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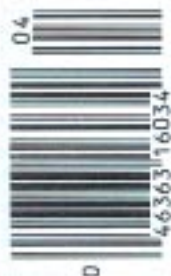
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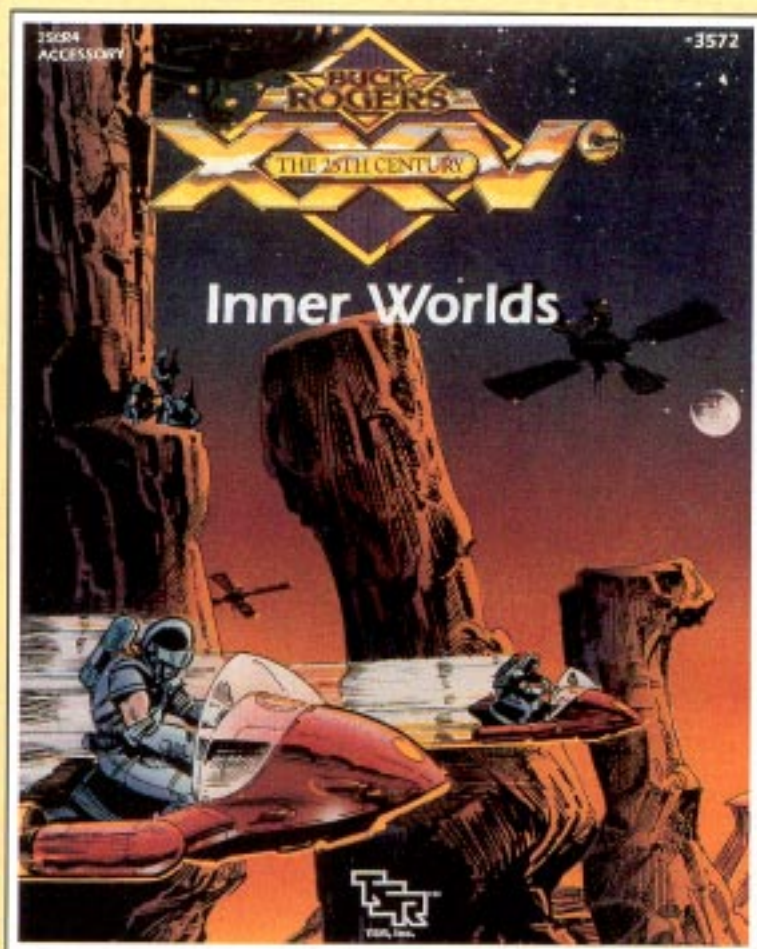
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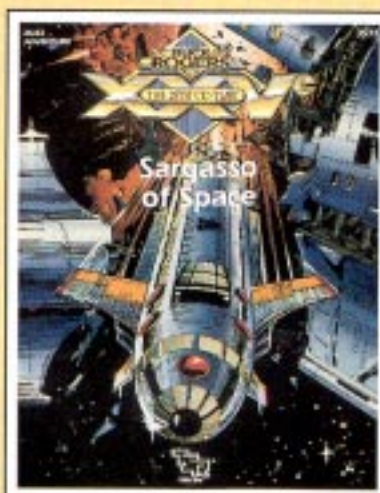
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(available in May): This 64-page sourcebook divulges the political and military secrets of the inner worlds—Mercury and Venus.



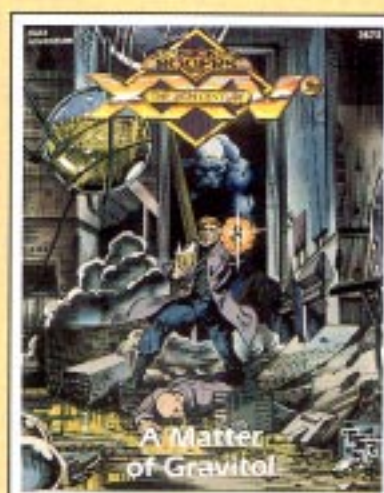
DEIMOS MANDATE

(available in February): Deimos, one of the moons of Mars, holds many RAM secrets. Explore these hidden reaches and strike back against RAM.



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(available in March): Fearless space pirates are marauding the Inner Worlds. Locate and destroy their secret command post.



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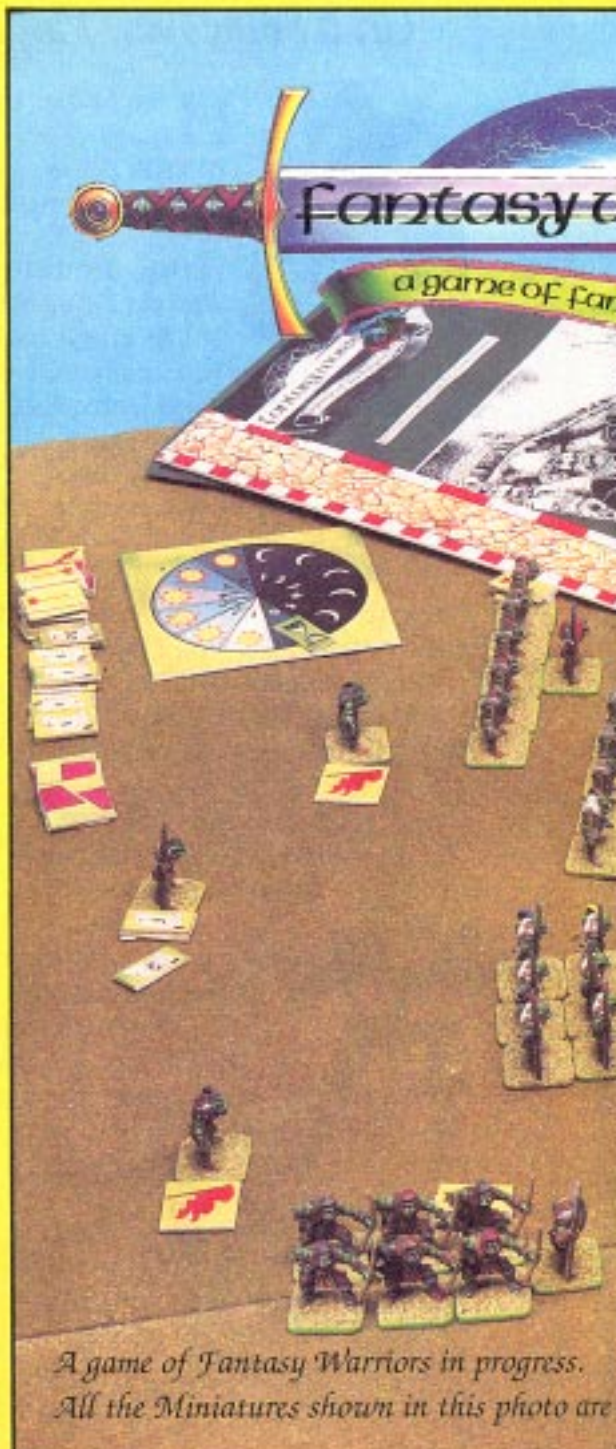
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Issue #168
Vol. XV, No. 11
April 1991

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COVER

Curiously enough, Michael Weaver began painting this issue's cover on the day the Persian Gulf war started—and he finished it on the day the war ended. The red dragon and its rider wanted to use the rocky perch for their own, but the perch was better defended than they'd thought. Odd how reality and fantasy come together sometimes, isn't it?

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 3LB, United Kingdom.

That time again

The following letters were actually received by the editors of DRAGON Magazine and, except for minor editing, appear as they were written.

Dear Dragon,

One of my characters is in love with a chaotic-evil wizard. What are the chances of him loving her back? I read your article on alignments, but I am still wondering. Please write back soon.

Chaotic-evil wizards make disappointing boyfriends, as any article on alignments should make clear. Sit down with your character and explain the hopelessness of her situation in calm, reasonable terms. If she refuses to listen, erase her.

Dear Dragon,

In a campaign I am now running, there is a battle going on. But this is no ordinary kind of battle. It's a custody battle! I'll give you the facts:

The whole custody battle is over an orc baby found in its lair by our fun-loving party. The paladin of the party decided he would bring up this baby in an upright manner so that this orc would be civilized and good when it grew up, instead of savage and chaotic.

But when the party visited the city of Ilbon, where they split up, Sir Ronis the paladin left the baby in the care of Andre Owganhowban, our neutral-good fighter. While Sir Ronis was away, Andre decided since he spent more time with the orc baby, it would grow to know him, and he would essentially be its father. During the many months Sir Ronis was away, Andre heard the orc's first words: "Me want sea gull!" Also, Andre named the baby Norb. Now Sir Ronis wants the baby back.

Both Andre and Sir Ronis make 200 iron pieces (my standard coinage) per year from their ambassadorial jobs for the city of Kulash, plus any loot they get while adventuring. Sir Ronis is unmarried, while Andre is married to the priestess of the party, Gwendolyn. There is also the small fact that Sir Ronis is under the protection of a guardian angel of sorts and belongs to the most prestigious order of knights, the Knights of the Moon.

I am hoping that these are enough of the facts for you to give me a decision.

By the time you resolve this entanglement, the orc will be old enough to vote in major elections. Just advance the campaign by 16 years and have Norb start adventuring while everyone else is still tied up in court.

Dear Dragon,

My party of adventurers has just slain a gold dragon. We asked the DM what we could do with it. All he knew was to take it to a taxidermist and get it stuffed. Isn't there anything we can do to make something? All we got from it was 50,000 gold pieces, and that had to be divided into seven portions. It seems that all that hard work was for nothing, because when we got back into town the gold got stolen. Isn't there anything we can do with the organs and guts?

A cookbook should solve the problem with the internal organs. Cooked dragon tastes just like chicken, so use any appropriate recipe. If you invite a party of paladins, rangers, priests, and dragon lovers over to share the meal, you should tactfully avoid discussing where you shop. You might wish to debone the meat, too, as even the least astute warrior knows there is no entry in the Monstrous Compendium for "Chicken, giant."

Dear Dragon,

Please pass the enclosed copies on to any experimenters who might be interested. I have sent copies to 12 SciFi conventions mentioned on the next to last page in "Analog SciFi." You are welcome to use any information that might stimulate further experiments.

P.S. Your experimenters, if they use this method, will find that the mentally guided psychic photography effect will enable them to see close up a space academy existing in a space empire controlling 20,000 solar systems. The time distortion effect can enable the users to experience the effect of apparently attending the academy as students, for one to five years, in an actual time of only half an hour. We could learn much about advanced space-propulsion engines.

[Extensive notes enclosed with letter, showing diagram of broomstick with loops attached allowing four people to hold it and generate "psycho-kinetic force."]

Mmm-hmm.

Dear Dragon,

My dad doesn't know much about D and D. He won 1 D and D adventure and says he is the highest level, the champion of all D and D, and needs no proof to prove it. Could this be correct? I say no but my dad says yes. I know a lot more about D and D than he does. I'm 12th level, he's 1st. My dad thinks 2 is great hitpoints. My dad thinks he owns TSR, and he also thinks TSR owns the tooth fairy.

Your dad is right on one point: We do own the tooth fairy.



DRAGON® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly by TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756 (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, United States of America. The postal address for all materials from the United States and Canada except subscription orders is: DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111 (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.; telephone: (414) 248-3625. The postal address for all materials from Europe is: DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom; telephone: (0223) 212517 (U.K.), 44-223-212517 (international), telex: 818761; fax: (0223) 248066 (U.K.), 44-223-248066 (international).

Distribution: DRAGON Magazine is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Distribution to the book trade in the United States is by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distributed to the book trade in the United Kingdom by Random Century Group and TSR Ltd. Send orders to: Random House, Inc., Order Entry Department, Westminster MD 21157, U.S.A. Newsstand distribution throughout the United Kingdom is by Seymour Press Ltd., 334 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AG, United Kingdom; telephone: **01-733-4444.**

Subscriptions: Subscription rates via second-class mail are as follows: \$30 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in the U.S. or Canada; £16 for 12 issues sent to an address within the United Kingdom; £24 for 12 issues sent to an address in Europe; \$50 in US funds for 12 issues sent by surface mail to any other address, or \$90 in US. funds for 12 issues sent airmail to any other address. Payment in full must accompany all subscription orders. In the U.S. and Canada, methods of payment include checks or money orders made payable to TSR, Inc., or charges to valid MasterCard or VISA credit cards; send subscription orders with payments to: TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 5695, Boston MA 02206, U.S.A. In the United Kingdom, methods of payment include cheques and money orders made payable to TSR Ltd, or charges to a valid ACCESS or VISA credit card; send subscription orders with payments to TSR Ltd, as per that address above. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. The issue of expiration of each subscription is printed on the mailing label of each subscriber's copy of the magazine. Changes of address for the delivery of subscription copies must be received at least six weeks prior to the effective date of the change in order to assure uninterrupted delivery.

Back issues: A limited quantity of back issues is available from either the TSR Mail Order Hobby Shop (P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.) or from TSR Ltd. For a free copy of the current catalog that lists available back issues, write to either of the above addresses.

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Second-class postage paid at Lake Geneva, Wis., U.S.A., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to DRAGON Magazine, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. USPS 318-790, ISSN 0279-6848.

No joke! Turn to page 21 and VOTE!

EDITORIAL

This is only a test

This is a test. For the next 20 questions, your magazine editors will challenge you to try your skills at editing fantasy-game material—the very sort of thing that we do all the time. You are allowed to consult any dictionary or TSR game product during the test if you cannot answer a question otherwise. The answers will be provided at the end of this editorial.

You may find that there is more than one correct answer to some questions, with some answers being more correct than others. Traps are included for the unwary.

If you have your paper and red editor's pencil ready, you may begin. Remember, this is only a test.



1. Give the plural forms of the following AD&D® game words:

a. <i>Allosaurus</i>	h. portcullis
b. ballista	i. samurai
c. cyclops	j. shadowperson
d. jermlaine	k. shaman
e. ninja	l. son of Kyuss
f. <i>Ornitholestes</i>	m. svirfneblin
g. phlogiston	n. violet fungi
2. You get an article that describes the original Greek versions of fantasy monsters from the AD&D game. The author writes that the original Gorgon was one of three sisters, each a medusa, and was slain by Perseus. You reject the article. Why?

a. Medusa was the name of the monster Perseus killed.	b. The original Gorgon was a hydra, not a medusa.
c. The three sisters were known as the Gorgons.	d. The original Gorgon was slain by Theseus.
3. Which spelling of this undead monster's name is the accepted form for AD&D 2nd Edition games?

a. hecuva	c. heucuva
b. huecuva	d. heuecuva
4. The best answer to the question "What is a Bohemian ear-spoon?" may be found in:

a. 1st Edition <i>Players Handbook</i>	b. 2nd Edition <i>Player's Handbook</i>
c. 1st Edition <i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i>	d. 2nd Edition <i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i>
e. <i>Unearthed Arcana</i>	f. <i>The Complete Fighter's Handbook</i>
5. You are reviewing a module submission. In a 20' X 20' stone room, the door is a killer mimic, a trapper is on the ceiling, yellow mold is on the floor, and the walls are covered with gray ooze. You reject the module. Why?

a. Two of the monsters will eat each other.	b. Two of the monsters cannot be placed in their locations.
c. Two of the monsters dissolve stone.	d. Two many monsters have been placed in a room that small.
6. Which species names are correctly spelled?

a. bullette	e. kopoacanth
b. coatl	f. oblivax
c. kaolinth	g. thesselhydra
d. kuo-tua	h. yuanti
7. Which idea for a module for DRAGON® Magazine or DUNGEON® Adventures has not yet been published?

a. Dungeon in the shape of a mobius strip	b. House built around a tesseract
c. Dungeon built around a klein bottle	d. Dungeon using time-travel paradoxes
e. Completely non-Euclidean dungeon	f. Dungeon composed solely of illusions
g. Dungeon based upon Lewis Carroll's <i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	
8. Which NPC is the most difficult to detail using the appropriate game rules?

a. Multiclassed 16th-level necromancer/18th-level cleric female drow with 19 intelligence and wisdom, a ring of wizardry, and a pearl of wisdom (AD&D 2nd Edition game)	b. Hivebrood hivemind that has devoured nine mages, eight clerics, seven fighters, six thieves, five elves, four half-lings, and three dwarves, all of levels 1-10 (D&D® game)
---	--
9. Which of the following monsters does not appear in an appendix of the AD&D *Monstrous Compendium*?

a. behemoth	d. colossus
b. gargantua	e. goliath
c. greater titan	f. leviathan
10. Which racial name from Oriental AD&D games is correctly spelled?

a. hengyokai	d. korobukuru
b. doc cu'oc	e. shen sao
c. shirokanukatsukami	
11. Which of the following words cannot be found in any standard dictionary?

a. ninja	d. psionics
b. orc	e. sorceror
c. scry	f. magus
12. You receive a module that features an NPC who is a 9th-level *spellfire* wielder.

The reference you need when editing that NPC's statistics is:

- a. *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures*
- b. *FR7 Hall of Heroes*
- c. *Spellfire*, the novel by Ed Greenwood
- d. *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*

13. An author has submitted an idea to you for an AD&D 2nd Edition module in which the adventurers must fight an alliance between a solar aasimon, a krakentua, Asmodeus, and Godzilla. What is the most important reason why you should reject the idea?

- a. The solar aasimon would never work with an alliance of evil creatures.
- b. Asmodeus, like all demon princes and arch-devils from the AD&D 1st Edition game, is not included in the AD&D 2nd Edition game.
- c. Godzilla is trademarked and copyrighted by a company other than TSR.
- d. The player characters won't stand a chance in the adventure.

14. Apply the appropriate trademark to the following terms:

- a. FIEND FOLIO tome
- b. POLYHEDRON Newszine
- c. CHAINMAIL game
- d. HOLLOW WORLD boxed set

15. Select the word that *must* be hyphenated:

- a. chainmail
- b. demihuman
- c. spellcaster
- d. greatsword
- e. freelancer
- f. roleplay

16. The AD&D 2nd Edition statistics for derro are described in which of the following references?

- a. *Monstrous Compendium*, GREYHAWK® appendix
- b. *Monster Manual II*
- c. *WGR1 Greyhawk Ruins*
- d. *Monstrous Compendium*, DRAGONLANCE appendix
- e. *WGA3 Flames of the Falcon*

17. You get a module idea that involves a nycadaemon. To check the revised statistics for this monster, you look in the *Monstrous Compendium*, Outer Planes appendix, under:

- a. baatezu
- b. gehreleth
- c. tanar'ri
- d. yugoloth

18. What is the most important element you should look for in a module proposal?

- a. plot
- b. length
- c. accuracy
- d. setting

19. You receive an article for *DRAGON Magazine* that presents a revised spell-casting and psionics system for the AD&D game, based upon "spell points." The system appears carefully reasoned

and comprehensive, and would take up about 25 magazine pages. You reject it. Why?

- a. Because it contradicts the official AD&D game system.
 - b. Because it would take up too much space in the magazine.
 - c. Because most gamers don't use any psionics system in their campaigns.
 - d. Because spell-casting and psionics should not be connected in any "universal" game mechanic.
 - e. Because a new psionics system has already been published for the game.
20. You get a D&D module proposal in which the characters are *polymorphed* into various small mammals (badgers, rats, monkeys, etc.) and must break into the tower of the half-elfen magic-user who enspelled them. The author notes that she got the idea from a book she once read, but she has changed the specifics to avoid plagiarism. You personally like the module, so you:
- a. Accept and publish the module as is.
 - b. Hold the module and ask the author for the original reference on which the module was based, to check for potential copyright problems.
 - c. Return the module, noting game inconsistencies but allowing for a rewrite.

Continued on page 16



Revealed! The Mysterious Life and Culture of the Silvanesti High Elves!

The elves of Krynn have always been shrouded in mystery.

Their lands have been invaded. But the time has come for the elves to return!

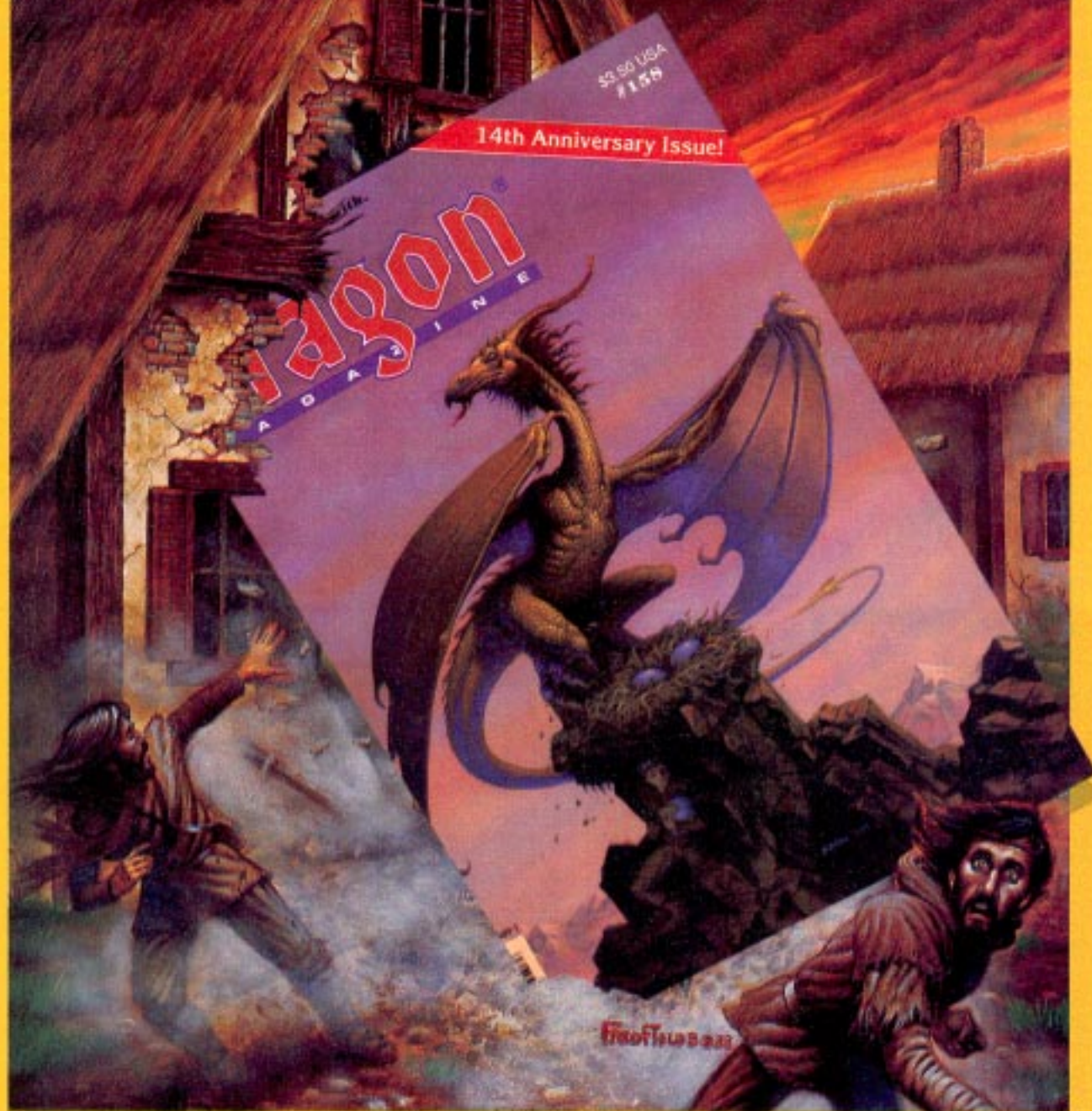
The Kirath are the first to arrive. They find landscapes twisted by magic, once-verdant fields now barren and gray. Next, the other tribes will follow. Join the Kirath scouts' perils as the Silvanesti reclaim their homelands.

Tree Lords is the first in a trilogy of new **DRAGONLANCE®** modules.



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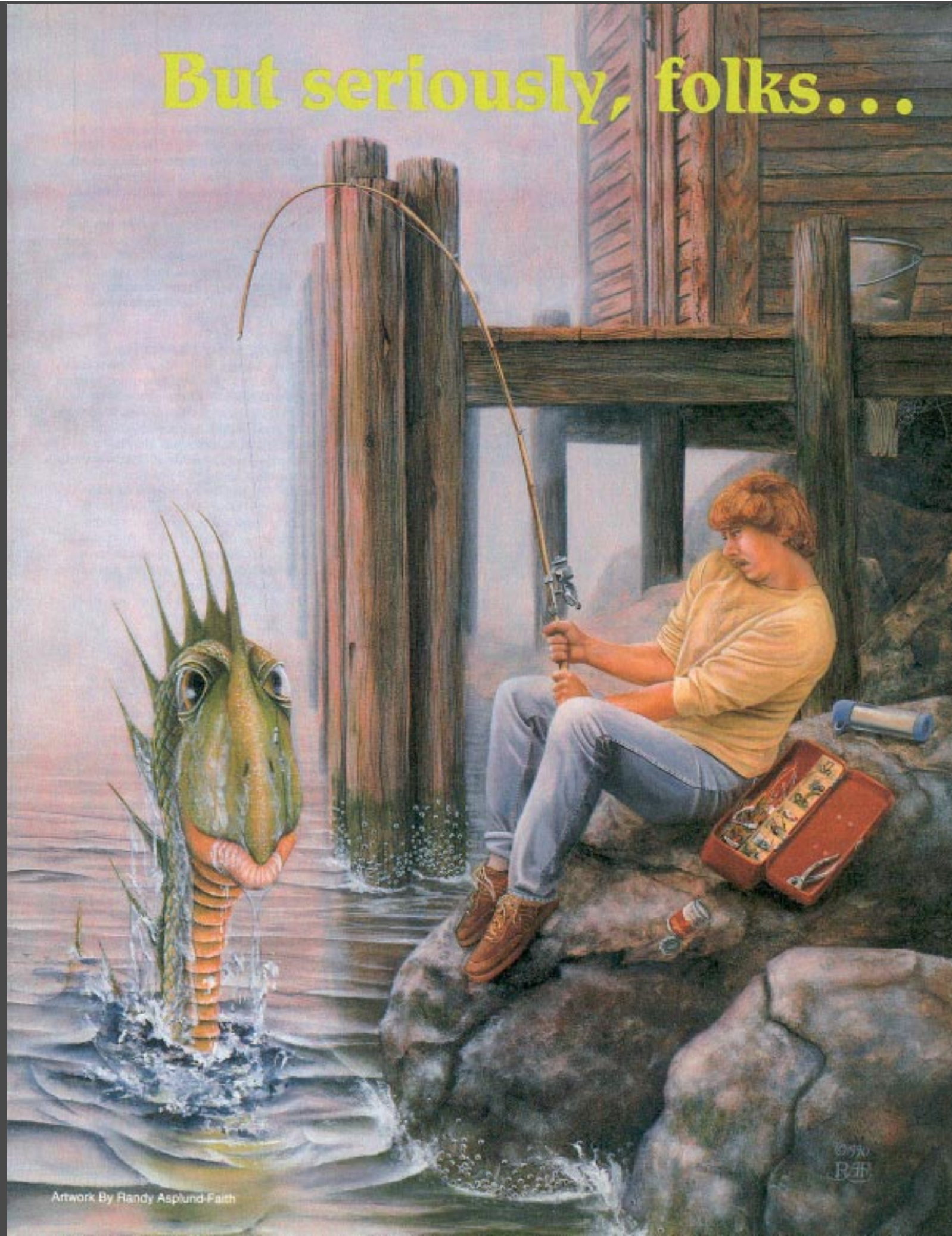
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But seriously, folks...





How to Role-play in One Easy Lesson

Lost? Confused? Need direction?
Then why are you reading this?

by Thomas Schlosser, Adalind Adventures

Artwork by Steven Schwartz

How many times have you gone over to a friend's house to play an fantasy role-playing game and have been thrown out with the dog when the other players found out you couldn't role-play? It's an embarrassing situation, and this article is here to remedy that. If you read this and follow these few simple rules, you too will soon name your characters bold, mysterious names and will see envy in your fellow players' eyes as your hero negotiates or does battle with the Dungeon Master's nonplayer characters.

Naming your character

Often, a player will roll up a great character but then give him an ordinary name. Joe the Fighter or Christine the Mage just won't do it for real role-players. Plagiarism is no good, either, as it seems like the world is full of Elrics and Merlins.

The best way to name your character is to use the Character Name Generation Table. Roll 1d6 for each letter of your character's name. This will give him a truly original name, like Jhusdhui the Cleric or Enhifhupwq the Thief. Think of the endless hours of fun you can have correcting your fellow players' pronunciation of your PC's name:

Leader: "Okay, Brian the elf and Jusdy will examine the throne."

You: "That's Jhusdhui!"

Leader: "Chusdwy?"

You: "Jhusdhui!"

Leader: "Tchoodsway?"

You: "No, you imbecile! Jhusdhui! Just like it's spelled!"

Human backgrounds

This aspect of the game is fairly simple. If you have a human character, just increase all his statistics two to five points and give him five to ten levels of experience before joining the rest of the party for his first adventure. Come up with a reasonable explanation for this, such as: "Well, Jhusdhui was born into a sorcerer's family but when he was 11 some barbarians from the local cable company came to his house and killed his parents for adjusting their box to get premium channels without paying for them so he killed them all single-handedly and mounted their horses and fled to visit the Monk of the East Wind who taught him all kinds of martial arts and made him wash his chariot saying 'Wax on, wax off' and then he joined the Imperial Marines where he specialized in lifting heavy objects and reading unattended spell books while moonlighting as a trapeze artist with some gypsies as he was studying to be a cleric."

This only works for humans, as demi-humans already get so many racial bonuses that only a complete idiot would choose a human PC without some sort of benefits.



Demihumans and you

Look, the only reason you chose to be nonhuman is to get those special abilities, right? Well, there's a price to be paid for infravision and strength bonuses. Demihumans cannot be played like ordinary humans, no sir! Dwarves should be played like short humans, gnomes like even shorter humans, halflings like short and hairy humans, elves like not-so-short humans, and half-orcs like rude humans. Here's how to apply this point:

Dwarves: When placed behind someone taller in the party's marching order, keep asking "What's going on up there?" and "What'd you see?" Also, get up from your chair at the gaming table and stand behind the guy whose character is in front of your dwarf. Jump up and down as if trying to see over him. Put your hands on his shoulders and try climbing onto his back as if to ride piggy-back. Put your

hands over his eyes as you do so, and jab him in the ribs a couple of times with your knees. This game is meant to be experienced, not just played!

Gnomes: When your character enters a bar, have him ask for a highchair. At the gaming table, get out of your chair and sit on the floor, so that your eyes just barely clear the top of the table. From this position, try to move your figures and roll the dice. Knock some drinks over and keep asking "What'd I roll? What'd I roll? Did I hit it?"

Halflings: Halflings hate to go adventuring. They are the ultimate couch potatoes. Just going to the post office is a traumatic experience for them, so you can imagine what they would be like on a journey to slay the evil high priest Glorak in the swamps of Mushtarga. If you have a halfling character, emphasize his displeasure at being dragged out of his comfort-

able hole and force-marched into whatever idiotic hazards the other heroes have chosen as this evening's adventure. A player with a halfling character must be an excellent judge of whines and have a full spate of them ready for any occasion. Here is a short list to get you started:

"A dragon?!? Oh, not another dragon! I just hate dragons. They make me have to run, and whenever I do that then all the buttons on my waistcoat come off and I'm forever trying to sew them back on!"

"We're going down there?!? It's smelly and I'll get my hair dirty. You guys just don't appreciate what it takes to get my feet clean!"

"No tea? How could we have run out of tea? I just can't digest these rations, either! Oh, how I wish I'd never come here."

"All of her gold pieces are bigger than mine! You guys never give me anything good when we divide the treasure!"

"Oh, this swamp is so muddy and icky! I had no idea the lizard-man king would live in a place like *this*."

"This riding is giving me bruises. Don't they make softer saddles?"

"The rations are gone! I wanna go home!"

Elves: With an elven character, you have to focus on motivation. Unlike humans, elves want magical items. (To a lesser extent, this is true of other races, too. Unlike humans, dwarves want gold, gnomes want gems, halflings want food, and half-orcs want it all. It is unknown what humans want, but it is suspected that they want all the other races to take a long walk off a short pier.) Have your elf try to acquire every magical item your companions find. If they won't give it to you outright, promise them outlandish things, such as 20 years of personal slavery in exchange. (Don't tell them that the 20 years will start 500 years from now. Since you live forever, or practically forever, they'll all be dead when it's time to collect!)

Half-orcs: Rudeness, abuse, and suspicion are the watchwords for players with half-orc characters. The other characters are all out to belittle your half-orc, steal his glory, and deprive him of his rightful share of the treasure. If they haven't done it yet, then their kind words and courteous gestures are all deceptions hiding something really nasty. Disagree with everything they say in an insulting fashion, and heap abuse on them at every opportunity. If this fails to bait them into revealing their true intentions, you must have your character strike first before they have a chance to strike him! When placed on watch out in the wilderness, have your half-orc give each sleeper a good bash on the head and ride off with all the loot and food. Insist on having him be last in the marching order to avoid being attacked from behind by his treacherous comrades. Under no conditions should your character ever, ever sleep. At the gaming table, back your chair into a corner so you can watch everyone at once. Always have your 1d20 in hand; if when you see anyone make a quick movement near his dice, shout out, "I'm attacking him first!" and roll your attack die.

Role-playing combat

Look, let's not beat around the bush. The DM is out to kill your hero, and that's that. You shouldn't let this get in the way of your role-playing, though. Whether you have a brave warrior who just got something in his eye and wants the other characters to go first, or you have a daring thief who unfortunately faints at the sight of blood and wants the others to go first, role-play combat to the hilt! It's not who wins or loses, it's how you stay alive!

Too often, combat devolves into a my-turn-your-turn dice-rolling exercise. This is unfortunate, as combat offers many ways to role-play. For example, if you have a

party of low-level characters who have just encountered 83 frost giants, having your character just drop dead on the spot is an excellent alternative to pointlessly rolling dice for the 11.3 seconds it would take the giants to grind you into fertilizer.

Whatever you do, take the opportunity to let combat help you define your character's motivations. If you have an elf, let the others go first and then take their magical items from their lifeless bodies. If you have a dwarf, let them go first and then strip all the gold from the dead and dying. If you have a half-orc, wait until there's just one party member and one monster left alive, then stab them both in the back and take everything. If you have a human, encourage the others to go first by praising their racial abilities, like so:

You [playing human fighter]: "Look, a frost giant! I sure wish I had infravision like you, Christine the Elven Mage! Then I'd really be able to fight him."

Christine's player: "Infravision?? What are you talking about?? It's daylight!"

You: "And you have all that magic resistance! Oooh, I suddenly feel weak! The giant must be casting a spell that demi-humans are immune to! You must save me, Christine!" [To the DM:] "I fall faint behind the mighty Christine."

Christine's player: "What the—"

DM: "THWACK!!! The frost giant hits Christine with his club. It's a critical hit! She takes 3,478 points of damage." [To you:] "His momentum carries him over Christine's body and past you."

You: "I get up and stab him in the back with my +5 two-handed sword! Don't forget my 18/96 strength bonuses!"

Goals and objectives

For some players, it seems like the only objective is to acquire wealth. Others want magical items, and still others experience points. This fixation on the numerical aspects of the game is a poor way to role-play. Your character shouldn't always be interested in getting just one thing or another. He should be interested in getting *everything*! (Ignore the motivations portion of this article noted previously. I hadn't thought of this part when I wrote the other stuff.) Also, remember that experience points and loot will be divided up among the survivors. If you're a cleric, try the following tactic the next time the party is engaged in combat:

Fighter's player: "I'm down to 13 hit points, Jusdy! Heal me quick! This frost

giant is just creaming me!"

You: "Do you really think I should? I mean, what if I need to heal someone later? Should I waste that spell now?"

Fighter's player: "Jusdy, you've got over five first-level spells left! Hurry up!"

DM: "The frost giant hits Joe for eight more points of damage. Joe's swing misses."

Fighter's player: "Jusdy! Help! I'm down to five points!"

You: "Five? Why that's more than I started out with! I remember when I was just a first-level cleric. How long ago that seems. I would have done anything to have five hit points."

Fighter's player: "Jusdy!"

DM: "The frost giant gets initiative and hits again for 18 points. Joe's dead."

Fighter's player [in a dying gasp]: "Jusdy!"

You [kicking the fighter's lifeless body]: "That's Jhusdhui to you." [To the DM:] "I fire my phaser and disintegrate the giant."

Your character's goals and objectives should be in accordance with his chosen alignment. If he's good, he should try to acquire everything he can so that some time in the very distant future, maybe on his deathbed, he can give it to the poor. If he's evil, he wants to keep it for himself, and if he's neutral, he wants to keep it until the time when he can figure out whether he wants to give it to the poor or keep it for himself.

The law-chaos aspect of the game is also a good source for role-playing material. If your character is lawful, you will want to come up with sound, reasonable justifications for his actions, particularly when he stabs the rest of the party in the back. If he's neutral, act confused and claim you don't know why he did all those nasty things, or blame it on "maintaining the balance." If he happens to be chaotic, tell the other players that their cars are being towed away, then change all their characters' statistics when they run outside to check.

Summary

Look, I can't tell you how to role-play every little detail of the game. I can't even keep the promises I made in the first paragraph of this article. In fact, the only thing I can do is promise you that if you follow the guidelines set down in this article, your FRPGs will never be the same. Ω

Character Name Generation Table

1d6	Result
1-2	Vowel: roll 1d6 to determine which one (1=a, 2=e, 3=i, 4=o, 5=u, 6=y)
3-5	Consonant: roll 1d20 to determine which one (1=b, 2=c, 3=d, . . .20=z)
6	Name ends



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while you pick up 1,000 marbles. The bag magically weighs only 1 lb. A must for any adventurer who is often pursued! (Manufacturer's note: There is a 5% chance per day that the marbles will spring free of the bag and roll about under the feet of the user. Use all appropriate caution with this item!)

Your Price: 3,000 gp

Merty's mystic mustard

Besides being a spicy zest for any meal, one serving of this condiment enables you to actually BREATHE FLAME! Yes, once per round for three rounds after partaking of this mustard, you are able to breathe a 40' long jet of flame that does 3-18 hp damage to anything it hits (save vs. breath weapon for half damage). Each clay jar contains enough for eight servings and comes in one of two flavors: Regular or Extra Tangy. (Warning: You must be careful to inhale slowly during this time, requiring a constitution check at the start of each round, or else you will toast yourself for 18 hp damage with no saving throw.)

Your Price: 3,000 gp

Merty's magnificent mattress

Do you have trouble falling asleep in musty, roach-infested inns frequented by

thieves and murderers? Does worry about wandering monsters keep you awake on long dungeon expeditions? Well, no more! Just sit or lie on this comfortable 3'x7' mattress with new COMFY-FILL® padding, and you will gently enter the land of Nod through the effects of a sleep spell (saving throws are applicable; roll once every round). When someone rolls you off the mat, you get up, roll it up, and carry it off—it weighs only 10 lbs. Pleasant dreams! (Caution: Do not operate any siege machinery, weapons, or magic while under the influence of this item. All restrictions of the sleep spell apply.)

Your Price: 3,500 gp

Merty's multiplanar mushrooms

After dining on one of these fresh and tasty treats, you will find yourself instantly transported to the Ethereal plane! You can stay as long as you like; you need only pop another mushroom in your mouth to return safely to the Prime Material. Merty's mushrooms come in sets of three, packaged in their own PAISLEY-TECH® decorated jade box. It's a great conversation starter at parties! (Warning: Encounters in the Ethereal plane are doubled when these mushrooms are used.)

Your Price: 11,250 gp per set.

Merty's mysterious mug

A great practical joke for all occasions! This item appears to be an ordinary tankard. However, when you fill the mug, give it to a friend or foe, then speak the magic word that only you know, one of the following things will happen:

1. The liquid inside turns into a vapor that will choke the drinker for two rounds (a save vs. spells negates).

2. The liquid becomes intoxicating, causing all the effects of a *confusion* spell for 3-36 hours (no saving throw).

3. The liquid turns so sour that the drinker cannot speak nor cast spells with verbal components for 2-24 hours (a save vs. spells is allowed).

4. The liquid secretly dyes the mouth and tongue of the drinker black. A guaranteed party starter!

Your Price: 800 gp

Merty's masterful mufflers

These color-safe, WEAR & WASH® earmuffs are guaranteed to protect you from

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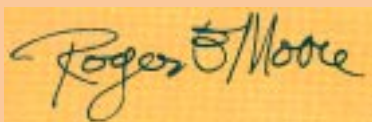
Editorial

Continued from page 7

- d. Reject the module (with a nice note) to avoid copyright infringement.
- e. Reject the module with a nice note because most gamers will find it too silly.
- f. Reject the module with a nice note because the characters cannot avoid the *polymorph* and are thus railroaded into the adventure.

Oops! We've run out of room. The answers will be printed next month in the editorial. Promise. No fooling. Really.

Until then, good luck on the test. And maybe you'll get an idea of what we go through every month. Cheers!



the sounds of sirens, harpies, annoying bards, and even the pestering of a spouse or loved one. Simply put them on, and no sound will reach your ears until you take them off. (They come in stylish red, blue, brown, or black. Please specify color when ordering.)

Your Price: 2,000 gp

Merty's munificent matches

These items appear to be nothing more than small wooden sticks. When they are struck against the FLAME-O-MATIC® strip on the side, however, they begin to burn. Quickly throw one at an attacking opponent within 20' (a dexterity check on 3d6 is required to hit the ground at the feet of the target; otherwise, the thrower drops the match at his own feet). On impact, the stick produces a 10'-diameter cloud of flame and smoke. Anyone caught in the cloud takes 1-6 hp damage and begins to choke and cough for the remainder of the round, attacking and defending at -2 on all rolls (a save vs. spells negates damage and choking). This device also makes a great practical joke to pull on your henchmen.

Your Price: 2,500 gp per box.

Merty's mmm-mmm! muskmelons

Each of these large fruits provides a nutritious meal for one person. Each is also imbued with special magic that allows them to stay fresh and delicious indefinitely. Furthermore, if you plant the seeds of one melon and give them sufficient water, each will sprout into a new melon plant in only *six hours* (no sunlight needed). Each plant will sprout 1-2 melons just like the original (75% chance for one, 25% chance for two). Up to six generations can be grown, not including the original melon. These beige melons come in cantaloupe, watermelon, and banana flavors; specify when ordering, please. (Warning: There is a 5% chance that any one melon will unfortunately cause some internal discomfort for 1-4 hours with no saving throw, during which time the eater's constitution drops to 1.)

Your Price: 500 gp each.

Merty's miraculous mistmaker

This item appears to be a hand-held crystal vial with a decorative triple "M" design on the front. When the crystal stopper is removed, the vial produces a 30'-radius cloud of thick mist that no sight or infravision can penetrate. The effect lasts for 3-18 rounds but can be dispelled instantly with a *gust of wind* spell. To recharge the item, simply fill the vial with normal drinking water and allow it to sit for 24 hours. (Warning: Do not allow crystal vial to break, or else bearer will be immersed in his own cloud. The vial makes all saving throws as glass.)

Your Price: 1,800 gp

Merty's mud masque

One jar of this pasty cosmetic will have

you looking just the way you want to in no time. Simply cover your face with the contents of the jar, and in five rounds your face will take on the shape of any visage you desire, straight from your own mind. Imitate ruling lords, famous mages, or even your own friends. *Merty's mud masque* will even alter hair color and ear shape, for those occasions when you need to look like an elf. A perfect gift for that special thief in your life. (Warning: The effects last for only 20 rounds and do not affect voice, body shape, or clothing.) One application per bottle.

Your Price: 800 gp

Merty's masculine macho-musk

A healthy application of this rugged, manly scent will turn any weakling adventurer into a hulking monstrosity with 18/00 strength. Furthermore, the scent acts as a *friends* spell on anyone within 20'. Not a scent to be used lightly! Twelve applications per vial. (Manufacturer's note: For some reason, female beings are repelled by this odor and will attack the wearer with intent to kill him if they fail saving throws vs. spells. The strength-enhancement effect lasts 2-5 rounds; the enragement effect lasts 5-20 rounds.)

Your Price: 1,200 gp

Merty's musical menagerie


Buried inside this magical leather bag weighing only 5 lbs. are all the instruments that any bard could ever need! Simply by reaching in, you can produce any of the following (roll 1d10): a lute, a harp, a mandolin, a harmonica, a horn, a drum, a tuba, bagpipes, a fiddle, or an angry giant rat (4 hp). While none of the instruments are specially powered, the *musical menagerie* allows the minstrel to have the proper sound for every occasion.

Your Price: 2,000 gp

Merty's magical markers

Do you constantly get lost in endless dungeon corridors? Do you hate trying to read maps by flickering torchlight? If so, then *Merty's magical markers* are for you! These colorful metal chips will save time and effort fruitlessly spent on trying to read a faintly penned map in the dark. These chips stick to any solid surface, and they can be seen only with the use of *Merty's magical membrane*, which we provide with every set. (The markers glow up to 120' away when seen through the membrane—no illumination necessary!) A perfect gift for the illiterate barbarian in your group!

Your Price: 1,500 gp per set of 12.

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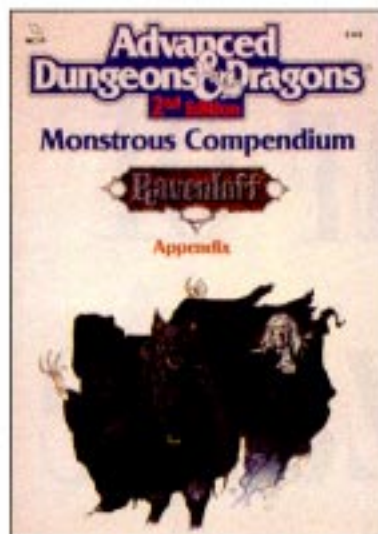
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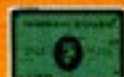
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Bazaar of the Bizarre

Booby prizes! Oh, you already have one?
That's a shame.

by William Wilson Goodson, Jr.

Artwork by Jim Holloway

One of the obvious pleasures of the AD&D® game is the acquisition of treasures. Every player dreams of filling his character's pockets with pearls and platinum coins. Even more exciting is the idea of finding a magical tool or weapon, something that will make your hero a power in the world. Of course, it is also an established part of the game system to put a few dangerous or confusing items in each dungeon. Just to keep everyone on their toes, I thought I'd mention a few of the booby prizes my friends and I have placed in our campaign's treasure troves. Each is an object of great worth to the correct person. But there might be serious problems if you take them at face value.

Mirror of sophistication

This wall mirror was the product of years of effort on the part of the archmage Hoovilian. He created it as a gift for his lover, Earthcul, and placed the following message on the back in the Common tongue: "Any woman who views herself in this mirror shall have her hair arranged for her best appearance." What is no longer widely known is that Earthcul was a dwarven princess. Any female human, demihuman, or humanoid who looks directly into the mirror will, in a single round, grow a thick luxurious dwarven beard, ready to be braided and decorated. After this first spurt of growth, the beard will grow at a rate normal for a female dwarf. If the woman chooses to shave, as an elfen or human woman almost certainly will, the beard will grow back normally. The effects of the mirror will wear off in $1d6 \times 100$ days. It may be removed by a *dispel magic* spell as if the mirror's effect were a spell cast by a 7th-level mage. The *mirror of sophistication* is considered an almost priceless treasure among dwarven women who are unhappy with their beards' growth; they might pay up to 2,000 gp for it.

XP Value: 50 (dwarves only)

Ring of ice

Hervmister was a famous archmage devoted to the cause of Good. When he had to enter the plane of elemental Fire to rescue a dear friend, he created a special *ring of ice*. It was designed to be used by any class and was activated simply by putting it on. This ring, however, was designed to protect against heat and flame never experienced on the Prime Material plane. If an adventurer activates the ring anywhere except on the elemental plane of Fire, he is protected from any form of flame or heat, but he also receives 1-3 hp frost damage for every round he wears the ring. The only way known to stop the ring from producing cold (unless one owns a *cube of frost resistance*) is to take it off. However, the cold produced by the ring is so intense that the wearer must make a dexterity check every round in order to remove the ring himself.

XP Value: 2,500

Elixir of additional weaponry

Every flask of this rare elixir carries this announcement in the Common tongue: "Whoever drinks this elixir will be able to use twice as many weapons as normal." What it does not say is that this elixir was created by drow worshipers of Lolth, the Spider Goddess. An individual of any race who drinks this elixir immediately grows a second pair of arms from the sides of his chest. These arms, if they appear on an elf, are fully functional and allow the elf to use twice as many weapons as he could with one pair of arms. If the arms appear on a character of any other race, they act in a hostile manner, taking off the character's armor, striking the character with his own weapons, or the like. Worse yet, the arms won't go away! A *remove curse* spell from a cleric of 12th level or greater will eliminate the extra arms on any character.

Any armor or clothing worn on the trunk of the body will be ruined when the extra arms appear, an effect that also causes 1-10 hp damage to the user if armor is strapped on. Any armor worn at a later time must be especially designed or modified. With the exception of the drow, the dark elves who worship Lolth, any being who sees a character with this deformity reacts with horror and loathing; surface elves know the origin of this potion and will attack on sight any elf possessing four arms. An adventurer who grows these arms loses half his charisma (never dropping below three, however.)

The drow will do anything in order to obtain a sample of this potion. A drow who gains the extra arms also gains great respect among other drow, but no other race. If an individual of any other race is found by the drow to bear this mark of Lolth, he will be put to death with the most painful tortures for insulting the goddess. Single doses of this potion have been sold to drow for 1,000 gp—if they don't decide to obtain the potions by more violent means.

XP Value: 500 (elves only)

Elixir of reduction

This mysterious potion's origins have never been determined. However, every sample found by adventurers has been a single dose in a small crystal flask. On each flask is engraved, in the Common language: "This potion makes my enemies nothing before me." Several adventurers have drunk the potion, assuming it would give them the power to defeat their enemies. However, it seems the potion was actually designed to be given to one's enemies. Anyone who drinks the potion is, in two rounds, reduced to one-tenth his normal height, with a corresponding reduction in weight (one-thousandth normal) and strength (now negligible). Only living matter is affected, not material items like armor, rings, etc. The potion's effects are permanent unless counteracted with a *remove curse* spell from a cleric of 12th level or greater. A potion designed to



cause growth has a 20% chance to restore a victim to his natural size; rings, spells, and other objects designed to magically cause growth have the same chance.

XP Value: nil

Scroll of transmutation

This scroll was written by the great spell-caster Otspatun. Mystics and scholars have known for many centuries that Otspatun insisted he knew how to create valuable treasure from dross. What has been forgotten is that Otspatun was a druid and did not personally consider gold or silver valuable. When the spell on the

scroll is read by a druid, it will have no effect on any substance but gold or silver. For 20' around the reader, all gold will be converted to mistletoe, an important element in many druidic spells, and all silver will become good, nutritious bread. The spells effects are permanent and unalterable. Any gold or silver magical objects automatically lose their special abilities. If the spell is read by anyone but a druid, nothing happens.

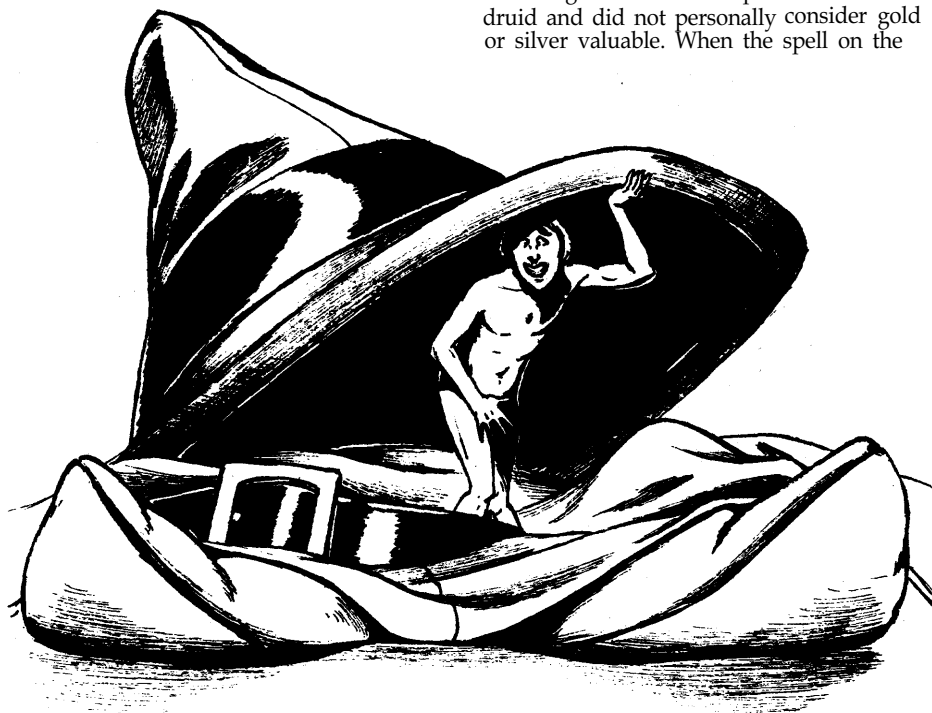
XP Value: 100 (druids only)

Orb of distant viewing

This is a small crystal that may be held in one hand. It was created by the mysterious dimensional traveler called Herman. All one has to do is warm the crystal in one's hands (paws, tentacles, teeth, etc.), and it will (or so Herman bragged) allow you to view his mysterious alien home-world. Many scholars and mages seek the orb to study it and its fabled view. Herman, however, was homesick for his favorite entertainment when he created the orb. All the orb can actually "tune in" is the dwelling of a Cuban minstrel married to a red-headed woman with a talent for humorous misadventures. Anyone viewing this scene will immediately be struck by *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter* for 10d10 rounds.

XP Value: nil

Ω



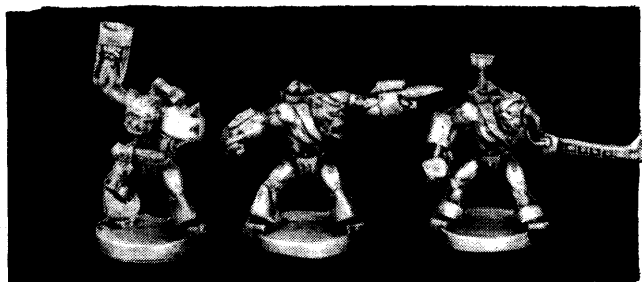
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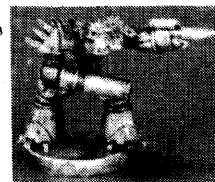
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Official Ballot for the

ORIGINS™ Awards 1990

Presented by the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design

The following are the final nominees for the ORIGINS Awards for 1990, to be presented at the ORIGINS '91 game convention in Baltimore, on July 5, 1991. The ORIGINS Awards are presented annually for outstanding achievement in adventure gaming. Members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design nominate products for the awards.

This page is your official ballot. If you are reading this ballot, you can vote. Vote for only one nominee per category by

marking the box preceding your choice. You do not need to vote in every category. To vote, simply fill in only ONE box under each of the following categories. Please vote only for products with which you are familiar. Then fill in your address and phone number, sign your ballot, and mail your completed ballot to: ORIGINS Awards Final Ballot, P.O. Box 3727, Hayward CA 94544, U.S.A. The deadline for the return of the ballot is June 7, 1991. Ballots postmarked after the deadline will not be

counted. A clear, legible photocopy of this ballot may be used, but send only ONE ballot per person. Each member of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design will receive a final ballot in the mail. There is no fee for voting.

If you have any questions concerning either the ballot or the Academy, please write: ORIGINS Awards, P.O. Box 3727, Hayward CA 94544, U.S.A., and enclose an SASE.

1. Best Historical Figure Series, 1990

- ☐ 15 mm Chariot Ancient (Stone Mountain Miniatures)
- ☐ 25 mm Ancients, Ral Partha Historicals (Ral Partha Enterprises)
- ☐ 25 mm Bretonnians (Games Workshop/Citadel Miniatures)
- ☐ American Civil War, 15 mm (Stone Mountain Miniatures)
- ☐ Jacobite 15 mm Ancients (SIMTAC)

2. Best Fantasy or Science-Fiction Figure Series, 1990

- ☐ AD&D® Adventurers, for the AD&D game (Ral Partha Enterprises)
- ☐ AD&D Monsters, for the AD&D game (Ral Partha Enterprises)
- ☐ Bridge of Sorrows, Denis Beauvais Vignettes (Ral Partha Enterprises)
- ☐ Star Wars Line, for Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game (Grenadier Models)
- ☐ AD&D Battlesystem™ Miniatures Brigades, for the AD&D game (Ral Partha Enterprises)

3. Best Vehicular Miniatures Series, 1990

- ☐ 1/1200 Russo-Japanese Ships (Houston's Ships)
- ☐ 20 mm World War II (RAFM Company)
- ☐ Silent Death Miniatures, for the Silent Death game (ICE)
- ☐ Space Ork Battle Wagon, 25 mm, for the Warhammer 40,000 game (Games Workshop/Citadel Miniatures)
- ☐ Swan Ship (Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures)

4. Best Accessory Figure Series, 1990

- ☐ 1/300 Hovels, European & Russian Villages (Stone Mountain Miniatures)
- ☐ 25 mm Hovels, Spanish Villages (Stone Mountain Miniatures)
- ☐ Castles box set, for the AD&D game (TSR)
- ☐ Jacobite 25 mm Accessory Packs (SIMTAC)
- ☐ Plains Indian Village Set, Hovels Plains War Lines (Stone Mountain Miniatures)

5. Best Miniatures Rules, 1990

- ☐ BattleTech Compendium, for the BattleTech game (FASA Corporation)
- ☐ Captain's Edition Harpoon, for the Harpoon game (Game Designers' Workshop)
- ☐ De Bellis Antiquitas (WRG)
- ☐ Fire and Fury Civil War Rules (Quantum Printing)
- ☐ Ironclads and Ether Flyers, for the Space 1889 game (Game Designers' Workshop)
- ☐ Over the Top rules, for the Command Decision game (Game Designers' Workshop)

6. Best Role-playing Rules, 1990

- ☐ Buck Rogers® XXVc™ game (TSR)
- ☐ Chill game (Mayfair Games)
- ☐ Hero System Rulesbook (ICE)
- ☐ King Arthur Pendragon game, 3rd Edition (Chaosium)
- ☐ Torg: The Roleplaying Game (West End Games)

7. Best Role-playing Adventure, 1990

- ☐ At Your Door, for the Call of Cthulhu game (Chaosium)
- ☐ Feast of Goblins, for the AD&D game (TSR)
- ☐ Gorgoroth, for the Middle-earth Role Playing game (ICE)
- ☐ Harlequin, for the Shadowrun game (FASA Corporation)
- ☐ Vecna Lives, for the AD&D game (TSR)

8. Best Role-playing Supplement, 1990

- ☐ Arkham Unveiled, for Call of Cthulhu (Chaosium)
- ☐ Angus McBride's Characters of Middle-earth, for the Middle-earth Role Playing game (ICE)
- ☐ The Aysle Sourcebook, for Torg: The Roleplaying Game (West End Games)
- ☐ Forgotten Realms® Adventures, for the AD&D game (TSR)
- ☐ GURPS Cyberpunk, for the GURPS game (Steve Jackson Games)

9. Best Graphic Presentation of a Role-playing Game, Adventure, or Supplement, 1990

- ☐ Angus McBride's Characters of Middle-earth, for the Middle-earth Role Playing game (ICE)
- ☐ Castles box set, for the AD&D game (TSR)
- ☐ Feast of Goblyns, for the AD&D game (TSR)
- ☐ Ravenloft™ box set, for the AD&D game (TSR)
- ☐ Seattle Sourcebook, for the Shadowrun game (FASA Corporation)

10. Best Pre-20th Century Board Game, 1990

- ☐ Doomed Victory game (3W)
- ☐ Kadesh game, from Command Magazine (XTR)
- ☐ Men-At-Arms game, from Strategy & Tactics Magazine (3W)
- ☐ New World game (The Avalon Hill Game Company)
- ☐ Republic of Rome game (The Avalon Hill Game Company)

11. Best Modern-Day Board Game, 1990

- ☐ Battle of Britain game (TSR)
- ☐ Code of Bushido game (The Avalon Hill Game Company)
- ☐ Days of Decision game (Australian Design Group)
- ☐ Eurorails game (Mayfair Games)
- ☐ World War II game (TSR)

12. Best Fantasy or Science-Fiction Board Game, 1990

- ☐ D.M.Z. game, for the Shadowrun game (FASA Corporation)
- ☐ Genestealer supplement, for the Space Hulk game (Games Workshop)
- ☐ Organized Crime game (Iron Crown Enterprise)
- ☐ Overkill: The Ptolemean Wars, for the Silent Death game (ICE)
- ☐ Silent Death game (ICE)

13. Best Graphic Presentation of a Board Game, 1990

- ☐ Battle of Britain game (TSR)
- ☐ Car Wars Card Game (Steve Jackson Games)
- ☐ D.M.Z. game, for the Shadowrun game (FASA Corporation)
- ☐ Genestealer supplement, for the Space Hulk game (Games Workshop)
- ☐ Silent Death game (ICE)

14. Best Play-By-Mail Game, 1990

- ☐ Battle Plan (Flying Buffalo)
- ☐ Duelmasters (Reality Simulations)
- ☐ Feudal Lords (Graaf Simulations/Flying Buffalo)
- ☐ Illuminati (Flying Buffalo)
- ☐ Mobius I (Flying Buffalo)
- ☐ Starweb (Flying Buffalo)

15. Best New Play-By-Mail Game, 1990

- ☐ 1939 World Wide Battle Plan (Flying Buffalo)
- ☐ Monster Island (Adventures By Mail)
- ☐ Legends (Midnight Games)

16. Best Fantasy or Science-Fiction Computer Game, 1990

- ☐ Buck Rogers: Countdown to Domsday (Strategic Simulations)
- ☐ Champions of Krynn (Strategic Simulations)
- ☐ DragonStrike (Strategic Simulations)
- ☐ Tunnels & Trolls (New World Computing)
- ☐ Wing Commander (Origin Systems)

17. Best Military or Strategy Computer Game, 1990

- ☐ Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
- ☐ Populous (Electronic Arts)
- ☐ Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse)
- ☐ Second Front (Strategic Simulations)
- ☐ SimEarth (Maxis)

18. Best Professional Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1990

- ☐ Challenge Magazine (Game Designers' Workshop)
- ☐ Dungeon® Adventures (TSR)
- ☐ Polyhedron™ Newszine (TSR)
- ☐ Strategy & Tactics Magazine (3W)
- ☐ White Wolf Magazine (White Wolf Publishing)

19. Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1990

- ☐ The Canadian Wargamer's Journal (The Canadian Wargamer's Group)
- ☐ ETO (A. E. Goodwin)
- ☐ Savage & Soldier (Lynn Bodin)
- ☐ Volunteers (The Newsletter of Civil War Gaming)
- ☐ Wargamer's Information (Rick Loomis)
- ☐ Wild Hunt (Mark Swanson)

The Award Committee has authorized a re-vote in both of last year's Play-By-Mail categories.

Best Play-By-Mail Game, 1989

- ☐ Family Wars (Andon Games)
- ☐ Illuminati (Flying Buffalo)
- ☐ It's a Crime (Adventures by Mail)
- ☐ Kings & Things (Andon Games)
- ☐ Mobius I (Flying Buffalo)

Best New Play-By-Mail Game, 1989

- ☐ Beyond the Stellar Empire—The New System (Adventures By Mail)
- ☐ Orion Nebula (Orpheus Publishing Corporation)
- ☐ Space Combat (Twin Engine Gaming)
- ☐ Supremacy (Andon Games)

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— Comments —

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FORUM



"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

As I read through the letters in "Forum" in DRAGON issue #161, I came across the remark by Lenny Valure that "A D&D® game is more like a fairy tale than some evil satanic toy? This is a very valid point, although it could have been expressed more directly: The D&D game is definitely *not* a satanic toy and, when played to its full potential, is a perfect extension of a fairy tale.

Long ago, before their meanings were lost through time, fairy tales were used to teach moral values to the vast majority of illiterates, much as parables were used by Jesus. Each tale was a depiction of one value or another, teaching us how to make the most of life.

When I am DMing, I like to try to run my adventures in a fairy-tale-like way. The people the group meets, the things they must do, the way things happen around them—all combine to form a story. Within each story, certain lessons may be found that teach the value, both inside the game and outside of it, of the traditional morals to be found in myth and legend: bravery, honesty, intelligence, tolerance, kindness, and, most of all, love.

Unlike Dan Pryor (also in issue #161), I don't consider demon lords and false gods as "questionable" subjects for RPGs. Rather, they can be used very effectively to widen the viewpoints of players and characters alike.

Consider this: One problem with the AD&D® game is that it contains a very strong "game racism," in that orcs, goblins, and similar monsters are seen as evil, period. They exist only to be killed by the "good guys." In my campaign world, the main evil powers are the demons and forces of Chaos, powerful beings who are not a natural part of the world and who want nothing less than complete control of the world and its subsequent return to Chaos. Goblinoids are often encountered as henchmen of evil wizards during the early stages of the campaign. But, as the demons increase their power and encroach upon the world, the emphasis shifts and the PCs find themselves fighting alongside orcs and goblins. The goblinoids then change from being dangerous, evil enemies to ferocious allies. The PCs learn about these creatures' cultures and personalities rather than how many hit dice they have. The PCs can even end up forming friendships with these formerly faceless foes. There are lessons to be seen in this, usable in the game and transferable to real life.

False gods are similarly useful. Also in my campaign world is a fanatical religion, totally

opposed to demons and Chaos to the extent that its followers turn against magic, nonhumans of all kinds, and other religions, persecuting them all. But the religion and the god are false; the real power comes from demons and the leaders of the cult who are possessed by or are servants of those same demons. Through their fanatical persecution, these fanatics will alienate demi-human races from humanity and split humans among opposing religions, making the demons' attempts to take over the world that much easier. From the point of view of the PCs, it is obvious that the fanatic religion is corrupt, but it still attracts large numbers of followers. Again, there is a lesson in this: Beware of religions that demand unconditional loyalty and obedience from their members or make unreasonable demands.

Another thing that Dan Pryor and others seem to consider questionable is the use of evil characters, but even these, if handled properly, can be useful. Of all my characters, just under half are evil, but there is not a single one of them who does not have the capacity for good. As these characters develop, they slowly become less evil out of necessity. They are forced to cooperate in order for the group, and hence themselves, to survive. They develop loyalties, too. The DM can also help things by allowing a slow change from evil to good without any penalties and perhaps by allowing an initially evil character to obtain his goals only when he has changed, slowly, to a good guy. After all, which is a better example to the group: a character who is lawful good and is expected to be a paragon of virtue from day one, or one who has, through years of hard times, seen fit to change under the influence of the group until he ends up fighting against the very forces he once served? That is what made Moorcock's Elric and C. J. Cherryh's Morgaine heroes rather than traitors to their respective peoples, and this goes for countless others.

In this age of microcomputers and advanced technology, we have forgotten how to dream and, through dreams, how to live, learn and love. This is the essence of a good RPG, as it is with a good book, poem, painting, or fairy tale. To those of us who are fortunate enough to play RPGs, this long-lost ability is returned to us, a gift that we should not waste.

I would like to end with a quotation I heard recently. I think it is from Nietzsche, but I can't be sure: "Be careful, lest in casting out your devil you cast out the best thing that's in you." It bears thinking about.

Andrew Cairns
Lancashire, U.K.

While I enjoy reading your magazine, nothing in it has tempted me to write to you before now. The article in question was the one by James Collier in DRAGON issue #160, on the problems associated with the defense of cities in a fantasy environment. Before I go any further, I think I should point out that I am an occasional

player of the AD&D game and that I have stuck to playing low-level fighter or thief types. All this means is that I am not familiar with the AD&D magic system. I have, however, played and refereed other systems and some high-level characters. I am quite familiar with the magic systems of GW's WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLE-PLAY* game and the PALLADIUM* RPG.

Taking into account the slightly different perspective that I have, compared to a more frequent AD&D game player, I think that a fantasy city in a world with extensive and widespread magic would be better off with "trace Italienne" or Vauban-type walls. The damage inflicted by magic is at least comparable to and usually exceeds that caused by gunpowder artillery. In the systems that I am familiar with, the range of artillery greatly exceeds that of most magic, but I do not believe that this is true in the AD&D game. At short range, magic is much more effective than musketry. All this, I believe, points to the Vauban-style fort as a more effective design.

In this type of fort, the high-level mages would be in the ravelin-fronted bastions along with the direct-fire artillery. Indirect-fire artillery could be placed in covered casemates to protect them against aerial attack. The glacis plate protects the curtain wall and bastions from direct-fire missiles (magical or mundane). Anyone storming up the glacis will come under archery and wand fire from the curtain wall, as well as fire from the bastions. Attackers attempting to climb the curtain wall will be under fire as heavy as anything achieved by artillery. Variations include chambers with loopholes in the inner face of the covered way allowing fire into the moat on the glacis. All this would force the besiegers to adopt the tactics of the gunpowder-era siege warfare—parallels and saps.

As a final note, the Romans, when building their wayforts, usually placed three ditches around each fort. Between the second and third ditch, they placed a rampart with a gentle outer face and a vertical drop into the last ditch. This made it easier to carry an assault to the main wall, but since the outer rampart was overlooked, the assault was under missile fire the whole time. The ditches broke the assault troops' formation, making it easier to deal with anyone who reached the palisade on the inner wall, while the vertical wall on the outer face of the last trench made it impossible for any defeated assault force to retire to its own lines.

Joseph Dineen
Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland

A couple of issues back, someone wrote in about the virtues of casting *polymorph other* on a *charmed* victim, thereby serving as better cannon fodder for the party; however, a few things were overlooked:

1. The creature is not an automaton under the control of the caster.

2. As specified in the spell, *polymorph other*,

no creature (charmed or otherwise) wishes to have its form changed and will construe such an attempt as an attack.

Following these guidelines, all a caster will succeed in doing is dispelling the *charm* and creating a stronger monster in the process.

Moving onto the AD&D *Oriental Adventures* book, it was surprising to see the lack of material on Oriental demihumans which, while adequate, did not try to flesh them out like so:

Hengeyokai (Carp): When in bipedal form, it will appear as a humanoid fish-man; however, its relatively human shape means it cannot swim except using the normal swimming rules. In spite of this, it still retains gills, so this character will have no problem breathing underwater. This is particularly useful for DMs interested in Oriental underwater campaigns.

Hengeyokai (Monkey): In animal form, its shape is still humanlike, and most importantly, it retains opposable thumbs. There is no reason why such a character cannot employ a weapon appropriate to its size (e.g., dagger, hand axe, blowgun, or even weapons employed by atomies, sprites, etc.). Of course, if the hengeyokai is not proficient in the weapon, he suffers the appropriate penalties. Such a character can climb and swing through trees at a movement rate of 6".

Hengeyokai (Crane): Maneuverability class C.
Hengeyokai (Cat): Unaffected by confusion spells.

Hengeyokai (Duck): Maneuverability class B.

Hengeyokai (Raccoon Dog): This character can climb and move through trees at 6".

Hengeyokai (Rat): When in animal form, its bite has a 5% chance of transmitting a serious disease unless a save vs. poison is made by the victim. In the western world, these hengeyokai will probably be mistaken for (and be attacked as) werewolves. In either of their rat forms, these beings will receive a favorable reaction when encountering xverts or jermlaine.

Hengeyokai (Sparrow): Maneuverability class A.

The lack of any multiclass possibilities is disappointing, as this would add diversity to the game. All hengeyokai can be multiclassed as wu-jen/shukenja or kensai/shukenja. Single-classed wu-jen or shukenja can rise two levels higher than listed in the OA book. Other types of hengeyokai, such as the tiger, might also exist.

Finally, a few things that should be clarified. The movement rate of the korobokuru is 9". White sohei do cast shukenja spells; they are clerics in their own right, albeit militant ones. They can wear any armor while spell-casting and gain the spell bonuses for high wisdom just as shukenja do.

Jules Jones
London, U.K.

I know it's ancient history (DRAGON issue #135), but I would still like to comment on Sherri Gilbert's wonderful work in "When Game Masters Go Bad." This was a work of pure genius. The examples given were entirely exhilarating. Many evenings have been ruined by occurrences such as the following.

One of my fellow DMs actually killed off an entire group of adventurers because another player's mom was there, and the DM just didn't feel comfortable with her participating. From what I understand, they were not even allowed a saving throw!

Many people would love for their parents to take an interest in their AD&D games. What better way to wash away any doubts caused by misinformation about the AD&D game or even about your friends who play the game? This would allow your parents the chance to meet

your friends and learn a little about your favorite game. If all of our parents could sit in on just one evening of play, they could see that the game is not in any way condoning devil worship or evil, and that our friends are not murderous psychopathic miscreants.

Another DM friend of mine constantly picks on one of his players. While the rest of the party is spoiling itself in the Fat District just south of Healthy Street, this poor soul is trying to sleep on a bamboo roof in the rain. If he is extremely fortunate, he may be allowed to don gaudy clothing stolen from a freshly slain peasant with body odor and fleas, or to land himself in jail for vagrancy. Despite repeated attempts at playing several different characters intelligently, the player has nearly always found them stifled into lives of poverty, eating only scraps that the dogs have missed on the muddied streets or in sickening slums.

When I was the DM, the same player played a paladin whose motivation rallied the entire party into adventures that have achieved near-legendary status. He has played the character with inspiration. This good character is presently residing in the jailhouse of Pontswain, Gwennynth—Moonshae, on a ground floor cell with his friend, a 2nd-level ranger. They are awaiting trial for poaching in the northern regions of the Llyrath forest. (The charges have been trumped up. No offense, Donald.)

The Royal Magistrate of Pontswain has already informed them that they will both be given a fair trial before they are hung. The bars are easily bent outward, accommodating escape for any creature smaller than Leviathan. Two halfling thieves previously escaped from the same cell and have given the paladin the keys to his cell. So here he sits, dangling a ring of keys on his first finger, while all of both character's equipment sits enticingly in an unlocked crate less than 5' from them. (Pontswain's legal system is rather outdated, even by Moonshae standards, and the authorities are hoping the characters will escape, thus saving the time and expense of a trial and hanging.)

Ask the paladin any question, and all he has to say is: "I am a Knight of the Thorndyke Thirteen, and I demand to see my lawyer!" (He is thoroughly convinced that a knight with his unstained credentials is quite above the laws of this, or any, tiny community. The authorities have even denied him his one letter.)

This example is just one of the many hilarious scenarios that we have experienced in our recent gaming. I can't even begin to tell you about the only bard in my game. His name was Chitaron Vipmore "The Great," until an incredibly embarrassing incident. He now answers to Chitaron "The Good." The stories, songs, and poetry that he relates have been banned in all but three regions of Moonshae, and people generally pay him large sums of gold or set great feasts out for his dining pleasure. (They give him coin only if he agrees to leave immediately, and they bring him food only after he promises to eat in silence!)

On a recent adventure, Chitaron fell down a flight of steps (i.e., was pushed), and all his breakable items were forced to make saving throws. To the dismay of all but six of the characters, his wooden flute did not survive the tumble. (Seven characters were participating.)

It is so much more enjoyable playing the AD&D game when the DM is there to have as much fun as the players. Many of the games that I have refereed don't even require combat rolls! We start having so much fun, I forget to put monsters in. I use them only when the story line drags or a great relic is involved.

But more to the point, my question to Sherri is this: What do you do when *players* go bad?

What do you do about the player who contests every decision made by the DM who is trying to create a memorable, smooth-running campaign? What about the player who constantly cheats or flagrantly disobeys alignment codes even after being penalized repeatedly? Can a character actually die from excessive loss of experience points (negative levels) due to alignment changes?

I have several players who used to refuse to play any but the most perfect characters. One low score and they would cry for an hour. If it was up to these guys, they would (and usually did) have all 18s or higher!

I began creating characters with little problems. No missing limbs or eyes or anything, just minor difficulties, like a near-sighted dwarf or a cleric with a case of the sniffles. I usually made the problems temporary or at least curable. I have found that most fun-loving players don't bother to repair minor difficulties as long as the affectations contributed to the game. It helped the player to identify with their characters, and it has made for more memorable gaming sessions. I also experimented with several ways of coaxing players into portraying their characters more realistically according to alignment, race, family history, and past experiences.

I have, in effect, eliminated many of the forms of cheating that at one time threatened to put an end to our games. It has taken a bit of time, but I have even convinced some of our former super-character players that playing an underdog character is much more interesting, challenging, and rewarding.

I must admit that a few of the more bull-headed players have gone their own ways because of my attempts to create more interesting scenarios, sometimes at the expense of their superhuman (and superdemihuman) characters' precious pride. To these people I say: "Good riddance! You have disrupted my game far too long with your 1st-level, all 18s, immune to everything, drow elven ranger/paladin/ninjamaster of Shenanju karate, double-specialized in any weapon he chooses to pick up today. Good-bye to you, and when you leave, please take your followers and familiars with you!" The latter we will not even discuss.

Once we get the players interested, they begin creating more personalized characters worthy of the beautiful worlds that we as Dungeon Masters have created, rather than point-mongering and creating characters by combining all of the best statistics from the AD&D 1st Edition game, *Unearthed Arcana*, *Oriental Adventures*, *DRAGON Magazine*, and the AD&D 2nd Edition game.

Scott M. McDowell
West Branch MI

I am writing about a problem that has been a difficult question for a lot of people. (Some of the things I have heard are really amusing.) It concerns the danger involved in fighting a dragon and the capabilities of dragons.

It has been stated before that dragons should be a lot tougher to defeat. This may be true, but making them tougher involves the way they are played, not how powerful they are. Dragons are already powerful enough. The only thing that I would suggest a change in is their mobility. This is explained later.

Some dragons will have informants working for them. A dragon would not use these informants if they were of no use to him. They insure him against ever being caught asleep or off guard and also help whittle the intruders down

to easy prey before they reach the dragon.

Many dragons will obviously be loners, staying away from civilization and contact with intelligent creatures. These will not need spies to alert them. They will be alerted to the presence of intruders long before there is any threat. Think how hard it is for a group of people to actually surprise a bear or elk. Yes, it can be done; I've done it. It usually doesn't happen though, and you have to remember that dragons are very intelligent.

Most dragons that are encountered in a fantasy campaign are found in the most inaccessible and dangerous terrain. A dragon should be found in all types of terrain, including the most accommodating—especially the most accommodating. Dragons are very large and have very large appetites. They have to live close enough to good hunting ground to survive.

Many people would say that terrain such as a flat, temperate forest would not give a dragon enough protection. These people would be wrong. There are dozens of ways to camouflage a very large hole in such a woods. Even finding the place would be difficult if there are no landmarks. Even if the party did not get lost, it would certainly be confused as to the locations of areas in the woods.

The dragon's lair doesn't even need to be hidden. The presence of several miners' cabins around it would tell people that the lair was simply a mine tunnel. There could even be an ancient road leading right up to it. If this was the case, the dragon would simply spread the idea that the mine was unsafe and contained nothing of value.

If a group was perceptive enough, it would instantly recognize tell-tale signs of a lair. There would be trampled grass, bloodstains, perhaps even carcasses and a few items of value that were overlooked by the dragon. These, however, would be few, since an intelligent dragon would keep a very deceptive exterior. He might even stay in *polymorphed* form when right outside the lair.

Once at the entrance to a lair, if the party was skillful or lucky enough to get that far, the opening would probably drop away in a sheer and smooth cliff face. It would spread out rapidly as it dropped to the floor far below. This prevents characters from easily gaining access to the lair. It would be ideal for the dragon, however, because he is a creature of the air. I'm not even going to cover the perils inside the lair, but they should surpass even the predictions of the worst pessimist.

The modes of a dragon's attacks and defense are where most game referees fail the most. A dragon never considers fighting a land battle unless he is so crippled he can't fly. He is a creature of the air. The land is his enemies' turf, and he would be playing to their advantage to stay on the ground. This is not to say that a dragon couldn't maneuver like a large powerful snake with wings. He is probably very hard even to catch. After all, his back legs could propel him fantastic distances as if jumping. He has used them for leaping to the air all of his life.

Regardless of a dragon's mobility on the earth, he is an undisputed king in the air. His wing structures are very similar to a bat's. This leads to a powerful combination of speed and ability. Yes, dragons are large, the largest creatures in the world, but a dragon's size should not matter if he is proportioned right. This would only matter if the dragon flies into a tight area, and dragons are too smart to do this very often.

Dragons, while very large, are not bulky. Their forms are sleek and snakelike. Thus, a

dragon is astoundingly mobile in whatever terrain he is in. While attacking, a dragon would soar to great heights. When his actual attack came, he would bullet toward his prey at incredible speeds, twisting and rolling to avoid much of the projectile fire he would draw. With his prey dead ahead, he would cut loose a barrage of claws, teeth, spines, and spells. He would pack in as many of these attacks as possible, and at the last second cut away. This might be followed by more strikes immediately or by a breakaway to reconsider his strategy.

A creature such as a dragon would never fight to the death unless he absolutely had to or knew it would be the best he could do for a cause he was fighting for. If a dragon was severely wounded, he might even wait long periods of time to lull the PCs into security before attacking. Then his attacks would be a confusing mixture of bold fury and cunning subtlety. Remember, time means much less to a long-lived dragon, and he has many other treacherous ways to gain what he wants: feigning death, attacking in an alternate form, terrorizing surprise, plagues of "accidents," poisoning, and even a host of other interesting irritations such as *charms* and *quests*.

Dragons are very powerful and interesting creatures; they should be defeated only through a great deal of cunning and skill. A strong show of ability is very helpful, but it shouldn't take a tremendously powerful group of characters to defeat them, nor should it be impossible for low-level characters to succeed. This should be done only through a constant play of techniques to disable the dragon and force him to fight to his worst possible disadvantage.

Jasen Cooper
Bozeman MT

Dinosaur—The very name conjures up swamp-bound, overgrown, stupid, doomed-to-extinction, cold-blooded lizards. I am writing to DRAGON Magazine to change this view of the dinosaur. I enjoy role-playing and DMing AD&D games and have been doing so for the past eight years. It still makes my blood boil, however, to look at the dinosaurs so horribly depicted in both AD&D 1st Edition *Monster Manuals*. In recent years, new studies on these ancient animals have enlightened scientists with a wealth of extraordinary information on these unique animals. I suggest a major rules change for all dinosaurs so as update them and to make a much more exciting campaign or adventure using these wonderful animals.

My first suggestion is to redefine the word "dinosaur." The *Monster Manual* states: "Dinosaurs are reptiles. . . . It must be born in mind that these reptiles are extremely stupid. Their motivation is primarily hunger. . . ." This definition is not only outdated but also wrong. In light of new theories on dinosaurs, scientists have found them to be warm-blooded, intelligent, gregarious, parental, flashy, and (most surprising of all) the ancestors of birds. With all due respect to these unique animals, I suggest scrapping the old definition and changing it to this: "Dinosaurs were a group of animals that belonged to none of the modern animal groups. They were colorful, warm-blooded animals, ranged in size from tiny (sparrow-sized) to incredibly large (around the size of the blue whale). Many small dinosaurs were feathered, and many cared for their young. The large herbivores herded together in dry, upland forests. Packs of large and small flesh-eating varieties followed these great herds in search of prey. Most dinosaurs lived in subtropical or temperate climates, but some lived in colder or

warmer areas. They all avoided swampland." With this redefinition, we can now proceed to change other dinosaur stats.

Intelligence: Large herbivores should have at least animal intelligence, whereas all predatory dinosaurs should fall somewhere between semi- and low intelligence. No dinosaurs were nonintelligent!

Color: Dinosaurs were rainbow-hued animals and had incredible territorial and mating displays. Dinosaurs smaller than or equal to man size will be feathered, with the smallest dinosaurs having the brightest feathers.

Here are some specific suggestions on changes of specific dinosaurs:

Duck-billed dinosaurs and sauropods: These dinosaurs were not aquatic and lived instead in dry, upland areas where they grazed on pine trees and the like. No sauropod ever submerged itself in a swamp or lake, and neither did the duck-bills.

Tyrannosaurs: These large predators were quick and agile, and worked together in groups to bring down large prey such as *Triceratops*.

I hope that these suggested changes can make dinosaurs more of a challenge and a more interesting opponent in all D&D games. Some suggested reading material on dinosaurs are: *Predatory Dinosaurs of the World*, by Gregory S. Paul; *The Dinosaur Heresies* by Robert T. Bakker; and *Archosauria: A New Look at the Old Dinosaur*, by John C. McLaughlin. All have excellent artwork and are very interesting.

Long live dinosaurs!

Matt Bonnan
Roselle IL

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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) 246-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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SPRING OFFENSIVE II, April 12-14

Formerly GAME FAIR, this Illinois Central College convention will be held in East Peoria, Ill. Events include Napoleonic, ADEPTUS TITANICUS*, American Civil War miniatures, CHILL*, and other role-playing, miniatures, and board games. Registration: \$5/weekend or \$3/day, plus \$1 per game. Write to: Tri-County Gaming Assoc., 116 Walnut St., Washington IL 61751; or call: (309) 444-4640.

TECHNICON 8, April 12-14

This SF/fantasy convention will be held at the Donaldson Brown Center on the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg, Va. Guests include Diane Carey, Greg Brodeur, Larry Elmore, Ruth Thompson, Don Sakers, and John "Fuzzface" McMahon. Activities include SF Jeopardy, live RPGs, panels, a play, an art show, films, and dealers. Write to: TECHNICON 8, c/o VTSFCC, P.O. Box 256, Blacksburg VA 24063-0256; or call: (703) 953-1214.

BAMACON V, April 19-21

This convention will be held at the Ferguson Center on the University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Guests include Mercedes Lackey, Brad Strickland, Keith Parkinson, Larry Elmore, Larry Dixon, Dave Arneson, Allen Hammack, and Thomas Fuller. A \$1,000 cash prize goes to the best AD&D® game team at this convention. Many other prizes will also be awarded. Activities include an art show/auction, a banquet, dances, movies, and dealers. Registration: \$25. One-day memberships and dealer passes are also available. Write to: BAMACON V, University of Alabama, P.O. Box 6542 Tuscaloosa AL 35486; or call: (205) 758-4577 or 348-3127.

CAPCON XIV, April 19-21

The Ohio State University Miniatures and Gaming Assoc. (OSUMGA) will hold this convention in the Ohio Union on the OSU Columbus campus in Columbus, Ohio. Activities include miniatures, board, and role-playing games covering all time periods and genres. Admission: \$3/day. Write to: OSUMGA/CAPCON, Box 21, the Ohio Union, 1739 N. High St., Columbus OH 43210; or call Jill Moody at: (614) 267-2649.

CONDUIT, April 19-21

Located at the Quality Inn in Salt Lake City, Utah, this SF/fantasy/gaming convention will feature such guests as Barbara Hambly, Erick Wujcik, and Derek Fegstad. Events include tournaments in AD&D® 2nd Ed., ROLE-MASTER*, TMN TURTLES*, RIFTS*, ROBO-TECH*, BATTLETECH*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, SPACE HULK*, SHADOWRUN*, CYBERPUNK*, and STAR FLEET BATTLES* games. Other activities include films, Japanese animation, an art show, a masquerade, panels, dealers, and open gaming. Registration: \$22 at the door.

Write to: CONDUIT, c/o David Lee Powell, 2566 Blaine Ave., Salt Lake City UT 84108-3359; or call: (801) 467-9517.

GAME FAIRE '91, April 19-21

This convention will be held at the Student Union at Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Wa. All proceeds will be donated to the Wishing Star Foundation. Events include RPGs, tournaments, microarmor, naval and historical miniatures, SF and fantasy miniatures, board games, a video room, a dealers' area, a used-game auction, and SCA events. Registration: \$12/weekend before April 10th; \$15/weekend, \$6 for Friday or Sunday, and \$7 for Saturday at the door. Write to: Merlyn's—Game Faire '91, North 1 Browne, Spokane WA 99201; or FAX: (509) 624-0957.

I-CON X, April 19-21

This convention will once again be held at the State University of New York, Stony Brook campus. Guests include Ken Rolston, Gary Gygax, Steve Jackson, and Tom Baker. Activities include RPGA™ and standard game tournaments, a writer's workshop, autograph sessions, a "meet the pros" party, dozens of dealers and more. Registration: \$25/weekend at the door, less in advance. One-day passes are also available. Write to: I-CON X, P.O. Box 550, Stony Brook NY 11790.

SFERACON '91, April 19-21

The oldest Yugoslavian SF/F convention will be held at the Community Centre Pescenica in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Guests include Radovan Devlic, Igor Kordej, and Predrag Raos. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, MERP*, DIPLOMACY*, POLECONOMY*, and other role-playing and board games. Other activities include two video rooms, an art show, story and book contests, an auction, and network computer gaming. Registration: 200 YUD for nonSFERA members, less for members, and free for those who bring their own computer (preferably Commodore Amiga). Write to: SFERACON, Drustveni dom Pescenica, Ivanicgradska BB, 41000 Zagreb, YUGOSLAVIA.

PENTECON '91, April 19-21

The Cornell Strategic Simulations Society will hold this convention at the Goldwin Smith Hall on the Cornell University campus in Ithaca, N.Y. Events include AD&D®, TRAVELLER*, PARANOIA*, DIPLOMACY*, CAR WARS*, AXIS & ALLIES*, ASL*, and CIVILIZATION* games. Other activities include miniatures painting and trivia contests. Write to: PENTECON '91, c/o Peace Studies Program, 180 Uris Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14853; or call Shelley at: (607) 272-1339.

UBCON, April 19-21

Sponsored by the UB Strategists' and Role-players' Assoc., this convention will be held on the State University of New York at Buffalo, Amherst (North) campus. Events include a 2nd Ed. AD&D® tournament and many other popular strategy and role-playing games, as well as a movie room, combat demos, and dealers. Registration: about \$8, plus fees for tournaments with cash prizes. Write to: Martin Szinger, UB/SaRPA Pres., 210 Curtis Parkway, Buffalo NY 14223; or call: (716) 833-4610.

THE UNTITLED GAME CON, April 19-21

Sponsored by Rutgers University Gamers, this convention will be held in Scott and Harden-

❖ indicates an Australian convention.

❖ indicates a Canadian convention.

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- c) Resolve Battles

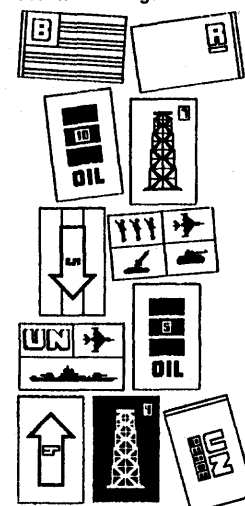
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burgh Halls on the College Ave. campus of Rutgers University. Events include AD&D® and CHAMPIONS* elimination tournaments, a very bizarre AD&D® Mage Duel, SHADOWRUN* games, playtesting on a new game system, and voting to name the convention itself! Registration: \$16/weekend or \$8/day preregistered; \$20/weekend or \$10/day at the door; plus event fees. Rutgers students receive 50% discount on all registration and event fee costs. Write to: Student Activities Center, Rutgers University, Box 19, 613 George St., New Brunswick NJ 08903 (include SASE); or call: (908) 745-0454.

IMPACT 0.6, April 20

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha, Nebraska. Activities include table-top and role-playing games from 8 A.M. until midnight. Registration: \$5. Write to: IMPACT, P.O. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104.

LAGACON 10, April 20

This convention will be held at Kaspar's Arc, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D® and BATTLETECH* tournaments, plus AD&D®, ASL*, BATTLETECH*, SHADOWRUN*, and AXIS & ALLIES* games. There will also be dealers, and food will be available. Registration: \$5 preregistered, \$7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers, 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706. Make checks payable to Keith Roth.

OPCON '91, April 20

This convention, sponsored by the OPRF SF/F Club, will be held at the Oak Park River Forest High School in Oak Park, Ill. Guests include Phyllis Eisenstein, Robert Shea, and Richard

Knaak. Activities include RPG tournaments, a silent auction, films and videos, autograph signings, a trivia contest, and a vendor's room. Registration: \$2. Write to: Sandra Price, OPRF SF/F Club, Oak River Park High School, 201 N. Scoville Ave., Oak Park IL 60302.

U-CON '91, April 20

The University of Connecticut SF Society will hold this convention at the UConn campus Student Union in Storrs, Conn. Activities include a dealers' room, an amateur art show, panels on SF, comics, films, videos, and gaming. Registration: \$5 until April 14; \$7 at the door. Send an SASE to: U-CON, c/o Vivian Norwood, Wheeler A, 202, Box 330, University of Connecticut, Storrs CT 06269.

DEMICON II, April 26-28

This convention will be held at the Des Moines Howard Johnson's in Des Moines, Iowa. Guests include Joe and Gay Haldeman, Lucy Synk, and Rusty Hevelin. Events include panels, readings, costume contests, a dealers' room, and an art show, plus open gaming, a live-action role-playing tournament, and a networked computer-game tournament. Registration: \$20/weekend or \$12/day at the door. Write to: P.O. Box 7572, Des Moines IA 50322-7572; or call: (515) 270-1312.

LITTLE WARS '91, April 26-28

This miniatures-oriented convention, sponsored by the Historical Miniatures Gaming Society (HMGS), will be held at the Zion Leisure Center in Zion, Ill. Miniatures events will span historical times and beyond. Registration: \$8/day or \$12/weekend, with a \$2 discount for HMGS

members. There are event fees. Judges and players are needed. There will be a judge's discount and a large dealers' area. Write to: Robert Bigelow, c/o Friends Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington St., Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790.

AGOG IV, April 27-28

The University Of Arizona Historical Games Society will hold this convention at the Student Union Main Hall on the University of Arizona campus in Tucson, Arizona. Tournaments include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS*, GURPS*, BATTLETECH*, and WARHAMMER 40,000* games. Other activities include open gaming, a game auction, and a miniatures-painting contest. Write to: AGOG IV, 3150 E. Monte Vista #A, Tucson AZ 85716; or call: (602) 327-3517.

BOISE FANTASY ARTS CONVENTION IV April 27-28

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Boise, Idaho. Activities include workshops, contests, dealers, gaming, movies, demos, and an art show. Registration: \$23 at the door. Supporting memberships and one-day costs are available. Write to: BFAC, P.O. Box 8602, Boise ID 83702; or call: (208) 454-2835.

PLATTECON DELTA, April 27-28

This gaming convention will be held at the Student Center on the UW-Platteville campus in Platteville, Wis. Events include AD&D® games, miniatures games, dealers, door prizes, and numerous games. Registration: \$4/day or \$5/weekend in advance; \$5/day and \$7/weekend at the door. Write to: Platteville Gaming Assoc., Student Center, 1 University Plaza, UW-

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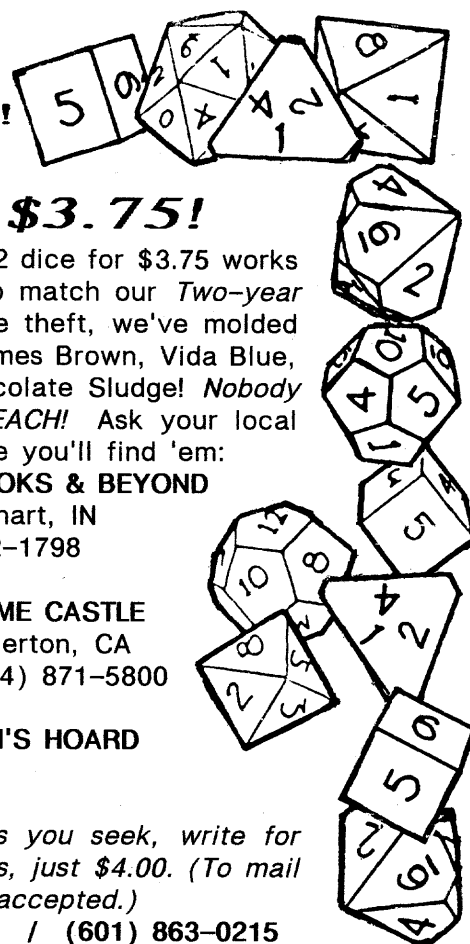
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WIZARD'S CHALLENGE IX, May 3-5 *

This convention will be held at the Sands Motor hotel in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Events include an AD&D® tournament, with ROLEMASTER*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, RISK*, SUPREMACY*, BLOOD BOWL*, and WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLES* games and a miniatures-painting contest. Write to: The Wizards Corner, #103-626 Broadway Ave., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, CANADA S7N 1A7; or call (306) 934-4777.

MISCON 6, May 10-12

This SF/fantasy/gaming convention will be held at the Best Western Executive Motor Inn in Missoula, Mont. Guests include Barbara Hambly, William Warren Jr., and Jerry Olton. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, and DIPLOMACY* games, with videos, a masquerade, an art show, and panels. Registration: \$16 until April 15; \$20 thereafter. Write to: WMSFC/MISCON 6, P.O. Box 9363, Missoula MT 59807.

KETTERING GAME CONVENTION IV May 11-12

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include FRPGs, an RPGA™ tournament, a MONOPOLY* tournament, and board, computer, and miniatures games, plus a tournament based on *Double Exposure*, by Piers Anthony. Write to: Bob Van Gruenigen, 2013 Gay Dr., Kettering OH 45420; or call: (513) 252-9948.

CONWEST III, May 17-19

This convention will be held at the Howard

Johnson Plaza Hotel in Albuquerque, N.M. Our guest of honor is Tracy W. Shurtleff, RPGA™ Regional Director. Events include two-round RPGA™ AD&D® and PARANOIA* tournaments, with ROLEMASTER*, ASL*, and WARHAMMER 40,000* tournaments, plus more board and miniatures games. Other activities include open gaming and a dealers' room. Registration: \$10 preregistered; and \$15 at the door, plus event fees. Daily prices are also available. Write to: The Weregamer's Guild, Student Activities Center, Box 28, Student Union Bldg., UNM, Albuquerque NM 87131; or call: (505) 277-3083. No collect calls, please.

SUMMERCON '91, May 18-19

The Gamers' Alliance of Miniatures Enthusiasts (G.A.M.E.) and the Midwest Masters RPGA™ Network will host this FREE convention in the Reunion Food Court Bldg., on the campus of the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebr. Events include three RPGA™ tournaments, an RPGA™ Masters tournament, and a benefit tournament. Other activities include WARHAMMER 40,000* role-playing and miniatures events, historical miniatures, a figure-painting contest, and other role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Everyone is welcome! Write to: Hobbies, Etc., N. 16th St., Lincoln NE 68508, Attn: Rufus; or call: (402) 477-7006.

GAMECAUCUS II, May 24-27

Sponsored by Trigaming Associates, this convention will be held at the Oakland Airport Hilton in Oakland, Calif. Events include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, with BATTLETECH*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, STAR WARS*,

DIPLOMACY*, ASL*, WORLD IN FLAMES*, EMPIRES IN ARMS*, TALISMAN*, and GURPS* games, and various historical and modern miniatures games. Other activities include a World Wide DIPLOMACY* game, plus live-action AD&D®, AWFUL GREEN THINGS FROM OUTER SPACE*, and ALIENS* games. Registration: \$15 preregistered or \$20 at the door. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Write to: Trigaming Associates, P.O. Box 4867, Walnut Creek CA 94596-0867; or call Larry or Mike at: (415) 686-9319 after 6 P.M. PST. No collect calls, please.

GAMEX '91, May 24-27

This convention will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles, Ca. Activities include all types of family, strategy, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming. Catch the bargains at the flea markets, auctions, and the dealers' area. Other activities include seminars, demos, and guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808; or call: (213) 326-9440.

ONCE UPON A CON '91, May 24-26

This convention will be held at the Radisson Hotel South in Englewood, Colo. Guests include Larry Niven, Steven Barnes, Jennifer Roberson, Simon Hawke, and Joe Dever. Activities include live-action role-playing games, panels, seminars, a costume ball and contest, a dealers' room, author readings, an art show, and a con suite. Registration: \$19/weekend until April 15; \$24/weekend thereafter; or \$13/day. Write to: IFGS/ONCE UPON A CON, P.O. Box 3577, Boulder CO 80307-3577; or call: (303) 494-4302, or out-of-state call: (303) 786-9727.

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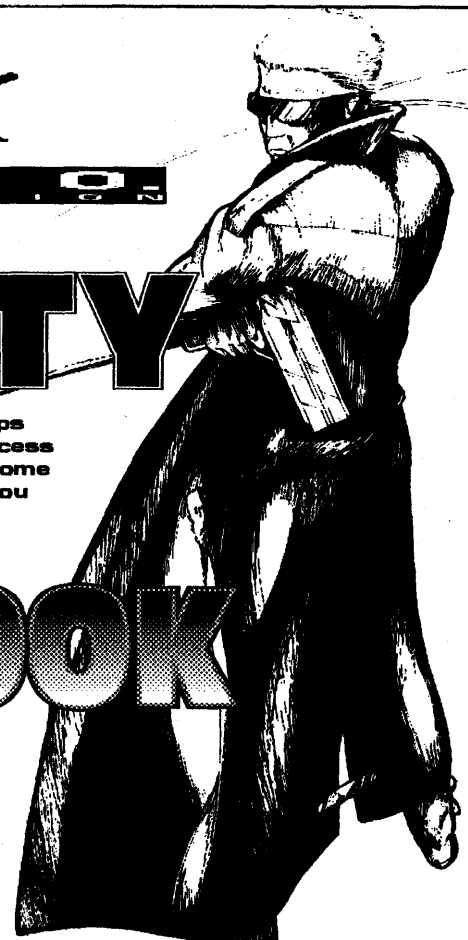
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SODACON II, May 25-26

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's Hotel and Convention Center in Rapid City, S.D. Events include AD&D®, BATTLE-TECH®, TWILIGHT: 2000®, CHAMPIONS®, and MORROW PROJECT® games. Registration: \$10 preregistered, or \$12 at the door. Write to: Black Hills Society of Gamers, 2416 Cameron Dr., Rapid City SD 57702; or call Steven at: (605) 642-3316.

TWINCON '91, May 25-27

This convention will be held at the Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center in Bloomington, Minn. (ask about special room rates). Guests include Julie Guthrie, Ken Rolston, Margaret Weis, Craig Taylor, and Greg Scott. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with miniatures-painting and costume contests, a vendors' room, seminars, discussions, and open gaming. Registration: \$20/weekend until May 5; \$30 thereafter. One- and two-day passes are available at the door. Make checks payable to Donald Prust. Write to: TWINCON '91, P.O. Box 8010, Lake St. Station, Minneapolis MN 55408; or call: (612) 888-5759.

NASHCON '91, May 31-June 2

This gaming convention will be held at the Music City Rodeway Inn in Nashville, Tenn. Events include miniatures tournaments, alternative gaming, a dealers' room, and an auction. FigFair will also be held here. Registration: \$15. Preregistrants receive a free NASHCON T-shirt. Write to: Games Extraordinaire, 2713 Lebanon Pike, Nashville TN 37214; or call: (615) 883-4800.

OPTICON '91, May 31-June 2

This convention will be held at the Gardiner Student Center on the campus of the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio. Events include RPGA™ tournaments and other individual and tournament games. Other activities include a large exhibitors' area, an auction, an art show, seminars and panels, a painting contest, and 24-hour gaming. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered. Dorm rooms are available; ask about rates and availability. Write to: OPTICON '91, P.O. Box 4876, Akron OH 44310; or call: (216) 972-7713.

ZIACON '91, May 31-June 2

This SF/F convention will be held at the Roswell campus of Eastern New Mexico University in Roswell, N.M. Guests include Gerald Brom, Jeff Easley, Fred Fields, Diana Gallagher, Carol Heyer, Ken Widing, Michael Williams, and Robin Wood. Gaming events include AD&D®, TRAVELLER®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, and miniatures games. Other activities include a masquerade, interactive literature, poetry, films, a miniatures painting contest, SCA demos, panels, a dealers' room, an art show, and pinatas. Registration: \$20 until May 1; \$22 thereafter. Write to: ZIACON, 1709 W. Walnut, Roswell NM 88201; or call: (505) 624-0810.

GAMECON III, JUNE 7-8

This convention will again be held at the auditorium of the Bergen Shopping Mall in Paramus, N.J. Events include AD&D® tournaments, BATTLETECH®, SPACE HULK®, WARHAMMER 40,000® and FANTASY®. GMs are needed. Registration: \$2 plus \$4 preregistered event fee or \$5 event fee at the door. Write to: GAMECON III, c/o The GameMaster, Bergen Mall Shopping Center, Paramus NJ 07652; or call: (201) 843-3308.

MOBI-CON '91, June 7-9

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Mobile, Ala. Activities include 24-hour gaming, a movie room, a retailers' room, an art show and sale, a writing contest, an auction, a galactic feud, games, tournaments, miniatures, demos. Proceeds will benefit the Mobile Area March of Dimes. Registration: \$12.50 until May 20; \$15/weekend or \$6/day thereafter. Send an SASE to: MOBI-CON Inc., P.O. Box 161275, Mobile AL 36608.

GLATHRICON '91, June 21-23

Sponsored by the Evansville Gaming Guild, this convention will be held at the Executive Inn in Evansville, Ind. The guests include Ed Greenwood, Alan Clark, Don Bingle, and Jean Rabe. RPGA™ tournaments include AD&D® Feature, Masters, Grandmasters, and the Joe Martin Cancer Benefit; MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Feature and Masters, JAMES BOND 007®, PARANOIA®, PARANOIA® Masters, CHILL®, DC HEROES®, and CHAMPIONS® games. Other activities include a dealers' room, a large art show and print shop, an art auction, a masquerade, a miniatures-painting contest, seminars, panels, and additional gaming. Registration: \$15 until April 15; \$20 thereafter. Write to: Evansville Gaming Guild, P.O. Box 15414, Evansville IN 47716; or call: (812) 421-1010.

MICHICON GAMEFEST '91, June 21-23

This gaming convention will be held in the Southfield Civic Center in Southfield, Mich. Events include 60 board game, 60 miniatures game, and 40 role-playing game events. Other activities include dealers, three used-game auctions, open gaming, and food. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$7/day. Preregistrations are accepted. Write to: Metro Detroit Gamers, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte MI 48192; or call Barry (daytime) at: (313) 953-2125.

NEW ORLEANS SF/F FESTIVAL '91 June 21-23

This convention will be held at the Clarion Hotel in New Orleans, La. Guests include Frederick Pohl, Pat Cadigan, John Slade, Ellen Datlow, George Alec Effinger, George R.R. Martin, Richard Pini, and Walter Jon Williams. Activities include 24-hour gaming, a costume contest, programming, an art show and auction, a dance, a 24-hour hospitality suite, a meet-the-guests party, a large dealers' room, and a special charity event benefiting the New Orleans Metropolitan Battered Women's Center. Registration: \$20 until May 26; \$25 at the door. Write to: New Orleans SF/F Festival, P.O. Box 791089, New Orleans LA 70179-1089; or call: (504) 835-4314.

INTERPHAZE III, June 22-23

This live-action gaming convention will be held near the Folklore Village of Dodgeville, Wis. Gather rumors and treasure from a host of characters, explore the countryside, and purchase supplies at the bazaar. There will be a medieval banquet, complete with court-dancing, musicians, jugglers, and a magic show. Costumes are recommended. A mini-adventure, complete with a pinata dragon, will be offered for the kids. Dealers and crafters are welcome. For information, send \$1 to: Doc Bradshaw, 7637 N. 15th St., Oakdale MN 55128.

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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Role-playing reviews

Game bored? Try these adventure board games!

©1991 by Ken Rolston

It's game night, and your regular FRPG crowd is gathered once again around your table, itching for some fantastic, escapist action. Then, disaster strikes! In walks your game master, who has had his bell thoroughly rung in an SCA weapons-training mishap, and he regretfully informs you that his brain is too addled to permit him to perform his game-mastering functions. Or weather, work, family crises, or other common disasters force your GM to cancel on short notice.

Now what? One of the players could volunteer to run a scenario on short notice, but rarely can it be properly linked to the current campaign everyone is hot for, and game mastering on short notice with little preparation time is a difficult and unrewarding chore. And no one wants to go home without his action-adventure game fix.

In this situation, our local game group pulls down an adventure board game from Rolston's shelves of barely holding and lets the board-game designers bear the burden of scenario design and game mastering for the evening.

I'm sure there are many folks who play adventure board games for their own sake, and they may even prefer board

games to role-playing games. I have always been a hard-core role-player and a lukewarm board gamer, however, and only a number of emergency game-night situations introduced me to the pleasures of adventure board gaming. Another reason for my increased interest in board games is that I don't have as much time to spend on character, scenario, and campaign preparation as I used to. Less of my ego and creative juices are tied up in role-playing games nowadays, since the social aspect of gaming—just getting together with friends—has become more important to me. After years of playing the game-master role of *Entertainment Tonight*, it's a pleasure to shed the mantle of impresario and sit down for a casual board game.

Part of my personal resistance to board games has been the feeling that the competitive aspect of traditional board games is incompatible with the cooperative style of gaming practiced by most role-playing gamers. But each of the games reviewed here deemphasizes the competitive element of board gaming to some degree, either by focusing on the conflict of the player versus the game environment or by integrating some features of the FRPG game master into the traditional board-game environment. In either case, the result is a game experience more comfort-

able for role-playing gamers accustomed to the cooperative rather than the adversarial aspects of gaming.

I've also become increasingly sensitive to the tactile and visual appeal of board games. Once, my adult persona might have been ashamed to be so childish and superficial as to respond to the cool bits inside a box, but now I'm quite comfortable about accepting my simple, primitive, gosh-wow pleasure in looking at and playing with the pretty bits when I play a board game. Even the more modest presentations of the games reviewed this month have charming and appealing game bits, while the most splendid graphic and component packages—in particular, the Milton Bradley/Games Workshop board games—are almost as much fun to touch and admire as they are to play.

In selecting games for this review, I looked for games suitable for four or more players that featured settings and thematic flavor familiar to fantasy and science-fiction role-players. I avoided games with traditional war-gaming and diplomatic elements that might inspire the urge to dominate more than the urge to socialize. I also looked for games I could play with kids and non-role-players, so I could intro-



duce them to the themes and settings of the games I play without subjecting them to the intense and sometimes intimidating atmosphere of a role-playing session. I wanted games with simple, clearly presented rules; strong, well-expressed narratives, settings, and themes; and sharp, appealing graphics and components.

I also looked for games that permitted solitaire play, primarily because I like to play a dry run of a board game by myself to learn the rules and feel of the game before I present it to my pals. Though it requires special effort, I highly recommend this approach. It's the old game-master/impresario impulse, of course, but I know how nice it is to sit down and be taught the rules rather than to have to read them and figure them out. Among my favorite examples of classic board-game rules writing is a passage from the beginning of Greg Costikyan's *STAR TREK: THE ADVENTURE GAME**, from West End Games: "The Easiest Way to Learn the Rules: Have someone else teach them to you. Failing that, you'll have to read them yourself."

Before we get on to the reviews, let me recommend some classic fantasy and science-fiction board games that satisfy many of the criteria described above. First and foremost, I recommend Games Workshop's *TALISMAN** game and its numerous supplements. Despite its flawed, interminable, and aggressively competitive end game, the beginning and middle game play are excellent. Just don't bother to play the end game—quit when you get tired. The *ILLUMINATI** game from Steve Jackson

Games places a greater emphasis on diplomacy, shrewd betrayal, and hatchet jobs than I usually find comfortable for a social evening, but its bizarre, ironic tone and style keep the atmosphere light. The Avalon Hill Game Company's *CIVILIZATION** game is perhaps my all-time favorite for involving intelligent nongamers in a historical-fantasy game setting. Like the *TALISMAN* game, however, the beginning and middle game play are more satisfying than the end game; just quit when you've gotten to the late Bronze Age and the civil wars start to take the joy out of the game. The *JUNTA** game (West End Games), a charming game of banana-republic politics, usually inspires a high level of wacky role-playing and contagiously bad Hispanic accents, despite its roots in traditional diplomacy gaming. Also, the *TITAN** game (The Avalon Hill Game Company) is an elaborate, flavorful fantasy board game, though somewhat more competitive, war gamish, and interminable in play than the other classics mentioned here. Two other excellent board games (both lamentably now out of print) are West End Games' *TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS** game, a unique narrative game with strong role-playing elements, and the *KINGS & THINGS** game (also by West End Games), a light-hearted but war-gamish battle involving fantasy exploration and kingdom-building by Tom Wham. Look for them at flea markets, on the dusty back shelves of game stores, or from second-hand game merchants.

The DUNGEON!® game

Fantasy board game

TSR, Inc.

\$19.95

Boxed game with 24-page rule book, game board, dice, 250 playing cards, and six plastic miniatures

Design and development: David Megarry, Jeff Grubb, Steve Winter, Michael Gray, Gary Gygas

No game could be simpler, and the *DUNGEON!* game successfully models the simplest elements of classic kill-the-monsters-and-grab-the-treasure gaming. The action is swift and suspenseful, with lots of dice-rolling. The players do compete with one another, but a gamer is typically more absorbed in avoiding the loss of treasure and being slain at the hands, mandibles, or sucking appendages of the game's denizens than in worrying about being outplayed by his opponent. Only in the final minutes of the end game, when players may make low-percentage, last-ditch attempts to forestall the front runner from winning, is there any point to attacking another player, and resentment about being savaged is short lived, mild, and mitigated by the dramatic payoff of the climax.

The fantasy flavor is thin and sharply focused on the D&D® game model of fantasy adventure. The character classes (warrior, elf, thief, dwarf, wizard, paladin) each have distinct game strengths and weaknesses, although there's hardly any story, theme, or character in this exceptionally simple game. The treasures being sought are simple cash (for satisfying end-game conditions) and widgets like magical swords and crystal balls. The widgets feel useful; you'll be grateful for their benefits and loathe to lose them.

The roll of the dice and the luck of the draw are crucial factors in success. Sensi-



ble consideration of the odds of rolling a given number on 2d6 is useful, but no strategy can guarantee success. The wizard seems to possess the most promising options for a reliable winning strategy, but the game's atmosphere and fantasy flavor did not attract me sufficiently to encourage exhaustive playtesting.

Presentation: The components and graphics are modest and unambitious. The plastic miniatures are unexceptional in detail and not a very suitable mix for many game sessions, since there are three individual player characters for each class of character available for play. For example, if six players decide to play three elves and three wizards, two of the elves and two of the wizards are going to look like a warrior, thief, paladin, or dwarf on the board.

Rules: This game is for 2-6 players. With four or more players, the resources to achieve victory conditions are pretty lean and the competition is fierce, particularly with beginning players who are bound to die a few times learning reliable play strategies. Dying early is a bad thing, as when characters die, they leave their treasures under the beasts that killed them-rich rewards for surviving characters best able to handle those beasts. The rules are short and simple, and the rules' style is lean and informal, with only a few minor but troublesome ambiguities. For example, the level a chamber is on is very significant in game terms, but many chambers are not clearly marked on the board or defined in the rules as belonging to a given level. A simple note in the chamber or the use of the color-code scheme that indicates room levels would have been helpful. And why not print the Monster Attack table (the only table you need to reference during the game) on the game board or on a reference card, so we don't have to look in the book each time we roll the dice?

The basic game is not very appealing and is not simple or fast enough to learn compared to the expert game to justify the distinction. Go straight through the expert rules, though younger gamers may be slow to pick up the subtle abilities of the wizard and elf and may find them frustrating to play. Dying is likely and may be especially discouraging for younger gamers. Unlike the HEROQUEST* game (see later), there is no game-master role, so I consider the DUNGEON! game less suitable as an kids introduction to FRPG experiences. Cooperative bonuses to joint attacks seem to be the sole feeble vestige of FRPG cooperative play style, and a not-very-persuasive vestige at that.

Fantasy feel: The DUNGEON! game contains 36 spells cards that represent only *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, and *teleport*. In the context of the game, these spells are quite suitable and effective, but not particularly exciting as examples of fantasy flavor. Character classes are distinguished in the traditional D&D-game style, but

beyond that there is little role-playing flavor for players. There are lots of good old dungeon monsters to whack, a particularly pleasant and nostalgic experience for veteran gamers, but the monsters are only modestly distinguished by personality and ability.

Evaluation: As a game, the DUNGEON! game is quite good. The tension, suspense, and challenge of exploring for treasure, discovering monsters, and gathering loot while staying alive are very satisfying. Choices of strategy are meaningful, and competition with other players maintains dramatic tension, but so much really depends on dice rolls that you can't take success too seriously. It's possible to die once or twice and still remain in the competition, and when someone approaches the victory conditions, the last-ditch attacks by one player upon another seem not so much vicious as desperate-a clever and pleasant surprise compared to other fantasy games that encourage interplayer back-stabbing and robbery.

The DUNGEON! game has strong, simple, reliable game elements. The setting is familiar from the classic style of dungeon-delving fantasy role-playing, but the narrative, character, and theme fantasy values are rather modest. I believe the basic game elements—who survives and who wins—would survive numerous playings, but I didn't find the fantasy flavor charming enough to stimulate a desire to play again. The DUNGEON! game is quick, easy to learn, and fun to play. It could be quite suitable for an adult introducing younger gamers to fantasy action-adventure gaming, but it probably won't seduce most experienced role-players into multiple sessions.

THE GREAT KHAN GAME

Fantasy board game

TSR, Inc.

\$12.95

Folio boxed game with 32-page rulebook, game map, 162 playing cards, and counters

Design: Tom Wham, Richard Hamblen (game map and playing cards by Jeff and Amanda Dee)

THE GREAT KHAN GAME is a card-and-board game presenting the epic sweep of politics, trade, and warfare among budding fantasy empires, with a goofy, cheerful tone and play style. Vividly characterized fantasy peoples and rabble join under heroes and leaders to form nations intent on the economic, political, and military conquest of the known world. THE GREAT KHAN GAME neatly combines epic scale and mock-epic tone in simultaneously exploiting and parodying the most distinctive excesses of the grand-fantasy genre setting.

Tom Wham: For reasons too complicated to discuss here, few games are instantly identifiable as the products of a specific game designer. Of the six games reviewed here, and of the seven games

previously recommended as classics, only three of them would be immediately identified with their designers by most game fans: the ILLUMINATI game, by Steve Jackson, and the KINGS & THINGS game and THE GREAT KHAN GAME, by Tom Wham. All of Tom Wham's games are instantly recognizable in graphic presentation, play style, and tone as Tom Wham's games. Other Tom Wham classics include the SNIT'S REVENGE*, AWFUL GREEN THINGS FROM OUTER SPACE*, and MERTWIG'S MAZE™ games (see "Short and sweet"). Each of these games boasts Tom Wham's light touch, simple and readable rules, and a vivid, imaginative fantasy setting focusing on the personalities, virtues, and foibles of various creatures, heroes, and stooges.

Fantasy feel: Wars of conquest, fleet engagements, political coups, trade missions, royal processions, pirate raids, dragons, and sea monsters sweep across the map in grand Hollywood fashion, but a glance at the illustrations on the cards representing the leaders, warriors, and monsters of this fantasy world should make it evident that players are not to take these epic events too seriously. Many of the games reviewed here, particularly the HEROQUEST, SPACE CRUSADE*, and DUNGEONQUEST* games, are heroic and serious, as may easily be discerned from a glance at their graphics and miniatures. But Tom Wham games are lovably mock-heroic, and only half serious in epic scale. Place names like Far Vandmeer, Graubunden, Veldergautland, Al-Ubaid (the Walled City), and titles like the Grand Wazir Neshamin, Badmuddin the Bald, Umgook (the Tusk Eater), and Andoquat the Sardar all evoke the grand scale of action-adventure fantasy literature and games with a friendly, lightly mocking tone.

I suspect this mock-epic tone works best for sophisticated gamers with a wry perspective on the cheesier values of the fantasy genre. Younger gamers may not get the joke. Also, the rules and procedures of THE GREAT KHAN GAME are more involved than those in the DUNGEON!, HEROQUEST, and SPACE CRUSADE games. There is also an important element of diplomacy—interplayer deals, conspiracies, and smiling betrayals—that I would find pleasant only in the Tom Wham light-hearted atmosphere.

Presentation: THE GREAT KHAN GAME's graphics are spartan and modest. But, by contrast with the DUNGEON! game, here the modest values are part of the charm and distinction of the game. The Jeff and Amanda Dee illustrations of the major leaders of the game world in particular are cute, lovable, and perfectly in keeping with the tone of the game. I did note, however, that THE GREAT KHAN GAME is sold unblushingly as an ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® FORGOTTEN REALMS® product, despite no discernable relationship to the AD&D game or the Realms. This lapse in market-

ing taste is excusable only because anyone who looks at the game box can tell immediately that its tone and style have nothing to do with either the Realms or the FRPG.

Rules: The basic idea of the game is to gather "melds" of various cards, representing leaders and peoples, into rich and powerful nations that vie for control of territories on a map. The player whose nations control the most territory and have the richest treasury at the end of the game is the winner. There are various ways to gain gold (trade with and conquest of other nations, for example) and various ways to gain control of nations and territory, usually by war (battles between melds of card representing nations) and political coups (where a nation is stolen away from another player by playing an alternative meld with greater political power than the existing meld representing a given country). As players draw cards each turn, new leaders and peoples come into play, and event cards signal disasters (assassins, rare diseases, earthquakes, and peasant revolts) and windfalls (trade caravans, fleets, and philanthropists) for the competing nations.

Tom Wham games feature rules that are usually sprawling, incoherent, rather clever, imaginative, well played, well tested, and cheerfully amended to deal with potential problems and to permit minor decorations and chrome. The basic concepts are usually fairly simple, but so many cute little bits are glued on to the basic design that the interaction of certain elements may not be anticipated by the rules. I was confused and needed to carefully reread the rules and examples from time to time. Nonetheless, his games seem to have been well play-tested, as is testified by various sensible observations on play included in the rules. Finally, the informal tone and style of rules writing invites you not to take the rules too seriously. Only someone who misunderstood the intent of a Tom Wham game could get involved in a rules squabble.

Evaluation: THE GREAT KHAN GAME is a pleasant, light-hearted fantasy game with an excellent flavor and an enjoyable, pleasing play style. Its competitive, diplomatic elements are nicely balanced by a mock-epic tone, and the epic conflicts of fantasy kingdoms play out like a grand, profoundly cheesy fantasy novel

HEROQUEST game

Fantasy adventure board game
Milton Bradley Ltd. and Games

Workshop £24.99/\$39.95
Boxed game with 16-page rulebook, 36-page quest book, game board, GM screen, 15 pieces of furniture and 21 doors in cardboard and plastic, door and trap tiles, 64 playing cards, dice, four character references, a pad of character sheets, and 35 plastic miniatures

Design: Milton Bradley and Games Workshop staff

The HEROQUEST game scores early and often in toy value and accessibility for young gamers. I've had great fun playing the game with young folks unfamiliar with role-playing. This is a simple fantasy board game that ingeniously incorporates the FRPG convention of the GM/referee who confronts a cooperative party of adventurers with deadly traps, monsters, and arch-villains. The few rules are easily taught. The scenarios are simple, one-page maps that show the locations of all the traps, monsters, and treasures in the dungeon. The brief read-aloud introduction describing the adventure and the sparse notes on the adventure are also limited to this one-page presentation.

The game board represents rooms and corridors that might contain traps, treasure, or monsters, according to the scenario maps. Doors, traps, monsters, and furniture are represented by jillions of lovely plastic and plastic-and-cardboard figures and cardboard counters. Detaching the plastic bits from the sprues and assembling the dungeon furniture is a time-consuming but pleasurable activity in itself, like model-building on a very modest scale. Just setting up the scenarios on the board with all the lovely toys is loads of fun for youths and arrested-development types like myself.

Play consists of four hero player characters—a barbarian, a dwarf, an elf, and a wizard—who move through the corridors and rooms of a dungeon, look for traps and secret doors, fight monsters when they find them, and loot the inevitable treasure chest. After all the player characters have moved and attacked, the Evil Wizard (i.e., the GM) may move and attack with any creatures he has on the board. The creatures he has are determined by reference to the scenario map; he usually has little choice in how they are deployed.

The systems are fast, simple, and easy to learn. Each player rolls two six-sided dice and moves his figure that many squares. Combat uses a simple set of special dice marked with skulls and shields; the attacker tries to roll skulls to score a wound, while the defender tries to roll shields to defend. The better the fighter, the more dice he rolls on attack or defense. Fighters can outfit themselves with new weapons, armor, and other equipment as they gain gold coins. Wizards get a variety of 12 fairly nifty spells, three associated with each of the elements earth, air, fire, and water. Each spell is printed on a card for easy reference and fast bookkeeping. Characters do not advance in abilities as they progress through adventures, but they do gain money to purchase more effective arms and armor, and success in scenarios may provide them with powerful magical treasures.

Experienced, dedicated gamers (e.g., DRAGON® Magazine readers) are not likely to appreciate simple game systems

like that of the HEROQUEST game. I've always liked West End Games' GHOST-BUSTERS* game, for example (a remarkably clean and simple role-playing system), but veteran role-players prefer more elaborate game mechanics. In that sense, the HEROQUEST system will be of little interest to most gamers, but as a game designer I admire how much action-adventure gaming this system gets out of so few and such simple game mechanics.

European and American editions:

The original European edition of this game has been available for almost two years. (I've heard figures like 500,000 copies sold by Milton Bradley in Europe.) A new and revised American edition was released at Toy Fair this winter. In the original European edition, the opposition is comparatively weak, and a player character triumph almost assured in each scenario. I'm told that the American revision of the rules will increase the hit points of the major antagonists and give them access to more spells. For my purposes of introducing young folk to role-playing-style fantasy adventure, I liked the relatively easy win better than I liked watching my eight-year-old niece deal with her dead dwarf character. On the other hand, once my nieces and nephews start playing the game on their own, I imagine they'll want something more challenging as they progress through the scenarios. With that in mind, owners of the American version who introduce their offspring, nephews, or neighborhood urchins to the game might limit monsters to one hit point each initially, then shift to larger hit-point values once the beginners get their bearings.

Fantasy feel: During play, my niece and nephew neophytes displayed the basic elements I associate with my first D&D game experience: greed for advancement, tactical caution and planning, and a healthy respect of unknown monsters. My young nieces and nephews readily comprehended the limited fantasy stereotypical roles of barbarian, dwarf, elf, and wizard and played them with great relish, with the stupid but tough barbarian cheerfully charging into melees without hesitation while the wizard and the elf minced around carefully in the background.

The dungeon and its traps, secret doors, monsters, and treasures were as vivid as any dungeons I crawled in during my early D&D game days, if not more so, though the roles, role-playing, and storytelling of the player characters and monsters are necessarily more limited in the HEROQUEST game. However, while gamers are invited to design their own dungeons and scenarios, this game provides none of the broad creative and improvisational impulses that the D&D game provides. In a developmental sense, I suspect that this is a good thing. Young'uns not yet ready to grapple with role-playing adventure design and refereeing will be perfectly comfortable and happy with this more modest but action-adventure-thrill-

packed game experience.

I can't see myself playing the HERO-QUEST game with other adults, particularly with FRPG or board-game veterans, unless everyone's tongue is firmly planted in cheek. The first time I played, we ignored the included scenarios and invented our own scenario: Furniture Quest, in which the Knights Who Say Nee sent the Heroes down in a dungeon to fetch a couple of huge oak bookcases. A good time was had by all, but I couldn't make a regular diet of it.

Evaluation: The HEROQUEST game is an excellent starter game and an excellent value, with buckets of nifty bits and fast-action bang for the buck. Other designers I've spoken with have noted wistfully that they've wanted to do this sort of thing for years, but only Games Workshop and Milton Bradley could provide the combination of distinctive graphic and model design with large-scale production efficiency and marketing muscle necessary to produce a game-and-toy package on this scale at such a modest price. The simple rules presentation is clear and effective, play itself is fast and action-packed, the dungeon furniture and the WARHAMMER* miniatures are lovely, and the graphic appeal is first class.

Is this the first mass-market action-adventure fantasy game that has the kind of impact that can compete effectively with cartridge and computer games? The latter are superior in immediacy, suspense, tension, and graphics, but at much less cost the HEROQUEST game offers some of the same excitement as well as the social context and toy payoff missing in cartridge and computer games.

I doubt, however, that the HEROQUEST game has much to offer experienced gamers except as a dungeon-dressings and miniatures package. For the price, you may want a copy just to play with the cool bits. More sophisticated, mature gamers immune to the temptation of heavy boxes filled with plastic miniatures and assemble-your-own dungeon fireplaces and torture racks should pass it up.

This game is available from Games Workshop, 3431 Benson Avenue, Baltimore MD 21227, U.S.A., or Games Workshop, Chewton Street, Hilltop, Eastwood, Nottingham NG16 3HY, UNITED KINGDOM.

SPACE CRUSADE game

Science-fiction board game

Milton Bradley Ltd. and Games

Workshop

£24.99/\$49.95

Boxed game with 24-page rulebook, 24-page mission book, four-piece game board with walls and assembly clips, three docking boards, 27 doors, three Marine player scanners, one Alien control panel, counters, 64 playing cards, dice, and 50 plastic miniatures
Design: Milton Bradley and Games Workshop staff

From a glance at the box, you might mistake the SPACE CRUSADE game for a reworked HEROQUEST game transplanted to a futuristic man-vs.-aliens setting. Actually, the SPACE CRUSADE game is a simple but challenging and sophisticated game that has much more in common with Games Workshop's SPACE HULK* board game than with the HEROQUEST game.

The SPACE CRUSADE game takes place in Game's Workshop's WARHAMMER 40,000* universe. The actual setting of the game is a space hulk—one of untold numbers of huge, mysterious, derelict spaceships that drift through Warp Space, occasionally emerging into normal space. These hulks are often infested with various aliens, enemies of the galaxy-spanning Empire, a society ruled by the Emperor of Human Space. The Legiones Astartes, the Space Marines, is the military arm of the Empire. Among their many responsibilities in maintaining the peace and security of the Empire, the Space Marines must enter these derelict space hulks and cleanse them of their alien infestations.

In the SPACE CRUSADE game, the GM's role is that of an adversary-opponent, the Alien Player. The Alien Player controls all the alien forces on the game board, which represents a section of a space hulk. Each scenario places limits on the alien troops he has at his disposal, but he may deploy them as he chooses.

The Alien Player is pitted against one-to-three Space Marine Players, who are assigned various missions according to the scenario being played. In the first scenario, the Space Marine squads are to search out and destroy an awesome Dreadnought combat robot; the alien forces attempt to prevent the Marines from completing their mission.

Each scenario may be played as a game within itself, but the SPACE CRUSADE game may also be played as a campaign game. In the campaign game, a player may be promoted in rank according to his performance in previous scenarios. With promotion comes modest but significant additional game resources.

The tactical and strategic resources and choices of the Space Marine and Alien Players are quite different. The Space Marine unit begins with a single leader with six hit points and a squad of four other marines with one hit point apiece. The Marine Player has a selection of weapons for outfitting his men, from small arms effective in close actions to heavy weapons that limit mobility but offer greater firepower. The Space Marine Player may select for his leader from one to four Order Cards. These cards may be played only once each and permit special actions like double move or double fire. Equipment Cards represent outfitting choices; for example, targetters increase the accuracy of weapons, while force fields increase armor resistance. When the game begins, the scenario determines where the Space Marines enter the board;

thereafter, the Space Marine Players' primary choices involve tactical movement and combat maneuvers.

The Alien Player, on the other hand, has almost no choice in the outfitting of his troops. He does, however, have great latitude in how and when he deploys them. When a Space Marine enters any of the four subboards that represent the entire playing field, the Alien Player must place down cardboard counters called "blips"; these represent life-sign traces on the Space Marines' bioscanners. The Alien Player may place all, some, or none of the blips allotted to a scenario on any of these four boards.

When blips are placed on a board, the Space Marine Players immediately know the location of all alien creatures on that board, but he does not know what each blip represents. A blip may represent anything from the relatively weedy, shotgun-armed, unarmored gretchin to the many-armed, heavily armored Dreadnought, so the Alien player has ample opportunity for feint and misdirection in the initial stages of the game. When a Space Marine moves within line of sight of a blip, the blip is turned over, revealing the silhouette of the creature it represents; a plastic miniature of the alien is then set down in the counter's place. Once most blips are replaced with miniatures, the battle becomes a more straightforward slugfest.

Effective strategies are not immediately apparent. After studying the rules and comparative resources of the Space Marines and aliens, it's not easy to guess what tactics will be most effective. In early play, the one-hit-point Space Marines are distressingly vulnerable to sudden, appalling losses. Also, though Space Marine Players are united in their desire to butcher aliens, they are also competing with one another to gain the most Mission Points, adding a minor but unpredictable diplomatic element to play.

Further confusing the issue, the SPACE CRUSADE game has a unique and counterintuitive method of balancing scenarios. For example, the first scenario may be played with one, two, or three Space Marine squads against the alien defenders, yet there are no alterations in the number of troops or mission-point conditions, whether there are one, two, or three Space Marine units going after the aliens. Clearly, you'd expect three squads of five Marines would be a lot harder on the aliens than one squad of Space Marines. Every time I've played with one squad in Mission One, the Space Marines got slaughtered before they accomplished their mission. In fact, they weren't even close.

But game performance is not judged by mission accomplishment or by body count, but by Mission Points. Given the way Mission Points are awarded, a single Space Marine unit that gets chewed up in Mission One and fails its mission objectives

may still rate an "Acceptable" or even "Commendable" performance. Only with considerable game experience have I developed a clearer sense of optimal strategies, and my play is still evolving. For a game with such simple rules, I am pleasantly surprised by the depth and subtlety of play.

The pace of the game is remarkably fast, in spite of the large number of pieces in play at one time. The small Space Marine units are probably the key to this rapid pace; the Alien Player must spend most of his time reacting to the Marines, while the number of models each Space Marine Player moves is small. The hidden movement is one of the game's best features, a mechanic lifted from the SPACE HULK game. The blip counters add a element of great suspense and tension, and are satisfyingly flexible tools for improvisation.

High-tech-shootout feel: First off, the board, miniatures, and cards are excellent. The beat-up, derelict feel of the space hulks decks is well presented, and the labyrinth of corridors and rooms presents a challenging maze for maneuver and line-of-sight firefights. The miniatures are detailed and richly imagined, with bulky but heroically clean lines on the Space Marines' armor vs. the spiky, bio-Art-Deco decorations of the Alien Player's Traitor Marines. The real joy is the Dreadnought, a heavily armored, towering monster with a four-square base size, chassis-mounted bolter guns, and two separately targetable heavy-weapon arms. (Remember the nice security robot that shoots up the board room in *Robocop*? The Dreadnought looks like that, only nastier.) And the heavy weapons used by both sides fit the proper SF warfare genre to a T: a hand-held autocannon like the one the marines in the movie *Aliens* use, a missile launcher that delivers explosive death into a distant area of effect, and a plasma gun that incinerates anything along its line of sight.

As a high-tech shootout, this game's simple basic systems and components give much of the same feel as found in movies like *Aliens* and *Robocop*. Little bits of SF setting chrome are introduced on the Alien Events cards that are played one at a time at the beginning of the Alien Player's turn. For example, one Alien Event card, "Auto-Defense," represents automatic corridor defenses by permitting one heavy-weapons attack on a Space Marine in a room anywhere on the board; another card, "Psychic Attack," representing a psychic blast generated by a Psyker aboard the Space Marines' Mothership, robs certain alien creatures of the ability to move or attack for a turn.

The narrative and setting of this game, placed in the WARHAMMER 40,000 universe, is an elaborate, energetic, and incoherently expansive militaristic space-opera campaign. The setting incorporates science-fantasy elements like psychic abilities, space-faring orcs, and warp daemons. As such, it contrasts with other

SF militaristic space-opera settings like FASA's BATTLETECH* and RENEGADE LEGION* games, and West End Games' STAR WARS*: the RPG, which are closer to traditional SF war games. If orcs-in-space rubs you the wrong way, you may find the SPACE CRUSADE game's setting unpalatable. (Note that the SPACE HULK game, another GW game in the 40K universe that does not contain orcs or goblins, has most of the same trappings of the SPACE CRUSADE game without the fantasy elements.)

Presentation: The graphics and components are a knockout, even more gratifying in charm and toy value than the HEROQUEST game. Separating counters and plastic miniatures from their sprues, then assembling all the game bits, seems to take forever, but again it's a bit like model-building, and the results are impressive. The rules are still fairly simple, compared to board games closer to the war-game tradition like the BATTLETECH game and I.C.E.'s SILENT DEATH* game (see later). Actually, at this level of complexity, I begin to long for the rules-writing rigor of war games. Sometimes I've had a hard time using the rules as a reference to resolve rules disputes. I also stumbled across some minor rules glitches that undermined my faith in the testing and error-trapping systems. For example, one Alien Event card refers to a weapon called a Devastator. The Devastator's abilities are not described on the card, and there is no mention elsewhere in the rules of such a weapon. Presumably it's an early-draft atmospheric name for one of the heavy weapons, but I naively had hopes of error-free rules where the rules were so relatively simple. I also naively imagined that a huge game company like Milton Bradley, which sells zillions of copies of its games, would have developed a superbly efficient system of testing and error-trapping. Perhaps it is silly, even with my years of game-design experience, that I might still harbor such illusions.

Those who know and love the SPACE HULK games should not make the mistake of looking at the more juvenile game virtues of the HEROQUEST game and prejudging the SPACE CRUSADE game to have similar values. Such a judgment would seem to be logical, since both the HEROQUEST and SPACE CRUSADE games appear to be on the box surface to be a pair of entry-level, mass-market, action-adventure games by Milton Bradley. The SPACE CRUSADE game in fact has much more in common with the SPACE HULK game, and in my opinion compares very favorably with the latter. The SPACE HULK game is excellent but narrowly defined in many ways. The SPACE CRUSADE game, even with its simpler rules, seems to present richer and more complex tactical and strategic problems and resources than the SPACE HULK game. As a game designer, I'm always impressed when a design manages to offer greater challenge and complexity of play with simpler

rules. With the SPACE CRUSADE game's wider range of troop and weapon types and with the added mechanical devices of Event Cards, Order Cards, and Equipment Cards, it provides a remarkably exciting game with a surprisingly clean and economical design.

Evaluation: The SPACE CRUSADE game is a colorful, exciting, fast-paced, easy-to-learn but hard-to-master game with solid, action-adventure, heroic SF appeal. The miniatures and graphic presentation start to satisfy the moment you pop the shrink wrap and dig into all the swell toys in the box, while the game itself achieves surprising tactical subtlety with simple game systems. Though more aggressive and competitive than the DUNGEON! or HEROQUEST games, the SPACE CRUSADE game is still light-hearted enough to suit casual SF-adventure gamers. Though simple enough to be an entry-level, mass-market game, the combination of cool toy value, space-opera setting, and dramatic play make this game plenty of fun for more sophisticated board gamers.

As of this writing, the SPACE CRUSADE game is not available for sale in the U.S.A. It is available from Games Workshop, Chewton Street, Hilltop, Eastwood, Nottingham NG16 3HY, UNITED KINGDOM.

DUNGEONQUEST game

Fantasy board game

Games Workshop £14.99/\$34.95

Boxed game with 20-page rulebook, six-piece gameboard, 115 room tiles, counters and tokens, 174 playing cards, dice, and four plastic miniatures

Design: Dan Glimne, Jakob Bonds (English-language rules by Jervis Johnson and Graeme Davis)

The DUNGEONQUEST game is Games Workshop's English-language version of the Swedish DRAKBORG* game. Standard fantasy hero types (a knight, a barbarian, an adventurer, and a ranger) journey into the ruins of a castle to steal gold from the treasure trove of a sleeping dragon. The heroes enter at dawn and must be out by dark; a counter tracks the movement of the sun from rising to setting, giving the heroes a limited number of turns to enter, plunder, and escape. This clever end-game mechanic uses time pressure to give this game a reliably short playing time and a steady build of tension to a dramatic climax—a feature missing in otherwise entertaining games like the TALISMAN, CIVILIZATION, and ILLUMINATI games.

The dungeon setting changes each time, since room tiles representing the dungeon interior are drawn randomly and revealed as heroes proceed into the dungeon. Thus, it is impossible to predict what kinds of obstacles you may encounter and difficult to judge when to give up and start the run back to the outside before the sun sets. Cards drawn when you enter a room tile determine the type of adventure challenge

you face: monster encounters, chasms, corpses, blown-out torches, crypts, traps, secret doors—a comprehensive parade of dungeon adventuring features. As an evocation of the atmosphere and excitement of a classic D&D-game dungeon crawl in a board game, the DUNGEON-QUEST game is excellent and clearly superior to the DUNGEON! or HEROQUEST games in that respect.

It is tough enough to get out alive with any treasure at all, much less to be successful in snatching gold from the dragon's treasure chamber before he awakes and bakes you. If you are playing socially and are more interested in getting out alive than in winning by grabbing the most loot, a conservative player can generally get his character out in one piece. But hard-nosed adventurers aiming for a big haul from the dragon's hoard will die like flies. I suppose the one time you win big makes up for the other times your character dies a horrible death, but my FRPG background makes it tough for me to be cavalier about the life of my hero, even in a board game.

The use of room tiles and cards to create a new dungeon every time gives this game good replay value in terms of varying the challenges and settings, but play more resembles the experience of a deadly thriller film than a tactical challenge. Luck of the draw plays a greater role in success than tactical shrewdness or experience, which is a positive feature for an FRPG-style social evening of board gaming. Further, the four heroes are actually playing parallel solitaire games, so there is little scope for player interaction and no issues of backstabbing or compulsive competitiveness. (In fact, the DUNGEONQUEST game is quite effective when played solitaire, which is probably the best way to familiarize yourself with the rules before introducing the game to your pals.) One weakness of this game is the four-player limit; if six or eight could play, I think this would be the perfect emergency board game substitute for an FRPG session.

Evaluation: The graphic design and presentation of the DUNGEONQUEST game are brilliant, the rules are simple and quickly learned, and the game experience is equivalent to a flavorful, action-filled, D&D-game dungeon crawl. Play is tense, suspenseful, and exciting, since the objectives are extremely difficult, and death is swift. The importance of good luck and the distraction of the vivid dungeon setting help suppress competitive impulses, making the DUNGEONQUEST game quite comfortable for social play.

ARKHAM HORROR* game

Horror board game
Chaosium, Inc. \$24.95
Boxed game with 99 playing cards, 50 monster counters, play money, four-page rules sheet, two four-page investigator rules sheets, two four-page

encounters tables references, game map, eight investigator cards, pawns, and markers

Design: Richard Launius, Lynn Willis, Charlie Krank

The ARKHAM HORROR game is my first choice for a board game with FRPG feel. It has everything I want in this respect: the lovably eldritch, fantasy-horror Lovecraftian setting; eight-player cooperative team play against the opening of Gates to Awful Places in quaint little Arkham; lots of charming chart-driven encounters; a clever game system that sends a veritable cornucopia of Cthulhoid monsters scooting along the game paths after the intrepid Investigators, and plenty of cool powers for Investigators to use against the rising tide of horrors. The game's rules presentation, tone, and feel are perfect for FRPG-bred gamers, and the components, while modest by Games Workshop and Milton Bradley standards, are perfectly charming and appropriate. The ARKHAM HORROR game even passes the dreaded Wife Test; my nongaming wife and I stayed up until four in the morning with a bottle of Madeira trying to plug the gates to the other worlds.

Tragically, ironically, the ARKHAM HORROR game has just gone out of print at Chaosium. I'm told, however, that there are still some copies out there in the stores. If you ever see a copy of this gem, buy it. Period.

Short and sweet

KELLAR'S KEEP and RETURN OF THE WITCH LORD games, by Milton Bradley and Games Workshop staff. £6.99/\$16.95 each. These present more sprues of plastic figures from the original HEROQUEST game, new cardboard bits, and new scenarios for the HEROQUEST game. If the young folks exhaust the scenarios in the original game, get these to keep them playing.

MERTWIG'S MAZE game, by Tom Wham. TSR, Inc., \$9.95. A cards-and-counters board game with the feel of a light-hearted dawn-of-the-dungeons-era D&D campaign. This is a pleasurable and entertaining substitute for an FRP evening. (See the errata and additional encounter in the RPGA™ Network's POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, issue #57.)

SILENT DEATH* game, by Kevin Barrett. I.C.E., \$40.00. A simple, science-fiction, dogfights-in-space game in the war-gaming tradition. Clear, readable rules are presented, with an excellent two-page introductory scenario that gets you playing immediately. The nice star-fighter lead miniatures provide an appealing game display. The systems wisely ignore physics and concentrate on zooming and shooting. This is available from Iron Crown Enter-

prises, Box 1605, Charlottesville VA 22902, U.S.A. [See the comments in "Through the Looking Glass," in DRAGON issue #165.]

SPACE HULK, DEATHWING, AND GENESTEALER games, by Richard Halliwell, Jervis Johnson, Matt Forbeck, and the Games Workshop staff. £19.95/\$47.95, £12.95/\$29.95, and £12.95/\$29.95, respectively. Expensive and elegant components, lovely alien Genestealer and Space Marine models, simple systems, and exceptionally clear rules with lots of helpful diagrams are presented with a fast pace of play and lots of action and mayhem. By itself, the SPACE HULK game is excellent. The DEATHWING set contains some useful supplemental material and more scenarios, but the GENESTEALER set introduces a charming "space magic," card-driven, psychic-powers system that adds lots of flavor while completely altering the balance of game elements—a good thing if you've played the SPACE HULK game to death and worked out all the basic tactics.

WIZ-WAR game. Jolly Games, price not available. A simple, cheap-and-cheerful, dungeon-fantasy board game in which wizards sneak around in a dungeon bushwhacking one another and trying to gather up treasures. This one offers fairly primitive components and fast, interesting play with lots of action and entertainment. It's an ideal game for killing an idle hour. This is available from Jolly Games, Box 695, Arroyo Grande CA 93420. [Editor's note: This game might not be available now; write to Jolly Games or check with your local hobby shop.]

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LOOKING FOR A GAME CONVENTION?

If your gaming group is too small, or if you've just moved into the neighborhood, finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem. However, your local hobbies and games shop may have a bulletin board where gamers can advertise their groups and meeting times. The hobby store may also know of local game conventions where you can meet dozens of other gamers with the same interests. The Convention Calendar in this issue may also be of help. Don't sit at home and wish you knew more gamers. Go out and find them today.

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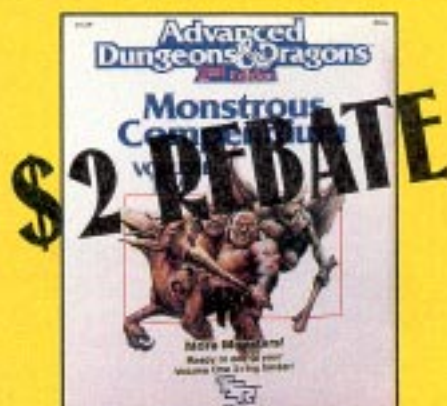
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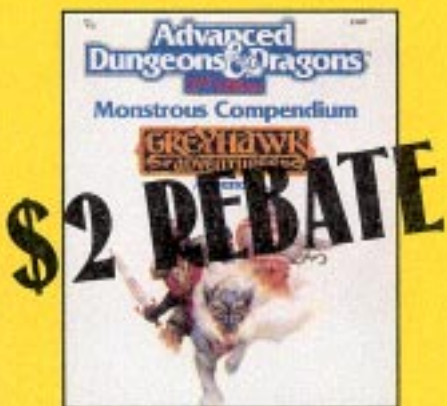
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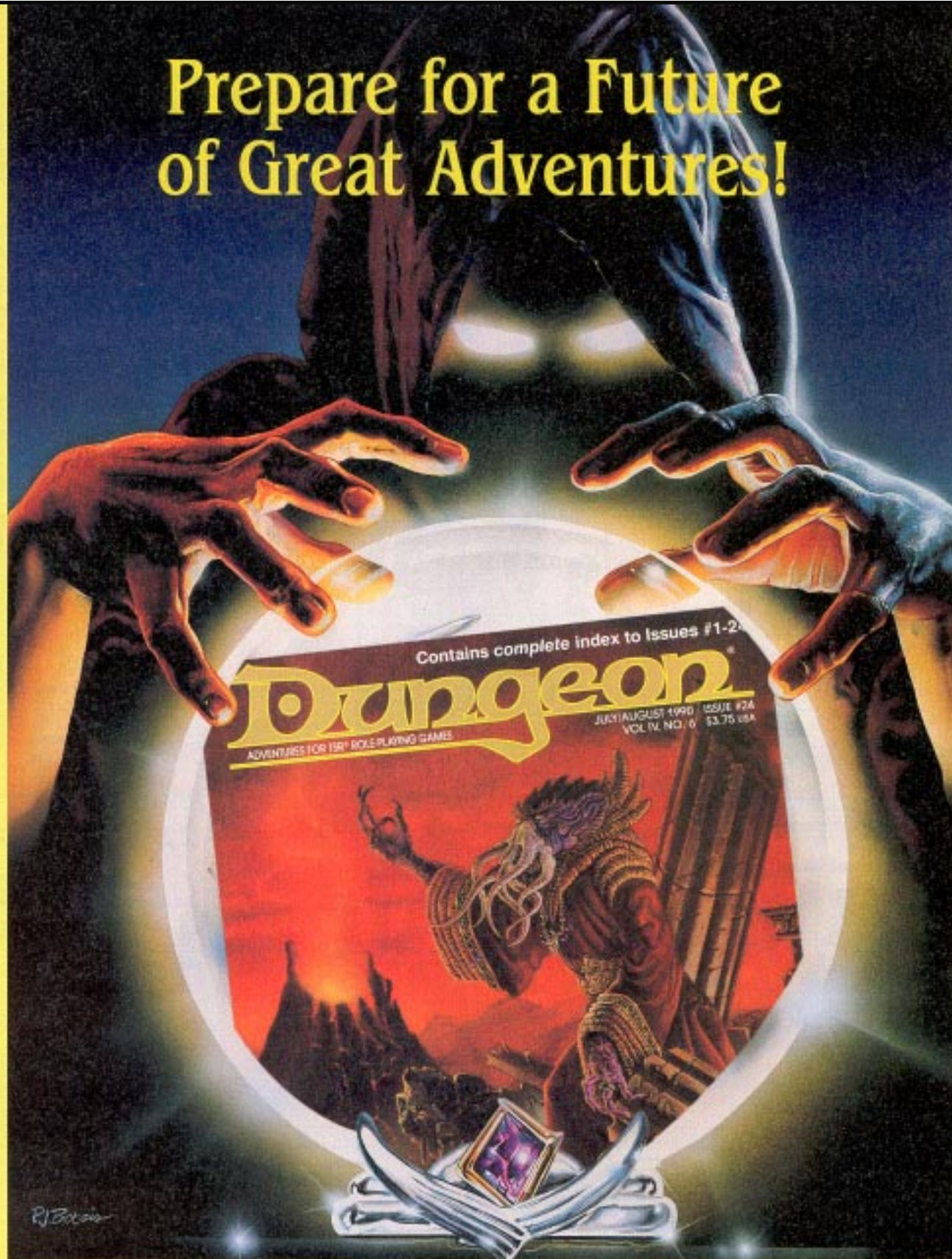
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The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 15: The last (and first) hour of the *Princess Ark*

by Bruce A. Heard

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

From the Journals of
prince haldemar of haaken
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire
Captain of the Ever-Victorious
PRINCESS ARK
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

Tslamir 13,2000 AY: I've entered this day's report from the back of a young sky wyrm. Immediately after the ship started to crumble into pieces, the sky wyrms swooped down and picked up those crewmembers who did not have time to reach the escape rafts. We all watched the *Princess Ark* tumble down, breaking apart totally. Meryath ordered her sky wyrms to return to their fortress, while she and Talasar followed the wreck in its fall toward the small, nearby world that the sky wyrms call Hakh. She was paying a last homage to her mother's soul. I could not bear the sight of the destroyed ship.

Tslamir 16: Talasar and Meryath have not returned; they should have been back by now. The sky wyrms are showing signs of irritability. I had to suspect foul play. I had a long talk with Meryath's elder senechal, Fenroth, and we decided to return to the world where Meryath and Talasar were last seen.

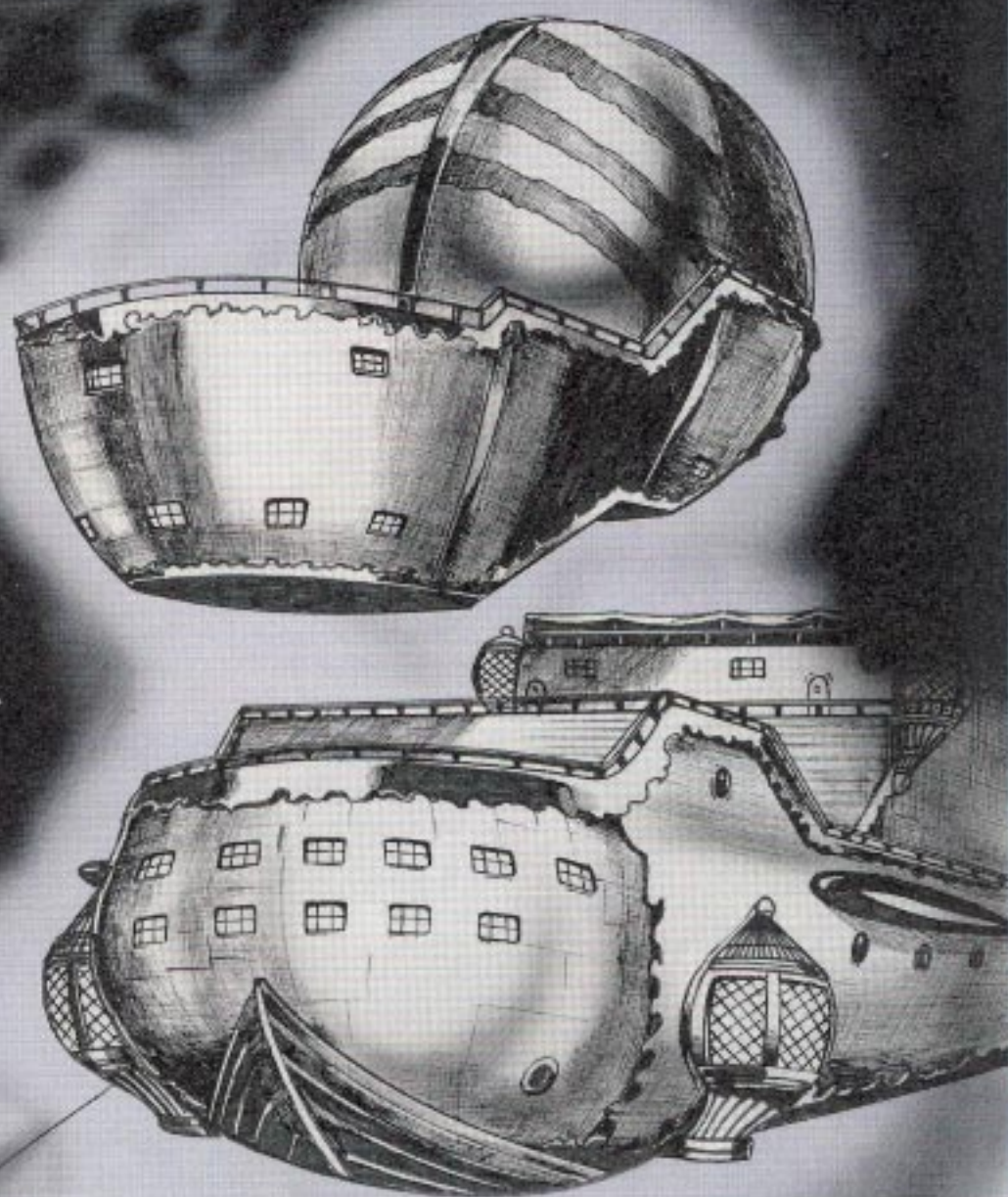
Tslamir 17: Dense layers of blue clouds covered Hakh; spotting any sign of either Meryath or the wreck was clearly hopeless. We dove toward that perpetually dark world and landed in a dense jungle. Strange, gnarled trees with dark blue leaves and purplish vines seemed to creep away from the magical, golden light that I invoked to show our way. Fenroth growled and hissed impatiently when his huge wings got entangled in the labyrinthine foliage. He soon decided to revert to a rakasta's shape, that of an old one with silver hair and two small fangs protruding slightly under his upper lip. A chilling, oily rain began to come down, turning the ground into a muddy, smelly mire. Fenroth hissed and spat his disgust for this repugnant place.

Fenroth said he had heard of hunting tribes in these woods who might help us. He did not know whether they were peaceful or not. We would have to find out. We began our slow trek through the sticky mud and the tangled vines.

Tslamir 20: It had been raining on and off every hour since our arrival. Both of us were soon unrecognizable, covered almost entirely with mud, leeches, and clouds of tiny flies. Chilled to the bones and exhausted, we were debating on whether or not to leave when my dagger betrayed some danger nearby. I looked but could not see much ahead.

All of a sudden, a heavy net fell from the branches above, and I felt ropes tightening around us. A trap! Fenroth snarled and





was ready to revert back to his natural form, but I bade him not to, for we would then never find the hunters' village. He hissed to me how foolish that was-and perhaps he was right, for a terrible blow to my head left me unconscious for the remainder of the day.

Tslamir 21: It was clear these hunters were no friendly folk. Both Fenroth and I were tightly tied up, gagged, and hanging by our feet from a branch. Ignoring a fuming look from Fenroth, I could see that the village consisted of a number of spherical huts hanging from branches, each large enough for a small family. The hunters were tall humanoids, very similar to our hobgoblins but with jet black skin, long blue hair, and white eyes. They wore little more than leather breeches or skin cloaks that still seemed to protect them well from the cold rain. Amazingly, their skins were covered with tattoos that glowed in the dark, producing a strange ballet of monstrous images in the dark distance.

At the far end of the village, on the ground, was a huge mound where trees had been cut down and piled up. Closer to us was an altar, carved out of a large rock, on which I could see our personal effects. A very tall hunter was standing there, playing with my dagger. He turned to us with a sadistic grin on his face. He jabbered some apparent insult, then asked questions that neither of us understood. As he became angrier, he moved closer and started poking at me. Then an old wokan, a spell-caster, walked up and silenced him. She pulled out slime, scum, wriggling slugs, and other disgusting mush from her side pouch, stuffed them into her mouth, and began dancing.

After a while, she approached and grabbed my hair, lifting my face close to hers as she spoke. Between her repugnant breath and the spit-out fragments of the black, gooey spell components she had been masticating, her words grew clear. "Morrrre strangerrrrs?" she said. "Good. The sky spirrrit will be pleased. But firrrst, you sufferrr."

More hunters came down rope ladders from their hanging huts. A cold hand clutched at my heart when I saw one of them wearing tattered parts of Talasar's uniform. They began dancing and feasting, a few of them tossing stones or daggers at us. Some missed; some didn't. The wokan brought a board covered with slimy creatures and applied it to my bare chest. The hunters greeted my muffled cries of pain with delight. A hunter stared at Fenroth with an insane look in his white eyes, slowly licking a long, serrated blade. He brandished the knife as the rain began to fall again.

The wokan suddenly barked an order. As if bitten by a snake, the hunter with the knife jumped back. The wokan snapped orders at two other hunters, and they ran off. The fun seemed to be over for the moment. The two came back,

dragging behind them the unconscious bodies of Talasar and Meryath. What they had done to them I cannot describe in this log, but the sight sent horror and pity through my mind-then anger.

The humanoids brought all four of us to the mound. The wokan began chanting. A throbbing glow filtered from under the mound, between the wooden logs. The wokan's incantations grew louder and more insistent. When a growl rose from the mound, the wokan stopped. She came closer, holding a garrotte that she slid slowly around my neck. Drummers began to pound on their drums, imitating heart beats. At first they grew quicker, then slowed as I lost consciousness. My last thought went to the *Princess Ark* and her soul. Dear Berylith, I wondered, where are you?

A log rolled off the mound, then three others. The garrotte loosened as the wokan turned to watch. Suddenly, the whole top of the mound blew off in a frightening explosion of blinding light and crackling bolts. The wokan screamed and fell to her knees. The other tribesmen dropped to the ground, prostrated before the sacred mound.

What seemed like the ghost of a great sky wyrm rose out of the mound. Meryath's strangled voice cried, "Mother?" The great beast turned toward the hunters and roared in the way the *Princess Ark* used to. So it *was* Berylith! But how? The hunters screamed, dropped their spears, shields, headdresses, and grigris, and fled as fast as their legs would allow. Trembling, the old wokan crawled over to us and cut us loose, revealing her black teeth in a pathetic parody of a smile. Fenroth immediately returned to his normal shape and ripped the wokan apart.

So, I turn my back for a moment, and the world falls apart! echoed a voice in my mind. *Look at you! Daughter, I thought you knew better than to meddle with the Forest People of Hakh. And Haldemar! Couldn't you wait just a little longer? I have been working very hard these past few days, and I needed some rest. You'll see. You'll be proud. Anyway, it's fortunate you called me, else I wouldn't be able to show you anything at all. That was a close one, wasn't it, my dear?*

Berylith was using *telepathy* More of the logs rolled off, revealing an incredible blue structure with windows and silver sculptures. By the beard of Pligzy Gladz! *That was my skyship?* In absolute horror, I recognized parts of my *Princess Ark* lost amid the massive creation. She wouldn't have dared! Or had she? I heard myself scream, "My ship! What have you done to my ship?"

Tslamir 22-Xerdon: Admiral Haaken left me in command of our new "ship" shortly after our departure from the sky wyrms' fortress. Commander Talasar is in sick bay, suffering greatly from wounds he received on Hakh, and the Admiral has retired to his quarters.

The *Princess Ark* has been altered in some radical fashion. The result is an incredible vessel of a kind I have never seen before.

The large wooden hull is totally different from-and bigger than-the Haaken family's *Princess Ark*. It is also surrounded by a ghostlike aura shaped like a living sky wyrm. As a combat vessel, I must admit it seems impressive. I think the crew and the rest of the officers will enjoy this new ship. Unfortunately, the Admiral's opinion became clear when I helped him to his new quarters. Admiral Haaken seemed to cringe at everything he saw on his way down. I thought for a second he was being attacked when I shut the door behind him and I heard him scream, "My cabin! What have you done to my cabin?" He said many other things that I will not copy here. Perhaps all is not perfect, after all.

We bid our sky wyrm allies farewell and took off toward the magical gate in the sky. I was proud to command this fantastic ship and can only marvel at the way it flies. It is truly amazing.

To be continued . . .

The new *Princess Ark*

The present-day *Princess Ark* is a much-evolved version of Haldemar's family ship. Ever since the Thothian enchantment was completed, the ship's structure became fully inhabited by the life force and psyche of the sky wyrm, Berylith. This spirit has totally reshaped the *Princess Ark* to suit her own preferences.

General description: The ship is now in three parts. One is an immaterial shape surrounding most of the ship, a magical aura resembling Berylith's sky-wyrm body. This translucent envelope has the consistency of pipe smoke, very much like the puffs of smoke some hins of the Shires use to create images in the air when telling their old tales. Berylith may turn this aura *invisible* on Haldemar's commands. The aura matches the maneuvers of the *Princess Ark* with appropriate body motions, like flapping its huge wings, moving its head, coiling its serpentine tail, and so on.

The second part is the ship's main wooden hull, which contains most of the crew and equipment. The outside of the hull is heavily decorated with sculptures representing cloud patterns, wavy snakes, lions, and eagles. The main colors of the ship range from azure to night blue, while the sculptures show a brilliant silver hue. The decks and the inside of the ship retain a more natural wood color.

The third part is a mobile deck *levitating* above the fore end of the main hull, within the head of the sky wyrm's ghostly aura. This is the commander's deck, from which Haldemar normally controls the flight of the ship. This deck moves with the aura's head, pitching to the left or right when Berylith looks aside, rolling up when she looks up, and so forth. All floors on the mobile deck are enchanted with their own *gravity* effect, preventing occupants from losing their footing when the

deck moves too rapidly. A smooth crystal dome covers the commander's deck. The nacreous crystal acts like a mirror, preventing anyone from looking into the dome. Berylith can see only through her aura's eyes.

The structure of the ship became a material extension of Berylith's immaterial body. Berylith feels whatever happens on the ship. If the ship is physically damaged, Berylith is in pain as well. Berylith may voluntarily move mobile parts of the ship, such as doors, windows, or other items that are part of the ship's structure. Passengers walking about the decks can be sensed as well, just as someone can notice ants on his skin.

It should be noted, however, that Berylith is no omnipotent genius. Although she is aware of many things, she has to concentrate to pay attention to any one thing. There is a limited number of things she can think about or do at any particular time. In general, Berylith is busy flying, watching what happens ahead, or dreaming. If Berylith wants to slam a door or lock a hatchway by herself, she must succeed at an intelligence check. Each additional simultaneous action she attempts incurs a +2 penalty to the check. Add another +5 penalty if Berylith is busier than usual that round (if combat or a difficult maneuver is in progress, for example):

Berylith communicates telepathically with Haldemar, to whom she is attuned. She may also accept simple commands from Talasar or other duly appointed officers on the commander's deck. The ship has a total crew of 100 people, including 60 boltmen and 12 officers, and a cargo capacity of 80,000 cn. The ship has AC 7 and 200 Hull Points.

Ship's weaponry: The ship is armed with three types of weapons. Despite their common names (ballistas and catapult), these are, in fact, magical devices. These are manned by common crew, while boltmen assume individual combat posts on the decks and gangways.

Light ballistas consist of triple-mounted, rotating rods capable of firing bursts of magic missiles at the rate of three per round with a range of 200', interspersed with a huge number of *light* spells. The firing of a light ballista produces spectacular, though harmless, roaring flames at the rods' firing tips, a feature designed essentially to scare the enemy.

Heavy ballistas come with larger twin-mounted rods, each capable of casting a web spell up to 300' every other round. Heavy ballista rods look like two oversized, hissing black snakes that recoil after each shot.

The catapult looks like a large, heavily sculpted wooden tube, similar to a fat, medieval bombard with three red muzzles resembling dragon heads. The catapult can fire a *disintegrate* spell to 400' once per turn.

In order to function, each of these de-

vices requires a magical key made of jade and gold. These keys have been entrusted to Xerdon and to several petty officers in charge of gunnery.

Berylith retained the use of her breath weapon, which originates at the mouth of her ghostly aura (effects as per the greater sky wyrm's description in DRAGON® issue #164, page 45). Berylith does not have the other abilities of sky wyrms. The ship's hull points are used as the basis of damage the breath weapon inflicts. The ship can fly at a speed of 360' per round (120 miles per day). Berylith's aura must remain visible around the ship while any of the magical weapon devices or the breath weapon are used, or during one full turn following their last use.

Deck plans and key: The rooms shown in the deck plans for the new *Princess Ark* are numbered according to their deck location. The first digit corresponds to the deck number on which the room is located.

Unless otherwise noted, the following is true for all of the ship. The lower edge of each stairs' railing ends with a small *continual light*. All windows and portholes are covered with the mirrorlike nacre, preventing observation by outsiders looking in. Portholes cannot be opened and are too small for anyone to get through. The doors are unlocked. The ship is heated or cooled depending on the seasons, and can maintain breathable atmosphere beyond the skyshield. Throughout the ship are leather straps used to avoid falling during emergency maneuvers; these are placed on railings, in alleyways and personal quarters, on rafts and lifeboats, etc.

Magical wards protect the ship from outside intrusions. They include the following enchantments:

—All *wizard lock* spells on doorways aboardship are cast at 32nd level (the number of hit dice that a greater sky wyrm has).

—All outside decks and all gangways directly accessible from the outside provide the ship's first line of security. Anyone or anything moving on these surfaces and not registered at the yeoman's office on the crew's roster will trip this first ward. It causes the culprit to leave brightly glowing footprints on these surfaces or anywhere else aboard, until the footprints are *dispelled*, the culprit is caught, or one turn has passed.

—Turning the door knobs or rings on any of the alleyways' port and starboard doors (including the ones leading to the brig) or on any of the hatchways, without first uttering the password, causes an electrical shock for 1-8 hp and activates all the *magic mouths* described later.

—Anyone or anything invisible or using magic to conceal its identity or appearance may not use any of the stairways or the *levitation* shaft without causing a *magic mouth* to appear and scream "Intruder!" continuously for one turn or until the spell is *dispelled*.

—Causing damage to the structure of the ship (starting a fire, breaking through doors, puncturing the hull, etc.) automatically attracts Berylith's attention. This may not be obvious to the culprit. Berylith will inform Haldemar or will take action on her own, such as attempting to slam a door in the culprit's face for 1-4 hp damage or attempting to lock the exits.

Deck plans key

E. Elevator (*levitation* shaft): A magical shaft stretches from deck 8 to deck 4, allowing quick access to a number of areas in the ship. The shaft itself is empty but is enchanted with a *levitation* spell. Anyone stepping in simply states which deck he wishes to reach, and the spell does the rest. Asking for a deck that does not exist or cannot be reached through the shaft automatically attracts Berylith's attention. Depending on the situation, Berylith may attempt to freeze or cancel the *levitation* effect, or even jettison the intruder from the shaft with great strength up through deck 4 or out through the bottom of the ship.

G. Guard turret: These small turrets are located in various areas of the ship. They are always occupied by a boltman. Each turret has a wide view and a horn to sound the alarm. Guards are changed every four hours.

L. Latrine: These rooms contain a magical chamber pot that remains always empty, a magical tub filled with warm *ever-cleaning* water, a small table, and wash cloths. Although insufficient for the whole crew by modern standards, ship personnel get by simply by taking water in pans and washing up in their quarters. According to Alphatian Imperial Navy Regulations, each crewmember must bathe at least once a week.

Decks 1-3—Commander's decks

101. Command bridge: Two wooden seats with red cushions face toward the bridge's front railing. The wood is carved to show strange, intertwining veins. A stand with a small crystalline ball sits between the two seats. Talasar or another officer simply lays a hand on the crystal to convey simple orders to Berylith.

201. Lower bridge: Two boltmen often stand guard in this area. The door to area 202 is *wizard locked*. Port-side stairs lead up to the bridge (area 101), while the starboard stairs lead down to area 204.

202. Commanders' lounge: All superior officers have a free access to this room. Six armchairs are spread around a circular, glowing metal plate on the floor. The plate shows a magical image of either the lands underneath the *Princess Ark* or the constellations above. A small cache exists under the stairs on the port side, containing the ship's more valuable treasures (usually gems and jewelry). The

value varies with the ship's fortunes but often comes close to 5,000 gp.

203. Commander's ballista deck:

This open-air deck is normally unoccupied except for one sentry, usually a forward watch. The deck has a light ballista (see "Ship's weaponry").

301. Library and cartographic services:

Crowded shelves of musty old books and map cases cover a large portion of the bulkheads here. The center of the room is occupied by a large varnished table with six leather chairs. The table is often strewn with scrolls, notes, and books. A secret compartment lies under the starboard staircase. It contains a rope ladder that can be used to exit through the secret door on the opposite side of the room. The ladder is long enough to reach area 503. The hatchway leads to area 401 underneath.

302. Promenade deck: This rectangular gangway overlooks the atrium underneath. The entire surface of the gangway and the atrium's skylight is covered with a sky-blue silk tent.

Deck 4—Ceremonial deck

401. Upper teleporter: Although at the level of deck 4, this room is really part of the mobile commander's deck. It contains a magical circle capable of *teleporting* people to area 402. *Teleportation* requires the proper password. Haldemar and Talasar know several other command words that will lead them directly to other areas of the ship.

402. Lower teleporter: This open-air area contains a magical circle linked with room 401. A sentry keeps guard here.

403. Atrium: This room contains the Myoshiman monolith that allows the *Princess Ark* to bend rays of light and become invisible. The bulkheads and beams supporting the gangway above (area 301) are ornately carved and decorated. Small wooden busts of previous Alpathian rulers are located at the corners. The top of the monolith sticks out through a rectangular skylight overhead. The port and starboard doors lead to the guard turrets. The forward doors open on the stairs to deck area 503. The stairs next to the monolith lead up the gangway area 302.

404. Midship ballista: This open deck is the location of a heavy ballista (see "Ship's weaponry"). A hatchway can slide to reveal the top end of the *levitation* shaft (see area E). The forward stairs lead up to the gangway area 302. The aft stairs lead down to deck area 511.

Deck 5—Crew deck

501. Forward ballista deck: This open deck holds a light ballista manned only during combat. The two doors leading to area 502 are locked, except during combat.

502. Armory: Nonmagical combat equipment is stored in this room. All the

doors leading to this room are locked, except during combat. The hatchway is always locked. Only superior officers have a key to the hatch. The hatchway leads to room 601 underneath.

503. Briefing deck: This open-air area is often used when officers address the crew. Ceremonial duties are performed on this deck, with a honor guard standing on the stairways and the gangway above (area 402).

504. Boltmen's quarters, men:

Ship's personnel live in these quarters. Narrow bunks are stacked three high, allowing rest for up to 33 people. Small chests are located under the lower bunk, while heavy cloth bags hang from the bulkheads. These contain the crew's personal belongings.

505. Boltmen's quarters, women: This room is similar to area 504. The Alpathian Imperial Navy is an equal opportunity employer. Fraternization, however, is not tolerated aboard ship.

506. Crew's mess room: Inactive personnel have their meals or spend their free time here. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is generally tightly controlled. Crew otherwise use their time here to mend uniforms or equipment, to read, or to play cards, dominos, dice, or darts.

507. Chapel: The chapel is nominally devoted to Razud; however, Talasar often conducts more generic services to accommodate the remainder of the crew. An unusual enchantment actually causes the room to be larger than it could possibly be. Its scale becomes 20' per square for people inside the room. The chapel contains rows of benches, a small wooden altar, and small statues of Razud and his followers carved into the bulkheads.

508. Crew quarters, men: This room is similar to area 504, except that some of the space is taken up with barrels and common deck equipment. In the tradition of the Alpathian Navy, sailors often sleep in hammocks. These are hooked to wooden beams and bulkheads almost haphazardly in these quarters. Up to 21 people can fit in the room, in rather cramped conditions. Passengers of the lowest status may share these quarters with the crew.

509. Crew quarters, women: This room is similar to area 508.

510. Alleyway: A sentry normally guards this passageway. The door to the stairway is *wizard locked*. Only officers and the galley personnel have free passage. The stairs lead down to area 613 underneath.

511. Aft catapult deck: This large deck is the largest open area on the ship. A magical catapult occupies the center of the deck (see "Ship's weaponry"). Riggings run up to the top of the observation mast, behind the catapult. A watch remains on top of the mast, observing the *Princess's* aft arc for incoming vessels. Two doors lead to the guard turrets near the stern of the ship. Three stern lanterns give off a reddish light during the night.

512. Upper gangways: These open-air bridges allow the crew to quickly reach their battle stations. A light ballista (see "Ship's weaponry") occupies the aft edge of each gangway. A sky-blue tent covers the narrow portion of the gangway; the tent can be rolled back for combat. Rolls of rope ladders are tied up to the inside of the railing, allowing quick escape to the life boats below on deck 7. A hatchway near the gangway's midsection leads down to gangway 614.

Deck 6—Officers' deck

601. Officers' mess room: Superior officers and occasionally petty officers dine in this chamber or conduct meetings here. It is a well-decorated room, with large window openings on the prow of the *Princess Ark*. A wooden ladder in the starboard corner leads to a locked hatchway overhead, opening into area 502. Another locked hatchway, hidden under the carpet, leads down to area 701. Both hatchways are locked (see area 502). A large wooden table and a dozen leather chairs occupy the center of the room. China and silverware are located in a chest in the port-side corner.

602. Guest lounge: Dignitaries often meet in this lounge. A large sofa faces a crystal canopy on the port side bulkhead. Several potted plants and small wooden sculptures of famous Alpathian seamen stand on pedestals in the corners of the lounge. The stairs lead down to area 702 underneath.

603-604. Guest rooms: These opulently decorated, very comfortable quarters are reserved for important passengers. They are currently unoccupied.

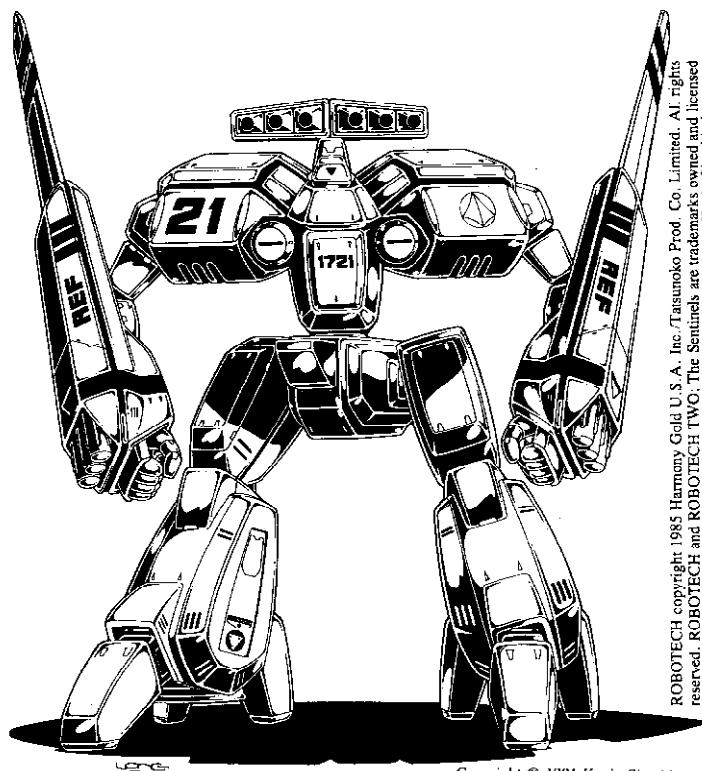
605. Trophy room: This area displays a variety of strange and valuable items collected over the years of travel of the *Princess Ark*. Some are magical; others are simply bizarre. Their true uses and actual properties are not always clearly known to the ship's officers. Raman is in charge of studying these items, researching their lore, and cataloging them in his library. The stairs lead down to area 703 below.

606. Raman's quarters: This room would be a disgrace to normal navy officers. It is filled with chests, wooden boxes, bulky scroll cases, and books spread about the room in a most disorganized fashion. A few of the items from area 605 can be found on Raman's work table, with piles of notes and sketches. Occasionally, a small cage with a strange creature inside may hang near the window (see area 703).

607. Xerdon's quarters: Unlike Raman's quarters (area 606), this rather spartan room is absolutely spotless. The only note of uniqueness consists in a collection of weapons and shields adorning the bulkheads.

608-611. Petty officers' quarters:

Continued on page 108



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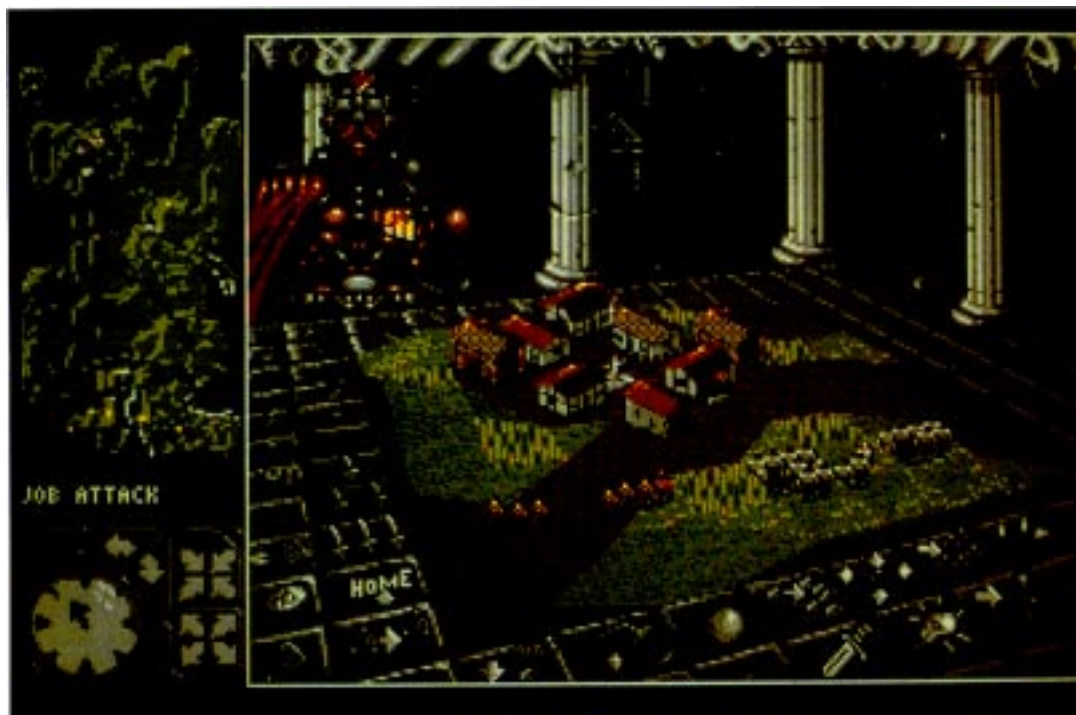
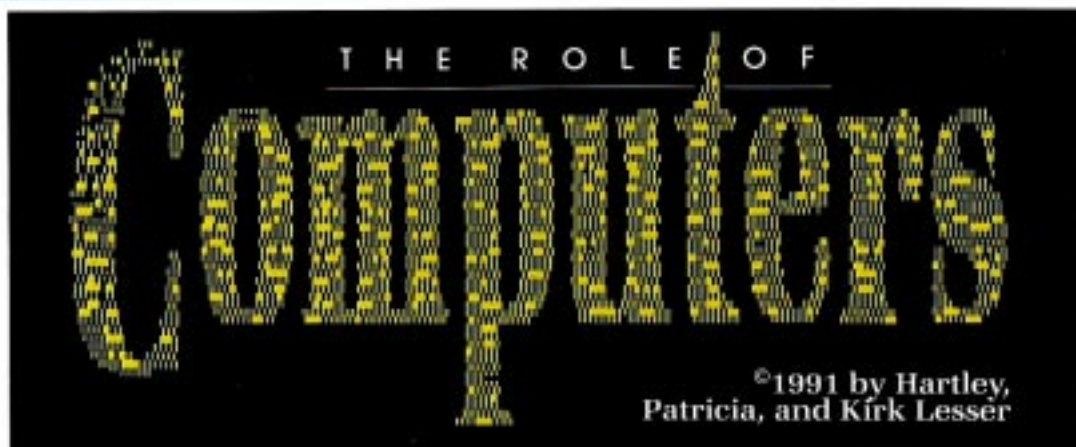
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Reviews

Bane of the Cosmic Forge ****
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Bane of the Cosmic Forge is a highly enjoyable fantasy role-playing game (FRPG). This new Wizardry adventure employs an easy-to-use player interface and allows you to save the game at any point. Sir-Tech has attempted to maintain full system compatibility with the most basic PC/MS-DOS system.

What's new with Wizardry? Much, including full-color illustrations and modifiers for encumbrance, magic, ranking, and armament. Every move is dictated by the roll of the dice, much as our in-person FRPGs are controlled, and the aforementioned modifiers affect the outcome of each roll both quickly and without screen

interference. New races and characters enliven this game. You can also select the game's skill level. This system is the foundation of new Wizardry scenarios due to be released by Sir-Tech and adventure author D. W. Bradley. Also, there is no disk copy protection.

On the negative side, redundant messages and animation when reencountering permanent NPCs are evident. Animated sequences showing monsters advancing on

your party slow game play. Room detail is lacking, and you must rely solely on text descriptions to determine where you should search. There is no sound-board support, but the digitized sounds that come through your internal speaker are good. However, if you have a noisy hard drive, they may be hard to hear.

With 11 races and 14 professions, you can create characters you've never played before in a software-based FRPG. For example, Bane enables you to create a character with fighting ability who can concentrate the powers of his mind as an offensive weapon. Other character classes include the valkyrie, bishop, lord, samurai, monk, and ninja. There's even an alchemist character in addition to the more familiar fighter, mage, priest, thief, ranger, and bard.

There are some new races, as well.

Computer games' ratings

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



Bane of the Cosmic Forge (Sir-Tech Software)

There's the dracon, a creature having high vitality, strength, and dexterity, with resistance to psionic and acid-based spells, who can also breathe acid upon his enemies. Others include felpurrs, rawulfs, mooks, and lizardmen in addition to the familiar humans, elves, dwarfs, gnomes, hobbits, and faeries. Each race has specific attributes that are stronger or weaker than other races, such as the dracon mentioned above. We highly recommend that gamers thoroughly read the adventurer's manual and consider possible characters before entering the character-creation section. Employ characters that have a variety of capabilities; it is good to remember that a ranger can employ a bow, that a wizard can employ a sling, and that many characters also possess spell capabilities, especially as they gain experience levels.

Your characters each possess individual armor classes for the various parts of the body. A character might use protective armor for his chest, but if he's wearing only cloth leggings, watch out for those low blows—they can cost him his life. And no longer do you have to concern yourself about a specific alignment. Karma rules the way you manage your character's ethics.

Talk about increased goodies—there are now 77 base spells and 462 different magic combinations. Although we missed seeing the previous, highly familiar Wizardry spells Mahalito and Dios, the new spell system is now more realistic. Spells are derived from six elemental realms (fire, water, etc.) and have six power levels, each with a specific die roll needed for doing damage against an opponent. The die roll also affects the new combat system, where primary and secondary attacks, parrying, and multiple fighting are balanced against other statistics for the character and the opposition.

There are hundreds of beasts in *Bane*.

The ones you'll encounter the most include bats, different vines (some that breathe Sleep spells that can really get your low-level characters in trouble), and a variety of rogues.

When encountering a locked door, your thief (or other character equipped with skullduggery skills) must maneuver on-screen tumblers to gain entry for the party. The lower the level, the less likely the thief will accomplish this task on his die roll. Traps also require players to unscramble jumbled letters to reveal any potential danger. You can also Assay the capabilities of items you find.

All characters can increase their skills, of which there are three categories: Weaponry, Physical, and Academia. Your character's statistics are always available for Review. These include your characters' age, number of rebirths, experience level, professional ranking, experience points, marks (which informs you how many creatures you've sent to their deaths), your condition (health, the effects of poisoning and disease, etc.), wealth in gold pieces, carrying capacity, and armor class.

We found the keyboard to be the best method of game play. You select commands by moving the direction keys to not only highlight what you wish to do, but also to move your party. The adventure is in first-person perspective. The on-screen view is what your party sees before them.

To access the commands (using the keyboard as the input device), you depress the RETURN key. A list of available commands appears in the lower left-hand corner. These include Review (check out your character), Search (check the immediate area), Open (use force or lock-picking skills), and Spell, to name a few. You move the cursor over the command you wish to use, then press RETURN again to activate submenus associated with the command.

Combat in *Bane* is similar in many respects to that in the original Wizardry series. Your characters appear on-screen in their marching order, and you select options as previously noted.

Your adventure in *Bane* revolves around your six characters finding a castle that has been abandoned for nearly 120 years. A couple of rotters, a King and a Queen, once inhabited the castle and were involved in some bizarre rituals. Additionally, the King practiced magic and formed a dark alliance with a necromancer. Combining their dark powers, the latter two sought to rule the evil planes and were actually succeeding in their dark endeavors. Through their battles on the planes, they learned of the Cosmic Forge, a magical pen. Whatever was written by the pen became part of the cosmic fabric and became true.

They found the pen and scripted unearthly horrors upon mankind until the day each decided the other member of this unholy alliance wasn't needed anymore. There was a climactic battle between the King and the necromancer, and neither has been heard from since. Your characters' entry into this "vacant" castle is about to change the curse on mankind wrought by the pen.

In this dread environment, you'll need your wits about you. *Bane* is a learning adventure, so low-level encounters are suited for low-level characters. For those unaccustomed to FRPGs, *Bane* is a good way to learn how such games are played. For those with adventuring experience, this new Wizardry system is a great method through which you can create characters that will gain in strength and power for future Wizardry scenarios. *Bane* is suitable for any gamer, bearing in mind future scenario releases.

We would still like to see the message and animation redundancy issue resolved. For example, in the Castle Basement, you'll run into Queueque, who buys and sells goods. After the first encounter explaining this NPC's position, you don't need to see him walk onto the screen again with the same textual description; it holds up game play and offers no additional value. It would be a good idea to simply have the Buy, Sell, Trade screen appear, with Queueque's on-screen persona arriving simultaneously.



Bane of the Cosmic Forge (Sir-Tech Software)

The Swag Bag is a great place to deposit those items you find and may need later in the adventure. Additionally, a backup option allows you to recover your previous character, should something untoward occur during your quest.

Bane is a fantastic adventuring environment for FRPG aficionados. New and well designed, *Bane of the Cosmic Forge* should not only please those gamers who have experienced the original Wizardry series, but also garner new fans! For PC/MS-DOS computers, *Bane* supports EGA and CGA graphics, with a VGA upgrade expected this year. Other versions available soon include Amiga and Macintosh, with support for color Mac II monitors.

By the way, be certain to check all of the wall alcoves in the first hallway to obtain a critically needed amulet. In the basement, you'll find that Jailor's Key in a room north and slightly east of the barracks.

PowerMonger

Electronic Arts (415-571-7171)

Amiga and Atari ST versions \$49.95

This strategic conquest game system is suitable for all gamer experience levels. With versions for the Amiga and the Atari ST, *PowerMonger* features an original and effective user interface with an icon-driven game system. Occasionally, the difficult copy-protection system requires gamers to enter data relating to a portion of the map. Many of the miniature maps in the manual are difficult to decipher when compared to the on-screen image. Also, there is no hard disk support.

For those who have enjoyed *Populous*, this game brings the creative juices of Bullfrog back to your Amiga and Atari ST screens. Like *Populous*, *PowerMonger* employs the omnipresent view of your worlds. You peer down on the lands that you are about to conquer, and access a variety of icons that border your world to initiate your commands. However, instead of interacting with your worlds as a god, you are now one of three commanders questing to rule the worlds.

What makes *PowerMonger* unique is that you can utilize both the power of arms and the power of words to conquer villages, cities, and lands. The loyalty of those whom you encounter can mean the difference between success and defeat. By learning how to Spy and Bide effectively, you can one-up your opposition. But if you take too much for granted, you may find your support has withered away and your haughty attitude leads to your grave.

As you conquer territories, you also gain captains, who can receive individual orders from you. The farther they are from you, the longer it takes an order to reach them by carrier pigeon (you actually see the bird flying to the captain next to his icon in the upper portion of the screen). You can also dictate the posture or aggressiveness of each captain. A captain with an aggressive posture might kill all of the villagers during an attack on a town, while

one of a more passive nature will be far more humane. Posture also affects the nature of invention. If a captured village possesses a workshop, you can invent objects to help your army, such as a cannon, bows, swords, pikes, boats, or plows. The more aggressive the posture of the captain, the more warlike the item your army will build. Once you've determined what needs to be constructed, you click on the Invent icon, then watch your minions march out of the village and begin chopping down trees to construct your bows. Birds even flee from trees being felled!

PowerMonger does take some time to get used to. It was only during the writing of this review that we realized that clicking on one of the four map icons above the overview map would help us plot our mini-invasions. Games can be saved to a disk at any time, and saved games can be recalled easily. The game can also be played with a friend via modem.

With the ability to zoom into and out of the action, you sometimes have difficulty knowing exactly where you are on the

map. Zoom in too far, and you may wonder where the village you were looking at went to! Just scroll in one direction or another and you'll find the missing village, or else position the cursor on the overview map where you believe the village is located and click once-you'll be there.

The animation is excellent, the graphics are colorful and easily distinguishable, and the music and sound effects are first rate. *PowerMonger* is an extremely exciting strategy game. With hundreds upon hundreds of different worlds to conquer, you'll be playing and enjoying *PowerMonger* long after Bullfrog produces another computer entertainment winner. *PowerMonger* seems to possess enormous staying power as one of those rare entertainments that will remain in your permanent software library.

The Secret of Monkey Island

Lucasfilm Games (415-721-3300)

PC/MS-DOS version (VGA) \$69.95

The Secret of Monkey Island is a highly enjoyable graphic adventure replete with



PowerMonger (Electronic Arts)

interesting puzzles, a fantastic Roland soundtrack, superb VGA graphics, smooth-scrolling animation, and some of the funniest lines ever seen on your computer screen. *Monkey Island* is a PC/MS-DOS game with a VGA special edition (EGA graphics are the standard offering for \$59.95), and both Roland and AdLib sound boards are supported. Normally, we find some "amusing" adventures fall flat on their faces. Not so with *Monkey Island*! Perhaps we have warped senses of humor, but we laughed uproariously on several occasions at the on-screen responses and the cut scenes employed in this graphic adventure. Gamers of any level of experience can play.

This game features a mouse-driven interface that is extremely easy to use; it also has an original adventure concept and an acceptable copy-protection scheme. Unfortunately, we feel the prices of over \$50 for the EGA version and \$60 for the VGA version are excessive.

A graphic adventure is like participating in a movie, but you decide which path the lead character takes, what action he employs when encountering a puzzle, and how the character responds in conversation. Your decisions dictate the outcome of various segments of the adventure.

The hero you control is one Guybrush Threepwood. The adventure starts on Melee Island in the Caribbean (the music



The Secret of Monkey Island (Lucasfilm Games)

will have your toes tapping as you read the on-screen messages). Guybrush's goal is to become a pirate. He must earn that right by completing three miniquests: He must defeat the best sword wielder on the island, procure the Idol of Many Hands from Governor Marley's mansion, and find the buried treasure.

First, you must figure out a way to buy a sword and a shovel (to complete miniquests one and three), then decide how to steal the idol. We recommend you investigate every item you find on Melee Island, enter every available doorway, look at items in each room, and talk with every character you meet. The latter activity will put you in stitches as you cajole information from the pirates of Melee Island.

There is one long-dead (and quite evil) pirate named LeChuck who learns of your desire to become a pirate. Since that could screw up his own plans, he will attempt to stop your quest.

To move Guybrush around, you simply move the mouse cursor in the direction you wish him to travel, then click the left mouse button. There is plenty to do, so don't ever feel as though you are stuck.

Another great feature of this adventure is that you can save 10 games in progress. As you attempt to figure out the various puzzles, you'll want to save as often as possible so that you don't lose the game you've already figured out.

You'll eventually run into the Fetuccini brothers for a big bang. You can aid an imprisoned pirate with bad breath, only to learn that some figure of authority may be not what he seems. Find Captain Smirk, talk to Carla, even talk to a dog.

The Secret of Monkey Island is so well crafted that, while in the village, even individual lights in various rooms in the buildings turn on and off while you're

taking care of business in the town square. You'll also find more than a few references to Lucasfilm's *Loom* while trying to uncover the secrets.

If you enjoy a great graphic adventure spiced with humor top-notch graphics, and a soundtrack filled with really good, original compositions, this is a must buy for you. We haven't stopped laughing yet!

Faces

Spectrum HoloByte (415-522-3584)
Macintosh version \$44.95

Faces is the new game from Spectrum HoloByte, which gave us *Tetris* and *Weltris*. While playing this game, I sud-



The Secret of Monkey Island (Lucasfilm Games)

denly remembered Khrushchev's famous threat "We will bury you." A lot of burying goes on in this game.

As in the two previous offerings, things fall from the top of the screen and you must position them before they hit bottom. In *Faces*, horizontal slices of two persons' faces fall side by side. You maneuver them left and right to make faces as they stack up in piles, preferably with all the pieces from the same person's face. Eventually, the pieces stack up to the top of the screen, and the game's over.

Such a description makes *Faces* sound like the other two games. However, in

Tetris or *Weltris*, you always had one great move for each failing piece, and even if you didn't see it, the piece usually helped things along wherever it landed. In *Faces*, however, one misplaced piece can undo many carefully laid ones. And when most pieces appear, they can only hurt you or, at best, put you a notch closer to the end of the game. Playing *Faces* was more an exercise in damage control than a game of surprise and creativity. It's a sequel that strains at what its predecessors accomplished.— reviewed by Gregg Williams

Harpoon

Three-Sixty (408-879-9144)
Macintosh version \$59.95

Though one might expect a black-and-white computer game to not be as playable as a color PC/MS-DOS version, one would have to recant on such thoughts when playing the Macintosh version of *Harpoon*. Not only does the game translate thoroughly and easily to black and white, but in some instances the high contrast of the game is enhanced by its lack of color.

The outstanding *Harpoon* operations manual continues to be one of the best treatises on submarine warfare. Although written for PC/MS-DOS machines, a four-page manual revision is included for Macintosh gamers. One simply moves the non-copy-protected files into a *Harpoon* folder on your Macintosh (if you have a hard drive), then double-click on the *Harpoon* icon. Then it's time to decide which of the various scenarios you wish to engage in. There's no doubt in our mind that *Harpoon* remains one of the better submarine warfare simulations, regardless of its machine translation.

Mega Man III

Capcom (408-727-0400)
Nintendo (NES) version \$54.95

Mega Man is back! He must obtain energy crystals for a peace-keeping project while battling an assortment of robots. Mega Man uses his arm cannon to quickly dispatch the unruly mechanical monsters, but he has also brought along his best friend, Rush (a dog). Rush can change into a trampoline, a submarine, or a jet to aid you along dangerous paths. Rush uses energy when he transforms; if Rush runs out of energy, he can no longer change into a needed shape.

Mega Man is not invincible, either. His energy bar in the top right section of the screen shows how much damage he can sustain before dying. Fortunately, energy pellets can restore Mega Man's and Rush's energy levels. Also scattered about are energy tanks that can also restore Mega Man's life energy. Surprise boxes and extra lives aid the player in these missions.

At the ends of the levels are Robot Masters, whose names match their powers. For example, Magnet Man shoots magnets that follow the character. The magnets can be avoided through dexterous use of the

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Cafeteria Workers Instigate Food Fight



"They were armed to the teeth," one surprised customer said. "You should have seen it. Carrots, tomatoes, broccoli everywhere." It seems cafeteria workers all over town have joined **The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer**. Now they're recommending foods that may help reduce cancer risk. The list includes foods high in vitamins A and C, high in fiber and low in fat.

"I love to see people eat healthy," as one server put it. "When I throw a big helping of steamed vegetables on someone's plate, I feel real good inside."

Similar sentiments were echoed by other workers. "When a kid reaches for low-fat milk or yogurt, or grabs an apple for dessert, well, it's just beautiful," said one emotional server.

Experts recommend that people join **The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer** whether dining out or at home.

The American Cancer Society, sponsor of the Food Fight, has more information. Call **1-800-ACS-2345**.

And, be on the lookout for Community Crusade volunteers armed with shopping lists. Ready? Aim. Chew!



controller until the magnets run into something.

When defeated, a Robot Master loses his special attacking power to Mega Man. Mega Man, in turn, can use this newly acquired power until he runs out of energy. Then he must find an energy pellet to restore his lost energy.

These powers not only help Mega Man with obstacles found in the various levels, but they can also be used against Robot Masters who have a weakness against other Robot Masters' special powers. The player, through trial and error, must determine which weapons are most effective against which Robot Master.

Mega Man III is addicting, and we like the concept of gaining the powers of the enemies you defeat. One big problem was the disappearance of graphics when several animated robots or objects arrived on the screen simultaneously. Not only did the game's speed slow down, but the graphics became so chopped up it was hard to tell one character from another. This glitch occurred in only a few scenes, but it did detract from the usually clean, crisp graphics. We still recommend this game. It is a good sequel for Mega Man fans and should be enjoyable for arcaders who want an original twist to their shoot-'em-ups.

The Buggies

Curse of the Azure Bonds

Black & white version

Color version

X

SSI (Electronic Arts 415-571-7171)

On Macintosh IIx with 8 • 24 GC color board

Running this conversion of the hit adventure *Curse of the Azure Bonds* in two-color (black & white) was a treat. However, don't expect to see the finely detailed, larger-scale graphics found in other versions. The character icons are *extremely* small.

Unfortunately, when we installed our new 8 • 24 GC color graphics board, the game fatally crashed and locked up when booting. We even turned off the graphics accelerator and reduced the colors to 16 in number, but the game still crashed. Perhaps the board is too new for SSI engineers to work out a fix for the game. If we receive an upgraded version that is compatible with the 8 • 24 GC, we'll certainly offer an updated review.

Clue corner

Bard's Tale II (Electronic Arts)

1. The Destiny Wand grants the Destiny Knight the power to cast a dragon breath at a group of opponents for 350 to 650 points of damage.

2. After you assemble the Destiny Wand, go to the sage's hut. The sage is actually Lagoth Zanta, and he has with him many Baldur Guards. Once you kill these guards,

Zanta casts a Brothers Kringle spell. Kill the Brothers Kringle and advance on Zanta. Maintain this procedure until you are close enough to fight him. After you win, the King will congratulate you.

3. To cast the Dreamspell, utter ZZGO. The Dreamspell, when not in combat, teleports the party to any of seven places where pieces of the spell can be found. It teleports you directly to the staircase entrance. During combat, the Dreamspell heals all wounds of the party (including dead characters), casts a Mangar's Mallet spell at your opponents, and lowers your party's armor class as low as it can go. The Dreamspell costs 100 spell points to cast.

Anonymous author

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

1. If Dracondras (the red wizard) still gives you trouble, try one of these ideas: A) Retreat behind the walls and pick his minions off one by one; or B) Hit Dracondras with an Ice Storm. For more fun, use a high-level mage to cast a Dispel Magic spell. The latter nullifies his Fire Shield, Minor Globe, and Invisibility spells. Always have your mage cast Haste and Minor Globe before you battle Dracondras.

2. If you fight the dragons on the tower roof, make certain you have the Dragon Slayer Sword from the Salamander Caverns. Use all the available mass-damage spells to damage the dragons at far range, then rush them with your hasted (and preferably enlarged) fighters. This is a tough battle.

3. In the town of Hap, it is possible to rest in the center of town. Just remain in Search mode until no more patrols appear, which takes approximately 10 encounters. This also makes the fight at the "Barn" easier.

Richard Andrews
Martinsville IN

You'll need *Hillsfar* from SSI to manage this little trick. First, get all of the items like Girdle of Giant Strength, Girdle of the Dwarves, Gauntlets of Dexterity, and so on. You'll also need a pink-and-green ioun stone to reverse the loss of charisma caused by the Girdle of Dwarves.

Now, ready all these items, starting with the Girdle of Strength first. Remove the characters from your *Curse* save disk and transfer them to *Hillsfar*, then back to the *Curse* disk again. Now, unready those items and check your stats. They are now permanent. You can continue with this process until your characters have the stats you desire. However, you can't transfer rangers and paladins.

Doug Parsons
Hampton VA

Dark Heart of Uukrul (Broderbund)

Many people have trouble starting this game because of the difficulty in reading the copy protection folder [Lessers' note: *This includes us!*]. This is because the line pointing to the rune and its English trans-

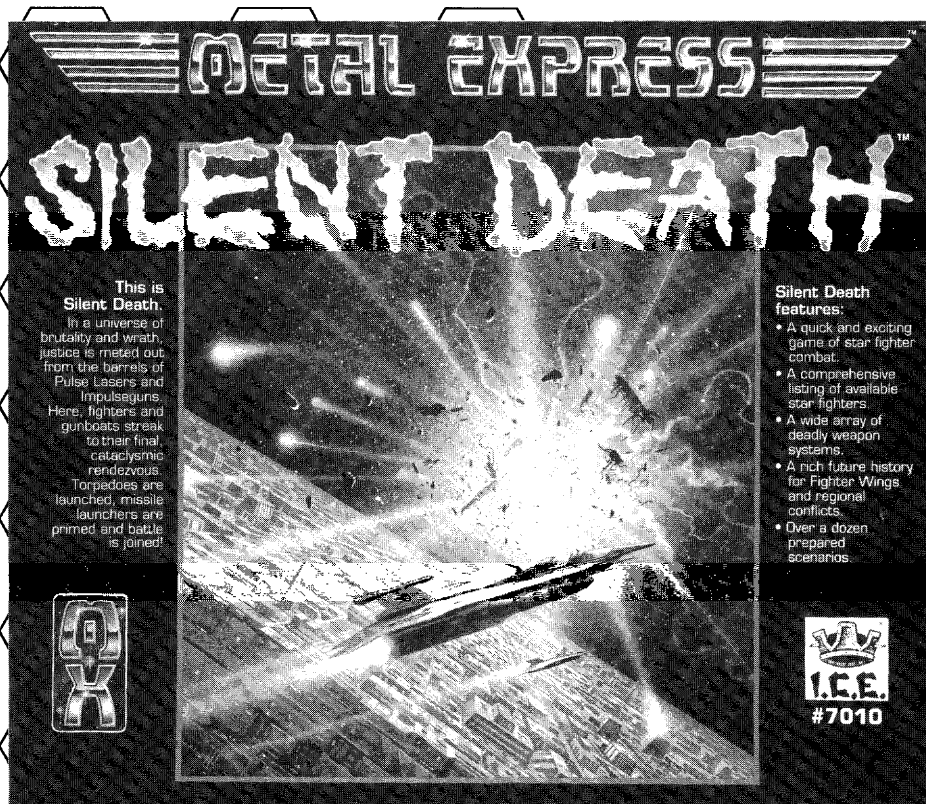
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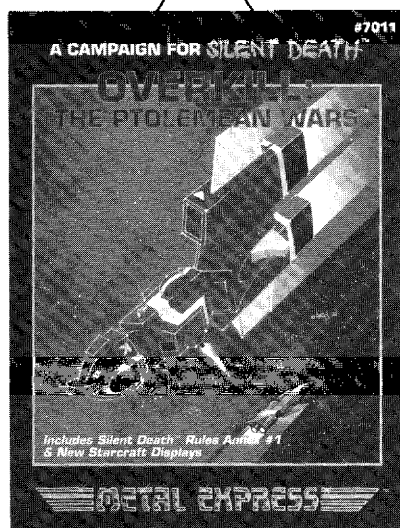
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lation covers part of the O. The word for the first sanctuary starts with a Q. Also, be certain to use the teleport stations whenever possible. This saves wear and tear on your part, as some wandering monsters (especially the undead) are tough.

Peter De Waters
Welaka FL

Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)

Before defeating Tyranthraxus in *Curse of the Azure Bonds*, you probably cast preparatory spells such as Enlarge. At the end of the *Curse* game, save your characters. Don't worry about any on-screen messages.

Next, transfer your characters to *Secret of the Silver Blades*. Their strength scores will be what they were when they fought Tyranthraxus in *Curse*. Your fighter-type using the Girdle of Storm Giant Strength will have a 24 strength. The same applies for abilities raised by items such as the Girdle of Dwarvenkind (with respect to Charisma), and so on.

Visit the old man south of the mayor's house for some nice surprises. Buy some magic at Marcus's house, and beware of the Mayor's house. The temple is a good place to go for healing while in town (it's free); if you are down in your cash supplies, go into the mines. Level 2, especially,

has many places where you can dig for your own gems.

Allen Soles
Parkesburg PA

Ultima VI (Origin)

1. In Serpent's Hold, you'll find a building to the far west of the city. In a secret northern room, you can find a triple crossbow.

2. To get into Sutek's castle, you must bash down the iron door. This requires numerous attacks. To lower the drawbridge over the Ethereal Void, cast Telekinesis on the crank.

3. In the catacombs under Sutek's castle, you'll find the body of the balloonist. Search him to find instructions on how to make a balloon. [*Perhaps the Telekinesis and Explosions spells will work! - Lessers*]

4. In Buccaneers' Den, talk to Homer. His information on Captain John's treasure is vital to your quest.

5. Magic fans are important, as they change the winds direction. This makes it far more convenient when ballooning.

6. The Storm Cloak dispels all uses of magic when it is readied.

7. Getting the panpie for Selganor is difficult. First, you must go to the woodsman southwest of Yew. Then, go to the woodcutter with your log. He'll cut it into

a board. Return to Julia. You can avoid this process by casting Pickpocket on Selganor; you can also steal the rune from him.

Nick Kesler
Vancouver WA

1. You can obtain experience points rather easily by fighting the trolls, headlesses, and cyclopes in the sewers and returning about a day later to fight them again. Once you have better equipment, apply the same tactics to the gargoyles at the Shrine of Compassion. You can obtain plenty of experience by following this strategy over and over again.

2. To raise levels, you need twice the experience required for your current level. For example, you need 400 XP points for Level 4 and 800 XP for Level 5.

3. The gypsies you need to find travel between Britain and Trinsic.

4. When talking to Budo (his shop and home in the northern part of town can be reached only from a secret door in the tavern at Buccaneer's Den), say "guild." Don't you remember a certain, silver-haired woman living under Britain?

5. To get the guild belt, you need the pickpocket spell. Rudyom in Cove can sell you this spell.

6. Sandy, in Trinsic, will give you the information on the other pieces of the map if given a dragon egg. You will need to go to Destrard for the dragon egg. Though it's unlikely you'll have the 7th-level spell Mass Invisibility, you will need Invisibility spells to sneak to the fourth level of the dungeon. You should take only the dragon egg and the magical items there. Say, while you're invisible, why not attack the dragons and drakes?

7. Don't attack Sin'Vraal, as he has some useful information and isn't quite as evil as others might think.

8. Go through Hythloth to enter the Realm of the Gargoyles, and have at least one slot open in your party to allow Beh Lem to join up.

9. Until you surrender to Draxinusom, no gargoyle will talk to you.

Anonymous author

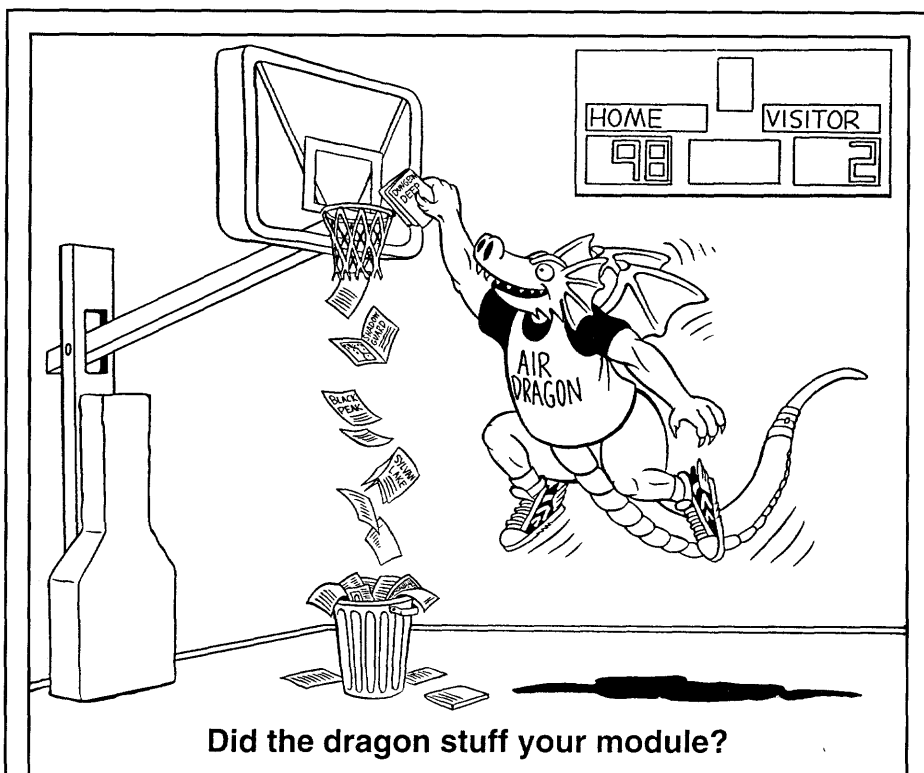


Several readers have written requesting hints to aid them in their fight with the Mulmaster Beholder Corps in SSI's *Curse of the Azure Bonds* adventure. Many have tried the straightforward approach and have been killed. Perhaps one of you can write with your messages of aid!



NOTE: The Lessers have moved. Their new address is: 521 Czerny Drive, Tracy CA 95376, U.S.A. Send all correspondence to their new address.

Ω



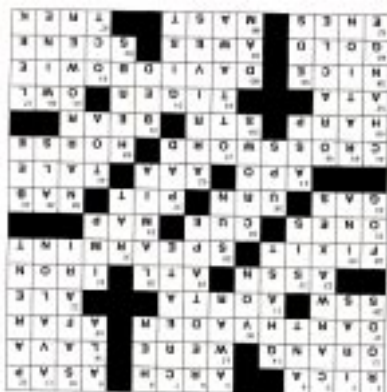
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SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

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

This issue, the Sage continues his look at spells in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game, then turns his attention to the often sticky subject of character alignment.

How much weight can a wizard carry when using a fly spell?

This is up to the DM. Most campaigns allow the recipient to fly with as much weight as he normally could carry. Some campaigns apply the standard encumbrance rules (see the PHB, page 76-79) and cut flying speed according to the weight carried. Other campaigns allow flying only when the recipient is lightly encumbered.

What's all this about copying a spell into a spell book from a scroll (from DRAGON issue #157, page 25)? According to the DMG, page 41, spells can be researched using scrolls, but not just copied.

Page 41 gives the specific time requirements and costs for getting a spell found on a scroll into a spell book. Technically, the wizard does not copy the spell but reinvents it, using the scroll as a guide, then records the "invention" into his book. It amounts to the same thing.

How does the invisibility spell work? Does it make the recipient transparent? If so, why isn't it an alteration spell? If invisibility is illusory, who decides what a creature sees when looking through an invisible creature? (Since the subject is "removed" from the scene, something's got to replace it.) Why does attacking make the subject visible? Why doesn't the spell make objects the subject picks up disappear?

Invisibility is illusory, and no one decides what a creature sees when gazing through an invisible creature. The recipient isn't removed; it is rendered visually undetectable. In campaigns in Lake Geneva, most people assume the spell bends light so it passes around the recipient rather than bouncing off the recipient or being blocked altogether. "Bent" light affects a creature's eyes in exactly the same way unbent light does, though very intelligent or powerful creatures have a chance to notice the bent light and get a saving throw against the effect (see the PHB, page 142). There probably are many other workable explanations of the spells mechanics; for example, the retinas of a viewing creature's eyes might be rendered completely insensitive to the recipient's image. In any case, the spell's effect is strictly limited to a live recipient (the spell description lists "creature touched" as the area of effect), and the spell has absolutely no power to change the way the subject's surroundings look.

If you take another look at the spell description, you'll see that items the subject picks up do become invisible. For the purposes of this spell, anything the recipient can tuck into his clothing is considered part of the recipient. Attacks break the spell because the dweomer isn't powerful enough to continue hiding the recipient from creatures under attack. The instinct for self preservation sharpens the victims' perceptions, and the spell unravels.

Apparently, quite a few folks think *invisibility* ought to fall into the alteration school; if you are one of them, by all means go ahead and run it that way. However, one also can argue that *invisibility* is an enchantment because it grants the recipient the "power" to disappear and to make objects disappear, too. *Invisibility* is called as an illusion because the spell's primary effect is to change the way other creatures perceive the recipient (i.e., they have no visual perception of the recipient at all). As such, the spell is more akin to other perception-altering spells such as *phantasmal force* and *blindness* than to any other class of spell. (One also could argue that *blindness* is an alteration, since it "removes" sight, but the loss of sight is a change in the way the recipient perceives things, so the spell is classed as an illusion.)

Why can't psionics be chaotic? After all, chaotic creatures tend to be self centered, and self knowledge is important to psionics. Can chaotic characters have wild talents? Can a psionist who has lost his abilities because he has become chaotic develop a wild talent?

It is very hard to answer this question any better than *The Complete Psionics Handbook* already does (see page 10), but here it goes: A broad range of psionic powers can be developed only through long hours of patient and intense meditation conducted according to strict rules. Chaotic characters are too impatient to meditate and too free thinking to accept the rules; therefore they cannot become psionists. Many chaotic creatures have natural psionic abilities, but these creatures are not psionists *per se*. Only chaotic-evil characters are terribly self centered; chaotic neutrals tend not to care about much of anything except for spreading chaos, and chaotic-good characters generally are concerned about other individuals' basic well being and freedom from oppression. In any event, to be self centered is not the same thing as being self aware or having true self knowledge.

Any character can manifest a wild talent—even a "fallen" psionist.

The PHB says druids must be "neutral." Does this mean druids have to be true neutral, or do they just have to have an alignment with a neutral component?

Druids must be true neutral, as defined in the PHB, page 47.

Would a true-neutral druid be obligated to do something to balance out everything his party does? If a true-neutral druid does something that promotes one alignment, does he have to perform actions that promote each of the other major alignments? Would a druid who finds himself in a party of lawful-good characters be obligated to work at cross purposes with his companions?

Can a thief who is lawful good pick pockets?

Could a paladin intimidate or harm a prisoner to get information? Does the prisoner's own alignment make a difference in this case?

Why does the AD&D game have alignments? Why can't players just decide how their characters act rather than trying to force them into a prefabricated mold?

The people asking these questions all seem to share the same misconceptions about alignment. If questions similar to these have occurred to you, I suggest you carefully reread the section on alignments in the *PHB*, starting on page 46. Pay special attention to the second paragraph on page 46, particularly the last sentence.

Alignments in the AD&D game are the cornerstones of characters' personalities. They help each player decide what a character's attitudes and values are, but they are guidelines, not absolute rules. The game's designers and editors do not assume that the entire spectrum of morality, ethics, and philosophy can neatly be categorized into nine strict divisions, and you shouldn't either. When picking an alignment for a player character, I suggest you spend some time thinking about what the character's disposition, principles, and sentiments are; then choose an alignment that fits the character.

Alignment is not defined by a single act. A good thief might indeed pick a pocket, and he might do so for any of many different reasons. He could lift a few coppers from an ostentatious fop to help feed a starving waif; he could filch the spell components from an opposing wizard during a combat encounter; or he might steal something outright, temporarily succumbing to greed (any character is entitled to commit the occasional slip). Note that, in the core AD&D 2nd Edition game, there are no lawful-good thieves (see *PHB*, page 38).

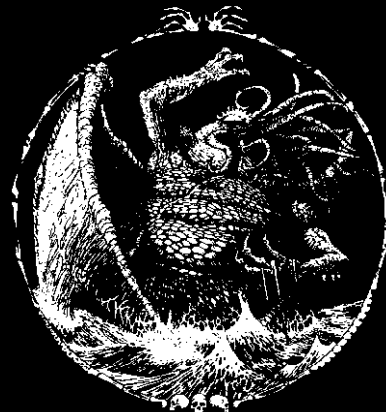
I occasionally see a letter from a person who thinks of lawful-good characters as ruthless, heartless folk who relentlessly impress their own views on others, but that's the lawful-evil formula for living. "Good" implies altruism, kindness, and the ability to see that serving the welfare of others can promote one's own self interests. On the other hand, I get too many letters from people who think good characters, and lawful-good characters particularly, are doormats who'll always allow evil creatures take advantage of their nobler instincts. Not so. Lawful-good characters, especially paladins, usually have very definite ideas about what has to be done to promote goodness, and they are free to try all manner of things to achieve their goals. Torture usually is considered evil because helpless people are capriciously harmed; however, a lawful-good creature might very well use bluff, intimidation, or even stronger measures to get vital information from a captive in order to better protect the innocent or confound a great evil. One severe interrogation, adminis-

tered at the right time and for the right reason, does not make an inquisition.

I get a lot of letters from people having trouble with the druidical ethos. Druids in the AD&D game believe in a "natural order" in which good, evil, law, and chaos play equally important roles. The first two paragraphs under the "ethos" heading on page 37 of the *PHB* explain the major elements of druidical doctrine.

Contrary to popular belief, maintaining "balance," especially on a personal scale, is not a druidical priority. According to the druidical view, there is a universal cycle that constantly shifts the cosmic balance between the eight "extreme" alignments. Even major shifts in the balance don't bother druids, since any one alignment's ascendancy is as temporary as fine summer weather. Druids are, however, on the lookout for anything that might cause the balance to "stick." In the druidical view, a universe permanently turned good or evil would either be unproductive, like a world caught in eternal summer where the harvest never comes, or sterile, like a world gripped by endless winter. However, most parties' actions are insignificant when measured on a universal scale. Even heroic adventurers don't often get the chance to affect the whole cosmos, and very few mortals ever get the opportunity to affect the balance in a way that would concern a druid.

Druids do not deliberately change their actions to reflect first one alignment, then another. Such shifts would make a druid's actions totally unpredictable, which in turn would tend to promote chaos. Druids believe that each of the eight alignments is equally valid, so it doesn't much matter to a druid which alignment his recent behavior tends to favor; any alignment will do over the short run. Druids do tend to be nonjudgmental about good, evil, law, and chaos; and they try to remain flexible and uncommitted to any single moral, legal, or philosophical system. However, druids regard interalignment struggles as part of nature, and druids serve nature. Since druids regard conflict between alignments as necessary, they do not seek to prevent their parties from continuing the struggle, nor do they resent being pulled into it themselves. Staying completely aloof or blocking their companions involvement would be as "unnatural" as trying to keep the leaves from falling in the autumn. Also, druids aren't stupid. Most parties won't take kindly to having their efforts continually stymied by a contrary druid (remember, alignment does not make characters into doormats). Being nonjudgmental, druids tend to go along with whatever their party chooses to do unless the party's actions threaten trees, crops, wild plants, and other things the druid is pledged to protect. Ω



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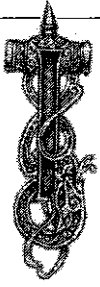
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It was eternally summer in Asgard, the home of the gods. The sun shone every day without even a cloud to break the bright monotony. Outside Valhalla, the weapons of Odin's dead heroes clashed as they battled one another, sharpening their appetites for the feast that would follow the day's combat.

The god Thor was bored. He wasn't one of Odin's warriors, and there were hardly any giants left to kill these days, for which, as his wife Sif kept reminding him, he had only himself to blame. "You would have to kill them all, bashing about with that hammer of yours. Well, just don't think for one minute that you're going to lie around in this hall every day, swilling mead and expecting me to mop up after you."

"You know what your problem is," said Loki. "You're getting stale up here in Asgard. Some new adventure, that's what you need. A challenge, something to get your blood running again."

Thor glared at him skeptically. The sly god was not exactly the most trustworthy companion.

But Loki closed his eyes, reminiscing. "Remember when we visited the giants in Utgard? When you wrestled the old lady and the world-serpent, Jormungandr? Now that was an adventure!"

Thor turned away, frowning, and missed the crafty grin on Loki's face. The journey to Utgard hadn't turned out well at all. The old giantess had beaten him in wrestling, and as for Jormungandr, Thor had barely been able to lift the world serpent off the ground.

"Or you could go fishing," the guileful Loki suggested. "Didn't you go fishing a while back with the giant Hymir, just before you bashed in his skull?"

Thor's fists clenched in silent wrath as he remembered how he and the giant had rowed out to sea early one morning. Hymir had caught a nice pair of whales, just right for breakfast. But Thor baited his hook with Hymir's favorite ox and snagged the unwary Jormungandr. Oh, how the serpent had thrashed! His tail whipped the ocean into foam, capsizing ships, raising waves that flooded the tops of mountains. But Thor kept hauling in the line. He had his hammer ready, just about to knock the serpent on the head, when that coward Hymir, afraid his boat would be swamped, had cut the line and let Jormungandr get away!

A surge of reborn fury flowed through the red-bearded god. Twice-twice already the world-serpent had gotten the better of him. Now, he vowed, the third time would pay for all.

As Thor strode purposefully away to the gates of Asgard, swinging his hammer in his huge fist, he heard Loki call out behind him, "Are you sure you wouldn't like me to come with you?" But he ignored the trickster. This wasn't the time for Loki's sneaky ways. This was to be a confrontation of two of the most powerful forces on earth.

In a short while Thor had reached the ocean, where the world-serpent Jormungandr, so large he encircled the whole world with his own tail in his mouth, lurked beneath the waves. Thor loaded up his boat, taking an ox or so for bait, plus a couple of whales and a sea-kraken that had washed

Thor Goes Fishing

By Lois Tilton

Illustrations by Robin Wood

ashore, in case the serpent had had a change of appetite since their last encounter. Then he climbed in and unshipped the oars, rowing far out to sea until the land was lost from sight. He baited his hook and cast it out.

All morning he waited, and then all afternoon, while the sun beat down on his bare head and the wind tangled his beard. But his only strike was a shark that ripped a leg from the ox on his hook and then swam away with an insolent flip of its tail.

Deep beneath the waves, Jormungandr settled into a deep fissure at the bottom of the ocean and fixed his cold, malicious eyes on the bait dangling far above his head—tempting, yes, but he had been caught that way once before and had no desire to repeat the experience.

Thor waited until it was near sunset, then at last he began to row back to land, hot and tired and profoundly out of sorts with the results of his day's fishing. His back bent to his work, his mighty arms drove the oars into the waves, his stroke so powerful that the shafts bent with the strain and the hull was lifted almost entirely out of the water. So vigorously did he row, with such furious, frustrated haste, that his wake almost capsized a small boat from which a dwarf was casting a line, fishing for his meager supper.

The furious dwarf shook his fist. "Hey! Watch it, you big oaf! Can't you look where you're going, running people down?"

"What?" In his surprise, Thor raised his oars, although the momentum from his stroke nearly carried him onto the shore. "Who is it dares to speak that way to the god Thor?"

Then he saw the boat, with its occupant angrily bailing—a short, squat figure with powerful arms, long beard, and mean little eyes scowling at him. A dwarf. Thor didn't much care for dwarves, especially not since one of the breed had the nerve to try to marry his daughter. He didn't care for the looks of this dwarf in particular. Glowering, he lifted the hammer from his belt and slapped it against his open palm.

The dwarf immediately adopted a more conciliatory tone. "Ah, your honor. Yes, sorry. I didn't quite recognize you. My mistake. I should have gotten out of your way; yes, of course I should. It won't happen again, I'm sure. Lovely day, isn't it, for a little exercise out on the ocean. Or were you . . . yes, I see you were fishing. I should have seen that right away. Did you have a good catch? A whale or two, I shouldn't wonder? Oh yes, a fine day for fishing!"

Thor's mood, not bright to begin with, darkened considerably. "Not so fine," he growled curtly. "Didn't get a single bite all day."

"Well, now that is too bad," the dwarf commiserated. "Are you sure you were using the right bait? Fish can be touchy, yes they can, if you don't treat them right. Now your trout, your salmon, he likes a nice fly—"

Thor lifted up the tentacled remains of the sea-kraken, which was looking less than its best after a hot day in the bottom of Thor's boat, and smelling no better. "This is what I was using!" he snarled, "but it was no good." With a mighty heave, he tossed the remains overboard, causing the dwarfs boat to rock again.

Suddenly, Thor's eyes widened. "There, what's that?" "What? Where?"

"There. In your boat. That serpent thing."

"Oh, that. That's nothing. Just an eel I caught today. Not even a very big one, no. Ought to throw it back, that's what I ought to do."

"That's no eel! That's a sea-serpent! I ought to know! How'd you catch it? What did you use for bait?"

The dwarf scowled unhappily. It was indeed a sea-serpent in his boat, a small specimen no more than twelve feet long, but the bait was an old family secret, and he didn't want to reveal it to this stupid, overgrown god. The fact was, he didn't much care for gods, always tramping around the countryside killing giants and one thing and another. He didn't care for this one in particular—almost capsizing his boat, threatening honest dwarves with his hammer. Give him the secret of old grandsire Dvalin's sea-serpent bait? Never!

On the other hand, there was the hammer, with the god tapping it against his hand, sort of meaningfully, sort of impatient looking. The dwarf thought quickly. "Well, as a matter of fact, my grandsire Dvalin—now there was a fisherman!—now, what he always said was, your sea-serpent isn't just any kind of fish. Fact is, he's no kind of fish at all, strictly speaking. A different thing altogether, your sea-serpent. A wily character, yes he is. Now this little fellow, he was easy enough to catch, but of course a god like yourself, if you were to be after one of the big ones, one of the really old ones."

Thor emitted a sort of warning growl from deep within his chest, and the dwarf choked. "Yes, well, now," he explained. "What you have to do is get him . . . befuddled like." Thor frowned, puzzled. "You know," the dwarf said, "tiddly. Tippy."

"You mean, drunk?"

"Exactly! Get his mental faculties impaired, that's the thing! He'll take your bait then. It's either that or—are you particularly good at riddles?"

Thor frowned and shook his head.

"No? Well, then. Best thing's to get him befuddled. At least, that's what my old grandsire Dvalin used to say." And the dwarf stroked his beard sagely.

Thor was still frowning. He scratched his head as if it would stimulate the difficult process of thought. Everyone knew that dwarves were sage, carrying around all that ancient, buried wisdom. Get him befuddled. Yes, that did seem to make sense. Thor knew perfectly well that when he had a lot to drink at a feast up in Asgard, he'd grab at anything that walked by his bench. Why shouldn't it be the same with Jormungandr?

Brusquely, he thanked the dwarf and started to row again, down the shore a bit. It would take quite a bit of drink to befuddle a serpent the size of Jormungandr, but Thor knew exactly where to obtain it.

A few miles or so down the coast, he pulled his boat ashore. On the top of a high bluff overlooking the sea were the ruins of a large abandoned hall. This had been the home of the late, unlamented giant Hymir. And Hymir, say what you will about his fishing skills or his courage, did know how to brew mead. It took a large cauldron to brew mead for a giant, and Hymir had been accus-

tomed to supplying regular hordes of relatives and visitors with copious drink. It was too bad, almost, Thor reflected for a moment, that he'd been forced to bash in old Hymir's skull. But then, the giant had ruined a whole day's fishing when he let Jormungandr get away.

Thor climbed the narrow, twisting path up from the beach. The thatched roof of the giant's hall was sagging, and yes, there was the broken beam where Hymir's head had hit. And there, next to the hearth, were his nine cauldrons of mead.

Thor tipped the first one, took a sniff, then a lick of his finger. Yes, the mead was still good. In fact, it had a kind of nice, aged taste to it. Mead rarely got a chance to age when Thor was around.

Indeed, the thought did come to his mind that a little mead would feel awfully good going down just about now, after his long, hot, thirsty day under the sun, but Thor refused to be diverted from his purpose. He braced his legs on the floor and tightened his belt of strength around his waist. His arms circled the cauldron. His muscles strained—thighs, arms, back. There was an ominous rupturing sensation in his belly. Slowly, he lifted the cauldron. Then, staggering under the weight, he started down the side of the bluff, down the treacherous narrow track to the beach.

Standing at the edge of the strand, he tilted the immense vat and watched the mead go pouring into the gray-green ocean where Jormungandr lurked at the bottom—a golden, foaming cascade of mead. “Drink that!” he muttered to the serpent his enemy, and started up the path to the cliff top for another load.

Again he descended the bluff, again he poured out the mead, with the ocean lapping at his ankles. When he came down the third time, it seemed to him that the path to the beach was not quite so long, the distance to the ocean not quite so far as it had been, but this was a relief, as heavy as Hymir's cauldrons were, so full of mead. The trip seemed even shorter the next time, and the next, when he noticed that the beach seemed to have vanished under the waves. The sea was washing up to the foot of the mountain now, all black in the rising moonlight.

“Must be the tide,” Thor muttered to himself, and started up the bluff to bring down yet another vat. Four more to go. Down the track, yes, not so far to go this time. Pour out the mead. Up again. Another cauldron. Down. The waves lapping up to his shins. Up again. Almost dawn now. Getting weary. Down. Pour. Climb. The last cauldron, the largest and heaviest of all. Getting tired. Wrap arms around the vat. Lift. Feel the strain on the muscles. Down the path.

Thor halted in astonishment outside the door of Hymir's hall and stared. The sea shone golden in the glow of the newly risen sun. The foaming waves were crashing onto the rocks not a dozen feet below Hymir's door, and the spray held the sweet odor of mead, not the salty ocean tang he had always known.

He had filled the sea with mead.

Just one more cauldron. Thor tipped it out, a wave of golden liquor pouring down into the ocean. The tide surged out, then back in a swelling wave that rose almost to his knees. The bluff was all but submerged, only the

roof of Hymir's hall standing above the swollen flood.

Thor climbed up onto the roof and looked out over the mead-sea with a certain amount of satisfaction in his night's work. “Drink, Jormungandr, you slimy worm,” he bellowed. “This ought to get him befuddled,” he added to himself, yawning as he spoke. He fumbled, baiting his hook and casting it far out onto the water. It had been a long, hard night's work. His muscles were aching with weariness. As the sun rose higher into the sky, Thor lay himself down on the thatch of Hymir's roof, shut his eyes, and fell asleep.

While fathoms deep on the ocean floor, the serpent Jormungandr hissed in distaste. Was that cursed old dwarf after him again?

The rest of the world woke to find the oceans had risen and turned to mead. For a few, this was cause for celebration, but otherwise it was a catastrophe. The floodwaters had washed the ships away from their moorings, out to sea. The ocean flowed through the streets of cities and towns, houses were swept away, fish now swam where hearthfires had been lit only the night before. Cropland and pasture were flooded. Forests were submerged to the very crowns of the highest trees. Only the crests of the mountains rose up above the waves. And the people cried aloud and prayed.

Eventually, the cries and lamentations rose up to Asgard, the home of the gods. Odin, as usual, was seated in Valhalla, watching his hosts of dead warriors do battle, when Heimdall, the watchman of the gods, broke into his sport.

“Um, Allfather, there seems to be a problem down on earth—some kind of flood. The mortals are praying for you to do something.”

Odin turned in irritation away from the war game. “Always interruptions! Am I the god of the sea? Well, am I? Do I have to attend to every little problem personally? Look, find somebody else to take care of this. I'm busy, can't you see that? We're in training for Ragnarok around here.”

“That's right, Heimdall,” sneered Loki, “Odin has more important things to worry about than a little flood.”

In the meanwhile, the noontime sun shining down on the roof of Hymir's hall had awakened Thor from his sleep. He groaned and shaded his eyes. Out there on the waves was his line and bait, still drifting, untouched. Thor mumbled a number of heartfelt oaths. Curse that serpent! Wasn't he befuddled enough by now?

The god's throat felt like sand. He had been all day yesterday out on the ocean, and all last night staggering up and down the mountain with those huge vats of mead. By now his thirst was overwhelming. And just below him, foaming as the golden waves rose and fell, was an entire ocean full of mead.

One of the discarded empty cauldrons came floating by, and Thor snatched it up. He dipped it full of mead and raised it to his mouth. The golden flood poured down his throat, a tide of it, sweet and cool to extinguish his thirst. He swallowed it down in a single gulp.

“Ah! That was good! There never was a giant who could brew mead like old Hymir—not too many gods,

either, now that I think of it."

His thirst was still unquenched, and he climbed down from the roof and dipped up a second vast vat of mead. That one he drained in two swallows. He wiped his mouth on his sleeve. No doubt about it, a little ageing did wonders. This batch of mead was mellow, smooth on the tongue. And he was, yes he was, still somewhat thirsty.

A third cauldron went down in three long, satisfying drafts, and a fourth vat quite a bit more slowly. Thor exhaled, then a profound, resonant belch rose from the depths of his belly, and he exhaled again, "Ahh!"

The cauldron slipped from his hand and went tumbling and clanging down the mountainside. Crash! Thor frowned in puzzlement. **CRASH!** He looked down.

CRASH! There on the beach far below, the cauldron was rolling slowly into the churning surf. Strange, he thought, how far the tide had receded. So suddenly, too.

Well, better not let the cauldron float away down there. A little unsteady on his legs, he stumbled down the path to the edge of the sea where the kettle lay on its side, half filled with ocean-mead. Thor shrugged, lifted it up, and drained it off. Far out on the waves, he could still spot his untouched fishing line. "Curse you, Jormungandr," he muttered again, casting his hammer down on the beach in his rage. Sand sprayed up and fell into his hair and beard, into his eyes and mouth. Spitting, he dipped up another bowl of mead to wash it away.

"Cursed . . . stupid, slimy stake . . . snake." Thor didn't feel so well all of a sudden. Kind of dizzy. The horizon was sort of moving up and down, as was the beach under his feet. He sat down abruptly and felt much better. "Ol' Hymir . . . sure did brew a good mead."

He dipped up another vat and started to drink.

The rest of the world saw the oceans recede, back to the original level of the beaches and then beyond. Their prayers of thanksgiving soon turned again to laments. Before long, the sea-bed was exposed. Ships were beached far from their harbors, while many of the houses that had earlier been washed away settled next to them. Dying fish flopped and gasped, and whales were beached in the middle of the ocean and spouted helplessly. Ancient shipwrecks were revealed after centuries below the waves, and the empty hollow eyes of drowned mariners stared up in astonishment at the sight of the blue sky.

And in the deepest fissure of the ocean, the serpent Jormungandr hissed and thrashed in wrath as the golden waters receded, exposing his lair. Finally, with the last foaming puddles draining away, he coiled up his immense length and wriggled down into the mud of the sea floor.

"Huh?" mumbled Thor, thinking he saw something move in the distance. "Wha'?" He started to get to his feet to see what it was, but instead he fell flat on his face into the mud and weeds that had been the bottom of the ocean.

Eventually, the prayers of the people rose again to Asgard, the home of the gods. The evening feast was just getting underway in Valhalla, and Odin was seated at the table with his favorite warriors, ready to celebrate the winners of the day's battle-games. He scowled, seeing Heimdall, the watchman of the gods, enter the hall.

"What is it now? Don't tell me the ocean is still rising? Didn't anyone take care of that problem?"

"Well, no. I mean, yes. I mean, well, the ocean's gone down, all right, but . . ."

"But what? We've got a feast going on here, if you can't see for yourself."

"The thing is, the ocean . . . Someone's drained it all away!"

Odin exhaled with exasperation. "Then don't just stand there, go find where it's gone! Can't anyone else take the slightest responsibility around here?"

"It sounds like the giants, one of their dirty tricks," Loki suggested helpfully. "Go see if they've hidden it somewhere."

In the meanwhile, the night passed with Thor snoring drunkenly among the rotting dead fish and the fermenting dregs of the sea. When the sun rose, the light stabbed into his eyes and woke him. He groaned. His skull felt like an iron cauldron, and a whole tribe of giants was hammering on it. His gut wanted to turn itself out. But most strongly of all, where an ocean full of mead had filled his bladder, there was a pressure, an urgent need for immediate relief.

Thor stumbled to his feet, swaying. He unfastened his trousers. He squeezed his eyes shut tight and released the flood. It was a fountain, a geyser, a foaming torrent.

"Ah!" he sighed as the pressure subsided. Then he opened his eyes.

The basins of the sea had been filled. The shipwrecks were once again hidden under the waves, the whales rose from the depths, a few surviving fish darted from the scattered shallow puddles where they had taken refuge. And in the deepest pit of the ocean floor, the serpent Jormungandr emerged from the mud and clamped his tail again in his mouth, encircling the world.

Thor caught hold of a boat drifting by, took hold of the oars, and started to pull for home. He had had quite enough of fishing for a while. Jormungandr, however he hated to admit it, had eluded him again.

When he opened the door of his own hall, he found his wife, Sif, hastily straightening her dress. Her face was flushed, and her long golden hair was disarranged. Thor frowned. "Who was that I just saw, around by the back door?"

"I didn't see anyone."

"I thought it looked like Loki."

Sif shook her head, then put her hands on her hips. "I suppose you and Loki were out adventuring again. And just where have you been, I'd like to know? No, don't tell me. I can smell it on you! Out swilling mead for days on end, never giving a thought for anyone else. You were supposed to be going fishing! It doesn't look like you caught anything, does it? Well, don't expect me to put food on your table if you can't be bothered to bring it home!"

Thor winced under the sting of his wife's tongue.

This was all Hymir's fault. Served the old giant right, after all.

Ω

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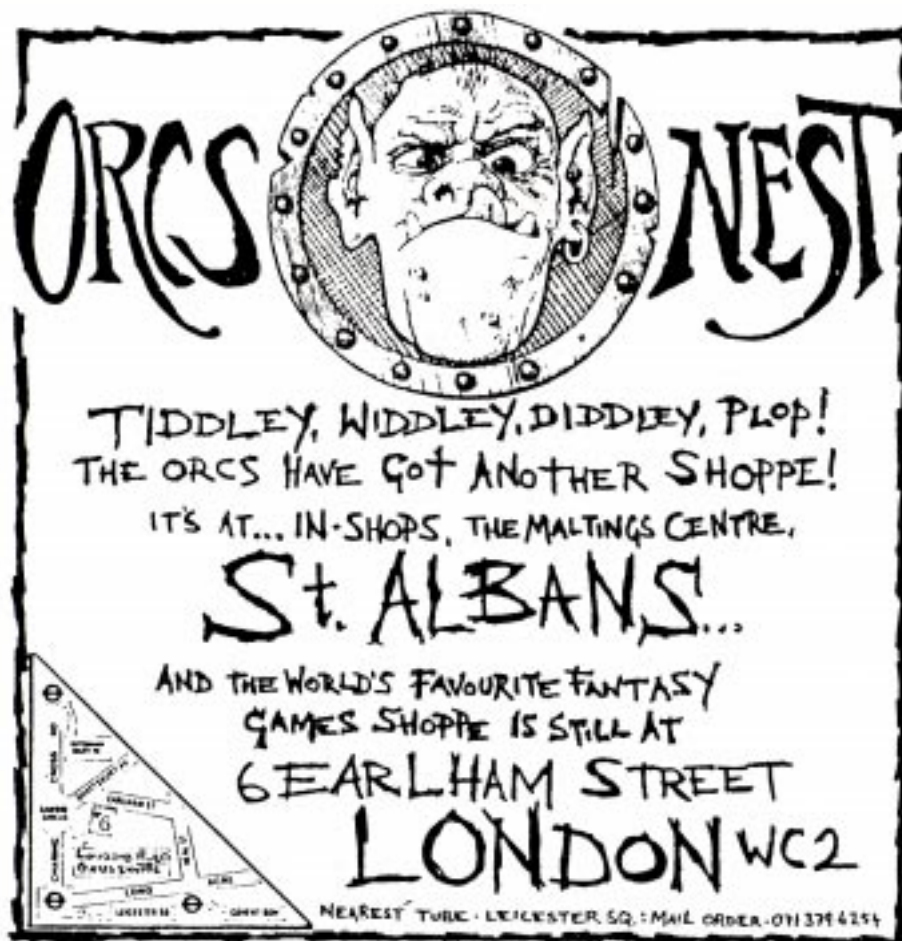
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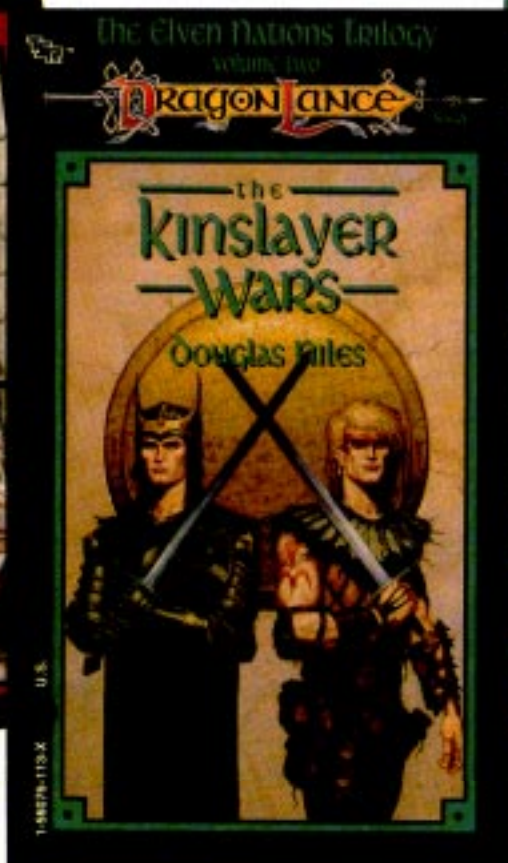
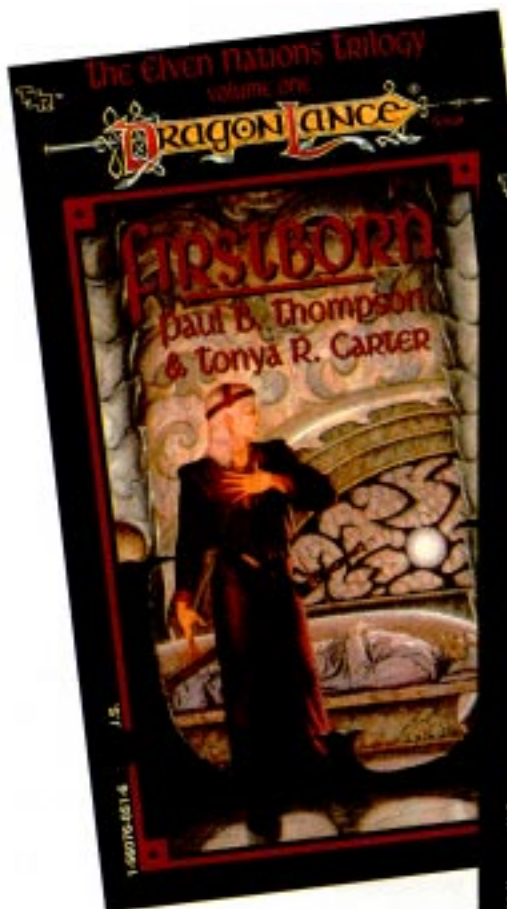
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The DRAGONLANCE® saga: The past unfolds

by Marlys Heeszel



Two new series are being introduced in the DRAGONLANCE® saga in 1991. The Elven Nations Trilogy will tell the story of the beginnings of the Silvanesti and Qualinesti elves, while the Meetings Sextet will introduce us to how the eight companions in the DRAGONLANCE Chronicles first met. Both series backtrack to times past, before an elven nation was sundered and strange friendships were formed. Join us as we discover how time, place, and circumstance combined to control the destinies of brothers and kings, friends and lovers, enemies and rivals.

Elven Nations Trilogy

We begin with *Firstborn*, volume one of the Elven Nations Trilogy, which was released in February. Written by Paul Thompson and Tonya Carter, *Firstborn* takes us back to a rainy night in the ancient elven city of Silvanost, where two moons share the night sky. There, high in a marble palace, twin sons are born to Sithel, Speaker of the Stars and ruler of all

the elves. On that same night, in the Tower of the Stars, a prophecy is made that will change the face of one nation and give birth to another. Those five words—"They both shall wear crowns"—can mean only trouble, for there can be but one ruler of the Silvanesti.

Time passes, and the baby boys grow to adulthood, ignorant of the fate decreed for them at their birth. Sithas, the elder, is raised as heir to the throne, indoctrinated at an early age into the workings of court and the traditions of his people. Kith-Kanan, younger by a whim of fate, is allowed the freedom typically afforded a second son. Little is expected of him, so he grows up unfettered by responsibility, unaware that his actions will play a part in the future of his nation.

Although Sithas and Kith-Kanan are twins, they have highly disparate views on

the future of their people. Sithas believes in the purity of the elven people and aligns himself with the aristocrats of the court in Silvanost, whereas Kith-Kanan believes the future of Silvanesti will be enhanced by trade with outsiders, including the humans of Ergoth. These differences eventually result in the splitting of the elven nation. When Sithel dies in a hunting "accident," believed to have been engineered by humans, Sithas becomes Speaker of the Stars. Kith-Kanan must swear fealty to his brother, though he questions the stand Sithas has taken against the humans.

The Kinslayer Wars, volume two in the Elven Nations trilogy, will be available in August 1991. Written by Douglas Niles, *The Kinslayer Wars* picks up the story of the two brothers, whose differences increase over time. Sithas declares war against the humans, resulting in a tragic conflict that can have no clear victors, as elves fight elves in the terrible Kinslayer Wars. Some side with the humans, while

others, who believe that the future of the Elven race depends on the purity of its blood, battle to maintain the status quo. Kith-Kanan commits the ultimate heresy of falling in love with a human female he has taken as prisoner, marrying her and further alienating his brother. The conflict is eventually resolved with the Swordsheath Scroll, a peace treaty that stops the fighting but cannot solve the differences that caused it. Kith-Kanan and the Wildrunners do not return to their homeland, instead journeying west to start a new country in a new land; thus, Qualinesti is born.

Volume three in the Elven Nations Trilogy, *The Qualinesti*, was also written by the team of Paul Thompson and Tonya Carter and will be released in November, 1991. It begins long after the end of the war, as the fortress of Pax Tharkas, built by a joint effort of the elves of Qualinesti and the dwarves of Thorbardin, nears completion. Kith-Kanan has promised to abdicate his throne when the fortress is finished; his hope is that by doing so his new country can avoid the system of aristocratic rule that existed in Silvanesti. A choice must be made between the half-elven son born to him by his human wife and the son born to him long ago by a Kagonesti elf far away. Once again there are two sons, but only one can rule.

The authors of the Elven Nations Trilogy have all written previous DRAGONLANCE novels but admit that there are special problems involved in writing about the pasts of characters that already exist. Paul Thompson, who with Tonya Carter authored TSR's *Darkness and Light*, *Red Sand*, and *Riverwind, the Plainsman*, told me, "The most difficult part is integrating the previous information about the character. You can't change history, and you have to be careful to maintain the character's personality." Thompson had the same challenge in writing *Riverwind, the Plainsman*, but felt that was easier because, while *Riverwind's* deeds were recorded, nothing much was known about his personal characteristics. Although he has been a writer of fiction for seven years and has published six books, Thompson has been at it full-time for only the past fifteen months. He holds degrees in European history and has extensive nonfiction writing credits.

Tonya Carter currently resides in New York, far from her writing partner in North Carolina, whom she met at a writing group where both were participants. She admits to missing the South and is currently planning a novel about the Civil War. Carter concedes that writing about figures who are already known can present a problem, but states, "Although some information was known, it had not appeared in any detail. The time we're writing about is almost 2000 years before the Cataclysm, so we weren't terribly constrained by previous information."

The third contributor to the Elven Nations Trilogy, Douglas Niles, lives in south-

eastern Wisconsin. He has written numerous DRAGONLANCE modules, as well as several books, including both the Moonshae and Maztica Trilogies based in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. When asked why Sithas and Kith-Kanan hold such divergent points of view about the humans, Niles answered, "There isn't so much an inherent difference between brothers as there is a difference in the way they were raised. They are a product of their upbringing. If Kith-Kanan had been the firstborn and had received the same instruction and lessons in the lore of the elves as Sithas, he may well have held the same point of view. Sithas sees himself as a protector of the elven way of life, a life that is threatened by outsiders. One of the largest distinctions between elves and humans is the difference in lifespan. Elves look at life differently because it lasts longer for them, a situation that eventually causes problems between Kith-Kanan and his human wife."

Meetings Sextet

Major differences also exist between the characters in the Meetings Sextet. When individuals from different cultures meet, fear and distrust are often the first emotions felt. They may fight, tolerate each other, or occasionally become friends. The Meetings Sextet is such a story. Eight strangers, who have little in common at the outset, eventually become so close that they willingly risk their lives for each other.

Kindred Spirits, volume one of the Meetings Sextet, will be available in April. Written by Mark Anthony and Ellen Porath, *Kindred Spirits* begins in the land of the Qualinesti elves. Flint Fireforge, the paternal dwarf, is invited to the elven kingdom because of his legendary metalsmithing. He meets and befriends a young half-elf named Tanis, who is a ward of the Speaker of the Sun. Though raised in the royal household, Tanis is very much an outcast; his mixed blood makes him an object of ridicule in the aristocratic court. When the Speaker's daughter declares her love for him, Tanis is framed for murder by a

jealous rival, and Flint must come to Tanis's rescue.

Volume two in the Meetings Sextet, written by the team of Mary Kirchoff and Steve Winter, will be released in September. *Wanderlust* picks up the story of Tanis Half-Elven and Flint Fireforge after their return to Flint's home in Solace. Tasslehoff Burrfoot, a light-fingered kender, accidentally pockets one of Flint's copper bracelets, and Tanis good-naturedly defends the topknotted newcomer to Solace. The bracelet turns out to be cursed, so Flint and Tanis give chase, but Tas manages to keep one step ahead of them. Then a sinister stranger appears, causing even greater danger for the three new friends.

Dark Heart, available in January 1992, is volume three of the Meetings Sextet. Written by Tina Daniell, *Dark Heart* gives us the story of the beautiful, dark-hearted Kitiara. Her love for her younger brothers, Raistlin and Caramon, is evidenced by her devoted raising of the frail mage and the warrior. Yet her youthful mercenary deeds and her obsession with finding her real father throw her into the company of a roguish stranger and an eerie mage.

The Meetings Sextet reveals the early adventures of eight of the most popular of the DRAGONLANCE saga characters. The first three volumes will be published in 1991, with the remaining three in 1992. Part of the popularity of these characters derives from their strange friendship. They come from various cultures, have divergent backgrounds, and seem to have little in common. Yet they are friends in the truest sense of the word.

I asked some of the authors of the first three Meetings volumes how the friendships between the characters evolved and why they were so strong. Mark Anthony, who co-authored *Kindred Spirits* with Ellen Porath, replied, "I know it's a cliché to have unlikely misfits as heroes, yet there's something honest and real in that. People sometimes find similarities in their differences. Feeling like a misfit is a common and powerful experience that creates a bond. When friends are too similar, it's easy to get bored with one another and

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grow apart. If there's something that already sets you apart from others, it's hard to find a real friend, and you're likely to value that friendship more." Anthony, who feels that Flint Fireforge began his wandering because he couldn't bear to see what the hill dwarves had been reduced to, adds, "Flint believes that there is something more to be had in life, though he follows many different paths in his search for that elusive something." Perhaps he found the answer in friendship.

Porath feels that the friendship between Tanis Half-Elven and Flint Fireforge comes about in part because they are both outsiders. "Flint is an irascible sort with a warm heart. Tanis, as a lad, is used to a certain level of hostility from many of the pure elves, so he's not put off by Flint's occasional crankiness. Tanis senses, however, that beneath Flint's crustiness is a true affection for the half-elf, an affection that all too often is lacking in Tanis's dealings with full elves." She finds it hard to imagine Flint and Tanis as enemies and feels that "even if they found themselves on opposite sides of a conflict, there would be an element of respect between them."

Just as the characters in *Kindred Spirits* have widely varied backgrounds, so do the two authors who collaborated on the novel. Mark Anthony has a degree in anthropology and is currently studying paleontology. He says the search for fossils

is a treasure hunt where the reward is viewing something that may have been hidden for over a million years. Ellen Porath has degrees in anthropology and journalism. She was an Associated Press writer-photographer for several years and currently teaches agricultural journalism at the University of Wisconsin. In addition to writing *Kindred Spirits*, she has also authored a murder mystery.

By contrast, Mary Kirchoff and Steve Winter, co-authors of *Wanderlust*, both work for TSR. Kirchoff, who wrote *Flint, the King* (with Douglas Niles) and *Kendermore*, heads TSR's book department, while Winter is an editor in the company's games department. When asked about the friendship that evolves between Flint, Tanis, and Tasslehoff, Winter responded, "Tanis and Flint have a natural affinity for each other. They're both alike in being outcasts from their native societies. And Tanis's natural calmness compliments Flint's excitability very nicely. To that extent, they need each other. As for Tas, he just sort of insinuated himself into their company. No matter how much trouble he [Tas] might be, Flint and Tanis both realize that his heart is always in the right place, even if his hands aren't."

Tina Daniell, author of *Dark Heart*, had a different type of story to write, one for which her background has prepared her well. Daniell, who has written for the

Associated Press, *Daily Variety*, and many other papers, currently works in public relations and is a freelance journalist. *Dark Heart* reveals a new side to Kitiara, whose father played a major role in her development. Daniell explains, "Kitiara has lived on the dark side of things from an early age. Her father, who was himself a mercenary, taught her about fighting. When he left, she had to fall back on her own resources and be self-sufficient. As a result, she came to value the power of being able to do and get what she wanted."

We hope that you enjoy the new DRAGONLANCE adventures, in which some of your favorite characters first become friends. Others, who until now were merely names from a distant past, will take on new and powerful dimensions as their stories are revealed. In the June "Novel Ideas," we'll go on an exploration of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, including the new series about the Harpers. Don't miss it! Ω

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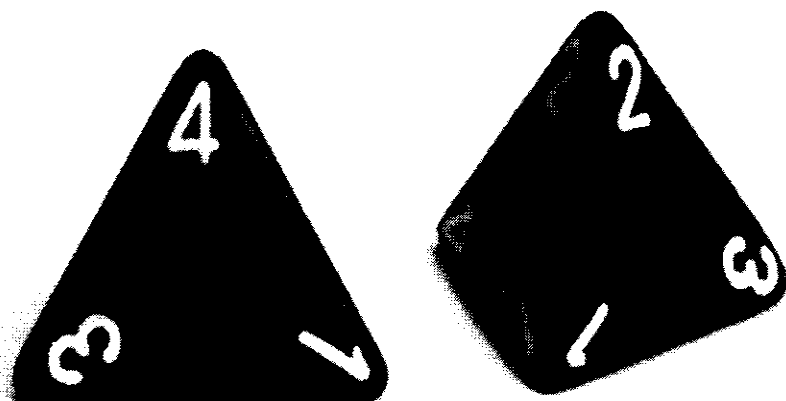
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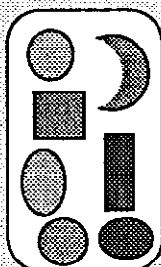
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by Steven Schend

THE MARVEL-PHILE

The times, they are a-changing....

Despite the recent overflow of new characters in the MARVEL UNIVERSE®, the creators of these comics continually change their existing characters, as I found when I looked through my binders of the *Gamer's Handbooks of the MARVEL UNIVERSE*. Many characters have had minor and major changes take place since they appeared in "The MARVEL-Phile" or any of the *Gamer's Handbooks*. These changes would not merit a new *Handbook* page, nor are they enough to devote an entire 'Phile column to (e.g., Quasar's new costume, or the Hulk's new/old look). I volunteered to put a lot of the chaos of the last few years of Marvel into one column, and it rests before you now.

Team changes

Alpha Flight: After a few long and arduous years on the outs with the government, Alpha Flight has finally reconciled its differences with Canadian officials. Department H is once again fully operational and is based, along with the team's headquarters, in Toronto. Gamma Flight is now an administrative service for the study of superhumans, and Beta Flight continues its status as a center for the recruitment and training of new heroes.

The team's current roster of active and on-call heroes is the largest in its history, dwarfing even the Avengers' sometimes unwieldy membership. The team is led by Heather MacDonald Hudson, now known as Guardian. Vindicator is also a member—yes, James MacDonald Hudson is back from the dead and sports some new powers. The membership roster also includes the following: Aurora, Box, Diamond Lil, Northstar, Persuasion, Puck (yes, he's back, too!), Sasquatch, Shaman, Talisman, Windshear, and Witchfire.

Avengers: These folks have really had a few bad years! After the Avengers Mansion was destroyed by the Masters of Evil IV) the group moved to Hydro-Base, a floating island and oceanographic research station, and set up a new mansion there. Just as things began to settle down, Dr. Doom (influenced by Loki during the "Acts of Vengeance" story line) used a large squadron of robots to destroy Hydro-Base. Well, the Avengers finally built a massive

headquarters on the site of the old mansion—then the U.S. government revoked their charter! The Avengers need not have worried; the United Nations quickly reinstated the Avengers' charter with a few revisions, and the Avengers are now a branch of the U.N. peacekeeping forces worldwide.

All past and present members retain Avengers' membership and some benefits, but the structure and coordination of the team has been changed. The "primary team" consists of active and on-call members; the "reserve substitutes" are the second string, called in by any primary team member who cannot answer the call to assemble. All others are considered "inactive reserve," maintaining certain benefits but not being in line to be called to duty without extenuating circumstances. This is all fine and good, but it leaves me wondering one thing: How does this change affect the West Coast contingent? Only time will tell.

The primary team is led by Captain America; its lineup includes the Black Widow, Quasar, Sersi, She-Hulk, Thor, and the Vision. The reserve substitutes are the Black Knight, Captain Marvel, the Falcon, Hercules, Spider-Man, and the two probationary Avengers: Rage and the Sandman.

New Mutants: The New Mutants have been disbanded, both as students and as a training group for young mutants. Of the original members, only Cannonball remains as an active hero; he and Boom-Boom now work alongside the mysterious Cable and Domino in X-Force. Sunspot has inherited his father's business and now runs a multimillion dollar corporation. Mirage is recovering from severe wounds, staying with her sister Valkyries in Asgard. Karma is once again under the sway of her uncle Nguyen Ngoc Coy, and she works for him in Madripoor. Wolfsbane is in Genosha; her powers are boosted in lupine form, but her will is sapped and she is a slave while human. Rictor left the New Mutants to help Rahne escape from Genosha. Rusty and Skids are MIA with the Mutant Liberation Front.

X-Men: This team takes the prize for major changes; not many super teams die and then come back for more! The X-Men

died on national television while fighting the Adversary in Dallas, but they were all brought back to life by Roma. The X-Men then operated out of the Australian outback for a number of months, returning to New York for the Inferno and reuniting with their allies in X-Factor.

After Wolverine and Longshot left the team, and Rogue was pulled through the Siege Perilous by Master Mold, and Storm was "accidentally killed" by Havok, Psylocke sent what remained of the X-Men through the Siege Perilous, fearing they would not survive an encounter with the cyborg assassins, the Reavers. The magical portal returned Dazzler to Hollywood and the path of fame, wiped out Colossus' memory and made him an American artist in Greenwich Village, and cured Rogue by depowering her and separating her memories from those of the original Ms. Marvel. Havok became a Genoshan native and a Magistrate (ironic for a mutant to become a mutant-hunter). Psylocke found herself transformed into an Oriental woman, and she became the ultimate psionic assassin for the Hand and the Mandarin.

Wolverine escaped the clutches of the Reavers and teamed up with Jubilee to rescue Psylocke from the Mandarin. Storm was reduced to childhood by Nanny and the Orphan Maker, but fled and fell in with Gambit, a mutant cat burglar. After a number of adventures, both teams of X-Men regrouped when they invaded Genosha. Storm was freed from Genoshan slavery, and Havok's true memories returned. The team returned to New York without Havok, who remained in Genosha to reform the system from within.

The X-Men now consists of Storm as team leader, Wolverine, Banshee, Forge, Gambit, Psylocke, and Jubilee. Members of unknown status are Lorna Dane and Amanda Sefton, both currently captured or enslaved by the mysterious Shadow King on Muir Isle.

Whew! Score cards all updated and notes scribbled onto your *Gamer's Handbook* pages? Well, we're done with only the team changes. The really strange stuff is yet to come.

Character changes

The following covers only the most recent changes and alterations of Marvel characters, from 1989 through January 1991. Also note that the survival possibilities given here are merely educated guesses on the part of the author (if no body is found, there is a strong possibility that the character is not truly dead).

Deaths-Heroes

Warlock: Killed in Genosha by Commander Hodge, Warlock has a questionable chance for survival despite his powerful mechanical form, as his body is currently in the form of metallic powder scattered over the grave of Douglas Ramsey, also known as Cypher.

Deaths-Villains

The Arranger: Killed by Knight and Fogg on the orders of the Kingpin; possibility of survival nil.

Destiny: Killed by the Reavers in an assault on Muir Isle; possibility of survival nil.

Mandrill: Killed by the Grim Reaper, who was on a rampage; possibility of survival nil.

Master Man I & II: Killed in an explosion of suspended-animation equipment in

Berlin; possibilities of survival high, as no bodies were recovered after the blast.

Mister Sinister: Killed by Cyclops's eyebeams; possibility of survival high due to his mastery of cloning techniques.

Mystique: Killed in Washington by Val Cooper, a new servant of the Shadow King; possibility of survival nil since her body was found.

Nekra: Killed by the Grim Reaper upon the latter's resurrection; possibility of survival nil.

Stonewall: Killed by the Reavers in an assault on Muir Isle; possibility of survival nil.

Tombstone: Killed in an ammunition-shed explosion outside Hammerhead's headquarters; possibility of survival high due to his new powers and the lack of a body at the scene.

Warrior Woman: Killed in an explosion of suspended-animation equipment in Berlin; possibility of survival high, as her body was not recovered after the blast.

Resurrected-Heroes

Adam Warlock: This poor guy will never rest easy in that green gem of his until Thanos gets his just desserts.

Drax the Destroyer: Of course he's back!

He's always dogged Thanos' steps, and death didn't stop him before.

Ghost Rider: He wasn't dead, but the demon Zarathos is back in action with another host, meting out vengeance and hellfire as the flaming skull of the biker set.

Puck: Not only is he back from being the Master's plaything, he's bounced back with all the resilience of his namesake.

Storm: Yes, we all know the X-Men were only dead a short time, but Ororo "died" again at the hands of Havok, and has only recently returned to her now-adult self.

Vindicator: Remember when Delphine Courtney impersonated the "dead" James MacDonald Hudson? Well, it seems her crazy story about his return from death about five years ago (involving aliens on Ganymede) was true, but only now has he awakened.

Resurrected-Villains

Commander Hedge: Not many people survive decapitation by the deadly wings of Archangel, but this guy returned in the ugliest cyborg body yet created in the MARVEL UNIVERSE. He's been decapitated once again during the X-Tinction Agenda and is now auditioning for the part of Yorick in *Hamlet* (just kidding about the last part, folks).

Grim Reaper: This man comes back from the dead with an attitude! Not only does he kill the woman who brought him back to "life" in the first place (Nekra), he now feeds on the energy of those he kills!

Master Man & Warrior Woman: Two more major villains from World War II managed to find their way out of yet two more suspended-animation chambers before they died (maybe).

Thanos: The comeback of the year! Not only does the evil son of Titan return to the living, he again takes steps to become the ruler of the universe.

Power changes-Heroes

Doctor Druid: Doc's powers are boosted (if only by his renewed self confidence), and he's got hair now, too! The ex-Avenger now stands revealed as the forerunner to the Sorcerer Supreme, Doctor Strange. Apparently, the lama who gave Doctor Druid his powers and awakened his mystic heritage was actually the Ancient One, Dr. Strange's mentor. Doctor Druid was the Ancient One's first attempt at giving a disciple a degree of his own powers. Druid's power of Druidic Spellcasting should be considered at Incredible rank.

Hulk: Bruce Banner's alter-egos are now unified into one persona. The Hulk is green again, though he's not the emerald Defender that you once knew. The Hulk now has Bruce Banner's intellect, the battle savvy and ruthlessness of the Gray Hulk, and the strength and power of the



old Green Hulk. As such, the Hulk's statistics are as follows:

F	IN(40)	Health: 225
A	GD(10)	
S	UN(100)	Karma: 70
E	MN(75)	
R	RM(30)	Resources: GD(10)
I	GD(10)	
P	RM(30)	Popularity: -10

It may now be assumed that the Hulks physical powers follow the same parameters of his old green form, with the lack of the Telelocation ability that constantly drew him to New Mexico.

Human Torch I: In a valiant effort to save the life of an old ally, the android Torch had much of his artificial blood transfused into Lady Jacqueline Falsworth Crichton. As a result of this transfusion, the Torch has apparently lost his flame powers. He is believed to be dead by the public at large, but he is simply seeing the world as "Jim Hammond," an alias he used while active in the 1940s.

Lorna Dane: Malice, the evil persona that formerly occupied Polaris's body, no longer controls her, and Lorna has been stripped of her magnetic powers by Zaladane. She seems to have inherited a number of other abilities to compensate for this loss. The full extent and her control over these new powers is unknown, as she has been a prisoner of the Shadow King since her new powers manifested. Lorna Dane has displayed the following powers: Incredible (40) Strength; Remarkable (35) Endurance; Remarkable (30) Body Armor vs. physical attacks; Good (10) Body Armor vs. energy attacks; Feeble Growth.

Master Man I: Willie Lohmer, the original Master Man, was revived from suspended animation and put back into action against Namor, the Sub-Mariner. Unfortunately, he was double-crossed by his ally, Herr Nacht, and his powers were drained away. After losing both his wife and his powers, Willie Lohmer apparently killed himself, Master Man II (Nacht), and Warrior Woman in an explosion. Their final fates, however, are likely not yet written.

Puck: His molecular structure has been tampered with and condensed down into his dwarven stature again. Now his body is as tough and resilient as a hockey puck!

Red Wolf: After nearly dying while battling the Bengal, Red Wolf returned renewed and revived by the spirit of Owayodata, the Cheyenne Wolf Spirit, and has exhibited enhanced abilities since his reawakening. His Agility is now Incredible (40), his Strength Remarkable (30), his Endurance Incredible (40), his Intuition Monstrous (75), and his Psyche Remarkable (30). As a result of Red Wolf's enhanced abilities, he now has 140 Health points and a Karma of 115. He also has Enhanced Senses (sight, hearing, and

smell) and the Tracking ability, all at Monstrous (75) rank.

Rogue: This little Southern lady has finally gotten her wish. She has been separated from the memories and persona of Carol Danvers, the original Ms. Marvel, and she has lost her powers. She still has her spunk and training, however, and is now aiding Magneto and Ka-Zar in the Savage Land against Zaladane. Rogue's Strength and Endurance are now down to Good (10) and Remarkable (30), respectively.

Spitfire: Lady Jacqueline Falsworth Crichton nearly died in a battle against the revived Master Man and Warrior Woman. After an emergency blood transfusion from the android Human Torch, Lady Crichton's metabolism returned to superhuman levels and her Spitfire powers have reactivated. A side effect of her returning powers caused her to become young again, and the 70-year-old English noblewoman now has the body and stamina of a 16-year-old girl (use her statistics listed in MU6). Whether this marks her return to adventuring is unknown at this time.

Union Jack III: Union Jack has been granted superhuman abilities by the Green Knight. The extent of Jack's powers are

unknown, but consider his Strength and Endurance to be Incredible (40).

Vindicator: Vindicator has been saved from his death in 1984, and his body is now a cyborg mixture of technology and biology. This has resulted in some new powers for the original "Major Maple Leaf" but has given him a cool, stone-faced attitude rivaling that of the Vision.

Wolfsbane: Rahne Sinclair has had it rough, and now she's in a fix. She's now a Genoshan mutate, captured and programmed during the X-Tinction Agenda. While human, she has Feeble (2) Reason, Intuition, and Psyche. If so ordered, she will transform into her new lupine forms, both of which have gained a Size Change power of Feeble rank and are 8' in size. Her new forms and any changed abilities are given in the Wolfsbane Table. Rahne regains her original personality and mind when she shapechanges, but she is encoded to be a Genoshan slave when in her human form.

Power changes-Villains

Commander Hodge: This man is the ultimate hater of mutants, yet he mutates more than those he abhors! Hodge has changed so much that his powers and



ability changes cannot be quantified here. Look for him in an upcoming 'Phile.

Grim Reaper: Eric Williams returns from the dead a second time, and now he has the power to truly be the Grim Reaper. Look for more on him in the future.

Thanos: Thanos's return from death is not as surprising as his current powers. Physically, he retains his original abilities and powers, but he is now in command of the six Soul Gems/Infinity Gems. With the power of the gems at his disposal, all his abilities are at least Class 1000, if not higher. Thanos now is equivalent to the Beyonder and can gain any Power or Talent he wishes. Individual GMs are encouraged to manipulate Thanos's levels of power within their own games, but be warned: Thanos has almost always been one of the most dangerous foes of the MARVEL UNIVERSE, no matter what his power level.

Tombstone: After escaping from prison, becoming the bodyguard of Hammerhead, and attempting to kill Robbie Robertson, Tombstone was shot by Robertson and exposed to an experimental preservative chemical in an accident at the Osborn Chemical Company. From that accident, he gained the following abilities and powers: Incredible (40) Strength and Endurance; Amazing (50) Body Armor (skin "hard as marble"); Good (10) Lightning Speed (covers 4 areas/round); Feeble (2) Cold Generation, limited to touch

Miscellaneous changes

With all the major specifics done, we're now left with the minor changes within the MARVEL UNIVERSE. Despite their minor status, these changes might have some effect on your games.

Deathlok has a new brain. A scientist named Michael Collins was shot by his unscrupulous Roxxon employers, and his mind was placed inside the Deathlok cyborg. Collins now controls Deathlok and he hopes to one day be restored to human form.

Hawkeye is now a cyborg, thanks to Ultron's latest scheme. The adamantium Oedipus exposed Hawk to a "gallium arsenide" gas that turned him partially into a robot. He is subservient to Ultron's will due to his robot components, but Hawkeye has shown no new powers due to his mechanization. Much of the damage has been repaired, though Hawkeye's right arm has not returned to its normal flesh and blood appearance.

Magneto left the company of the X-Men and the New Mutants, and is now attempting to forge a large number of alliances to prepare for the coming strife amongst the mutants for power and supremacy (or so he foresees in the current world state). He briefly reformed the Brotherhood of Evil

Mutants with Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch; Wanda was mentally ill, and Pietro was leading Magneto into the hands of the Avengers. Magneto's other alliances are in limbo; the status of his work with the Hellfire Club and the White and Black Queens remains a mystery. Needless to say, he has once again turned to being the villain. He sees himself in nobler terms, however, and acts as a hero against greater evils, such as Zaladane's armies in the Savage Land.

Mark Raxton, the Molten Man, turned over a new leaf and reformed after his latest release from prison. He is working with his brother-in-law, Harry Osborn, and has aided Spider-Man in one case against Tombstone.

Namor, the Sub-Mariner, recently lost his ankle wings. Whether these growths will

regenerate remains to be seen, but Namor currently lacks his Flight power.

The Phantom Blonde may be one of Marvel's newest heroines, if her mother doesn't stop her official crime-fighting duties, Wanda Mason, daughter of Louise Grant Mason (the original Blonde Phantom), is attempting to follow in the path of her mother's crime-fighting career with a name and costume change, if "Weezi" doesn't insist on her finishing college first. Consider all her statistics to be within the normal human range, the one exception being a Good (10) Fighting score.

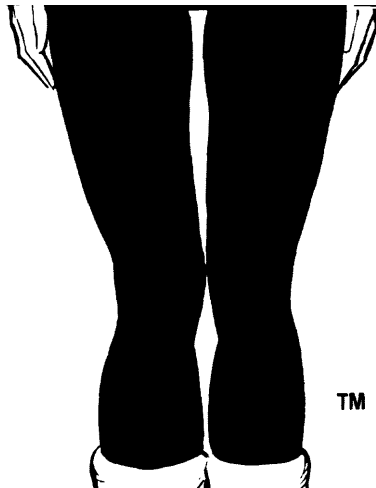
Quicksilver has returned to Earth and is fighting alongside the Avengers' West Coast contingent. All traces of his mental illnesses seem to be gone (a little time on the Moon apparently steadies the nerves).

The Vision, after experiencing key-systems failures, sought the aid of Miles Lipton, a researcher in artificial intelligence. Dr. Lipton deduced the need for human brain patterns to be incorporated with the Vision's computer brain in order for him to function. The Vision's mind is now based on a template of Alexander Lipton, Miles' deceased son. The Vision has also incorporated a holographic Image Inducer into his form, allowing him to visually alter his form and appear as "Victor Shade," his new alias (count this as an Illusion Generation power, Feeble rank, with no range beyond the Vision's body).



Wolfsbane Table

	Wolf form		"Wolfoid"/Werewolf form
F	EX(20)	F	EX(20)
A	EX(20)	A	EX(20)
S	EX(20)	S	RM(30)
E	RM(30)	E	IN(40)
R	PR(4)	R	PR(4)
I	RM(30)	I	RM(30)
P	GD(10)	P	GD(10)
Health:	90	Health:	110
Bite:	EX(20) edged damage	Bite:	GD(10) edged damage
Move:	Springs at EX(20) speed (5 areas/rd.)	Claws:	EX(20) edged damage



Warrior Woman spent the last 46 years in suspended animation in Germany, but it appears the maintenance equipment keeping her life signs stable had malfunctioned an untold number of times. As a result, she has suffered some brain damage, the degree of which is not accurately defined at this time. How well this woman of the '40s adapts to the world of the '90s is another mystery waiting to unfold.

Ω

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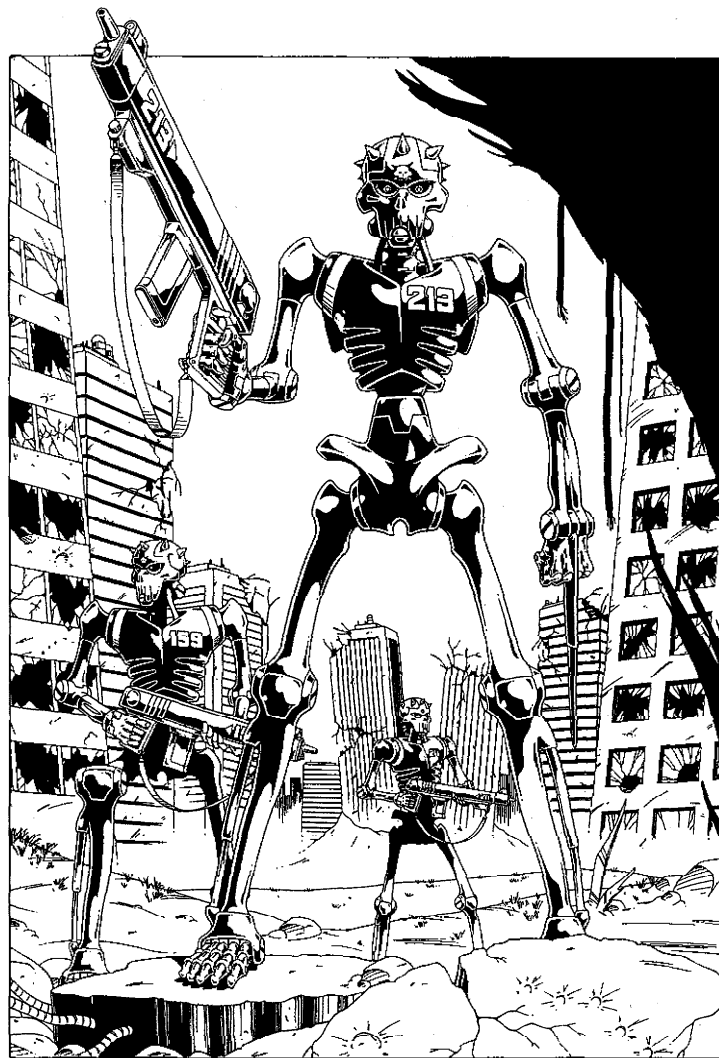
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Look Sharp!

Find the concealed weapons in this fantasy crossword puzzle

by Raymond C. Young

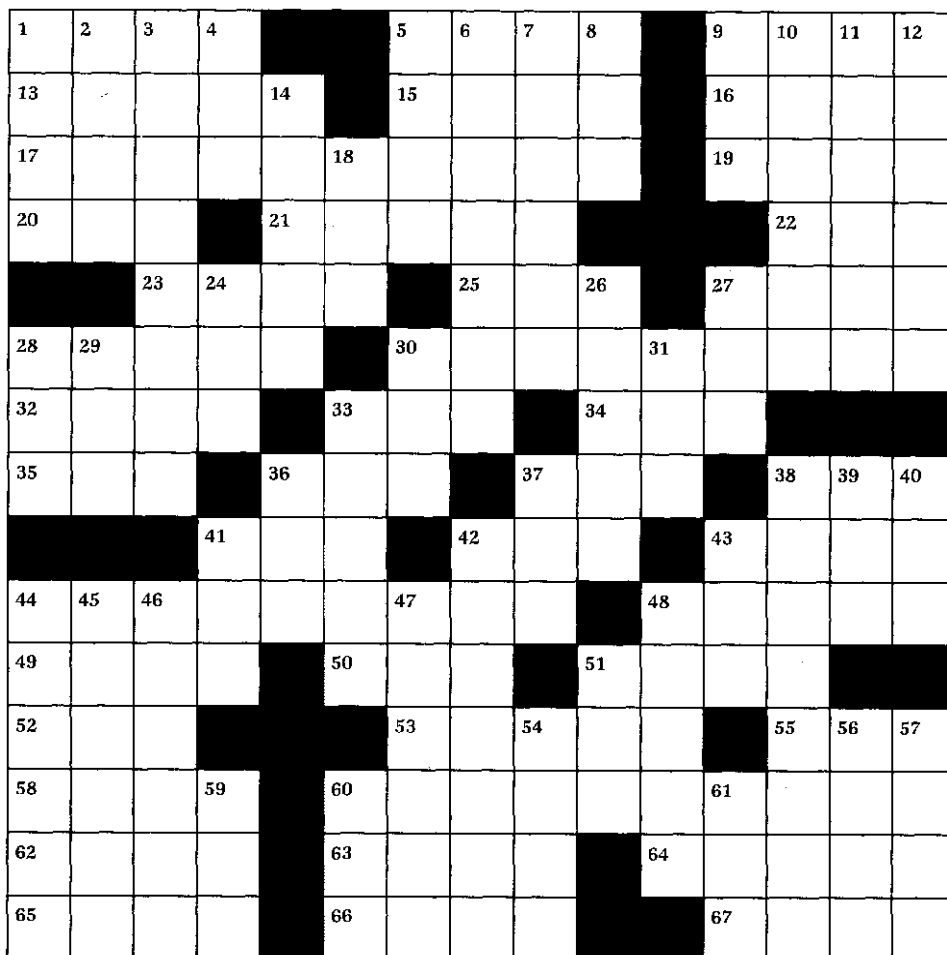
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Across

1. A priest's spells are cle _____
5. _____ -Mage: powerful wizard (1st Ed.)
9. How quickly a 1st-level fighter meeting a beholder needs help (abbr.)
13. Bar-Igura resembles it (short name)
15. Prefix for lycanthropes
16. Salamander's bed
17. Luke Skywalker's father (2 words)
19. Where a 1st-level fighter wishes he were when a beholder appears
20. Direction from Kendermore to Silvanost (abbr.)
21. Main artery out of the heart
22. Drink costing 1 sp/pint (1st Ed.) or 2 sp/gallon (2nd Ed.)
23. Org. or co.
25. Atlantis's ocean (abbr.)
27. Greater golem type
28. What *mending* spell will do to a broken glass (2 words)
30. Fresh-tasting spice favored by warriors
32. Lowest dice throws
33. Signal, prompt
34. Scroll showing treasure location
35. Green dragon's breath weapon
36. Container for ashes in a temple
37. Oldest trap in the book
38. Catch a rogue
41. Medieval druggist's prefix
42. Skeleton's shoe size?
43. Bard's ballad
44. This puzzle
48. Pegasus without wings
49. Bards stringed instrument
50. Fighter's prime requisite (abbr.)
51. Hugging animal
52. Adventurers take life "one day _____ time" (two words)
53. Great cat with 5 + 5 HD
55. Silent nocturnal avian
58. What a beholder that meets a 1st-level fighter will not be
60. Played Jareth in *Labyrinth* (2 words)
62. Fool's _____ spell
63. What a charisma of 25 does
64. A Dungeon Master "sets the _____"
65. A wizard who crossbreeds owls and bears probably knows a lot about _____
66. Holds a ship's sails
67. Long walk that adventurers take

Down

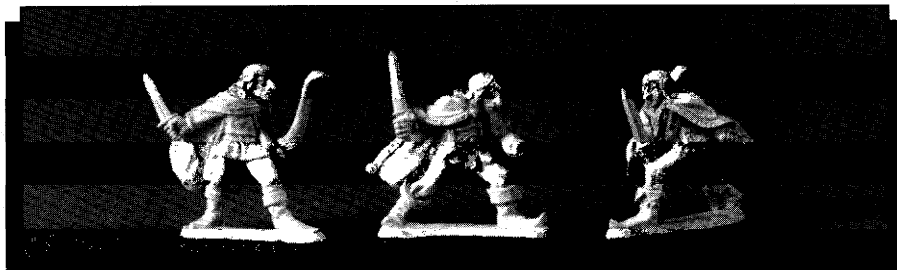
1. 3' magical sticks
2. Temperament of a bulette: _____ cible
3. They shine sedans (2 words)
4. Giant biting insect
5. What every fantasy general wants (2 words)
6. Bureaucratic routine that adventurers hate (2 words)
7. _____ water spell
8. Pronoun for Tiamat (not "them")
9. What a 1st-level adventurer says upon seeing a beholder: "_____!"
10. Caravan through Hepmonaland, Amedio Jungle, or Chult
11. Celtic isle of the dead
12. Mother or father
14. Especially smelly undead
18. River near which author of "The Tempest" was born: A _____
24. What Raistlin might call Kitiara
26. Cruel female desert creature
27. Lawful-evil familiar
28. _____ cloud spell
29. Skum the Barbarian says, "What's _____ name?" (2 words)
30. Goes around Oerth, as per the SPELLJAMMER™ set
31. Rodent with a diseased bite
33. Giant evil cawing birds
36. Levitation has its _____ and downs
37. Tablet of graph paper used by party mapper
38. Tighter, like a dungeon corridor
39. Mr. Capone and Mr. Pacino
40. Giant insect that makes royal jelly
41. Cobra, viper, snake
42. Comes to a place
43. Fish men: kuo- _____
44. _____ self spell
45. Adventurer's one-day food allowance
46. Holy prophet
47. Capital of Canada
48. Wolfsbane, garlic, rosemary, and thyme
51. Dragon's use for a pile of treasure
54. Main point, essence
56. Drink held in skins
57. Soup vegetable
59. Result of casting *mirror image* on Realms' Greenwood
60. Giant beaver's workplace
61. Bewitching month (abbr.)



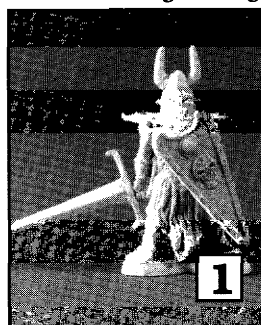
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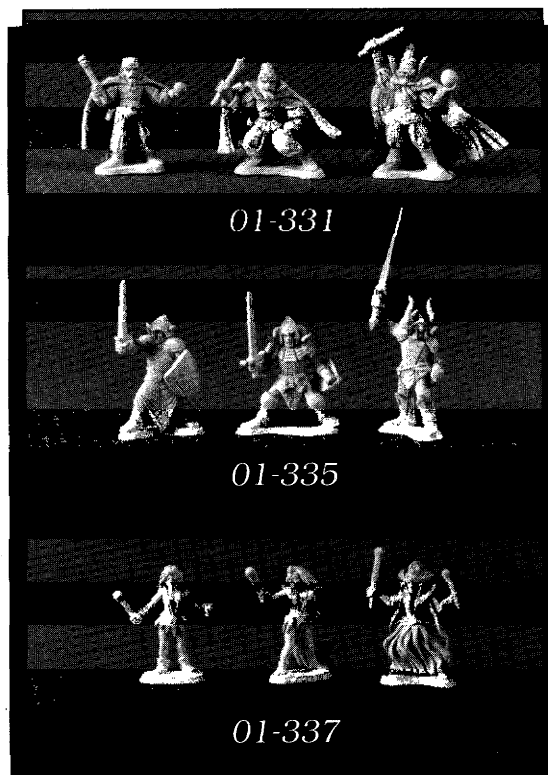
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TREASURES MORE Real

Just where did all of that monster's gold come from, anyway?

by Scott Williams



Artwork by J. Wallace Jones

The battle was over at last. The fire-breathing wyrm that had overshadowed the countryside for centuries now lay dead before its slayers. After a moment's hesitation to be assured of the monster's lifelessness, the adventurers began to comb the hoard for prizes. Methraks the warrior found five magical arrows and a fine silvered long sword, the blade of which bore an inscription that identified it as a royal weapon of ages past. Heilor the thief took an interest in a set of lock-picking tools, a map to an abandoned mine, and a small dagger inlaid with silver and a few gems. Symohr the wizard turned his attention to an aged pot with scenes telling of an ancient battle, and a sturdy staff that seemed to have been crafted by divine hands. All the adventurers found items that justified the danger of assaulting the terrible creature.

While not all of the items named above will appeal to every AD&D® game player, they all have some value. Some people might claim that thieves' tools, for instance, are not unique, but such common items are often overlooked in treasure troves. Nowhere does it say that the only good treasure is either magical or of immense value. Quite the opposite is true. Some of the greatest treasures are simple items such as weapons, armor, food, or even clothing. Unfortunately, these are often overlooked by jaded adventurers.

Another misfortune is that unique items are often dismissed because of the time required to create them. But we, as Dungeon Masters, are supposed to fill treasure rooms with combinations of such common and uncommon goods, instead of simply dumping large sums of coins in them. Who can honestly imagine a group of ogres accumulating a hoard of 5,000 cp, 4,000 ep, 2,000 gp, eight gems, and a *vornpal sword*? Could all this come from simple raiding, or did they take all of their other stolen goods to the local markets to sell them? Those of us who do not think that monsters would do such a thing are urged to divide this treasure up into those items that the ogres, for example, would accumulate in raids. The total value of these items would roughly equal the monetary value of the above treasure.

A question that must inevitably arise if coinage is heavily used in treasures is: Where did all of this money come from? If the ogres had 5,000 cp, 4,000 ep, and 2,000 gp, then the hill giants in the sur-

rounding hills would surely have 6,000 cp, 11,000 sp, 6,000 ep, and 4,000 gp. The bugbears inhabiting the dark forest to the east undoubtedly have 6,000 cp, 4,000 ep, and 3,000 gp, and the griffons atop the mountains to the north cannot be left out with their hoard of coins at 11,000 cp, 5,000 sp, and 4,000 ep. Then there is that terrible fire-breathing dragon to the south that has raided the countryside for centuries, lying atop its hoard of 27,000 cp, 91,000 sp, 4,000 ep, 54,000 gp, and 4,500 pp. And we must not forget the local monarch and the wealthy citizens of the fair city in the midst of all of this. Now, exactly where did all of this money come from? Did everyone just start spitting out tons of copper, silver, electrum, and gold pieces? If so, the economic status of the entire continent is a disaster.

Thus we see that all of this wealth is not only unbelievable but also dangerous to the economy of the continent! Separating this treasure, as suggested, is now not only desirable but also essential. Despite this excellent advice (first given in the AD&D 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, pages 91-93), having a DM divide up treasure in such a fashion for each hoard, with no tables to aid him, takes such an immense amount of time that he would probably be worn out!

Therefore, the following tables were designed to make this task less demanding on the DM and to make the game more enjoyable and believable for all. When rolling for treasure after you have determined the monetary value of a hoard, refer to the following tables to divide up the monetary value into those items that would logically be accumulated by such creatures.

Treasure procedure

1. Roll on Table 1 to find the treasure type.
2. Roll on Table 2 for each item's condition and value. Percentages given are the proportionate values each item is worth if sold, based on its original sale price and rounded up to the nearest small coin (e.g., a long sword in poor condition would not be worth the same amount as a new sword, but would only fetch 20% of that value when sold: 3 gp).
3. Roll on Tables 3-6 to determine the specific sort of item found, according to the roll from Table 1.
4. Roll 1d4 - 1 for the number of special materials in the item, then roll 1d6 for

each special material: 1 = copper, 2 = silver, 3 = electrum, 4 = gold, 5 = platinum, 6 = gem. These materials are assumed to be decoratively used.

Then check Table 7 to find the value of this material by the item's condition.

5. Roll on Table 8. Some possibilities on this table include names, directions, instructions, warnings, omens, and riddles. To assess the increase of value in the item because of this quality, roll 1d100 to decide this number. If the quality is exceptional, you can increase the value of the item so that it could be worth up to 100 times its current value.
6. Add all of the amounts to get the total value of the item, adjusting any values for the price range you need it to fit.

It is also suggested that you choose the conditions and items according to the price range that you need to fit, instead of relying solely upon random numbers. By doing this you may tailor the prices to your needs, instead of rolling and ending up with a suit of good plate mail valued at 340 gp when you only needed something worth 10 gp. Random numbers were given for huge treasure troves, where it would be difficult to exceed the price range needed with only one item.

Pristine or broken?

Let's consider the bold group of adventurers again who had overcome the great dragon and had begun to choose their rewards from its hoard. This time, let's look at a few items that they passed over in their quest for treasure. A shattered vial, wet from its former contents, lies unnoticed in the midst of the great hoard. No one will benefit from its healing magic after it was stepped on during the battle with the terrible serpent. Nor will any wizard ever conjure spells from a charred spell book, burned accidentally by a *fireball* cast at the dragon. And, at the very bottom of the hoard, lies a once-magnificent suit of plate mail armor that will never guard another person's life, after being crushed under the horrible weight of the dragon's hoard.

Though few DMs think of being this picky, treasure condition does add to game believability and reality. Simply because certain treasures are indicated by the dice does not mean that they will be in pristine condition. No one expects dragons to polish the swords in their hoards or bugbears to shine the armor in theirs, so why

Table 1
Diversification of Treasure

1d100	Treasure type
01-24	Common weapons (Table 3)
25-28	Uncommon weapons (Table 4)
29-55	Armor (Table 5)
56-00	Miscellaneous items (Table 6)

Table 2
Item Condition

1d100	Condition	Portion of full price
01-31	Poor	25%
32-51	Fair	50%
52-80	Good	75%
81-00	Excellent	100%

should items be found in such a condition? Item condition was discussed earlier, but only for those items in the tables. But what of potions, scrolls, staves, wands, and other such valuables? The process to determine item condition in the hoard should not be exceedingly complex for reasons of time and simplicity. Therefore, there is only one simple step in this sequence.

When you roll up an item of treasure not included in the tables in the article, also roll the item's saving throw vs. normal blow (the items from the tables above are excluded since their conditions have already been decided). This takes care of the possibility that the item will be somehow ruined by the possessor or by attackers. This step may be omitted if the owner takes some form of precaution to avoid such occurrences.

While some items may not be susceptible to crushing, such as paper items, they can be torn. Therefore, consider the mate-

rial of the item when rolling for damage, and make sure the damage is reasonable and proper. Also remember to make saving throws for those items in the areas of effect of spells thrown. Though a spell book may avoid being ripped apart, it might be charred horribly by a *fireball* cast during battle.

If the treasure is a particularly large one, you need not roll for every item. You may decide to check every other item, or group them by twos, threes, or even fours

at a time. For items noted in poor condition b this article's tables, also roll a saving throw vs. a normal blow (or crushing blow, if you decide that the item has been subjected to a greater force). If the save fails, the item has either been crushed, broken, or otherwise ruined. In this case, the item will be worthless unless it is unique and valuable to someone. Do not alter the treasure to make up for the loss of this item! It was all intact once, and that's all that really matters.

You can assume that 15% of all damaged items can be fixed or cleaned up by the possessor, given time. Cleaning increases the item's value a few pieces of that coin type at most, unless the character has a secondary ability in the field of the item's necessary repair. A professional can return almost any item to its mint condition, but the expense involved in doing so may exceed its replacement value. Therefore it might be wiser to simply purchase a new item-unless, of course, the item is important or unique.

Table 3 Common Weapons	
1d100	Item
01-02	Arrows, flight (1-10)
03-04	Arrows, sheaf (1-10)
05-07	Axe, battle
08-10	Axe, hand
11-12	Bow, long (25% composite)
13-14	Bow, short (25% composite)
15-17	Club
18	Crossbow, hand
19-20	Crossbow, heavy
21	Crossbow, light
22-25	Dagger
26	Dart (1-6)
27-28	Flail, footman's
29-30	Flail, horseman's
31	Halberd
32	Hammer, lucern
33-37	Hammer
38-41	Javelin
42-46	Knife
47-50	Mace, footman's
51-52	Mace, horseman's
53-57	Morning star
58	Quarrel/bolts, hand (1-4)
59	Quarrel/bolts, light (1-6)
60	Quarrel/bolts, heavy (1-6)
61-63	Scimitar
64-66	Sling
67-69	Sling bullets (1-20)
70-75	Spear
76-79	Staff, quarter
80-81	Staff sling
82-97	Sword-roll below
01-15	Bastard
16-25	Broad
26	Falchion
27	Khopesh
28-71	Long
72-89	Short
90-00	Iwo-handed
98-00	Whip

Table 4 Uncommon Weapons	
1d100	Item
01	Aklys
02	Arquebus
03-05	Atlatl & javelin
06-07	Bardiche
08-10	Bec-de-corbin
11-13	Bill-guisarme
14	Blowgun & needle
15-17	Bo stick
18-22	Caltrop
23-24	Fauchard
25-26	Fauchard-fork
27-30	Fork, military
31-32	Garrot
33-35	Glaive
36-38	Glaive-guisarme
39-41	Guisarme
42-44	Guisarme-voulge
45	Harpoon
46-48	Hook fauchard
49-52	Jo stick
53-54	Lance, light
55-56	Lance, medium
57-58	Lance, heavy
59-62	Lasso
63-65	Man catcher
66-68	Partisan
69-73	Pick, footman's
74-78	Pick, horseman's
79-82	Pike, awl
83-86	Ranseur
87-90	Sap
91-94	Spetum
95-96	Spiked buckler
97-98	Trident
99-00	Voulge

Table 5 Armor	
1d100	Armor
01-04	Banded mail
05-08	Brigandine
09-10	Bronze plate mail
11-18	Chain mail
19	Field plate
20	Full plate
21-26	Helmet, great
27-31	Helmet, small
32-35	Hide
36-44	Leather
45-50	Padded
51-57	Plate mail
58-63	Ring mail
64-69	Scale mail
70-72	Shield, body (large)
73-74	Shield, buckler
75-79	Shield, medium
80-83	Shield, small
84-85	Shield, small, wood
86-91	Splinted mail
92-00	Studded leather

Table 6 Miscellaneous Items	
1d100	Item
01-10	Clothing and footwear (1st Edition DMG, page 219; or 2nd Edition PHB, pages 66-67)
11-35	Miscellaneous equipment and items (1st Edition PHB, page 36; or 2nd Edition PHB, pages 67-68)
36-50	Provisions (1st Edition DMG, page 219, "Food & Drink"; 1st Edition PHB, 36; or 2nd Edition DMG, page 67)
51-75	Religious items (1st Edition PHB, page 36; or 2nd Edition PHB, 67-68)
76-00	Miscellaneous utensils and personal items (1st Edition DMG, page 219)
Note: No prices are given for some of the items given in these references, so you must price them accordingly.	

Table 7
Value of Special Materials*

Item condition	Copper	Silver	Electrum	Gold	Platinum	Gem chance
Poor	1 cp	1 sp	8 sp	5 ep	2 gp	10%
Fair	2 cp	2 sp	1 ep	1 gp	5 gp	50%
Good	4 cp	4 sp	3 ep	3 gp	20 gp	90%
Excellent	5 cp	5 sp	5 ep	5 gp	25 gp	100%

* This table assumes that five coins' worth of material is used for decoration on each item.

Table 8
Special Quality

1d100	Quality
01-70	No special quality
71-76	Message
77-80	Scene
81-86	Word
87-91	Insignia
92-00	Meaningless design

No method of treasure diversification will be simple; DMing never has been, but the tables and methods presented here were created to try to make it as easy as possible. By varying the treasure in hoards, you not only keep the economy stable but also make the treasure-collecting process more interesting and challenging to your players. And by assigning item conditions, you do not give your

players any free lunches. This might make them think twice before carelessly shooting off a *fireball*, and will make them respect you as a fair DM. The aim of these methods are in no way meant to rob players of well-earned rewards. They are simply to round out treasures and to enhance game believability-which, as we all know, is essential to the enjoyment of the game.



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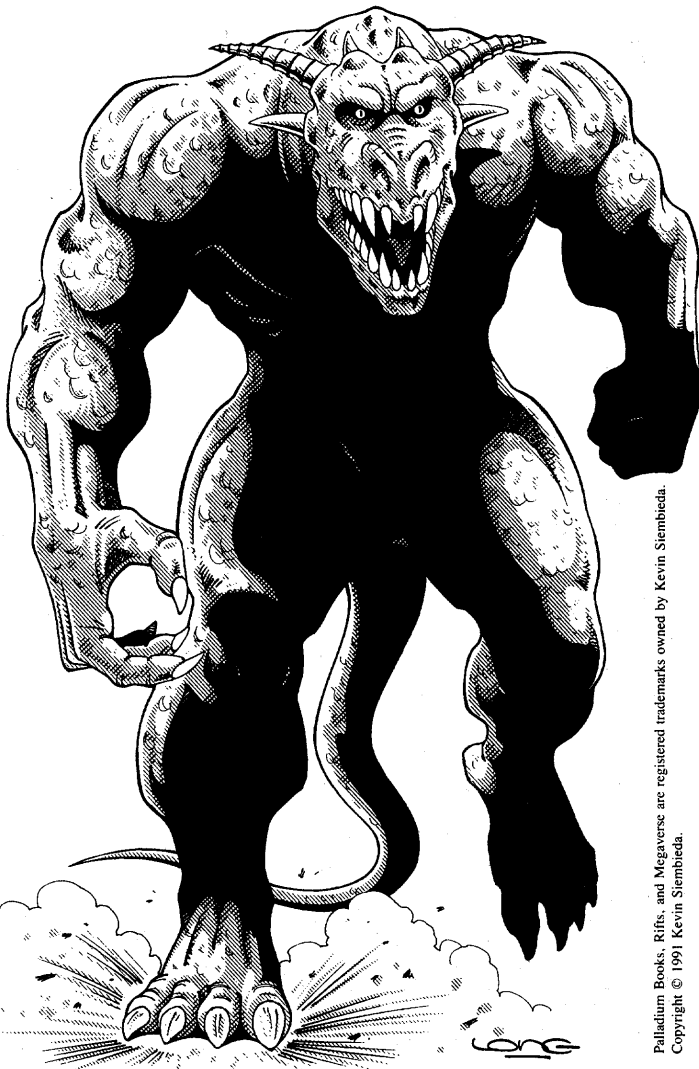
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Harpers Bold

by Ed Greenwood

The Harpers are a mysterious and respected organization in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign's North. Many of the most powerful Harpers are well known, even legendary, and fans of the Realms have requested details on these powerhouses. Of greater interest to most DMs, however, are some of the "lesser lights" of the Harpers: midlevel characters powerful enough to hold their own in encounters with PCs, but not so overwhelming, or so famous (as Harpers, anyway) to be immediately recognizable. Two such individuals are presented here.

Jhastar Belnold

Male human

7th-level ranger

ARMOR CLASS: -1

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 59

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2

ATTACK BONUSES: +3 to hit (*strength and magic*), +7 vs. orcs (*including ranger skill*)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type* (+1 for strength, +2 for magic, +4 vs. orcs)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Tracking* (+2 bonus due to level); *hide in shadows* 48%; *move silently* 60%; -3 to animals save vs. rods to resist ranger's calming

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic good

PROFICIENCIES: *Weapon*: long sword, spear, battle axe, dagger, flail, long bow; *nonweapon*: blind-fighting, direction sense, riding (land-based), swimming (plus tracking)

LANGUAGES READ & SPOKEN: Common, Elvish, Orcish, Goblinish

S 17	D 17	C 17
I 15	W 15	CH 16

AGE: 26	SIZE: M
HT: 6'2"	WT: 211 lbs.
HAIR: Brown	EYES: Gray

POSSESSIONS: Chain mail +1, shield +1, long sword +2, two potions of healing
TREASURE: 1-20 gp, 1-22 sp, 1-10 cp

Jhastar Belnold is a tireless traveler of the Forgotten Realms North and Dragonreach lands. One of the most openly

active of the Harpers, Jhastar has dedicated his life to fighting evil, aiding travelers in distress, and battling careless woodcutters and indiscriminate hunters of wildlife.

Jhastar has piercing gray eyes and tends to be close-mouthed and grim. He is not humorless, however, and is a graceful dancer and singer. A native of Secomber, he grew up in the wild forests, fighting raiding orcs, goblins, and kobolds alongside older villagers. An early love of danger was joined by a growing skill at arms, until Jhastar's prowess was recognized by a local ranger, Thondier "Foehammer" Thornstar. Thornstar's Band was a dedicated group of hardened fighting men who roamed the lands east of Waterdeep, battling brigands and evil creatures intent upon plundering settlements in the area.

Thornstar met his end at Dragonspear Castle, defending pilgrims from attacking fiends (baatezu). Most of Thornstar's Band perished in that battle. Jhastar and two other surviving members of the band, following Thornstar's orders, fled northward with the pilgrims, bringing them safe across the High Moor to Secomber. One pilgrim, a priest of Lathander, called Jhastar "a gallant young warrior, as kind to us as he is ruthless with evil beasts."

Jhastar's membership in Thornstar's Band stood him in some esteem in Secomber, where he was approached by the Harper sorceress Glendara Maerorstar. He agreed to join the Harpers, and Glendara introduced him to many rangers, bards, and druids of the Harpers over the next three seasons. During this time, Jhastar was trained by such worthy rangers as Dar Orlspear and Thammaster Sparlyon, and rode often into the High Moor to battle evil.

Eventually, Jhastar struck out on his own, venturing into the perilous lands east of Hills Edge. There he aided Harpers and Cormyrean war bands against Zhentilar forces, and found his way into a titanic battle. Three beholders allied to the Zhentarim trapped a Cormyrean band in a deep valley, and a great slaughter began. Jhastar and three other Harpers saved their Cormyrean battle companions with a daring attack on the eye tyrants. One of the Harpers used *fly* and *invisibility* spells to get Jhastar and the other Harpers, armed with weighted nets and necklace of missiles' globes, into the air above the

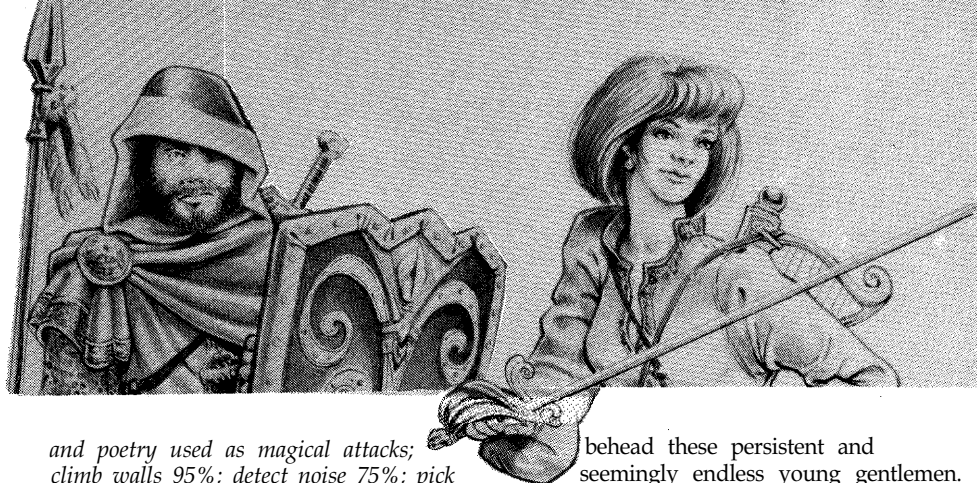
beholders. The beholders were forced to flee; Jhastar slew one, riding it to the ground as he stabbed its central eye.

Since then, Jhastar has become something of a hero among travelers and prospectors in the North, due to his habit of appearing out of nowhere in the deep wilderness to aid those in trouble. He prefers to operate alone but will readily cooperate with other Harpers who can



Artwork by Paul Jaquays

Two stars in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign universe



find him. Jhastar recently fell upon an encamped orc band and singlehandedly slaughtered them, gaining magical weapons and armor that the orcs had plundered from some forgotten tomb of the early human kingdoms of the North.

Talantra Bowgentle Female human 8th-level bard

ARMOR CLASS: 4

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 46

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

ATTACK BONUSES: Nil

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Spells, influence enemy reactions (-2 penalty on save), rally allies, 40% chance of identifying magical items, counter effects of songs*

and poetry used as magical attacks; climb walls 95%; detect noise 75%; pick pockets 70%; read languages 25%

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*

PROFICIENCIES: *Weapon: long sword, dagger, dart, club; nonweapon: blind-fighting, direction sense, rope use, swimming*

LANGUAGES READ & SPOKEN: *Common, Centaur, Dwarvish, Elvish, Halfling, Gnome*

SPELLS COMMONLY MEMORIZED: *Charm person, light, magic missile, alter self, invisibility, rope trick, lightning bolt (complete spell book should be generated by the DM)*

S 15

D 18

C 16

I 16

W 17

CH 17

AGE: 27

SIZE: M

HT: 5'6"

WT: 122 lbs.

HAIR: Auburn

EYES: Green

POSSESSIONS: *Ring of protection +2, ring of regeneration, cloak of elvenkind, boots of elvenkind, one jar of Keoghtom's ointment*

TREASURE: *4-32 gp, 1-20 ep, 1-12 sp, 1-10 cp, 1-10 bloodstones (50 gp each) carried in hollow boot heels*

Talantra Bowgentle is a legendary "dangerous lady" of the Sword Coast lands of the Forgotten Realms. In her youth, she served as a mercenary guard in the harems of Calimshan (her only available livelihood, as a "barbarian" orphan having strength but no skills). Though also known for her singing talents, her later exploits as a jewel thief were more famous and culminated in her impersonation of the evil Shairn Delarna, a vizier of Calimshan, at a grand feast. By the time the real Shairn was discovered in a pantry-unclad, bound, and furious—Talantra was long gone, with the Shairn's emerald-studded spidersilk gown and enameled, chased gold stomacher.

Assassins hunted Talantra's head for months thereafter. This practice stopped when the Shairn discovered no less than 11 severed heads in bed with her when she awoke one morning—heads belonging to her hired assassins, each bearing a message stuffed into its mouth: "It will soon become easier to remove just one head—yours—rather than to entertain and

behead these persistent and seemingly endless young gentlemen.

Talantra, however, disappeared from view as the Shairn's hunt ended. For some years she was not heard from. Most folk (in Calimshan, at least) assumed that the Shairn or another of Talantra's foes had managed to bring about her death. They were, of course, wrong. Talantra had settled down for a time as a waitress in Tilverton, east of Cormyr in the Dragonreach lands. There she observed the folk traveling through on the trade road, considering what she could better do with her life than steal things, even if it was from evildoers.

Eventually, she met the Knights of Myth Drannor and became enamored of the ranger Florin Falconhand, who was then single. From that brief encounter, she came away desiring a wandering life of adventure in the North and having a new appreciation for the beauty of the deep forests. She set off wandering alone and arrived in Daggerdale just as Randal Morn, lord of that dale, faced a heavy attack from orcs sent by Zhentil Keep.

Talantra and Randal were strongly attracted to each other, but Randal sent Talantra away for her own safety in the company of a passing Harper, the adventuress Sharanralee. Sharanralee, a famous warrior in her own right, took Talantra to Silverymoon in the Sword Coast North. Talantra found friends good and true in the ranks of the Harpers who dwelt around Silverymoon, and she joined their organization. Delighting in their fellowship, Talantra again took up her childhood love of ballads and renewed her bardic career.

Talantra presently wanders the North alone or in the company of other Harpers. She will aid beleaguered females, druids, rangers, or outnumbered adventurers of any kind who are beset by orcs, brigands, or evil creatures of the wild.

Talantra is no relation to the mage Bowgentle, described in sourcebook FR4 *The Magister* and in "Pages From The Mages IV" in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #97 (misspelled in the latter as "Bowgentle"). She is usually armed with a silver-bladed long sword and at least eight daggers hidden at various places about her person. Talantra always carries a hand-harp or pipes, as well as at least 60' of black, waxed cord, usually wound about her waist as an armor belt.

Ω



Declassified tips for running espionage role-playing games

by Michael L. McDaniel

In the last few years, the game market has seen a plethora of espionage role-playing games. However, the same cannot be said for advice on how to referee and play these games. In this field, selecting a game system, setting up a campaign, writing adventures, creating characters, and playing all require techniques other than those used in fantasy RPGs. I would like to offer some advice to those who are considering starting an espionage RPG campaign, and some tidbits I have found useful for experienced GMs and players.

The novice spymaster

Being the game master for an espionage RPG can be a lot of fun, if approached properly. To many GMs try to use classical "dungeon crawl" hack-and-slash techniques, with the emphasis on combat over thinking, that are inappropriate for espionage RPGs. The espionage genre more properly emphasizes problem solving and role-playing, with combat as seasoning. The secret to being a successful GM is *not* to be a GM. In an espionage RPG, the GM's job is that of a movie writer and director. The writer/director (GM) creates a backdrop for his movie (sets up a campaign), writes a logical plot and script (creates a logical adventure), hires supporting actors and extras (creates nonplayer characters), and directs the movie toward a climax (runs the adventure).

Game tone: A novice GM setting up an espionage campaign must first set a tone for the game. Real-life espionage is a contest of stealth, wits, and patience, while movie espionage consists of gunplay, seduction, and breakneck speed. The GM determines how exotic the plots will be, how unusual the villains will be, and how deadly combat will be. Making these decisions is largely a matter of the GM's personal tastes and those of his group. Do the PCs want to be spies or military men? Are they operating in the present, past, or future? Do they want to adhere strictly to reality, deviate slightly, or be extremely exotic? How unusual do they want their PCs to be? How exotic are the gadgets? All these questions should be answered before the campaign can be set up.

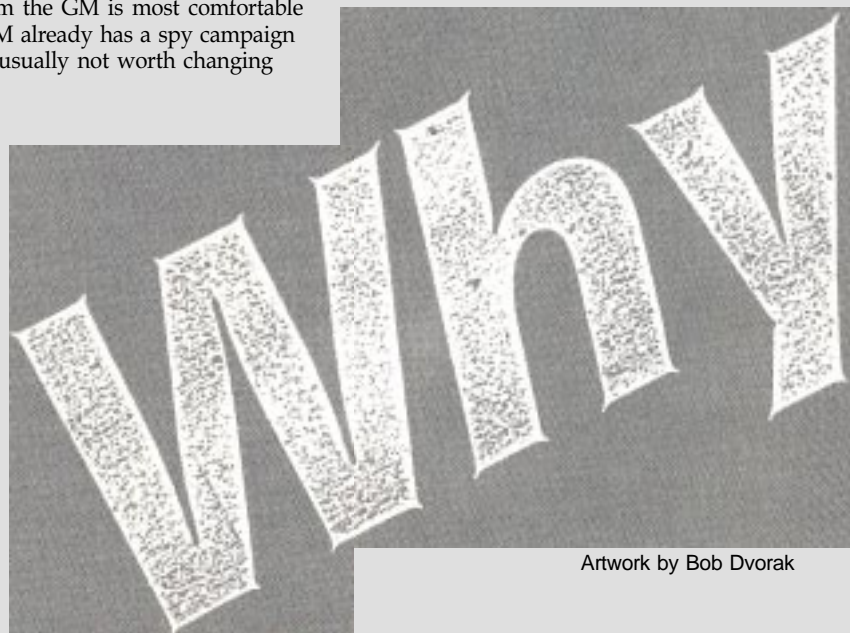
As a matter of personal preference, my own campaign is at a "moderate" reality level, operating in today's world. The PCs are spies working for or with the British Secret Service. Their opponents are usually highly eccentric but have workable plots to accomplish their nefarious aims.

Gadgets are used sparingly and are never a necessity. Attractive members of the opposite sex are likewise used sparingly. The overall tone of my campaign is that of an early James Bond movie, which I have found offers enough realism to permit the players to use their wits and enough flexibility to permit full-bore role-playing.

Selecting a system: Setting the tone for your campaign is important because the two most popular systems (the JAMES BOND 007* game, by Victory Games, and the TOP SECRET/S.I.TM game, by TSR, Inc.) are geared to different reality levels. Because of their popularity, a new GM would be well advised to pick one of these two systems. This selection hinges on the flavor of the campaign the GM wishes to run. The JAMES BOND 007 game is fast moving, simple, and deals with the necessities of a not-too-realistic "pure Bond" campaign quite well. The TOP SECRET/S.I. game is more realistic and detailed, and it also permits the characters the options of being something other than spies (with the TSAC5 *Commando* supplement) and of operating in different time periods (using the TSAC2 *AGENT 13*TM *Sourcebook*, TSAC4 *F.R.E.E.Lancers*, or TSAC7 *F.R.E.E.America* supplements), although at a cost in complexity. For a swashbuckling campaign out of the later James Bond movies, the JAMES BOND 007 game has a definite edge. For a paramilitary or realistic game, the TOP SECRET/S.I. game is superior. At the moderate reality level of a spy novel, both systems are workable, and the decision should be made based on which system the GM is most comfortable with. If a GM already has a spy campaign set up, it is usually not worth changing systems.

Organizing things: With a game tone and system selected, the GM needs to spend a few minutes on organization. Who do the characters work for? What are the characters trying to do? What resources do the characters have at their disposal? Who are the major continuing NPCs? The GM needs to take a few minutes and figure out what the world looks like in his campaign. Characters can be employed by a government agency (the CIA), by a private organization (the RPGATM Network), or by themselves (a la Doc Savage). Characters can have vast resources available (the CIA) or very little (the CIA after severe budget cuts).

GMs should be careful to not expend too much effort on organizations. The life story of the deputy assistant's second secretary may be entertaining but has very little bearing on the game. Keep things at a general level. The GM should know whom the PCs work for and against, have a general idea of the available resources, and have statistics and personalities for the briefing officer, equipment officer, and a secretary or two. Save your effort for creating good adventure plots.



Artwork by Bob Dvorak



SPY

Speaking of adventures...

Adventure creation is where the really imaginative GMs shine. Creating an adventure for any game system requires effort, and espionage RPGs are arguably the worst games to create adventures for. Many GMs have come to grief by producing weak plots, using dull NPCs, or placing too much reliance on gadgetry. But a canny GM, wary of the pitfalls of adventure design, can crank out a good spy adventure without much difficulty.

Plots: Plotting starts with a basic concept. The PCs in most spy adventures must usually find, protect, acquire, or harm a person or item, or else investigate a crime. Sticking strictly to these basic concepts leaves the GM with very few adventures, but variations on the basic themes will keep the GM in business. Changes in locales, methods, and equipment let a GM retread a basic concept dozens of times. GMs can also combine concepts. Perhaps the PCs must accomplish two or more missions at once.

After figuring out a basic concept, the GM must flesh out the plot. As an example, let us build an adventure around recovering a stolen item—to be specific, an atomic bomb. This basic concept turns up fairly frequently in modern spy stories because of the horrible effects of failure. The GM

must ask himself: Who has the bomb? How was the bomb stolen? Where is the bomb? How is it hidden? What do the villains intend to do with the bomb? How do they intend to do it? And, most importantly: How do the characters fit into all of this? The difficulty is that the GM must answer these questions without plagiarizing. It would be easy enough to say that a criminal conspiracy has the bomb, that it got the bomb by having a double agent on the crew of a bomber, that the bomb is hidden underwater, that the organization plans to extort money for the bomb's return, and that the characters get involved because they are sent to find the bomb. However, Ian Fleming did it first, and the players have probably seen or read *Thunderball*. The GM must vary the plot enough to keep the players from guessing what will happen next.

In this example, let us lose not just a bomb but a complete cruise missile, stolen by killing the crew of an airplane carrying cruise missiles and warheads that were to be destroyed under the terms of the INF treaty. The airplane crashed near Bermuda, but when a team of salvage divers arrived three hours later, the missiles and their warheads were gone. The villainous thieves have hidden the missiles underwater and plan to load them onto a short-range oceanographic sub to smuggle them through the inspections that any ship or

aircraft leaving the island will soon be put through. Moving the missiles is necessary because the thieves cannot attack Europe or America from Bermuda. After the group escapes, it will try to extort \$1 billion from NATO. The characters get involved because they were sent to Bermuda to help a Soviet defector escape and were escorting the defector to an airplane when they got word to stay in Bermuda and help with the search. This plot is tight and will not allow players to guess what is happening ahead of time.

With a fully formed concept, the GM is ready to create a plot. The plot should explain how the PCs get involved, how they can find out what is happening, and how they can stop it. The plot should detail the major options open to the characters at each point and describe the results of each option. It should also explain why the characters do not make a beeline for the major villain and why the characters cannot call in an air strike to demolish the villain's base. Plotting is, in my opinion, the hardest part of writing an espionage adventure. It is also the most critical. GMs must leave an evidence trail a mile wide for the players and never assume that the characters will interpret orders or evidence in the way the GM expects.

Returning to the example adventure, a plot might run as follows:

Event 1: The agents are sent to Bermuda to help a Soviet oceanographer defect to the West.

Event 2: The agents meet the Soviet oceanographer at a lecture and make arrangements for his escape. They also meet the criminal mastermind who will steal the bombs, who is at the conference working undercover as an oceanographer. The agents will be invited (as part of a larger group of researchers) aboard the mastermind's research ship.

Event 3: The agents help the Soviet oceanographer escape his KGB guards, and they are allowed to stay in Bermuda for a few days.

Event 4: The agents go on a tour of the masterminds ship and are allowed to see the revolutionary new long-endurance research sub that the mastermind has developed. They also go on an underwater shark-hunting expedition with the mastermind (and almost get killed).

Event 5: The agents are informed that an aircraft carrying two nuclear-armed cruise missiles crashed into the sea 10 miles offshore, and they are ordered to stay in Bermuda as a routine precaution.

Event 6: The agents are informed that the airplane crashed in about 150' of water, and that the missiles are missing. Autopsies of the crewmen show that they were murdered. The agents are assigned to help track down the missiles and warheads. They are also told that the missiles do not have sufficient range to attack any populated mainland area from Bermuda. The agents should be able to figure out for

themselves that this will require that the missiles be moved, and they can suggest that investigations concentrate on this aspect. The character who suggests this should receive an experience-point bonus (or its equivalent). If none of the agents makes the suggestion, an NPC does. The agents are told that normal customs agents are capable of inspecting airliners and cargo ships, and they are directed to check unusual modes of transportation. They are issued compact geiger counters and instructions on the care and defusing of the nuclear warheads. Last, the agents are informed that the public is not being told about the warheads at this moment.

Event 7: The agents are accosted by a young, attractive reporter who is suspicious about the crash and is trying to get more information. The agents may try to brush the reporter off, but she follows the agents wherever they go. The reporter is introduced as a romantic interest and to keep the agents off balance.

Event 8: By this time, the agents should be suspicious of the mastermind, who has a submarine capable of transporting the missiles several hundred miles. Agents who get close to the sub find that it is radioactive. Anyone who asks questions about this is taken prisoner.

Event 9: Since the PCs do not know where the warheads are, they must stow away on the mastermind's research ship, which houses the sub. The PCs must sneak aboard and remain undetected until the warheads are found, and must then foil the masterminds plan. Their job is complicated by the fact that the reporter who has been hounding the PCs was captured while trying to sneak aboard and will soon be killed by the mastermind.

Event 10: A firefright breaks out aboard the ship, with the agents assumedly trashing the ship and sub in a spectacular manner (while rescuing the reporter).

It should be remembered that this is only a rough plot. The details of what to do take time to develop. What if the PCs don't go on the masterminds ship? Can an encounter in a casino be squeezed between the lecture with the Soviet oceanographer and his defection? Plotting is a game of "What If?"; the homework that the GM puts in will show when the adventure is run.

Nonplayer characters: Espionage games are longer on character interplay and shorter on combat than many other games, placing a premium on good NPC creation and role-playing. Unfortunately, many GMs have not mastered the art of creating and running NPCs—an art that is surprisingly easy to learn if approached properly. Too many GMs create legions of highly detailed but dull NPCs for each adventure; they spend hours creating these NPCs and sweat blood playing them, but the GMs still come out of game sessions with bad reputations.

Creative laziness is the secret to a good



Vampire Brain

April 16, 1925 was a cold and dreary day. A day many people in Hanover, Germany thought fitting for an execution. In fact, twenty-seven families in the area did not let the weather dampen their spirits. Instead, they breathed an enormous sigh of relief when they heard that Fritz Haarman had finally been executed.

Only three months earlier Fritz Haarman had gone on a rampage, killing twenty-seven young men and women all in one month, all in the same mysterious way. Every corpse's neck was found to have two puncture marks approximately two inches apart, each the size of a pea. The skin surrounding the wounds was ashen, and the marks themselves were a deep purple. All the corpses were unusually pale and bloodless.

Once local authorities had caught the madman, they dredged through local records for information on him, but not even a birth certificate was found. However, the membership records of a local theatrical guild showed that an "F. Haarman" had been a member for over ninety-five years.

While authorities puzzled over Haarman's motive, scientists at Gottingen University were so intrigued by the fact that all of Haarman's victims were bitten to death, they requested that his body remain unburied until they could examine it thoroughly. They planned to study Haarman's corpse and remove his brain in the hopes of being the only scientists ever to preserve the brain of a vampire...



"IF EVER THERE WAS IN THE WORLD A WARRANTED AND PROVEN HISTORY, IT IS THAT OF VAMPIRES."

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NPC. The GM should treat his campaign setting and adventures like a movie, breaking roles up into supporting actors and extras. And, like a movie, the GM should minimize the number of supporting actors to save effort. A good example are the James Bond movies. James Bond works for MI-6, a relatively large organization. How many people from MI-6 regularly show up? Usually about three (M, Q, and Miss Moneypenny).

After deciding which supporting actor NPCs he must have, the GM should develop their personalities. Remember that you, as a GM, are going to be extremely busy. Simple, eccentric personalities with big role-playing handles are best, not subtle personalities that take hours to develop. Again, using the James Bond movies as an example, let's look at the three people in MI-6 with whom James Bond usually works. M is a former sailor who is very serious; Q thinks Bond shouldn't be trusted with anything more complex than a pocketknife; and Moneypenny is in love with Bond. These are simple personalities that the movie audience can easily understand with only a few seconds exposure. A GM should try for the same ease of understanding.

Villains and major romantic interests should receive the same treatment. These NPCs, because the PCs deal with them so often, require more detail than others, but the principles of simplicity and eccentricity still hold true. Three or four personality characteristics each (and the reasons why each NPC has them) are sufficient.

Naturally, it is a waste to throw away good supporting-actor NPCs after one adventure. GMs should retain NPCs by having the PCs always deal with the same few people in their own organization and by having the master villains escape whenever possible. This lends continuity to a campaign and adds to the satisfaction of the players when their agents finally catch the villains who have dogged them for the last four missions.

The principle of creative laziness also extends to extras. Extras run the car-rental counters, act as waiters, and perform countless other jobs. Smart GMs spend as little time as possible on extras, preferring to concentrate on the supporting actors. However, some characterization is required. A good idea is to take a phone book and piece together a list of first and last names, using this list for extras. For an extra, a name is half his personality. The rest can be handled by notes on the NPC's appearance and, perhaps, a stereotyped personality.

Gadgets: Gadgets, or the lack of them, are an integral part of any espionage RPG, whether in a straight espionage setup or a paramilitary campaign. The GM must set a "gadget level" when he starts his campaign, deciding how much equipment the agents are allowed to have. Do the characters get tons of deadly laser watches and

explosive pens, or merely a short lecture about the limited budget of the agency? It's all up to the GM.

In any case, the GM should not overuse gadgets and should never place the PCs in a situation where they must have a certain gadget to succeed or survive. A gadget should be a luxury, not a necessity. In my opinion, the primary use of gadgets is for flavor. Picking up gadgets from their none-too-sane designers can be a major event in itself and should be exploited. The choice of gadgets can be used to send the players on a wild goose chase, if they assume the gadgets have something to do with the adventure. The GM should also consider that a widget whose primary function is useless in an adventure may have a useful side effect. Gadgets are props for atmosphere, not crutches for the PCs.

Resources: Writing adventures requires a wide variety of resources, covering everything from plot ideas to geography. Just as a good movie writer and director must ensure that a movie is technically accurate, a good GM should take the same care with adventures. In my experience, GMs usually need help with plot ideas, equipment, and geography. The following are good resources in these areas:

Plot ideas— Any spy novels will help here, including the James Bond series, by Ian Fleming and John Gardner; the Matt Helm series, by Donald Hamilton; and any other spy or mystery novels. You can also use some TV shows (most notably *The Avengers* and *The Wild, Wild West*) and spy movies, including the James Bond movies (often available on video).

A warning: Under no circumstances whatsoever should the GM copy these plots verbatim! Not only is this a form of plagiarism, but the players may have seen the same show or read the same book. Furthermore, the plots may not be adaptable to your group. Instead, swipe plot elements and ideas from several sources (carefully filing off the serial numbers) and splice them together into a new plot. One of the best examples of this is in Victory Games' *Dr. No* adventure for the JAMES BOND 007 game. This is a mishmash of ideas from the book and the movie, with some creative twists thrown in by Victory Games. The result is an adventure that is new, with only a passing resemblance to either of its parents. A GM who can match those standards cannot go far wrong.

Equipment— The JAMES BOND 007 Q Manual, by Victory Games, is a good overview, with detailed drawings, descriptions, and statistics for a wide variety of weapons, vehicles, and equipment. Back issues of *Car and Driver*, *Road and Track*, and *Motor Trend* magazines are great for finding the latest information on cars. *Popular Mechanics* and *Popular Science* are always full of interesting goodies. *Jane's All the World's Aircraft* is the definitive reference on aircraft. *Small Arms of the World*, by Ed Ezell, is the definitive

Spy movies are good guides to indicate how outlandish the exotic gadgets can get.

When selecting equipment, it is imperative that the GM try for believability. Even the most outrageous gadgets should have a rational explanation. Above all, avoid glaring blunders. Having the master villain's base be aboard an airship is fine. Having this airship be only 100' long is bad since the Goodyear blimps are each just under 200' long, and those are considered tiny. A length of 800'-900' would be about right. I mention the airship base because precisely that sort of mistake was made in Victory Games' *View to a Kill* adventure.

When locating most of these reference books, try a good library. I would recommend buying the *Q Manual* no matter which game system you use, but the other books are expensive and are not worth the investment when a library has them. A library may also have books on espionage and military equipment that can be of use. Finally, a good encyclopedia is an invaluable reference, and every GM should have access to one.

Geography— An encyclopedia is necessary for accurate information on exotic locales, and atlases are mandatory for their maps. The JAMES BOND 007 supplement *For Your Information* supplies game information and places of interest for a wide variety of cities. The TOP SECRET/S.I. boxed game contains a set of generic building-interior maps, invaluable when the GM needs a generic office layout. The real-estate supplement of any major newspaper has floor plans for large houses that can sometimes be adapted into mansions for a master villain. A globe or world map is handy for determining distances and travel times on trips, as well as to simply locate foreign places.

Since PCs in espionage RPGs invariably travel all over the world, it behooves the GM to have some information concerning the world in which the PCs operate. This information need not be detailed but should be sufficient for the GM to let the players know when their PCs aren't in Kansas any more.

Running the adventure

It is in running the adventure that "GM-ing" comes closest to directing a movie. The GM should be guided by one primary principle: The players are here to have fun. Having fun means that the GM keeps the action moving, keeps the PCs on the right track, does not kill PCs off capriciously, and brings the entire adventure to a satisfactory climax and conclusion. The GM is not doing his job when half the players are sleeping while the GM works with one individual, when the PCs spend half the session chasing false leads, when PCs die because of a single unfortunate roll of the die, and when the climax of an adventure is dull.

Keeping the action moving is a hallmark of a skilled GM. The GM must keep the party's attention concentrated, not let

players take too long to decide what to do, and cut out extraneous material. Parties larger than three or four PCs can split up, forcing the GM to divide his attention and neglect each player about half the time. Keep the party small. Players can delay an adventure by taking hours to plan how to break into a hotel room; don't let them. Give the players enough time to make a reasonable plan, then get things moving. Finally, chop out extraneous material. Too many fantasy-game GMs let parties spend too much time in bars and taverns, making no headway whatsoever. The players will find enough dead ends of their own. Don't slow them down any further.

Keeping the PCs on the right track is similar to keep the action moving, but it is so critical that it merits closer examination. When the PCs chase false leads, they should turn up evidence that they are on the wrong track. If the PCs investigate the wrong person, they should discover that the suspect has a solid alibi. PCs who deviate from the straight and narrow should find that the trail grows cold very quickly.

Killing PCs is a matter that must be approached with great care. PCs in espionage RPGs tend to have a great deal of personality and are therefore valued by players much more than usual. PCs should never be killed simply because of bad luck or a die roll. Death is a penalty that should be reserved for sustained stupidity on the part of a player. If the GM needs to spank a player, he can demote a PC, take away a favorite gadget, give the PC the worst assignments, and have the NPCs heap scorn on the offending player's character. If the GM simply needs to neutralize a PC, incapacitating him is quite adequate. Death is reserved only for the most exceptional circumstances.

Finally, the GM must bring the adventure to a successful, dramatic conclusion. Dramatic conclusions can make or break an adventure, and the GM should spare no efforts on the finale. A good finale usually starts with a warmup fight or chase between the PCs and the villain's henchmen, and ends with a dramatic final confrontation between the PCs and the master villain himself. The secret is to manage the finale so that the PCs do not throw a wrench into the works, such as killing the master villain with ease, then sneaking out unscathed. Good players will develop plans that give them a high chance of pulling off such undramatic endings. Good GMs will take these plans, make a note to reward the PCs for thinking of them, then modify the adventure to ensure that the plans will fail in ways that ensure dramatic endings. Good PCs with good fighting skills may be able to defeat the villain's henchmen too easily. Good GMs will add more henchmen to compensate. Some players may be petulant when the GM does such things, but ample rewards for innovative thinking (even if the fruits are disallowed by the GM) and a dramatically

staged finale usually mollify them.

My last comment to the GM is that there is no such thing as a good GM who does not also play. A good GM can learn many things as a player, including GMing tips from other GMs and a better idea of how broad the evidence trail in an adventure must be. It may be difficult to persuade your players to take on the burden of GMing, but it is rarely impossible.

An agent is born

Playing in an espionage RPG can be either agonizing or ecstatic. The result depends to a surprising degree on the quality of play rather than the quality of GMing. My advice to players is quite simple: Develop a good character concept, don't sweat being captured, and don't pressure the GM too heavily. Players who take this advice will find espionage RPGs fun and surprisingly easy to play well.

Picking personalities: The first step in playing in an espionage RPG is to create an easily played, entertaining PC. Many of the players who have difficulties role-playing are not bad role-players, but they simply have PCs that are hard to role-play. Espionage RPGs, no matter what the system, are very long on role-playing. Easily played PCs are a necessity.

The great secret of PC generation is what I call the "schtick method." PC personalities are built up of a few salient traits, called shticks, and minor traits, called quirks. These shticks and quirks are then played up for effect during the course of the game. The schtick method is method acting applied to RPGs.

A good PC should have 2-6 shticks in order to provide adequate depth of personality while retaining ease of play. Some of the shticks I have found useful are:

Ethnic— The PC can be a Scotsman, Russian, Italian, Texan, etc. "Ethnics" speak with accents and are always extolling the virtues of their native cultures and their products (e.g., a Scotsman always drinks Scotch and wears a kilt whenever appropriate, and a Texan always wears cowboy boots). These people should be played like stereotypes, not the real thing. If you, the player, can master the accent, these work beautifully.

Fashion plate— This is the killer fop, featured in *Miami Vice* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. Fashion plates are always overdressed and never like being shot at because bullet holes ruin suits.

Beautiful but deceptive blonde (BDB)— The BDB succeeds by convincing everyone around him or her, either accidentally or deliberately, that he or she is attractive but brainless. Unfortunately for the opposition, the BDB is a genius, a skilled fighting machine, or both. The opportunities for role-playing while trying to convince NPCs that the character is or is not a gorgeous moron are enormous.

Mr. Perfect— Mr. Perfect is a perfect gentleman at all times, no matter what the

circumstances. He will always say "Please" and "Thank you," acting in a chivalrous manner toward his opponents and gallantly toward members of the opposite sex. This may be hazardous at times but is extremely entertaining.

Sailor— The sailor is actually a variation on the ethnic schtick, except that he uses nautical terms instead of an accent. Sailors also are continually trying to upstage the army— any army.

Devoted spouse— The devoted spouse is hopelessly in love with his or her mate and will not react in the least to the blandishments of the hordes of attractive members of the opposite sex with which espionage adventures are stuffed. This is especially funny if the "spouse" is an NPC who is extremely jealous and always seems to walk in on the character at the most embarrassing moments.

Gourmet— The gourmet is an expert on food and drink, and will not pass up an opportunity to eat exotic cuisine. Gourmets drag the rest of the party to places where they can eat delicacies such as chilled monkey brains, and they are offended when the rest of the party lacks enthusiasm. Players who use this schtick should have at least a smattering of culinary knowledge.

Collector— The collector is an expert in certain items and is always on the lookout for unusual items in his field of expertise. A car collector, for example, might try to drive as many different cars as possible. Collectors can be annoying in their pursuit of their hobby, if the players so desire. Players who want to use this schtick should have a fair knowledge of the subject area.

Bad punster— This PC makes bad puns. No more need be said.

Stiff-upper-lip— The stiff-upper-lip PC is completely unflappable, no matter what the danger. Bombs go off, and she merely sighs and comments that the PCs may have to miss dinner this evening.

This is not a complete list of shticks, but it illustrates the idea. The bolder and more eccentric a PC's personality, the easier the PC will be to play. Real-life spies may seem bland by comparison, but it must also be admitted that real espionage can be very dull, and the whole purpose of playing RPGs is entertainment.

Quirks are similar to shticks but are not as broadly applied. Quirks are minor preferences or dislikes that do not dramatically affect the performance of the PC in the game. A schtick dealing with firearms would be a refusal to use them; a quirk dealing with firearms would be a disdain for pistols. Other quirks would be:

- A preference or disdain for certain makes of automobiles, wristwatches, liquor, etc. The PC still uses items he does not prefer, but would rather have the "better" item.

- A preference or disdain for opposite-sex companions with certain physical characteristics, such as hair color.

— A preference or disdain for certain weapons. The PC might regard using a rifle as assassination, while using a pistol gives his opponent a fighting chance.

To enhance entertainment value, it is often advisable for players to coordinate shticks and quirks. PCs who don't like each other provide excellent opportunities for role-playing, as do PCs who share interests. Picking shticks that maximize role-playing opportunities is a smart way to get good mileage out of limited role-playing skills.

Players who are new to role-playing are advised to start by playing themselves—not as they really are, but as they fare in their daydreams. Take your personality, inflate it, and play. For example, I am an aerospace engineer by trade, a collector and shooter of muzzle-loading firearms, a fencer, and a student of military history. I'm also good at fake accents. A character based on my personality would be Stuart Lee, an agent of MI-6. Stuart Lee is a Scotsman (ethnic shtick), who became a pilot in the Royal Navy in 1976 (sailor shtick). After the decommissioning of the H.M.S. *Ark Royal* in 1978, Stuart was faced with having to join the RAF or find work elsewhere. He joined MI-6. Stuart Lee is an expert on aviation (collector shtick for types of aircraft flown) and collects muzzle-loading firearms (collector shtick again). His expertise in muzzle-loaders has led him to be disdainful of repeating rifles, and he prefers revolvers (quirk). Stuart Lee is proud of his Scottish heritage and is even prouder of being a sailor. Needless to say, he bears a grudge against the RAE. Voila: A character!

Skills: After creating the basic PC personality, the player needs to select skills. As a general rule, the character's personality should guide skill selection. However, it should be kept in mind that both the JAMES BOND 007 and TOP SECRET/S.I. systems impose heavy penalties on attempts to perform any action without the appropriate skill. It therefore behooves the players to coordinate their character-creation efforts to ensure that each skill is covered by at least one PC.

If you are playing the TOP SECRET/S.I. game, it may be desirable to ask the GM for more skill points. While the JAMES BOND 007 game has provisions for creating PCs at three distinct levels of skill to accommodate variations in party size, the TOP SECRET/S.I. game does not.

Equipment: As with skills, the PCs' shticks and quirks should guide equipment selection. PCs who like a given make of car will own that car. PCs who are Texans will arm themselves with revolvers, because they are more in keeping with the history of Texas. However, it is necessary to keep a certain degree of realism. A Texan might carry a revolver, but he probably would not carry a Colt Peacemaker unless he is a real fanatic about the Old West. A Colt Python would be more appropriate. A PC who collects firearms might try a different

weapon for each adventure.

Some equipment, of course, is assigned by the GM. Such equipment should be accepted with a grain of salt. Assuming that the equipment issued has anything to do with the mission can be a bad mistake, leading the PCs on a wild goose chase for more such "needed equipment." If the GM gives a PC a geiger counter, it is by no means certain that the adventure involves radioactive materials. Equally so, the fact that the PCs weren't supplied with a geiger counter is no guarantee that they won't wind up chasing radioactive materials. The equipment issued by the GM often has no relation whatsoever to the mission!

Sometimes the GM might issue the PCs useful items that do not appear to be useful. Players should take careful note of any side effects when they are issued items, since these effects may themselves be of use. Also, players should keep in mind that some items can be broken down for parts, allowing the PCs to make other needed items.

Finally, the PCs should not be above running down to the local hardware store to buy equipment or parts. If the PCs really need a geiger counter, it is not too hard to make one. While some items like vehicles and firearms cannot be easily bought or built due to expense, rarity, local laws, or complexity, many small items can be quickly located by a PC who thinks to look.

The game begins

Playing techniques can be divided into two broad areas: roll-playing and role-playing. Roll-playing deals with using game mechanics to one's best advantage. Role-playing deals with developing a character and making the adventure more enjoyable for the players and GM. Both techniques are critical; roll-playing because it leads to a successful mission, and role-playing because it leads to an enjoyable game session. However, role-playing must take priority over roll-playing. The purpose of playing any game is to have fun. RPGs, by definition, deal with role-playing, allowing the players to become actors in a GM-directed movie. If a player dislikes role-playing, he should consider playing board games instead of RPGs.

Fortunately, roll-playing and role-playing are usually complementary. Good strategy and tactics are part of any competent PC, and it can be taken for granted that no player would deliberately play an incompetent PC. Good roll-playing is thus part of good role-playing. Also, both the JAMES BOND 007 and TOP SECRET/S.I. games reward the seizure of role-playing opportunities by players with opportunities to make skill rolls, earning hero points or luck points that can be used to influence die rolls. Finally, good GMs permit PCs to do the near-impossible if it's dramatic enough, and these GMs help PCs survive the near-fatal if the PC has been enter-

taining. Roll-playing and role-playing do not conflict—they combine.

Movie spies and soldiers: Strategy and tactics for an espionage RPG depend largely on the specific campaign and the tastes of the GM. However, campaigns fall into two categories, about which some generalizations can be made. These are the movie-spy and soldier categories.

The movie-spy category deals with the classic spies of fiction. It is fast paced, dramatic, and not especially realistic. The JAMES BOND 007 game is designed especially for this type of campaign. As a rule, PCs in these campaigns tend to stumble across evidence of an evil conspiracy planning to perpetrate some heinous crime in the near future. The PCs may have a preliminary encounter with the main villain, but this is not certain. The PCs' strategy should be to maintain only moderate secrecy as they chase clues. Eventually, the PCs will locate the base of the enemy. If possible, they should attempt to sneak in unnoticed, then gather information on the plans of the villains and foil them. However, the GM will often arrange to have the PCs captured for dramatic reasons. This is often a blessing in disguise, since the PCs can expect to be taken through the impregnable defenses of the base, be told the villain's plans, and be placed in a deathtrap from which they can eventually escape to wreak havoc. When confronted with overwhelming force, the PCs should not hesitate to surrender. Caution should be used, though, since the GM may decide to kill PCs who surrender too easily. When one PC surrenders to a dozen thugs armed with AK-47s, it's good strategy. When a dozen PCs surrender to one thug armed with a BB gun, it's poor play and will arouse the wrath of the GM.

As a rule, the movie-spy genre is long on role-playing opportunities. Whenever possible, the players should try to get skill rolls in circumstances under which failure will not be devastating, in order to accumulate hero or luck points. However, the players should not push too far. Requesting a roll when a PC orders dinner is fine. Demanding a roll each for the dinner, the wine, and the coffee is a good way to get the GM mad.

The soldier genre deals with military and paramilitary operations, and sometimes with realistic espionage. Usually, the PCs' missions will be assigned to them, with few instances of the PCs stumbling across evidence of a larger conspiracy that they must then eliminate. Secrecy and security are critical in this genre, as the PCs are usually reliant on surprise for the success of their operation and for their lives. Planning and preparation are also important for the same reason. Plans should be simple to reduce the chance of failure. Contingency plans should be made. Players should try to get all the information they can about the enemy in

the time available.

However, the players should also realize that the more time they spend planning, the more time their opponents have to prepare, and the more bored the GM will become. Sometimes, especially when pursuing an opponent, a quick offensive will take the foe by surprise and deny him time to set up a defense.

When attacking an opponent, soldiers should try to strike as quickly as possible. The ideal, of course, is for the foe to find out that the PCs have struck long after the fact. However, this is often not an option, making speed essential to survival. The more time that the opposition has, the more it can do to stop the PCs. Time should be spent generously in creating plans, and spent willingly to set up the operation by getting into a good attack position or arranging to delay pursuit, but spent sparingly in executing the assault. Speed is life.

Players of both genres, but especially the soldier genre, must be wary of double-crosses. Trust no one. Keep your full capabilities and strength concealed. Try to figure out why the NPCs are doing whatever they are doing, and how they would benefit by double-crossing you.

Above all, players in both the movie-spy and soldier genres must never fear to be bold. Timid players and plans are bound to fail. Bold players and plans usually succeed, both because they take the opposition by surprise and because they entertain the GM. In the real world, success often attends the bold. RPGs work the same way.

Role-playing strategies: Good role-playing has the same basic principle just noted: Be bold! GMs favor bold characters and allow them to succeed where a less flamboyant PC would be doomed by a roll of the dice. A good role-player is strong in playing his own character and interacting with NPCs, stronger in interacting with other PCs, and strongest in helping the GM create a dramatic adventure. Remember that espionage RPGs are like movies, and that the most successful movies are those that feature interesting characters.

Good role-playing starts with playing your own character. Whenever possible, do everything in the PC's persona, speaking as he speaks and acting as he would act. If the persona requires an accent, use the accent at all times during the game. Use props, if possible, to get into the spirit of things. A chase scene is much more fun when the player whose PC is driving pretends to hold a steering wheel and the other players, who are fighting off the pursuers, fire their deadly .45-caliber fingers. Good players put playing first and personal dignity second.

Interacting with NPCs is another of the stock methods of role-playing. Doing it properly takes practice. Players must take the initiative, remembering that the GM is heavily burdened with running the adven-

ture and probably has not had the time to detail every encounter. Players should also act as much in their PC personas as they possibly can. A player who says, "My character will order something to eat," is not role-playing. A player who says, "Good evening. I'd like to order some Argentinean quiche and a bottle of '59 Tattingers," is doing his part. The GM can easily assume the role of the waiter, inquiring whether or not the PC really wants the Argentinean quiche, which is extremely hot, or the wine, which is not appropriate. (As an aside, when I, as a GM, had some players order the Argentinean quiche, I gave them Connoisseur rolls to order, and Willpower rolls to keep from grabbing a glass of water after eating.) Good role-playing is a nice, safe way to get hero or luck points.

Ultimately, though, interaction with the other PCs is more rewarding than interacting with the NPCs. For one thing, the other PCs receive the undivided attention of a player, as opposed to the NPCs that are played on a part-time basis by the GM. For another, the PCs have highly developed personalities. PCs can compete for the attentions of NPCs of the opposite sex, for numbers of enemies killed, or in finding restaurants that serve outrageous foods. PCs can be friendly toward each other, or can have rivalries. Players may wish to create PC personalities with rivalries in mind to enhance playability. Players should never pass up opportunities to play off each other.

Finally, the player should help the GM create a dramatic, enjoyable adventure. Part of this involves playing your own character well. Another part involves interacting well with other PCs and the NPCs. But there is more. The GM writes the general plot for the adventure, but the players write the script. Never pass up an opportunity to make a dramatic pronouncement or a good one-liner. And never pass up an opportunity to do something dramatic or entertaining, unless it would be wildly out of character or possibly fatal. If you need to steal a car to

escape from a villain's base, steal the mastermind's Mercedes or a minor thug's Yugo; leave the station wagon alone! Always keep in mind that the players and GM are playing RPGs for fun, and that it is everybody's job to keep everyone else entertained.

As a parting note, the players should be willing to take on the burden of GMing, too. The GM bears a heavy load, and a group that leaves all the work to one person will find itself without a GM very quickly. There is no such thing as a competent player who does not also GM.

Conclusion

Espionage RPGs have their difficulties, but the rewards match the effort spent. GMs of such games will have to spend more time and effort than they may be used to on plots and in background research. Players of such games will have to spend more time and effort on their character concept and on role-playing than they may be accustomed to. But the work pays off with some of the best adventures and most interesting PCs to be found in all of gaming. Ω

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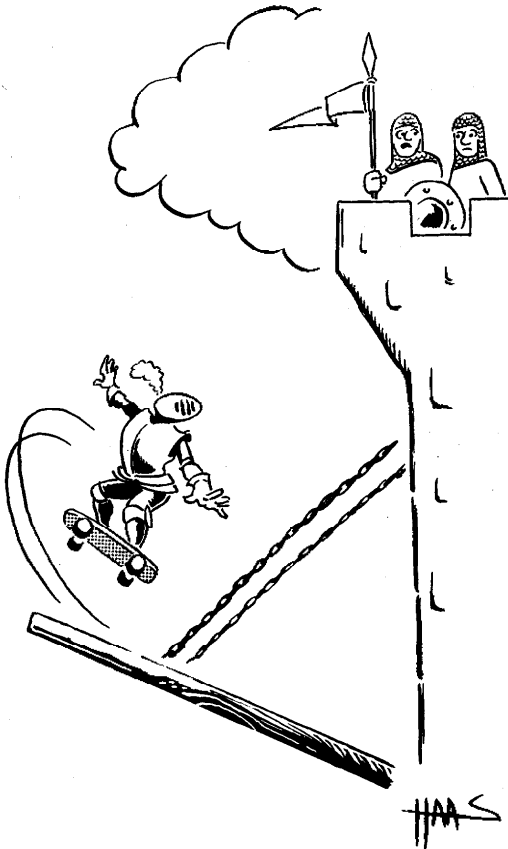
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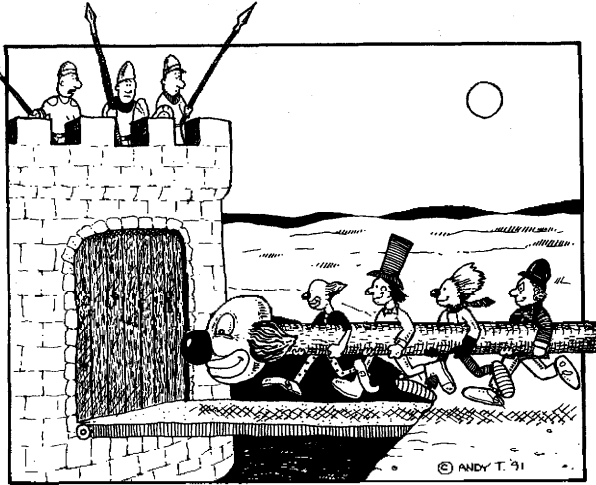
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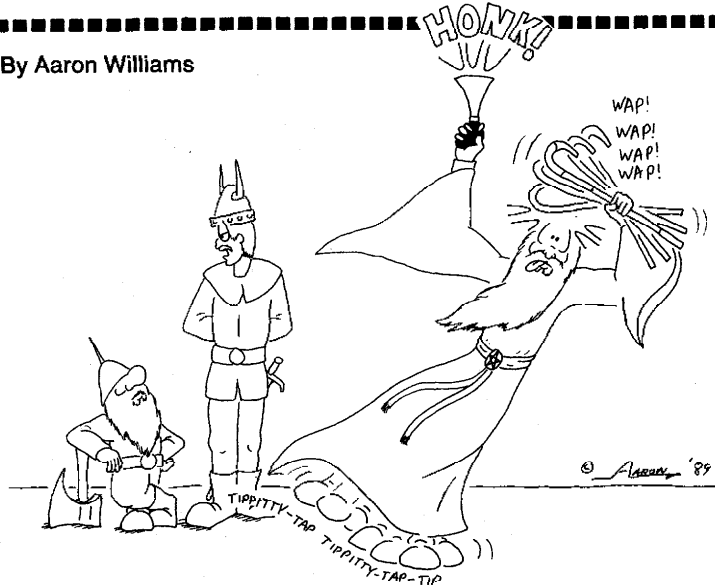
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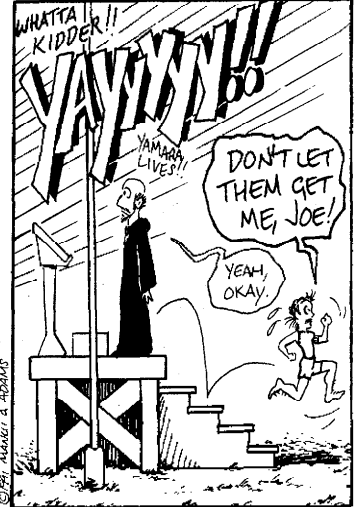
"Who are these clowns?"

By Aaron Williams



"It'd be a great spell if only the somatic part wasn't so darned silly!"

Yamara



By Jordan Greywolf



"The wizard must have a set of Nolzur's Marvelous Crayons . . ."

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"-HEY! YOU'RE RIGHT! I DO HAVE A SPELL OF PROTECTION... BUMMER!"



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WESTON IS A WEEK'S RIDE WEST.

I'VE HEARD OF THIS MAGNUS...



HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A SLY CUSTOMER.



LET'S HOPE HE CAN HELP.

MAYBE HE CAN TURN ME BACK INTO A PRINCE.

BILL, YOU WERE NEVER A PRINCE.

UGO'S HEADQUARTERS...

ARE THE
MEN READY?

PREPARED TO
MARCH, SIR!

MY ENLISTEES ALSO, LORD.

GOOD, THEN...

MY LORD... MY LORD...!

WHAT IS IT, MAN?
SPEAK!

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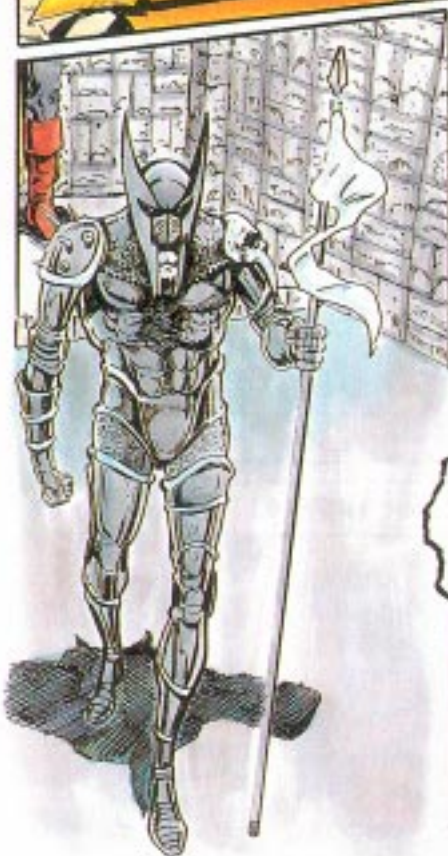
LETTERING

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PART 13



LORD UGO REDHAND...?

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU.

MY MISTRESS, SHANDRA,
WITCH QUEEN OF FERRO,
PRINCESS OF THE TWILIGHT
EMPIRE, BIDS YOU
SURRENDER TO HER WILL...

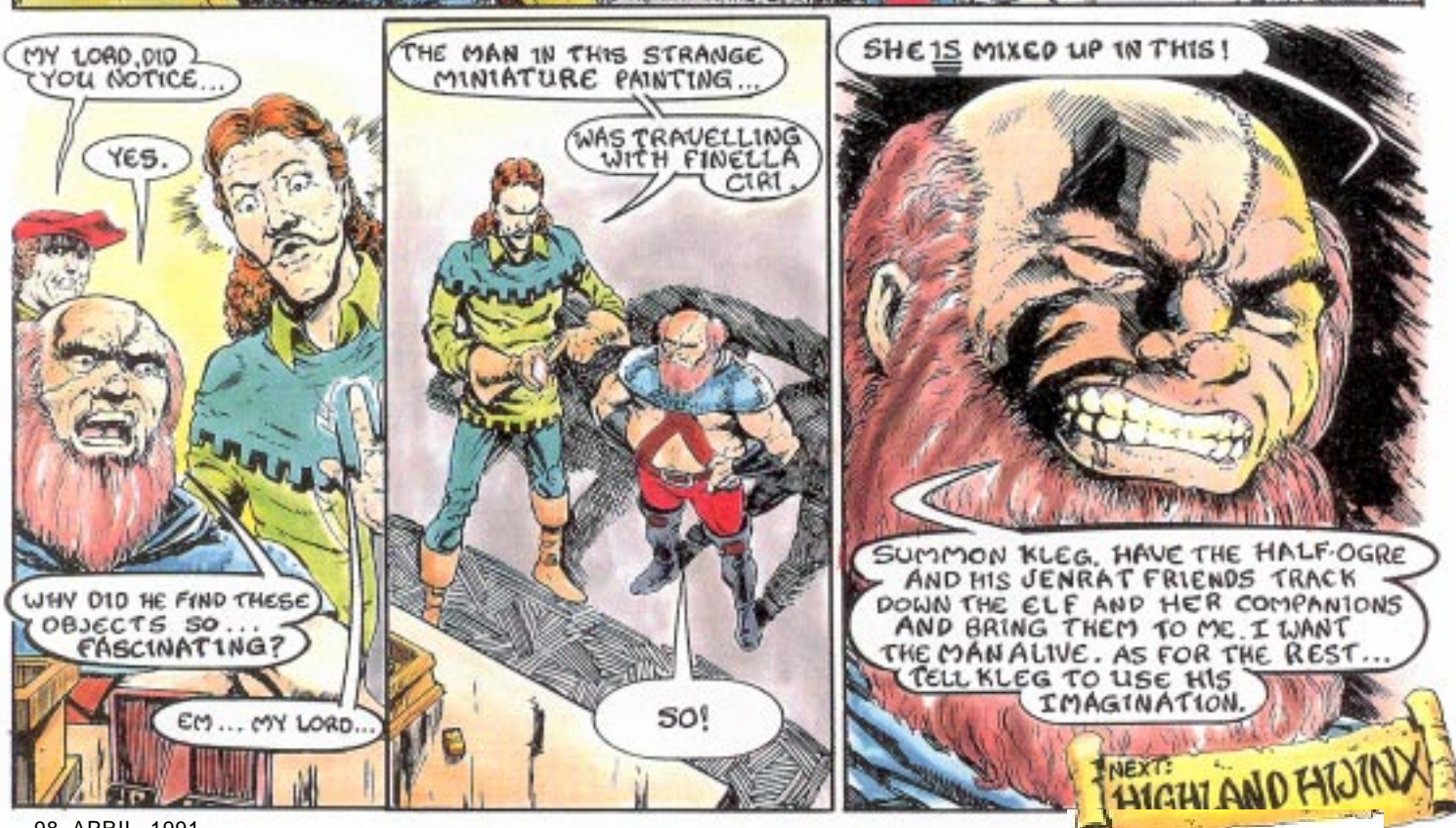
WHY THAT...!

I SHOULD SEND YOUR HEAD
AS MY ANSWER!

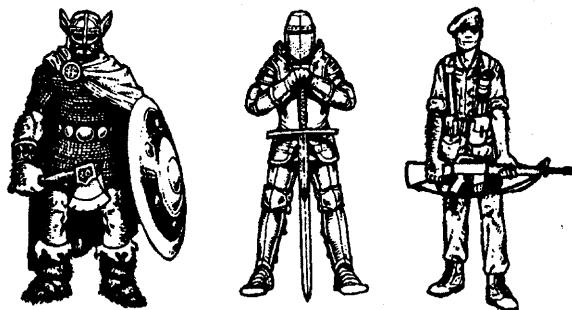
YOU COULD TRY...

OR FACE UTTER
DESTRUCTION!





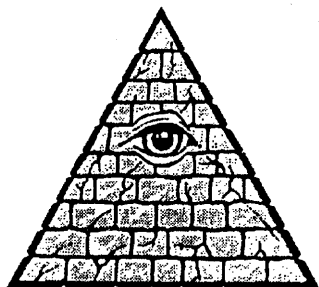
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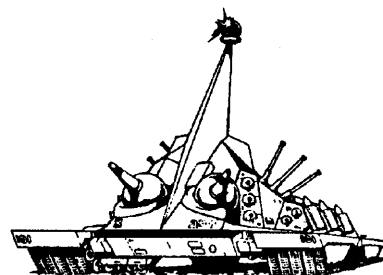
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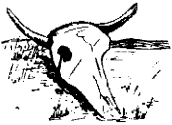
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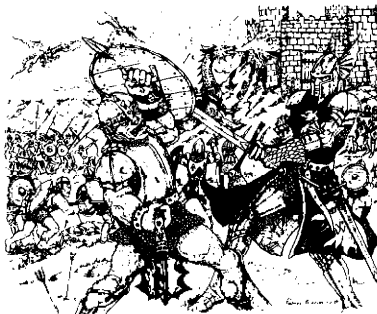
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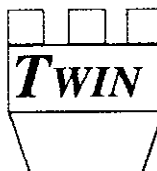
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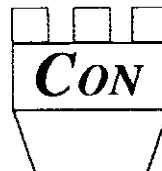
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Through the

LOOKING Glass

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Dwarven Kings (Thunderbolt Mountain)

A look at “da good stuff”

©1991 by Robert Bigelow

April Fool's Day is upon us, and my trick is to play the column straight. As of this writing, the anti-lead bill [see *DRAGON*® issues #164 and 165] is on hold, due to more pressing business in the Persian Gulf, and we should take this time to quietly keep pressure on our lawmakers to avoid banning lead miniatures, just as environmentalists will be pressuring the lawmakers for their own causes through letters and lobbyists.

On the good side, my store has started receiving figures from New Hope Design Miniatures, in the United Kingdom. These figures are said to be lead-free, and have a very tinny sound when tapped. The detail is just as good as it could be with lead figures, and the price increase was minimal, so maybe there is still hope. Some miniatures companies in the United States are working on materials modifications so that we will have no problems with anti-lead laws.

This is also the first “nice weather”

month for much of our readership. As winter recedes, this is a good time to prime large groups of figures for painting. Some readers may not realize that most primers are petroleum based and give off noxious fumes. These fumes may explode when flame is present, so avoid painting in enclosed areas like basements or storerooms, and use areas with good ventilation. I know of at least two cases in which fires started because of painting, and one in which an injury occurred. Stay safe.

Now, on to our review column.

Reviews

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

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Cincinnati OH 45222-0024

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

70 Harcourt St.
Newark, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG 241 RF

Limited Edition – Set C – Dwarfven Kings *****

Almost everyone who owns miniatures has at least one unit of dwarves, and many people own several. These heavy-duty fighters can provide the anchor for a battle line and are heavily armed and armored. Most fantasy miniatures rules give dwarves bonuses against large humanoid creatures, and most provide dwarves with the chance to go berserk when faced with traditional mortal enemies. While many companies have manufactured dwarf command packs, the officers in these packs have all been dressed alike and may fail to generate any excitement. They look more like sergeants than leaders and kings.

Thunderbolt Mountain now presents leaders and kings to lead your dwarfven troops to victory. In following the tradition of creating miniatures that could be used either as playthings or collectibles, this company has issued seven dwarf leaders in 25 mm scale. All are made of lead and are manufactured in two parts, the base and the figure. The bases are 25 mm raised hexes with no engraved features. The figures are molded with pegs on their feet that you can melt into the two holes on the base. Each figure in this set is not only posed but also clothed differently.

Figure #1 is a dwarf setting himself to defend against an attack. He is completely dressed in chain mail with plates in strategic places. His boots appear to be overlapping plates, and his feet are planted flat with his right foot braced. Plates are on his knees, and supporting straps stretch across his back from his belt to his breast plate, which extends to just below his groin and is made to allow his arms full movement. A sword is strapped to his waist by a belt with a simple buckle. The sword's scabbard is engraved with a spot that could be painted to resemble a gem, and other engravings appear on both front and rear groin plates. Both hands grasp a single-bladed axe. The head of the axe is engraved with what looks like a raven. The dwarf's face has deep-set eyes, a long nose, and a thick, flowing beard. He wears a crown with a cone-shaped center that brings the figure to just over 25 mm tall, with an 8 mm crown.

Figure #2 is a bare-headed dwarf wearing a full set of plate mail with chain underneath. His feet and waist are covered by overlapping plates, while back and breast plates are solid with a ridge in the breast plate. The two plates are joined by



Spike (Black Dragon Pewter)

"Da Good Stuff" (Black /Dragon Pewter)

a flexible overlapping joint and a clasp. Arm and knee covers have engravings, with the knee plate forming a half skull. The dwarf has a single-bladed battle-axe that he holds at an angle from his body. His beard is neatly trimmed. On his head he wears a simple crown made of woven gold, but the top of his head is bald as an egg! There is some light flash, but it could be cleaned with a fingernail.

Figure #3 is a dwarf king urging his forces on to battle. His helmet is almost Byzantine in style, with an ornate band and clasp that holds a plume. The helmet comes to a knobby point; upon close inspection, there does not seem to be anything securing the helmet to his head. His body is covered by what looks like laced mail that extends from neck to feet. His breast guards are made of overlapping plates covered at the shoulders and neck by a fur-trimmed cape. A shield with a dwarven symbol is strapped on his back, and he wears a chain belt. His sword is nearly as tall as he is. His face is obscured by a bushy beard, done up in ringlets, but his mouth, humped nose, and deep-set eyes are clearly visible. You can almost hear him yell, "Charge!"

Figure #4 cradles a short sword in his gauntleted hand and appears to be waiting for an enemy to step up. He wears splinted mail over almost all his body. Detailed joints and studs are on his knuckles. A tassel fringed with fur extends from beneath his beard, over his shoulders, and down to his ankles. His head is covered by a simple helmet. His mustache extends beyond his cheeks, but his beard goes down to his stomach. A look of resignation is on his face, and his body signals that he is ready to protect the pouch on his right side.

Figure #5 looks like he should be singing

opera instead of fighting. He wears gauntlets, and in his right hand he holds a weapon that looks like a meat tenderizer on a long shaft. His armor is a combination of ring and plate mail with a laced mail skirt. He wears a loincloth and an ankle-length cape with runes on the hem. His helmet is tapered so his neck is covered but part of his forehead isn't. What look to be jewels are molded on the front and back of his helmet, and horns from a bull or similar animal jut from it. His beard is parted and goes down to his stomach; a sharp nose juts out above a trimmed mustache. With his mouth open slightly and his left arm flung out, the next operatic verse seems not far away.

Figure #6 is ready to fly into combat, dressed from head to toe in chain mail. His hands are clenched tightly on a battle axe. A belt with many pockets decorates his waist, and a short sword hangs on his left side. A stout round shield hangs on his back from straps that criss-cross his chest. A half-round, engraved helmet with a pair of dragon wings sprouting from the top adorns his head. The wings point slightly forward and add to his crouching appearance. His expression warns you off.

Figure #7 is dressed in what appears to be laced mail, except for his legs and arms which are covered by jointed, flexible plates. A short sword is attached to a belt that is losing the battle of the dwarfs stomach bulge; a smiling face is on the buckle. In his right hand he holds the neck of a long-shafted axe. His beard is rough, his mustache sticks out, and his facial expression is almost neutral. His head is topped by a tall, conical hat that closely resembles a wizard's, except this hat has a decorated steel band. Unfortunately, this figure has a few problems. My figure has a slightly disjointed mold line on the left arm

where the mold halves did not join perfectly. In addition, the shaft on the axe is joined to the base of the right foot by a strip of metal. Normally you could simply cut this strip, but that would leave the axe handle off the hex base and vulnerable to damage through any kind of use. Constant fixing could cause the axe to break.

As a whole, I heartily recommend these figures to anyone who has dwarf units. Flash is almost nonexistent, and mold lines on the rest of the figures are difficult to find. With the added bonus of being collectors' limited edition figures, the \$21 price tag is very reasonable.

Black Dragon Pewter Inc.

Unit 303
2437 Bay Area Blvd.
Houston TX 77058

7864 – Spike

**** ½

"Once upon a time, there was a dragon who looked into the future and then wished he hadn't." This was the line that started off a fantasy-game campaign many years ago and now seems to fit this miniature so well. The figure is a small dragon that stands balanced on its hind legs and tail. It is about 116 mm long from tail to crest, standing 58 mm tall. Its wings are much too small even to glide on, each only 20 mm across. The dragon's skin is pebbled rather than scaly on the back and sides, and a ridge of spinal spikes goes from head to tail. Its belly is covered by flexible plates, like a snake's, that extend to below its snout. Its head is bony from jaw to crest. Its upper jaw and teeth almost completely cover the bottom jaw, making it appear to have a deformity until close observation is made.

The dragon appears to be lecturing or



Grox Blox (Dark Tower Enterprises)

teaching. It holds a round, multifaceted crystal ball in its left hand at what would be waist height on a human. The dragon's right hand is tucked against its body with the paw out as if saying "Halt" or making a point during a lecture. Even the reptilian eyes give more of an intelligent stare than a dangerous glare.

This is one of the few pewter pieces (besides those from Ral Partha Pewter) small enough to use in an AD&D® game. It shows real potential for scenarios; you could use it as a dragon professor at some magical college, or as a sage dragon that your party encounters. At \$21, it is versatile as well as collectable.

9624—"Da Good Stuff" *****

Collectable pewter fantasy figures usually contain at least a gram or two of reality in their creation. The miniature submitted here, "Da Good Stuff," was designed after a real incident. The designer, Cindy Sudano, based this figure on the appearance of someone she knew after a party. The pose and expression was caught by sculptor Evelyn Vincent.

This figure is packed with little details that suggest action and magnify the main theme. The base is roughly 3½ mm × 3½ mm, with a rough, rounded look. On the base is a toad with a big grin. At the back of the base, next to a small stump, is the stem of a mushroom. The cap is slightly rough, and its edges cracked and separated, as mushrooms usually look, with a small snail on top. The base is textured to show grass and small rocks.

Under this mushroom, leaning against the stem and a pillow of bark, is the local leprechaun. His right hand still clutches a foaming mug, while his left hand hangs over a protruding gut. A large stone crock with an engraved label proclaims that this

is "Da Good Stuff." His bare feet extend out from tattered cuffs, while his hat droops and his vest hangs open. He wears a huge, dopey grin from ear to ear.

This piece is well worth its \$20 price tag. It tells an entire story at a glance, and that is what I feel pieces like this should convey. Despite that, I want to make it clear that I don't condone drinking to excess and, in fact, know it to be dangerous.

Please note the new address for Black Dragon Pewter and store it in your files. If you send anything to the old address, it may or may not be forwarded.

Dark Tower Enterprises

134 Roberts Rd.
New Lenox IL 60451

GB-008—Grox Blox Starter Set *****

GB-252—Grox Blox Accessory Blocks, Black *****

When I go to conventions, I look for new products that could be used for miniatures

gaming. This year's WINTER FANTASY™ convention reintroduced me to Dark Tower Enterprises (it makes Dragonbones, the electronic random-number generators) and a new product line it is introducing. The product is known as Grox Blox and is meant to be used as a scenery replacement or supplement.

Grox Blox is a strange name for a very different product. Each block is round in appearance, about 43 mm wide and 25 mm tall, with a hexagonal center. The top hex surface has pegs at each corner and holes on the bottom that allow it to be stacked, and the top surface is wide enough to allow a BATTLETECH hex base to be used. The block also has a J-shaped slot on each of its six sides, allowing the blocks to be joined together. (They do lock together well.) The blocks are made of a heavy-duty, impact-resistant plastic.

In order to use the Grox Blox system effectively, you need to pick up a starter set. These sets include two maps, which come in any of several colors, and 25 initial blocks also in assorted colors. GB-008 contains two clear, numbered hex sheets with 38 mm hexes. All hexes are numbered, and the maps have a playing surface of 24" × 31", minus half hexes. Each hex is slightly smaller than a block, but when the blocks are joined they fit well. The set also includes five each of five different colors of blocks: green, gray, dark blue, dark green, and clear, representing lightly wooded, rocky, water, heavily wooded, and icy terrain (or aerial terrain for use in altitude measurements), respectively. You should also get at least one accessory set to get the ability to make hills and terrain features.

To use the set, lay down the clear sheets and select the terrain you want to set up. Then pick out the colored blocks that represent those features. Take the blocks and connect them at the joiners, grouping them to suit. Remember that each block is made to represent one level of altitude.

The blocks can also be used for flight stands in GDW's BLUE MAX* game or in other air/space games with altitude rules (like I.C.E.'s SILENT DEATH* game, which



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Drow Elves (Ral Partha Enterprises)

will have altitude rules shortly). One disadvantage is that these blocks are solid around their edges, even with a hollow core, so you have to be careful when you use them in games in which you place a block over a ground or air vehicle.

These blox have potential, but I see a few problems. With an overall cost of \$.50 each, it will be fairly expensive to put on a game with large amounts of varied scenery. For those of us who are poor, it may be a choice of buying playing pieces or this scenery. The purist will dislike the chunky, unrealistic terrain features that this product produces. On the plus side, the blocks go together fairly quickly, lock together well, and produce child-proof scenery. They also come apart quickly, store neatly, are uniform, and are very hard to break.

You have to decide whether this product is right for you. The starter set is \$30, and a 100-piece accessory set is \$49.

Ral Partha Enterprises

5938 Carthage Ct.
Cincinnati OH 45212

Ral Partha Enterprises

c/o Minifigs
1/5 Graham Rd, Southampton
ENGLAND SO2 0AX

11-418 — Drow Elves

Drow elves have always been a bane for parties that adventure underground (or aboveground at night, in certain areas). Their evil is legendary, as are their powers of magic. There have not been many miniatures of these creatures, except from Games Workshop and Grenadier Models—until now.

The pack submitted for review contains four of these elves, two males and two females. These lead figures are 25 mm scale, measuring 23 mm tall at eye level (placing them at the upper end of elfen height). The figures are all mounted on 13 mm square bases having top moldings that resemble rippled stone. All figures but one have slightly visible mold lines. Each figure wears chain mail as a base uniform but varies in weapons and extras.

Figure #1 is a male elf armed with a double-edged barbed sword with an extended pommel, almost like a bowie knife, held in his right hand. His left hand holds a V-shaped shield with a center decoration. His feet are clad in supple boots with the tops folded over. The chain mail is cinched by a simple belt that also holds a small knife and pouch on the left side. Facial features, including ears, are sharply done. Hair is brushed to the right and gathered in a pony tail that falls down his back. The expression on his face shows a willingness to fight.

Figure #2 is obviously female and dressed much more ornately than the rest of the elves. Under her chain, she wears a pants-type outfit that extends to her feet. Her knees are protected by ornate plate guards, as are the tops of her hands and wrists. A simple belt cinched with a shield-shaped buckle supports a holster on her left side and a knife on her right. In her left hand she holds a simple sword, while her right hand rests on a sheathed knife's grip. A fur collar covers her neck, and a cape, hemmed with studs, falls to the floor. A simple clasp holds her cape between two half plates that protect her breasts. Her hair is wavy on top and formed into a pony tail that falls to her mid-back. Her face is well done and contains a look of scorn on its molded surface.

Figure #3 stands in a "come and get me" pose. His right hand holds a short, pistol-like crossbow whose arrows are undoubtedly coated with poison. His left hand grips a sword. His right shoulder is protected by a plate that seems to be riveted to his chain mail. His feet are clad in folded-down boots. His chain mail is cinched at the waist by a thin belt with a skull-shaped buckle. A case of short bolts for the crossbow pistol and a sheathed knife are on his belt. His hair is brushed back into locks that fall to his shoulders; a mustache droops down to his chin, and his face is set with the glee of battle. The only other decoration is a metal-studded band on his left arm. There is a trace of a mold line on this arm as well.

Figure #4 is a female whose hair is brushed straight back and held off her eyes by a studded leather headband. Her facial expression is stern but not mean. She wears the same basic chain mail but with metal plates over breasts and shoulders as well as both wrists. In her left hand is a mini-crossbow, and in her right she holds a jagged-edged sword. A belt with clasp buckle supports a large knife and a quarrel of bolts.

All of the figures are well detailed. I found no flash on any of them. There are some mold lines, but these should be easily cleaned up, giving you collector-class figures. These figures could also be painted up as regular elves, but the expressions would be wasted. They could also be used as leaders of a dark-elf army. It's an excellent buy at \$5 per pack.

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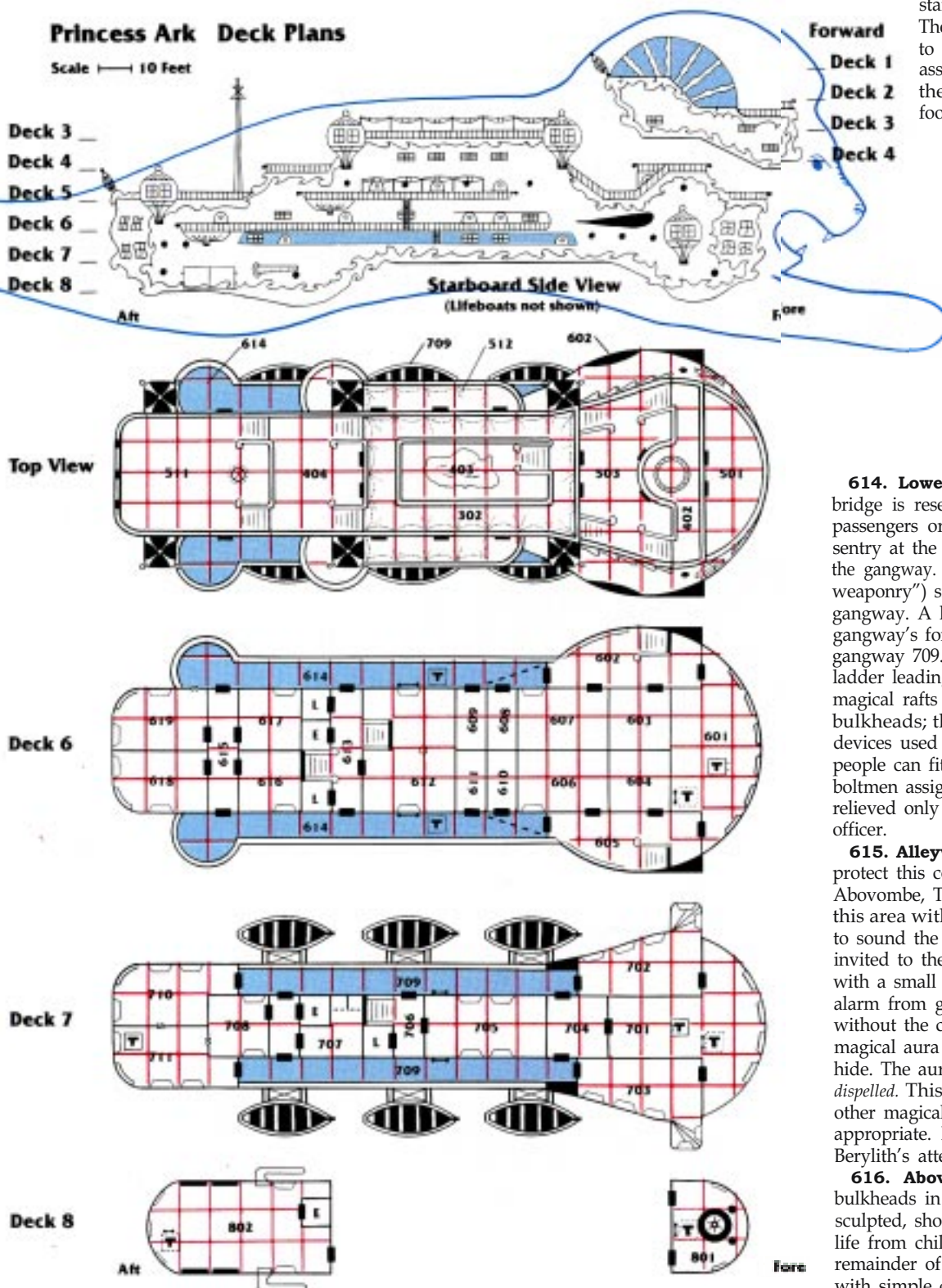
Princess Ark

Continued from page 45

These narrow quarters are shared by two to four lower-ranking officers. The quarters include wooden bunks stacked two high, chests or bags for personal goods, small tables, and chairs. Occasionally, middle-class passengers may share these quarters.

612. Galley: All meals for the crew and officers are prepared in this room. The cook and his two scullions work, sleep, and live here, catering to all needs aboardship. Food is cooked in a magical oven that requires no flame or combustibles. The galley includes a kitchen and a scullery.

613. Alleyway: The aft stairs lead up to alleyway 510. The forward stairs lead down to alleyway 706. The cooks two assistants use either stairs or the *levitation* shaft to bring food from area 612.



614. Lower gangway: This open-air bridge is reserved for upper-class passengers or officers. There often is a sentry at the door on the forward edge of the gangway. A light ballista (see "Ship's weaponry") sits on the aft edge of the gangway. A hatchway located near the gangway's forward end leads down to gangway 709. Near this hatchway is a ladder leading up to gangway 512. Three magical rafts are fastened to the bulkheads; these rafts are *levitating* devices used for emergencies only. Four people can fit on each raft. Any crew or boltmen assigned duty on this deck can be relieved only in the presence of a petty officer.

615. Alleyway: Further magical wards protect this corridor. Only Myojo, Lady Abovombe, Talasar, or Haldemar can enter this area without causing a *magic mouth* to sound the alarm. When someone is invited to these quarters, he is provided with a small magical coin that prevents the alarm from going off. Anyone entering without the coin is also surrounded by a magical aura that betrays him if he tries to hide. The aura lasts an hour or until *dispelled*. This aura will trigger every other magical ward on the ship, where appropriate. It does not, however, attract Berylith's attention by itself.

616. Abovombe's quarters: The bulkheads in this room are intricately sculpted, showing episodes of Abovombe's life from childhood to present. The remainder of the room is more humble, with simple curtains over the window, a round carpet in the middle of the room, and flowers in a vase on the chest of drawers near the door. A small table and

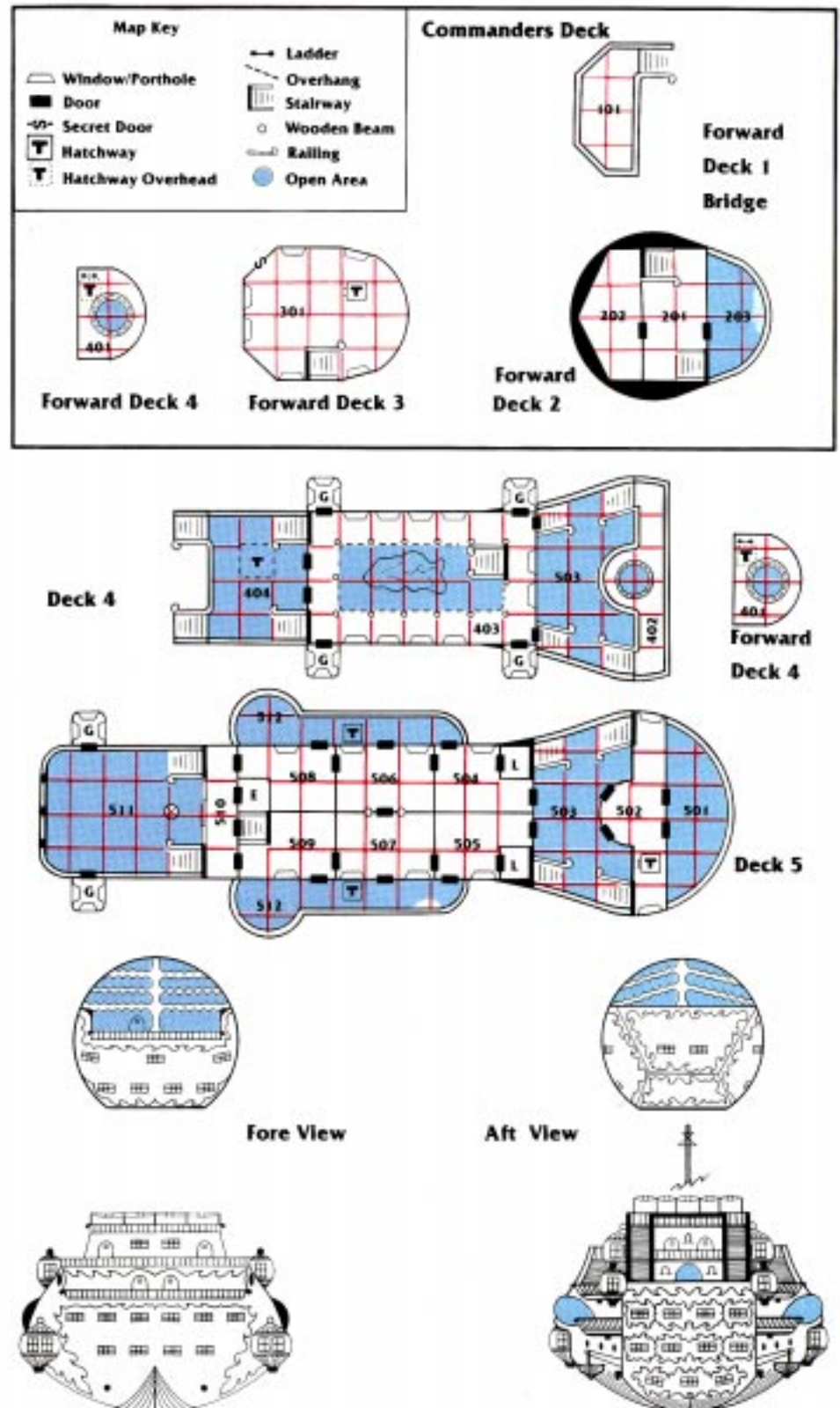
two chairs stand next to the bed, which is covered with a mosquito net. A *levitating* crystal globe hovers over the table, providing a soft, opalescent light; it can be dimmed with a black velvet veil that lies on the table.

617. Myojo's quarters: These quarters are furnished very much like a Myoshiman room. A tatami (woven mat) covers the floor, while a futon (low mattress) lies in the far corner of the room. Myojo's swords normally rest on a small wooden stand near the futon. A number of fine tapestries cover the bulkheads. Myojo's other personal belongings remain in a wooden chest.

Near the door is a donshu sitting on a perch. Myojo talked Raman out of dissecting the little creature, and he has kept it ever since as his mascot and watchful pet. The donshu has the size and body of a tamarin monkey, with small claws and the head of cat. It has blue-gray hair and green eyes having neither pupil nor iris. The donshu shows the intelligence of a clever chimp. Once per day, it can turn *invisible* and cast a *telekinesis* spell (at the 1st level of ability). The donshu can pick pockets, move silently, climb, hide in shadows, and hear noise as a 10th-level thief. (Donshu: AC 6 (Dx 18); HD 1/2; hp 3; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1 hp; Save F1; ML 7; TT None; AL N; XP 20.)

618. Talasar's quarters: The floor, bulkheads, and ceiling in this room are covered with skillfully polished metal plates. All of them are oriented at slightly different angles and act like mirrors. The room is normally dark, except for a large number of *perpetual candles* (enchanted with tiny *continual lights*) glowing everywhere in the room. In effect, the room resembles the meditation hall in the Great Temple of Razud in Starpoint. Talasar's bed is concealed behind one of the reflecting panels. The window is covered with a thick velvet curtain. Anyone using bright light in this area must save vs. spell or be blinded for 1d6 rounds.

619. Haldemar's quarters: Berylith took particular care to rearrange Haldemar's quarters in the way *she* liked them. Most of the dark-brown, varnished floor is covered with unique carpets made from the fluffy, silver hair of sky-wyrm manes. The bulkheads have the consistency of soft leather rather than wood and show a variety of blue tints, ranging from deep purple dotted with tiny glowing stars, when Haldemar sleeps, to bright azure with shifting cloud patterns, when he's fully awake. A translucent globe of *continual light* mimics the passage of the sun or the moon across the cabin's overhead, with all appropriate tints for sunrises and sunsets. Occasionally, a light breeze may create havoc among Haldemar's disorganized stacks of scrolls. The choice of shades and the strength of the breeze depend on Berylith's mood.



Berylith also added to the room quite a bit of what could be perceived by Haldemar as the dreaded feminine touch—including exquisite curtains and charming vases of ever-resplendent blooms. The centerpiece and pride of Berylith lies in Haldemar's age-old bunk, which she has mercilessly turned into a pink-shaded, *levitating* cloud in the middle of the room. Berylith is very sensitive about comments on her taste. There is a 90% chance in any situation that she will hear any derogatory comments anywhere on the ship and act upon them in some rash manner.

Deck 7—Utility deck

701. Upper cargo deck: Common crew equipment and items of small bulk that can be pulled up through the hatchway are stored in this area. The hatchway in the floor leads down to area 801. A wooden ladder in the middle of the cargo bay leads to another hatchway overhead to area 601. Both hatchways are locked (see area 502).

702. Greenhouse: A continual light spell permanently illuminates this large room. A number of small and large plants picked up during the voyages of the *Princess Ark* have been placed here. One unappreciated vegetable is a specimen of Cestian gobbler (see DRAGON issue #153),

which stopped growing and went dormant due to unfavorable conditions in the room. The carnivorous plant wakes up only when touched or presented with raw meat. The greenhouse's caretaker, Azoth, is a zombie that remains inside a large empty jar when done with its chores. Azoth will attack anyone harming the plants. A heavy curtain conceals the stairway on the port-side bulkhead; the stairs lead up to area 702.

703. Zoo: A strong, alkaline smell fills this room. Most of the space is occupied by metal cages, some empty and others containing various animals and small monsters. Some have recently become objects of further study, especially by Raman (see area 606). A heavy curtain conceals the stairway on the starboard side; the stairs lead up to area 703.

704. Yeoman's office: This office contains a large desk, wooden chests, and shelves covered with a number of ledgers and other scroll cases. Most of the ship's accounting takes place in this room. The crew often stops in this office to receive their pay before leaving the ship. It is also here that passengers and new crew members must register.

705. Sick bay: These quarters are mostly filled with bunks, night stands, chairs, chests, and a small altar consecrated to Razud. Wisps of myrrh slowly curl out from small copper censers. The beds are covered with fine mosquito nets. Opposite the door to alleyway 706 is an area that can be separated with curtains from the rest of the room. In the center of that area is a flat wooden table used for surgery, should it ever become necessary, as well as a rack of wicked-looking tools. Occasionally, Raman will use the table to dissect some of the creatures from area 605. Talasar more often handles common medicine through clerical spell-casting. The room fills rapidly after a battle.

706. Alleyway: The stairs leading up from this area connect with alleyway 613.

707. Brig: Only two cells can be used in this area. Manacles hang from the wooden bulkhead to which they are solidly bolted. One sentry, who normally remains with potential prisoners, sits at a small table near the exit. The door is *wizard locked* at all times, limiting access to officers only.

708. Leo's quarters: This room is filled with an incredible mess of raw materials, tools, and strange pieces of machinery (Leo's partially completed inventions). There is no telling what these devices may do if tampered with. Leo's bed is a small hammock hanging from the ceiling. Mugs, bags, and other items hang nearby; Leo can reach them with a mechanical arm.

709. Evacuation gangway: Lifeboats hang from the side of the gangway here. Pulleys and cranks allow the boats to be pushed away from the deck or pulled back in 1d4+3 rounds. The lifeboats are enchanted with *fly* spells and may carry

up to 12 people without ill effect. Up to 18 people could huddle on a lifeboat, but it would lose its ability to maneuver (it would descend slowly within a gravitational field). With more than 18 people aboard, a lifeboat has a 10% chance per turn of capsizing or beginning a free fall within a gravitational field. *Airmasks* may be needed during an evacuation, since lifeboats and rafts lack *create air* enchantments. The lifeboats are covered with tarpaulins. A ladder located halfway down this gangway leads up to an overhead hatchway connecting with gangway 614.

710. Laboratory: Haldemar and Talasar often use these quarters to study magic or alchemy. Shelves cover the bulkheads, displaying huge numbers of crystal vials, copper urns, glass beakers and tubes of various colors, porcelain jars, stone crucibles, ivory and wooden scroll cases, skulls of various shapes, bizarrely twisted candles, grimoires, and other arcane objects. Haldemar often calls in Leo to help make a sophisticated contraption. The door is *wizard locked*.

711. Workshop: Leo works in this area, using the facilities and its heavy tools to build his inventions. Leo is aware of the secret passage leading to his quarters in area 708. The room is filled with work benches, rows of tools, and pieces of broken equipment belonging to the ship or the crew. Chief engineer Raman has long given up this area, reluctantly leaving it to the hyperactive gnome. A hatchway in the floor leads to area 802 underneath.

Deck 8—Cargo deck

801. Anchor room: A few boxes and barrels are stored in this area. In the middle sits a large winch used to lower a ground anchor. At least four people are needed to crank the anchor back up, a process taking 1d6+4 rounds. A wooden ladder leads to a hatchway in the ceiling that connects with area 701. The two doors are *wizard locked*.

802. Lower cargo deck: This area is filled with large barrels, crates, chests, and other bulky items. This cargo deck contains mostly food supplies for the crew, with very little in the way of actual merchandise, as the *Princess Ark* is not a merchantman but an exploration vessel. Two very large double doors open on the port and starboard sides of the hull. Two cranes on the outside can be used to bring cargo up when the ship is airborne. The cranes are operated from the inside of the cargo deck with pulleys and levers. All doors are normally *wizard locked*, except for the one leading to the *levitation shaft*. Scullions commonly visit this area, searching for food. A wooden ladder near the end of the room leads up to a hatchway overhead, connecting with area 711. Ω

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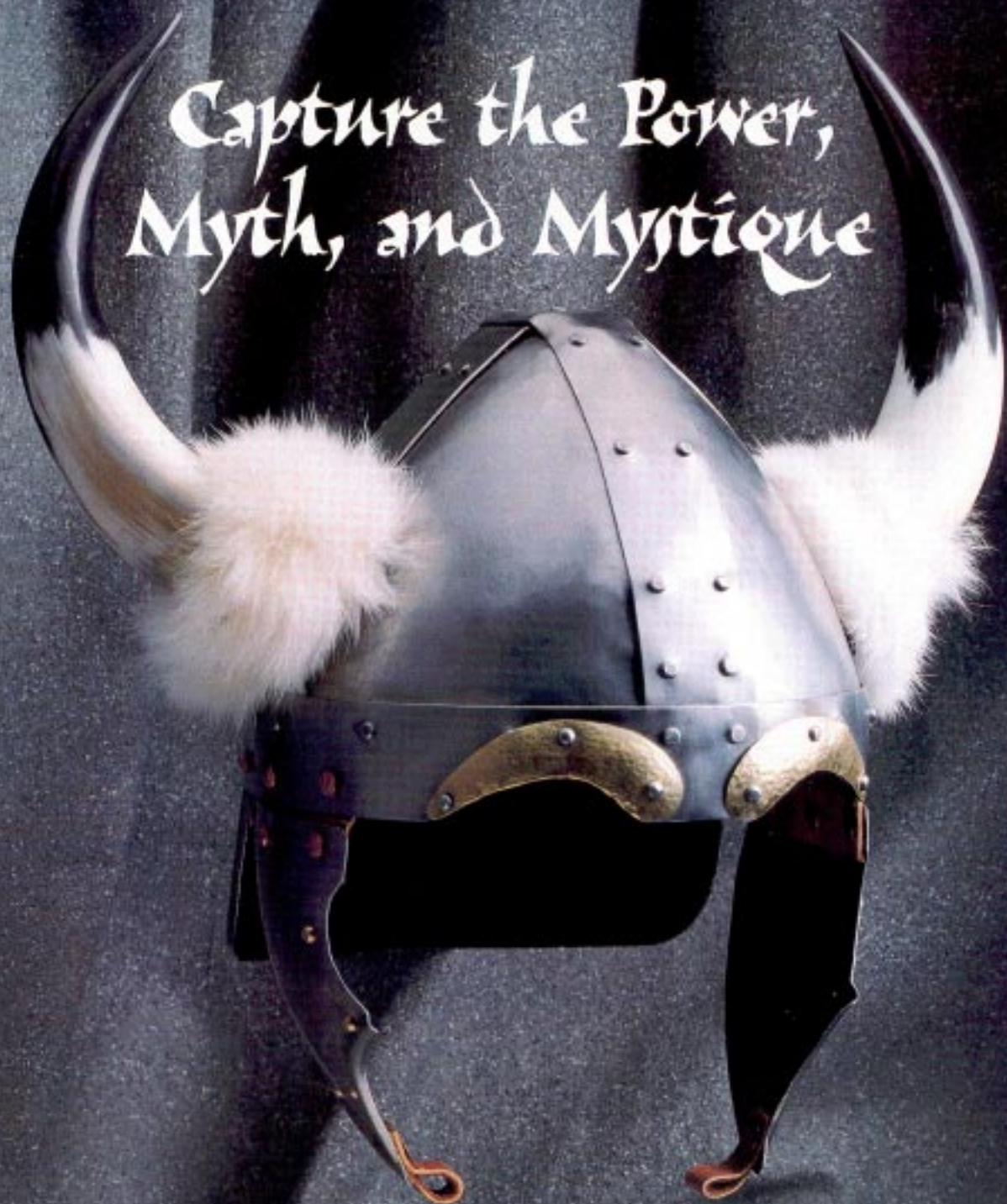
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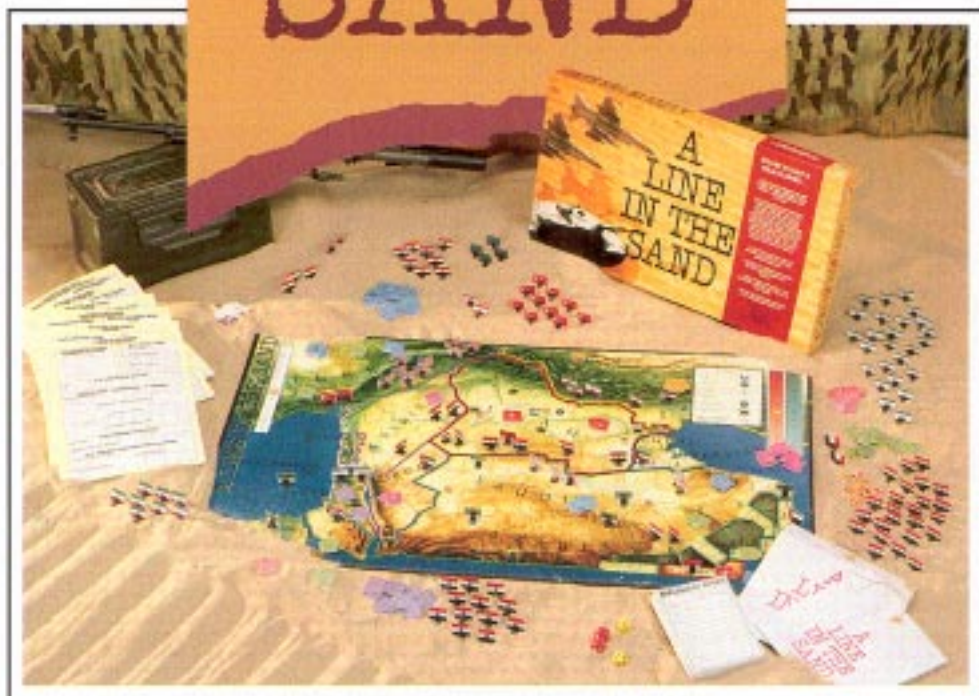


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