBOTECH* RPG. Palladium produces a lot more material than R. Talsorian, advertises more, and even sells/distributes videotapes of *Robotech (The Sentinels)*. With little doubt, Palladium's game is the American giant-transformable-mecha RPG.

Then FASA came into play with giant robots called 'Mechs. However, they do not transform, so they're not really like "robotechnology" at all. What I want to clarify is Mr. Sharp's statement that series like *Gundam (Mobile Suit Gundam, War in the Pocket, ZZ Gundam, Char's Counter-attack, et al.)*, which use giant robots, "have suspicious similarities to BATTLETECH game 'Mechs.'" The truth is, Japanimation came first. Giant robots have been on Japanese cartoons for more than a decade, and the designs by their creators are more than two decades old in some cases.

I would also like to mention the *Captain Harlock* series, because it's great for science-fiction campaigns in which giant space cruisers and battleships soar through the sea of stars. The film *Vengeance of the Space Pirate* (the Japanese version is *My Youth in Arcadia*) specifically deals with Harlock's rebellion against an Earth taken over by an alien race. The series *Captain Harlock and the Queen of a Thousand Years* deals with his fight against an alien race that is trying to take over Earth as well as against a blundering Earth government that refuses to believe the aliens even exist. Harlock is a pirate sworn to his own flag and dedicated to defending Earth; he is denounced by the government and legally is a criminal.

Kildare Bangore
Webster MA

I'd like to thank Alex Iwanow for his wonderful letter to "Forum" in issue #157. I am often worried that, when I go to any big tournament, someone will blame every mistake in the game on me. I wish all gamers would realize that younger people enjoy playing, too, and are often

just as good or better than some of the older gamers. I'm only 13 but have played D&D games for a long while. I began to play the AD&D game after about two months of playing the D&D game. I also play TOP SECRET/S.I.T.M., BOOT HILL®, GAMMA WORLD®, BATTLE-TECH®, ROBOTECH®, and other games, so it's not like I don't know how to role-play.

So thank you, Mr. Iwanow, for defending us younger gamers.

Patrick E. Baroco, Jr.
Centreville VA

We are writing to express our feelings about the absurd suggestion that children should not play the AD&D game. We have been playing since we were seven years old.

Our Dungeon Master is very creative, but his campaigns are not too complicated. It is our aim to become Dungeon Masters when we are old enough. We don't think this game is too violent for children—at least it doesn't have to be. Our parents agree with us.

We all agree that the AD&D game expands children's imagination and creativity, and it helps develop self-expression and builds self-confidence.

Thank you.

Leah Carson, age 11
Sarah Carson, age 10
Jason Kondrk, age 11
Hopelawn NJ

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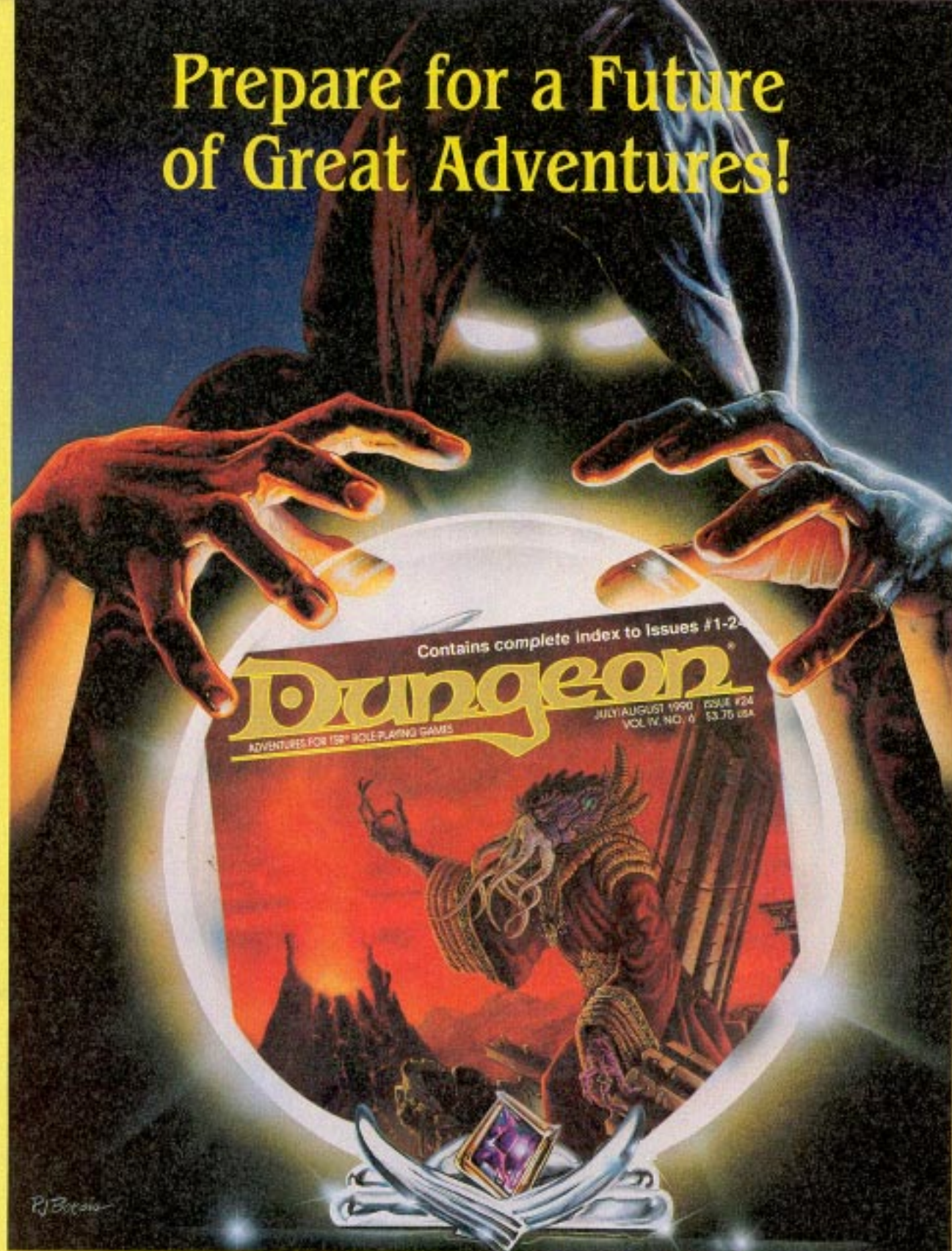


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Alphamir 26, 2000 AY: The sound of creaking wood slowly woke me, as the solar winds softly rocked the *Princess Ark*. I have slept little despite the long hours of reflection and anguish that have followed the last incredible events. I shivered in the cold air and thought of what seemed to have happened only a day ago.

Somehow, Synn had anticipated the presence of a nebular storm near the Hollow World's gate. It ripped the very fabric of time, and the *Princess* fell through. According to my estimations

based on the relative position of the stars, we have jumped 34 years into our future. I fear what may await us below, in our new world.

I conjecture that the wretched dragon waited all those years, meditating on her revenge. Synn must have returned to Myoshima exactly 34 years after abandoning the Heldannic wreck, recovered Lady Abovombe from the Myoshiman gaol, and returned her to the *Princess Ark* as the ship emerged into this new era. The hapless woman spent years in misery and hardship, obviously thinking that I had abandoned her to her captors.

I have a magical cure for Lady Abovombe's current age, but I am afraid that a much deeper wound may linger in her heart—and mine. It pains me to think that Lady Abovombe would doubt my feelings toward her. I suppose this is what that wretched Synn had in her twisted mind all along. Such a hateful and gratuitous act of cruelty speaks eloquently of the night dragon's utter evil.

Not only this, but Myojo suffered greatly during the last battle. The brave warrior had followed Synn closely prior to her treachery. He must have sensed her wicked intentions and attempted to stop the night dragon. But she turned against him and easily defeated him. It took many hours of praying and great skill from Talasar to pull Myojo back from the very threshold of death.

So be it. Rolf may be dead, but Synn has replaced him as a foe that I must destroy. But first, patience and time will be needed to regain Lady Abovombe's heart. I must find this elixir at once.

Alphamir 27: Again, Myojo's life came close to an end. As I left my quarters on my way to see Lady Abovombe, I noticed a



Artwork by Jim Holloway



furtive shadow quickly entering Myojo's cabin. I knew it couldn't be my feline companion, since he was quite feeble and still recovering. I crept up to the door as quietly as I could—quietly for a wizard, that is.

Three intruders were in Myojo's cabin, dressed in black from head to toe. One was poised to strike at Myojo's chest with a short sword. The two others spotted me and threw curious little metal stars at me. One got stuck in the wooden door, while the other grazed my throat. Almost instantly I spoke a command word, and my wand disintegrated one of the two, who shrivelled into a lifeless form. Unfortunately, the deadly discharge also damaged the wooden bulkhead beyond.

Immediately, a roar rocked the *Princess*, almost as if the ship had felt the blow from my wand. Myojo woke up and instinctively stabbed at the closest of his foes with a hidden dagger, while both myself and the other intruder lost our footing. A short scuffle followed, and my opponent ran down the passageway. He didn't go far however, as Talasar stepped out of his quarters and magically *held* the intruder. About the same time I heard some fighting on the main deck, followed by the familiar "zap-crack" sounds of boltmen at work.

The intruders were Myoshiman rakastas. Another two intruders had freed Kenju and Jiro from the brig, but they were all intercepted on the deck. All died except the one Talasar paralysed and the one Myojo wounded. According to Myojo, these are trained and highly skillful assassins, probably sent by Lord Katayama. Alerted by the recent disappearance of Lady Abovombe from their gaol, the Myoshimans must have dispatched their scouts to seek us out.

The two survivors would not utter a word, but there are ways to pry information out with a little talent and magic. The tall, wounded survivor was Uisuka-San, chief of his clan of assassins. The other was his daughter, Kitikata. It was a stroke of luck that I left my quarters just as the rakastas had entered Myojo's cabin, or else my companion would certainly have been quite dead by now.

I, however, released the two with a message to Lord Katayama. I informed the lord that Herr Rolf of the Heldannic Knights had been killed 34 years ago, and that his own envoys Kenju and Jiro had acted treacherously. One should not hope to acquire Imperial friendship with a gift in one hand and a dagger in the other. The two bowed abruptly and flew away on a black-moth ship that blended swiftly into the night.

Alphamir 28: I met Lady Abovombe again. I found her lying near the crystal bay, sadly gazing at the stars. She turned and watched me silently, with an expression of resignation in her eyes. Conversation was difficult, interrupted by many uncomfortably quiet pauses. I am not sure she truly understands what has happened.

After all, only our appearance could testify to the time lapse.

I offered her my elixir, one of those potions that rejuvenates one's body by 10 years—but she refused to drink it. She firmly believed what had happened was the will of the Immortals. I advanced the argument that Immortals care little, and their will is more often than not that of the mortals. But the thought failed to comfort her, and she still showed reluctance to drink the elixir. There was little else I could do and so retired to my quarters. Time had betrayed her, yet time perhaps would heal her sorrow.

Sulamir 1: At last, the familiar coastline of Alphatia could be observed through the clouds. Everyone was very tense on board. The news of our time shift had reached the crew. Talasar was skillful in explaining the situation to all—their relatives in the Empire would now be dead, much older, or have mostly forgotten about them. Worse, they ran the risk of being arrested for impersonating people thought dead for decades. It will be difficult for the crew to understand and adapt. For my part, I am worried as to what may have happened during the last third century.

The answer came swiftly as we approached the aerodrome over Sundsvall. Three imperial skyships raced toward us. This, at least, had not changed. As expected of the aerodrome's Crimson Guard, they spotted our invisible ship and reacted swiftly. I ordered the Haaken colors to be hoisted, along with a parliamentary banner. Two of the crimson airships flanked the *Princess* while a squad of guards requested to come aboard. Much to everyone's surprise, the guards arrested both Talasar and me. We were immediately taken to the imperial dungeon under the palace. A chill ran down my spine at the thought of going to this ghastly place, but we had to cooperate in order to see this through.

Sulamir 14: I was finally granted a meeting with the Empress, as befitted my rank. Curiously, the palace had changed very little during all that time. The guards, the customs, and the court were all nearly identical to what I was accustomed to, except that many of my friends were now long dead. One that was still alive did not recognize me.

I was quickly ushered into the immense Throne Room. The Empress sat a mere 60' from me. Of course, the guards had been exceedingly thorough in stripping me of my personal belongings. I had also been duly "processed" by the court's magists to ensure that none of my magic could harm the Empress in any way. From where I kneeled, I could see a glimmer of magic encasing the Empress. *That* was new.

The Empress observed me, and I hated it. She wasn't merely studying me. She was steadily and progressively exposing my inner self, almost as casually as one would peel a fruit. She was browsing

through my mind and memories with all the delicacy of a gardener's rake.

"Release him," she ordered abruptly. "He is not guilty. Leave us alone." The guards left swiftly and closed the doors behind them.

"That was quite a journey, Admiral," she began. "Too bad you lost all that time. Your presence and knowledge would have been useful many years ago."

I was relieved to see that the initial enmity was gone. "May I know what I was accused of, Your Imperial Majesty?"

She smiled briefly, but her eyes remained ice cold. "Simply of attempting an assassination on the person of the Heldannic Order's High Priest! I believe you knew him as Herr Rolf. When you seek trouble, you certainly are thorough in your quest, Admiral." Seeing the expression on my face, she immediately added "Yes, yes, I know you did not do it. Amazingly, however, I see from your memories that the man did indeed die!"

Something was amiss. How could they have known? There were no survivors other than the prisoners still in our brig. The Empress sighed, motioning me to come closer and sit near her. "But how?" I asked.

"My dear Admiral, all isn't so simple. The ruler of the Heldannic Order died twenty-one years ago—while you were absent from the normal flow of history. Wulf von Klagendorf, the one you know as Herr Rolf, succeeded him and became the High Priest. Clearly, someone brought Rolf back to life after his death, which you witnessed thirty-four years ago. Since that creature of Entropy, Synn, killed him, Herr Rolf must have had some ties with Entropic Immortals. Or else something very strange must be happening 'up there.' The Heldannic Knights are followers of Vanya, who is not a lord of Entropy. It's a bad omen, in any case.

"You see, no one here at the palace could find any trace of you, even through the most powerful magic available. The only news about your expedition came shortly after Herr Rolf became the High Priest in Freiburg. An envoy came and declared you had attempted to kill their High Priest and that you were in hiding. Of course, I know the true story now—as amazing as it is. You do understand, however, that you and your men must avoid any prolonged stay anywhere and with anyone. Your knowledge of the sky shield and most especially of that strange Hollow World must remain absolutely secret. Few would believe you, but this knowledge is far too dangerous to fall in the wrong ears.

"Now you have a choice, Admiral: Either leave and carry on your initial endeavor in the name of the Empire, or all of your crew, officers, and civilians on board must perish at once. Then I will deal with you and your first officer in my own ways."

I had no wish to ask what that may be, and I quickly nodded agreement with the first option.

"Very well, then. Carry on, Admiral. Your ship, or whatever you call that thing, has been restocked. And please, do show any Heldannic ships you encounter what a true Alphatian wizard can do. Those knights annoy me. Farewell."

Sulamir 15: Bitterness, bitterness: That was all I could see in their eyes. The crew had been under order to remain aboard above Sundsvall during the days of my confinement. None were allowed to disembark at any time, and now I bore the news of our imminent departure. For a moment I thought we would have a mutiny on our hands, but my harangue seemed to have some effect. The older crew members returned to their duties, some muttering, others showing outright anger in their movements and words. The younger sailors followed.

Suddenly, a sailor broke into tears. He screamed and ran for a small floating launch. Before anyone could react, the young man was already floating down toward Sundsvall. A single crimson frigate swooped by; much to everyone's horror, a blast of *lightning* shot forth. The man fell off the launch's remains and tumbled like a rag doll toward the distant earth. A deathly silence descended upon the crew. Slowly, one after the other, they returned to their quarters. That was all.

Sulamir 19: I had no immediate plans to leave for anywhere, not with the crew's miserable morale. I opted for a quick stop incognito at Starpoint. We stopped due north of the city above a small forest. Unseen, the crew left in shifts, all wearing civilian outfits and carrying copious gold to spend, courtesy of the *Princess's* treasury. This took five days. I must admit I never saw a crew as drunk as this one! But that was worth every pop of a cork. None of them deserted. They knew they would not last long in metropolitan Alphatia. Perhaps they feared me even more, for they all knew I could easily find any of them. The crew was mostly Amburese, and that stop in Starpoint went a long way toward improving morale.

Sulamir 25: I paid a short visit to my kin in nearby Ar. They were overjoyed to see me again, but were appalled at what had happened. All was fine at the family domain. They quietly hoped that I would someday, somehow, come back and settle there for good. That would not be for a long time yet. I gathered a few of my favorite objects, then returned to the *Princess*.

In the evening, while unpacking, I accidentally triggered an item of my making. The thing had never been fully completed nor properly enchanted. It popped. It hissed. It rattled. And by the beard of Pligzy Gladz, it smoked like the nostrils of a sleeping dragon! Soon the room was filled with a luminescent, swirling fog. That's when I heard something heavy rip loose from the overhead beam and crash to the floor.

The smoke cleared—and there was

Ramissur! Wide-eyed, the man was on all fours—naked as a worm, mind you—holding a piece a fruit in one hand and with a foot tangled up in what was left of my bat's cage. He sniffed, squeaked, and scurried over to the other end of the room. All that time my bat had been none other than Ramissur himself! Why am I not surprised?

Talasar did wonders in bringing back the human side of Ramissur. The boltman had been under Synn's control, acting as her eyes and ears all along. The crew welcomed him back. By now, nothing could surprise them either.

Indeed, that would end a chapter of our saga. After the latest events, it was time for the *Princess* to head for other horizons, and the sooner the better. The sun was setting, and once again we headed out under the stars.

To be continued. . . .

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 A. 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 always get our attention.

Haldemar of Haaken **(Admiral, Captain of the *Princess Ark*)**

History: Haldemar was born in 1911 AY, of pure Alphatian blood, in the Kingdom of Ar. He was raised in the tradition of aristocratic spell-casters and spent many years of his childhood with his uncle, a famous skyship owner in Ar. For his tenth birthday, Haldemar was offered a small flying sailboat, with which he got himself into trouble at every occasion.

As a teenager, Haldemar became the family's accountant. He was brilliant but tremendously bored, and over the years he developed a propensity for investments of a highly speculative nature to spice up his life. One financial venture brought great anger from his elders when he nearly squandered his entire family's fortune on a bad investment. Although not disinherited, he was promptly cast out of his home.

His taste for adventure and gambling brought him aboard a flying casino in 1933 AY. His nerve allowed him to acquire the ship from its previous owner on a successful wager. The games were rigged, but Haldemar—a hustler at heart—used his magical skills (which he had concealed when he came aboard) to turn the situation to his advantage at the pool table. His skill and experience of things aerial enabled him to embark on a career of excellence on his flying casino, where he met a number of very influential nobles. He quickly learned to deal with the Alphatian society's upper crust.

A pack of greedy young dragons once attacked his ship, seeking wealth, but he successfully repelled the air raid when he organized the defense of the gambling palace. Although the flying casino was seriously damaged, he managed to bring it to a place where his aristocratic passengers were out of danger.

Soon after this episode, he was introduced to Emperor Tylion IV, who granted him the command of a small flying frigate. Haldemar sold the damaged casino at a profit and began his duty right after that. Haldemar proved to be an outstanding commander during the 1959 war against Thyatis, and he collected an impressive list of treasures. His long career in the Imperial Navy eventually led him to the rank of Admiral in 1961 AY. He retired shortly afterward to avoid life at the palace—which he found too dull for his taste—and returned to the family tower with his treasure (and his family's renewed blessings).

He spent a number of years at the family tower, improving his magical skills. After studying a mysterious and ancient scroll he had acquired during the war, he used a one-of-a-kind enchantment to bind the soul of a sky wyrm (see later) to the hull of the family ship, the aging *Princess Ark*. Although he did not fully grasp the nature and implications of the enchantment, Haldemar thus imbued the entire ship with the ability to fly, rather than using an inordinate amount of separate *fly* enchantments on all surfaces of the ship. This allowed the *Princess Ark* to fly despite heavy damage to its hull, unlike conventional warships.

Haldemar came out of retirement in 1964 AY after presenting his new flying enchantment to Empress Eriadna. She rewarded Haldemar with a commission in the Imperial Fleet and bestowed upon him the mission to explore distant new lands for the benefit of the empire. Empress Eriadna provided him with an official Writ of Endorsement, allowing him to act as a plenipotentiary with newly discovered nations and to subsequently draw a personal excise of 1% on all future trade with each of these nations for 10 years.

Personality: Although a good-hearted person, Haldemar betrays a naturally chaotic attitude due to his family background and national culture. Clever and quick thinking, Haldemar is a good judge of character and an effective leader. He has proved many times to be a shrewd and tenacious negotiator.

Haldemar seems conceited when it comes to his physical appearance and dressing habits. Some at the palace called him a dandy, although Haldemar refrained from any of his dressing excesses at court. This is a facade he often uses to deceive others. Cosmopolitan and refined, Haldemar is also capable of numerous escapades. His talents as an actor allow him to spontaneously mingle with common folk without betraying his origins, and he can move silently as a thief of equal level.

Occasionally whimsical with his peers or his foes, Haldemar is fanciful in his way of dealing with unexpected problems. He is an imaginative and unpredictable aristocrat who likes to do things with style. A learned man and an adventurer, he seeks to discover the marvels of the world and bring them to his peers.

Disposition: Goodwill toward Talasar, Lady Abovombe, and Xerdon; Neutral toward Myojo, Leo, Ashari, Ramissur, and Raman; Antipathy toward Tarias. Haldemar is in love with Lady Abovombe—as much as an elder Alphatian wizard and a hardened bachelor can be.

Appearance: Haldemar is a typical Alphatian, slim, proud, with long black hair, pale skin, and deep blue eyes. He keeps his hair neatly tied on the back of his neck. A few gray hair on his temples and wrinkles on his face betray his age of 51. When on duty on the *Princess Ark*, Haldemar often wears knee-high boots, dark blue pants and cloak, and a white, laced shirt.

Equipment Carried: Haldemar's cloak contains a number of secret pockets in which he conceals magical items and miscellaneous objects. In addition to the cloak and a few normal pouches, Haldemar commonly carries a dagger +2 of *watching* in his left sleeve, a small *pouch of security* at his waist (capacity 200 cn—containing an *egg of wonder* and a *wand of disintegration*), a *wand of fire balls* (8d6 hp damage) in his right sleeve, a *wand of lightning bolts* (8d6 hp damage) in his right boot, a *potion of healing* (one dose) at his belt, a *ring of protection* +3 on his left hand, a *scarab of protection* on his cloak, a sealed *scroll of creation* in the cloak lining, a *talisman of air elemental conjuring* around his neck, a few odd gems, gambling tokens from the Lady Luck Flying Casino (for good luck), and some loose change. Other objects may be found in his cabin on the *Princess Ark*, and even more in his family estate in the Kingdom of Ar.

Spells Commonly Memorized:

Haldemar has several spells of his own invention that will be disclosed during a later episode.

Level 1 – *Detect magic, floating disk, light (x2), shield, ventriloquism*

Level 2 – *Invisibility, knock (x2), phantasmal force, web*

Level 3 – *Create air, dispel magic, haste, fly, protection from normal missiles*

Level 4 – *Dimension door (x2), polymorph self, remove curse, wizard eye*

Level 5 – *Animate dead, hold monster, passwall, telekinesis*

Level 6 – *Geas, invisible stalker, projected image, weather control*

Level 7 – *Magic door, reverse gravity, summon object*

Level 8 – *Force field, travel*

Level 9 – *Contingency (20% chance) or immunity*

D&D Game Statistics: S 10, I 16, W 12, D 17, Co 11, Ch 15; 21st-level Wizard,

AC 4 (with Dex); hp 35; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (dagger +2 or spell); Dmg by weapon type or spell; Save MU21; ML 10; AL C. Languages: Common Alphatian, Ancient Alphatian (for poetry and arcane lore), and the Ambur dialect. Skills: Astronomy (In), Finance and Accounting (In +1), Alchemy (In), Gambling (Wi+3), Acting (Wi), Palace Etiquette (Wi), Prestidigitation (Dx), Helmsman/Captain (In).

Sky Wyrms

The sky wyrm is a very large elemental from the plane of Air. The front half of the lesser sky wyrm is that of a wildcat with two powerful paws. Two large feathery wings protrude from its back, while the other half of the creature turns into a long, coiling serpent's tail. The greater sky wyrm has the paws and head of a lion with a thick mane, being otherwise like its smaller relative. All sky wyrms are made of shimmering clouds and living air, with an overall pearl color with light green shadings.

Sky wyrms are highly intelligent and magical, having the ability to create the *whirlwind* common to conjured air elementals. At their option, sky wyrms may use the claw-claw-bite combat routine instead of the *whirlwind*. Lesser sky wyrms can *predict, summon, and control weather and control winds* at will. They can cast the following spells once per day: *cloudkill, dimension door explosive cloud, ice storm, and invisibility*. They are immune to electrical attacks.

In addition, greater sky wyrms have the normal spell-casting abilities of a 12th-level wizard. They can also spit a *lightning bolt* three times a day that is immediately followed with a thunderous roar (save vs. paralysis within a 300' X 100' cone). The damage inflicted by the *lightning bolt* equals the sky wyrm's current hit points. This breath weapon cannot be used simultaneously with any of the sky wyrm's other attacks.

Sky wyrms are rare, even in the plane of

Air. They sometimes serve as mounts and companions of greater djinn, but always of their own free will. Sky wyrms do not get along well with aerial servants and earth-type creatures. Lesser sky wyrms absolutely hate spectral hounds and hell hounds, and at best dislike all other dog-like creatures. Greater sky wyrms are marginally more tolerant of canine-kind. Sky wyrms are otherwise good-willed although neutrally aligned.

Talasar, Ecbashur

(Commander, 1st Officer of the *Princess Ark*)

History: Talasar was born and raised as a Minaean pirate. At 13, Yodar Jernog (Talar's true name) scored his first success when he swam up to an Alphatian merchantman and entangled its anchor in nearby reefs. Minaean bandits on foot did the rest at low tide. Talasar's early life consisted of ruthless piracy, spreading woe and destruction in his wake. His Minaean name became feared on the entire eastern Alphatian coast. He was finally captured and condemned to be a slave for life.

Eleven years later, he was sold back to the Temple of Razud in Starpoint, Ambur. The high priest was looking for strong minds, and so put Talasar to the test. Talasar endured unspeakable rituals to atone for his deeds. But he saw the light and honestly embraced the Ways of Razud. Talasar finally returned to the seas and the skies, making his skills and wisdom available to the Imperial Navy. He keeps his

Continued on page 92

Errata

On the map on page 42, in DRAGON® issue #161, the directions of east and west were reversed on the Hollow World side; thus, Devil's Fork is east of the White Peninsula.

Sky Wyrms

	Lesser	Greater
ARMOR CLASS	- 2	- 10
HIT DICE	16	32****
MOVE	60' (20')	60' (20')
Flying	360' (120')	360' (120')
ATTACKS	3 or special	3 or special
Breath Area	nil	300"x100' cone
Breath Effect	nil	Stun + lightning bolt
COMBAT DAMAGE	1-8/1-8/1-12	2-16/2-16/2-24
Whirlwind	3-24	10-80
NO. APPEARING	1-4 (1-2)	1-2 (1)
SAVE AS	Fighter 16	Fighter 32
MORALE	9	11
TREASURE TYPE	Px20, I	Rx100, I, M, N
ALIGNMENT	Neutral	Neutral
XP VALUE	8,450	48,000



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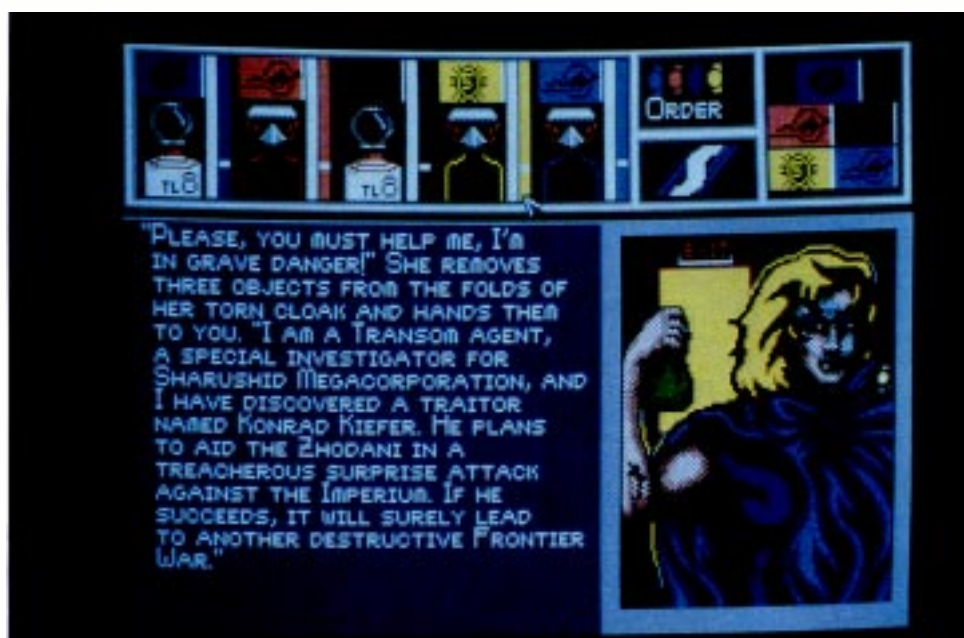
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*Megatraveller 1:
The Zhodani Conspiracy*
(Paragon Software)

Megafun with *MegaTraveller 1*

Let's talk sound. Amiga, Atari ST, and Macintosh II owners all possess computer systems that play digitized sounds. These sound capabilities are built into those machines, and when these sounds are incorporated into games, play is greatly enhanced.

Pity then the PC/MS-DOS gamer: His standard IBM or clone has a single, minute speaker inside the computer case through which comes beeps and squeals that do little to enhance a game. After playing PC/MS-DOS games for a while, one becomes immune to the raucous noises that are emitted.

Thankfully, many developers now produce games that include a variety of sound drivers for the various sound add-ons for PC/MS-DOS computers. We've tested several of these add-ons, and our favorite is, without a doubt, the fantastic Roland MPU-IPC-T CPU card, with a CM-32L LA (Linear Arithmetic) sound module and two MA-12C Roland Micro Monitor speakers.

The MPU-IPC-T is the next generation of sound boards from Roland and is fully compatible with all software written for the Roland MP-32 sound board. This unit delivers as though you had a full stereo and sound-effects system in your PC.

Second in our evaluation is the well-designed AdLib board. The AdLib board does not possess the wide range of music and sound capabilities of the Roland product line, but it does offer enhanced sound capabilities for gamers.

Top-notch game publishers such as Sierra, Origin, Accolade, LucasFilm, MicroProse, Spectrum HoloByte, Electronic Arts, and others now code their PC/MS-DOS games with drivers for several sound-enhancement boards, the two most popular systems being the Roland and AdLib boards. Other sound systems, such as Covox and the IBM sound board, do not have a large following yet.

The reason for Roland's superiority is that this sound add-on operates using the

highly advanced MIDI (Musical Instruments Digital Interface) language, which can be shared by all manner of musical instruments. Most of the popular groups recording music today do so using MIDI between their instruments and the computer to record and enhance play. The Roland board, be it the MPU-IPC-T or the Roland MT-32, is actually its own computer; it interprets the messages from the computer and translates them into MIDI.

The CM-32L LA module packs the ability to produce 32 voices simultaneously. It actually can be used as a rhythm sound module with eight individual synthesizers. It also stores 128 different instruments sounds, 30 rhythm sounds, and 33 sound effects. With this capability, a full-fledged symphony orchestra can be created to lift a game to new heights. The CM-32L LA module also includes a reverberation that adds a deep richness to the produced sounds. When playing a game such as Sierra's *Colonel's Bequest*, the once mildly

interesting animated cut scenes become works of true cinematic art. The musical background score and other digitized sounds leave the gamer wanting to see more scenes between the actual playing modules.

You should consider the Roland MIDI offerings if you are a fanatic gamer. Nothing equals its performance in a PC—nothing. The Roland units are not inexpensive, but they certainly do make a marvelous gift for the gamer in your family. But watch out: You could become a MIDI fanatic! We now have a Yamaha keyboard and several software programs that teach music and keyboarding. We can use the Roland sound board and sound modules for somewhat raucous playing. We've even tried our hand at music composition. Who knows how well we'll do in a few more months with the help of Roland and its PC sound enhancement products.

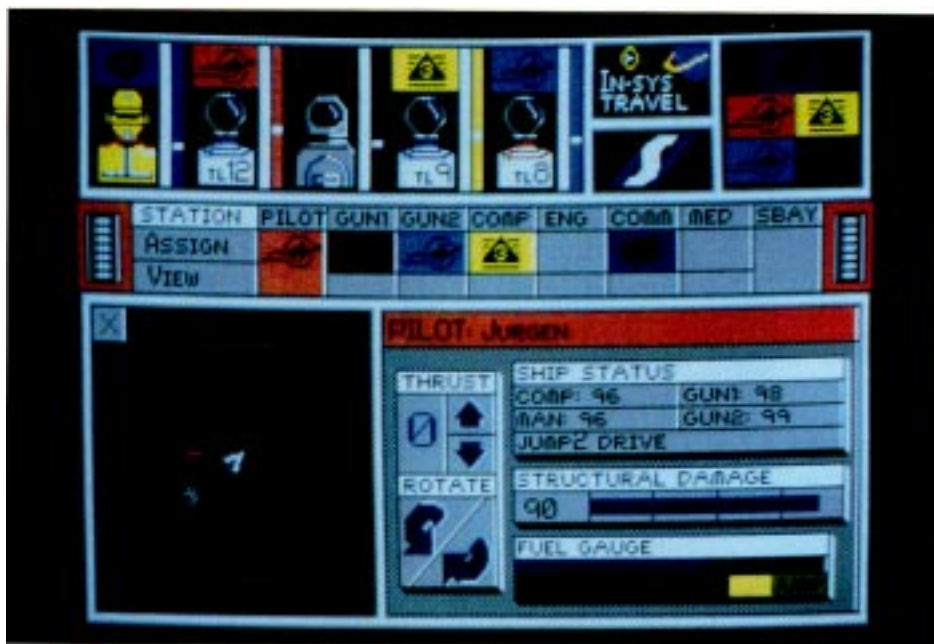
A caution: In PCs, various boards cause conflicts. For example, we have a board in our PC that drives an external Macintosh disk drive. This enables us to read and write Macintosh files with our PC word processor. We also pack an asynchronous communications card, a joystick card, a second graphics board, the AdLib board, and a mouse board. Sometimes you'll have to remove a board or change the jumpers on one or two of your boards to ensure the correct operation of a newly installed board. In our case, we had to remove the Macintosh drive board in order for the Roland interface board to work correctly.

We should also say a few words about the AdLib board. Currently, far more game designers are driving their sounds and music using this device than any other. The AdLib board is a half-size card that fits into one of your PC's slots. In order to hear its output, you need a headset or speakers plugged into the board's audio jack. The AdLib board features as many as 11 simultaneous sounds and is approximately half the cost of the Roland offering. However, when it comes to PC sound enhancements, you really do get what you pay for. The AdLib board does not approach the Roland product in sound richness, variety, or quality. Prices for these units vary throughout the country.

Reviews

Computer games' ratings

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



MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy (Paragon Software)

Paragon Software

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

MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy *****

PC/MS-DOS version \$59.95

We have had the opportunity to experience both the earliest and the latest versions of *Mega Traveller 1*, and we are extremely happy to report that Paragon Software has corrected a major deficiency in the early release. Paragon has created one of the best science-fiction role-playing games ever for the computer. If you have played Game Designers' Workshop's MEGATRAVELLER™ system, you'll find that this computer version faithfully follows that RPG. You'll never have to wait for a group of fellow gamers in order to hunt for the traitor, Konrad Kiefer, and stop the Zhodani conspiracy.

The Paragon game, although complex, encompasses a smooth and colorful interface that eases a newcomer's entry into this action-filled environment. Not only will you become embroiled in encounters and battles on various planets, but your journeys through space will have you wheeling, dealing, and fighting everywhere from planetary orbits to hyper-space jumps. *MegaTraveller 1* offers so much detail that a single review cannot do this game justice.

Before we delve into some of the game's characteristics, we'll get the only negative thing we have to say out of the way. The only time you can save your game is when you have landed at a starport. This is really quite burdensome at times. There should be a single hot-key command that can save your game at any stage in the adventure. You might complete a number of critically important actions since the

last starport save, only to be destroyed by an unexpected attack or turn of events. Not being able to save at different stages throughout the game can cause you to become quite frustrated.

The level of detail in *Mega Traveller 1* is most impressive. The level of personal attachment you have for your five characters increases as you play the adventure. And don't expect to complete *Mega Traveller 1* in a few weeks. With planetary systems, assassins, trading, and combat, it'll be a wonder if you can find time to eat dinner.

As mentioned, the character-creation process is an absolute treat. You need five highly skilled characters to be successful in the quest. The computer's character-making system follows faithfully the paper-and-pencil version in GDW's RPG. In fact, characters you create in the software version are highly playable in the RPG version.

Your five characters are ex-military personnel who must save the Imperium against the conspiracy of the Zhodani and the traitor. Each character should have special skills that can come into play at various stages of the game. You'll go adventuring in both space and on planets whose atmospheres range from hostile to Earthlike, so a variety of talents will be needed.

MegaTraveller 1 is basically a menu-driven game. Through use of your cursor keys or an optional joy stick, you select the proper commands. Those who want to rush into the game can use any of the prerolled characters on the *MegaTraveller 1* disks. For character generation, you are taken to a screen where pre-set character abilities are randomly assigned a value. These values are in hexadecimal notation, which means that values from 10 to 15 are displayed as letters A to E respectively

(e.g., if a character has a "B" for endurance, that is an 11). We made it a general rule to never accept a character who didn't have at least three scores of A (10) or better and no scores below 7.

Our first set of characters required no less than four hours to create. This time not only included making certain their ability roles were appropriate, but ensuring their military training and schooling met the need for diverse skills. We went through 18 generated characters just to obtain the finest pilot we could.

Once your ability scores are set, you must decide to either enlist your character in one of the five services or allow him to be drafted. The Navy and the Merchants are the hardest services to enter, while the Army and Scouts are the easiest. Promotions are fastest in the Army but nonexistent in the Scouts, and survival rates are lowest in the Marines. (We recommend that each of your five characters come from a different branch of the military.) The higher your rank and the longer your service, the greater the amount of your retirement pay. Also, upon discharge or retirement from the service, you earn additional benefits.

When in the military, the number of skills a character receives is determined by his service. You'll receive one skill for each term served, except for Scouts, who receive two skills for each term of service. You'll also receive an additional skill for a promotion. For special duty assignments, another additional skill is received. Remember that when you submit your character to a service, he will automatically learn some basic skills. If your education score is eight or higher, you'll be able to select skills from the Advanced Education Table. We never allowed a character to be created who did not possess a score of at least eight in Education.

The adventure finds your five characters in a bar, where they are contacted by a Transom agent. She is a special investigator for Sharushid Megacorporation and names Konrad Kiefer as a traitor. He is planning to aid the Zhodanis in a surprise attack against the Imperium that could lead to yet another destructive Frontier war. She hands the group a decoding key, a holographic data-storage device, and one-half of an Imperial seal. She tells you that these objects must get to a bar called the Supernova on the planet Boughene and be given to Arik Toryan. In return, he'll hand you a second decoder key and more instructions. You also receive 30,000 credits from the agent, who tells you that a starship, *The Interloper*, in the starport possesses a Jump-1 drive. However, in order to reach Boughene, you've got to fit a Jump-2 drive—and believe us, there's a lot of adventuring ahead before you can even begin to think about a Jump-2 drive.

Suddenly, a disreputable gang surrounds your table, and it's time to save your skins. The agent distracts the gang, and your five characters quickly exit the bar—where



Flood (Bullfrog Productions)

you come under fire! This is where the one major problem arose in the earlier version of this game, but that has now been solved. Combat was in real time. While you flipped from character to character, trying to get each individual to select and fire at a target, the opposition continually shot and hit your party members. While you were coordinating party member #1's actions, poor old party members #2 through #5 were stationary and getting clobbered. Now you simply use the TAB key to identify your character's target. Once the target cursor is over your target, you hit ENTER. You then cycle through the remaining characters, identifying the same or other targets for each individual. Now, no hostile fire destroys your painstakingly created characters. Once you've issued all the orders, you press the O key and the action takes place.

Our strongest recommendation is that you Regroup your party once it comes under fire. Run like heck to the right and find sanctuary in the shops you'll locate. Equip your starship: Buy a better weapons system, and get those computer programs that must be loaded before your ship can accomplish much of anything. We'll certainly be offering tips in "Clue corner" for this massive adventure during the coming months.

One additional proviso: Make certain the joy stick you use is calibrated correctly. If you use a joy stick and it malfunctions, you might as well reboot. You won't be able to make the menu selections you want, as the cursor will jump all over the selection screen.

If you own a PC/MS-DOS machine, consider yourself a moderately experienced gamer, and enjoy science-fiction RPGs, *Mega Traveller 1* is a purchase you must consider mandatory. If a hot-key, save-game feature was added, there's no doubt

that *Mega Traveller 1* would become infinitely more attuned to a gamer's needs. Hang on to your Jump drives; *Mega Traveller 1* is a great offering.

Bullfrog Productions

(distributed by Electronic Arts)
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo CA 94404
(415) 571-7171

Flood

Atari ST version

\$39.95

So, you want arcade action that will require hours and hours to eventually succeed? Then you've got to try *Flood*. The game's premise is a little weird. You're Quiffy, a Blobbie, and Bulbous Headed Vongs and Psycho Teddies are intent on wiping out all Blobberies. Not only are these vicious warmongers trying to pounce on Quiffy, but millions of gallons of water are also pouring into the caverns where he lives. As Quiffy and his kind cannot breathe water, there's trouble ahead.

Quiffy must explore each cavern and collect all the trash on that level. Once a level has been cleared of trash, he can move on to the next level. There are 36 regular levels and six special levels built by the Vongs, all guaranteed to drive your joy-stick-using, sweaty-palmed self bonkers. Add in creatures like the Ghost, Vacuous Gombos, Snails (though slow, they cause damage unmercifully), and Plonkin Donkins, and you've got to stay alert on every step of each level to survive.

You have three lives to start with, and you've got to make it to the surface to evade the water and the nasties. You'll find such helpful items as grenades and boom-rangs that you can use to eliminate some of your opposition. *Flood* guarantees all arcade players a great time trying to fig-



Flood (Bullfrog Productions)

ure out the best way to advance through the levels while evading water and beasties. Although not a totally original arcade adventure, it is definitely one of the best we've seen on the Atari ST (We also attempted a review of the Amiga version, but the program continually crashed when moving from the first to the second level of play.)



Bloody Wolf (NEC)

NEC
1255 Michael Dr.
Wood Dale IL
(708) 860-9500

Bloody Wolf *** 1/2
NEC TurboGraphx-16 version \$61.99
In this action game, you must rescue the President from terrorists. You become Bloody Wolf and enter the terrorists' territory to effect the rescue.

The action takes place with a top-down perspective. Armed with a machine gun with unlimited ammunition and grenades, you enter buildings, caves, and trucks in hopes of rescuing hostages and picking up such items as magnum grenades, shot-

guns, flash bombs, bazookas, and flame throwers. A life gauge tracks the number of hits you can withstand before dying. Medicine and muscle-enhancement pills heal and increase your life gauge. At the end of each stage of the rescue awaits a terrorist boss who must be eliminated before you can continue your adventure.

Although this game is hardly original and is hardly one of the best NEC games we've played, there is plenty of action to keep any warmonger happy for some time. The graphics are quite good, although they do flicker and sometimes slow down when too many sprites are present on the screen at once. Other NEC games are better than this one, but *Bloody Wolf* should be added to your NEC TurboGraphx-16 game library if you enjoy blowing terrorists off the Earth.

Something extra

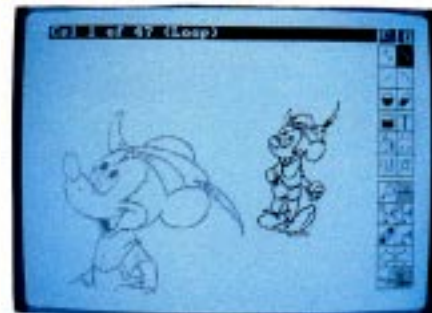


The Animation Studio (Walt Disney)

Normally we don't discuss programs other than entertainment software. However, we have run across such an outstanding program that we have to mention it. Amiga users, if you are interested in furthering your drawing and animation skills, we recommend *The Animation*

Studio, from Walt Disney Computer Software. This outstanding animation program is suited for use by both novices and experienced animators. Priced at \$179.95, you see not only the cel you're working on, but the previous three cels, which makes for smooth-flowing animations. With an exposure sheet, you become the editor and director of your animation, and decide the order and timing control of each cel.

All initial drawing is done in "ink" (black and white) and, once you're satisfied with your animation, you use the program's ink-and-paint program. You fill your drawn objects with as many as 32 colors out of a possible 4,096. You can even add music and sound to your finished product. Sample Disney animations are included. You can modify these characters any way you wish.



The Animation Studio (Walt Disney)

There's also a Disney animation competition, with the grand prize being a trip to Disney World. We recommend you check this software out at your local Amiga retailer for a view of a stunningly simple-to-use but enormously effective animation program.

The Buggles

This new section discusses software with which we have had problems. This does not necessarily mean you will have problems in running these games on your computer, as a problem could arise during the software disk duplication process that affects only a small number of copies.

You might also have a solution for problems we identify that deal with copy protection schemes or other coding inaccuracies. We do recommend that you test these games at your local retailer before purchasing them, just to make certain they are in proper working order before taking them home.

Bad Blood

(Origin, 512-328-0282)

On PC/MS-DOS 80286 clone, EGA board

Humes battle Muties in this post-nuclear holocaust adventure for PC/MS-DOS computers. Add in one of the most stunning and original musical scores coded for the Roland MT-32 sound system, and *Bad Blood* should be a winner.

Unfortunately, we have now tested two production copies of the game and con-

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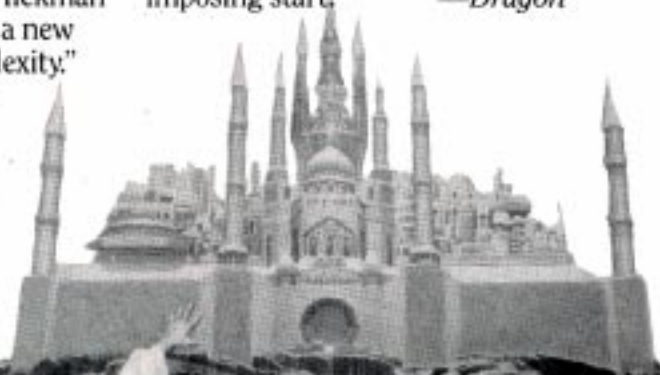
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A BANTAM HARDCOVER



stantly ran into fatal game crashes. All attempts were made after using the program's "install" utility to copy the required files to our hard disk drive. When we booted the game, it got as far as the second game screen, then crashed with an explosion of color. The Roland MT-32 boomed the fantastic score right up to the point where a nuclear bomb blast obliterated the view on our EGA monitor.

We called Origin and received a second set of disks. Again, we followed the installation instructions. The first three times we booted the game, we never were able to proceed beyond the opening title screen. The Roland music continued to play, raising our hopes that perhaps we had installed the game incorrectly.

We reinstalled the game and, lo and behold, got beyond the opening screens and were able to select "1-Play a new game." We proceeded through the brief introduction to the screen where you must select one of three "tuffs" as the character for the adventure. Then, once the character was selected, there was a screen refresh and clear, and—nothing but a blinking cursor in the upper right hand corner of the screen. There was no exit from this horrible situation—CTRL-C, BREAK, ESC, CTRL-Q, nothing. We had to turn off the computer.

We attempted to break through this barrier four times and then, with a sigh of disappointment, gave up on the adventure. We can only hope that others have been more successful in running *Bad Blood*.

The Dark Heart of Uukrul

(Broderbund, 415-492-3299)

On PC/MS-DOS 80286 clone, EGA board

Are we frustrated! *Dark Heart* initially appeared to be a fantastic conversion. With EGA graphics, a great plot, twists and turns, we felt as though we had found a game to rave about. Your party of four (consisting of a fighter, a paladin, a priest, and a magician) must search an enormous underground city to destroy Uukrul. Uukrul is evil incarnate and intends to subjugate the city of Eriosthe.

You create your adventurers by answering four questions for each of them. Your answer dictates how strong or intelligent each will be. This is a unique system of character creation, similar to the manner in which Origin has you generate *Ultima VI* characters.

With auto-mapping, *Dark Heart* is off to a strong start. You can always check your map simply by tapping M when you're in the game. And you can save and back up your game whenever you wish. There are plenty of corridors and rooms to explore and puzzles to decipher. Finding the keys at the start of the game gives you a feeling of exhilaration; you actually have a chance of winning!

You'll recall how we continue to harp on copy protection methods and how they can ruin a great adventure. Well, Broderbund's copy protection is built into the

game itself, so that you don't actually realize it's copy protection until you fail to correctly bypass it.

Throughout Eriosthe are places called Sanctuaries. These enable your characters to rest and restore their hit points and vitality. The latter is absolutely necessary for magic casters and clerics in order to perform spells.

When you enter a Sanctuary, a six-symbol code appears on the screen. You must grab your four-page Soul Amulet (which is hard to read, as it is on rust-colored paper) and must then decipher each symbol and find its English equivalent. The first symbol specifies which of the pages to look at. You'll note there are five increasingly large concentric circles. Within each circle are various symbols. You start in the center circle and match the second on-screen symbol with a symbol in the first circle. You then enter the English letter that adjoins the found symbol. By tracing outward from this letter, you enter the second circle. You then look for the third symbol of the code and again equate it with its English letter equivalent, which is entered into the game. This continues until you have found all five of the codes. Then you press ENTER; if luck is with you, the typed-in name of one of the Ancients flashes, and you have gained access to the Sanctuary.

All was going well for us. We were having a grand time fighting rats, bats, skeletons, and goblins using the automapping to check out large areas that seemed ripe for secret doors, and had found the Sanctuary of the Ancients, Urtas.

Bounding onwards, we traced our way into a long corridor and cautiously opened door after door. We finally found the second Sanctuary, Urtas, the Sanctuary of the Village. And this is where we met our game-ender.

The code appeared on-screen and, try as we might, we could not enter the correct English letter equivalent. We studied the Soul Amulet and attempted every combination we believed possible, all to no avail. We even tried Soul Amulets with different first-symbol origins. We traced each symbol, double-checked our entries, double-checked the routes taken from one circle to another, double-checked our double-checking, and continually came up with the same code identifier—the code that the program would not recognize.

We finally had to surrender and move on to another adventure. This was extremely disappointing, as Broderbund had released what, until that Sanctuary, was a great adventure game. Now all was lost. It is possible that we had continually erred in our ways and had entered an incorrect code, but as experienced adventure gamers, we just don't see how such is possible after working on those symbols for three-quarters of an hour. Perhaps others have crossed successfully into the Sanctuary of the Village; we certainly hope so. But to us, it appears as though a copy

protection method has stunted yet another game's promising potential. If you have a more enlightening experience with *Dark Heart*, we'd like to know about it. We just don't see how such a potentially great adventure could block gamers in this manner.

News and new products—computer games

Accolade (408-985-1700) has reached an agreement with Horro Soft to publish and distribute its newest computer game, *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark*. Featuring the sultry Elvira, the game leads players on a ghostly and grisly role-playing adventure through a demon-filled medieval castle. It seems as though Elvira's recent renovations to an ancient castle have aroused her long-dead relative, Queen Emelda, who has risen from the grave and has opened a portal into the underworld. Now hundreds of her evil servants are entering the castle to prepare for her arrival. You must search the castle for six keys that will open a chest that contains a scroll that wards off the demons. The game will be released for the Amiga, Atari ST, and PC/MS-DOS computers early next year.

Also from Accolade is *Star Control*, an action/strategy game of galactic conquest. The game is designed in such a way that players who want only starship-to-starship space battles can forego the scheming and precise planning preferred by strategic players. The adventure is set in the future, in a star cluster that cannot accommodate all of the alien races that make up the Ur-Quan Hierarchy and the Alliance of Free Stars. A one- or two-player game, this allows you to represent either side and attempt to capture your opponent's home base. The price is \$49.95.

Broderbund Software (415-492-3299) and DIC Enterprises of Burbank are going to develop an animated program based on the adventures of Carmen Sandiego, a detective-chase computer-game series that teaches geography and history to children. The series first appeared in 1985 and has sold nearly two million units. The players chase Carmen and her henchmen all over the world and even through time, learning facts as they recover stolen loot.

Prince of Persia, Broderbund's action-adventure game, is being released for the Amiga (\$39.95). Created by Jordan Mechner, the author of Broderbund's *Karateka*, *Prince of Persia* has the player escape from a dungeon in one hour and rescue a princess before the evil Grand Vizier Jaffar can marry her.

Electronic Arts (415-571-7171) has released *Imperium* for Atari ST and Amiga computers. Developed in the United Kingdom, this game deals with successful conquests, broken alliances, and complex administrative duties. As the Emperor of the Solar System, you must engineer the growth of your empire while maintaining the delicate balance between many economic and political factors. There are

hundreds of nearby worlds to conquer, but there are other empires with conquest in mind. The adventure starts in the year 2020, with you attempting to expand your empire. If you manage to crush all other empires and colonize the planets, or if your empire lasts 1,000 years, the safe destiny of the human race is assured. The price is \$39.95.

Brainblaster is another offering from Electronic Arts, a double game package that includes *Xenon 2* and *Bombuzal*, both developed by Spotlight Software. *Xenon 2* has players saving the universe from the Xenites, aliens who have planted five time bombs throughout history. Only you can save the day and the universe. *Xenon 2* features coin-op quality action and a hot soundtrack. *Bombuzal* is 120 levels of fast-moving explosive mayhem. Your objective is to detonate a variety of bombs without getting blown up yourself. The bombs are located on tiles that can be covered with ice, disappear, or spin wildly. Both a 2-D overhead view and a 3-D isometric view add to this frantic game. Versions are currently available for the Amiga and Atari ST for \$39.95, and a version for MS-DOS will be available soon.

Electronic Arts has announced the release of *Harpoon Scenario Editor* from Three-Sixty Inc. for \$39.95. This is the same in-house programming tool used by the original *Harpoon* developers to produce the scenarios for all of the existing *Harpoon* Battlesets. You have full control over every scenario available, including geographical location of units and groups, weapons, composition of air and sea assets, and much more. A built-in analysis feature checks your completed scenario to ensure all components necessary for the action are present.

Interplay Productions (714-545-9001) has released *Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess*, for PC/MS-DOS computers. This is an animated strategy game that simulates ancient warfare with a mix of stunning graphics, realistic sound, and humorous animation. An exotic and varied version of chess, it features new pieces (cannons, counsellors, and ministers), movement along a grid line instead of squares, and a river separating the two halves of the board. There are also 2-D and 3-D viewing modes and on-line information files to explain the game's rules and strategy. The price is \$49.95. An Amiga version will appear soon. All Interplay products are distributed through Mediagenic.

Miles Computing (818-340-6300) has introduced *Questmaster, The Prism of Hehuetotol*, for PC/MS-DOS (\$39.95), Apple IIGs (\$39.95), and Commodore 64/128 (\$34.95) computers. You become Terna, last of the Tellasien race. You must find the crystal prism of Hehuetotol, a vital piece to the master staff that will help conquer the evil lord Colnar. You start the game in Dondra, where an advanced interface allows use of full sentences, multiple commands, and even multiple executions in

the same set of instructions. Earn experience points by battling Mutoids, Wildebeests, and others, as well as obtaining items useful in future encounters.

Spectrum HoloByte (415-522-3584) has released *Flight of the Intruder* for PC/MS-DOS gamers. This game brings Stephen Coonts' best-selling novel, based on his experiences as a Navy pilot in the Vietnam war, to the computer. After you select your jet (A-6 or F-4), you are sent in search of enemy targets from your base on the carrier U.S.S. *Shiloh*. The game's action takes place during the 1972 Linebacker campaign over North Vietnam. You can also connect two PC/MS-DOS machines together via direct cable link to team up against the enemy. There are 13 different operations, each composed of as many as four separate missions and yielding different targets, strategy, and adventure. Included in the game package is a copy of Coonts' novel. The price is \$59.95. Versions for the Amiga and Atari ST are also scheduled for release.

Star Games (800-783-8023) has introduced *Rings of Medusa*. You must challenge the evil Medusa, who has stolen your father's kingdom using her diabolical magic, to a final fight. You conduct trade, find treasures, equip an armada of ships, hire warriors for your army, and go into battle. There are 33 cities to explore, 13 castles, and three islands. Find five hidden rings and place them together to call Medusa to the final confrontation. The price is \$49.95 for PC/MS-DOS and Amiga versions, and \$39.95 for the Atari ST version.

Strategic Simulations, Inc. (408-737-6800) is releasing *Renegade Legion: Interceptor*, a science-fiction strategy game. It is based on the board game from FASA, the creators of the RENEGADE LEGION™ games. You wage a campaign of galactic struggle between the Terran Overlord Government and the Renegade Legions. Take command of a fighter squadron and fly with the elite forces on either side of this never-ending struggle. Engage in tactical ship-to-ship space combat with deadly 69th Century starfighters. Twenty-four standard fighter types are included, and you can design your own. The game will be initially released for PC/MS-DOS machines at \$59.95.

SSI has also signed a new contract with TSR, Inc., to produce a new line of BUCK ROGERS® science-fiction computer games. Its first game is entitled *Countdown to Doomsday*. Included in specially marked *Countdown* boxes will be copies of a full-length novel, *First Power Play*. All SSI games are distributed by Electronic Arts.

Three-Sixty Pacific (408-879-9144) is releasing *The Blue Max*. Currently for PC/MS-DOS machines, this game recreates the challenge of air-to-air combat over France during 1917. Included is an original soundtrack score and digitized animated graphics, with a total 3-D world in multiple camera views.

Also from Three-Sixty Pacific comes *Das Boot*, a German U-boat simulation. The

game is based on the actual accounts of Peter Cramer, who was the technical source for the movie of the same name and was one of the surviving U-boat captains. This game is also for PC/MS-DOS gamers.

Three-Sixty Pacific (408-879-9144) has produced *MegaFortress* for PC/MS-DOS and Amiga computers. This is a military air simulation based on Dale Brown's best selling techno-thriller, *Flight of the Old Dog*. It poses the question: What if the Soviet Union had developed "Star Wars" technology before the United States? You are assigned the task of combatting a Soviet laser powerful enough to knock missiles, planes, and satellites out of the sky. You assume the role and view the action from the perspectives of five crew members, and you'll confront such Soviet threats as MiG 27s and 29s, as well as surface-to-air missiles. The price is \$49.95.

Also from Three-Sixty Pacific is *Armor Alley*, for the Macintosh, Macintosh II, and PC/MS-DOS computers. This strategic war game allows one, two, or four players (two teams of two each) to engage in head-to-head confrontations using helicopters, paratroopers, tanks, missile launchers, and infantry. This simulation matches one opponent or team against another of equal strength and ability. You can also play by connecting computers together via AppleTalk. There are eight difficulty levels. The price is \$49.95.

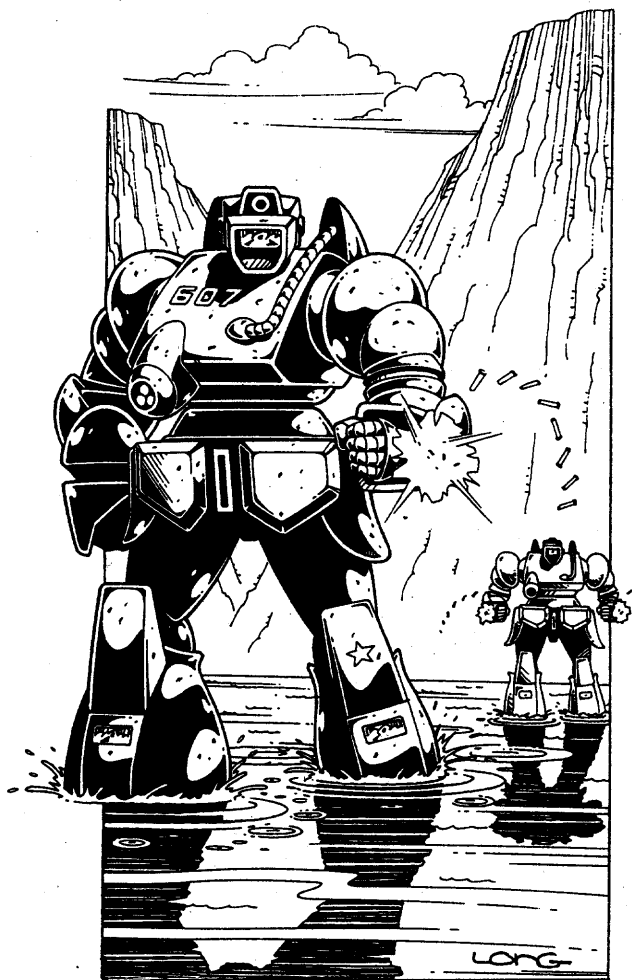
News and new products-video games

CAPCOM U.S.A. (408-727-0400) has released *Gargoyle's Quest* for Nintendo's Game Boy, priced at \$29.95. You control Firebrand, the valiant guardian gargoyle of the Ghoul Realm. You are pitted against marauding Destroyers who are determined to wipe out the entire planet. You'll also recover stolen magic items to strengthen yourself for future battles.

Data East USA (408-286-7080) has released a new Nintendo Game Boy title, *Lock N Chase*. You assume the role of an international diamond thief on the run. You must stay ahead of the police by finding your way through a series of twisted mazes, each littered with cash and gems. Players score points by outsmarting their pursuers, picking up coins, sacks of cash and other valuable items.

Also from Data East is the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) release of *Battle Chess*. The game combines the strategic challenges of traditional chess with the excitement of 3-D graphics and sound. There are six levels of strategic play with each chess piece possessing its own method of attack. Players watch a unique battle unfold while planning the next move. The price is \$44.95.

Hot-B USA Inc. (415-567-9337) has released *Shingen the Ruler* for NES game systems. This game takes you back to Japan, 400 years ago. The country then was divided into numerous autonomous



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fiefdoms, where each daimyo (lord) was the absolute ruler of his territory. As there was no central government, it was the dream of some lords to unite and rule all Japan. As Shingen Takeda, a real person from Japanese history, your objective is to bring all of the fiefdoms under your control. Your strategic skill in manipulating the domestic and military commands determines success or failure. The war zone, on four screens, consists of woods, rivers, mountains, bridges, and castles. There are 42 unique battlefields.

Radiance Software (805-496-7898) has introduced *Sidearms* for NEC Turbo-Graphx-16 video game systems. You are Earth's last interstellar warrior and must defend the galaxy against the invading nemesis from a distant black hole. With your government-issue sidearm, you are mankind's only hope against total annihilation. There are 10 levels of action.

Sega of America, Inc. (415-742-9300) has released its new *Ghostbusters* game for the Genesis system. This full-color, 16-bit graphics game with full digital stereo finds a rash of earthquakes unleashing a host of nasty new ghosts and demons on New York City. Peter, Raymond, and Egon use every weapon imaginable to seal the ghouls in bubbles for easy removal. You'll encounter the Silk Hatton and Broccoli Worm, as well as Fire Giants and Dragons. The price is approximately \$50.

For Genesis comes Sega's *The Sword of Vermilion*, a role-playing fantasy game where you come face-to-face with legions of fiends, monsters, and the evil denizens of deep, dark dungeons. A free hint book also comes with the game, as well as battery back-up.

New arcade hits for the Sega system include: *Strider*, that allows players to traverse snowy mountains and battle Amazons, attack dogs, and futuristic gunners and *Afterburner II*, the Sega arcade classic of a jet fight thriller. Other new games include: *E-Swat*, which features futuristic humanoid robot-police using their strengths in a battle to save the cities of tomorrow, and *Cyberball*, where one or two gamers play football with teams of cyborg robots.

Watch for *Dick Tracy* and *Spider-Man* to arrive for the Genesis system. Sega has also released two exciting new accessories for their 16-bit system: the Arcade Power Stick, an ergonomically designed joy stick that permits control of individual push-button velocity; and the Power Base Converter, which allows Genesis owners to play Sega Master System Games on their 16-bit unit. These items are \$49.95 and \$39.95, respectively.

Clue corner

Conquests of Camelot (Sierra)

1. Go first to Merlin's room and ask him about Gawaine, Launcelot, and Galahad. While here, get the lodestone.

2. Obtain more copper, gold, and silver, and be certain to get your purse back.

3. For visionary results, put a gold coin in each tray in the chapel of the two gods.

4. Go to Glastonbury Tor, and give a copper to Widdershins and another copper to the hunter. Certainly buy that spear for a gold piece and prepared to get "boarded." After saying "Yes" to the crow, you can get the sleeve from the skeleton.

5. Keep your lance down and to the right when jousting with the Black Knight. As soon as the Black Knight's lance tip goes past your lance tip, move yours to the left. He'll get skewered in the stomach nearly every time.

6. After you free Galahad, go east. Give the witch the sleeve you recovered in #4 above. Read the inscription on the slab and go north.

7. Search around Tor and find the Mad Monk. To fight him most effectively, stand in one spot and swing at every monk that comes near you. After killing the monk, go to the altar and put all of your silver coins on it. You will receive a key. Go to the well with the lid on it and unlock it. Search the water and get the crystal heart. You can leave the Tor now.

8. Go to Ot Moor. To cross the ice, watch for the first scene that is entire ice. Type: "Love is my shield." Follow the petals to the castle. Give the Ice Maiden the heart. When looking at the Miraculous Bush of Flowers, be careful to answer the riddles correctly; otherwise, you will die.

9. At the port where the Ice Maiden told you to go, go to Gaza. Follow the boy and talk to the old man about symbols. Be certain to write them down.

10. As soon as you enter the desert, the thief will jump you.

11. After leaving the mountains, go south until you can't move anymore. Follow the river. Don't drink the river water. At the house, go downstairs and drink that water.

12. Go north. Give the mercenaries five copper pieces. Go west. When the man at the gate orders you to give him your money, wield Excalibur.

13. A thief will steal your money. Follow him and go back the way you came. Sell the donkey to the man. Then go to the woman who sells apples and take the apple of Truth.

14. Buy a mirror from the merchant who is positioned to the left of the fish man. Then talk to the rug merchant. Go south. Type: "Yell"; give the mirror to the woman and the veil to the rug merchant. Go to Abdul's store and buy a relic of Elzer. Give this to the man with the broom, then buy some herbs and charcoal from him. Give the herbs to the fishmonger, the broom to the innkeeper, and the charcoal to the beggar. Buy a lamb cutlet from the butcher and give it to the woman near the small boy. Buy seed from the grain merchant, then sprinkle it near the woman's cage that can be found near the gate. Talk to the apple woman again. Enter

the temple and take the Test.

15. Talk to the beggar. Enter the crypt. Wander around until you find a small mummy with a necklace. Type: "Use Sword" to get the necklace. Go east and give the potion to Gawaine. Wander around more until you find a sarcophagus. Wait until the Thing goes back into the coffin. Get the apple inside. Go east. Search for the statue of Aphrodite. Put the golden apple in her hand, then follow her directions by using the lodestone.

16. After fighting the Saracen, use the dove. After Aphrodite disappears, move counterclockwise and count six pillars. Push that pillar and get the Grail. Leave the thief; let the Grail handle it. You have now saved Camelot!

Billy Rawls
Rock Hill SC

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

1. In Haptooth, do not try to defeat the efreet right away. Instead, wander around the town killing off the patrols. Keep doing this until all wandering encounters stop. Then attack the efreet. This drastically reduces the number of drow clerics and magic-users you will have to fight in this major battle.

2. Do not attack the dragons at the top of the red wizards tower. Instead, turn them against their master.

3. While in the red wizards tower, make sure not to pick up any air mail. Also, do not accept the Challenge of the Sphere, unless you are prepared to be annihilated.

4. Intrepid adventurers can find a shop dealing in magic items outside Daggerford.

David Grau
Howell NJ

The Dark Heart of Uukrul (Broderbund)

Below is the solution to the crossword puzzle located midway through the game. Where and how you use this information is up to you!

DOWN

1. Weak, loud, backward (frail)
2. Within or inside itself (inside)
3. Sounds like bread is being made, want some? (need)
4. Mythical monsters become tiresome (dragon)
5. The infinite ethereal plane contains many small bones (teeth)
6. Sing out but keep your mouth closed (hum)

ACROSS

7. The avenger is moved to carve two points where dead lie (engrave)
8. A keen joint (knee)
9. The tree before and after the fire (ash)
10. Conditions important when walking less than 12 inches (underfoot)
11. Gives up a short recess to get a word in (renounces)
12. Covered with cold wet spikes (icicled)

Ted Naleid
Park Falls WI

Deja Vu II (Mindscape)

1. If you think you've traveled everywhere in Chicago, courtesy of Gabby's cab, remember he's a local cab driver and you won't be able to have him take you to another city.

2. Try Opening and Operating the pocket knife you found in your apartment to open the locked backdoor to Joe's Bar.

The Lessers

MegaTraveller 1 (Paragon)

1. The highest possible profit for a single trip seems to be gunrunning to Stur, in the Efate system. Go to the weapons' shop on Efate and buy as many PGMP-12s as your party can carry. Travel to Stur, and when the starport guards request permission to search for illegal weapons, say no. They will inform you that you are in violation and will let you pass. Walk down the street to the weapons shop and sell the weapons.

2. The most lucrative legal route in the early stages of the game (before acquiring the Jump-2 drive) is between Efate and Louzy. Buy water on Efate and sell it on Louzy. The latter planet is experiencing a water shortage. Then purchase explosives to sell upon your return to Efate.

3. The most lucrative legal route after you have purchased the Jump-2 drive is between Chiros in the Pixie system and Boughene. Buy Streechen wine on Chiros and exchange it for computers on Boughene.

4. Whenever buying or selling anything, the character with the highest level of Trader skill should be at the front of the party. One level of Trader skill makes a difference of kCr40 in the cost of the Jump-2 drive and will affect all other details as well.

James A. Gilly

U.S.S. *Simon Lake*, FPO NY

Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)

1. Whenever you enter a new area, hunt for the teleporter that will take your party back to the well. Be certain to mark where that teleporter takes you!

2. An easy way to obtain gems in the mine is to advance down a shaft until you come to a door blocked with rubble. If you look at the door, your characters will find a pick and you will be asked if you wish to dig. Say yes and you will be rewarded with some gems. Repeat this process as often as you wish.

3. Save the game before you enter the castle. When you enter, do not sign the Medusa's Scroll. Also, do not follow the Medusa if you encounter her later. The punishment for not following this advice is that your characters will be teleported away.

Brian Smith
McKinney TX

1. Free the Well of Knowledge First.

2. Find the dwarf called Derf in the temple and accept his quest.

3. When you complete Derf's quest, go

to the Black Circle headquarters, where a magical item of great power awaits you.

4. Return to the dungeon after slaying the dragon with the amulet and go to the 8th level.

5. Use the malfunctioning teleporter on the prescribed level and free the shaft from the barrier.

6. Take the now-freed shaft to the 10th level and travel east.

7. Once in the second dungeon you must answer riddles to move to the higher levels, or you'll have to fight many iron golems in a trial by combat. The riddle answers are:

—That which bears no shadow is the wind.

—That which cannot be held is your breath.

—That which dies with a drink of water is fire.

—That which cannot climb is water.

—That which cannot sleep is a river.

—That which you feel but cannot see is your heart.

—That which you break is silence.

8. When you have all three keys, enter the ice caverns via the purple worm entrance and seek out the frost giant king.

9. Once in the final castle, you cannot memorize spells. Therefore, it is a good idea to take the teleporter on the first level back to the well and restock on used spells.

10. Do not trust the storm giant king on the second level.

11. The doors that correspond to the keys come in the following order: silver before gold, which comes before bronze

12. Save the game after the 16-headed hydra fight, for the end of the game is near. Whether this is the end of the character or the end of the game depends on you.

John Redden

Nova Scotia, Canada

Space Rogue (Origin)

1. Search Hiathre Base. In Cebak's room, you'll find a keycard in one spacesuit.

2. One man is willing to trade with you. Ask him about Monchi. You can give him a ruby cube.

3. When asking for the pilot's license, the last answer is "Imperium." You should also ask for form CRC-07.

4. You can find a transmutation coil on the Koth carrier. It is useful for building a special engine.

5. In Arcturus is a mad pirate; an injection of NSB will do him good.

Ron Mertens
Tel Aviv, Israel

Sword of Aragon (SSI)

Start with a warrior and take the standard units you received. You should get one ranger, two priests, two mages, and 100 men. Re-equip the 2nd Javelins with chain mail, small shields, swords, crossbows ("X-bow" on the menu), and nothing else. All future infantry units should also be equipped in this manner.

Using this strategy, it was possible to eliminate the first attack while only losing two men. Ignore the monster to the southwest for a while; he's too tough for starting characters. Go to the trees (characters only) northwest of Aladda and slay the minotaur to get his gold. Have your rangers, priests, and mages attack the minotaur with ranged weapons, then send in your warriors for the kill.

Now await your chance to take the city of Marina and then Parithian when it is lightly defended. During this time, develop your city of Aladda's resources, except for lumber. Ignore the missing boy quest; you'll probably end up with several folk leaving your army by the time you find him.

Pardon Olaff when asked; he is innocent. By the time you march on Marina, you should have around 103 men in your army. Accept Malacon as a vassal and use extensive missile fire to win with minimal casualties. Then garrison Aladda with 30 infantry possessing crossbows. Take about 125 men against Parithian. After 10 to 15 rounds of missile fire, you should either win the battle outright or will have softened the defenders up enough for an attack. You can still keep on firing your missiles until the defenders are all dead.

Next, take Brocada, then Sur Nova as it is always undefended. Always fire at hexes where the most enemy units are stacked, and you'll get more hits.

Then attack Tantula with about 150 men. The defenders number about 500, but they have no bowmen. Do not attack Zarnix, or you'll find yourself in combat with about 200 trolls and 1,000 orcs! You should go against the city of Gernok with at least 225 men, as you'll be battling 2,300 goblins, one minotaur, and three demons. I fired continually at them for 24 turns (the maximum battle) and won. I lost 35 men.

Always keep in mind that the troop estimates your scouts give you are high.

You'll need about 1,000 men for the battles against Estallah and Tetrada. Don't attack the dark elf city west of Tranvan until you have taken Tetrada.

William Johnson
Hartsville SC

1. Spend money on bow units. A platoon of 50 bowmen make enemy units disappear faster than a spike can disarm your computer.

2. When fighting the dragon, take at least three bow platoons, two infantry platoons, and two cavalry units. Combat the dragon in this order: bow, infantry, then cavalry. You can kill the dragon in one turn.

3. Nuralia has a mountain pass nearby that leads directly to Tetrada.

4. Save after every game year!

5. To the west of Sur Nova is a hidden group of spell-casters and a demon.

6. Vassal, if you can—a monthly tribute is very helpful.

David Waters
APO New York

1. Use the 35% tax rate. Decrease the rate to 0% during the winter months, as your income is low then anyway, to increase your popularity.

2. At the start of each turn, leave Allada. Return before the turn ends. If you are fortunate enough to meet a group of goblins, you'll earn easy experience.

3. Take your time before you try to conquer the other cities. Trolls attack Sur Nova by night. I recommend that you accept their offer. Even if the Trolls come back, they'll take no gold.

Michel Walsh
Ville LaSalle, Quebec

Ultima V (Origin)

A letter of correction was received from Dan Jenner of Castro Valley, Calif., in response to a letter we published from Rick Davis in issue #156. Rick indicated that to obtain the crown of Lord British from inside Blackthorne's Castle, one character had to be permanently sacrificed. Not so, claims Dan.

This problem can be averted by going to the castle of an evil witch that lies off the shores of the Isle of the Abyss. You first need the grapple obtained from Lord Michael in the Lyceum to climb the mountains that surround her keep. Once you enter her keep, go past the daemons that guard the door and go to the farthest lower-right room. Talk to the lady there and ask about "Oppression." When she asks for the password, answer "Impera." She will give you a black patch that you must wear when inside Blackthorne's Castle.

The Blackthorne guards will also ask you for the password; repeat "Impera." From that point on, the guards in the castle will leave you alone.

Ultima VI (Origin)

1. Look under a potted plant in Serpent's Hold for a great clue.

2. Perhaps the plant in The Slaughtered Lamb also holds information.

3. A liar is a liar. Forcing facts to be faced might prove beneficial.

4. Don't slay the queen of the giant ants.


5. Use your sextant to locate the shipwreck to obtain a piece of the pirate map.

6. Mariah needs all of the pieces before she can translate the Gargoyle Book of Prophecy.

7. Sutek died in the dungeons beneath the castle.

8. Stonegate can be reached only from the north via a transportation device.

The Lessers

Don't forget to mail your vote for the best software game of the year (as well as your game hints) to: The Lessers, 179 Pebble Place, San Ramon CA 94583, U.S.A. The results will be published in our January 1991 column. Until next issue, game on! 



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Sir Edward Mainwaring: archaeologist

Your quest:
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Arcane Lore

Pages From the Mages, part VI

by Ed Greenwood

Elminster looked around contentedly at the rocks and trees outside my cottage. "Mayhap you and I could watch the sunset," he suggested, getting out his pipe.

I agreed enthusiastically and grabbed my tape recorder. Sunsets up at the cottage are free of stinging insects only when Elminster's thick green pipesmoke is present. Elminster was already halfway down the rock steps, trailing said smoke in a sparkling, winking plume. He was humming something that sounded suspiciously like a rock song that had been on the radio on the trip up.

The water lay quiet and peaceful below the dock. Down the bay, a loon was diving. Elminster smoked, looked about, and said nothing. A heron eyed us suspiciously for a bit, then resumed fishing in silence.

Abruptly, the peace was shattered by the roar of an approaching speedboat slicing toward us. Elminster took the pipe out of his mouth and asked, "Friends?"

I shook my head, and he nodded and waved a hand. The boat abruptly rose straight up out of the water to hang unmoving in empty air, dripping. He waved his hands again and muttered something. Silence fell abruptly, as if the frantic roar of the motor had been cut off by an axe. The sage grinned at me and waved his hands again. The levitating boat and its silently screaming inhabitants spun about and, still in midair, floated behind a clump of trees where we couldn't see it.

"Better?" he asked.

"Much better," I agreed. "What will happen to them?"

"When it wears off," he said, "they'll fall back into the water. A few simple spells."

"Ah, yes," I replied. "Speaking of magic. . ."

He grinned slowly. "Of course. Turn on thy little machine, then."

And the old sage gave me a dissertation that lasted through the evening (including the eventual hasty retreat of the speedboat) and included details of more magic of the Realms.

I asked the old mage about necromancy (or "Dark Art," as it is usually called in the Realms) because of the *Lords of Darkness* accessory book I was working on at the time, and he revealed enough spells for that anthology and two powerful spellbooks concerned with Dark Art that are detailed herein. To balance such evil with lighter magicks, I've included details of some priestly tomes, too, both druidic and ecclesiastical. Enjoy!

The Book of Shangalar "the Black"

Appearance: A tome of beaten electrum pages stamped and etched with the runes of the spells set down within. The four pages are secured by small rings to covers of polished silver (that have tarnished to a smoky black appearance). The name of Shangalar is written in Thorass on the lower right of the front cover, and is the only lettering or adornment that the cover bears. The book is surprisingly heavy but is less than a finger thick, and its cover is three hand-widths across by seven hand-widths in height.

History and description: Shangalar was a mage of Calimshan some 700 winters ago. Reclusive and secretive from the first, he gained experience and much treasure by exploring (and pillaging) ruins of the lost kingdoms of men, elves, and dwarves, making extensive use of animated undead servitors, summoned monsters, and *charmed* hirelings.

Deeply paranoid, Shangalar believed that every creature in the Realms was out to get him, and so he trusted no one and laid many elaborate plans, back-up strategies, and double-crosses to protect himself from betrayal. These undoubtedly saved his life on the several occasions when he did encounter deceit and treachery, but they won him no friends and caused many blameless individuals to be slain or ruined along the way. Shangalar cared not a whit.

He grew rapidly in power and built himself a hidden keep somewhere in the northeast of Calimshan, slaying all who learned anything of its location or appearance. It remains hidden today, perhaps as the lair of a lich. All that is known to men is the suspicion (perhaps false) that it is an aerial dwelling, concealed amid mountain peaks.

Shangalar is known to have specialized in Dark Art and was once robbed by the master thief, Athchos the Black, while exploring a ruined desert city. Athchos emerged from Anauroch with the book that bears Shangalar's name, obviously a volume compiled by Shangalar in his early researches.

Athchos recited the book in Iriaebor to a cabal of evil mages led by Orlistar Meir, for copying; it is from their various records that Elminster knows the books contents.

Athchos then tried to rent the book to a mage in Elturel but was slain by a swarm

of hundreds of crawling claws. The book vanished in the attack, and it is widely believed that Shangalar was responsible, for he thereafter styled himself Shangalar "the Black" (thought to be a proud reference to his slaying of the notorious thief). Perhaps Shangalar did not regain the book—or perhaps he allowed it to pass into the hands of others for coin or for his own fell reasons—because the book turned up again in Neverwinter, where it was unmistakably described by Ourgos, a minor sage. The book was promptly stolen by evil mages of Luskan or agents working for them, but it is believed to have since vanished again (and is being sought by those of Luskan who desire to retrieve it).

The tome's four pages each contain a single spell dealing with the dead, undead, or necromancy. The book itself bears no alignment nor known traps (although Athchos spoke, perhaps falsely, of a "poisoned clasp," to deter theft by those he lent it to), and the spells it contains seem more protective than actively evil in nature. These spells are *bone javelin* (a unique spell), *negative plane protection* (a wizards equivalent of the widely known priest spell), *repel undead* (a unique spell), and *bone blade* (a unique spell). All are described hereafter.

Bone Javelin

(Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 7 Components: V,S,M

Range: 10'/lvl. CT: 7

Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: None

AE: Special

This magic requires a drop of the caster's blood, a tiny carved replica of a javelin fashioned of any organic material, and a bone or bone fragment. A javelin of bone springs into being in the air above one of the caster's hands (caster's choice) and flashes (at a speed of 300'/round) in the direction pointed by the caster. The javelin turns after striking a living creature or obstacle, or when it reaches its maximum range, then returns at the same speed to the caster. It then floats above the caster's hand until directed forth again. Spell-casting or other activities may be undertaken without unintentionally sending forth or dissipating the javelin.

A *bone javelin* strikes only once per round. A successful to-hit roll is required (all creatures in the javelin's path are imperiled if the javelin misses the target chosen by the caster). A *bone javelin* is AC

-4, shatters if dealt at least 7 hp damage, and does 1 hp damage per level of the caster to creatures it strikes. It can damage Ethereal, undead, other-planar, and Prime Material plane creatures alike. A *bone javelin* can twist and turn as necessary to overcome barriers and return to its caster.

Negative Plane Protection (Abjuration, Necromancy)

Level: 7 Components: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 1
Duration: 1 turn/lvl. Save: None
AE: 1 creature

By means of three drops of the caster's blood (plus one drop from the creature to be protected by the spell, if it is not the caster), this magic protects against *energy drain* spells and undead powers. The caster or any eligible creature touched by the caster is partially protected against one undead attack per level of the caster (this differs from the priest spell of the same name).

Undead that exist partially on the Negative Material plane (such as shadows, wights, wraiths, spectres, and vampires) do physical damage by any attack, but if the protected being saves vs. death magic, no drain of experience or strength results. Instead, the attacking undead suffers 2-12 (2d6) hp damage (attackers using *energy drain* spells are not so harmed). Unlike the clerical spell, failure to save vs. death magic does not cause the protected being double physical damage.

Repel Undead

(Abjuration, Necromancy)

Level: 7 Components: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 4
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special
AE: Special

This spell enables a caster to force undead away from his person. *Repelled* undead move away at their full movement rate to the limit of the spell's range and cannot move closer. If solid barriers prevent their fleeing out of spell range, the undead are held against the barrier until the spell expires or the caster moves away. The spell effect remains centered on and moves with the caster.

Undead that are able to launch missile or spell attacks are free to do so, but even by magical means they cannot approach creatures who are within this spell's range, regardless of further spell-casting, slumber, or unconsciousness on the part of the caster, and regardless of attacks made against the undead.

Undead who successfully save vs. spells at -3 may enter or remain in spell range (and attack other creatures or otherwise take normal actions) for one round, but they must save each and every round. On any round in which the save fails, the magic forces the undead to move directly away from the caster at full movement rate. In places dedicated to evil, evil undead may save at -2, -1, or normally, at

the DM's discretion. The material component of this spell is a magnet in bar form, with a drop of the caster's blood placed on one end and a fragment of bone or tissue from any undead wired or tied to the other end.

Bone Blade

(Alteration, Evocation, Necromancy)

Level: 8 Components: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 8
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: None
AE: Special

From a normal bladed weapon and a bone from any source (both consumed in the casting), this magic creates a temporary but very effective weapon. The *bone blade* thus created can be wielded by any being normally able to wield edged weapons. It is identical in size, weight, and damage to the bladed weapon that served as a material component of the spell.

The *bone blade* does normal damage with the following exceptions: It is unbreakable until it crumbles into dust at the spell's expiration, counts as a "+0" magical weapon for attack purposes, and deals damage against undead as a *sword of wounding*. Any wounds it causes cannot be healed by *regeneration* or magical means short of a *limited wish* spell. Normal rest and time cure the wounds caused by a *bone blade*. Until such wounds are bandaged or one turn passes, the victim loses one additional hit point per round, per wound, over and above the initial damage (e.g., a being hit for 4 hp damage suffers one additional hit point on the following round, the round thereafter, and so on).

Against undead, a *bone blade* does double normal damage. If the undead fails to save vs. death magic (it must save only at the first contact with a particular *bone blade*, not at each strike), it is instantly blasted out of existence.

The Glandar's Grimoire

Appearance: This book is only a burned remnant; its original, undamaged appearance is unknown. All that survives is a front cover of black dragon hide stretched over a sheet of slate and stitched with wire, and five scorched, fire-browned pages that it protected. The rest of the book—its back cover and an unknown number of additional pages—is lost, probably destroyed by flames.

The cover and surviving pages have been kept together over the years by storage in a flat octagonal coffer of ornately carved ivory. The coffer has a clasp and hinges of electrum, and its cover is worked in a stylized relief design of waves, clouds, trees, and seabirds, with a lateen-rigged ship visible far off on the waves. The coffer is worth 150 gp or so for materials, plus a subjective amount (50-500 gp) for the workmanship, believed to be that of an artisan of Calimport or Tashluta. A shallow secret compartment on the underside of the coffer is known to

have held (at various times) lockpicks, keys, amulets, needles, and the like.

History and description: The Glandar was a mage-king of long ago, whose lands were somewhere near the Vilhon Reach, "The Glandar" is actually a title; his real name has been forgotten. It is known that the Glandar was an intelligent, powerful mage whose Art was skillful enough to create aerial craft even in those dim days, and whose small kingdom boasted irrigation, medicine, and Art far more advanced than those of neighboring lands.

The Glandar was also a cruel tyrant who permitted no other being beside himself to study Art in his lands—and this policy proved to be his undoing. He was alone when attacked by a group of young, ambitious mages of Unther. Although he slew many of them, he was overwhelmed and utterly destroyed. His grimoire (so named because its first page bears only the inscription: "The Grimoire Most Perilous of The Immortal Glandar, Lord of the Undying, Scepter of Glandara") was seized by his slayers, who battled each other for the spoils, wreaking much havoc in the fallen mage's realm of Glandara. ("Scepter" was the title the Glandar ruled by; "Lord of the Undying" is believed to refer to his mastery of undead, through Dark Art.)

The other four surviving pages of the Grimoire contain a single spell each—four unique magicks, all described hereafter.

Fellblade

(Abjuration, Evocation, Necromancy)

Level: 5 Components: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 1 rd.
Duration: 1 turn/lvl. Save: None
AE: Special

The casting of this spell brings into being a smoky-gray, blade-shaped bar of force (up to 4' in length) in the caster's grip. A *fellblade* passes into nothingness in an instant if it leaves the caster's hand (it cannot be sheathed to be wielded again later). Its use therefore precludes spell-casting. It also vanishes instantly if the caster dies or becomes unconscious or *feble-minded*, but it can otherwise be wielded for one strike per round (normal attack roll required). The *fellblade's* strike can have one of three fell effects. One function must be selected by the caster prior to attacking.

—The *fellblade* can do 2-8 hp damage, functioning as a weapon able to hit all creatures at normal chances.

—The *fellblade* can drain from any creature it hits the exact hit points necessary to heal all current damage to the sword-wielder (up to the maximum possessed by the target).

—The touch of the blade can do 1 hp physical damage and *bestow curse* (as the reverse form of the priest spell *remove curse*). Some suggested curses are given in the rulebook spell description, and many alternatives can be found in the article "Curses!" in issue #77 of DRAGON® Magazine. This power can be used only three

times in every 111 turns by any spell-caster (regardless of how many *fellblade* spells that being casts).

The material components of this spell are a drop of the caster's blood, a piece (any size) of cold iron, and a drop of unholy water (that the caster need not touch directly).

Melisander's Harp

(Alteration)

Level: 5 Components: V,S,M
Range: 10'/lvl. CT: 5
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: Neg.
AE: Special

This spell is named for its creator, the elven mage and harper hero known to Realmslore as "The Last Lonely Harpist." It brings into being the spectral, shadowy illusion of a harp that plays by itself, floating in midair. The harp can be up to 10' per level distant from the caster, and while within range can be moved at a rate of up to 10' per round according to the caster's will. The harp's playing can be turned on and off instantly and repeatedly by the silent will of the caster, but this does not affect spell duration.

While the harp is playing, all creatures within 20' of it are affected as if by a *slow* spell (no saving throw). All sound is hushed (but not negated), available light dims, and all creatures of 4+4 HD or less within 40' must make a saving throw vs. spells or be affected as if by a *sleep* spell. All creatures and objects within 60' of a *Melisander's harp* are also affected as if by a *feather fall* spell (no saving throw) while the harp is playing.

A *Melisander's harp* is unaffected by *dispel magic* or *silence* spells. A *limited wish* or stronger spell is required to destroy such a harp. The powers of a harp cannot pass through magical barriers (such as a *wall of force*), and a spell-caster cannot cause a harp to come into being beyond or to move to the other side of such a barrier.

The material components of this spell are a silver-harp-string and at least three tears (the tears of an elf, a maiden who sings, a harpist or other musician, or the caster; tears from different individuals may be combined in the casting).

Disruption

(Alteration, Necromancy)

Level: 9 Components: V,S
Range: 10'/lvl. C T : 3
Duration: Instant. Save: Special
AE: 40'-radius sphere

This powerful spell causes undead and other magically animated creatures (such as golems) to be utterly destroyed. Summoned, enchanted (controlled by magical means), and *charmed* creatures are instantly freed from any controls upon them.

Any ongoing spell-casting in the area of effect is ruined (magical-item effects are delayed for a round but are not otherwise affected; artifact powers are unaffected).

All effects of a *disruption* occur only

within a 40'-radius globe. The range of the spell refers to how distant the center of the globe may be from the caster. The spell takes effect instantly and then is gone; its area of effect cannot be moved.

The spell affects creatures within the area of effect who are of only three specific sorts. Undead, magically created or animated creatures, and magically controlled creatures that have fewer than 6 HD are automatically affected. Any creature of this sort who has 6 HD or more must save vs. spells to avoid being affected by a *disruption* spell (even if it wants to be affected). If the save succeeds, the creature escapes *disruption* but is *stunned* for 1-2 rounds.

Immunity to Undeath

(Abjuration, Alteration, Necromancy)

Level: 9 Components: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 1 rd.
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: None
AE: 40'-radius sphere

This spell creates a globe that moves with and is centered on the caster. The perimeter of this protected area glows with a very faint blue-white radiance, visible only in gloomy or dark surroundings. All creatures can freely pass into and out of the globe.

Within the globe, all beings are rendered immune to energy-draining attacks, strength-draining attacks, mental control (even of one undead by another), and all undead powers that cause *fear*, *paralyzation*, aging, or death (such as the wail of a banshee).

A creature leaving the globe becomes normally vulnerable to undead attacks but can regain protection by reentering the globe any number of times until the spell expires. A being on the perimeter remains completely protected as long as any part of its body is in contact with the globe.

Undead can freely enter or leave the globe, and their physical attacks do normal physical damage. Undead can be turned with the usual chances within the globe. Undead cannot change form within the globe (e.g., a vampire cannot turn from gaseous to solid form or vice versa), nor can undead be animated by any creature or means within the globe. Shadows and other hard-to-discern undead are clearly outlined at all times while within the globe and are rendered vulnerable to all weapons.

The caster cannot end the spell's effects before the spell expires. Only a *dispel magic* spell can destroy the globe. Otherwise, spell-casting may be freely undertaken within the globe, by the caster of the *immunity* spell or by others.

The material components of this spell are a drop of the caster's blood, a seed from any plant, and a drop of holy water.

The Tome of the Wyvernwater Circle

Appearance: This tome is two octagonal

half-rounded slabs of shadowtop wood enclosing 16 vellum pages. Each page contains a single druidic prayer (written spell) as follows: *detect magic*, *faerie fire*, *invisibility to animals*, *pass without trace*, *wailing wind* (a unique spell), *cure light wounds*, *fire trap*, *locate animals or plants*, *produce flame*, *touchsickle* (a unique spell), *call lightning*, *cure disease*, *flame shield* (a unique spell), *hold animal*, *mold touch* (a unique spell), *water breathing*. The book is old and well-worn, but protective magicks prevent normal heat, flame, water (even a heavy rainfall), or cold from harming it.

History and description: The Wyvernwater Circle was a group of druids who flourished over 200 years ago, when elves ruled the western Dragonreach and much of Cormyr and what is now the Dales was still cloaked in heavy forest. The Circle (of 12 to 16 members; their numbers varied over time) dwelt on the northern shores of the Wyvernwater, at its eastern end. The area they protected is now mostly rolling farmland, although part of its easternmost reaches survive as the Hullack Forest.

Hullack, leader of the Circle, was a firm and true friend to the elves. It is said that he lies buried in a hidden magical refuge known as the Elfhold, somewhere in the depths of the forest that bears his name. Hullack created the tome, well aware of his own mortality and of the need to preserve the woodlands—a need that could only grow more pressing as men became more numerous around the Wyvernwater. It was his intention that the tome serve as an aid in training new recruits to the Circle. The book could also aid the druids' allies in the defense of the trees if the Circle were absent, weakened, or destroyed.

In the end the Circle did fall, battling beholders who were served by gargoyles, bugbears, and quicklings. The eye tyrants sought to establish a realm in the area, where they would be served by human and elven slaves (whom they might herd like cattle and hunt for sport and food).

The Circle slew at least five eye tyrants and drove the rest northward into the mountains. The fell woodland where the beholders continue to lurk is known today as the Spiderhaunt Wood, although it was not then isolated from the great forest that covered all the land from the advancing desert of Anauroch to the coastal marshes of the Inner Sea. The tome was lost in the battles at which the Circle members were slain; driven mad, or scattered. Today, the tome's whereabouts are unknown.

The contents of the Tome of the Wyvernwater Circle come down to us from surviving initiates of the Circle, and include four prayers said to have been given to Hullack by the goddess Eldath herself.

Wailing Wind

(Alteration)

Level: 1 Components: V
Range: 100'/lvl. CT: 1 rd.

Duration: 1 turn/lvl. Save: None

AE: Special

By means of this spell, a druid or other priest creates a magical warning system. When any creature enters a guarded area (a passage, chamber, cavern, doorway, or cave mouth of up to a maximum cubic size per side of 10'/level of the caster), a wailing, whistling blast of wind blows from the guarded area toward the druid.

The wind travels toward the druid regardless of intervening distance if the druid is on the same plane as the guarded area. The wind can reach up to 100' per level of the casting druid. The *wailing wind* has a distinctive tone and can be heard by all creatures. It transmits and magnifies any sounds (of speech, movement, etc.) made by the triggering being at the time it is activated, and it can thereby give any hearer a clue as to what sort of intruder approaches.

The spell cannot be modified to be activated by only specific beings or types of creatures. Once the guarded area is entered and the wind rises, the spell is exhausted. The wind itself lasts for one round per level of the druid, although the caster may end it sooner.

Once ended, the wind cannot be restarted except as follows: As the level of the caster increases, the number of activations per single spell (i.e., the number of blasts of wind, occurring for different intruders at different times) is also increased. A caster of 1st or 2nd level creates only a single-blast *wailing wind*; a 3rd- or 4th-level caster creates a wind of two blasts; a 5th- or 6th-level caster creates a wind of three blasts, and so on (with no known maximum).

Touchsickle

(Alteration)

Level: 2 Components: V,S

Range: 0 CT: 2

Duration: 2 rds./lvl. Save: None

AE: Self

By means of this spell, one of the caster's hands temporarily becomes a magical weapon. The extremity is able to strike all creatures who can be hit by only magical weapons (even if such creatures are normally hit by only magical weapons of +2 or greater). The extremity gains no attack bonus, but its slightest touch does the same damage as a sickle (1d4 + 1 vs. S/M beings; 1d4 vs. L beings). Its touch can slash or stab like a normal sickle, as the caster wills.

A druid may use the enchanted extremity to harvest greater mistletoe as though it were a gold or silver sickle.

Flame Shield

(Evocation)

Level: 3 Components: V,S,M

Range: 0 CT: 3

Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: None

AE: Special

This spell brings into being a pulsing, 6'-high shield of darkness at the end of the

druids hand. The shield is weightless and has no solid existence. Missiles and other weapons and solid objects (including parts of the caster's body) pass harmlessly through it. The shield remains attached to one of the druids hands (chosen in the casting) unless the druid touches another creature's hand and wills control of the shield to pass to the other creature (who must agree to the transfer or it cannot occur).

The shield works against flame. Its touch extinguishes normal torches, flaming oil, and candles instantly. Larger fires are diminished. A *fireball* striking or exploding around the bearer of a *flame shield*, for example, does only half damage.

A *flame blade* coming into contact with a *flame shield* is harmlessly destroyed. A *flame shield* can prevent a *flame strike* only if it is directly in the path of the strike (i.e., over the target's head). Flame-related illusions, hypnotic patterns, and the like have no effect on any being viewing them through a *flame shield*.

A magical flaming sword striking through a *flame shield* encounters no resistance and does normal weapon damage (but not flaming damage). The shield doesn't permanently affect the blade in any way, but the part of the blade that has passed through the shield remains free of flames while any part of the blade is in contact with the shield; thus a flaming sword striking through a *flame shield* cannot ignite a scroll or other flammable object by touch.

The material components for this spell are a piece of phosphorous, a drop of mercury, and a cobweb.

Mold Touch

(Alteration)

Level: 3 Components: V,S,M

Ranger Touch CT: 3

Duration: Special Save: Special

AE: Creature touched

This spell empowers the druid to transmute mistletoe, holly, or oak leaves (the material components) into brown mold spores without harm to himself. Any creature touched by the caster within six rounds of casting is infected by brown mold (an attack roll is required; if the druid cannot touch any creature, the mold spores vanish at the end of six rounds). The mold spores created by this spell cannot live on plant or inorganic material. All the spores created by the spell are transferred to any creature touched by the druid. Thus, the druid can infect only one creature per spell in the event of an accident, it could well be a friend or ally.

A *mold touch* spell does 4-24 hp damage to the target creature (half that if a saving throw vs. spells is made). Brown mold spreads upon the victim; in the second round after the attack, the mold does 2-12 hp damage (save for half damage). On every round thereafter, the victim receives a saving throw vs. spells. If the save is successful, no damage is taken and the

spell ends. If the save fails, the victim takes 1-6 hp damage in that round.

Brown mold created by this spell is of limited duration, and a victim cannot infect other creatures, even if intending to do so. Magical cold harms mold created by this spell in the usual manner (but also affects the creature the mold is growing on).

The Hand of Helm

Appearance: This book is six handwidths across by twelve handwidths tall and is fashioned of sheets of polished electrum. These pages are stamped and graven with the runes and glyphs of prayers (clerical spells), one prayer to a page. Each page is linked to its fellows by two binding rings. The rings are welded to inch-thick steel covers worked to resemble overlapping, rivetted armor plates radiating outward from a single large staring eye (the badge of Helm, god of guardians).

The tome is heavy (30 lbs.) and is customarily wrapped in turquoise velvet and borne about upon an upturned shield slung between two pikes carried on the shoulders of four priests of Helm.

History and description: The origin of *The Hand of Helm* (both the book and the reason behind the name it bears) are lost in the mists of time. This volume was used by the traveling cleric Helbrace "Stormhammer" Orthorn in the early days of human settlement of the North. It served to guide the prayers of the acolytes and lesser brothers in Helbrace's service. Helbrace was crippled in body and mind at his greatest victory, the destruction of the illithid-led orc horde known to bards as the Everhorde, at the battle of Firetears in the year 612 (Northreckoning). He was taken to Neverwinter, where he lived out the last of his days in peaceful idleness, his mind clouded and wandering. *The Hand of Helm* disappeared during the battle; none know if Helbrace gave it to someone, hid it, or lost it to misadventure or a foe. Its present whereabouts are unknown. Many clerics of Helm read from its pages when Helbrace was active, and were free to copy what they needed from it.

The Hand of Helm contains 27 spells, one spell per page, as follows: *bless*, *command*, *cure light wounds*, *detect evil*, *detect magic*, *light*, *protection from evil*, *remove fear*, *resist fire/resist cold*, *detect charm*, *hold person*, *know alignment*, *continual light*, *cure blindness or deafness*, *dispel magic*, *exaltation* (a unique spell), *forceward* (a unique spell), *glyph of warding*, *mace of Odo* (a unique spell), *remove curse*, *speak with dead*, *abjure*, *detect lie*, *neutralize poison*, *protection from evil 10' radius*, *seeking sword* (a unique spell), and *tongues*.

Exaltation

(Abjuration, Conjunction/Summoning)

Level: 3 Components: V,S,M

Range: Touch CT: 1 rd.

Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special

AE: Creature touched

This spell enables a priest to aid and protect any one other being. By touch, the caster removes the effects of *fear*, *sleep*, *feeble-mindedness*, hunger, pain, nausea, unconsciousness, intoxication, and insanity from the spell recipient. The recipient is protected against spells and other attacks causing these effects for the duration of the spell. Such effects are negated, not postponed until the spell expires.

When this spell is cast on a being of different alignment and faith than the caster, the recipient makes a saving throw vs. spells (even if willing). If the save is successful, the spell is lost and has no effect. If the spell recipient is of the same alignment as the priest but of a different faith, the saving throw is at -4. If the spell is successful, the *exalted* recipient receives a +1 morale and reaction/attack bonus. If the spell recipient worships the same deity as the caster but is of another alignment, the saving throw is at -6; a successfully *exalted* recipient gets a +1 morale bonus. A recipient of the same faith and alignment as the caster needs no saving throw, gets a +2 morale bonus for the spell duration, and (if the cleric desires) can radiate a white, blue-white, or amber *faerie fire* radiance for the spell duration (if chosen, the radiance is evoked immediately and cannot be ended before the spell expires).

A priest cannot cast this spell upon himself. The material components of the spell are a flask of holy water and a powdered sapphire or diamond (worth not less than 1,000 gp).

Forceward

(Abjuration)

Level: 3 Components: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 1 rd.
Duration: 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special
AE: creature touched

By means of a string of gems, rock crystals, or glass beads and his holy symbol, a priest can call into being a *forceward*. The air within this spherical area of protection glows faintly; it is barely visible in full sunlight but clearly lit in darkness.

All creatures except those touched or named by the priest in the spell-casting must make a saving throw vs. spells or be forced away from the caster (for 10' per level of the caster), withdrawing immediately. Warded creatures must remain outside the protected area for the spell duration unless they save vs. spells at -3 to successfully break into the warded area (one save per round for each being attempting to enter).

Any creature breaching through the *forceward* may move and act freely thereafter but cannot confer freedom from the ward to other creatures, even by attempting to drag them along. Any creature may freely leave the warded area but must successfully save to reenter, even if originally named as protected or if successful earlier in breaching the ward.

Missiles and spells may be launched

freely into and out of the warded area. The *forceward* ends instantly if the casting priest leaves its confines, is slain or rendered unconscious, or wills the ward out of existence. The caster may engage in spell-casting without affecting a *forceward*; continuous concentration is not required to maintain it. A *dispel magic* spell destroys a *forceward* instantly.

Mace of Odo (Evocation)

Level: 3 Components: V,S,M
Range: 0 CT: 1 rd.
Duration: 1-4 rds. Save: Special
AE: Special

By means of a stone, a piece of wood, and two drops of holy water, this spell enables a priest to create a magical mace. A *mace of Odo* is actually a mace-shaped construct of force. It is translucent but glows bright white (its radiance equal in effects to a *light* spell). The mace can be wielded immediately when casting is complete, or it can be held for up to three rounds. All spells cast at the bearer of a *mace of Odo* are absorbed harmlessly by the mace (area-effect spells are not affected by such a mace).

A *mace of Odo* strikes at +5 to hit and does 3-18 hp damage (4-24 hp to undead). Whenever it strikes, or four rounds after the round of its casting (whichever comes first), the mace vanishes instantly in a burst of white radiance. Creatures of 2 HD or less suffer only 1 hp damage when struck by a *mace of Odo* but must save vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed for 2-5 turns.

Seeking Sword (Evocation)

Level: 4 Components: V,S,M
Range: 30' CT: 7
Duration: 2 rds./lvl. Save: None
AE: Special

This spell brings into being a shimmering blade of force that appears as a sword of any description the caster desires. The sword forms in mid-air and is animated by the will of the caster (who need not ever touch it), flashing about as it attacks.

The blade is silent (maneuverability class A) and fast (able to catch a quickling), although it cannot move beyond spell range from the caster. The blade can

strike four times per round, doing 2-8 hp damage with each successful hit.

Although it has no attack bonuses, a *seeking sword* is considered a +4 magical weapon for determining what sorts of beings it can strike. It can strike nonliving objects and can be wielded dexterously enough to lift latches, slide bolts open or shut, turn pages of books, and so on. The caster may freely move the sword from target to target unless physical or magical barriers (such as a *wall of force*) is in the way, but the caster must concentrate on the blade to maintain its existence and to direct it (other spell-casting is impossible).

A *seeking sword* moves with strength enough to parry and hold back another blade wielded by a strong human or humanoid. It can be used to shatter glass objects, spike open doors, puncture sacks, or search for unseen opponents by sweeping through apparently empty spaces or across windowsills and thresholds.

The material components are a drop of mercury and a human hair. Ω

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A game convention is the perfect place to make new friends who enjoy the same hobbies you do — whether you like board games, role-playing games, miniature war games, or just shopping around. If you've never attended a game convention before, please check out the Convention Calendar feature in this issue for the game convention nearest you. Take some of your own gaming friends along, too — and make it an experience to remember.



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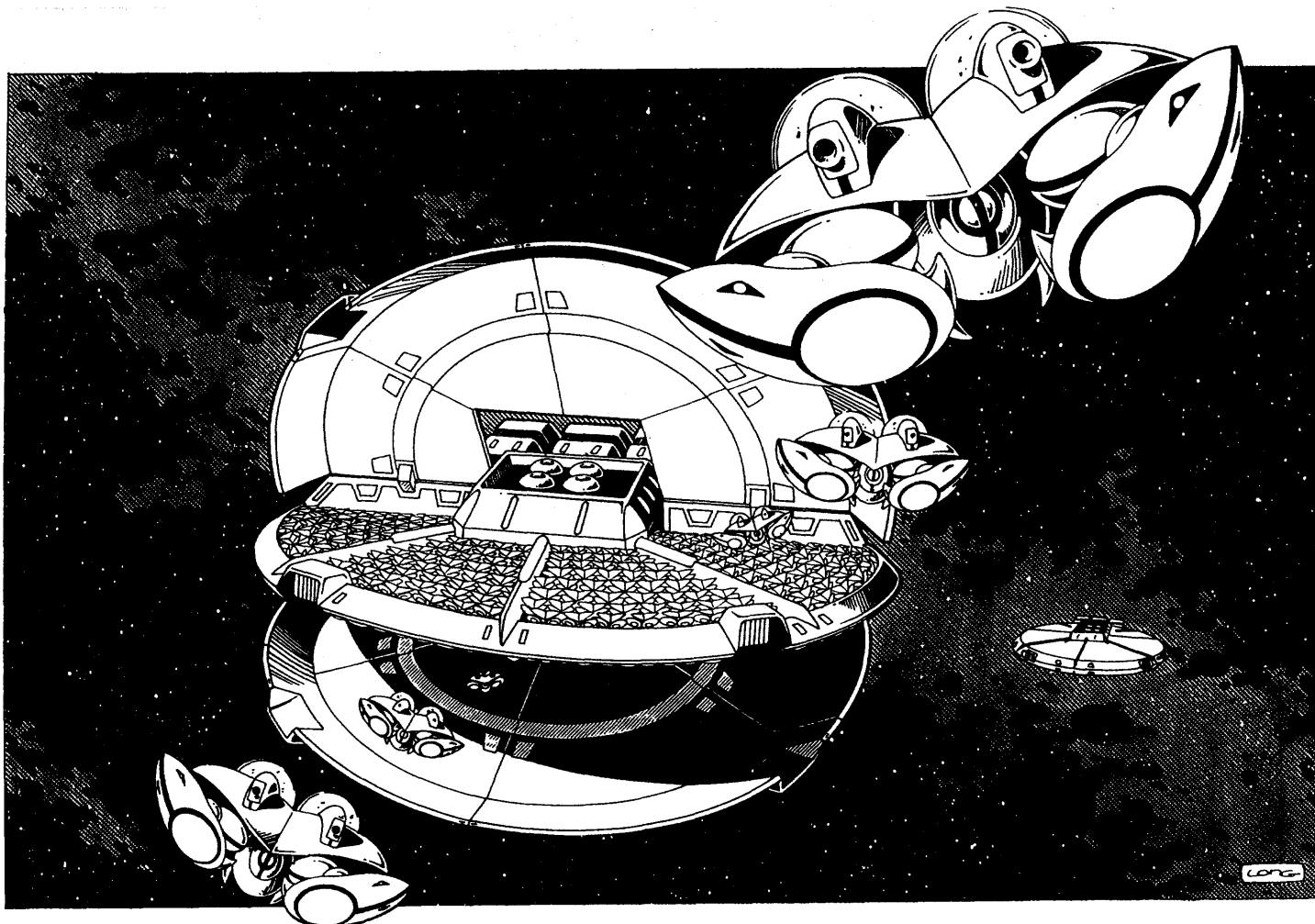
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The *New Generation* portion of the **Robotech™** television series is second only to *Macross* in popularity. Yet most fans have never seen it.

Why? Well, it simply seemed to get less TV air time than the famous *Macross* segments. Many syndicated stations opted to repeat the popular *Macross* episodes rather than the entire series, never realizing how many fans longed to see the *New Generation*. Likewise, the *New Generation/Invids* has never been available on video tape. Until now that is.

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The *first New Generation/Invids* video tape presents the first three episodes, *The Invid Invasion*, *The Lost City*, and *Lonely Soldier Boy*. Witness the swift and terrible invasion of the Invid, the arrival of *Scott Bernard* and

the destruction of the second REF assault fleet. Scott immediately meets the wilderness scout, *Rand*, and the two embark on adventure. By the end of the third episode, our cast of heroes is complete, *Scott Bernard*, *Rand*, *Rook*, *Lunk*, *Amie*, and the infamous *Lancer* (a.k.a. *Yellow Dancer*).

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Role-playing reviews

Monsters have feelings, too

©1990 by Jim Bamba

At their worst, fantasy-game monsters are bunches of statistics that loll around in dark places waiting to be butchered. They come to life only when adventurers kick in the doors to their rooms and attempt to steal their treasures.

In extreme cases, monsters seem to survive on air, lacking even basic necessities like water and food. They live next door to creatures that would cheerfully devour them for breakfast. In settings like these, deafness or selective hearing deficiencies are often widespread. Monsters carry on their lives, blissfully unaware that in the next room their neighbors are being dismembered and incinerated by treasure-hungry adventurers.

We've all seen the above at one time or another. Hordes of monsters stuffed into small rooms were once a staple of fantasy role-playing adventures. These days, we expect a little more in our gaming ses-

sions. Role-playing has become more narrative-based; plots and character development have taken over from the old-style dungeons where characters started at the top and chopped and blasted their ways down to the bottom.

At the same time, our expectations of what constitutes a monster have changed. Now, listings of combat abilities and equipment no longer seem adequate. We look for much more: How do the monsters live, sleep, eat? How do they view the world, one another, and other races? What motivates them in their dealings with others? Do they act from fear, mindless aggression, or the pressures of an expanding population? How has their history and racial development colored their attitudes? Do they look to the deities and immortals to aid them, or do they worship the gods out of fear?

Background is important in bringing any

nonhuman race to life. A race that is firmly based within the game world is much more believable than one that is simply dumped into a dungeon room with no means of survival. Background provides GMs with adventure hooks and excellent role-playing opportunities. It is also important if members of that race are going to be used as player characters.

No one is going to seriously suggest that you play a green slime or giant slug, but there are creatures out there that can be lots of fun to play. For a start, you can take on the role of the bad guys and go whack on the humans, elves, and halflings. Also, playing nonhumans or monsters can be a great role-playing experience in itself.

This month we take a look at five supplements that deal with monster and nonhuman races and cultures. In addition to providing GMs with background information, these supplements allow the featured

racers to be used as player characters.

Trollpak

RUNEQUEST® game supplement

The Avalon Hill Game Company \$18

Boxed set containing one-page information sheet, 56-page Uz Lore booklet, 50-page Book of Uz, 40-page The Munchrooms booklet, one-page black and white map, large color map of the troll lands, pad of six troll character sheets, and four-page Thunderbreath Gobblegut's Restaurant menu

Design: Greg Stafford and Sandy Petersen

Additional material: William Dunn, Charlie Krank, and Lynn Willis

Editing: William Dunn and Lynn Willis

Cover illustration: Steve Purcell

Interior illustrations: Lisa Free, James Kevin Ramos, and Steve Purcell

Before looking at this new edition of *Trollpak*, a little history is in order. *Trollpak* was originally released by Chaosium, Inc. in 1982. It consisted of three booklets and three smaller folios that between them took an extensive look at trolls in the RUNEQUEST game. Now the contents of the original *Trollpak* have been updated to the third-edition RUNEQUEST game and split into four products: *Trollpak*, *Into the Troll Realms*, *Troll Gods*, and a forthcoming supplement on the Sazdorf Clan of trolls.

Into the Troll Realms consists of troll-oriented adventures and was reviewed in DRAGON® issue #148. *Troll Gods* is reviewed later in this article.

Background: Even though reduced in size, *Trollpak* remains one of the best treatments of a nonhuman race available. Designed for use with the world of Glorantha (see DRAGON issue #161), it details the origin and development of the trolls in terms of Glorantha's mythic history.

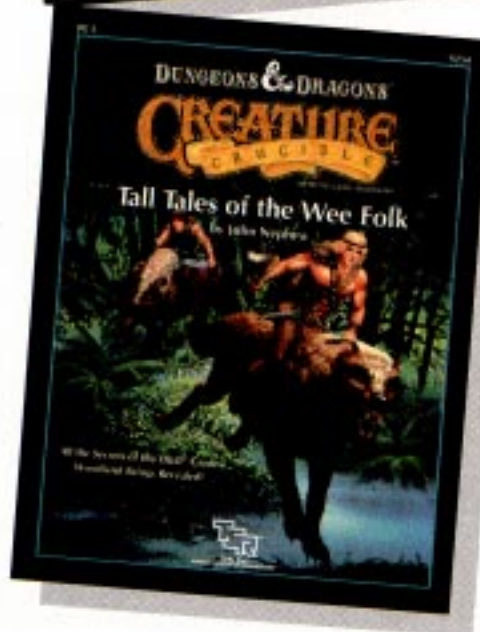
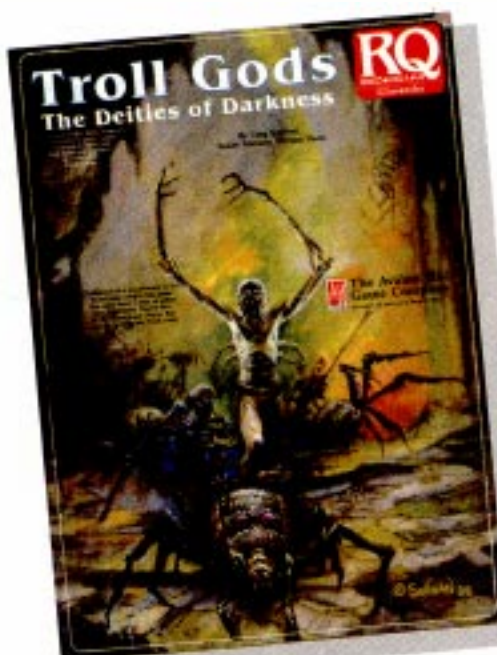
Trolls have played an integral part in the development of Glorantha and have suffered greatly. In the early period of Glorantha their fertility goddess, Korasting, was imprisoned in the lands of the dead following the arrival of the sun god Yelm into the lands of darkness. The loss of Korasting caused a change in the trolls' offspring. Instead of continuing to produce members of the ancient Mistress Race, trolls began to give birth to Dark Trolls. Even worse, the trolls were foremost in the wars against chaos and became cursed as a result. The Trollkin Curse, as it is known, further interfered with troll reproduction. Under its influence, over half of all troll pregnancies are premature and result in trollkin births. These creatures are weak, stunted trolls who never grow to full maturity; they are treated as slaves and as food sources by the trolls.

Other aspects of troll history and development are further detailed in *Book One: Uz Lore*. The historical and mythic background is extensive and forms the main part of the book. Other information is

broken up into sidebars or annotated anatomical diagrams. The way that trolls refer to themselves as Uz (literally "us") is described, as are the way trollkin are divided into various castes ranging from the prized "values" to the lowly "food" trollkin.

Trolls can eat almost anything, and we are treated to extensive descriptions of what this means in practice. One of these descriptions is "Uz Food Preferences: An Experiment" in which a researcher feeds selected items to a troll. During the experiment, the troll eats a wide variety of items: a silver finger ring, an obsidian arrow head, a small wooden drum, a small glass disk, a leather and brass lantern (with oil), and other equally unlikely items.

This book winds up with a look at some typical troll lairs and at the giant insects that the trolls breed as pets, beasts of burden and as food.



Game mechanics: The game mechanics fit smoothly and neatly into the RUNEQUEST game, being logical extensions of existing rules rather than new systems. *Book Two: Book of Uz* contains troll character-generation rules and information on troll society for player characters. It looks at the ceremonies conducted when a troll reaches adulthood and maturity, as well as more background information on this fascinating race.

Then the cult of the trolls major deity, Kyger Litor is described in detail. This entry is far larger than the one in *Gods of Glorantha* (see DRAGON issue #127) and covers all aspects of Kyger Litor worship and cult membership.

The remainder of the book is taken up with stats for various beetles and encounter tables for use in troll lands. The encounter tables are followed by brief descriptions that flesh out each encounter.

Adventures: *Book Three: The Munchrooms* is a fairly straightforward dungeon bash suitable for use with troll player characters, rebellious trollkin characters, or human adventurers. Taken from the trolls point of view, the adventure is okay. The troll PCs accompany a troll hero and his buddies on a raid on the trollkin infested caverns. Given the number of NPC trolls involved, the PCs are likely to spend a lot of time just standing around.

When played from the trollkin's point of view, the adventure is much more exciting. The PCs have to organize defenses and beat off repeated attacks by the trolls. It is likely that the trolls will eventually win, so the adventure is really only useful as a one-off, unless the GM allows the PCs to escape. Human PCs can join in on either side.

While *The Munchrooms* is okay, it fails to do justice to the extensive background information of *Trollpak*. I would have much preferred to see a more role-playing-oriented adventure in which the PCs get to interact with troll culture in a more meaningful way. Admittedly, the adventures in *Into the Troll Realms* go a long way to doing that, but it would have been nice to see troll culture and society more in the forefront here.

Presentation: The presentation of *Trollpak* is very high. Illustrations are used as an integral part of the product to depict aspects of troll culture. The text is very well presented, with good use of sidebars and short essays.

Of special mention is the Thunderbreath Gobblegut's Restaurant menu. This four-page card menu presents such culinary delights as trollkin burger, batter-fried pixies, dwarf haunch, and elf torso, all illustrated for your dining and viewing pleasure.

Evaluation: Even given the way the original *Trollpak* has been split across four products, the new *Trollpak* is still a substantial supplement. It provides an extensive look at trolls in the RUNEQUEST game and presents the information in a very usable format.

On a negative note, only the cult of Kyger

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Litor is described in any detail; to get the same level of information for the other cults, *Troll Gods* is essential. However, shorter descriptions of five of the major deities can be found in *Gods of Glorantha*.

Even so, *Trollpak* is an excellent example of how to breathe life and creativity into nonhuman races, and I recommend *Trollpak* to anyone interested in seeing its superb presentation. Trolls in the RUNE-QUEST game may be monsters, but they are well characterized and believably motivated.

Troll Gods

RUNEQUEST® game supplement
The Avalon Hill Game Company \$20
Boxed set containing one-page information sheet, 88-page Troll Cults booklet, 28-page background booklet, and large two-color map

Design: Greg Stafford, Sandy Petersen, and William Dunn

Editing: William Dunn and Sandy Petersen

Cover illustration: Tom Sullivan

Interior illustrations: Dave Dobyski

Troll Gods is a companion product to *Trollpak*. It describes 15 troll deities in great detail and makes available new cult spells and skills. Seven of these deities appeared in the original *Trollpak* set and are reproduced here unchanged. The others, to my knowledge, are fully described here for the first time.

The deities are interesting and add to our knowledge of troll lore. Here we get details of: Aranea, Goddess of Spiders; Argan Agar, God of Surface Darkness; Mee Voral, Goddess of Fungi; Xiola Umbar, Goddess of Compassion; and Zorak Zoran, God of Hate, among others.

The range of deities is extensive, showing the diversity of troll beliefs and cultural expression. For some reason, the Kyger Litor entry from *Trollpak* has been reproduced verbatim. It could be claimed that this has been done for completeness, but anyone who buys *Troll Gods* is likely to already have a copy of *Trollpak*. The Kyger Litor entry is eight pages long, an excessive amount of material to repeat. It would have been better if the space had been used for something else or if the overall size of the book had been reduced.

The background booklet contains various essays on troll life and religion, compiled by the sage Minaryth Purple. It takes a look at troll history and religious practices through the eyes of various outsiders. The text provides useful insights into troll life and offers various interpretations of their religious practices.

Presentation: With the exception of the cover illustration, the artwork in *Troll Gods* is of very questionable quality. The full-page drawings appear childishly rendered. Rather than enhancing the product, they detract greatly from it.

In one place, text in the background

booklet ends in mid-sentence with no indication given of where it continues. Otherwise, the presentation is clear and concise, with each deity and associated cult information neatly described.

Evaluation: To GMs and players seeking to get the most out of *Trollpak*, *Troll Gods* is essential. To anyone interested in a good guide to nonhuman deities, *Troll Gods* is also useful. But given the repetition of information from *Trollpak* and the poor quality artwork, I cannot really recommend *Troll Gods* to anyone else. Check out *Trollpak* first, then decide whether you want the additional information from *Troll Gods*.

RUNEQUEST game products are available from The Avalon Hill Game Company, 4517 Harford Road, Baltimore MD 21214.

PC 1 Tall Tales of the Wee Folk

D&D® CREATURE CRUCIBLE™ supplement
TSR, Inc. \$9.95

64-page booklet, 32-page adventure booklet, two-panel card cover

Design: John Nephew

Editing: Gary L. Thomas

Cover illustration: Keith Parkinson

Interior illustrations: Valerie Valusek

The D&D game's Known World has received plenty of coverage in recent years. Thirteen Gazetteers and the *Dawn of the Emperors* boxed set have done a fine job of detailing many interesting and fascinating cultures, human and nonhuman. We've seen Gazetteers covering the elves, dwarfs, and halflings, and the orcs, goblins, ogres, and trolls of the Broken Lands. *The Orcs of Thar* (see DRAGON issue #148) even gave players the chance to take on the roles of humanoid scum by providing character-generation rules and experience-level tables.

With the release of the CREATURE CRUCIBLE series, the opportunities for nonhuman role-playing have expanded even further. PC1 *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk* is the first of three of these supplements. PC2 *Top Ballista* is reviewed hereafter. (Because I designed PC3 *The Sea People*, I'm unable to review it.)

In *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*, we enter the woodland realm of the Dreamland. Ruled by the fairy king, Oberon, the Dreamland is home to many creatures drawn from diverse mythological sources. Here, Celtic sidhe rub shoulders with ancient Greek centaurs and fauns. While this is keeping with the eclectic background of the D&D game, it tends to blur differences between the two cultures, detracting from the overall cohesiveness of the product. Other creatures covered are brownies, dryads, hsiao (large, intelligent owls), leprechauns, pixies, pookas (shape-changing pranksters), sprites, treants, wood imps, and woodrakes.

Background: The races are introduced and described by knowledgeable characters who tell us how each race lives, what they look like, how they dress, their cul-

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tural outlooks and aspirations, and other relevant pieces of information. This is followed by game-orientated information that lists experience levels and relevant special abilities.

Each race is neatly handled, and players are given plenty of good role-playing hooks. Occasionally the text lapses into game terminology in the middle of character speech, and that jars the narrative.

The background information on the forest realm is useful and contains some very nice touches, such as the way the Fairy Court holds its meetings using a *timestamp* spell.

Game mechanics: *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk* follows the design guidelines set out in *The Orcs of Thar*, but compared to its predecessor, it does not quite come up to scratch. In *The Orcs of Thar*, large and powerful creatures, such as trolls and ogres, start off as young members of their race who have to work their way up to normal monster level. A troll starts off as a whelp, and an ogre as a youngster; both terms conjure up neat images of immature monsters. Unfortunately, creatures in PC1 start the game with negative experience points, so we start with a -4,000 XP centaur. Not very inspiring, is it? Surely, titles like "colt" or "young" would have been better. A bit of time and effort taken here would have improved this product tremendously and helped to have pushed the game mechanics into the background.

A few other design problems occur in PC1. Character races are described as making saving rolls as clerics, fighters, magic-users, etc. of the same level. That's fine, but how does a creature that has not achieved 1st level make saving throws as a cleric of any level? Setting saving throws according to the number of hit dice would have been preferable, at least until the creature's level exceeded its hit dice.

Also, creatures fight according to their numbers of hit dice, but no indication is given on how to handle the combat abilities of high-level creatures who no longer increase in hit dice at high levels. These creatures gain a fixed number of hit points per level instead, as do high-level human characters.

In other areas, PC1 is much better. The relative experience-level costs are well balanced, with no race being more powerful than another. The new fairy spells are good and give a distinct flavor to these whimsical and fun creatures. Players and GMs can have a lot of fun with the creatures featured here; there's plenty of scope for humorous role-playing, particularly with the pooka and faun.

Even GMs who have no desire to let their players deviate from the straight and narrow world of humans, dwarves, elves, and halflings will find that PC1 has a lot to offer. Now, with their ability to improve in levels, even diminutive pixie and sprite NPCs can become a challenge for high-level characters.

Adventures: The 32-page adventure

book features six short 1-2 page adventures and a longer 15-page adventure. They cover levels one through 26, and are useful when you need woodland modules.

The 15-page adventure, "The Lost Senechal," is for 1st-3rd level characters. While interesting and having an other-worldly feel to it, the use of a basilisk in a pivotal encounter makes me very uneasy. Even though the PCs get an indication that it's there, any creature that turns characters to stone simply by looking at them has the potential for bringing the adventure to a dead stop. ("We failed our saving throws. What now?")

Presentation: The presentation is generally quite high, but it lacks the neat integration of graphics and text found in *Trollpak*. Some of the character voices are a little dry in places, conveying the information in a scholarly tone rather than in a more conversational one. But this is hardly a major problem.

Evaluation: *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk* contains some very good ideas, particularly in its background sections. But it fails to live up to the very high standards set by *The Orcs of Thar*. It does a good job of introducing us to the woodland creatures and expanding on the information contained in the rulebooks, but suffers from a number of minor design problems. Even given these, *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk* is a fine product.

PC 2 Top Ballista

D&D® CREATURE CRUCIBLE supplement
TSR, Inc. \$9.95

64-page booklet, 32-page adventure booklet, large color map, two-panel card cover

Design: Carl Sargent

Editing: Paul Jaquays

Cover and Interior Illustrations: John Lakey

In *Top Ballista*, we take to the skies to visit the aerial city of Serraine. There we get to meet the flying aces of the Top Ballista squadrons and marvel at those glorious gnomes in their flying machines. That's right. PC2 gives you nifty First-

World-War-style fighter planes, complete with deadly lightning guns and synchronized crossbows.

Background: *Top Ballista* takes a humorous look at the sky gnomes and their bizarre yet workable inventions. The city flies over the Known World carrying its inhabitants with it. Creatures featured in this product are faenare (birdmen), gnomes, gremlins, harpies, nagpa (vulture-headed guys), pegataurs (winged centaurs), sphinxes, and tabi (catlike creatures). What do these creatures have in common? They all live in Serraine.

As in PC1, each of races is introduced by a character who gives us the lowdown on cultures, evolution, and lifestyles. This text is presented in a cheerful and illuminating manner that captures the flavor of the city and its inhabitants nicely.

Game mechanics: In this area, PC2 is much less successful, showing signs of not having been designed or edited very thoroughly. Some areas are markedly better than others, but I found enough mistakes and poorly considered areas to give me cause for concern.

Let's start with some of the creature designs. Some creatures starting with negative experience points are described as being "young" or "teens," while others are listed as starting with negative XP totals. This is an improvement over PC1, but why aren't all of the character races given a consistent treatment?

Also, I'm not convinced that much thought has gone into balancing the abilities of these creatures. The sphinx, for instance, requires 300,000 XP to progress from a beginning 2-HD monster to a 3-HD monster. Given the same number of experience points, a human fighter will have attained 9th level.

With the nagpa we have a similar problem. A beginning nagpa needs 100,000 XP to progress. Okay, this is less than a sphinx, but the nagpa then goes from 2 HD to 4 HD! Another jump occurs when it accumulates another 200,000 XP and goes from 4 HD to 6 HD. A 1-HD increase per level would have been preferable and would have at least kept the XP cost down

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Given the high XP costs, sphinx and nagpa PCs are going to progress very slowly in comparison to other characters. This has the potential to be a very frustrating experience in itself. It also leads to sphinx and nagpa characters being left behind as other creatures and characters increase in level. In a campaign in which only nagpa and sphinxes are played, it's less of a problem, but as it stands it's way out of line with normal expectations. On the positive side, these creatures have some powerful abilities to compensate, but these fail to balance out the disproportionate XP costs paid for them at low levels. If these PCs could have paid more XP later when they were more established, it would have been far better.

Elsewhere, other problems exist. Faenare experience-level tables do not match the examples and references in the text. Harpies are shown as having two almost identical charm person abilities at "young" level: the first ability gives their victims a +2 bonus to saving throws, and the second gives their victims a +1 bonus. Pegataurs automatically progress as spellcasters using the same table as elves. They can, however, elect to follow the path of the wicca (tribal magic-users). For this they need Intelligences of 15+, and they can progress up to 8th level in spell-casting ability by paying extra experience points per level. By performing the addi-

tional (and optional) rituals, they might progress higher as wiccans than they can as elves (which cuts out at 10th level). But why would anyone want to follow a career that restricts them in their choice of spells, offers no guarantees that they'll ever achieve the same level of spellcasting ability, and costs them additional experience points to follow?

These flaws ruin what is in many ways a fine product. The sky gnomes and their ability to build machines using fantasy physics are handled well. The faenare are a finely detailed race with nifty powers, able to create spell-like effects through songs. The city is neatly described, and the plane rules look like they'll work, although they overlook such basic concepts as stall speeds and acceleration/deceleration.

Adventures: There are three adventures for characters of various levels. The first contains a basilisk that must be defeated by the PCs. This looks like another case of making the saving throws or having the adventure come to a grinding halt.

The longest adventure is for characters of levels 7-11 and is set within the flying city. The opening stages require a fair bit of detective work from the PCs, but the text suffers from a murky presentation that makes it hard to follow. After the investigation in the city, the PCs chase the bad guy through the air in one of the planes. But they are not allowed to catch him or else the adventure comes to a premature end. When the PCs follow him to the next encounter area, the person to whom he has fled for protection is likely to zap him with a *lightning bolt* spell for leading the PCs to his lair. Exit one villain, to be replaced by a second one who appears to exist for no other reason than to fight the PCs. Even worse, this second villain doesn't even bother to lock his door (he forgets).

Presentation: The graphic presentation is high, with a full-color map of the city and excellent illustrations of the four planes. The interior artwork captures the humorous flavor of the product well, but it is not used to enhance the text. For example, there are no illustrations of a faenare or tabi, and the only nagpa illustration is not near the nagpa entry.

Evaluation: *Top Ballista* suffers from a large number of design flaws, which is a pity as it has some great ideas and well-written descriptive passages. The background sections are generally very good, making it a fun and unusual adventure setting. Viewed as a source of background information, *Top Ballista* is useful, but its failure to provide balanced PC creatures weakens it greatly. This one is for completists only.

GURPS® Fantasy Folk

GURPS game supplement

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Design: Chris C. McCubbin

Additional material: Loyd Blankenship and

Steve Jackson

Editing: Loyd Blankenship

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Interior illustrations: Evan Dorkin, Charlie

Wiedman, Angela Bostick, and Rick Lowry

GURPS Fantasy Folk describes 24 creatures that can be used as player characters or as monsters. These include: the traditional dwarves, elves, and halflings; woodland and aquatic creatures; and the orcs, goblins, giants, and other bad guys of fantasy literature. The book is split into two parts: extensive creature design rules, and four-page descriptions of each of the races. Let's start with the creature descriptions first.

Background: Each creature is described in terms of its psychology, ecology, culture and politics. These provide good insights into each of the races, but they fall short of allowing them to be role-played really effectively. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the descriptions, they suffer from being designed for a generic setting. Instead of getting creatures who are integral parts of their fantasy world, we get creatures who can be plugged into almost any world, which gives them a fairly bland flavor. Given the world of Yrth, described in the *GURPS Fantasy* game, it's strange that these creatures were not designed to be part of it.

Game mechanics: The creatures are designed and balanced using the extensive guidelines at the front of the book. These guidelines cover racial advantages and disadvantages such as longevity and slave mentality, each rated in terms of its character design point cost. Using these comprehensive guidelines, any kind of creature can be designed for the *GURPS* game. The use of point costs acts as an in-built balancing device: Any creature that is too powerful is going to cost too many character points for players to afford.


Presentation: The cover artwork is exceptionally good, but the internals are only average at best. Each race is illustrated, so there is no doubt about its appearance. It's just a pity that the illustrations are not of a higher quality.

Evaluation: *GURPS* game players looking for nifty creature design rules will not be disappointed in this product. With a bit of work, the creatures can be integrated into any fantasy world, which makes them useful to GMs looking for ideas rather than finished settings. To those looking for detailed descriptions of how these creatures interact with a given world or setting, *GURPS Fantasy Folk* is far too generic to offer more than just a brief glimpse.

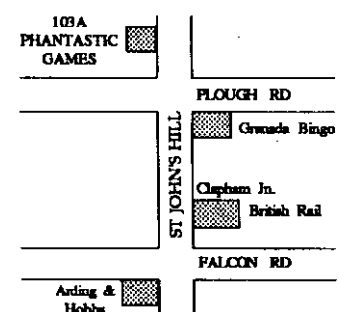
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The Mechanics of the IRON COBRA

A mechanical serpent has no ecology

by Spike Y. Jones

"As you can easily hear, Grainne, our own crwth is much gentler in tone than the quayteros of the worshipers of Ishtar the Dancer. Now, compare my telyn with this other harp called a kissar. It's made from the skull of a minotaur that has had strings attached to its horns by—"

"Look at Aidan! Look at Aidan!" cried Fiona, interrupting the bard in midleson.

"If you're trying to look like a fool, Aidan, you're doing a good job of it," muttered the children's older sister.

"I'm trying to get this horn to blow, Grainne, but it just won't work."

"That 'horn' is actually a very rare instrument in this country," said the bard, "for I found it in a land beyond the Imbran Mountains and, indeed, beyond the deserts on their nether side. It is a 'naganai.' "

"A what?" asked the red-headed boy.

"A 'snake-flute,' in the language of a man named Gawara Hawara."

"It doesn't look like a flute," observed Grainne.

"Or a snake," added Fiona.

"And it doesn't sound like either," added Aidan with a grin as he handed the tube of wood and metal to its owner, who took it in his right (and only) hand.

"That's a part of its special magic," said the bard.

"Magic? Like in the stories?"

"Yes, Fiona, magic like in the stories."

"And was there magic when you got the flute?"

"Yes, Aidan, there was magic in the 'nai, and there was magic all around it, and there is magic in it still."

"And will you please tell us about it, Mr. Farwanderer?"

"I wonder how it was that I knew what

the next question asked of me would be? Yes, Grainne, I will tell you this story, but only as I can see that otherwise our music lesson will go no farther this day. Fiona, bring me the other naganai, the polished wooden one, from my instrument satchel. Aidan, you get me a drink to wet my lips—but only water, mind you; it's hardly past dusk. And Grainne, you merely make yourself comfortable here while the others are about their tasks, for you shall have a task of your own—a musical task—to perform later."

There had been a sound, and from close by. It was not a proper command and had been nothing at all intelligible, but it was the first time in untold years and miles that there had been a sound. The listener hesitated in the near darkness—then moved in that direction. It was so close.

"Years ago when I was still earning the title 'Farwanderer,' for I had yet to see many of the faraway places that by now I have, I arrived in the city of Mangala on the banks of the Porah River. I was traveling in those eastern lands looking for an education of sorts and the means to support myself until the education was through. In Mangala I found what I thought was a way to combine the two.

"The average person of that place is much the same as those of Mardukan to our south, but their magicians are of a different sort entirely. While Mardukanian spell-casters use their elaborate rituals to ensure good harvests and to protect their people from barbarian and monster attacks, Mangalan wizards use their magicks to fabricate items of power for their personal profit. And I had heard of one such magical creation, rumored to be unique in

the world.

"This thing, called the Light of Surya, was a flawless diamond that had been magically engraved with the words to a number of spells of great power. Fortunately, those spells could be cast only by one strong of will and pure of heart, and the mage who possessed the diamond, Gawara Hawara, had neither, having gained the periapt by way of a poisonous snake, as he was both a coward and a scoundrel. While I myself had not the . . . magical aptitude to use such a device, I thought that retrieving and returning it to the rightful owners would be beneficial to all involved—including myself," he added hastily before Aidan could say the same. "I was younger then, and willing to lay aside my greatest talent for a bit of glory and a chance at being killed." He hefted the strange flute in his hand.

"Did you sneak in and grab it?" asked Fiona.

"Or did you break in and fight for it?" countered Aidan.

"Being not as rash as many another young adventurer," the bard continued blithely, "I did not present myself at the mage's door and demand the return of the periapt. Instead, remembering such sage phrases as 'ignorance breeds indigence' and 'over hurried, soon buried,' I decided to first learn as much as I could concerning Gawara Hawara's security measures.

"The first thing I was told by those I approached was that he guarded himself and his treasures with snakes—mind you, not just any snakes, but magical creatures with scales of steel and blood of oil.¹

"These 'iron cobras,' for such were they called, he constructed for himself in his apartments and released to prowl the courtyards and recesses of his mansion. It

was one such device as this that he sent to slay the mage-priest of Surya to gain the magical gemstone I sought, one of many such stolen articles said to litter his quarters. Many a prospective pilferer had died in the clutches of these cobras, and only one, Asman, called 'the Lucky' after his one encounter with the snakes, had survived their attacks to tell me of their effectiveness.

"But the theft and subsequent protection of his ill-gotten gains were not all for which Gawara Hawara used the cobras. He would sometimes hire them out as relentless assassins, even offering them to high officials for legitimate purposes if the price tendered was exorbitant enough. Whereas a man being hunted by another man could hope to use trickery or speed to escape his pursuer, or could hope to defeat him in combat if finally cornered, the same could not be said of the man chased by the iron cobras. The iron serpents were unceasing and never lost a trail once they'd found it.² I was told that they were invincible in combat. Worse still, they often struck at night or when their victim was unable to defend himself, making maximum use of their stealth and deadly poison.

"The cobras were not alive and did not think for themselves. Instead, they followed the commands given them by Gawara Hawara. To ensure that the commands could not be overheard and then spoken by other men, he constructed his serpents in such a way that they would respond only to commands issued by way of his flute, his naganai.³ No one I spoke with in Mangala knew the songs he played to command his snakes, as he refrained from playing where he could be overheard, unless the audience was not expected to survive to pass on the tune.

"So," said the bard, setting aside the wood and metal 'nai and taking the plain wooden one, "I first had to learn how to play this instrument. Luckily, it being one of the more popular of those played in Mangala, I had my choice of many capable tutors, and I quickly mastered its techniques of play. Aidan, you can try to play this 'nai."

Aidan took the proffered instrument and proceeded to produce two or three audible but painfully bad notes before passing it back to the bard.

"Now, give it to Grainne and we'll see what sort of impression my chwiwanogl lessons have made on your sister."

The older girl accepted the 'nai, took a few seconds to nervously adjust her finger-holds, then played a halting but recognizable scale on it.

"That's better, Grainne, especially as the 'nai can play notes quite different from the chwiwanogl you're used to. You will both get the chance to continue with your lessons while I continue with this story. You'll play the tunes I show you, as it is not easy for me," he said, raising his left arm but not letting the concealing folds of his

sleeve drop away from its stumped end. "Grainne shall play on the audible 'nai, while Aidan will follow along silently with the other."

Aidan's expression fell for a moment as he took the silent 'nai. Perhaps Mr. Farwanderer had given him the quiet instrument to keep him from playing badly again. But the barest hint of a smirk tickled the corners of the bard's mouth, and the boy realized that there might be other reasons for the choice of instruments. His usual smile resurfaced.

"Now, as I was saying," the bard resumed, his face regaining the serious expression he wore during instruction, "having learned to play the naganai, I next went to discover the tunes Gawara Hawara used. Mangala being a city of magicks, I visited a guild of magicians and asked if to borrow a scrying device."

"Scrying?" asked Fiona.

"That's like spying," replied Aidan, looking up from his fingering of the 'nai, "but it's magic."

"By paying them a fair price, leaving the rest of my instruments in their care as collateral, and promising them further payment if I was successful, I procured the loan of a pair of magical eyepieces known as 'eyes of the eagle.' Equipped with these crystals, I rented a room on a hill overlooking Gawara Hawara's house. Although it was some distance away, with the crystal eyepieces I could see the mage as if he were but feet away from me. Every time he came into my sight, I watched him in hopes that he would give some command to his cobras.

"A few times a day, he did make rounds of his yards, inquiring of his constructs if there had been any disturbances, then replaying their original orders or changing them if anything noteworthy had occurred.

"It took me a fortnight and more before I felt confident that I had learned all of the tunes I would need. I watched closely and mastered the fingerings for a half-dozen different commands." He reached for Grainne with his one hand. "This," he said, carefully raising and lowering her fingers over the holes of the wooden naganai to a simple beat, "was the command to attack intruders. And this," he said, moving her fingers through an identical pattern, "was the command to report to Gawara Hawara."

"But they're the same," Grainne complained.

"Ah, the fingerings are the same, but are the songs?"

"If they were loud or quiet . . ." said Grainne after a thoughtful pause.

"Or if they were notes with the same fingerings but different sounds . . ." pondered Aidan.

"... with different pitches, then the songs would differ," finished the bard. "Both good answers, and both correct. I watched Gawara Hawara even more closely for the next week to notice any signs of intonation changes or octave jumps. And by way of movements of his

cheeks and lips, the way he shifted his head, and the way the muscles of his throat and mouth tightened at certain points, I was sure I had been able to determine what all of the notes were and how the songs were to be played. Now, try blowing the tune the easiest way."

When Grainne played a passable version of the song, giggling erupted from Fiona.

"I couldn't help it, Mr. Farward'rer," the child protested before the bard could chastise her, "Aidan was blowin', too!"

"I thought you meant for both of us to try it," Aidan answered as his teacher turned toward him, a look of purest mischief belying his avowed innocence.

"Be that as it may, it would be to the advantage of all involved if you merely fingered along with your older sister and left the cheek puffing to another time. Now, Grainne," the bard continued, "if you were to blow doubly hard when you reach the third note, and only just whisper the last, you will find that you can play notes of different pitch at those two places, one an octave above, and one an octave below the normal pitch."

Grainne now played a tune quite similar to the first with only the two requested modifications.

"Very good! That first tune you played, that Aidan tried to echo, was 'attack,' and the second was 'report.' Of course, even if properly played on the naganai in Aidan's care, neither variation would be audible, but the method would be the same, and I assumed the result would be, too."

Once in a great while, the naganai's slave would pass some of its smaller brethren along its journey, lying damaged beyond repair in the wastes of the desert or at the bottom of mountain defiles, or even lying rusted beneath the surfaces of still lakes and slow rivers. All had tried to carry out their last orders, and all had failed in their attempts. But now the servant had a new order, an order that would last until canceled.⁴ It moved quickly to fulfill its command, iron fangs parting in anticipation.

"And then you got the thing?" asked Fiona, attempting to steer the story firmly away from the music lesson.

"Yes, dear, it was time to make my try for the Light of Surya. I had watched the mage until I had determined just these sorts of differences between the tunes he played regularly. There were slight variations to some tunes played on different days or in different places that apparently made the commands more precise, but I was confident that the general commands I'd learned were sufficient.

"I readied myself in my least conspicuous clothing, secured my all-important naganai and a few other tools of value, belted on my smallsword, and made my way through the dark of the night to his mansion's outer walls.

"As I began my ascent, I thought for a moment that I spotted movement farther

along the garden wall. But when I paused to look more intently, I saw nothing. I told myself that it was just nervousness and finished the climb. From the walls top, I looked for any sign of cobras in the yard but saw none. One of the reasons real cobras are dangerous is that they can disappear in the darkness and undergrowth as effectively as a skilled thief; apparently, this is one of the reasons cobras were chosen to model for these constructs.

"I crept toward the manse across the compound, headed for a small door that I'd seen Gawara Hawara use but rarely—and I was almost discovered. One of his mechanical minions approached me along the path, but apparently I saw it before it saw me. I immediately stopped and attempted to blend silently into the same shadows the cobras were using for concealment, as I did not want to betray my presence by playing my 'nai too soon. The silvery snake-stopped short of my concealment and spread its hood out about its head, turning in all directions as a human would turn with a hand cupped to his ear.⁵ Luckily, although it looked directly at me for a time that felt like hours, it finally refolded its hood and glided swiftly past. Evidently, it was intent on finding something or someone else.

"Shaken but not unnerved by this good fortune, I waited until the iron serpent was well gone, then made for the door. It had been locked, but the device was a simple one, the mage putting trust in the abilities of his iron guardians to protect him. I left the door ajar behind me, in case I had no time later for a leisurely exit, and I proceeded cautiously forward.

"It was not dark inside, for the mage had attached some small globes to the ceiling at intervals that cast magical light bright enough to allow navigation of the corridors without fear of bumping against walls or breaking crockery. I had no sure idea where the periapt was secured, but I assumed that it would be in the center of the building, away from entrances as vulnerable as the one I had come through, and that it would be close to the rooms Gawara Hawara occupied, mages and misers often surrounding themselves with their treasures. So, I made my way upward and inward.

"Stealing through the mage's apartments was a nerve-wracking experience, as I paused and hid at every imagined sound. Although everything was sized for humans, there were small holes cut into the walls and doors to allow easy access for the snakes, a fact demonstrated when another inattentive iron sentinel emerged from one of these channels a short distance ahead of me and departed across the hall.

"I eventually ascended a flight of stairs and arrived at a room that appeared to be Gawara Hawara's personal quarters, and hopefully of the Light of Surya. Gathering my courage, I opened the last door and entered the chamber. As I'd guessed, the

room contained a mass of treasure; silver, gold, gems, jewelled arms and armor, and beautiful works of art, all illuminated by the magical light-globes fixed in the doubly high ceiling. And nowhere could a cobra be seen. Made bold by this wealth of wealth and dearth of protection, I stepped in and made for an alabaster pedestal in the room's center, upon which shone the gem I sought.

"And it was at this moment I learned that it is never wise to assume the unlikely. For there I was in the most important room of the mage's lair, and it did not enter my mind that he would have guarded that room more effectively than the rest of his demesne. Before I could traverse half the distance to my goal, something that I had previously taken to be a rolled carpet⁶ unfurled, showing itself to be a shockingly huge iron cobra that raised its head more than my own height above the floor.⁷

"Guessing that it would not be wise to attempt to bluff this monster, I grabbed my naganai and played the command song for it to 'stand fast and report,' the tune I was most sure of. Now, Grainne, if you remember it . . ." he said expectantly. Grainne raised the 'nai to her lips and complied, and the bard returned to his narration when she had completed a halting rendition of the command. "To my chagrin, the monstrous snake failed to pause, continuing its measured advance. Thinking that I'd mistaken the tune, I played another song"—at which point Grainne played "return to patrols" unbidden—"but it did me no better. The cobra approached still.

"Realizing that there had somehow been an error in my preparations, I drew my smallsword and took a defensive stance. Much faster than its stately stalking of me, the automaton lashed out. Desperation more than skill enabled me to jump aside at the last possible moment. As I dodged, I stabbed my blade at the automation, only to have the weapon clang and shatter against a surface stronger than my swords cheap steel.⁸ That action was my last against the periapt's final warder. Before I could even think of another attack to make, it reared up once more and, with a lightning lunge, thrust its fangs into my shoulder and poisoned me."

Years of silence had been broken less than an hour before by meaningless noise, then again minutes later by an actual command: the command to attack all but the holder of the naganai. It should have made no difference to the serpent, but it seemed to move a trifle faster through the darkness than it had before, as if to fulfil this latest order before the holder of the naganai could pick up and move away. It was the greatest of its kind. It would not fail now.

"But you couldn't have been poisoned! You're still alive!"

"The sting of a bee needn't kill to frighten away a curious boy, Aidan, and not all poisons need be fatal in order to be effective.⁹ In this case, it was enough for the venom to leave me paralyzed, lying on the flagstones until Gawara Hawara could investigate the clamor we had made; after that, my death would be assured.

"I was too distraught to judge the interval, but I imagine Gawara Hawara was not long in coming. He was a tall man with a shaven pate, and he was wrapped entirely in many-layered green robes. A jewelled dagger hung at his hip, and he had in his hand the same silvered naganai that Aidan now holds. With a most evil look on his face, he approached to question me before having me disposed of. But before he could ask his first question, we both heard a clinking sound from somewhere across the room.

"Whirling about, Gawara Hawara saw nothing. Only momentarily puzzled, he lifted the naganai to his lips and began to play. At first I thought the poison of the cobra had deafened me, for I heard no sound from the 'nai, but I soon realized that it must be something else for I could still hear the rustling of his robes. Immediately after this realization, a normal-size iron cobra appeared from one of the perforations in the walls. Moments later, another appeared, then a third. When they'd halted before him, Gawara Hawara played another silent tune and they opened their fans, 'looking' for the unseen intruder. I discovered then that part of the magic of this naganai was that it could be heard only by his iron legions.

"Of a sudden, one of the snakes ceased its rotations and a whispering sound like wind through dry leaves came from it.¹⁰ Hearing this, Gawara Hawara played yet another soundless song. Immediately, all of his small charges made for the shadows behind one treasure pile.

"Realizing that he'd been found out, a man dressed all in black leapt from behind an urn of coins and landed beside the leading snake. Swinging downward with a glowing sword, he struck its head off with one blow, then grabbed its fallen body and slung it about him, spraying the floor between himself and the other snakes with its ichor. Then, with extraordinary calm, he took a handful of slim darts from his belt and dipped their tips in the venom dripping from the downed cobra's fangs.

"Not at all dismayed by this apparently senseless act, the other snakes continued forward, but once they arrived at the pool of fluid their progress stopped. Writhe and twitch as they might, they could neither move forward nor retreat from the blood of the fallen one.¹¹ That being the case, the brazen thief walked up to the plinth and plucked the Light of Surya that sat there.

"This I thought was the man's only mistake, for he'd apparently forgotten about the enraged Gawara Hawara. After the mage recovered from his shock at the scene, he uttered an oath in his foreign

tongue and desperately played the command to attack once more.

"At this last command, the immense serpent whose head had hung over me now started after the thief. Audacious and unafraid to the end, the man in black stood his ground, selected an envenomed dart, and calmly blew it through his dart-tube at the mage. Not being interested in watching his adversary fall dead to the floor, he turned to where I lay on the floor and removed the scarves he had worn to hide his face.

"To my surprise, the man was familiar, but it was not until he spoke that I recognized him. 'Thank you,' Asman the Lucky said, 'for showing me the way into Gawara Hawara's lair, and for showing me the Light that I have sought all these years.' Then he turned and ran down the stairs, barely eluding the monstrous cobra that followed in slow but determined pursuit.

"It took me some while to get up from where I lay. Surprisingly, I was not attacked in that time. The snakes that had been stranded in the oily puddle had evidently escaped and joined the pursuit of Asman, and unless they caught him, they're probably pursuing to this day. Only the gods know where they've all gone now."

On a chilly night like this, a human would call the light streaming from the windows of the two-storied building friendly. To the long, sinuous figure in the black street outside, the light was merely a signpost that its mission was coming to a close. With mechanical precision unhampered by the dents and scratches it had collected on its years-long journey, the serpentine machine advanced on the inn's front door to carry out the first order it had received since it had left the tower in Mangala. Its head lowered to serve as a ram. The door would not hold beyond the first blow.

"I was too weak from the lingering effects of the poison to make much use of the treasures piled around me, so I selected a few choice and expensive pieces to make up for the loss of the prime treasure and limped out of the room. As I passed the body that had been Gawara Hawara, a cautious thought struck me and I took from his hands the magical naganai with which he had commanded his crawling weapons. Then, knowing full well that the rest of the booty would be long pilaged before I could heal and return, I painfully made my way back to my room on the other side of Mangala. Through all the intervening years, I have kept the naganai here, just in case I should happen to meet one of his iron snakes, still intent on punishing the thief and I."

"Mr. Farwanderer, you can't play the 'nai anymore, so why do you still keep it around?"

"Ah, Aidan, while no one can play a song on it, nor can I play many of the cobra's

commands, it might still be useful." He took the instrument from the boy and quickly, almost carelessly, fingering a short flurry of soundless notes. "In an emergency, I need only remember that the tune to make the snakes resume their normal patrols, as if no enemy had been encountered, needs but a single hand to play."

The serpent paused, head drawn back and flattened for the blow. Yet another new command had been given: "Resume patrols in the compound in Mangala." Clockwork eyes gleamed in the moonlight as it appeared to considered the order and reach a decision. Then, in unhurried silence, the cobra turned its 18' of iron power from its target and began the return trip across the mountains, the deserts, and the rivers to home.

Footnotes

Iron cobras are described in the AD&D® 1st Edition FIEND FOLIO® tome, pages 52-53. It is assumed herein that these creations can be made by high-level wizards, and that they are more common than generally believed (they are certainly far less powerful than iron golems). Iron cobras have a 50% chance to hide in shadows (the FIEND FOLIO tome says they hide as well as 8th-level thieves, but this chance is 49%).

1. While they exhibit some signs of life, iron cobras are merely cunningly designed magical constructs. Rare and expensive materials, powerful spells, and secret crafting techniques are required to build them, with different combinations of these creating iron cobras with different capabilities. Still, many components are held in common by all such devices: mithral, adamantite, or meteoritic iron; a vial of oil of slipperiness; and many gemstones crafted into gears and bits of machinery. The cost of constructing even the smallest of these automatons is 2,000 gp.

A mage owning a manual describing the methods of constructing iron cobras will protect it dearly, as it can fetch a price in the hundreds of gold pieces—thousands if it contains special directions such as those for creating giant iron cobras.

As an aside, while these constructs are the sort of thing that the tinker gnomes of Krynn might manufacture, an iron cobra appearing in a DRAGONLANCE® setting would likely have come from some other universe, as the cost for tinkers to make an iron cobra would be well above 20,000 steel pieces. But if confronted with an iron cobra or the remains of one, a tinker would have to make a check vs. wisdom on 2d12 in order to tear himself away from the fascinating device.

2. Iron cobras are not alive, so they do not need food, water, or sleep, nor will they ever forget a command or be distracted from a task. Thus they make excellent servitors and, because of their combination of tracking and lethal combat capabilities, are sometimes used by bounty hunters or even

respectable legal authorities.

3. Iron cobras can be commanded in many ways, the means being decided upon during creation. While most iron cobras obey voice commands, some respond only to coded messages, hand signals, nonverbal sounds (such as musical instruments) or other exotic or long-range modes of communications. The manual used to create an iron cobra includes a list of possible command devices, so that a person possessing a deactivated iron cobra and the manual from which it was created could, through trial and error, determine the one method of controlling it.

The commands themselves can be of any sort the creator desires, from such simple things as "attack," to complicated orders such as "attack, targeting spell-casters first, followed by elves, then by all others." Whatever the commands, they must be selected at the time of the cobra's creation; it will answer to no commands not built into it after that.

Whatever the commands and command method decided upon, they must be individually programmed into each iron cobra created. Thus the creator could use similar but subtly different commands for each of his constructs, so that determining the commands for one might not help an attacker use them against others. This would also allow the controller greater subtlety in issuing commands.

4. Many iron cobras are created with a built-in "fail-safe" command that comes into effect if the cobra spends a considerable length of time without receiving orders. Typical fail-safes include commands to return to the cobra's creator, to its owner, or to a specific place after a period of time has elapsed (up to one year). Iron cobras designed to be left alone for unlimited periods of time, such as guardians of a tomb, sometimes use other fail-safes, such as commands to slay all intruders, to prevent the theft of the treasures in the lair, or to hide and await further instructions.

5. Every iron cobra can detect a single specific property by spreading its hood and orienting it on that quality. Typical properties detected for are covered by existing divination spells (e.g., good, evil, magic, undead, invisibility, etc.); the ranges and areas of effects are as if those spells were cast by a 12th-level human mage, with the divinatory ability being usable as many times each day as desired. Other divinatory properties can be used, but the mage must have cast on the near-completed construction a spell designed by him for this purpose (for example, a spell that detects those who worship a particular god, for one who plans to use his iron cobra against the worshippers of an opposed deity).

The iron cobra's construction manual will list specific materials that must be varied according to the detection spell bestowed on the serpent (e.g., an iron cobra designed to detect poison would include eyes glazed with celadon, pur-

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ported to locate such substances, while one designed to detect magic might replace those eyes with eyes of magic-sensing star sapphires).

While an iron cobra is almost infallible at detecting the property for which it was constructed, it cannot serve every purpose. If a mage built an iron cobra to detect evil, for use as a guardian of his treasures, a neutral-good thief would elude his precautions. Thus, owners of more than one iron cobra often have them constructed to detect different properties such as evil, magic, and poison, in hopes that intruders and victims will be revealed by at least one of these traits.

Without its outspread hood, an iron cobra is incapable of sensing anything beyond that which is mundanely presented to it by way of sight, sound, or touch (unlike a real snake, it has no sense of taste or smell). The hood has the same armor class as the rest of the cobra, but attacks specifically aimed at the hood can damage it without destroying the cobra itself. The hood has the equivalent of one-fifth of the cobra's normal hit points (never less than one point), but these points are in addition to those listed for the iron cobra and are not calculated into its hit-point total for purposes of destroying the machine or for experience-point calculations.

6. The normal construction of an iron cobra is such that it obviously appears to be a machine. If its creator adds 10% to its cost and construction time, the cobra can be made to have some other outward appearance, the most common of these being the appearance of an actual cobra (or other type of snake, if the hood and its detection abilities are eliminated).

7. Most iron cobras are of the small and inexpensive sort, but some are giants as large as six times standard size. The cost of manufacturing huge cobras is considerably more than six times that needed to make normal iron cobras, running as high as 50,000 gp depending on what "special features" are included. Some mages would spend those thousands on having many normal iron cobras, but some consider it a fair price for a huge serpent's capabilities and its effect on enemy morale.

The giant iron cobra is identical in all ways with the smaller version of the same monster except as shown in the Iron Cobra Table and in other notes here. Both are unaffected by spells such as snake charm. Although some think that cold or lightning spells should have a special effect on them, they are insulated so that they suffer no more than any living creature caught in one of these spells. Thus, an *ice storm* cast on one would still do damage, but it would have no extra effects due to the nature of the target.

8. As iron cobras are made of exotic and strong metals, laced together by powerful enchantments, normal weapons used against them do only half damage on a hit. In the case of giant iron cobras, the metals

used are as much as six times as thick, and the enchantments similarly stronger. Because of this, the giant iron cobra's skin is much tougher than that of the small version and a nonmagical weapon (which will do the giant cobra no harm) has a possibility of breaking against it. If the attacker misses with a roll high enough to have hit armor class 10, his weapon has struck the snake's skin and, if it fails a saving throw vs. crushing blow, it will shatter. Additionally, for every bonus point of damage done due to the attacker's strength, the saving throw for the weapon will be one point worse because such forceful blows are more likely to break the weapon. Thus, if the sword of a character with a 16 strength was forced to make a save, it would have a worse chance of making its save than the weapon of a weaker character due to the stronger's +1 damage bonus.

9. Just as the iron cobra can have any sort of detection spell centered on its hood, it also can be equipped with any type of poison in its fangs. Poison can be changed by the controller of the cobra whenever desired by merely draining out the old poison and replacing it with a new one. Typical toxins include those that cause damage or death, those causing special effects such as paralysis, sleep, or various discomforts (disease, allergies, rashes, etc), and other, more exotic, substances that can incapacitate or cause insanity in victims.

Whatever the substance injected into the victim on a successful hit, an iron cobra is equipped with only 3-8 (1d6 +2) doses of it, and they cannot withhold poison at will; whenever they bite, if they still contain poison, it will be delivered into their victim.

While giant iron cobras would appear to have capacity for more poison than normal ones, they still carry only 3-8 doses of their poison, but have larger and more

potent doses. Thus, if the same poison is used by both small and giant iron cobras, that of the larger mechanism is 10% more effective (save vs. poison at -2 beyond any adjustments vs. the poison of the smaller machine).

10. While iron cobras are usually given instructions that preclude the need for return communication ("kill all intruders"), some mages consider it useful to allow their charges to communicate information as well as perform other tasks. The most common method of doing this is to program certain movements of the cobra's body to correspond to specific reports it is likely to make. If this is done, a reporting iron cobra will look very much like a live snake as it sways its body and bobs its head to convey a message to its master.

Although they are not normally constructed for it, iron cobras can also be built that have the capacity for rudimentary speech. Without lungs, lips, and other sound-generating devices, they can be made to "speak" by rasping together some of the gears in their mouths and the plates on their backs or hoods in code (so a short mouth rasp might mean "intruders have been detected," while a repeated scraping sound might mean something as mundane as "tea is being served in the library"). In no case can an untrained person interpret these noises or movements,

11. Most of the iron cobra's components are reduced to useless scrap if it is destroyed, making its resale value after destruction less than 10% of its intact value, but some substances within it retain their use if separated quickly from the rest to prevent contamination. These include the *oil of slipperiness* lubricating its gears, which acts as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for 1-4 hours after being removed from the cobra; and its poison, which maintains its full effects for 1-4 turns after removal. Ω

Iron Cobra Table

	Normal	Giant
CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Any	Any
FREQUENCY	Very rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	None	None
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Any	Any
DIET	Nil	Nil
INTELLIGENCE	Non (0)	Non (0)
TREASURE TYPE	2,000+ gp	25,000+ gp
ALIGNMENT	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING	1(1-6)	1
ARMOR CLASS	0	- 2
MOVEMENT	12	9
HIT DICE	1	5
THACO	19	15
NO. OF ATTACKS	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK	1-3	1-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Poison	Poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See text	See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil	Nil
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“What has he got in his pockets, anyway?”

Treasures that lead to adventures

by Ed Greenwood

At long last, the brave band of adventurers corner their arch-foe. Their blades flash faster than his spells, and soon he crumples lifeless to the ground. It's treasure time!

The wise Dungeon Master has prepared what the party will find in advance, of course—but what if the chosen treasure seems boring or ill suited to a particularly easy (or difficult) victory? What if the player characters have ambushed a random NPC instead of their arch-foe or (gulp!) have laid low the wrong spell-

hurler? Perhaps the play is a pick-up session, hastily organized by a DM who hasn't prepared the loot beforehand. Or maybe the DM is eager to find ways of introducing intriguing subplots, red herrings, and treasure trails for the PCs to follow up in later play. All of these circumstances can be handled in a variety of ways.

Here is one way to handle this problem, used in many FORGOTTEN REALMS™ campaigns over more than a decade: the Treasure Hook Table. Entries on this table should be expanded, altered, or replaced

whenever an idea strikes. Every DM should personalize such a table, and (of course) should never use the same entry twice. The following table is given as an example only (“Change everything to entertain the guilty,” as Elminster has been known to say).

To use the Treasure Hook Table, roll 1d20 and refer to the indicated result, rolling again if a particular result is inappropriate, and altering circumstances freely to fit your own campaign.

Treasure Hook Table

1: A rogue stone (see "Rogue Stones and Gemjumping," in issue #116 of DRAGON® Magazine), in the form of a 5,000-gp ruby of brilliant cut and chatoyance. It radiates a faint dweomer. Any use of magic upon it or by anyone carrying it will draw the attention—and, subsequently, the presence—of the mage Kordeerlar "Krakenhand," who will seek to slay or disable everyone in the vicinity, take all magical or other items of value they possess, and teleport away.

Kordeerlar's statistics are: Int genius; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; M16; 41 hp; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon or spell; S 7, D 17, C 11, I 18, W 12, Ch 14; ML 14; *ring of protection* +3, *bag of holding*, *potion of extra healing* in a steel vial at his belt, two nonmagical daggers. His spells include *magic missile* ×3, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, *wall of fire*, and *feeblemind* (among others). He will be protected by *Serten's spell immunity* and will appear right beside the gem, attacking instantly. He will not be carrying his spell books.

2: A rare, highly prized material component. One example: a beholder's central eye, preserved in a solution of *Keoghtom's ointment* and "everwater" (embalming fluid) so that it retains its anti-magic gaze property for an indefinite time. This component should be somewhat difficult to sell for its proper value, and it may be eagerly sought by many powerful NPCs (including, perhaps, its "rightful" owner), but it should be too valuable or potentially useful for the PCs to simply discard.

3: Regalia recently stolen from and sought by a ruler—the jewelled scepter of a local lord, for example (complete with hollow compartment containing a map, cryptic message, or parchment bearing a *symbol* trap to harm thieves or other unauthorized handlers of the thing), or the Wyvern Crown of Cormyr, won by the present royal family an age ago when they defeated the Witch-Lords of the Wyvernwater, to consolidate their hold on the fledgling Forest-Kingdom. The Wyvern Crown is said to be fashioned of some rare, unknown star-metal and adorned with active *ioun* stones. Many conflicting rumors speak of its strange powers. Though not an active crown of state like the High Crown of Cormyr, the Wyvern Crown is one of the most valued pieces in the Royal Strongcrypts. King Azoun has sent messengers to all Purple Dragon outposts and to neighboring rulers; any local lord would do the same. Rewards are offered for the return of the item; the reward its wrongful possessors will earn is likely to be swift death.

4: A *portable hole* of palm size. Its extra-dimensional space is 4" in diameter and 1' deep, and it holds a complete set of thieves' picks and tools, a silver-bladed dagger, and a 9" -long magical iron baton. The baton counts as a magical weapon (no pluses, deals damage as a club) that, upon

command, extends in one round into a 36'-long pole ladder, with a hook at the top and crossbrace footholds every 6" along its length. Retraction requires a reverse command and another round. There is also a scrap of parchment in the hole that contains the message: "... Six paces sunward from the crypt sundial stands a stone, amid tall grass and much ruin. At its base are four tiles. Beneath the tile marked with the fish symbol is a key, carved of rock-crystal. It will unlock the spell book hidden by Orthabbas in ... " The location of the key and the spell book (as well as the nature of its contents) are up to the DM. The hole has been recently stolen and is sought by local authorities, their agents, and patrols.

5: A tiny figurine of an angry-looking woman in a dark blue gown. She wears no armor but has a *girdle of armor* class 2 beneath her gown; her bare arms are raised as if in supplication or warding off a threat. The figurine is a real mage, trapped long ago by an enemy who tricked her into imbibing a potion of *diminution*; he then placed her in *temporal stasis*. If freed, she will be enraged and will attempt to find and destroy her foe—the Arch-Mage Anthilar, dead now for over 300 years. She will also be confused at the changes in the Realms that have occurred since her entrapment and will do *anything* to get spell books. The figurine is Nanzil Starspeladine, of Untisczer, a city now lost (destroyed by Calimshan in a long-ago war) that stood east of Tashluta.

Nanzil's statistics are: Int genius; AL CN; AC - 1; MV 12; M11; 32 hp; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon or spell; S 11, D 17, C 16, I 17, W 12, Ch 16; ML 13. Nanzil was trapped at a ball, and her only other magical item is a *dagger* +1 strapped to her thigh beneath her gown. She lacks spell books but does have material components hidden in various pockets in her ornate eveningwear. She carries the following memorized spells: *charm person*, *comprehend languages*, *dancing lights*, *spider climb*, *darkness* 15' radius, *ESP*, *invisibility*, *levitate*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *hold person*, *lightning bolt*, *dimension door*, *polymorph other polymorph self*, *cone of cold*, *feeblemind*, and *telekinesis*. Nanzil is fiery-tempered, clever, and very alluring (and knows it). She is also fearless and manipulative, and she thinks nothing of plunging into combat with a dagger, darts, or staves.

6: A silver ring, fashioned with two horns, and between them the inscription: "Thelm Horn." Sages will identify this ring (which bears a dweomer but has no apparent powers) as one of "The Lost Rings of Thelm Horn" (Thelm Horn being a famous human mage of long ago). It is not; instead, it is a device placed on Faerun by an ultra-daemon also named Thelm Horn; each time the ring's inscription is read aloud, there is a 5% chance (not cumulative) that the daemon will hear and investigate.

7: A map of the known sewers of Waterdeep, the City of Splendors. The map may be accurate or not, as the DM wishes (and may be devised freely or taken from the sewer map given in the AD&D accessory FR1 *Waterdeep and the North*). The map should show a secret entry to Piergeiron's Palace and a "Treasure Cache" chamber watched over by a "Guild Guardian" (DM's choice of monster and treasure).

8: A black opal gem, fist-size and radiating a faint dweomer. It is worth 5,000 gp on the open market and more to a gemcutter or other being (such as a dwarf skilled in gem-mining) able to examine it minutely; he will see a tiny, ever-pulsing sparkle in its depths. The gem is in reality a *long sword* +1, +3 vs. *shapeshifters* and all creatures employing powers of *mutability* (e.g., +3 against mages using *polymorph* spells, *doppelgangers*, or druids while shifting to or from beast-form). The item shifts form back and forth uncontrollably; it is a sword whenever any magical item or artifact is within 60' of it, but it is a gem otherwise (scrolls and potions do not "activate" it). The gem/sword transformation could easily damage a carrying-pouch or purse, or even injure a creature impaled by the forming sword. If carried by hand or kept close by pocket or pouch, it "attacks" as a 4-HD monster for 1-4 hp damage when it changes.

9: A plain ivory coffer (itself worth 1 gp) that radiates a dweomer. It is latched, but has no lock and is not trapped. When opened, it releases a swirling cloud of winking motes of light, the source of the dweomer. The cloud rises up around the head of any one character of the DM's choice and coalesces into a ring of 3-12 *ioun stones* (DM's choice of types and sizes). They circle the head of the character, no doubt attracting unwanted NPC attention—but they do not exist. *Dispel magic* will end the illusion, but the stones always dance away to avoid a touch and cannot be "destroyed" by physical attacks or touch attempts that seem to succeed. The illusory *ioun stones* radiate a dweomer but do not, of course, have any of the protections or beneficial powers of real *ioun stones*.

10: A hand-size brass jewel box, without a lock. When opened, it emits a small glowing globe that springs wildly up into the air. The globe evades any attacks or capturing attempts, bounces to the ground, and rolls 40' in a random direction. As it rolls (AC -8), a *magic mouth* emanates from it and says, in a peevish male human voice: "So I said to him, 'Why, yes, of course black sigils are dangerous, because they do this!'" At that point, the globe explodes, doing 4-16 hp damage to all within 30' (no save). It is up to the DM to determine what powers "black sigils" have and who knows the secrets of creating them. They are evil delayed-action *symbols* triggered by conditions similar to those for a *magic mouth* spell.

11: A key of polished electrum, 1' in length and quite heavy. It radiates a faint dweomer and displays the inscription "Alsimbra." If this command word is said aloud, the key shrinks. Sixteen such shrinkages cause the key to shrink to nothingness, to be lost forever. If the key is touched to any one chain, knot, lock, winch, bolt, or bar when the command word is spoken, its magical unlocking power shatters, dissolves, or parts the restraining mechanisms. The key's power even works upon command without direct contact with the lock or restraint if it is held, carried, or touched by any number of beings who are under that physical restraint. This *key of free passage* cannot be recharged, its shrinkage cannot be reversed or halted, and its power cannot be nullified by physical or magical means.

12: An old, worn, stone box, one hand wide and thick by 10 hands long. It has rusting iron clasps all around it and opens to reveal nothing. Physical examination of its interior reveals an *invisible mace*, fashioned of one piece of metal. Whenever it is grasped, a male-voiced *magic mouth* on the mace (called a *mace of doom*) roars, "Destroy them! Destroy them!" every three rounds. The mace remains *invisible* at all times, although substances smeared on it or scarves tied to it remain visible and can be used to readily locate the weapon. The mace is dedicated to destroying dragons; upon contact with any dragon, it explodes and vanishes forever. The magical blast of the *mace of doom* does 4-24 hp damage to the wielder and all other beings within 20', unless they save vs. spells for half damage. A dragon so struck by this mace takes 8-48 hp damage (no save).

13: An electrum sword scabbard, empty and unadorned. It is finely made, handsome, and radiates a dweomer. It is, in reality, a doppelganger who has employed a potion of *diminution*, who will attack when the majority of nearby beings are asleep, wounded, or at ease and not alert. The doppelganger's potion is effective for thrice the normal duration. A sword inserted in the scabbard will not harm the doppelganger. The monster has a second extrapowerful potion of *diminution* that it will use to take the shape of a plain brass ring (which will also radiate a dweomer) if it escapes notice by others while attacking its first victim.

14: A glass globe containing a swirling, milky-white gas. It radiates no dweomer. If the globe is shattered, it releases the gas in a cloud that expands rapidly into a cloud of pale white haze, before dissipating into harmlessness after four rounds. In the first round, the cloud expands to a 10' radius; in the second round, the cloud is 20' in radius; in the third and fourth rounds, the cloud has a 30' radius. Any beings who breathe the gas or whose skin comes into contact with it will be overcome by a frenzied urge to slay. Spell-casting and rational thought are impossible, and all affected beings launch

physical attacks against the nearest other creatures. All beings are allowed a saving throw vs. spells to avoid this effect. If they succumb, they make twice their normal attacks each round, caught in a reckless frenzy with no thought for their own safety or waiting for good opportunities for assault. Gas effects on beings last only for the round(s) in which they are in contact with it. Under the influence of this rare horrible vapor, friends and even mates attack each other without hesitation. All attacks are at -1 to hit but are +1 to damage due to their savagery.

15: An eye of gold, actually an *eye of vision*. This palm-size object is inset with an obsidian and pearl "eyeball" and is worth 1,500 gp. If the inlay is removed or the eye melted or hammered into another shape, it explodes (3-12 hp damage within 20' radius; save vs. wands for half damage; anyone in contact with the eye at the time suffers 4-32 damage, no save). On the back of every *eye of vision* is a single word (on this one, the word is "halass"). If this word is uttered aloud by a being touching the eye, the speaker is empowered to see the whereabouts of any one particular creature or physical object that he has seen before. For example, a speaker could see "the gem I saw atop the crown King Orvan wore last Highfeast," but could not see "the largest gem King Orvan owns." Such directions need not be spoken aloud but must be concentrated upon (precluding reading, spell-casting, or other mental activities and requiring full attention). The eye then vaporizes, but its activator receives a mental vision (lasting 2-5 rounds) of the desired being or object and its present whereabouts, governed by light available at the locale. No sense of the direction or distance separating the target from the activator is imparted, nor is any sound transmitted. No spells can be cast through the vision; it is not a mental link or portal. Every *eye of vision* is a one-shot device; such devices are very rare, and the secrets of making them are thought to be lost.

16: A magical arrow. This finely made arrow radiates a dweomer and can be identified as an *arrow of direction*. It is actually an *arrow of monster location*, always pointing unerringly at the nearest dangerous nonhuman or demihuman creature. The creature may be any distance away on the same plane. The arrow will do this regardless of the commands it is given.

17: A famous magical item or artifact, sought by many mages of power. This might be a *book of infinite spells*, a piece of the *rod of seven parts*, or any item appropriate to the DM's own campaign.

18: An ivory slate adorned with hammered gold corners (12 gp value). A spell placed on the slate long ago causes these words to appear silently on the slate when it is touched: "So you have come at last. Know, before the Dark Dragons devour the world, that there is a way to defeat them: Find the Whip of Mastery. It lies in

the Tower of Crymon, on the island of Ulm's Hand in the Nelanther. Waste no time." The slate's words then fade forever. The DM should alter the treasure and location to suit his own campaign. Details of the dragon-controlling and dragon-slaying powers of the "whip of mastery" are likewise left to the DM.

19: A gold piece that radiates a faint dweomer, found among several hundred or so other nonmagical gold pieces. When first touched, it causes the ghostly white illusion of a harp to appear in midair, approximately 2' behind and a little above the head of the being who touches the coin. The illusory harp plays faint, eerie, intricate music constantly. Touching or using magic on the harp will not affect it, and it can pass through magical barriers, walls, solid rock, and so on. The harp vanishes when the gold piece is touched again by a living being—whereupon another harp illusion will appear, to trail the second being who touched the coin. A harp illusion disappears if the person currently causing it dies, or if *dispel magic* is cast on the coin. The coin can still cause illusions later when next touched, unless it is melted down or a *limited wish* is used to permanently end its magic.

20: A sealed clay sphere, baked hard long ago, light in weight but about the size of a human head. The sphere radiates a faint dweomer. It has no powers except a total inability to be affected by any magic, including *fireballs*, *wish* spells, and the like (a protection that it cannot extend to beings or other items). If shattered by a fall or a deliberate blow, the sphere releases a swarm of disembodied, animated eyeballs of all types and sizes. These eyeballs float about, clustering around and following PCs until the spheres are destroyed (each AC -2, MV 18, 1 hp). A successful to-hit roll when using a net, or when a creature attacks barehanded with the stated intention of catching an eyeball, results in the capture of an undamaged eyeball. The eyeballs can then be used as material components, decorations, food, or in ruses (e.g., to suggest the presence of someone who does not in fact exist watching an intruder).



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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(es) 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) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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SYNDICON III, December 8

This convention will be held at the International Inn in Orlando, Fla. The guest of honor is Rembert N. Parker, RPGA™ Regional Director. Events include one- and two-round RPGA™ AD&D® tournaments, with BATTLETECH®, ILLUMINATI®, CAR WARS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, SHADOWRUN®, SPELLJAMMER™, DIPLOMACY®, and DRAGONQUEST™ games. Registration: \$8; \$6 for RPGA™ Network members; \$10 at the door. All fees include four free events. Write to: SYNDICON III, 11324 Porto Court, Orlando FL 32821; or call: (407)857-1896 or (407) 788-3014.

NOVAG VI, December 15-16

Northern Virginia Adventure Gamers' annual gaming convention will be held at the Leesburg National Guard Armory in Leesburg, Va. Events include fantasy role-playing and historical games. Registration: \$6 for the weekend. Write to: NOVAG, 101 East Holly Ave., Sterling VA 22170; or call: (703) 450-6738.

GAMICON ALPHA, January 19, 1991

Sponsored by SFLIS/I-CON, this gaming convention will be held at the Iowa Memorial Union at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Events will include AD&D™, CALL OF CTHULHU®, BATTLETECH®, and STAR FLEET BATTLES® games. Other activities include seminars and panels by guests, including Roger E. Moore, editor of DRAGON® Magazine, plus a silent auction. Registration: \$6 until Dec. 20; \$8 thereafter. This fee includes all games. Send an SASE to: GAMICON, c/o SFLIS, Student Activities Center, IMU, University of Iowa, Iowa City IA 52242. Call Nigel at: (319) 354-2236; or Ahmad at: (319) 351-7963. No collect calls, please.

ROACH-CON '91, January 19

The first kind-of-annual convention will be held at La Roche College and is sponsored by Project Achievement. Events include AD&D®, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, and BATTLETECH® games. Other activities include movies, vendors, and a miniatures-painting contest with an entry fee of \$2 per figure. Registration: \$5 preregistered; or \$7.50 at the door. Write to: ROACH-CON '91, La Roche College, Box 22, Allison Park PA 15101; or call Bob at: (412) 793-6028 or (412) 341-6450.

JANCON '91, January 19-20

This two-day gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn Conference Center in New Haven, Conn. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, and DIPLOMACY® games, with miniatures painting, movies, and a dealers' room. Other activities include a banquet on the 20th and a benefit game with all proceeds going to Alzheimer's research. Send an SASE to: JANCON '91, P.O. Box 822, Shelton CT 06484.

PANDEMONIUM VIII, January 19-20 ✱

This convention will be held at the Ryerson Hub Cafeteria, Jorgenson Hall, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, in Toronto, Ontario. Highlights include two game auctions, over 50 games, a miniatures contest, and many local dealers. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Registration: \$10 (Canadian)/day. Write to: PANDEMONIUM VIII, c/o 17B Wales Ave., Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M5T 1J2; or call: (416) 597-1934.

ADVENTURERS' INN II, January 26-27

This gaming convention will be held at the Stockton Growers' Hall in Stockton, Calif. A medieval/fantasy atmosphere will highlight this gathering of gamers. Events include official and open gaming, SCA demos, a 36-hour campaign, a costume contest, and a dealers' area. Registration: \$15/weekend until Jan. 1; \$13/day or \$20/weekend at the door. A \$3 discount goes to anyone in medieval/fantasy costume. Write to: ADVENTURERS' INN, P.O. Box 3669, Turlock CA 95381.

CANCON '91, January 26-28 ✦

Australia's biggest and best convention will be held at the University of Canberra, ACT, Australia. Our special guest will be Jean Rabe, the RPGA™ Network coordinator. Events include miniatures, board games, RPGs, including several RPGA™ Network events, and a costume parade. Registration: \$15 (Australian) before Nov. 30; \$20 thereafter. Most events cost \$2. Write to: CANCON, GPO Box 1016, Canberra City, ACT, 2601, AUSTRALIA.

REALMS OF ROLE-PLAY II, February 1-3 ✱

This convention, organized by TRoA, will be held at Sofiendalskolen, Aalborg, Denmark. Events will include AD&D® 2nd Ed., CALL OF CTHULHU®, D&D®, MERP®, ROLEMASTER®, SHADOWRUN®, STAR WARS®, WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE® and ROLEPLAY®, and board games. Registration: DKK 50/weekend or Dm 30/day. GMs are welcome! Write to: TRoA, Hvidkildevej 20 A, 9220 Aalborg Oest, DENMARK.

CONNECT-A-CON, February 16-17

This SF/fantasy/gaming convention will be held at the Sheraton Westgate in Toledo, Ohio. Guests of honor include Jean Lorrain, Dennis McKiernan, and Rob Prior. Events include gaming, a writers' workshop, a short-story contest, a costume contest and masquerade ball, a murder-mystery contest, a huge dealers' room, a 24-hour movie room, an art show and auction, and a gaming auction. Registration: \$15/weekend before Dec 31; \$20/weekend thereafter. Write to: CONNECT-A-CON, PO. Box 4674, Toledo OH 43620.

ECONOMYCON IV, February 15-17

This convention will be held at the Smart Plaza, Road Suites 17 and 18 in Mesa, Ariz. Events include AD&D®, BATTLE FOR MOSCOW®, SQUAD LEADER®, and BATTLETECH® games. Other activities include computer games, Japanimation, open gaming, and a Miniatures Fest featuring WWII microarmor, American Civil War, British colonial and SF miniatures gaming. There is no admission fee, and all events are free. Send an SASE to: ECONOMYCON IV, c/o Roaming Panther Game Co., 2740 S. Alma School Rd., #16, Mesa AZ 85202.

GENGHIS CON XII, February 15-17

The Denver Gamers' Assoc. presents this

convention at the Sheraton of Lakewood. Events include VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC*, CIVILIZATION*, KINGMAKER*, ASL*, and BATTLETECH* games, with official RPGA™ Network tournaments including PARANOIA*, D&D®, and AD&D® games. A variety of miniatures events will be featured. Other activities include several auctions, art and figure-painting contests, seminars, and demos. Guests include Jean Rabe (the RPGA™ Network coordinator), Darwin Bromley, and Richard Berg. Also featured is the PUFFING BILLY* tournament for railroad gamers. Registration: \$1/weekend preregistered. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 680-7824.

ORCCON 14, February 15-18

This convention will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Hilton. All types of family, board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer games are featured. Get bargains at the flea markets, auctions, and exhibitors' area. Also featured are seminars, demos, and special guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (213) 326-9440.

ECLECTICON 5, February 16-18

This SF/fantasy convention will be held at the Sacramento Hilton Inn in Sacramento, Calif. Guests of honor include Greg Bear, Rick Sternbach, and Rhea Stone. The dead guest of honor is Jules Verne. Registration: \$25 until Jan. 15; and \$30 thereafter. Proceeds will benefit the Sacramento Public Library and the Children's Burn Unit of the University of California at Davis Medical Center, among other charities. There will also be a blood drive at the convention on Feb. 17th. Write to: Publicity Committee, ECLECTICON 5, #176 P.O. Box 19040, Sacramento CA 95814; or call: (916) 421-8365 and leave a message.

TOTAL CONFUSION V, February 22-24

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Worcester Hotel and Conference Center in Worcester, Mass. Events include AD&D®, GURPS*, BATTLETECH*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, DIPLOMACY*, ASSAULT*, CAR WARS*, DC HEROES*, and AXIS & ALLIES* games. Over 120 games are scheduled. Other activities include a costume competition and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$5/day or \$20/weekend preregistered; or \$10/day at the door. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, P.O. Box 1463, Worcester MA 01607; or call: (508) 987-1530.

CHIMERACON VII, March 1-3

This seventh annual SF/fantasy convention will be held at the Union of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C. Guests of honor include Fred Chappell, Alan Wold, and Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Write to: Shannon Turlington, c/o CHIMERACON, 306 Avery UNC-CH, Chapel Hill, NC 27514; or call: (919) 933-2912.

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '91, March 1-3

This gaming convention will be held at the Student Center of Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Ill. Events include RPGA™ AD&D® tournaments, miniatures judging, and a game auction. Registration: \$8 preregistered or \$5/day. Friday, the 1st, is free to all. Send a business-size SASE to: S.I.U. Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901-4425; or call: (618) 529-5317.

BASHCON '91, March 8-10

This sixth annual convention, sponsored by the Benevolent Adventurers' Strategic Headquarters, will be held at the Student Union Auditorium at the University of Toledo's main campus in Toledo, Ohio. Over 150 game events will be featured, including RPGA™ tournaments, plus movies, a miniatures contest, an exhibitors' area, two auctions, and an honored speaker or two. Registration: \$3/weekend or \$1 for Friday, \$2/day for Saturday and Sunday. There will be no preregistration. Games cost \$.50 each. Send an SASE to: UT-BASH, c/o Student Activities Office, University of Toledo, Toledo OH 43606-9987.

OWLCON XII, March 8-10

Rice University's WARP and RSFAFA will hold this convention at Rice University in Houston, Texas. Tournaments will be held for RUNEQUEST*, PARANOIA*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, CAR WARS*, TRAVELLER*, DIPLOMACY*, ILLUMINATI*, CIVILIZATION*, BATTLETECH*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, ASL*, WORLD IN FLAMES*, and AD&D® games. Prizes will be awarded for some of these tournaments. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$12/weekend at the door. Single-day prices vary. Write to: RSFAFA, OWLCON, P.O. Box 1892, Houston TX 77251.

AGGIECON XXII, March 21-24

The largest and oldest annual SF/fantasy convention in the Southwest will be held on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Tex. Guests include Fred Saberhagen, Lynn Abbey, Keith Parkinson, Marv Wolfman, and Steve Jackson. Activities include RPGA™ tournaments, a dealers' room, game shows, a hall costume contest and masquerade ball, SF films, Japanimation and video rooms, and live-action games. Registration: \$13 before March 1; \$16 thereafter. One-day passes are \$10. Write to: AGGIECON XXII, MSC Cepheid Variable, Box J-1, College Station TX 77844; or call: (409) 845-1515.


SIMCON XIII, March 22-24

This gaming convention will be held at the University of Rochester River campus in Rochester, N.Y. Role-playing events, including an R. Talsorian-sanctioned CYBERPUNK* tournament, plus miniatures events, board games, and a miniatures contest are scheduled. Registration: \$7 before March 4; \$10 thereafter. College students with an I.D. receive a \$2 discount. Write to: SIMCON, CPU Box 277146, River Station, Rochester NY 14627.


SCRYCON '91, March 23

Sponsored by the Seekers of the Crystal Monolith, this ninth annual convention will be held at the Oakwood School in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Events include AD&D® and alternate games, a painted-miniatures contest, and a used-game auction. Registration: \$6 preregistered and \$8 at the door. Send an SASE to: SCRYCON '91, P.O. Box 896, Pleasant Valley NY 12569. Space is limited; preregistration is advised.

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.



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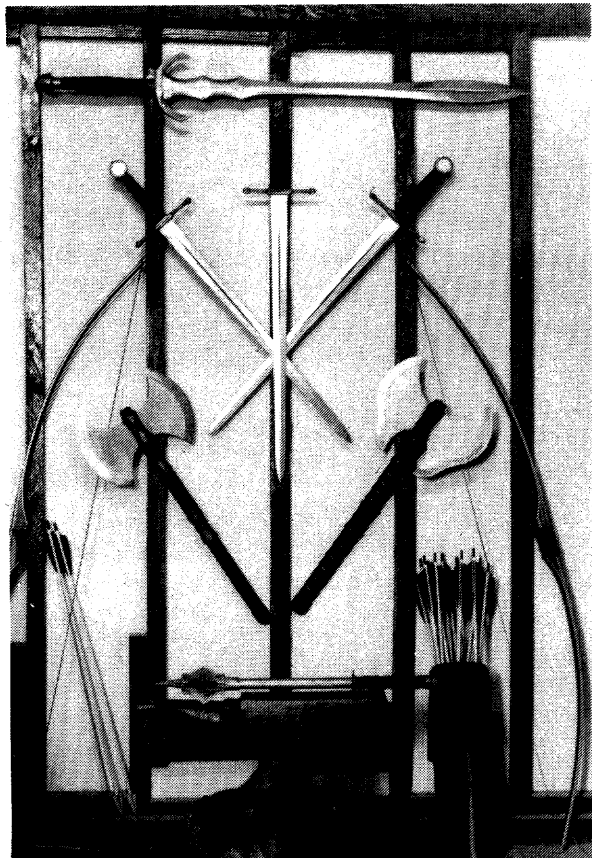
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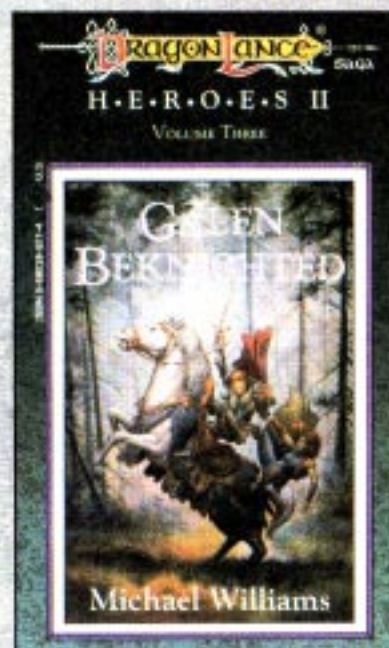
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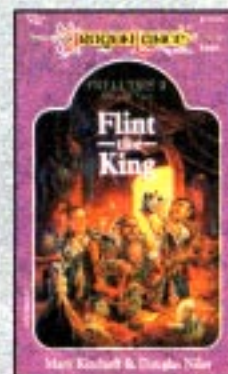
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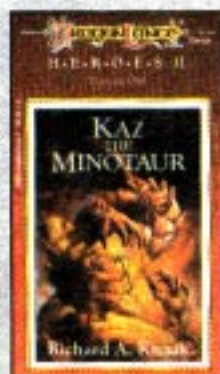
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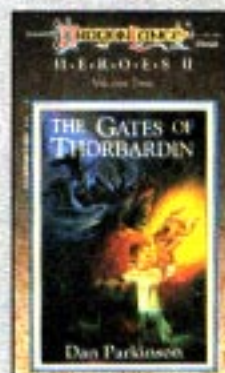
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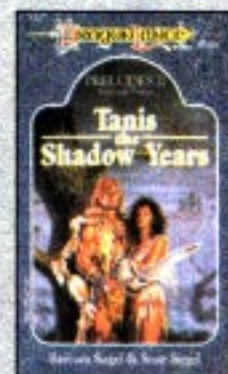


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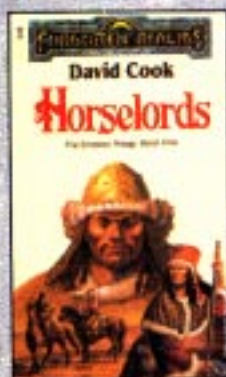
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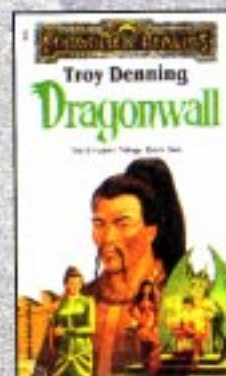


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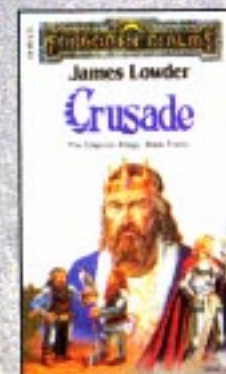
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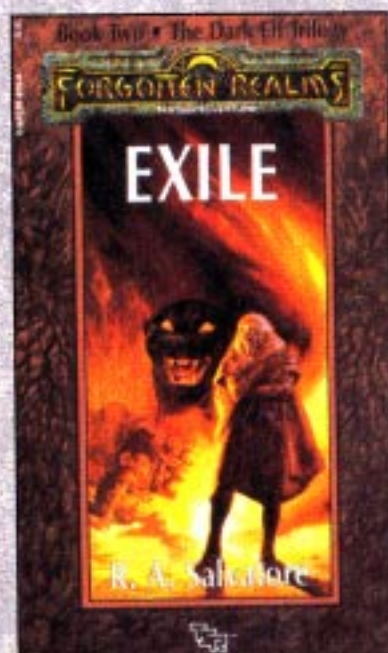
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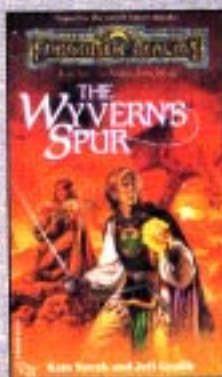
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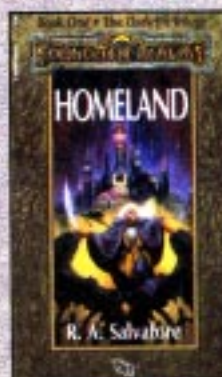
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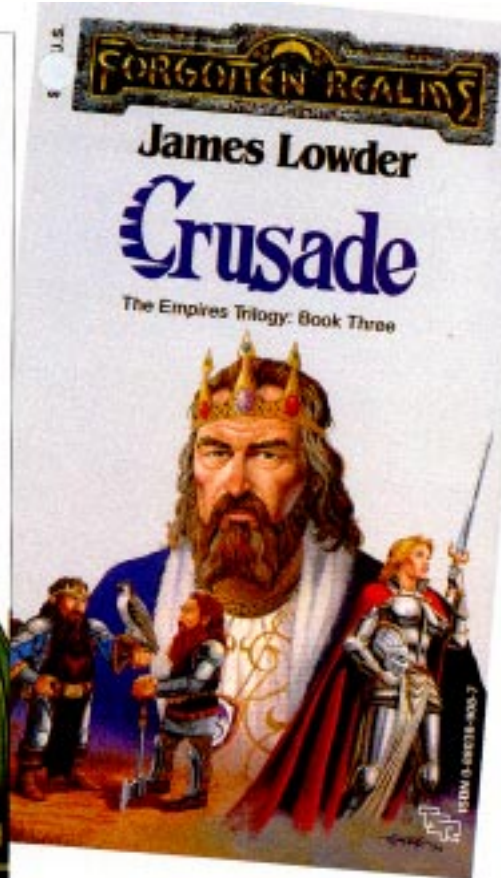
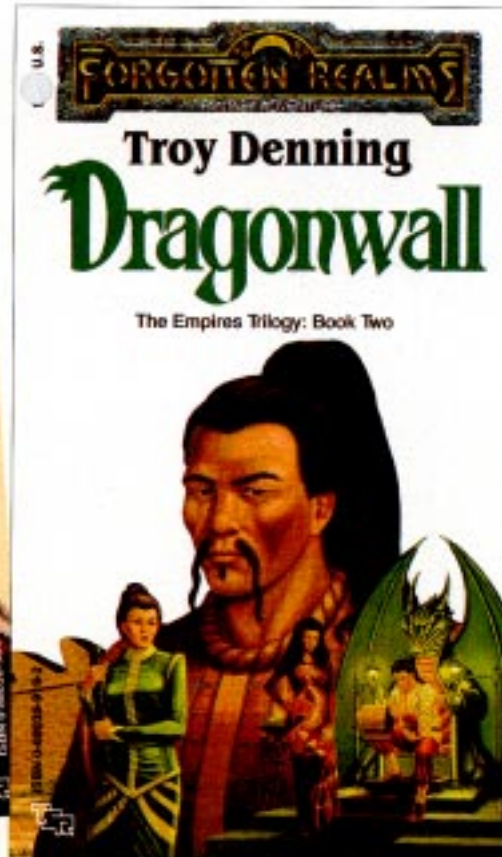
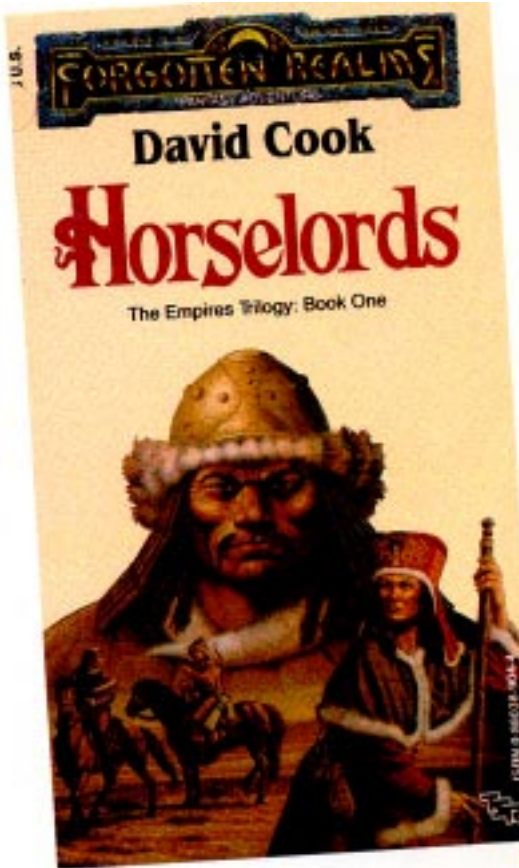


NOVEL

I • D • E • A • S

Three books, three writers, one great trilogy

by Theresa Hickey



East finally meets west in the Empires Trilogy in the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ campaign world, but it's a war-torn connection. These are the stories of an unexplored kingdom, the wild expanse between the western Realms and the eastern Kara-Tur that the civilized folk of the Realms have long ignored. Once populated by small clans of sour-breathed barbarians known as Tuigan, this land has become the stronghold of Yamun Khahan, who has united the horse warriors and has set out to conquer nothing less than the world. You can bet these barbarians won't be ignored for long.

Horselords

Horselords, the first book in the Empires series, comes to us from within the camps of the Tuigan barbarians, where savagery, strength, and stench are the only ways of life. After a savory meal of dried meat and cheese curd stew, the barbarians journey eastward to sate yet another hunger—that of conquest. They ride out to breach the

when writing this book, author David Cook had two alternate sources of inspiration: fear and Diet Coke. Fear that his deadlines would arrive before any of his ideas were recorded propelled Cook into many nights of frenzied typing. Diet Coke kept him bouncing through it all. "I'd drink Diet Coke until I got jittery," Cook says, "and then I'd write until about midnight, sometimes one in the morning, until I was exhausted. Usually I'd go a couple of nights and then I wouldn't be able to keep my eyes open, so I'd go to sleep. And the next night, I'd try it again."

Writing did not come easily to Cook. Although he tried to select certain background noises, they weren't always the most conducive to writing. "MTV was occasionally on, but it was bad when there was an interesting video or when odd things flashed on the screen. Regular TV was really bad, although old movies that I wasn't real interested in watching were okay." In addition to these distractions, as soon as Cook started writing for the night,

he felt a persistent urge to get up and pace. Finally he found a background sound that actually helped him in his work and kept him in his seat—music. It proved most beneficial because it blocked out the other distractions and established a positive mood for writing.

Long before he ever started the writing for *Horselords*, Cook spent many hours researching the Mongol culture to give his book a strong atmosphere, a powerful setting, and true characters. His descriptions were gleaned from "a million different picture books" and from a museum exhibition that conveniently came through town displaying artifacts from Soviet museums. He formed piles of picture books next to his computer and would page through these whenever he needed descriptions of "weird Mongol things."

After the book was completed, Cook traveled to China to observe firsthand the country about which he had been writing. "The whole last part of the book takes place along the Dragonwall, and we went to see its rough equivalent, the Great Wall of China," He adds, "I didn't realize how

steep things were there, how rugged," and admits that if he had traveled before writing the book, some physical descriptions of the landscape would be much different.

Cook offered one bit of advice for aspiring writers. "Be diligent about sitting down and getting to work. If you don't sit down and write, you're not going to get anywhere. Try and get in the habit of doing it on a regular basis, every day, every other day."

Hard at work on other projects for TSR, he attempts to follow this advice as well, but realizes how difficult this discipline really is. "Right now I try to get up at four in the morning because nobody bothers me then," he says. "The only problem is, I keep sleeping too late."

Dragonwall

"In the seventh grade in my English class, I started keeping a journal as an assignment, and I just started having a lot of fun with it. By the time I was in eighth grade, I knew what I wanted to do," says Troy Denning, author of *Dragonwall*, Book Two in the Empires Trilogy. This desire to write stayed with him throughout high school; when he traveled to a small liberal-arts college in Beloit, Wis., he immediately went to declare his major.

"I had signed up to play football in college," he says, "so as a freshman, I went in to declare my major to the head of the department, a little, wiry guy who took one look at this football player and said 'Are you sure you want to be an English major?'" But Denning had no doubts, and a few years later he graduated with a double major in English composition and in sociology, a combination appropriate for a project such as *Dragonwall*, which involved writing about a foreign culture.

Dragonwall is written from the perspective of the eastern nation of Shou Lung and describes the threatened invasion of Shou Lung by the barbarian horde. The army of the Shou uses its one major strength, general Batu Min Ho, a brilliant strategist and a loyal fighter. But confronting the bloodthirsty warriors leads Batu to confront his Tuigan heritage, a background that soon shadows his achievements. After battles tainted by politics and spies, Batu leaves the Shou for a new life within the ranks of the barbarians.

Although Denning has a strong interest in Far Eastern cultures and has spent the past two and a half years learning and practicing kyuki-do, a form of martial arts comprising tae-kwon-do, hapki-do, and judo, writing this book required heavy research. "I spent hundreds of dollars and probably hundreds of hours on research," he says. "And it was an ongoing process. As I wrote, it helped to keep reading about the places."

Denning started his research with children's books to get an overview of the culture, then moved on to more complex materials. He also underwent mental preparation. "Each night before writing, I

would sit for a few minutes, close my eyes, and think of the character or the scene I was writing about. This would relax and clear my mind."

Denning then would begin composing, slowly at first, until he reached his usual pace of approximately three pages per hour. He carefully followed outlines constructed in the planning stages of the book, but not everything could be plotted so closely. "I think the relationships of the characters came out more as the writing went on. And because of this, an awful lot of my character work was done in the second draft."

Denning grew up in a small mining town in the mountains of Colorado; the entire county was home to fewer than 5,000 people. "I went to a very unusual high school," he says. "We had this immense mine in the county that created a very large tax base. So we had a very nice and expensive high school populated by people who had very little interest in education." But the talented teachers at his school inspired Denning and made learning enjoyable for him.

Dragonwall is dedicated to one of these teachers, Mr. Dallas, as well as to other educators. "Mike Dallas was more of a gem than you ever had the right to expect in a little backward town like mine," Denning explains. "He not only taught how to write and how to read, but he made me curious and willing to try things that I wouldn't have tried before. He was a teacher who made me look beyond the immediate possibilities and gave me confidence."

This confidence did not come easily, however. "The first hundred stories I wrote all ended up in the wastebasket, and I had started many novels. If someone were to ask me what's the one thing he should do to be a writer, I would tell him not to be too critical. You have to learn to suspend your critical functions while you're writing."

Crusade

Crusade begins about three months after the end of *Dragonwall*. The setting is the civilized west, in the city of Suzail in the country of Cormyr—which, we learn, is the next target of those pugnacious barbarians. The Tuigan challenge is met by one ruler, King Azoun, who must unify the western factions to create a force powerful enough to reckon with the horse warriors.

The story unravels from the western viewpoint, and author James Lowder used medieval England as a model for King Azoun's land. "From the minute we defined this book, it was like a magnet to me," says Lowder, an English and history major who is fascinated by the medieval period.

But more intriguing than the setting, to Lowder, was the main character. "When we picked King Azoun as the major character, I really fell in love with him," says Lowder. "I couldn't stop thinking about

him, about 'What would this character do?' He is King Arthur if King Arthur had survived the final battle, a character who is so incredibly charismatic and has these noble ideas, and who finally has to go in and put his government together. And you've got somebody who wants to rule by law and by good in a situation where he can't, because when you make sweeping laws, somebody is affected negatively by them and then you're not ruling by law and by good anymore."

Although Lowder researched historical accounts for his novel, he emphasizes that none of the books in the Empires Trilogy is of the historical fiction genre. "There is more historical authenticity to these stories than what's been done in the Realms before, but that's not to say that these are parallels to any specific history. And they shouldn't be taken that way." What they tried to do, according to Lowder, was to create a Realms that was historic. He considers this trilogy a success in that respect.

"I think we achieved what we set out to do," he says. "We let the readers know what it was like to live in these three parts of the Realms. We also created a story, a type of epic, that was focused on the people who made the action. So many fantasy stories are about adventurers pulled along by circumstance. But the three main characters in this series are the people who run their countries, who make history every day."

Although he started writing when in college and currently pens video, film, and book reviews, Lowder became most interested in writing through working with novels at TSR. "I think if a lot more people could see how books get put together, they'd have a more confident approach to publishing a book. But it's a lot of work." Lowder began working on *Crusade* by allotting a certain amount of time for writing each night. This system, however, didn't last for long. "As my deadlines got closer, I had a certain amount that I needed to write."

Fortunately for Lowder, writer's block didn't strike too frequently. When it did, he made himself relax by turning on a movie. "I'd watch *Excalibur* or *A Man For All Seasons* to try and get back in the feel for the world that I was trying to create." And when that failed, he would raid the refrigerator for one of the many Dr. Peppers inside, charge himself up, then get back to work. *Crusade* will go on sale in December.

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Ω

Continued from page 45

Personality: The Ways of Razud changed Talasar, making him a charitable, forgiving, and compassionate person. His tact and diplomacy have served him well aboard the Princess. Quiet and keenly observant, Talasar is a great judge of character who proven many times to be an invaluable help in Haldemar's endeavors.

Appearance: Although in his mid-fifties, Talasar is a tall, powerful man. He keeps his head shaved and bare, according to the precepts of his order. Talasar has a dark complexion, with slightly slanted green eyes. His thin, long mustache common to that of Ochalean nobles in Beitung has long since turned white.

Equipment Carried: Potion of *black dragon control* (including lesser night dragon, two doses left), *earring of seamanship*, *balm of ethereality*, *scroll of communication* (whose other half is at the temple of Razud in Starpoint), *ring of holiness*, *amulet vs. crystal balls and ESP hammer* +3 of *extinguishing*.

D&D Game Statistics: S 15, I 13, W 17, D 10, Co 14, Ch 16; 17th.level cleric; AC 9; hp 49; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (by weapon type or spell); Dmg by weapon type or spell; Save C17; ML 11, AL L. Languages: Common Alpathian and Minaean. Skills: Intimidation (St), Swimming (St), Helmsman/Captain (In), Guidance/Counseling (Wi), Theology (Wi), Persuasion (Wi), Storytelling (Ch).

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Thanks for your vote. Amazons would be likely to be in the region originally called the Matriarchy of Pelatan, on the Southern continent. Perhaps that old Nithian map had some truth to it!

 Ω

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By Jerry Cogan

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Yamara

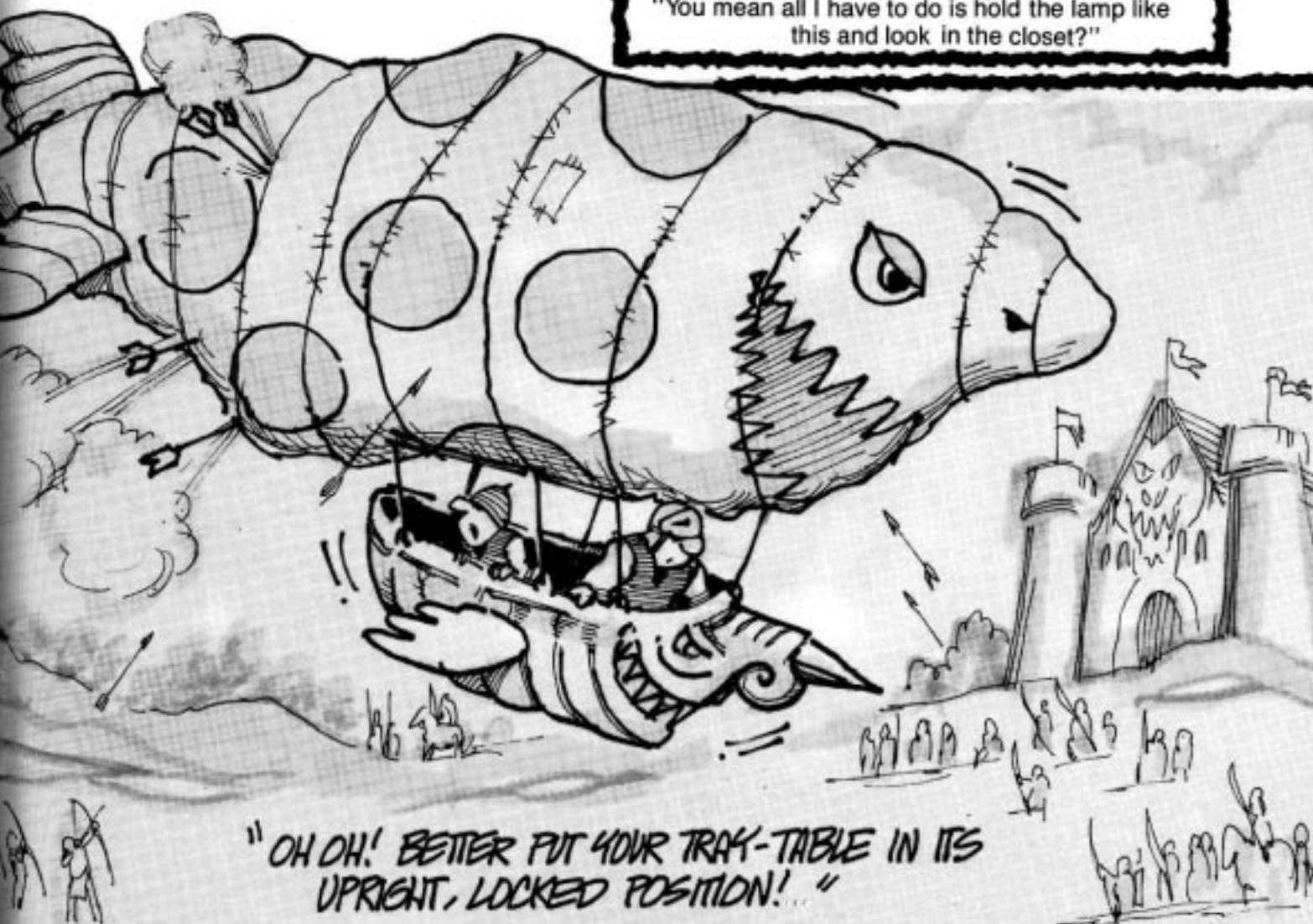
By Barbara Manui & Chris Adams





"Onion ring to rule them all,
Onion ring to find them,
Onion ring to bring them all,
and in the darkness bind them."

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PART 9

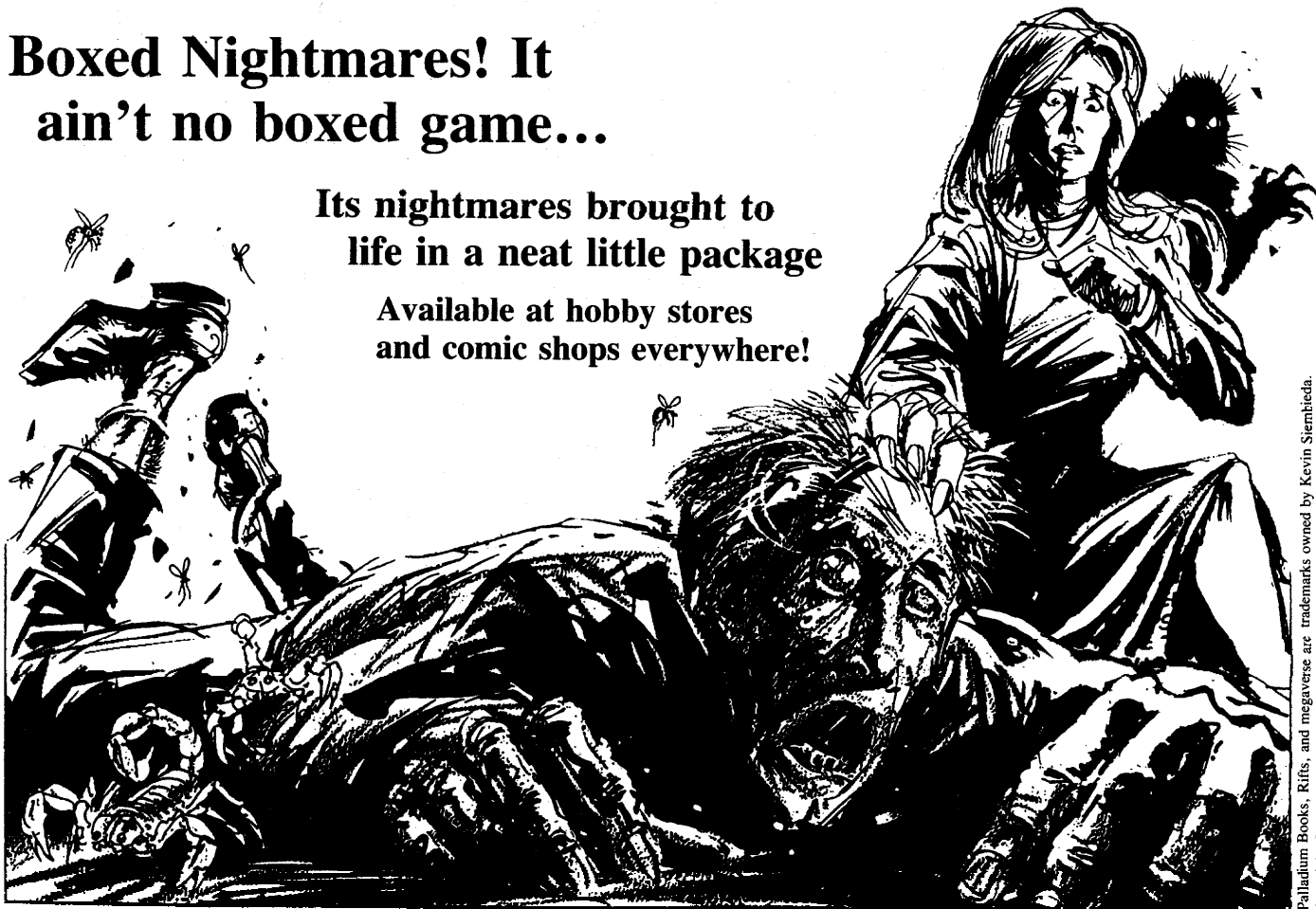


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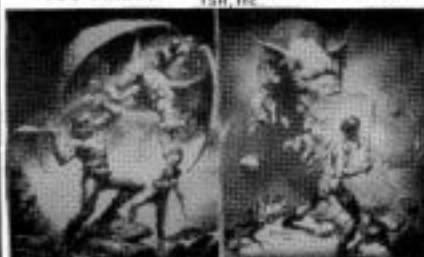
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(I'd like to apologise for the grossly offensive advertisement that appears above. We at CHG realise that Christmas is a religious holiday with significance for the whole family and not just an excuse for an over-commercialised binge. What can I say to you, I'm a bad person. Merry Christmas.)

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Through the LOOKING Glass

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Lead miniatures: a new endangered species

As I write this column at the end of September, it is hard to project what will have happened by the time you read this. This year marks the appearance of a major threat to both the role-playing and war-gaming hobbies. In the past, these groups have watched each other take lumps from church groups or from anti-militarists. It is time to put aside our differences and work to save the endangered species that binds our groups together: the lead-based miniature.

There are currently bills in both the U.S. House and Senate that will, if passed, destroy the lead-based miniatures industry. The bill in the House of Representatives is number HR5372. The bill before the Senate is number S2637 and seeks to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act. Both the original Senate bill and this amendment are meant to limit danger to the environment by reducing the amounts of lead available as pollutants. Pertinent excerpts from the Senate bill follow:

Section 402, Subsection 9: "(a) General Restrictions—Except as provided under subsections (b), (c), and (d) of the section [Note: *These subsections refer to certain alterations to the bill that the EPA Administrator may apply after the bill is passed*], beginning on the date that is one year after the date of enactment of the Lead Exposure Reduction Act of 1990, no person may manufacture, possess or distribute in commerce any of the following product categories: . . . [Category] (9) Toy and recreational game pieces containing more than 0.1 percent of lead by dry weight." According to an aide of Senator Reid of Nevada, one of the bill's main sponsors, there is an amendment to this bill that would be added after "dry weight." It will read: "Exceptions to this bill will be collectable figures that shall be used for display. There will be warning labels attached to or printed on the packaging of these objects." I should emphasize that this is the preliminary wording and

may not be the final form of the text that appears in the bill.

Lead miniatures are made of a lead/tin alloy that is at least 60% lead. Several alternate compounds may be used, but few if any are desirable. Pewter is generally triple the price of lead. Plastic has the dual problems of permitting very limited detail and requiring large amounts of oil used to release the figures from the molds. Zinc is even more toxic than lead and is harder to work with. Epoxy or resin is brittle and has difficulty holding detail, as well as having the frequent problem of bubbles in the casting. None of the alternatives are good ones.

What can you do to stop this? You can let your senators and representatives know that you don't feel that miniatures are a frivolous use of a "toxic substance," and that you don't approve of the inclusion of Category #9 in the final Senate bill. This can be done by signing a petition against this inclusion. Be sure that you are over 18 if you sign the petition, or you can sign and have a parent co-sign in support of you so the senators can see that parents support the position of their children. You can also write or call the congressmen named later in this article. When you write or call these senators or representatives, be polite and concise; do not harangue or harass. These men look for input and are willing to compromise, as shown by their amendment. Last but not least, contact others who may not know of this bill so they can respond. These people include local hobby shops, other gamers, and diorama and model builders. Everybody has to get involved to make a difference.

The Senate bill was produced by the Committee on the Environment and Public Works. Currently, sponsors of the bill include Senators Reid of Nevada, Moynihan of New York, Lieberman of Connecticut, and Mikulski of Maryland. Subcommittee members working on the

bill include Senator Reid (the author of the bill and chairman of the subcommittee) and Senators Balkus of Montana, Lieberman, Jeffords of Vermont, and Warner of Virginia. To reach the subcommittee, you can call: (202) 244-6176; to reach individual senators, call: (202) 244-3121 and ask for the senator by name. Before calling, be sure you know exactly what you want to say and say it politely. Know the number of the bill, and be prepared to answer any questions the aides may have. House inquiries should be made to Rep. Thomas Lugar.

My opinion in this matter is that Category #9 should be struck entirely from Senate bill number S2637, and that any reference to hobby material should be removed from House bill number HR5372. While the threat from lead poisoning to the environment does exist, much more serious threats exist from products such as paint, old waste containers, pipes, and even tire weights.

If we request that hobby materials be exempt from these bills, a responsibility rests with us. We must make sure that none of the lead used in miniatures ever gets into our nation's landfills or gets buried where the lead can leech into the soil. If you ever want to get rid of your figures, they should be sold or given away rather than tossed in the trash. Broken figures should be fixed rather than discarded out of hand; if they cannot be fixed, they should be turned over to a local recycling center for disposal. Large armies may be given to schools or local clubs for use in displays, in teaching, or for gaming by people who want to use the figures correctly but can't afford them.

We can make a difference in our environment, but we shouldn't have other people's ideas shoved down our collective throats. Everyone needs to respond with his own opinion; it is hoped that we will prevail. If, by the time you read this, Category #9 has been withdrawn, please send

your thoughts in anyway so the senators and representatives know that we do not want this category added to any future bills. If you have any questions, call me at: (708) 336-0790; or write to: Ship & Soldier Shop, 55 Maryland Ave., Annapolis MD 21401, U.S.A.

Without further ado, we slip into the holiday spirit with some reviews of products that are fun to give as well as to receive.

Reviews

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

Black Dragon Pewter

c/o Gallow Pewter Sculptures Corp.
166 N. Franklin St.
Hempstead NY 11550

#616—Witch

Last month, we presented two pieces of pewter sculpture from Black Dragon Pewter. This month we review another of its pewter miniatures that is not necessarily a gaming piece. This piece was designed and sculpted by Cindy Sudano and presents a slightly different perspective on a common theme: the witch.

This witch figure is done in 54-mm scale, dressed in a long, flowing robe that reaches from shoulders to ground. The sleeves billow out and are wide and bell-like, having a well-defined gap for the inner sleeve with arm and wrists visible. The dress has a small V neck with a pendant visible. The dress spreads out in pleated folds after being cinched by a braided rope belt with frayed ends.

The figure also wears a long cape that stretches from shoulders to feet. On the back of the cape is a raised full moon with a face that seems to change expressions. The witch's hat is wide brimmed and has a faceted glass jewel. The figure carries a straw broom as if sweeping; on the top of the handle is a faceted glass ball. Her hair is long and straight, and her face is that of a young woman.

The figure that I received is fine in the sculpting department but seems to have some production problems. The mouth of the witch seems to vanish or develop a cleft, depending on how you turn the figure. A cat appears between her robes and cape, but the head of the feline is an unrecognizable blob with an unfilled neck. There is some pitting and areas that obviously didn't fill; there is also a lack of detail on the witch's hands.

I called Black Dragon and talked to

Cindy Sudano, who stated that they had just started using new molds, and I had probably received a figure made with the old mold. Just before press time, I received a new figure that was molded much better and was well worth its \$16 price tag.

Geo-Hex

609 N.E. Schuyler St., Unit #1
Portland OR 97212

GSFF series—Farmfields

Last month we dealt with the advantages of using Geo-Hex's Forest Floors (GSFL series) in miniatures games instead of trying to move miniature troops between standing model trees. This month we cover yet more ground from Geo-Hex, which has introduced the next in its series of terrain reproductions, Farmfields. These simulate the rough grain fields seen in modern or historical country settings or on agricultural planets in SF settings. Rough terrain can impede the movement of troops in miniatures games by as much as 50% (depending on the rules used), allowing defenders to gain more shots against slow attackers.

Geo-Hex Farmfields are printed on the rough side of feltlike material. This felt acts like Velcro when used with Geo-Hex and it grabs most other types of terrain. The crop rows are set down on the mats in different directions, so there is no smooth way through them except for the paths that border the fields and wander throughout. The rows of crops are also flocked so they give a plantlike feel when you rub your hand across a mat. The usable part of each mat is 12" × 10¼", unless you wish to use the outer section as a farm boundary. These fields also come in a version that has gray hexes superimposed so the mat can be used for games like FASA's BATTLETECH® game, though these mats have more value for historical or individual figure fights. The BATTLETECH game has few modifiers for rough terrain unless you're using tracked vehicles or infantry.

If you plan to pick these up for BATTLETECH games as anything other than extra scenery, these are not a good buy. If you play different time periods and different games, these mats are still expensive at \$5.95 each (\$6.95 each for the hex-printed Battlescape format) but can lead to some interesting variations in your game.

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

P.O. Box 37024
Cincinnati OH 45222-0024

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

70 Harcourt St.
Newark, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG 241 RF



1002—Sorceress at Sea 1004—Anti-Paladin

**** 1/2

Thunderbolt Mountain continues its ambitious plan of new releases with three pieces for December, two of which are featured this month. Both are in 54-mm scale and are made of lead. Neither are standard gaming pieces unless you use them as giants, but they would not fit any standard giant profile. They are, however, perfect for the expert painter or diorama builder.

"Sorceress at Sea" is a piece directed at the serious adult collector. The miniature comes in four separate parts. The base is a 1 3/8" circle that consists of a sea-floor rock pile with part of a serpentine body wrapped around it. The surface of the base is covered with a variety of detailing castings such as plants, a starfish, shellfish, and an open oyster with a pearl. Part two is the rear third of a sea serpent with large feathery fins. When you assemble this piece, note that the tail can fit to the base in two different ways and still look right; the tail should face forward with the fins up. Part three is the front third of the serpent, which should be attached to the base so that the serpent twists up and faces back toward its tail. The serpent's head reminds me of an aquatic dinosaur. The sea sorceress is part number four, a one-piece casting. Her hair is just longer



Anti-Paladin (Thunderbolt Mountain)

than shoulder length and flows to her left as if being blown by a strong wind. Her face has a stern, determined look, with high cheekbones, large eyes, and a partly opened mouth. Her left arm and hand stretch out almost straight from her shoulder; her right arm is down with palm facing up. The rest of her body is bare except for a loincloth-type arrangement, secured at her waist by a chain belt and being blown to her left in the same way as her hair. The figure's proportions are good, neither over- or underdone. The left leg is bent slightly as if mounting a step; both feet are on the rock formation. The only problem with this miniature is the slight filling needed at the base and an alignment problem with the serpent head and base body. The figure is worth its \$9.50 price tag.

Figure #1004, "Anti-Paladin," comes in three pieces. The base, part one, is a simple rectangle measuring 60 mm x 38 mm, a flat surface made to resemble a stone floor with most of a six-pointed star showing. In the center of the star is a covered brazier or pedestal. Part two consists of the anti-paladin's hands clenching a two-handed sword at the handle and blade. The sword is plain with oversized guards. This piece gave me a problem, as the arms to which the hands attach are slightly too far apart. Carefully figure out where the arms need to be, then slowly and gently bend the arms to their proper positions.

The body, part three, is by far the most interesting and is also a study in contrasts. The figure is wearing a full helmet with



Jabba's Place (West End Games)

studded cheek guard and large ram's horns. His eyes stare out malevolently, blending with the sneer on his face. The upper torso is covered by a breastplate, and his shoulders and abdomen are covered by overlapping plates with shoulder guards that protect the neck. His loins are covered by plates and chain mail that extend to mid-thigh. His boots are also made of flexible plates.

The anti-paladin's arms are bare except for large bracers, and his legs are bare from mid-thigh to the tops of his boots. Veins and muscle detail are good and clearly visible. The price is right at \$8.50.

I suggest that you trial assemble these miniatures before applying any glue. I cracked the left leg of my anti-paladin figure by attempting to bend the leg so its peg would fit into the hole in the base (I applied just a bit too much force).

I also advise painting both of these figures before assembly. They are designed so that you can get an excellent job without having to worry about overlapping pieces. I highly recommend both of these figures as gifts or special displays. As a parting note, please enclose \$1.50 in the U.S.A. for shipping and handling; Ohio residents should include 5.5% sales tax.

West End Games Inc.

251 West 30th St.
New York NY 10001

WEG 40310—Jabba's Place ****

In West End Games' STAR WARS®: the RPG, one of the best-known villains is Jabba the Hutt. This STAR WARS set, submitted for review, consists of seven humanoid figures and one very large Jabba the Hutt. The figures were produced for West End by Grenadier Models and are in 25-mm scale. They are made of a slightly harder lead than usual and are thus a little more brittle than other lead figures. These figures are not made to be altered, so be

careful not to break the figures in handling.

Figure #1 is a Twi'lek, a humanoid race with flexible tail-like appendages coming out the back of his head. The figure has muscle bands on the appendages. He is dressed in overlapping robes with an inscribed and decorated breast plate. The face is puffy, with ridges over the eyes and a double chin. No bare skin is visible except for the face and hands.

Figure #2, the Quarren, is also totally robed except for his hands and head. There is no ornamentation on his robe except for a woven belt. The left hand of the figure holds a blaster pistol and his right hand is positioned as if warding someone away. The facial features include tentacles and a triangular skull. My figure had flash between the arm and cape, with light flash around the head.

The Nikto figure wears a cloth cap with a rear veil, padded armor jacket, pants, and gloves. The figure is in an alert position with a pole arm in his left hand and a leather belt with a sword in scabbard around his waist. Laced boots come up to his knees. The face has overlapping folds of flesh with slitted eyes and floppy triangular ears. The body has good detail, but this might be obstructed by heavy paint. The facial detail is also good but not as deep as it could be.

The Lando figure is wearing smooth armor with a decorative breast plate. He is completely covered by armor or clothes, except for his eyes and the middle of his face. His helmet covers his head down to the neck and has a brim. His back has a ribbed vest with criss-crossed belts. His weapon is an electronic pole axe held at the port arms position. There are mold lines on the leg.

The Oola figure is an exotic dancer with no military hardware. She wears gauzelike clothing with straps on thigh and knee. Tight clothes cover her upper body and legs; her back is bare. She is a Twi'lek, so

she has head appendages. There was a little flash on this figure and some mold lines.

The Ephant Mon has a broad, flat face with tusks and a domed skull. The entire body is covered with a coarse, large-curved fur from shoulders to cloven hooves. The figure carries two blades strapped to his left side that, according to the sheet, are a vibroblade and a normal sword. There was some flash between the legs, but no other problems.

The Gammorean figure is broad compared to the other humanoid figures. The figure has bare skin from shoulder to glove and from below his groin to the sandals on his feet. His hands are covered by gauntlets. The rest of the body is covered by a jerkin with a leather belt. He wears a soft protective hat, and his face is broad, flat and shovel jawed, with teeth or tusks showing and a baleful glare on his face. He holds a vibroaxe over his head as if getting ready to swing down. There was flash along the axe handle, along with a raised mold line; mold lines appear along both sides of the figure. This one needs to be cleaned up.

Last, but not least, is Jabba. He reclines on a raised stone platform 60 mm x 26 mm. The platform has lines dividing it into blocks; sculptured stone heads with serpentine features extend out from three sides. From the top of the platform extends an armrest. Several throw pillows are present; Jabba's parasite/companion, Salacious Crumb, rests against his master's bulk.

Jabba the Hutt measures just over 68 mm long from tip of tail to useless left arm. His reptilian eyes are fairly well detailed but shallow. His mouth is smaller than suggested by *Galaxy Guide #4* from West End, but the flaps and folds of blubber are fairly right if a bit shallow. His arms are the right proportion as per the book and pictures, and his hands are folded together. The only problems with this figure are that it is too small compared with other figures, and the base needs work to make it presentable.

This set has additional play value. Only one figure has an obviously modern weapon, which allows you to use all the figures, including Jabba, as a chaos-type fantasy-races camp or with some stat modifications, as an off-race camp in AD&D® games. Collectors will have to work to get this set to collector status, but the price of \$12 is worth it.

GHQ

2634 Bryant Ave. South
Minneapolis MN 55408

#211 — H.M.S. *Victory* (100 Gun)

**** 1/2

During the mid-18th century, Britain had not yet earned the title "Queen of the Seas." Instead, she was involved in an ever-widening series of clashes with both Spain and France as each side fought for control of the seas and for the safety of their



H.M.S. *Victory* (GHQ)

nations and their colonies. Total victory would allow the victorious nation to bring her cargo from the outlying ports with fears only of natural disasters or pirates. The wealth from cargo helped pay for further exploration and more military forces. Much of this wealth also went to building floating fortresses with as many as 130 main guns and three or more decks.

The most famous of these British three-deckers was the subject for this miniature, the H.M.S. *Victory*. The *Victory* was built in 1765 and updated three times in her lifespan to keep up with advances made. By today's standards she was small, at only 226' in length and a beam of just short of 52', but packed into this ship were 102 guns ranging from two 68-pound carronades down to 12 pounders on the deck (Note: "Pound" refers to weight of shot that cannon could handle. It set the standard for British gun size in World War II). It was in

this form that the *Victory* served as Admiral Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar in 1805.

GHQ's miniature of the *Victory* is a multipiece kit. It consists of a highly detailed stern quarter that includes scrolling windows, window panes, and molded-on rear railings. The body of the ship has three rows of gun ports with support belts separating them. Stepladders for boarding are faithfully engraved, as are most channels, railings, and deck gratings. Four cannons are visible on the deck. The bow even includes the figurehead, recognizable under a magnifying glass as a lion.

Included in the sails and mast group are a mainmast, a foremast and mizzenmast molded with sails billowing, and furled lower sails. The spanker is separate but only needs two drops of glue to be attached to the mizzenmast. The bowsprit is a separate piece—but it is also the source of one of the few faults in this model. The bowsprit is not molded as per the illustra-

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CHRISTMAS



Blue Ardua (Lance & Laser)

tion. You must build the trailer and cross-spar it yourself. The brace may be made by taking one of the number tags on the sails and cutting it in half lengthwise. Glue this plate on the end of the bowsprit, joining the boat and the number side towards the bow; glue it so the short side is parallel to the water. Then take a piece of thin, solid core wire. Strip the insulation from the wire and cut the wire into three pieces, one 5/16", one 5/8", and one 3/8" long. The short piece is glued to the front of the plate, pointing towards the water; the second piece forms a spar about halfway down the first half of the bowsprit; the third piece is placed halfway up the end of the second half of the bowsprit. Don't be afraid to leave a small glue bubble on the spot where the spars join the bowsprit. Painted, these blobs look like hardware.

With the anchors and detailed lifeboats that include oars, this is an impressive miniature. Fully 3 3/4" end to end, it is a good model for either dioramas or use with Avalon Hills WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN™ or FGU's PRIVATEERS & GENTLEMEN™ games. With a little work and by following the enclosed rigging instructions, this ship will be worth far more than its \$7.50 price tag.

Lance & Laser

P.O. Box 14491
Columbus OH 43124

TALISLANTA T-004— Blue Ardua

**** 1/2

Recently I was given several packs of TALISLANTA figures by Lance & Laser for review. I was just a little lost as all I knew for certain about the TALISLANTA game was that it didn't have any elves in it (see, people do read ads) and it was made by Bard Games. I searched my store inven-

tory and came up with the *Chronicles of Talislanta* for background information.

The figure pack submitted for review contains two Blue Ardua. The *Chronicles* defines the Ardua as a species of former avians in the process of devolving into a race of land dwellers. There are two species: the smaller Green Ardua, and the larger Blue Ardua. These Blue Ardua figures measure 32 mm from feet to eyes, so they are either very tall or out of scale, with very tall being more probable. Both figures have thin, bony arms joined to the wings that extend from the wrist to the waist. Both have thin, protruding chests and muscular legs. Their heads have features that look like a combination of monkey and bird, with beak and all. Each figure has a crest that stretches back from where human ears would be.

Figure one stands with his arms raised straight over his head and his wings fully extended. In his hands he grasps a strange pole-type weapon with crescent-shaped blades at each end. These blades are lashed to the pole with rope or vines, and the central part of the pole is wrapped with the same material. The figure wears a cape that is draped from his shoulders and is secured by a ring clasp anchored to his breast plate. The breast plate is a skull of some sort held by a leather strap that joins to his belt, then drops over a pair of shorts held up by a chain belt. He wears smooth pullover boots that leave his claws exposed.

Figure two has the same skull and clothes, but these are not quite as fancy. Attached to his belt is a water jug and a quiver with several arrows. Unlike the other figure, this figure has heavy-duty laced boots with fringes. This figure also has a small loaded crossbow in his right hand. His left arm reaches almost straight out from his body, and in his left hand he clutches a crescent-shaped two-edged

blade. His mouth is open; you can almost hear a screech of defiance.

Both of these figures are made of a very soft lead. One bent when I dropped it, but the figure did not break when I bent it back into shape. There was very little flash, and the mold line was well hidden. Even the wing feathers were good. This package also has the extra benefit that it could be used as bird people in AD&D games, making a nasty surprise for your party. They are worth their \$2.70 price tag.

Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212

11-414—Chimera

**** 1/2

11-410—Firbolg

The chimera is an all-around bad apple in an AD&D game setting. Its dragon, lion, and goat heads make it a formidable opponent on land, while its large dragon's wings allow it to "drop in" on a party. This is one of those creatures whose appearances are best kept rare.

This chimera miniature from Ral Partha comes as five separate pieces. Its wingspan is just over 95 mm tip-to-tip, though the dragonlike wings are not fully extended. The wings have obvious and well-done vein, bone, and muscle structures.

The main body comes on a rectangular stand with molded details of plants and ground. The chimera's back half is that of a goat, complete with cloven hooves and short, wiry hair. The front half is of a snarling lion with teeth exposed. The lion's mane is layered in rows, the fur standing almost straight up. The monster's front right paw is taking a swipe at something, and the left is hovering over a plant. The wings jut forth from the back through the rear of the mane.

Also coming out from the mane are the heads of a goat and a dragon. The horns of the goat go straight back across the head, with the ears parallel to the horns. The goat's beard is bristled, and a hateful look is on its face. The dragon's head is turned forward; its scales are well molded with large belly scales and ridged spine.

The pieces needed some filing to fit correctly and to eliminate the few gaps that appear. You need to do some careful fitting, but the figure is well worth the \$6 price tag when you are finished.

The AD&D *Monstrous Compendium* defines the firbolg as being the most powerful of the giant-kin due to its natural intelligence and considerable magical ability. Firbolg are over 10' tall and weigh over 800 lbs. They have a clan society and operate in hunting groups.

The firbolg comes in a single-figure package. The figure has substantial weight (I know it's made out of lead) and size: 52 mm from base to top of head. This compares to about 28 mm for a normal fighter, so the figure is just short of 12' tall in scale. His shoulders measure about 22 mm



Chimera (Ral Partha)




Firbolg (Ral Partha)

across, about 5½' in scale. The figure is posed with his legs spread slightly, his left arm bent with left thumb hooked into his belt, and his right hand holding a 56-mm sword point down in the ground. The sword is double edged and two handed (for the giant), with a leather-wrapped handle. The firbolg's face almost resembles that of Santa Claus, with a well-trimmed beard and mustache (though the firbolg figure has very little forehead and has brows that stretch out almost level with the crook of his Roman-looking nose). The muscle detail on his arms and legs is excellent and comes close to matching the illustration in the *Monstrous Compendium*. His body is covered by an animal hide that covers from mid-thigh to his right shoulder, leaving the left side of his hairy chest exposed. A studded or jewelled girdle is worn in place of a belt. His feet and shins are covered by fur boots se-

cured by leather straps.

There was no flash on this entire model except for a small piece on the tip of the sword pommel. It is a model that I would highly recommend to anyone doing hill or mountain campaigns. The only thing I could say to Ral Partha is that it needs a

female firbolg figure for a family or clan meet. The figure is well worth \$6. 

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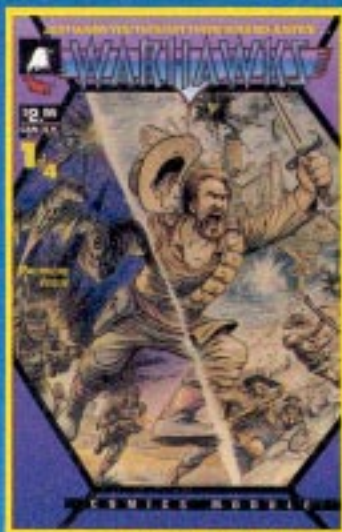
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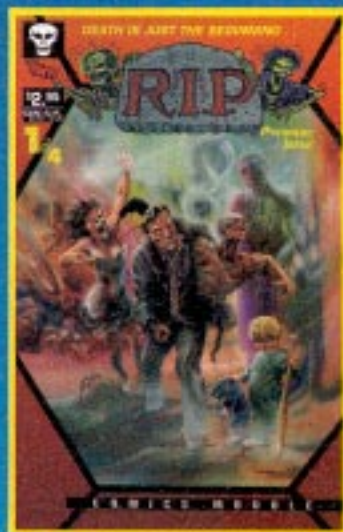
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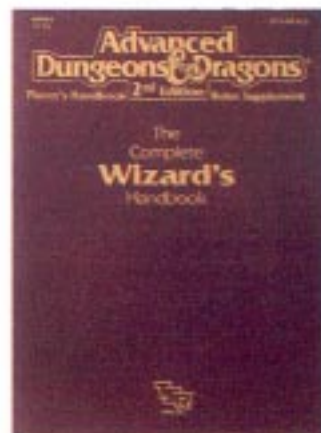
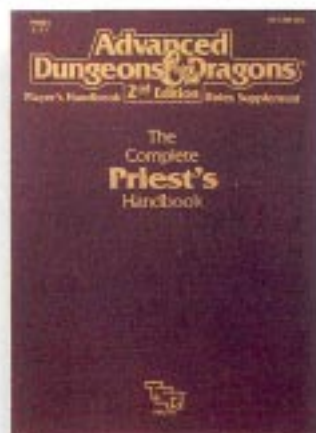
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