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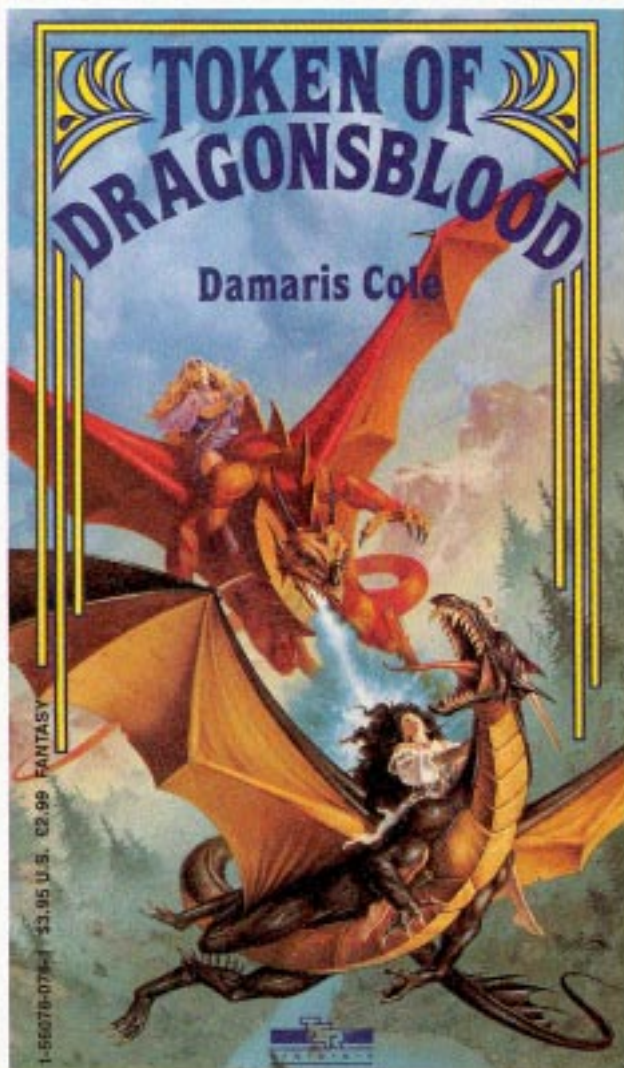


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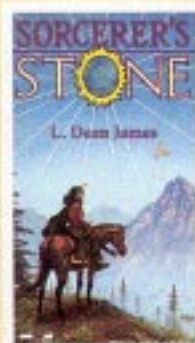
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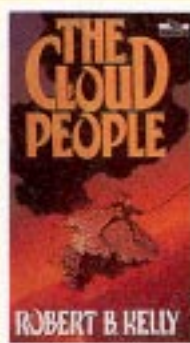
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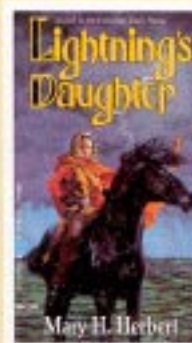
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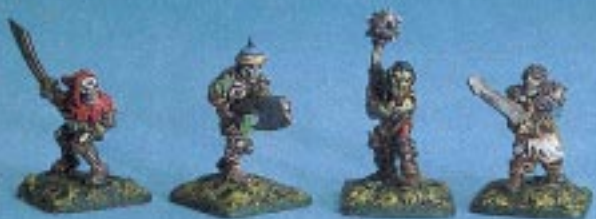
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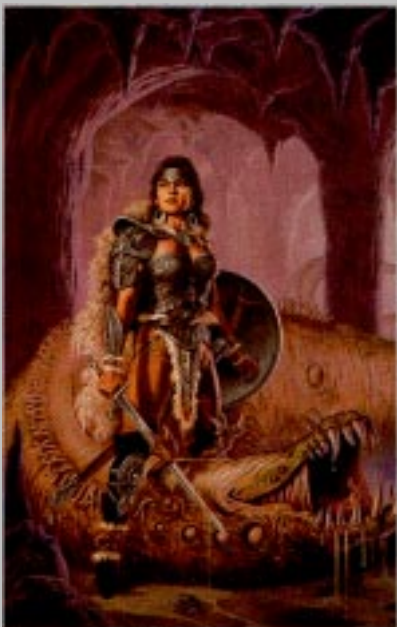
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COVER

Babette the Barbarian (a fantasy character inspired by the cover artist's real-life fiancée, Babette Fletcher) stands victorious over the body of a giant cave dweller. This cover, "The Worm Has Turned," should be available soon as a limited-edition print; for further information, write to the artist, Clyde Caldwell, c/o TSR, Inc.

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.

D&D® articles!

Dear Dragon,

I recently took great pleasure in investing \$20 in the new, easy-to-master D&D® set. It delivers everything it promised, and I like it a lot.

However, a lot of articles in DRAGON Magazine pertain to the as yet more-popular AD&D® game. Most of the articles explore monsters and treasures that would do me a lot of good in my still-young campaign, but they were written with the AD&D game in mind. They would also work well with the D&D game, if some notes were given for conversion.

What I am suggesting is that either you print a lot more articles on the D&D game, which I feel is going to make a comeback soon, or print an article that tells how to convert some of the articles giving advice, treasures, and monsters for the AD&D game into the D&D game.

Along with the D&D set came an order form for DUNGEON® Adventures and DRAGON Magazine. I would be willing to take multiple-year subscriptions to both if these changes could possibly be made. It would really help my campaign take off in a big way, and I would really appreciate these improvements. I'm sure that those who buy the new D&D game would like these improvements, too.

No name or address given

We have been running an article series for a year and a half for those who play the D&D game: "The Voyage of the Princess Ark." Aside from this, however, we've received little else on that game from our readers. The lack of articles on the D&D game has been a long-term problem here, and we've run letters similar to the above one on several occasions in the past. We would love to see more articles relating specifically to the D&D game.

The idea of running an article converting AD&D game statistics to the D&D game is intriguing and has been mentioned before by other letter writers. We might do something about this in the near future. Stay tuned.

DUNGEON Adventures is looking for more D&D game modules and module writers, too, by the way. To get a free copy of the DUNGEON Adventures module-writers guidelines, send a long self-addressed stamped envelope (inside another envelope, of course) to: Module Guidelines, DUNGEON Adventures, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147. And write!

Where's the SCA?

Dear Dragon,

My name is Blaine Rebello, and I'm a private in Uncle Sam's army. I'm writing to ask if you have heard of an organization that goes by the title of the SCA. This organization performs swordplay, competitions, and meets.

I was first told about this group by a fellow private. He does not know if the SCA has any "households" in the Massachusetts area. Do you think you could help me out?

PV2 Blaine Rebello

APO NY

The Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. (the SCA) sponsors many activities for those interested in medieval times, from fairs and banquets to jousting tournaments and "wars." Information on the SCA can be obtained by writing to: The Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc., Office of the Registry, P.O. Box 360743, Milpitas CA 95035-0743. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Apologies in order

Dear Dragon,

The organizers of Pocono Games Day wish to express sincere apologies to anyone who may not have been aware of our sudden cancellation. Time was not available to retract or change our most recent listing in the "Convention Calendar" section of DRAGON Magazine, and we fear that some of our potential guests may have been in for a big disappointment if they arrived at the hotel only to find out about the bad news. Again, we apologize. All possible measures were taken to alert the public about the cancellation.

Please do not let our sudden cancellation put you off about attending one-day and small, regional gaming conventions. There are many sprouting up all around the globe. Please take the time to read this issue's "Convention Calendar" section. We're sure you'll find some quality conventions there which may be within your traveling distance. For example, this fall there will be no less than two multiday games conventions within a 75-mile radius of the site of our cancelled convention. We urge everyone to check on and support their local game conventions. Once in a while, something manages to hinder the progress of our hobby (such as our unfortunate and sudden cancellation), but, for the most part, your local games conventions offer a good time for all.

Thank you.

The organizers of
Pocono Games Day
c/o Michael Griffith
Wind Gap PA

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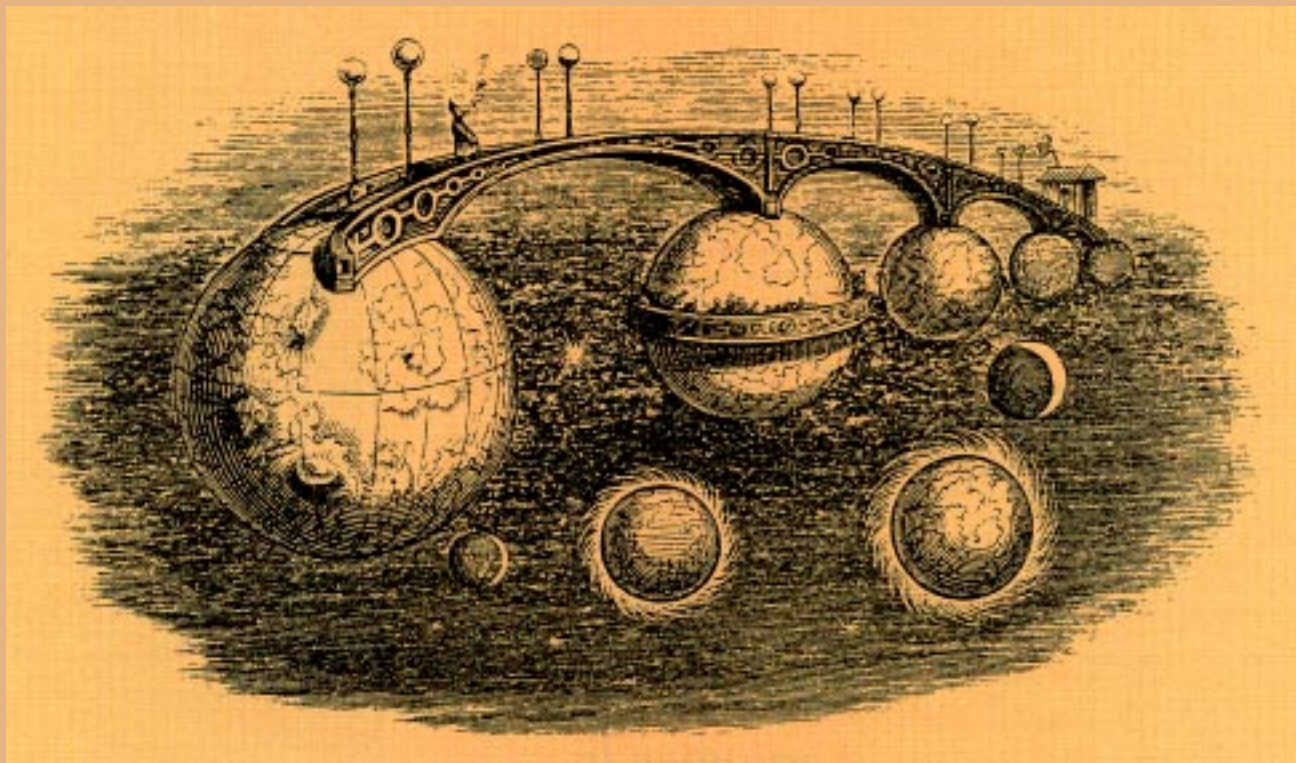
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EDITORIAL



Getting lost in the translation

I recently saw the movie, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*. I absolutely loved it. No, Kevin Costner wasn't great, but the movie was fantastic. As I left the theater, though, I was envious—envious of how well the film had been done. Its tone, pacing, and action all contributed to a whole greater than its parts. I also envied the fact that I would not be able to duplicate those same aspects of the film in a role-playing game session. Even if I ran a party through the same plot (something I do not recommend), something would inevitably pale in comparison to the film. That's often the problem when trying to translate fiction into gaming. Before I go farther, I'd like to relate a personal DMing experience with the character, Robin Hood.

Way back in *DRAGON*® issue #55, there was an article by Katherine Kerr detailing Robin, Will Scarlet, Little John, Friar Tuck, and the Merry Men in AD&D® game terms. Being a big fan of the legend of Robin Hood and of the Errol Flynn movie version of that story, I was thrilled. I immediately set up an adventure in which our campaign's party would meet these gentlemen rogues.

At least as far as I was concerned, that portion of the adventure failed miserably. As the party was journeying through

Sherwood Forest on the way to an NPC's hometown, they were waylaid by Robin, Will, Little John, and a company of 24 archers. I had envisioned the PCs realizing that they were facing superior numbers and acquiescing to the "robbery." I fully intended for Robin to return the party's goods after he spent some time with them and learned they were not evil. Robin could even have helped the group against the Sheriff of Nottingham later in the adventure.

Well, all that went right out the window when the party of about eight mid-level PCs decided that being surrounded by two dozen archers with arrows nocked wasn't really that much of a problem. Not an atypical gaming attitude, I grant you, but then I had to think fast. I eventually managed to convince, cajole, or browbeat my players (and their characters) into not berserkly attacking Robin and his cohorts, but I still had a problem. The PCs didn't want to give up their cash and jewelry, especially their magical rings, amulets, and so on. To keep the game moving, I had Robin settle for the PCs' cash alone. The PCs reluctantly agreed. Then, Robin played one of his little jokes. He invited the party to join him for dinner, since they were paying for it, after all. The party did

not find that humorous in the least.

By this time, I was bitterly disappointed that my plan had not worked out, and the players were getting frustrated with just playing along with me. So, I reluctantly cut short the role-playing of the dinner, had Robin return the PCs' cash, and got on with the rest of the adventure. The rest of the evening seemed to go better.

What went wrong? Several things did. They were all my fault and only some of them had to do with using a fictional character. The first thing I failed to do was to consider all the possible actions the party could take when faced with robbers. (I didn't think of them as "robbers"; I thought of them as "Robin Hood and his Merry Men.") Surely, no party of good-aligned adventurers would ever attack Robin Hood, right? But more on that later. I don't have the charm or looks of Errol Flynn; hence, my NPC Robin didn't have them, either. The players just saw a thief named Robin who wanted their valuables. This points out the first major problem when trying to integrate characters from fiction or the movies into our games: a lack of resources.

No matter how hard he tries, no matter what he does, no DM can present a story—with only his words, a map or two, and a

few handouts-as well as a great piece of fiction, much less a good motion picture. No one, outside of the people who do that sort of thing for a living, has that kind of time or resources. A fiction piece can take several hundred pages to fully develop a character, and a movie has professional actors presenting characters for a two- or three-hour production, usually with only one character per actor (DMs: When was the last time you portrayed only one NPC in a game session?).

In most cases, a DM has only a few minutes to establish an NPC's character before moving on with the adventure. That means "borrowed" NPCs won't have the depth they had in their source material, unless the original NPC's character is well known to the players. Even then, the details are lost. Also, unless your campaign's tone closely matches the flavor of the source material, much of the character's charm would be lost. How interesting would Robin be if there were no evil Sheriff, Sir Guy, or Prince John for him to battle? This leads to my next point.

Any characters a DM chooses to integrate into his campaign from fiction sources must mesh closely with the campaign as it already exists. This was another reason why my Robin encounter failed. I plopped Nottingham into a mountain valley neighboring the idyllic valley kingdom in which my campaign was sent. I didn't think about how two small realms, one ruled by lawful-good folks (my campaign base) and one ruled by a lawful-evil one (the Sheriff of Nottingham) would get along as next-door neighbors. I'm now positive that my players were still working under the assumption that they were still in a "good land" and naturally assumed that these bandits were therefore evil. The fact that the players didn't catch on was my fault.

Not only must borrowed characters come from the same genre, but the source must have the same tone and flavor as your campaign. If you're running a gritty, low-magic, low-fantasy campaign, Gandalf the White would not fit any better than Conan the Barbarian would fit in an Arthurian campaign with chivalrous knights on white chargers. It just wouldn't feel right. The level of magic in the source and in the campaign is very important to consider. In my Robin encounter, several of the PCs were mages, and both mages and magic are concepts completely foreign to the Robin Hood legends. The fight between Robin's forces and the PCs, had it taken place, would have been long, spectacular, and bloody, leaving both sides decimated, despite the numerical superiority of Robin's band.

The last aspect of the encounter that I misjudged was the options of the PCs. I didn't even consider the possibility that the PCs would want to fight to keep their valuables (silly me). In fiction and movies, the entire plot and story line of the piece is worked out in advance. In RPGs, that

sort of thing is virtually impossible to achieve without railroading the PCs. Players almost always come up with some way to take the adventure off in an unexpected direction. If you're trying to reenact the plot of Kevin Costner's Robin Hood film, what would the DM do if the party decides not to return to England, but rather roam the Arabic world, guided by Azim? That is why I do not recommend trying to adapt any borrowed plot verbatim into a RPG. It's not going to work.

Now that I've listed all these problems involved with running characters borrowed from other sources, you might think that creating an RPG set in one of these borrowed universes would be impossible, right? Wrong. Off the top of my head, I can count ten RPGs that are properties licensed to game companies. I won't mention them all, but I will talk about how two game companies took different approaches to designing a licensed game.

West End Games's STAR WARS*: THE RPG game universe was set just after the events in the film, *Star Wars*, took place. This was the best possible choice. The Rebel Alliance has just won a great victory with the destruction of the first Death Star, but there are still dark days ahead for the Rebellion. This game does not encourage playing the movie's characters, though movie influences are seen in the game's character templates. Players are encouraged to individualize their characters, so West End does not promote borrowing from the films, books, etc.

FASA's STAR TREK* game, on the other hand, seems to have been designed (at least partially) with the concept of role-playing the crew of the U.S.S. *Enterprise* in mind. The first *Enterprise's* crew stats are included in the boxed game. I believe the first *Star Trek: The Next Generation* supplement was the *First Year Source-book*, which listed the stats for Picard and company. I think that the game was set up for players to take these characters because the game's skill system really works only when characters are highly skilled,

like the two TV-show crews. Characters generated using the game's systems are nowhere near as experienced, and hence have trouble performing their duties because some of their skill ratings are so low. Also, the game is not set in any time or place reference of the *Star Trek* universe. The only setup suggested is to have the characters be newly assigned to a Constitution-class heavy cruiser (a *Galaxy-class* ship in *ST:TNG*).

So, if you want to borrow characters from fiction or film, be warned that it's tougher to do than it seems. The best way to go about this, if you're insistent, is to find a game whose flavor matches that of the characters and world you like. Or, you can look around for a licensed game for that universe. There has been a trend in the RPG industry to publish licensed games for major SF or fantasy motion pictures released in the past few years. Anybody remember *Willow*, *The Last Starfighter*, or *Aliens*? Did you know licensed games were published for each of these films? How long will it be before we see a ROBIN HOOD: PRINCE OF THIEVES game? (Iron Crown Enterprises has already published a Robin Hood supplement for its ROLEMASTER* fantasy game.) Whatever you do, I wish you luck—more than I had with my own Robin Hood.



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DM

Welcome to the Underdark

MARCUS 9/10





Seeing the Sights in SKULLPORT

by Ed Greenwood and Steven E. Schend

Expanding the city from the *Ruins of Undermountain* boxed set

Working late at night can be quite relaxing, when all the bustle and noise of the day has died down and little intrudes on the task at hand. We (Ed and Steven) were at TSR after hours, poring over some of the myriad mysteries of Undermountain to tell the fans at the 1991 GEN CON® game fair, when an unexpected waft of perfume came into the cubicle.

"Could ye use assistance, gentlemen?"

The low, musical voice took us both by surprise. We spun around, maps and papers flying. A tall, slim, very beautiful lady stood smiling at us. It was Laeral, once leader of the famous adventuring band, "The Nine."

"Well met and welcome again, milady," we said together, making our bows. TSR's cubicles don't offer lots of room for calisthenics, but our visitor was, after all, an archmage in her own right—and our guide to Skullport.

Laeral smiled, took the most comfortable chair, and patiently answered questions, revealing only what she deems fit for wider knowledge. The Lady Mage of Waterdeep is our guide because, in disguise, she (with Kitten of the Lords and certain unrevealed others) keeps watch on

Skullport for Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun. She took on this dangerous and sometimes disgusting task because her lord feels he must act when he sees the evils of Skullport. The more tolerant Laeral (who rightly sees the necessity for Skullport, to keep The City Above from open lawless-

ness) is able to turn a blind eye to things that would goad her into angry spell-casting in Waterdeep.

Much of what Laeral uttered was in the form of mysterious hints and tantalizing phrases—and in that manner we pass this information on to you.

Goods and services

Skullport serves as a smuggling and trading base for cargo that is illegal or obviously stolen in Waterdeep, and as a home for those not welcome or safe in The City of Splendors. Drugs and slaves can be found in its dark ways, and its inhabitants include mind flayers, drow, vampires, gargoyles, beholders, and worse.

In such a violent place of constant intrigue and danger, beings and their businesses come and go, but Laeral gave us a beginner's guide to what the unwary may find in Skullport today, if they go looking—and survive.

Slaves: Slaves are the first thing most visitors seek, having fancies of creating sensual pleasure dens or eerie laboratories where screaming unfortunates have monstrous limbs grafted onto them. Little of such things goes on these days, as both extremes drive down the monetary worth of slaves.

Most slaves are kept on Skull Isle, the large island that serves as Skullport's main docks. Here the smell of crowded captives is as far from the settlements as possible,

and the slaves are kept close to washing and drinking water and to the ships that bring them or carry them away. They are also separated from a chance to escape into the monster-haunted river depths.

Skullport has always been home to "snatch bands" that can be hired to kidnap people. Its most prominent professional slaver at present is Zstulkk Ssarmn, a yuan-ti abomination who heads a small, well-trained band of pureblood warriors and halfbreed "whips" (jailers). Zstulkk's yuan-ti have extensive merchant contacts in The Shining South, and some are skilled in doctoring, for steep fees.

The Hand, a band of slavers who serve the Eye (both detailed in the *Ruins of Undermountain* boxed set), also has an agent in Skullport: the dwarf Ahmaergo. He can be contacted through various "mouths and runners" at The Black Tankard. His office, somewhere under Skullport, is reached through dark sewers and guarded by several undead beholders (death tyrants, described in the SPELLJAMMER™ accessory SJR1 *Lost Ships*). Ahmaergo's horn-adorned black armor, which he never seems to remove, harbors many magical weapons.

Drugs: Second in importance to slaves in Skullport's illicit markets are the wide variety of substances used to alter the senses and sensibilities of many different beings of the Realms: drinkables, poisons, pain killers, and potions. These are offered at every other dark doorway and corner, but the two

sources with the largest stock and best (if that's the word) reputations are Vhondryl and her rival Shaun Taunador.

Vhondryl has permanent rooms at The Deepfires (some believe she may secretly own the place; she has ready access to its bodyguards and secret passages). She is a thin, silent, mysterious lady with chalk-white skin, knee-length blonde hair, and rather plain features. Her eyes are straw yellow, and she is known to ardently worship Loviatar. She can supply any drink, poison, or potion (and all antidotes) known to the Realms on short notice, commanding fabulously high prices. She also has magical powers.

Her chief rival, Shaun Taunador, has lower prices but a far more sinister reputation. Shaun does business from a barge on the river Sargauth moored just off the docks, or in short-rented rooms at The Crowing Cockatrice. A mind flayer of awesome powers and a titan among his own kind, Shaun is always surrounded by a trained bodyguard of human thugs and loyal monsters of controllable sorts.

Corpses: The next most important trade in Skullport is the brisk business in cadavers and body parts. Although many dabble in this sort of work, the present "powers" in the field are threefold: Mhaug, the Cryptkey mages, and Shradin Mulophor—the "Lord of Bones."

Mhaug is an annis (see "Hag" in the *Monstrous Compendium*) who spends much of her time watching events from the doorway of her gruesome shop at the edge of the docks. She hangs corpses by their necks as ornaments until sold; the floppy-headed undead created from them are derisively called "Mhaug hogs."

Cryptkey Facilitations is a tomb-robbing organization active in The City of the Dead and in the countryside around Waterdeep, procuring exhumed-to-order corpses and body parts. The organization's members (estimates range from six to ten in number) wear masks and rarely, if ever, speak. For those who wish to create undead, the mysterious mages who run Cryptkey sew up wounds, wire bones together, and fix bones and joints with magic, such as *mending* and *Nulathoe's ninemen* spells (the latter appears in *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures*, page 57). Their shop in central Skullport is guarded by many undead, including an impressive skull-headed ettin and a scuttling legion of crawling claws (as per volume 3, the *FORGOTTEN REALMS®* appendix, of the *Monstrous Compendium*).

Shradin's Excellent Zombies is a dingy, run-down shop in the inner reaches of Skullport; parts of it seem more ruined than usable. The haughty Shradin Mulophor is a seemingly unstable archmage who has developed necromantic spells far beyond what most mages know. He is heavily armed with wands. He sells or rents out "claws" of controllable zombies for guarding, carrying, and loading work. A claw consists of four normal zombies

linked to the control of a ju-ju zombie leader. Shradin's scepters, each topped with a severed hand, enable clients to control particular leader zombies. The Lord of Bones himself is said to have a master "Skull-Staff" that can override all the scepters he sells.

Mercenaries: Skullport has always held an ample supply of swords for hire, from fully trained and equipped bodyguards to desperate outlaws. Deserters from surface armies, adventurers down on their luck, and "bravos" (pirates too untrustworthy to serve as regular crew, or who currently lack a seaworthy ship) are always plentiful. The presence of large, organized bands of professional warriors tends to keep open, widespread warfare outside Skullport itself, though it won't prevent spontaneous brawls.

The nature of this work tends to make today's hired hero tomorrow's fading memory, but two rivals currently share Skullport's hiresword stage: Rhaunaguth and Dalagor.

Rhaunaguth is a gallant, dashing, handsome former pirate who leads his band of jolly, prank-playing, hard-drinking bravos into action as guards or as ambush and sabotage teams in Undermountain and Waterdeep. His colorful, swashbuckling style stands in sharp contrast to that of Dalagor "the Cold," a calculating, vicious man who provides the same service with an army of ju-ju zombies and reckless, fearless curst (a type of undead detailed in the Avatar-series module *FRE1 Shadowdale*; longtime *DRAGON®* Magazine readers may remember it from issue #30).

Smuggling: Perhaps the wisest inhabitants of Skullport are those whose prices are lower, but whose trade is of less danger and wider variety than others: the traders, shippers, and moneylenders who arrange smuggling, build containers with false bottoms, or repack easily recognized stolen goods so that they can be readily resold—back to their original owners as replacements, for instance. These beings must be shrewd to survive for long, for they cannot avoid Skullport's intrigues.

Most powerful in this field at present are Misker and the drow Malakuth Tabuirr. Misker is called the "Pirate Tyrant" (though not to his face), because he is an old, wart-covered, very large beholder who wears black eye patches over two of his eyes. Those who have dwelt in Skullport a long time warn newcomers that Misker's eye patches do not conceal missing or damaged orbs; instead, he bears unique eyes whose destructive blasts are powerful enough to easily rend dragon's hide, magical armor, and adamantite alike! The wise place no bets on the success of anyone stupid enough to challenge Misker, something that those who are wild for entertainment—or who wish to learn more about his powers—have been known to hire fools to do.

Misker is not the only beholder regularly found in Skullport, but the other two,

Seirtych Xantaun and Uthh, keep to the shadows and operate in much greater secrecy. Beholder rivalries are legendary for cruel one-upmanship and cordial face-to-face relations, with much death and maiming between servitor underlings in dark alleyways and the depths of Undermountain. Misker is clearly the victor over his rivals in present-day Skullport, but some say that Misker lives only so long as the Eye does not come to town.

Malakuth Tabuirr is a scheming drow who worships Vhaeraun (see **FOR2 Drow of the Underdark**) and uses fellow worshippers as thieves and spies in his service. He trades poisons, deepwine, drow armor, weaponry, and magical items in return for slaves, whom he takes into the depths (presumably to drow cities). Beautiful human and elven females command his highest offers.

The darkened skyline

Skullport teems with colorful, dangerous folk, but what does the visitor actually see? Well, it's dark, always too dark for a surface dweller's comfort. The map in the *Ruins of Undermountain* boxed set can't show the criss-crossing and ever-changing network of rickety wooden catwalks that link the homes and shops of Skullport on many levels. These provide space for hanging out washing—or the corpses of defeated foes, left as grisly trophies and warnings. They are also the many-levelled stages for fast-paced and acrobatic sword fights.

The catwalks and the upper areas of the Skullport cavern are home to a wide variety of fearsome creatures. Some very sly mimics lurk about these catwalks—and, in fact, are *parts* of the catwalks. The catwalks sometimes serve a strategic purpose. In years past, a gigantic gray ooze once lurked about Skullport, but soon became too great a problem; it was destroyed spectacularly some time ago by a group of wizards on a high and well-placed catwalk, after a long drinking bout, along with many of the nearby buildings, lower catwalks, bystanders, and some of the stone floor of the cavern.

Visitors to Skullport will also notice a lot of will-o'-wisps drifting about. These creatures never attack directly, but try to lure the unwary out of settled areas, to their dooms deep in Undermountain.

The streets also hold cages of monsters, which can be bought dead or alive (for spell or potion components, experimentation, sport hunting, eating, the pleasure of their company, or as guards). There are dung heaps where enterprising goblins grow exotic mushrooms favored by Waterdhavian nobles, and even shops where adventurers who make it this far can purchase trophies and relics of Undermountain, such as dragon skulls, to impress folks back on the surface.

Tales of the past

Undermountain and Skullport are inseparable.

arable in all but name, though Skullport is one area of the Under-Realms that Halaster Blackcloak, the Lord of Undermountain, doesn't include as part of his dominion. Granted, he has been known to gate in a few of his more fearsome "pets" now and again, but he himself never overtly enters Skullport. This arrangement has been in effect for the last two centuries of Skullport's existence, all due to the power of the necromancer Shradin Mulphor, the unofficial ruler of Skullport.

Halaster and his former apprentices all honor a nonaggression pact with Shradin and his shady port, some out of respect for his power and some from fear of the same. Strangely enough, Halaster honors the pact out of friendship. Shradin, an old comrade and contemporary from the fading lands of Netheril, impressed his fellow wizard in his mastery of the necromantic art, becoming one of few beings to have met (nay, exceeded) Halaster's expectations. Shradin bided his time in Netheril and soon found his way to the Blackcloak's domain in Undermountain. Upon finding the large skull-infested cavern (see "Heads up!"), he simply asked for Skullport as a personal demesne and was granted it.

When Shradin and Halaster first discovered the cavern complex that would later become Skullport, the floating skulls were already there. Shradin's intense investigations of these phenomena continued for nearly a decade, but how much the master necromancer learned is unknown. Allegedly, Halaster quitted the place nearly 210 years ago and has returned only three times in the intervening years. Few pretend to know what the Master of the Underhalls thinks of Skullport, but many point to him as the architect of Skullport's macabre sentinels. The truth on this matter is known only to Shradin, Halaster, and the skulls themselves, and none of them are quick to impart any information on the matter.

Shradin and Halaster, it is told, took to clearing out much of the rubble of an older city within the cavern proper, a task requiring one year alone. It is said that the only building that predates those of the current Skullport is Shradin's own, the tumbledown stone building that contains his zombie shop.

Shradin spent an additional number of years populating Skullport. Through Halaster's work, the river Sargauth was magically connected with deeper rivers to allow trade with the Realms Below. Shradin set up the trade routes and agreements with the svirfnebli and the Shunned Races of Toril—the drow, duergar, and illithids. A large number of Skullport's denizens were drow and other Deep races, until an increasing number of adventurers forged their way into Skullport, some tired of adventuring and others quickly seeing the potential profits involved here. The Port of Shadows grew by leaps and bounds, filling the cavern within 25 years. Buildings and homes were con-

structed from the rubble of the previous settlement as well as wood from the various shipwrecks out in the Sea of Swords, hauled in by Shradin's undead and other agents.

Within Skullport's first eight years as an active port, Shradin and his undead engineered and constructed the massive hoist in the South Seacaves to allow direct access to the port from the Sea of Swords. With this construct came the notice of the Lords of Waterdeep; for the sake of Waterdeep's order and trade, the Lords were actually glad to hear of the existence of Skullport. Having used the Underhalls as a place to banish certain prisoners, the Lords of Waterdeep found that Skullport was a perfect place to punish unscrupulous merchants as well as acquire some rare and wondrous items not found on the surface Realms. As a result, a number of truly dishonest Waterdhavian merchants were sent to Skullport's shadowed merchants' quarter. Few lasted long, but a small number thrived in the shadows.

After a decade of venturing down in the Deep Realms, Shradin allegedly went mad from encounters with unknown horrors lurking far away from any civilized outposts. He returned to Skullport a very unstable personage and remains so to this day. (However, see his character notes under "Skullport's 'Best.'") Shradin no longer commands the respect of the dwellers and traders of the Port of Shadows, though he is still given little trouble due to his powerful wands and spell-casting.

Natives of Skullport

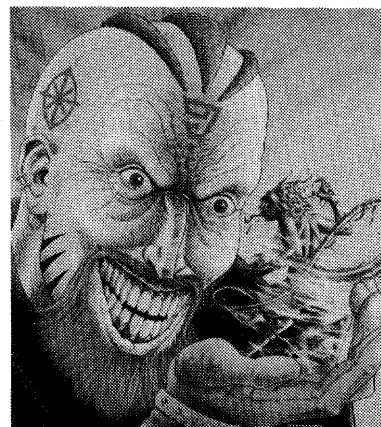
There are many other beings of interest in this place of misfits and eccentrics, but most notable to visitors are Thaglar and the Hired Horrors.

Thaglar is a gruff, foul-mouthed dwarf whose drinking bouts and crude pranks are local legends. He makes customized armor and alters or repairs armor and weapons, specializing in fitting both with spring barbs, poisoned needles, and other traps.

There is also a company known as the Hired Horrors, run by several soft-spoken, gentleman mages. They breed deepspawn (beasts that produce other monsters, detailed in the Realms sourcebook FR11 *Dwarves Deep*) in a secret location and have developed spells to *teleport* such creatures into desired areas. When hired, they deliver a deepspawn directly into the home or headquarters of a client's rival or enemy—in the cellar of a Waterdhavian noble's villa, for example, or the sewers near an important warehouse. Until destroyed, the deepspawn will produce many lesser but still deadly monsters.

Heads up!

The skulls of Skullport are the sentinels of order in an otherwise dangerous place. Shradin, being the first settler and merchant here, set up an unwritten code that is told to any arriving in Skullport: "This be safe haven to all traders and customers;



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keep thy weapons and uncivil tongue sheathed lest thee find the grinning skull of Death smiling in thy face." Only a select few actually believe or even remember this tale; many believe that the skulls set up this law even before Shradin arrived. The skulls enforce this beneficial code of behavior as well as their own code. Unfortunately, the skulls don't divulge their code, but simply order beings to perform seemingly random, pointless tasks. Such tasks in the past have included climbing to the ceiling of the cavern and shouting a certain name 12 times, going to the Crock and Helm and polishing the bar, venturing north of the city and into the caverns to retrieve 10 rocks of a certain color, or buying a slave of a certain name and setting him loose into the Sargauth. The skulls' demands often seem illogical, but the power they appear to wield keeps few from ignoring their requests. They rarely make requests of clearly powerful beings, though troublemakers and braggart adventurers often find themselves subject to the more degrading of tasks ("Go help that poor goblin harvest his mushrooms. Surely such a hero as you can handle that.").

If the rule of safe haven is broken or if a being refuses to follow the dictates of one of the skulls, they summon a wizshade (from MC7, the first SPELLJAMMER™ Appendix for the *Monstrous Compendium*) to escort the offending being from the Port of Shadows. If met with steel or spell, the wizshade will attack in kind, removing the lawbreaker from the port dead or alive.

Longtime natives of Skullport, few as they are, also tend to deal harshly with those who do not follow the law of Skullport. They have learned by example how much destruction and lost profit comes from having the wizshades arrive. Many merchants, as well as some frequent customers, will escort wrongdoers away from their businesses—if not out of Skullport altogether—to prevent damage to their goods when things get out of hand.

Skullport's "best"

Shradin Mulophor: AL NE; AC 2; MV 12; human necromancer M21; hp 38; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type (dagger); ML 18; C 16, I 18, W 17.

To all appearances, Shradin Mulophor is an unstable, doddering old mage who many believe stays alive only because of his marginal usefulness with undead. In truth, Shradin is the Lord of Skullport, though he makes sure no one realizes that fact. He fakes his insanity and instability to promote his foes' underestimation of his power and ability. Without having to openly show his power, he is left in peace by the many unscrupulous inhabitants of the Port of Shadows. If there are any foolish enough to steal from Shradin's own shop, there are none left alive to brag of it.

Shradin's shop takes the majority of the space in his building, the laboratory and main sales room occupying more than half of the total building. There is a small room

in the back with Shradin's sleeping pallet and a small chest, but this is simply a front. Concealed behind a lethal yet impressive array of deadly magicks is a secret trapdoor that leads down to a dungeon beneath Skullport. The main dungeon covers two different levels, both extending to the north and west under the port, and was formerly a temple to a lost god of the kuo-toan race. Shradin has here created a luxurious palace filled with magical and monetary treasures. He has shared these secrets with only four people in the past 200 years: Halaster, Raella Hiess (of The Deepfires), Laeral (under her alias as Irusyl Eraneth), and Vhondryl. He trusts these people enough to drop his facade of the idiot when in private (though he wonders where Irusyl's loyalties lie), and they are privy to secrets that many spies from The City Above would give their souls to hear.

Shradin, despite his unassuming role as a fool, carries an impressive and daunting collection of magical paraphernalia on his person at all times. In full view, he wears a *cowl of warding*, *bracers of defense AC 5*, a *cloak of the bat*, a *wand of fire*, a *wand of paralyzation*, a *ring of protection +3*, and a *ring of the ram*. Hidden from view, Shradin also habitually carries a Netherese *blast scepter* a *wand of fear*, a *wand of size alteration*, and a *horned ring*, a gift from Halaster. (Nearly all unfamiliar magical items are from the *Ruins of Undermountain* boxed set.) His spells are numerous and deadly, his spell books containing every known necromantic spell in the Realms (see appendix two of *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures*).

Aekyl Dafyre: AL N; AC 8; MV 12; human T4; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (dagger or short sword); D 17, C 15, Ch 16.

Aekyl Dafyre is a short, dour human with thinning brown hair pulled back into a ponytail, a pencil-thin moustache, and a dark complexion. His mood is almost always bad; most people hear only grunts and grumbles when they speak to him. Eight years past, Aekyl was the premier cartographer and guide through Undermountain's uppermost levels, guiding thrill-seeking nobles and Watch parties through the twisting tunnels of Halaster's lair. His sense of direction and skill at map-making were legend until the corridors and his luck took a wrong turn.

Escorting a trio of nobles through the northwestern passages of Level Two, Aekyl took an unfamiliar path, thanks to Halaster's *teleports*, and he failed to recognize warning signs of active monsters. Soon after, the party was ambushed by two owlbeats. Aekyl and one of the nobles escaped with their lives, but Aekyl lost the use of his left arm due to severe clawing. Once safe in the Yawning Portal, the noble ordered him arrested for the murder of their companions. In a panic, Aekyl fled back into Undermountain and made his

way to Skullport.

His injured arm prevented him from safely adventuring and, being left-handed, his mapping career ground to a halt. With his meager savings, he secured rooms at The Deepfires and began drowning his sorrows for days and nights on end. The skulls took notice of him, sending him into the caverns east of Skullport to find a "dragon's tooth." Aekyl returned to Skullport unharmed with a magical *short sword of dancing* (with "Dragon's Tooth" carved into the blade in Dethek runes), a pouch full of emeralds, and a pair of boots. The skulls simply nodded and let him keep his spoils.

Aekyl now operates his new mapping shop close to the Deepfires, his customers keeping him well fed and clothed in style. His magical *boots of guiding* now do the mapping for him, though his customers don't know this. All Aekyl does is walk through the dungeons with slow careful steps. After covering the areas required by his contracts, he returns to his shop and removes his boots; on a command word, the boots shrink to the size of rice grains and retrace the previous day's steps in permanent marks on parchments or vellum. His maps are well known as "Aekyl's bootprints," and their accuracy on a map for the Lords of Waterdeep secured a dismissal of charges for Aekyl's alleged crime. Now, Aekyl prefers the intrigues and profits of Skullport, and he plans an indefinite stay in the area.

Vhondryl: AL LE; AC 6; MV 12; human Psi 13; hp 52; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (scimitar); W17, C18.

Vhondryl is one of the top dealers of potions in the Port of Shadows, though she keeps a low profile on this by working through intermediaries. Only buyers of rare or dangerous concoctions deal directly with Vhondryl. The petty poisons are not worth her time away from managing The Deepfires. This quiet and cryptic lady can supply any drink, poison, or potion known on Toril, but commands fabulously high prices; many find the prices reasonable given the rarity of some requests. Never one to be cheated or threatened, she has strong powers of the mind. If your campaigns do not use the *Complete Psionics Handbook* or psionics, Vhondryl can be changed to a 13th-level transmuter (a specialist mage). Her psionic powers are the following:

PSPs 171; *psychoportation*: banishment (14), teleport (15), teleport other (12); dimensional door (17), dimension walk (16), teleport trigger (15), time shift (16), time/space anchor (14); *psychometabolism*: energy containment (16); body control (14), cell adjustment (15); *psychokinetics*: detonate (15); *telepathy*: contact (17), false sensory input (14), identity penetration (14), psionic blast (14); *defense modes*: all

Vhondryl has rooms at The Deepfires as a secret gift from Raella Hiess, the inn's

Continued on page 88



Skullport Map Key

D = dwelling; I = inn; M = merchant/business; T = tavern

1. Mhaug's (M)
2. The Hired Horrors(M)
3. The Burning Troll
4. The Black Tankard
5. Skullport Isle Registry(M)
6. Gyudd's Distillery(M)
7. The Crowing Cockatrice (I)
6. Cryptkey Facilitations (M)
9. Misker's Manse(D)
10. Guts And Garters (I)
11. Shradin's Excellent Zombies (M)
12. The Crock and Helm (I)

13. The Thrown Gauntlet
14. The Deepfires (I)
15. Malakuth Tabuir's Townhouse (D)
16. Thaglar's Foundry(M)

- A. Shadow Pass
- B. Herald's Meet
- C. Slavers' Market
- D. Skulls' Square (Pillory and Stocks)
- E. Trade Lane
- F. Illithid Way



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The Dragon's Bestiary

Attention:
Underground
adversaries
seeking heroes
to bash

Artwork by Jim Holloway



Biclops

Created by Spike Y. Jones

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate hills and mountains, subterranean*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Night*

DIET: *Omnivore*

INTELLIGENCE: *Low (5-7)*

TREASURE TYPE: *C*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic evil*

NO. APPEARING: *1 (10%: 2-4)*

ARMOR CLASS: *3*

MOVEMENT: *12*

HIT DICE: *8*

THACO: *13*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *2*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1d8/1d10 (unarmed);
1d10+6/1d12+7 (with clubs)*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Hurl rocks*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *+1 bonus to avoid
surprise*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*

SIZE: *L (11' tall)*

MORALE: *Elite (14)*

XP VALUE: *2,000*

The biclops is a gray-brown, two-headed giant having one yellow eye in the center of each head. The origin of the biclops is uncertain, but it appears to be a cross between a cyclopskin and an ettin. As with both of its ancestors, the biclops prefers to live an isolated life in mountain caves, hunting at night for sources of food including fruits, honey, wild animals, and the occasional human, goblin, orc, or dwarf.

The right head of a biclops usually appears slightly larger than the left, and the right is always dominant. As filthy as an ettin, a biclops has no concept of bathing and can barely make its own clothing, ornaments, and weapons. Biclopes have no true language, instead using a mixture of animal noises and a few words borrowed from other races when appropriate. They have 90' infravision.

Combat: Biclopes behave much like ettins, holding a weapon in each hand with one head controlling each attack. Their preferred weapons are mauls, tree-limb clubs, and stone axes. Each of their attacks can be used against a different opponent unless one head is incapacitated, in which case control of both arms reverts to the remaining head and both attacks can then be directed at only one target.

In addition, biclopes can throw small boulders (of which they often have an ample supply in their lairs) up to 30' for 1-8 hp damage each; two rocks can be thrown each round. Because they can achieve binocular vision of a sort if both rocks are hurled at the same target, no penalty is then suffered; but if separate targets are chosen or if only one head is "operational," there is a -2 to-hit penalty on all missiles.

Biclopes never use armor, preferring only the crudest of dirt-encrusted, animal-hide coverings. They play with fire but never use it for cooking or combat.

Habitat/Society: Generally solitary, the only time multiple biclopes will be encountered is when 1-3 young are being raised by their mother. Young biclopes usually have 3 HD and AC 6, and do 1d4+3/1d6+4 hp damage with their small clubs (or half that damage with fists alone). Youths reach adulthood in 5-8 years. Biclopes almost never work in concert with other beings, savagely attacking all who come within sighting range.

Ecology: Biclopes are consummate scroungers, able to ingest and survive on virtually any plant or animal diet, including rotting meat. They especially enjoy the flesh of humans, demihumans, and humanoids, though, and have no objection to fighting for their meals. Biclopes are preyed upon as food by dragons, wyverns, and similar monsters, and are attacked on sight by most adventuring and military forces, as well as by other giants. Unchecked, they wreak the sort of devastation common to evil, uncivilized giant-kin, but this rarely happens for long. Biclopes in some regions are wiped out by their enemies within only a few years of their discovery.

Averx

Created by Costa Valhouli

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Subterranean*
FREQUENCY: *Rare*
ORGANIZATION: *Clan*
ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*
DIET: *Omnivore*
INTELLIGENCE: *Genius (18)*
TREASURE TYPE: *W; Q on individuals*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
NO. APPEARING: *4-16 (10%: 1-2)*
ARMOR CLASS: *4*
MOVEMENT: *9, Fl 15*
HIT DICE: *1+3 (leaders 2+1)*
THACO: *19*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spells, +4 to surprise foes*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Spells, thieving abilities*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *25%*
SIZE: *T (1½' tall)*
MORALE: *Steady (11)*
XP VALUE: *650 (Leaders 975)*

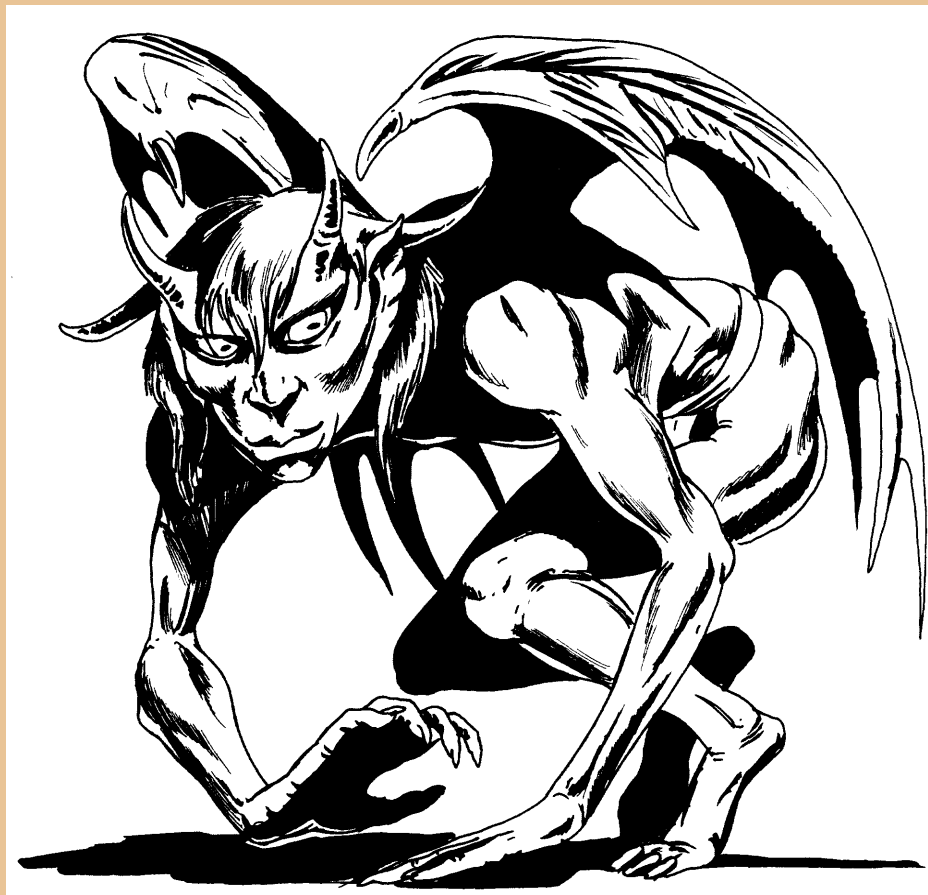
Averxes, in their usual form, resemble small, thin, gray-skinned humans with horns, amber eyes, miniature wings, and little clothing. These miniature "dungeon demons" or "cave devils" enjoy hampering and stealing from adventurers or other beings unlucky enough to stumble across

their path, but they have other concerns and goals as well.

Combat: Averxes can move silently, hide in shadows, and read languages with an 85% chance of success. They utilize other thieving abilities at the fifth level of use, using Table 19 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. All averxes have infravision to 120', but light causes them no harm.

They can use each of the following spells twice per day: *blink*, *enlarge*, *invisibility*, and *levitate*. They can also cast, thrice per day, *faerie fire*, *audible glamer*, *phantasmal force*, *light*, and *spook*. All spells work as though cast by a 5th-level mage. In addition to these spells, an averx leader can cast *fear*, *silence 15' radius*, and *warp wood* once a day. These spells can be cast even in total silence, though the averx must have its hands free for somatic gestures. Oddly enough, no averx is affected by a *cursed* weapon or item, and they are immune to all forms of *curse* spells.

Averxes avoid direct combat, preferring hit-and-run raids, traps, sabotage, misdirection, and bluffing. They attack other beings only if attacked themselves or if such beings enter and harm the averxes' territory, but they enjoy causing trouble for its own sake as well. In particular, these creatures hunt out small, evil beings like jermilaine and other vermin of the Underdark, killing them and casting their bodies into any available deep pits.



In all combat situation, averxes are extremely clever, observant, and commanding. They set traps of fiendish design in the underground corridors leading to their most carefully guarded lairs and realms, using all manner of snares, pits, poisons, and the like.

Habitat/Society: Averxes prefer to live deep underground in the most beautiful natural areas imaginable, especially in vast, crystalline caverns. They enjoy lighting their homes in different ways to enhance the natural beauty, and they conduct elaborate rituals in honor of their homes at irregular intervals. Any intruders who damage these caverns in any way, whether by mining, construction, or simple rock collecting, will spark the averxes' communal anger.

Averxes do not usually carry treasure upon their persons, but each one is likely to have thin rope or cord, knives, wire, oil, tinderboxes, caltrops, or darts. Leaders may carry *curse* items for bothersome intruders to "find." An averx lair has only a relatively small amount of treasure, and averxes usually carry a few gems around with them for their own pleasure. A lair is usually high in a cavern ceiling, in a hole or tunnel or along a ledge. Every effort is made to conceal this area from view and to keep it safe.

Sometimes one or two averxes, acting on their own curiosity, make their ways into dungeons or deep cellars. They rarely stay long, preferring to acquire some minor treasures and leave—possibly after causing a little mischief.

Ecology: With their array of powers, one would guess that averxes are nothing more than nuisance monsters. Some sages, however, believe that averxes were created by unknown land possibly extinct) greater powers as guardians of subterranean lands and protectors of their beauty. They prey on small animals and evil creatures but largely leave everything else alone.

Fungus, Cushion

Created by Anthony Gerard

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Dry subterranean areas*

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*

DIET: *Scavenger*

INTELLIGENCE: *Non- (0)*

TREASURE TYPE: *Incidental; 5% chance of O, P, R, U*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*

NO. APPEARING: *1-8*

ARMOR CLASS: *10*

MOVEMENT: *Nil*

HIT DICE: *1 hit point*

THAC0: *20*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *Nil*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *Nil*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Poisonous spores*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*

SIZE: *S-L (2'-8' diameter)*

MORALE: *Not applicable*

XP VALUE: *35*

The cushion fungus is usually found in dry, dark, underground areas having little or no air movement. This fungus is typically oval in shape, about knee-high when mature, and up to 8' in diameter at its largest. Its pastel coloration ranges from pink to purple, with the outer surface of the fungus having the texture of fine velvet.

Combat: Any movement of air or an increase in the ambient temperature (such as from a torch or warm-blooded creature) in the vicinity of a mature fungus will cause it to release an almost-invisible cloud of spores in a 40' diameter. Some observers have described this spore cloud as resembling the shimmering distortion of heat rising through the air from a hot surface. A successful wisdom check on 4d6, or such spells or devices that *detect invisibility*, are required to notice the cloud. Assume that the spore cloud will be released one round after a being or heat source passes within 30' of the cushion fungus, or two rounds after a being or heat source passes within 31'-60' of it. The cloud remains active in the air for 5-8 turns thereafter.

Creatures caught within a spore cloud must save against poison or will begin to feel drowsy, with a deep, peaceful sleep coming on in 1-4 rounds. Even those who save are affected as per a *confusion* spell for 1-4 rounds, and must save again 10 rounds later if they haven't left the vicinity of the fungus. Creatures failing their saves will fall, usually onto or near the velvety soft fungus, and remain in this state until they are removed from the radius of the cloud and a *neutralize poison* spell is cast on them (without this spell, 1-3 days are required before the victim wakes up).

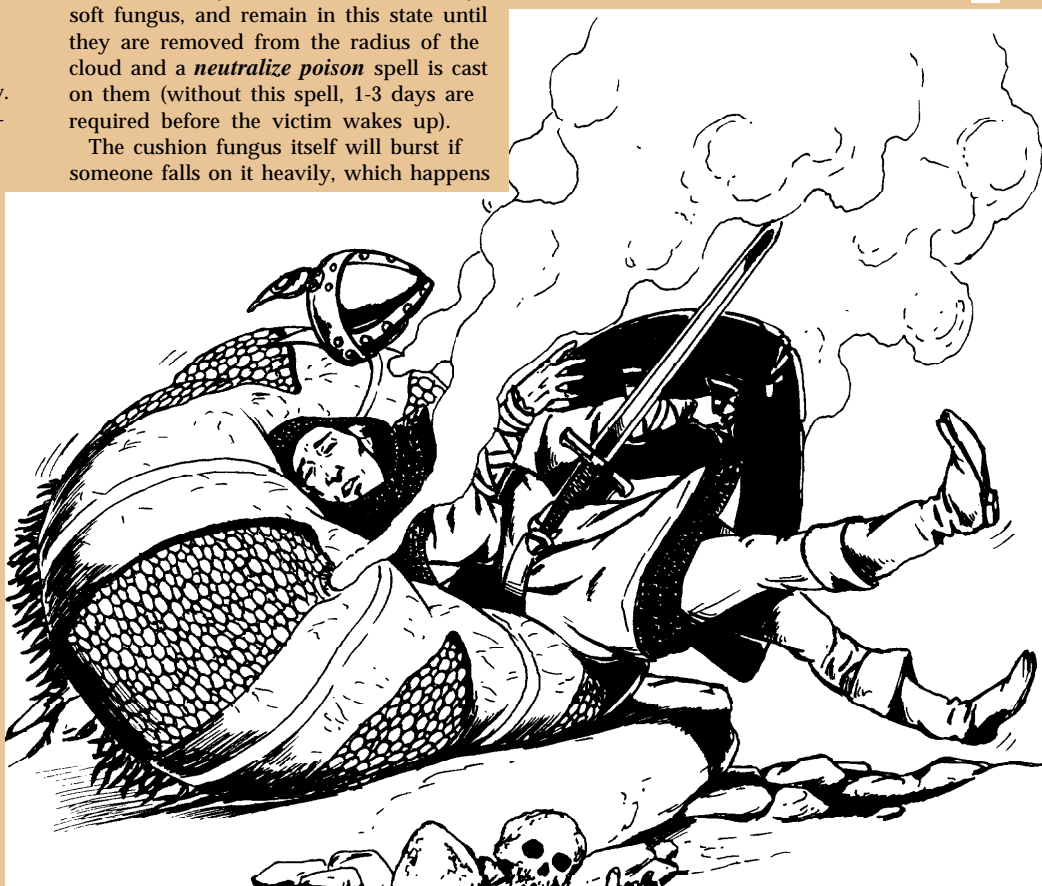
The cushion fungus itself will burst if someone falls on it heavily, which happens

if the person struck by sleepiness is within 3' of the cushion and fails a dexterity check on 1d20 when he falls. A burst fungi emits a 60'-diameter cloud of spores for 2-5 turns, and those caught within this thick cloud have a -2 on their saving throws vs. poison, sleeping for 3-6 days if they fail. If the fungus does not burst, spores will continue to be emitted as long as victims are breathing or snoring nearby.

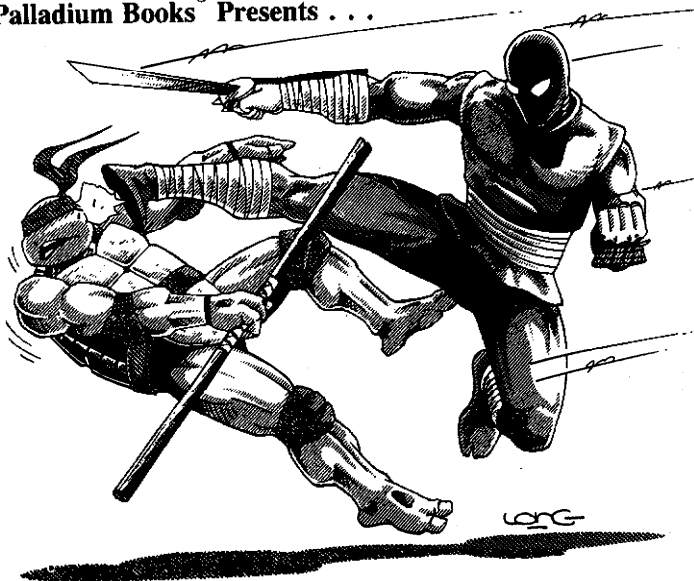
Over a period of 4-16 days, a sleeping victim dies of starvation and thirst, begins to decompose, and is digested by the fungus's spores on the body. The body then slowly becomes covered with the velvetlike fungus until, 5-30 days after the being's death, it has become a new cushion fungus. A body that falls on and bursts a cushion fungus takes only 3-12 days to turn into a fungus if the victim dies. In any event, a sleeping victim who manages to revive requires no further care except for eating and drinking.

Habitat/Society: This fungus grows only in areas with little or no air movement (abandoned dungeons, vaults, crypts, blocked caverns, etc.). If brought to an area with any regular air movement, perhaps on a spore-carrying body, the spores will not mature.

Ecology: The fungus's digestive enzymes are incapable of digesting inorganic items, so metallic items, jewelry, gems, and so forth will continue to exist within the body of the fungus. Some adventurers have told of finding treasure within oddly shaped cushion fungi, but cutting one open invites trouble. It is said that the spores of this fungus are valuable to alchemists and mages for use in potions of *sleep*, *confusion*, and *feign death*. Ω



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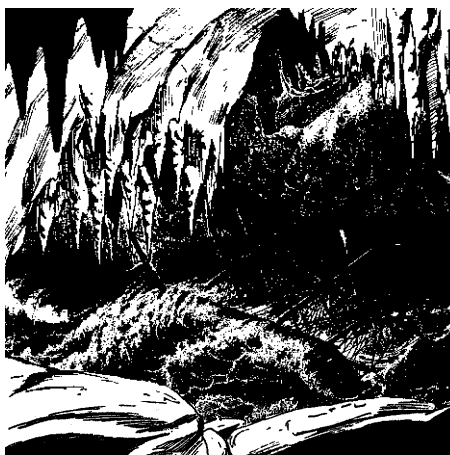
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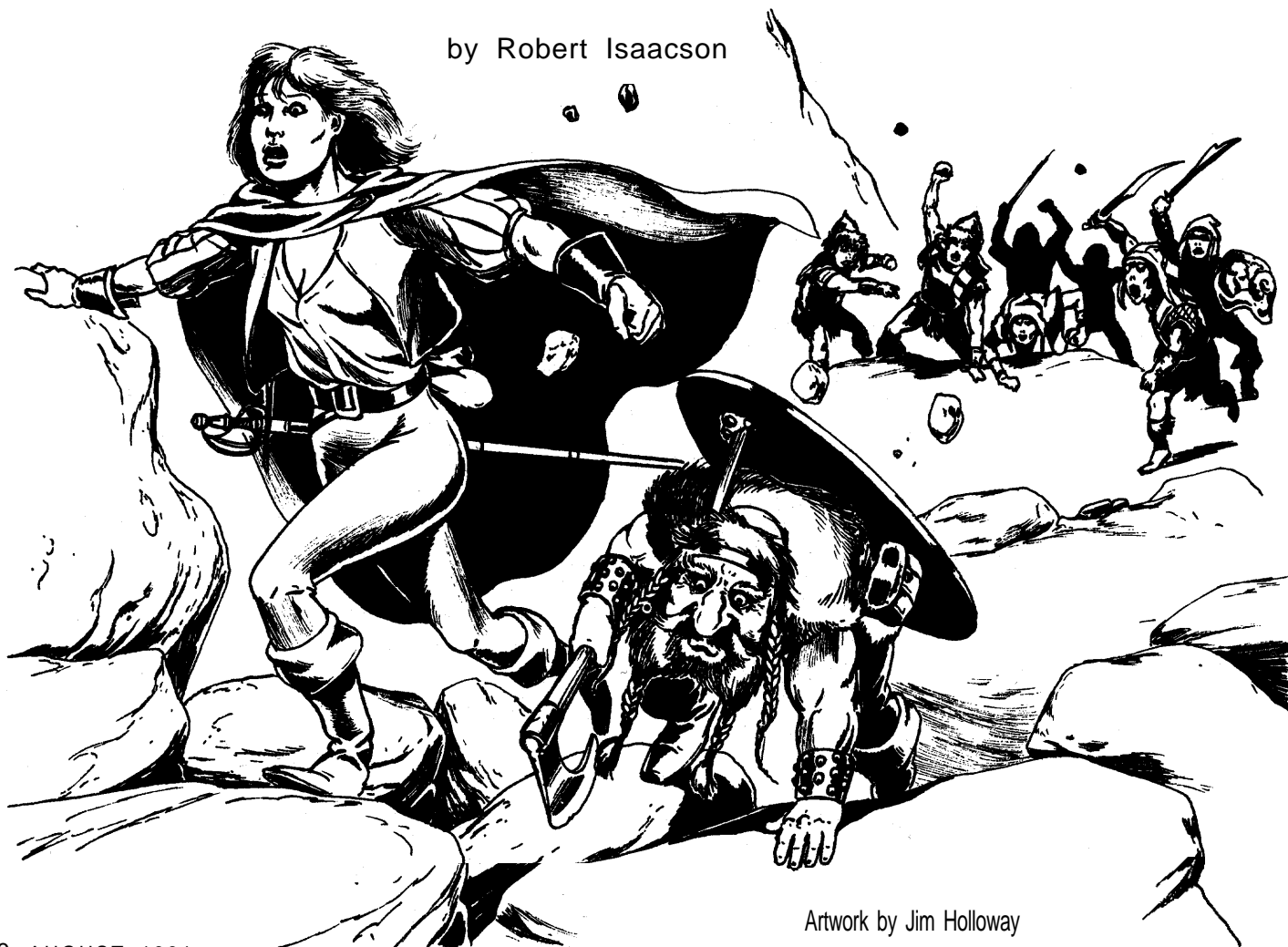
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The Ecology of the *Galeb Duhr*

An AD&D[®] game monster that gives new meaning
to the term “rock & roll”

by Robert Isaacson



Artwork by Jim Holloway

As recorded in Goldenfire, the third volume of the collected journals of the ranger Leira Silvershadow:

Thus it came to pass, in the early autumn of that year, that the decade-long feud between the dwarves of the Thunderbarrel Clan and the Skull Smasher and Blood Licker goblin tribes was at last resolved. The decisive battle that found the noble dwarves victorious took place during the siege of the ancient dwarven bastion of Yrensparthe. Having had the dubious honor of being present there during the final days of the fight, I can remember all too clearly the horrific allies the goblins called upon in their efforts to overwhelm the fortress: orcish and ogreish warriors, gnoll archers, a band of berserk trolls, and others even more diverse and deadly. While the greatest allies the dwarves possessed were their courage and tenacity, neither were they alone in their long struggle. Indeed, some of the dwarves' greatest aid came from entities the goblins never even saw. "A trick that is known is good; a trick that is unknown, doubly so," is a saying of the elves, and I can readily attest to its truth. For it was in the foothills leading to the besieged Yrensparthe that a young messenger and I had an encounter of note.

I had been hired by the dwarves, at the recommendation of my friend, Wilsar Thunderbarrel, to aid messengers and runners in their return to Yrensparthe. Ordinarily the dwarves would have had no difficulty in getting back on their own; circumstances, however, were not ordinary. The large number of goblin patrols and spies in the area precluded the use of many of the outlying secret entrances to the keep, lest they be discovered and thus bring attack from within on the beleaguered defenders. In addition, as every available stalwart was needed to hold his place on the walls, many of the older and more experienced scouts were involved in planning and orchestrating the defense. Only the younger runners, unused to battle and of little practical worth on the ramparts, could be spared for the exchange of information with the few spies the dwarves had emplaced in secret outposts in the hills. As they mostly carried news of the minor shifts the goblin hordes made from one clearing to another, the lads I was charged with guiding and protecting only rarely had news worthy of even the slightest attention of their commanders. I usually had no trouble sneaking them through the goblin lines, whose sentries were looking out for dwarvish raiding parties, not messengers. I therefore expected that bringing young Slekk Aldenroy back to Yrensparthe would not pose much difficulty.

When I got to the outpost where Slekk was supposed to be awaiting me, it was empty. The flurry of tracks around the area indicated to me that the hidden station had almost been discovered by a group of goblins on patrol. The shambles

Slekk had left behind indicated that he had departed in considerable haste. The tracks he had left were clear enough for a kobold to follow; I set off immediately, and before long had caught up with the lad.

I found him sitting half-conscious in a small glade. He was young as dwarf runners go, having not even five years' growth of beard and a dazed and frightened look in his eyes. His only armament was a blood-streaked woodsman's axe, and his left leg had been struck by a gnoll's arrow. The corpses of a pair of gnoll archers lay sprawled nearby.

Slekk was dazed with pain and weak with blood loss. I removed the arrow and applied a hasty field dressing to the wound. As I did so, I questioned him about what had happened. He was able to give me some half-coherent explanations, and a swift examination of the surrounding area told the rest. He had indeed discovered some vital information; he had observed the beginnings of a gathering of a huge force, all the remaining hordes in the area, to be hurled against the unsuspecting dwarves in three days time. After the near-discovery of his hidden refuge, he had decided that he could wait no more, lest the knowledge he carried be lost. Unwise in the ways of the woods, however, he had not been traveling long before he bumped into the now-deceased gnolls. I hid the corpses as best I could while trying to get some details from him on the goblins' imminent offensive, but the lad had slipped into a daze and I got nothing more out of him.

I feared it would not be long before the gnolls' bodies were discovered, so I got Slekk to his feet and we set off as swiftly as we could. It was not long before we heard an alarm horn in the distance. Before another hour had passed, we could hear the sounds of pursuit. Had I been alone, there should have been no difficulties. But my charge was both wounded and unskilled in woods lore, and the goblins steadily gained on us. By the time we reached Truman's Pass, a rough and steep trail leading up the side of Raven's Ravine to a dwarf-sentried blockhouse some distance away, they were almost at our heels.

There was no choice but to continue running for it. I knew we had scant hope of outrunning them; the pass, extending the length of the ravine, offered little concealment, being nothing but a rough path with a few scattered boulders and patches of scree. But my only alternative was to abandon a wounded runner to the goblins, and with him abandon all hope that the besieged dwarves could hold against the coming attack. We started up.

The goblins howled as they caught sight of us, surging forward up the trail in a pack. Lacking proper bows or slings, they hurled stones and inventive curses after us. The clamorous sounds of their pursuit bounced and echoed off the steep walls around us, and their foul battle-cries rang

in our ears as they drew steadily closer.

Then there was another sound, more thunderous and deafening than the goblins that pursued us. The path trembled as a sudden avalanche of soil, loose rock, and debris plowed into the horde pursuing us, sweeping many of the screaming pack into the ravine. The remaining force wavered, daunted by the sudden catastrophe. The incident bought us needed time, and we did not waste it, continuing our flight.

Our pursuers paused only momentarily, though, then set after us with cries of renewed fury. Young Slekk slipped further into unconsciousness, and I was obliged to half-carry him up the trail. Our pace was growing steadily slower, and the goblins behind us screeched in joyous anticipation of the kill. We passed under one of the large outcroppings of rock with which Truman's Pass is dotted. I scanned the jutting formation and surrounding cliff face for some small trigger, knowing that one might well have been placed by the dwarves to activate a trap or open a secret door, but my search was futile; there was nothing, and the horde behind us rapidly closed the distance. Once past the rocks, my legs finally gave out. I could run no more. I set Slekk down and unslung my longbow, vainly hoping that my elf-wrought arrows could persuade them to abandon the chase. I felled only one, and then they were sweeping beneath the outcropping toward us.

Suddenly, to my utter astonishment, the outcropping changed. It grew darker and glistened with sudden moisture. An instant later, it melted and collapsed upon the goblins, no longer stone but thousands of pounds of mud. A dozen goblins screamed as the sudden mudslide engulfed them and carried them over the edge into the ravine. Again, I did not question the unexpected miracle, but got Slekk to his feet and got moving again. The blockhouse was growing steadily closer, and I hoped that the goblins would decide that their losses were too great to continue.

Alas, no one has ever credited goblins with abundant wisdom, though they know something of tenacity; this second disaster only served to incense the remaining handful. They raced after us, shrieking promises of revenge for their lost companions. The blockhouse seemed close, incredibly so, but the one gate lay on the other side of the structure. I knew it to be much too far for the half-dozen dwarves within to aid us. Hurling stones and knives bounced around us as we stumbled up the last rise.

A sudden grating sound met our ears. As we topped the rise, I turned to see a barrier of stone shoot up out of the ground, sealing the path behind the goblins. A split second later, a new rumbling sounded—*ahead of me!*—and another wall appeared across the path before us. As we reached this wall, a section melted back, opening a hole large enough for a man to pass through. I had no time to wonder at our

salvation; I quickly lifted Sleik and stepped through the opening. As I turned to look back, I could see that the hole was already closing on itself, leaving the goblins boxed in. Before the opening vanished completely, however, I caught a glimpse of the goblins panicking. The very boulders along the path seemed to be stirring, as though life had suddenly been breathed into them. Then the hole was closed, and I could see no more. But I heard the goblins' terrified cries. I carried Sleik to the gate, where the dwarves within quickly admitted us.

"We'll see to this young one," the sergeant assured me, after I explained the information Sleik carried. "So you led those blackguards on quite a chase, eh?"

"Not entirely my doing," I gasped, my heart still pounding in my chest. "There was wizardry at work out there. Walls of stone, seas of mud—"

The sergeant laughed. "Not wizardry. Just the doings of those who know the stone even better than we. It's thanks to them that we require only a company of six in this post; they see to it that no unwelcome trespassers make it here. They've been watching you since you started up the pass. They're just outside. Would you care to meet them?"

We stepped back outside. There was no sound now from the goblins trapped inside the stone walls. "Dead," the sergeant said. "Probably ground to blood and powder by now. Well, here we are. You can thank them yourself."

I looked around, but could see nothing except the wall of the ravine, a struggling mountain pine, a pair of very large boulders, and some scrub. "Where?" I asked.

The sergeant smiled again and pointed at the boulders. "There," he replied. As I watched amazed, one of the boulders shifted. A rocky brow lifted, revealing a stony black eye. Both stones began to stir, rising up and standing on short, thick legs. Their eyes opened as they hefted themselves up, and their cavernous mouths stretched into a pair of mischievous grins.

Thus was my first encounter with a most rare and fascinating creature, the galeb duhr. During ensuing conversations, both with Yrensparthe's resident sage, Jarek Thunderbarrel, and with the galeb duhr themselves, I have discovered much of the so-called "stone men of the mountains." There is much to wonder about when one considers the lives of beings that are living rocks. How does a galeb duhr eat? What kinds of rigors can they withstand, given their rocky forms? How do they reproduce? What laws do they follow, if any? How long do they ordinarily live? What gives them their legendary powers over stone? Over a course of months, I learned the answers to these questions. Herein do I set down my findings, that I may rectify some misconceptions and enrich the general knowledge about these amazing entities.

Galeb duhr are monolithic in appear-

ance, for these beings are formed entirely of stone. They look like huge boulders or outcroppings of rock, with stony human-like features positioned on the broadest face. They have two limbs, which act as both arms and legs. A galeb duhr walks with a slow, ponderously steady gait, the digits of its appendages gripping the ground surely. A galeb duhr cannot walk while holding something in its "hands," though the digits are capable of fairly delicate manipulation. A galeb duhr that is dormant or wishes to remain hidden can merely close its eyes and mouth, draw its appendages close to its body, and sit still; in such a state, it cannot be distinguished from a normal boulder.

A common thread running through the popular stories told of the galeb duhr is the idea that they eat rocks, an understandable though incorrect conception. More accurate would it be to say that they *draw sustenance* from rocks, for a galeb duhr does not eat, at least not as we understand eating. As far as I was able to tell, they also neither sleep nor breathe.¹ Instead, they gain nourishment simply from continual contact with their stony surroundings. Galeb duhr take their sustenance from the earth much the same way a plant grows in the sunlight; the more sunlight, the stronger and healthier the plant. In the same manner, a galeb duhr is strongest and healthiest in areas that are predominantly stony in nature. A galeb duhr lives out its life in a mountainous environment; they are almost never encountered elsewhere, for good reason: loss of contact with the natural mountainous environment progressively weakens a galeb duhr, and it will die if kept from areas of stone for too long a time, much as a plant will die without sunlight.² Galeb duhr are often found in underground caverns as well, though they are rarely recognized there in the jumble of rock.

In conversation with the galeb duhr near Raven's Ravine (which was a prolonged business, as galeb duhr rival treants for slowness of speech), I frequently heard references to a thing they called "earth power." When I asked them to describe it, they could only say that they felt "a feeling of strength in places with the earth power." In further discussion, Jarek Thunderbarrel gave me his theory of earth power, which went as follows:

The galeb duhr are very strongly connected to the elemental plane of Earth. This link is unconscious for the most part, and it exists in each of them. Since they are so well attuned to that plane, they are able to consume the rocks themselves and magically control stones without the use of spell-casting, as we understand it. Earth power is simply a measure of a place's "connection" to the plane of Earth; places of strong earth power include mountain ranges, deep caverns, or rocky lands prone to severe earthquakes. Galeb duhr greatly prefer such places, for away from them their endurance and powers wane.

All mountains contain the "earth power" to some extent, though some less so than others. Generally, the younger and less eroded by air or water the rocky surroundings are, the stronger the elemental link that such a place possesses. In very new mountains or places where the natural elemental link has been heightened, such as by magical alteration, a galeb duhr's power is said to become greater still. Tales tell of whole colonies of stone men dwelling there, and only the foolish would contest their power.

From this and other dissertations, I gathered that while a galeb duhr's powers over the rocky environment of its home are similar in form to known earth- and stone-affecting spells, such powers may be activated with but a moment's thought (a warning to wily mages who might think to best these creatures at their own game!). It is also my understanding that very old galeb duhr or those dwelling in highly magical areas are stronger than ordinary galeb duhr, and may command additional powers.³

Galeb duhr are naturally resistant to certain extremes. Fire does little harm to them, for it takes a great deal of heat to harm stone. Magical fires, which have such intense heat, are more dangerous to these beings. Galeb duhr easily shrug off electrical attack, being nonconductive, and they are completely immune to any and all poisons. However, all stonemasons know that there is nothing like cold to bring out cracks or faults in stone. Intense cold does considerable harm to galeb duhr, and they are often dormant during wintertime, though Jarek told me that this may not be the case in areas of strong earth power.⁴ (Caverns at least afford protection from the winter's chill.) Wizards knowledgeable in elemental matters have discovered that certain spells affecting rock will also harm a galeb duhr, though details on these effects are not clearly known.⁵

I am at a loss to converse about the exact interior biology of a galeb duhr. I broached the subject with the galeb duhr at Raven's Ravine but was able to learn little; they seemed surprised at such a question. However, I spoke with one dwarven veteran who had witnessed a battle between two galeb duhr and a marauding young dragon, in which one of the galeb duhr was killed. The galeb duhr was struck a mighty blow by the dragon's tail and broke apart like a rock struck by a sledgehammer. When the dwarf visited the aftermath of the battle, the fragments were almost indistinguishable from the ordinary scree of the area.⁶ From this, I gather that galeb duhr have no interior organs at all, being literally solid stone throughout. How such beings can move and think as ordinary creatures do is beyond my understanding. I postulate that their ties to the plane of Earth allow animating elemental forces to flow directly into them; Jarek is supportive of this theory but refuses to commit himself profes-

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sionally until proof can be obtained.

Galeb duhr are very territorial creatures. Once they have settled into an area, it is nearly impossible to move them. A galeb duhr usually spends much of its time either sitting in one place, watching and thinking, or slowly patrolling its environs for signs of disturbance. A galeb duhr's territory usually encompasses an area of about 1-4 square miles. It is invariably protective of its mountain home, vigorously defending it as its own against uninvited or hostile intruders. It will often ally itself with those of like mind against potential despoilers; in wooded mountain ranges, galeb duhr and treants often work together, and alliances between galeb duhr and near-surface bands of pech are not unheard of. A galeb duhr is intimately familiar with the lay of the land in its territory and will usually have traps set in various areas of access (paths, natural ascents, etc.). Such traps are usually features of the landscape, either natural or created by the galeb duhr, that can be triggered by one of the galeb duhr's earth-affecting powers; the outcropping at Truman's Pass that changed to mud was one of these.

A galeb duhr will typically watch invaders for some time, determining if they are of violent intent or not. Peaceful travelers are allowed to pass unmolested. Should the intruders be deemed hostile, the galeb duhr will attack from hiding, using its powers to harry and waylay the intruders (note that "hiding" to a galeb duhr often means simply closing its eyes and mouth and sitting still). If a galeb duhr cannot persuade invaders to leave its territory in this way, it attacks openly, usually in a steep or narrow area so its foes cannot retaliate easily. In combat, a galeb duhr animates normal boulders and rocks around it and commands them to attack; this action is similar to the way a treant animates trees. Earth-affecting powers will be used in the most effective way possible: *walls of stone* may be raised and collapsed on intruders, earthen embankments may be moved to hinder movement or cause an avalanche, and so forth. If any foes come within striking distance, the galeb duhr will attack physically with a crushing bite or a smashing blow from one of its appendages.

Galeb duhr social structure is practically nonexistent. They have no castes or classes, leaders or followers. They are, for the most part, solitary creatures, each of whom will stake out and watch over its own mountain territory. Occasionally, a number of galeb duhr will dwell in the same area, as do those at Raven's Ravine, but this is unusual. I know nothing of their religion, if any such exists; the galeb duhr of Raven's Ravine showed little interest in the subject, but they may not have understood my questions on the topic.

Galeb duhr are extremely long-lived; an average specimen could live to be many thousands of years old. They do not mate; indeed, they have no genders at all. When a galeb duhr dies naturally (that is to say,

not from combat or the loss of contact with its earth power), it slowly cracks and crumbles away over a period of 2-7 days. At the end of this time, all that remains of the original galeb duhr is stone dust, gravel, and three large chunks of stone. These chunks of stone are young galeb duhr. They remain immobile for a period of approximately one century, slowly growing and developing, during which time they are completely indistinguishable from normal rocks. At the end of this time, they awaken as adult galeb duhr. The largest then usually takes control of the surrounding territory, while the smaller two move off to find their own territories.⁷

There is little more I can say about these wondrous beings. Perhaps this treatise may serve to guide one more learned than myself in discovering more. I must say that in the time I have spent studying the galeb duhr, I have grown to respect and like them. Bold adventurers who plan expeditions to the mountains may run across these creatures, and I strongly advise friendliness and courtesy when dealing with them. To their friends, they are most benevolent and helpful; those who make them enemies will find the galeb duhr have hearts of stone.

Footnotes

Galeb duhr are described in the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, volume 2, and in the AD&D 1st Edition *Monster Manual II*, page 68.

1. Galeb duhr have no need for oxygen or any other inhaled gas for survival. Accordingly, they suffer no damage from harmful gases (poison gas, *cloudkills*, green dragon breath, etc.) or immersion in any liquid except acid.

2. If a galeb duhr is removed by any means from its natural surroundings, its physical condition will slowly begin to deteriorate, as the life-giving connection to the elemental plane of Earth slowly fades. In areas where they are not totally cut off from their mountain origins, such as plains or farmland, this deterioration will be slow: the galeb duhr will lose 1 hp per day that it is away from its home. Such loss is permanent until it returns to an area that is predominantly rock and stone, at which time it recovers lost hit points at a rate of 2-5 hp per day. In an area totally removed from its ordinary habitat, such as a desert or an ocean, a galeb duhr will lose 2-5 hp per day, but will regain them at the above rate if returned to its home.

When a galeb duhr falls below 20 hp due to loss of contact with its natural habitat, it loses its powers to control stone. Such powers return at once upon renewed contact with a rocky or mountainous environment. Should a galeb duhr fall to zero hit points due to environmental deprivation, the connection with the elemental plane of Earth is considered to have vanished completely, and it becomes nothing more than a normal boulder. A full *wish* is required to revive a galeb duhr

from this state.

3. See the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 64, "Innate Abilities," for details on how a galeb duhr's "spell-casting" powers really work.

For every 500 years over 2,000 that a galeb duhr has lived in its own territory, it gains one of the following advantages. This reflects the galeb duhr's ever-strengthening connection with its territorial surroundings and the plane of Earth. In areas where the natural elemental influence has been heightened, galeb duhr may obtain these additional powers more quickly; this is left to the DM's discretion. DMs may choose powers or roll them randomly; if duplicate powers are obtained on rolls of 13-20, roll again.

1d100	Benefit
1-4	+2 AC bonus
5-8	Resist magical fire
9-12	+2 HD bonus
13-16	Resist cold
17-18	<i>Stone tell</i>
19	<i>Stone barrier</i>
20	Double boulders

Explanation of powers

+2 AC bonus: The galeb duhr's armor class is modified from -2 to -4 initially and may improve further on subsequent rolls to AC -10.

Resist magical fire: The galeb duhr still has a +4 bonus vs. fire attacks. However, the galeb duhr takes -1 hp per die of damage done. Further bonuses of this sort reduce damage down to a minimum of -4 hp per hit die.

+2 HD bonus: For each hit die the galeb duhr possesses, it gains an additional 2 hp, to a maximum of 8 hp per die on subsequent rolls.

Resist cold: Galeb duhr who possess this power may move and function in even the coldest weather. They save normally against cold-based attacks and take only normal damage from them.

Stone tell: This power is identical to the priest spell *stone tell*. It is performed at the 20th level of ability.

Stone barrier: This is a new priest spell, described here. Galeb duhr perform it at the 20th level of ability.

Stone barrier (Alteration)

Level: 6 Components: V,S
Range: 30 yards CT: 5
Duration: 3 rnds. +1 rnd./2 lvls. of caster
AE: Special Save: Special

Upon casting this spell, the spell-caster sets a whirling wall of flying stones in motion about a fixed point. Any creature attempting to pass through this barrier will take 8d8 hp damage (when used by galeb duhr, add 1 hp for each hit die the galeb duhr possesses: 8d8 + 8-10 hp). In respect to area of effect and in all other aspects, noting the changes given here, this spell conforms to the sixth-level priest spell *blade barrier*.

Double boulders: When the galeb duhr *animates* normal boulders to fight for it, 2-4 are *animated* (as opposed to the normal 1-2).

4. Galeb duhr ordinarily are very sluggish after more than three days of sub-freezing temperatures. They are hard to rouse in such times and act as though under the influence of a slow spell when active at all. Those who are resistant to cold (see note #3) may move and act normally.

5. The following effects of wizard and priest spells should be noted when such spells are used against galeb duhr: *Animate rock*, if it can affect a stone the size of the galeb duhr, effectively *charms* the galeb duhr (who receives no saving throw) and causes it to obey the caster's every command; however, the galeb duhr greatly resents such treatment and always attacks the spell-caster after the spells duration ceases. *Dig, move earth, passwall, sink, spike stones, stone shape*, and *transmute rock to mud* (and its reverse) have no effect if cast upon on galeb duhr. *Earthquake*, if cast directly at the galeb duhr, causes death and shattering if a saving throw vs. death magic is failed, or 3-30 hp damage otherwise. *Stone tell* forces the galeb duhr, with no saving throw, to confront the spell-caster and truthfully answer all questions for the spells duration; once the spell ends, the galeb duhr is

certain to leave at once, though it might attack the spell-caster if the latter was rude. *Stone to flesh* causes the galeb duhr's body to become fleshy (AC 8) if it fails a saving throw vs. spells, a condition that distresses it greatly and causes it to lose all of its spell-like powers; *flesh to stone* reverses this effect. Always consider the galeb duhr's 20% magic resistance when figuring spell effects.

6. The stony body of a galeb duhr always matches the predominant stone of the area. Granitelike stone is most common, but marble, quartz, and all other igneous or metamorphic types are possible. No galeb duhr have bodies matching sedimentary rock, such as shale, sandstone, or limestone.

A fragment of a galeb duhr's body, if it can be identified as such, is of special value to spell-casters. Any earth- or stone-related spell requiring a piece of stone as a material component will be half again as effective if the stone used comes from a galeb duhr. Fragments retain this magic-boosting property for one month after their creation, after which they become like normal stone in all respects. Fragments used in spell-casting will always be consumed, even if the spell does not ordinarily destroy the material components. There is no way to prevent this consumption or to cause a fragment to retain its enhancing power for more than one

month.

7. Of the three galeb duhr produced, there will be one of each size category: one 10 HD, one 9 HD, and one 8 HD. The 10 HD galeb duhr will instinctively move to take over the immediate territory. The smaller ones usually move off to stake out their own areas, though they sometimes remain (15% chance) and share the area between the three of them. In such cases, the largest does not rule the others, and they take little note of each other in day-to-day activities, though they do not hesitate to aid one another in a crisis. Ω

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Role-playing reviews

The state of the art in superheroics, Part 3



I rode a silver board across a shower of comets, skimming their glowing wakes—walked the deserted halls of ancient Atlantis, seeking my vanished subjects—grabbed the flame-eyed conqueror in the Pincers of Power and held him aloft, rescuing my dimension—

With a child's pure joy, I gazed on a city in a bottle, a team of spectacular animals in capes and uniforms, and a newspaper reporter transformed into a giant turtle monster—chased a brilliantly evil gorilla while that alien air, the *mola*, hardened in crystal shells around my limbs—followed an endless trail of grinning bodies across a dark city, to track a giggling maniac—

More recently, I flexed tree-root muscles and made a mountain shake—struggled to hold onto sanity while a cool crimelord bulldozed my life—rescued victims from a tenement fire with a wonderful ship, to a tune sung by Billie Holliday—raced down the 99 levels of Prometheus to beat a noon deadline that would doom the city—and ruled a new world from a palace 16 miles tall, ushering in a new Golden Age of gaudy miracles.

Miracles: The best super-hero comics abound in them. I read those lavish power fantasies, grandiose beyond the hopes of Wagner and charged with melodrama that would put Harriet Beecher Stowe to shame, and I, like thousands of other readers, live those miracles. In those tales, just as in a good role-playing adventure, we partake of the heroic.

But such moments were always rare and are rarer still today. Do young comics fans, faced with the legions of dour avengers who dominate the market, now comprehend that old magic? More to the point, do any recent super-hero games and supplements help game masters and players recreate it?

Only rarely. But that, of course, is the nature of miracles.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Basic Set (revised)

64-page Rule Book, 64-page Campaign Book, 12 cardstock sheets of characters and stand-up figures, two 21"x 32" color maps, two 10-sided dice, boxed TSR, Inc. \$20

Design: Jeff Grubb

Editing: Steve Winter

Cover: Jeffrey Butler

Illustrations: Jeffrey Butler and the Marvel Bullpen

After seven years, TSR has issued a new edition of the popular role-playing game that lets youngsters play Marvel Comics heroes like Spider-Man, Captain America, the Hulk, and the X-Men. Designer Jeff Grubb, longtime Marvel guru at TSR, has since become guru of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® and SPELLJAMMER™ campaign settings, and will no doubt achieve even greater guru-hood in the future. He's returned to his roots with this touch-up of

his 1984 design.

This edition incorporates the Advanced Set's larger Universal Table, offers several other systems from the Advanced Set, and updates the mercurial biographies of 85 heroes and villains. The maps are identical to those in the previous edition, so judges who want new banks to rob must look elsewhere.

The MARVEL SUPER HEROES game targets young comics readers otherwise unfamiliar with role-playing games. The game's novice-level approach reduces emphasis on creating new characters in favor of playing established heroes. It also alludes only briefly to the topics of adventure design and good role-playing, preferring to dwell on combat tactics and Karma-point awards.

Evaluation: This is the gravest flaw of this system and support line: its apathy about recreating the spirit of Marvel stories. In this new Basic Set edition and the Advanced Set (never mind the past seven years of pallid scenarios), you couldn't find a miracle if you used microscopic vision. Look at this set's few elementary mini-scenarios: all fight scenes. The four-color grandeur and narrative magic in the best Marvel stories are absent. Is this a good introduction to role-playing?

For that matter, the new text is larger and less friendly than its predecessor. I confess mild irritation at the first edition's practice of describing the rules in the heroes' own voices. But, in its place, we now have featureless expanses of gray type, and lots of it. The new edition's core rules are not notably shorter or simpler than the core rules of Mayfair's DC HEROES* game, a more elegant and flexible design. The MARVEL SUPER HEROES game could intimidate a newcomer, I think.

Point the beginner instead to Steve Jackson Games' TOON*: The Cartoon Roleplaying Game (a personal favorite) or to West End Game's GHOSTBUSTERS* game. Both have simple rules, high action, and a gratifying accent on storytelling and adventure design. And don't forget the new edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Basic Set, especially designed to introduce beginners to role-playing. For novice super-hero role-playing, the choices are not great, but try the BATMAN* RPG volume that Mayfair extracted from the DC HEROES game to capitalize on the Batmania of 1989.

Of course, the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game is the only authorized source of game statistics for Marvel characters. This leads smoothly to my next tirade.

The Uncanny X-Men™ Special! Campaign Set

96-page Roster Book, 64-page Campaign Book, 32-page "School's Out" Adventure Book, four 21"x 32" color maps, boxed TSR, Inc. \$18

Design: Jeff Grubb

"School's Out" adventure: Rick Swan

Cover: Jeffrey Butler

Illustrations: Jeffrey Butler and the Marvel Bullpen

Justice League* Sourcebook

128-page softcover book
Mayfair Games, Inc. \$12
Design: Ray Winninger with Jack Barker
Cover: Kevin Maguire and Joe Rubinstein
Illustrations: DC staff

The New Titans* Sourcebook

128-page softcover book
Mayfair Games, Inc. \$10
Design: John J. Terra
Cover: George Perez
Illustrations: DC staff

Swamp Thing* Sourcebook

32-page sourcebook, 32-page "Racing With the Rats" solo adventure
Mayfair Games, Inc. \$9
Design: Ray Winninger
Cover: Paris Cullins
Illustrations: DC staff

I heard recently that you can't copyright a phone book any more. The Supreme Court ruled that to gain copyright protection, a work must involve creativity; an alphabetical list of names and their telephone numbers doesn't qualify. Now, why does that ruling spring to mind as I look at the latest pile of licensed hero-roster "sourcebooks"?

Companies pump these out like mail-order catalogs at Christmas. They must be easy, if not entertaining, to write: Read a couple hundred comics, describe all the heroes in the subject group, then their friends, major enemies, headquarters, and equipment, then add some back-issue history. Add a little chrome and maybe an adventure, throw in clip art from the comics, and publish. Nobody has to think hard, nor even worry about proofreading a lot of phone numbers.

(Let me immediately distinguish these churned-out lists of licensed characters from similar volumes of *original* villains and heroes that an author creates specifically for super-hero RPGs—for instance, the *Enemies* books for the CHAMPIONS* game. None of the following remarks relate to such original gaming creations.)

Gamers—or somebody—must love these huge compost heaps of established characters. After all, how many times has TSR gotten them to buy an X-Men roster? The latest and most exhaustive of these is *The Uncanny X-Men Special!* campaign set. Half of this set, 96 pages of text, lists the abilities of over 250 mutants. Mind you, it doesn't tell much about these mutants' backgrounds, nor how to role-play them or use them in a campaign; it just has stats.

The rest of this set offers a bit more entertainment value. It doesn't sparkle, but at least here you get paragraphs, with adverbs and stuff. The Campaign Book gives histories of two dozen mutant groups, lengthy descriptions of mutant-

ridden locations, and 13 models of Sentinel mutant-hunting robots. And lo, the 12 pages of authentic campaigning advice include typical mutant-campaign premises, mutant-villain types, and a "mutant phobia" index. A full-scale adventure by the talented Rick Swan shovels an amazing number of villains into one globe-trotting plot, though player characters have little to do but fight. With these tools (and the great maps), an enterprising game master could probably rig up a campaign. But I doubt it would be anything special.

The other phone-number sourcebooks at hand support the DC HEROES game. Do you want to know a lot about those two popular super-hero groups, the Justice League and the New (formerly Teen) Titans? No, I mean do you want to know a *whole* lot? Do you want your brain to explode from sheer data pressure? Then *The Justice League Sourcebook* and *The New Titans Sourcebook* are for you!

The JL sourcebook comes from Ray Winninger, an experienced and prolific freelancer with many credits in the DC HEROES game line; for instance, he developed the recent second edition of the game. Here he gives us—well, you know the drill by now: histories and stats for everybody who's ever joined, almost joined, or come near the Justice League (note the numbered versions of Dr. Fate: 1, 2, and 2½); 30 pages of villains, including Killer Penguins; extensive maps for three headquarters, plus a previously unseen Saudi Arabian Embassy (winner of Mayfair's "Justice League Embassy Contest"; congratulations to designer Brian Heid); and the original JLA's charter, membership requirements, and procedures. At that point my eyes glazed over, but Winninger's text is clear, well-researched, and respectful.

The New Titans Sourcebook offers—stop me if you've heard this before—complete membership rosters of all versions of the Teen Titans; a 16-page description of the 10-level Titan Tower, down to and including the video games in the rec room; friends and allies, including Timothy Drake, the new Robin, the Boy Wonder (either #3 or #4, depending on how you score it); foes; equipment; and a lengthy time line. Author John J. Terra, a relative newcomer with credits for TSR and FASA, gives valuable role-playing notes and, occasionally, brash humor. ("Changeling's garish room is enough to send the bravest interior decorator into convulsions.") Miracles? Those he does not give. But miracles are where you find them.

I often found them in the pages of *Swamp Thing*, a DC horror title that was at one time—no, at *two* times—the best mainstream comic book published. Its classy early-'70s issues by Len Wein and Berni Wrightson, though excellent, were completely outstripped during an astounding mid-'80s run written by British comics star Alan Moore. What stories! Brilliant new takes on classic horror ideas, new concepts, a breathtaking scope of learning and in-

sight, terrific characters, world-spanning adventures, true love, fear, madness, passion, and compassion. Miracles all! And now comes a *Swamp Thing Sourcebook*. What a perfect opportunity for—

—For a history of the Swamp Thing, a list of his powers, a roster of friends and foes, and a description of his "headquarters" (the Louisiana bayou town of Houma). Sigh.

Along with this bland five-finger exercise comes a solo Swamp Thing adventure, "Racing With the Rats," which is striking because (you're not going to believe this) *it has nothing at all to do with the Swamp Thing*. Get this: Poisoned by toxic waste, Swamp Thing experiences a four-day hallucination of suburban hell, where (as an ordinary human) he tries to hold down a job and make ends meet—Generic Super-hero Hallucination/Dream #542. Even if you've never heard of the Swamp Thing and haven't read the sourcebook section, you can still play this straight-line adventure perfectly well—not that I recommend you do.

Evaluation: I don't really know how to review these new character compilations. Sure, I liked one of their predecessors, the new edition of Mayfair's *Batman Sourcebook* (see "Role-playing Reviews" in issue #165); but that book offered real insight into an interesting subject, along with strong gaming value. Maybe if you'd told me then, "If you like this one, you'll get 20 more exactly like it," well, I might have restrained myself. Now, here are these followers. I believe they're not really game products, but more like super-hero Audubon guides and extended fanzine articles.

Jack Barker, DC HEROES game editor at Mayfair, disagrees. "We sell a lot to the comic-book audience, [but these books are] definitely game products," he says. "There are a million and one adventure hooks in those [character] histories, especially the villains'." Barker notes that gamers ask him more often for character stats and headquarters maps than for anything else.

Okay, fair enough. But I can't imagine how you turn these laundry lists into miracles.

In any case, the Mayfair books are good jobs, with colorful text, extensive footnotes listing sources, and indexes. TSR's *Uncanny X-Men Special!* campaign set also makes the grade. But the cold fact is, either you want these rosters or you don't, based on their subjects. The idea that it's "a good job" hardly enters into it.

Can there be a super-hero roster that a review could recommend wholeheartedly as an authentic "good job"?

Yes!

The Watchmen* Sourcebook

128-page softcover book

Mayfair Games, Inc.

\$10

Design: Ray Winninger

Cover and illustrations: Dave Gibbons

Design layout and graphics: Mari Paz P. Cabardo

Swamp Thing writer Alan Moore reached even greater heights in the graphic novel *Watchmen*, collaborating with British artist Dave Gibbons. Rather than discuss *Watchmen* here, I'll just recommend it with every fiber of my being; look for it in specialty bookstores and comics shops. Now, Mayfair and the ubiquitous Ray Winninger have produced a fine companion piece, the best-presented product that super-hero role-playing has ever seen.

This is not so much a sourcebook as a scrapbook. It pains me to quote a company press release, but I can't put it better: "*The Watchmen Sourcebook* is presented in the same style as the comic series, where the readers progressively piece together the story as they go along. The 'scrapbook' format features newspaper articles, movie scripts, letters to and from family and friends of the Watchmen and Minutemen, and much, much more." (All press-release writers recite "and much, much more" as a mantra at dawn, noon, and sunset.)

Winninger and layout artist Cabardo return us to the back pages of *Watchmen*, that cut-up realm of diverse sources, high believability, and telling juxtapositions. A mental hospital report, followed by a clipping with a name circled, suddenly and chillingly explains a murder reported two pages back. Incorporation papers, innocuous in themselves, stand like signposts on the path to nuclear war. Winninger's news stories, letters, college rosters, and brochures follow Alan Moore's creative lead, often showing genuine insight. And Cabardo sends everything cascading higgledy-piggledy down the page, askew, overlapping, invigorating.

DC HEROES game stats? Oh, yeah, it has some of those, too. They mostly get in the way. For instance, when the gadgeteer Nite Owl makes long construction notes about his Owlship and various costumes, the sudden intermissions of gamespeak are jarring.

Evaluation: It's tricky, recommending a product with so little gaming value, a kind of super-hero Audubon guide or fanzine article. But this one displays creativity. Enthusiasm. Thought! More stats would dry out this book like a grape under a sunlamp. Instead, Mayfair has wisely chosen to turn this book into (the reviewer pushes his metaphor and his luck) fine wine.

The Watchmen Sourcebook won't mean anything to those unfamiliar with the graphic novel, but for its fans, this book of clever and enlightening annotations should help recapture the original's miracles. Good job!

Kingdom of Champions

208-page sourcebook

Hero Games/ICE

\$18

Design: Phil Masters

Editing: Rob Bell

Cover: Adam Hughes

Illustrations: Albert Deschesne, Ben

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Oh, man, talk about miracles. Years ago, Phil Masters, who had never published a word in the gaming business, proposed to *Adventurer's Club* magazine a short article describing super-hero CHAMPIONS* game adventures in Great Britain. The article never saw print; instead it grew to 208 pages and stormed onto the Hero Games scene last summer as—what, ho!—

Kingdom of Champions.

"Written by native Britons, edited by Americans, this supplement contains all that a game master needs to start running adventures in the United Kingdom." For once, a product lives up to its back cover copy: This book actually does contain *everything* you could want for British heroics, and (what was that mantra?) much, much more.

Terrain, cities, transport, districts of London, major sites from the British Museum to Stonehenge (with maps), petrol prices, waterways, standard vehicles, postage rates, three pages of slang terms, history, race relations, six pages on "The British Character (If It Exists)," political parties, titled aristocrats, "The Troubles" in Ireland, castles and manor houses, tax rates, property market, legal system, major religions, educational system, TV channels, food and drink, holidays, soccer hooligans, the army, MI5, and four pages about the police. If it only had addresses and tourist hours, you could lug along this supplement as a fair guidebook to the UK.

Guidebooks don't usually make great reading, though, and I developed info overload around page 98, where Masters details the political leanings of each of Britain's 12 daily newspapers. But after my eyes unglazed, I dove back in. A good thing, too, for soon after that comes a great 10-page discussion of British magic and legends. Then the entire last half of the book gathers over 50 (!) very original British heroes and villains, plus secret super-agents, half a dozen organizations, and, as an afterthought, four different versions of the Loch Ness Monster. Three short scenarios and suggestions for a dozen more finish off the package, and probably finish the GM, too!

Evaluation: I joke about its encyclopedic scope, but *Kingdom of Champions* is that rare pleasure: a labor of true love. Bolstered by the breadth of imagination here, any GM can launch a one-shot scenario or any of several complete campaigns for super-heroes who cross the Atlantic. Masters' clear style and subtle wit makes this a great read (with suitable intermissions) and a snap to review. All I have to say is, if you want to game modern Britain, get this book!

This book comes closest yet to conjuring the miracles of the great super-hero comics. Why? Because it has the same quality they do, the very stuff of miracles: imagination. With more works like this one, the super-hero role-playing field

would be grander and more glorious, a miraculous place.

Short and sweet

Time of Magic, by Cook, Findley, Her-ring, Kubasik, Sargent, and Swan. TSR, Inc., \$20. As my fellow reviewer Ken Rolston would say, "Awright!" In this new AD&D® game hardcover, I count 86 new wizard spells (plus neat rules for "wild mages"), 170 priest spells (plus eight new spheres), and 92 new magical items, all meant to fill minor gaps in the extant spell lists. Spell-casters will zoom in on heavy artillery like *acid storm* (W7) and *spiritual wrath* (P7; minimum damage 16d6). The wise DM, though, should prefer the many spells that don't cause damage but instead enable good stories. Spells like *thought capture* (P1) and the many communication spells let you convey information more easily; others, like *breath of death* (P7) and most of the quest spells, are story hooks. Have fun seeing quantum physics applied to magic in spells like *spacewarp* (P7) and *there/not there* (W4). This product needs its hardcover package; you'll use it a lot.

The Complete Guide to Role-playing Games, by Rick Swan. St. Martin's Press, \$12.95. This was a surprise gift on the bookshelves last Christmas. In this thick volume, Rick Swan, gifted author of many TSR products (such as the recent AD&D module FA2 *Nightmare Keep*, and the DLA trilogy of DRAGONLANCE® adventures), reviews over 150 role-playing games, good and bad, famous and completely obscure, with no punches pulled and seemingly no game missed. "If I found it for sale as of spring 1990 in a hobby shop or a dealer's booth at a game convention, it's reviewed here," says Swan, and he also gives informed commentary on each game's support line. You start thinking, "Is there anything he hasn't read?" If so, I haven't found it, and I've read every fascinating review. There's lots of historical perspective, amusing rules bloopers, and maybe even room for argument, but overall I enthusiastically recommend Swan's book. So, when's the next edition?

Angus McBride's Characters of Middle-earth. Iron Crown Enterprises, \$14.95. South African artist Angus McBride, my favorite of the legions of illustrators of J.R.R. Tolkien's works, has blessed many an otherwise dreary MIDDLE-EARTH ROLE-PLAYING* supplement. He captures the high-fantasy majesty that most MERP* products seem bent on expunging. Now, ICE has managed to wrap its MERP gaming license around this softcover collection of 29 lovely McBride paintings by adding a page of feeble gaming filler facing each painting. Skip the game junk and frame these vivid visualizations of Gandalf, Treebeard, Galadriel, and dozens of other figures of Middle-earth. Too bad so few of those figures actually come from Tolkien; ICE instead has chosen covers from all

those supplements about Near Harad, Far Harad, Really Far Boring Harad, and other backwaters that barely rate footnotes in *The Lord of the Rings*. This points up a failing of the whole MERP game line: its dawdling pace in describing Mordor, Barad-Dur, and other places that gamers *really* want to know about. Meantime, though, let's thank ICE for offering this pristine book of McBride's fine art.

OGRE*/G.E.V.* games, by Steve Jackson. Steve Jackson Games, \$9.95. Released for the first time together in one package, these two simulation board games of armored combat on a future battlefield are among the best the field has ever seen: fast, elegant, and endlessly replayable. Steve Jackson's first design, the action-packed OGRE game, pulled me into this hobby back in 1977, and I wish I'd held up as well as it has. Its sequel, the G.E.V. (ground effect vehicle) game, adds new units and new rules that give its hovercraft and power-armor infantry a better chance to stop the unstoppable, intelligent cybertank called the Ogre. With great maps, new two-color counters, and a new (if rather flimsy) box, these twin classics shouldn't be missed.

In Hot Pursuit, by Terra, Pecsényicki, Franks, and Tracy. Mayfair Games, \$8. Mayfair has devised several fresh ideas to support its DC HEROES game, and here's another: an anthology of four short adventures, each for a game master and one player, and each starring a different hero. The tones and topics run from slam-bang, super-slugfest action (starring Superman) to light comedy (the Atom) to gritty gang warfare (the Huntress) to suspense and mistrust in a deserted villain base (Manhunter). These straightforward and effective miniscenarios can fill an evening or two on their own, or an hour while you're waiting for more players to show up. Too bad the back cover gives away every surprise in every adventure! Maybe if we forgive them, Mayfair's copywriters will restrain themselves next time—and I hope there is a next time. Ω

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roone Chiselbeard crouched across the main corridor from his doorway, waiting for the lizards to come. He had been waiting for seven hours, and he would wait another fifty if need be.

It was time for Droone Chiselbeard to die.

He felt them through the skin of his back, pressed as it was to the bare stone. He judged they were four or five levels above him, and there were many of them. He could feel the vibrations of each individual's steps out of the many hundreds he felt and some of them were not lizards. Some were giants, he thought, but he couldn't be sure. Perhaps hobgoblins or big humans. No matter. He still had several hours and nothing to do, so he sat, and he thought about his life.

He was one hundred fifty-eight years old and getting gray, and he had decided that if he didn't get about this business of dying soon, he might not get another chance. So when the dwarves had gone to the call of the king, Droone had tousled the hair and pinched the cheek of his youngest son (age eighty-six), patted his wife on the rump, and gone after his war hammer. He would defend his home, his tunnels, his door.

It was a good door, he thought, looking at it through the dimly lit corridor. It was round and made of the roots of the tree Kollollondor, named by the elves. It was the only wooden door in all the mountain, the only piece of Kollollondor ever cut by a creature. It was ten feet tall.

Behind it was Droone Chiselbeard's home, the home of his clan and family since the dwarves had come to Black Rock Mountain in search of coal and iron for the dwarven forges.

On either side of that huge door were sculptures, set in the wall itself: one of Droone and one of his eldest son, the slain hero Hammerfoot. They had been carved by the finest sculptor who ever lived, and the only human to ever visit the inside of Black Rock Mountain: the blind sculptor Orius.

Across thirty feet of dark corridor was the history of Droone Chiselbeard's life, and as he sat waiting to die, he allowed himself to be impressed.

He had come here as a pup of only twenty-three and had made the trek from Ice Cliff Mountain overland. He knew that the overland would be strange, but he had not anticipated what he saw. Leaves on trees, now, that was strange. Droone was familiar with trees, all right, so familiar that his father used to call him Elf-Beard.

But trees had tendrils at the edges of their roots to sip water. He had no idea what leaves were for. That was just one mystery in a world of mysteries he had seen in that twelve-day hike.

He had gone aboveground only once after. In that, he was a fairly average dwarf. Most saw the light of day only once or twice in their lives. He heard that some dwarves lived out in the open, but he had not believed it until Hammerfoot moved aboveground to trade with the humans.

He still thought that was damn peculiar.

The lizards were coming slowly. The resistance they

The Lay of Droone

by William B. Crump

Illustrations by Erik Baker

received was far more than they had expected, as they thought Black Rock was abandoned. But like Droone, those elderly dwarves who had spent their lives making Black Rock a home had not left their houses and halls to be surrendered. They had elected to stay and die with their mountain.

They fought with a grim determination, and they already knew the lizards would regret this conquest, if not this fight.

After the dwarves had found the caves at Black Rock, they set up housekeeping. For ten years they chiseled and broke and picked and chiseled until finally they had some decent tunnels. The head of the colony, then Arjan Stonebone, had given him a new hammer and chisel, put them against the wall, and said, "Droone, build yourself a home."

After another ten years he had a good sized hole, and he married to double the effort. Hammerfoot was born a year later, and Droone dug with a smile and a young rascal on his shoulders.

The year Hammerfoot came they hit iron, and wealth soon followed. Droone worked the forge with his brothers all day, leaving no time for his home. So the wife and even precocious little Hammerfoot helped, and they had ten rooms, a mushroom tunnel, metal plates, metal hammers, and twin daughters by the end of the year.

The colony thrived and sent much iron back to Ice Cliff Mountain in exchange for food, and the digging went on.

The lizards were getting closer, but they were running into trouble. Droone thought the trouble was probably named Arjan Stonebone, two floors up, defending his home as Droone was preparing to defend his.

As Arjan delivered a wise and probably fatal lesson in stonemasonry to a lizard-man, Droone felt the vibrations, heard the lizard's hiss-scream through the rock, and smiled. About another hour and a half, he judged, before they reached him.

In his thirty-eighth year of residence, Droone's, tunnels reached almost to the back of the mountain, more than a mile of corridors and rooms and dining halls and a gem cutting shop and room for his nineteen children. It was then that he reached Kollollondor, though his name for her was The Tree.

She was an old oak, and she sat on a huge plateau on the side of the mountain. The plateau marked the beginning of the steep rise to the peak but was easily accessible to the forest below. She was at least eighty feet tall, and her root system was enormous.

She had much to teach Droone, who alone among the dwarves paid her any attention. He liked the way her blind tentacles sought out the best rock, slowly, over the years. He liked the way she seemed to know the stone, to respect it. He liked that she seemed to eat the rock, and he thought she must love the rock very much, sort of like he himself did. He also thought it must be such a nuisance for her to have to feed all that bulk above ground, with the water and rock from his home.

He spent many months studying her root system, tun-

neling around it, careful not to expose too much. He examined the rock that she seemed to be reaching for, tunneled parallel to her roots, and twice struck rich mineral deposits with many gems.

She made him rich, even compared to the other dwarves, and while his twenty-three children grew and his eldest went to trade with the humans, he spent much time with his hobby, The Tree. He named her different major roots and fed her by diverting some of the water from the water-tunnels (filled every spring by the melting mountaintop snow) to her roots. He knew that, aboveground, the tree served as some sort of gathering place—he could tell by the vibrations through the stone—but he didn't know the language and he couldn't tell the race. As long as they did not hurt his tree, he didn't mind.

Droone heard and felt a large thud as the mountain moved, and he smiled. Undoubtedly, more lizards and hobgoblins were being taught about stone, he thought. It would be less than half an hour before he would find if his lessons in stonemasonry would be as well delivered. His hammer and chisel had been busy lately.

He looked across at the door made from Kollollondor and thought how well the wood and stone joined in a useful door, how pleasing in form and structure. He went back to his memories.

Still the colony thrived, even more so since Hammerfoot had gone to trade among the humans. He was said to be part of a wandering band of heros, slaying dragons and the like, and Droone, who did not quite understand the point, was proud nonetheless.

Eventually, Hammerfoot returned home wearing a suit of gold scale mail and listened to his father's lecture about how poor a material gold was for armor. He settled in as if he'd never been gone, except that his stories were much better.

The next year, a stricken Droone had begged Hammerfoot to brave the overland once again to look at the tree from the top.

"It's dying," said Droone.

"I'll go," said Hammerfoot, being a dwarf of few words.

Hammerfoot returned and said that there were many elves around the tree, and they didn't know why it was dying either.

Several months later, Droone knew the answer. The tree, in its ongoing search for food and water, had with its massive main root broken through the rock ledge and into the salt layer below. The salt was getting into the water and poisoning the tree.

Droone was excited. Not only could he save the tree, but he could sell the salt and even ship some to Ice Cliff where it was needed. But when they were done, there would be an open space fifteen feet deep below The Tree.

"Simple," he thought, "We'll wash the hole out, brace up the tree as we go, and when we're done, lower her down into the hole. I've already dug enough tunnels around the major roots. The tree will be saved, and we'll all be richer."

The Tree was Kollollondor, a tree so sacred she had her own druid and her own tribe of elves that worshiped her

as a god. She had stood for eight hundred years, and now she was dying.

So the whole colony of dwarves labored to remove the salt, and Droone's family labored to prop up The Tree as the work progressed.

About fifteen feet of Kollollondor's main root had to be cut off, so saturated with salt that it could not be saved. Droone did this himself, saving the root.

She would be lowered onto this fifteen-foot hole so that her root could continue its progress. Her secondary roots were tunneled around so that, when the main root was lowered, they would follow with minimum damage.

The salt deposit was somewhat larger than the plateau above, and when the plateau was lowered it would look like a pit inside a bowl. The operation would open the mountain up, exposing to the open air about thirty feet of the tunnels Droone had been digging around Kollollondor, and thus passages into the heart of Droone's halls and the dwarven caves.

Droone looked with apprehension at seeing the outside again, but he was curious to see the top of Kollollondor. The cave would be blocked off and concealed once the operation was finished.

It was finally done. The dwarves, sixty-one of them, lined up around that part of the plateau as it and The Tree were lowered.

At the same time, the elves were having another one of their sacred worship ceremonies. The elves thought the spirit of their god had come to save The Tree, and they threw themselves to the ground and worshiped as the tree swayed and rocked. As it lowered to its new ground, they bowed to it and closed their eyes and said prayers to it.

Thirty feet around the tree on all sides, the plateau dropped, and with it the tree and the elves. As the elves opened their eyes, they found they had been praying to sixty-one dirt-covered dwarves. The dwarves laughed, seeing the lordly, haughty elves bowed in prayer, seemingly to them.

And laughed, and laughed. They rolled on the ground. They laughed until they cried.

The elves were not amused. The elves drew their weapons and advanced. Hammerfoot, of course, screamed his death song and leapt toward the elves. The line of elves looked up at the tree, which gave a final tilt. The whole elf line stopped.

The dwarves, still looking out through the tunnels, gripped their hammers and axes tightly. Hammerfoot glared at the elf he faced, ready with his hammer.

Kollollondor stopped moving, seeming to steady. The elves started to close on Hammerfoot, and the dwarves rushed out to him from the tunnels.

Suddenly, next to the tree, there was a bright light and a clap of thunder. The dwarves and elves stared. There stood an old human, looking at Kollollondor, his old hands against the trunk of the great tree.

At his appearance, the elves all bowed and backed away from the dwarves. Not knowing what to do, the dwarves fidgeted uneasily, looking quickly between the old man and the elves.

The druid of Kollollondor hobbled about the tree, leaning on an old oak staff. He took out a small dagger and

stabbed the trunk of the tree.

Droone yelled and charged.

The druid tasted the end of the dagger with the tip of his tongue. Hammerfoot ran to intercept his father, who was about to strike the druid with his excavating pick.

The druid said something in a language Droone didn't understand, and a shout erupted from the crowd of elves.

"He said The Tree is saved," Hammerfoot muttered to Droone.

"Tell him to get away from my Tree."

Droone, with Hammerfoot translating, spoke with the druid, who was very angry.

"The Tree," Droone said, "Is not the thing of the wind and sky and birds and elves that you think. She is a creature of rock and tunnels and water. Most of her is underground. She has been here longer than any dwarf, and she will be here when I am gone. She tunnels where she will. She knows these rocks better than any of us. She knows where gems and ore and minerals are. She is my friend."

The druid, much impressed, asked about the collapsing, and Hammerfoot told the story so well that when he got to the part where the elves opened their eyes, the druid was shaking with laughter. He dismissed the elves and told Hammerfoot to seal up the tunnel. That the part of the tree underground was forever Droone's to care for. This was done.

There were more invaders on his level, he felt. He could hear their hissing as they progressed; he could feel their movements. Ten minutes.

He had made the section of salted root into his door and continued following the roots of the tree, Kollollondor, until one day he had broken through to tunnels of an ancient warren and the trouble with lizard-men and hobgoblins had begun, just as it had started at Ice Cliff, when they had found the first entrance to the extensive caverns. But now that the lizards knew about Black Rock, it would be a target, too.

His son, Hammerfoot, had perished in the first assault, killing twenty-one lizards before a lucky arrow caught him.

They sealed up the new hole and for good measure most of Kollollondor, but now that the creatures knew the location of the colony, the attacks came from overland. Always, for the last forty years, they had been repulsed.

One day a human appeared at one of the secret doors and asked to see Droone. This was the sculptor Orius, who was blind.

"Your son, Hammerfoot, was my friend. He and I did many things together, in many lands. He wanted me to carve his likeness in stone if I should hear he had died. He told me how to get here."

Droone was skeptical. "A human carve stone! Never!" he laughed. But he gave the man a chisel and a hammer.

He watched for fifty days as this human learned the stone with his fingers, felt every crack, every fissure, every strength and weakness. He tasted the stone, listened to it, talked to it, prayed to it, and finally, carved it.

It was the most beautiful rendering in stone Droone had ever seen.

Droone begged him to carve another, so he could learn

how by watching. On the other side of the door, they carved again, and Droone learned much about stone from a blind human.

The lizards were just around the corner from Droone, and he stood stock-still against the rock. A troop of them went by, and only eight lizard-men and a hobgoblin stopped at his door.

Among the overlanders, dwarves are thought of as loud and clumsy, but put one in his own cave and he is as are elves in the trees.

The nearest lizard-man was four feet from him, and they didn't even see him.

The hobgoblin opened the door.

As the twelve-foot-square slab of concrete fell from the ceiling and squashed the hobgoblin and two lizard-men, the two heads carved in the wall on either side of the door cackled deafeningly.

Orius had been a wizard before he was blinded, and he had still known some tricks.

The lizard-men looked about themselves, confused.

Down the hall, Droone heard some other lizards being taught about stone, fatally. He dashed forward with great speed, hitting one lizard square on the spine with his hammer. He skittered around the block and squished enemies, ducking badly aimed and wide swings, through the doorway into his home.

If they were smart, he thought, they would not follow him.

They were not smart, and it wouldn't have mattered anyway.

Droone was having fun. He dodged behind a corner and waited as the lizards passed him. He followed them, resting a little, totally silent on his own stone. When he felt rested, he raised his hammer and charged, landing a blow on another lizard, who went down.

Droone grinned and ran.

Two others fell to traps, pits covered with tilting rocks. Droone watched, gleeful.

There were only two left. Time to die like a dwarf, he thought, and led them to a room he had prepared, with enough open space. He stood in the center, and the lizard-men flanked him.

Using the best in dwarven combat strategy, he charged the one on the left, hitting him in the knee, and the fight was joined. The lizard swung back, and his short sword bit deep into Droone's leg. He was rewarded for his effort with a hammer in the face. He went down.

Droone was hurt but still combat ready and whirled to face the lizard-man left standing. It ran away, and Droone was too injured to follow.

His first fight, and he was victorious!

He thought he might have missed his calling as a fighter, but when he tried to move his leg, he reconsidered.

He sat down in the middle of the floor and looked around the room that was to be his burial chamber. In one corner, behind a central support pillar, was a barrel of ale, just done fermenting last month, and on the other side was an exposed root of Kollollondor.

Droone dragged himself toward the ale. A dwarf was a dwarf after all. He settled down with a full stein to wait.

The assaults on Ice Cliff Mountain had grown intense, and the king had recalled all soldiers and said that Black Rock was to be abandoned.

Dwarves take their wars seriously, and they had gone. But to Droone, his Black Rock Mountain in the hands of lizard-men was unthinkable. So when the next lizard-man appeared, Droone would take his hammer and knock away the stone support in the corner, and the bottom of the cistern holding all the water stored from the spring runoff would empty onto the top floor. And the weight of all that water would collapse the supports onto the floor below it, which would collapse the floor below that. The floors would collapse onto each other, and what was not crushed would be drowned from the water.

Kollollondor would be unaffected, having been blocked off years ago.

The mountain would settle about ten feet, and everything in it would die.

Droone drank and waited, thinking that he was glad to be a dwarf. He had cut stone, fired forges, dug tunnels. He was happy that he had finally got to fight. Now he could die in traditional dwarf fashion, surrounded by the bodies of vanquished foes.

He thought about the look on the elves' faces the last time the mountain had settled.

He wondered if anyone had thought to tell the elves. He hoped not.

He laughed and laughed and laughed.

Ω



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The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 19: Hule!

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.

Hastmir 25, 2000 AY: This evening, I could hear the hull and the new masts creak faintly with the ship's slow pitch. The wide sails occasionally fluttered in the wind, the sound sharing the darkness with only the night bell. The crew was still learning to work the rigging, but Berylith nevertheless showed satisfaction with her new sails, like a bird with new wings. She enjoyed the sweet feeling of wind filling her sails, and she had maintained a good pace since our departure from Slagovich.

I could not get to sleep. The picture of the man in black behind the mirror haunted me. I got up, dressed, and walked down to the laboratory, where I examined the

strange mirror I had taken from the Rajah of Jaibul. I could push small objects through its glassy surface to the other side—wherever that was. I could not see what lay beyond. Only parchment or papyrus could pass, but I was careful not to let any paper fall completely through. Wooden, metallic, and mineral objects, as well as living flesh, would not go through, for the mirror felt cold and solid to my hand. Neither could air, water, or the flame of a candle get through.

Magic did get through, but not all magic. Some spells related to vision or detection could sometimes get through the mirror. By chance, a *wizard* eye paired with a spell of *infravision* made it through. It revealed an unlit crypt, a scriptorium with many books, scrolls, and maps. One map displayed the familiar contour of the Great Waste desert. On it, little flags were pinned west of Sind, others very close to Slagovich. Their symbols looked orcish or goblinoid in style. These could have been Hulean-controlled forces.

Then I saw a dark veil on the scriptorium's floor next to the mirror. I realized in a moment that it was a covering for the mirror. Perhaps it had slipped off when one of the pieces of paper I had poked through disturbed it. I was lucky, for otherwise the *wizard* eye would not have functioned at all. I could not explore further since the scriptorium's door was closed, but at least I could now spy on that room. If another *wizard* eye could not succeed, my *crystal ball* would. At last, I had found a weakness in the dark figure's defenses and had even learned one useful thing: **Keep my mirror covered.** As the sun began to filter through the curtains, I dropped a black velvet cloth of my own over my mirror (fixing it carefully in place) and left.

Hastmir 26: At sunrise, we had an unexpected encounter. Just past the city of





Artwork by Thomas Baxa

Raska, a small man-o-war descended from the clouds and veered toward the northwest. A flying warship was already reason enough to pay attention, but her banner was even more disturbing: a black lion over a white field. She was a Heldannic Prowler. And I wanted to know why she was here.

I had general quarters sounded immediately. We were at her stern, hiding in the rising sun; her watch was either sleeping or blinded. We got close enough for a warning shot. The light ballistas at the bow quickly shredded the Heldanners' main sail. Despite the surprise, her crew reacted swiftly and competently, returning a volley of arrows in little time. A blinding ray followed, punching a hole into the side of the *Princess Ark*. The wood crumpled and withered away where the ray had hit, causing Berylith to roar in pain. Berylith then responded with a devastating bolt of her own that blew off a large part of the Prowler's hull. The Prowler careened violently, causing topside crew to fall off screaming in space. Oil spilled over the deck and caught fire, spreading chaos aboard. Almost instantly, the Prowler struck her colors as she began to list severely and lose altitude. Alas, I failed to calm Berylith, and she roared again. With horror, I saw the surrendering vessel break up and crash into the sea.

Infamy! Shame! Even against Heldanners, there were certain rules of engagement by which all respectful commanders abided. Berylith felt my anger and ceased further attacks. We came as close as we could and rescued what little was left of the Prowler's crew. The captain had drowned, along with many of his officers. The few I could question knew only of their next stop, a port called Boyâzka in southern Hule. They could not unveil the reason of their journey this far away from home. Rats.

Hastmir 27: Boyâzka was in sight early in the morning. Talasar activated the ship's invisibility while I convinced Berylith to fade away. For once, she did not argue. Talasar and I landed, while the *Princess* took position above the town. Xerdon remained on board. He looked pale, and Talasar ordered him to stay.

Boyâzka was a mean-looking little town. Decrepit and filthy, it harbored no more than two dozen ships. A handful of merchantmen flew Zvornikian or Hojahite banners. Many others displayed unknown flags that Nyanga said belonged to a series of shady coastal realms southwest of Hule. Among them were a number of heavily armed warships. Perhaps half of the ships mooring at the docks were Hulean, but these were old, rotting merchant or fishing vessels, barely fit for navigation. Hule could hardly qualify as a naval power in these waters; any of the regional city states fared better in that respect.

The people bore the same reddish skin as those in Slagovich, and they seemed just as poor. We learned that this territory was

part of the Dervishy of Uzûmir. The High Dervish of Uzûmir himself sometimes resided at a small temple in downtown Boyâzka, a meridional retreat of sorts. Talasar and I found the temple and posed as Heldannic officers who had survived an unfortunate shipwreck.

Soon enough, a cloistress came trotting to us. "For Hosadu's sake, be quiet! No one is to know of your arrival. Follow me." The elderly lady brought us to our quarters and explained that her superior, the High Dervish, had not yet returned. He was up north, meeting with the Most Holy One.

Both of us scouted the temple during the night. We found the dervish's personal quarters and browsed about, looking for clues on the Heldannic presence. Among his papers was a message from the "Master," addressed to the High Dervish of Uzûmir. It ordered him to escort the Heldannic envoys to Darkwood; their ship was to remain in Boyâzka until their return. Obviously, the Heldannic Order was conspiring with that "Master." By the same token, this made the "Master" the Most Holy One, Ruler of Hule.

Hastmir 28: The cloistress came back in the morning. She said her superior, His Eminence Ismet Atadervis, the High Dervish, could see us. She brought us to a mirror in an alcove of the temple's crypt. It was nearly identical to the mirror I took from the Rajah of Jaibul, but perhaps larger. This one, however, allowed passage. It was a magical gate that led to a chamber in a much larger temple—somewhere north, judging from the cooler weather. Outside the windows spread a dark forest everywhere we looked. The

temple itself looked more like a fortified city, with large avenues, smaller temples, huge statues, schools, and sprawling monastic quarters.

A man walked in with a broad smile on his face. "Welcome to Hule! I wished to see my Brother Knights before your meeting with . . ." He froze in the middle of his sentence, and we stared at him in shock as well. It was Zgozod, the "charming" warrior from Slagovich.

"You!" he cried. "What the—" Talasar's hammer landed on his head before he uttered another word. We promptly tied him, gagged him, and hooked him up to the highest point of the chamber's ceiling—and, for good measure, cast an *invisibility* spell on the scoundrel. We could always use him at some other time, perhaps.

A eunuch finally came in and led us to the cluttered office of the High Dervish of Uzûmir. Another reunion—he was the man in white robes who had appeared at the court of Slagovich with Zgozod. My heart froze in my chest when I recognized him; unlike Zgozod, he could cast spells. Ismet did not seem to react, however. Perhaps I had stood in the dark behind Stavro when I first saw Ismet, so he could not recognize me. The thought of facing him was still unnerving.

Addressing Talasar with a smile, Ismet said, "Please enter. General Strohm, I presume?" Talasar clicked his heels in a perfect imitation of the Heldannic salute. With a slight bow of the head to me, Ismet added, "Your Grace Urqvart, my respects. We are so sorry of the delay on the Slagovich affair. We assure you that it is only

Table 1
Essence of Cinnabar Contamination

Contamination	# of Abilities	Subject
Degree 0	no special abilities	Foreigner
Degree 1	no special abilities	Normal native
Degree 2	1 ability	Enhanced contamination
Degree 3	2 abilities	Enhanced contamination
Degree 4*	3 abilities *	Enhanced contamination

* Each subsequent degree adds one additional ability.

Table 2
Abilities Granted by Essence of Cinnabar

1d12	Contamination degree			
	1-4	5-7	8-9	10+
1-3	#3	#3	#3	#3*
4-5	#3	#3	#3*	#4
6-7	#3	#3*	#4	#4
8-9	#3	#4	#4	#5
10-11	#3	#4	#5	#5
12+	#3*	#4	#5	#6

* The player may freely chose any one ability from Table 3, except for the last ability (Power Fluke).

a temporary setback, and soon the fortress shall be yours. Meanwhile, you are more than welcome to use our ports of Boyázka and Yenigaz."

Talasar cleared his throat. "Ach ja. But your ports need major work, Your Eminenz! Silt threatens to block the main stream, and the state of repair of the docks is a disgrace. And we expected to control Slagovich by now!" I thought for a moment he was overdoing it, but I understood what he was trying to do.

"Yes, yes, of course, general." Ismet was clearly embarrassed at Talasar's rebuke. "I shall obtain new funds to begin improvements right away. Our forces are standing by in the desert east of Slagovich. If need be, we could overrun their puny army."

I intervened. "Well, there will be no need for this. I am sure that you have the situation well in hand. Now, if we could discuss what we came for. It is a long way back to Freiburg."

Reassured, Ismet agreed. He led us to a large map on the wall. With a wink, he said, "We bought this wonderful trail map from the library of Rufus Omnibus in Thyatis. Amazing what these Thyatians can do with a piece of parchment, isn't it?" With a wide gesture across the eastern portion of the map, he added, "Soon, we shall share all of this! As agreed, all coastal areas on the Western Sea of Dawn will belong to the Heldannic Order, and we shall keep the coastal kingdoms from Sind to the Five Shires! Together, we shall smash the Thyatian Empire!"

I nearly choked on that one. "Have you made plans for a possible Alpathian intervention? For this to succeed, we will need major support against their powerful magic."

"Fear nothing. The Glantrian Council is unwittingly working for us. It is in their power to foment major unrest in metropolitan Alpathia, possibly destroying their main skyfleet and perhaps even assassinating Eriadna the Wise, the hag herself. This should delay the Alpathians long enough for us to reach our goals. Your Knights will have to do the rest."

"Naturally." Our recently departed friend Yarani did not jest when he had talked about dark plans. And I was right in the middle of them. I just hoped our masquerade would last long enough for us to ruin these plans.

I thought for a moment. "But we will need Slagovich now."

"We have already stockpiled enough depleted red steel to outfit several of your armies. We could ship these right now at our own cost, provided . . . that you relinquish your claim on Slagovich's port and its mines." Hurriedly, he added, "This would save time in both our plans."

I seized the opportunity at once. I had no doubt we could sink whatever Hule put to sea, thereby denying the Heldannic Order access to the red steel (some superior alloy, probably). At least, it could ruin their plans for some time. "Of course. I

came to negotiate this alternative. We want the metal now. Do you have a sample here?"

The dervish sighed in relief and gave me a red, glistening short sword from a shelf. "Very well, then," he said. "Let's sign the treaty now." After scribbling several more lines on a stack of scrolls, Ismet rang a

small gong. The eunuch came back. Ismet murmured a few words to the man, and the eunuch ran off with the scrolls. Free to relax, our host offered us baklava and some of that black beverage I once had with Yarani. This version was much worse, though, almost syrupy with black mud at the bottom of the cup. The eunuch

Table 3

Special Abilities From Essence of Cinnabar: Degrees 1-4

1d20 Ability and description

- 1 Altered Dexterity:** This permanently adds +2 to the character's Dexterity score, up to a maximum of 18 (reroll if 18 has been reached). Use: constant once activated.
- 2 Altered Strength:** This permanently adds +2 to the character's Strength score, up to a maximum of 18 (reroll if 18 has been reached). Use: constant once activated.
- 3 Amber Paralysis:** The character paralyzes one nonmagical creature on contact for 1d6 rounds. A successful save vs. paralysis negates this ability.
- 4 Anti-Magic I:** The character becomes immune to the effects of one first-level spell, either clerical or magical. The first eligible spell affecting the character automatically triggers this ability and alerts him of the activation. The character may cast all spells normally.
- 5 Cinnabar Skin:** The character develops a tough skin, improving his natural armor class by +2. This benefit may be combined with normal or magical armor protection.
- 6 Cinnamorphism:** The character gains a form of anti-magic due to the essence of cinnabar. It reduces damage from magical weapons bonuses at the rate of 1 hp per degree of contamination.
- 7 Crimson Fire:** The character causes any creature he hits with a red steel weapon to glow with *faerie fire*.
- 8 Detect Cinnabryl:** The character can detect and locate cinnabryl or essence of cinnabar within a 30' radius. This ability is similar to a locate object spell.
- 9 Enhanced Corrosion:** The character gains the ability to steal iron molecules from a ferrous object he is touching, in order to heal any single wound on a nonmagical creature, causing a permanent oxidation of the ferrous metal. The process rusts 50 cn worth of nonmagical iron or steel per point of damage healed.
- 10 Enhanced Life Force:** The character's life force is permanently enhanced, providing an extra 1d4 hp per degree of contamination. The ability remains active for each new degree of contamination reached subsequently. Use: constant once activated.
- 11 Fiery Mesmer:** This power causes a victim who looks the character in the eyes to stare blankly until slapped or attacked in some way. The attempt takes one round. A saving throw vs. spell negates the attempt.
- 12 Immunity to Fire:** The character becomes immune to up to 10 hp damage from all magical or nonmagical fires.
- 13 Immunity to Electricity:** The character becomes immune to up to 10 hp damage caused by magical or nonmagical electricity.
- 14 Immunity to Paralysis:** The character gains immunity to ghouls' paralysis or other paralyzing poisons.
- 15 Infravision:** The character permanently gains infravision if human, or *detect invisible* if demihuman or humanoid, or if infravision was acquired earlier. Use: infravision is constant once activated; detect invisible lasts for one turn and can be used only once per day.
- 16 Repel Metal:** The character develops an antimagnetic energy that repels any metal projectile of 60 cn or less. An attacker wielding a metallic weapon attacks with a -2 penalty to hit.
- 17 Ultravision:** The character's vision is altered, allowing him to see up to 60' into the Ethereal and Astral Planes.
- 18 War Cry:** The character gains a powerful metallic voice. His war cry causes an immediate Morale check to all NPC or monstrous opponents within hearing distance (at least a 20' radius under battlefield conditions).
- 19 X-Vision:** The character's vision is altered to receive X-rays, allowing him to see the silhouettes of objects up to 6' through rock, iron, or wood.
- 20 Power Fluke:** Roll twice more on this table, ignoring scores of 20, or roll once more on this table ignoring a score of 20 and gain a +1 bonus to all future die rolls on Table #2 (player's choice of option).

returned and whispered in Ismet's ear. "The Master waits," our host declared, rising.

We left the room and entered another chamber. There sat—the man in black from the mirror! Damn!

"Imposstorsss!" he hissed—and disappeared before our eyes. If Ismet did not recognize me, the Master made no such mistake. The eunuch shrieked and fled. Ismet followed, but I intercepted him with a *web*. Talasar knocked him out promptly and recovered his scrolls.

We had to leave at once. Already we could hear ominous gongs echoing in the cavernous hallways. I had barely enough time to cast a travel spell before hordes of fierce janissaries poured into the chamber.

I took both Talasar and the unconscious dervish with me as I returned to the *Princess Ark*.

Eimir 1: I ordered a course to the southwest after dropping the Heldanners off in the wilderness. Hule was a wee bit risky for us now. Talasar used his magical scroll to send a long message to his temple in Starpoint. He requested the message be delivered at once to Her Imperial Majesty. Starpoint acknowledged a few hours later and said we could trust the Temple of Razud. As for myself, I *teleported* a message to the Maharajah of Putnabad, warning him of a possible invasion from the Great Waste.

Once done with this, I returned to my quarters and observed the crypt through

my crystal ball. By chance, I saw the man in black, the Master, angrily pulling flags off his maps. I guessed that he would pull back his forces for some time, thus removing any proof of the conspiracy. I hoped Her Imperial Majesty would soon unveil what Glantrian treachery menaced our beloved Alphatia. The stakes were dreadfully high.

Then there was this red steel, which I examined. It had to have come from the mines in Slagovich. It was a mighty metal, hard like true steel yet light like wood. I had a hunch the nations to the southwest held more clues to that fancy metal.

Talasar soon came back with news of Ismet. He was found dead in the brig, apparently from the same causes that did for the ruffian Pustek at the Black Samovar. Talasar tried reaching the man's soul, but failed. Either something held on to it very tightly, or it no longer was in existence. Both of these alternatives sent a chill through my spine. A nasty business this Master was in. . . .

To be continued....

Cinnabryl's darker uses

This section continues the section on the shiny red metal cinnabryl and its uses, from this column in DRAGON® issue #171, pages 43-44.

As noted in the last issue, individuals of the Savage Coast are affected by a natural poison in the soil called *seed of cinnabar*. However, contact with a shiny red metallic ore called *cinnabryl*, produced by geological activity on beds of seed of cinnabar, will undo the effects of the poison. Contact with living beings also causes the cinnabryl to become depleted, so that it loses its healing properties. Fully depleted cinnabryl becomes *red steel*, a dull red metal as strong as steel but with half the weight.

Certain powerful individuals of the Savage Coast discovered that they could cause a sudden, massive depletion of cinnabryl by ingesting *essence of cinnabar*, a precious and rare alchemical distillate, while in contact with a sufficient quantity of cinnabryl. The reaction of this distillate in the body allows a character to gain special abilities derived from the magical and alchemical properties of cinnabar. Essence of cinnabar is, however, a virulent poison, causing an immediate and permanent loss of one point of Constitution per dose (no save allowed). Despite this cost, essence of cinnabar has become the object of epic adventures, sinister quests, unspeakable treacheries, and bloody wars. It is the Savage Coast's Unholy Grail!

Essence of cinnabar comes in small vials of a single dose. Each dose increases the drinker's contamination by a single degree (a "degree" being a measurement of contamination). One hundred coin-sized units of cinnabryl (100 Ci) are also required per degree of contamination wanted. For example, to reach the second degree of contamination after having reached the first, two doses of essence of cinnabar

Table 4

Special Abilities From Essence of Cinnabar: Degrees 5-7

1d12 Ability and description

- 1 Anti-Magic II:** The character becomes immune to the effects of one first- or second-level spell, either clerical or magical. The first eligible spell affecting the character automatically triggers this ability and alerts him of the activation. The character may cast spells normally.
- 2 Amber Sharpness:** The character gains the ability to cause slashing or piercing weapons made of red steel to vibrate in such a way as to negate any opponent's nonmagical protection due exclusively to metallic armor. Thus, red steel cuts right through the metallic armor.
- 3 Cinnabryl Implant:** The character can instantly deplete up to 1 Ci, implanting the cinnabryl molecules in his body for later use in supporting any abilities derived from essence of cinnabar. This allows the character to maintain the required contact with cinnabryl without carrying the precious metal itself. The absorbed molecules function like depletable cinnabryl in all respects. The implanted cinnabryl depletes before material cinnabryl does, if the character is carrying both an object of cinnabryl and holding implanted molecules simultaneously. Use: at will, though implanted molecules must dissipate before this power can be used again.
- 4 Crimson Skin:** The character's skin turns silvery red, providing partial immunity to damage from any natural or manmade weapon. In this condition, the character ignores 1d6 hp of nonmagical damage from each successful physical attack, to a minimum of 1 hp damage per attack.
- 5 Gaseous Form:** The character and his equipment turn gaseous, allowing him to fly 90' per turn and pass through very small openings (key holes, cracks, porous rocks, etc.).
- 6 Heroism:** This ability produces effects identical to those of a *potion of heroism*. If the character is a spell-caster or a thief, ignore this ability and roll for another one on this chart.
- 7 Immunity to Energy, 10' Radius:** Negates up to 10 hp of natural or magical damage based on fire or electricity within a 10' radius centered on the character.
- 8 Invulnerability** This ability's effects are identical to those of a *potion of invulnerability*.
- 9 Neutralize Cinnabryl:** The character instantly causes all cinnabryl within 10' around him to become totally inert and stop depleting. This negates all special abilities drawn from cinnabryl until those affected move out of the area of effect. The ability-neutralizing effects apply to the character using this power as well, excluding this ability itself, which lasts a turn. This power does not affect someone using a *cinnabryl implant* (#3 above).
- 10 Pyric Brand:** This ability creates a burst of red light equivalent to a *light* spell, blinding for 2-12 rounds all creatures facing the character within a 10' radius (or a 30' radius in the dark). A saving throw vs. spells is required to prevent this blindness. Use: once per day, instantaneous duration.
- 11 Quick Silver:** The character gains the ability to accelerate his reactions, allowing movement at twice the normal speed and twice as many melee or missile attacks (but not spell attacks) as normally permitted.
- 12 Regeneration:** The character regenerates lost hit points at the rate of 1 hp per turn. At 0 hp, the character passes out normally but could withstand up to 10 hp of additional damage before actually dying. Use: constant once activated.

and 200 Ci would be required; two points of Constitution would be lost as a result. See Table 1 for further details on contamination levels.

In addition to an innate ability, each dose of essence of cinnabar augments the character's longevity at the rate of one year per hit die or experience level. For example: Gobar the minotaur (6 HD) imbibes two doses, which give him another 12 years to live. Note that seed of cinnabar, cinnabryl, and essence of cinnabar do not affect undead or magical creatures like dragons.

High-level characters of the Savage Coast are often tempted to sacrifice their stamina in order to gain what is referred to among them as "cinnabar's immortality." The more notorious figures gained several centuries of life in this way.

In most cases, an ability generated by the essence of cinnabar is innate and can be called upon at any time, as long as the user wears pure, undepleted cinnabryl. The character must physically touch cinnabryl to use these abilities or maintain their effects (hence the use of cinnabryl bracers, rings, and so forth). All of the abilities described in Tables 3-6, unless noted otherwise, can be used at will only once per day, for a duration of one turn.

A player usually cannot choose a specific ability nor a specific ability table to roll from if his character increases his degree of contamination. Each time a character imbibes a dose of essence of cinnabar, roll 1d12 on Table 2 to find out on which table (Tables 3-6) special abilities are found.

The "catch"

If a Savage Coast native left his home, the seed of cinnabar poison in his blood would eventually pass out of his body, breaking his body's delicate balance with the metal cinnabryl. Remember: *Cinnabryl is poisonous to uncontaminated people* (see DRAGON issue #171). The absence of cinnabryl also prevents the use of all special abilities drawn from cinnabar and negates all permanent changes that such abilities may have had on the character. It may ultimately bring death to one who has already exceeded his normal biological life expectancy, by causing a permanent loss of 1 hp per day spent without cinnabryl.

This explains why no cinnabryl-augmented explorer or conqueror ever succeeded in reaching far beyond the Savage Coast. They all eventually died from contact with their cinnabryl talismans, which most of the affected persons jealously kept to themselves, or from the lack of cinnabryl, for those who grew far too old for the Immortals' taste. Very few are those who are aware of the risks involved in using this dangerous metal in all its forms.

A *wish* spell could conceivably remove any contamination, but that would ruin the character, just as this spell would ruin any other standard character class if someone *wished* his class to be something

else (provided such a use of the *wish* spell were allowed at all). Constitution points lost during the absorption of essence of cinnabar can never be restored, even if the character is "cured," except by use of a *wish* (one *wish* per point). This spell and all magical items with *wishes* are almost unknown on the Savage Coast because of their over-use.

Note that an "instant cure" of cinnabar contamination is instantly lethal to someone who has lived past his normal life expectancy. Seed of cinnabar also makes common people more irritable than normal, which accounts for the history of violence among the nations of the Savage Coast.

On the subject of life expectancy, it is a good idea not to reveal to a player what the exact longevity of his character is

(see the *Dungeon Master's Companion*, page 21). It would be appropriate to have a player make several die rolls for life prolongation, then have the DM secretly pick one at random every time his character increases his longevity in this manner. Keep them guessing.

Very low Constitution can become a real problem. DMs should be nasty with power-crazed characters! When a Constitution score reaches 2, adjust the PC's hit points further downward (-4 hp per HD/Level) and drop Strength and Dexterity 2 points. At a Constitution score of 1, apply a -5 hp per HD/Level penalty; if the character is still alive by then, reduce his Strength and Dexterity by half, rounding down. At a score of 0, the character turns into depleted bologna—R.I.P.

Table 5
Special Abilities From Essence of Cinnabar: Degrees 8-9

1d8 Ability and description

- 1 Anti-Magic III:** The character becomes immune to the effects of one first-, second-, or third-level spell, either clerical or magical in nature. The first eligible spell affecting the character automatically triggers this ability and alerts him of the activation. The character may cast spells normally.
- 2 Contaminate:** The character surreptitiously contaminates one living creature with cinnabar (no save). The contamination takes one day per level or hit die of the victim, as long as the character can remain within 10' of the victim for at least one full turn each day of the contamination process, or in physical contact for at least one full round each day, or partake of the same food or beverage each day. The attempt fails if any of the above is interrupted. The character knows when the contamination takes effect only when the victim's skin takes a reddish color; the victim reaches Degree 1 of contamination. Use: at will, one victim at a time until the attempt fails or succeeds.
- 3 Counter Drain:** The character causes a level-draining creature to drain its own hit dice each time it would affect the character (no save). If the PC counter *drains* the creature to 0 HD, the character gains a 5% chance per drained hit die of recovering one lost point of Constitution.
- 4 Life Sublimation:** A human character using this power ages 50 years in order to regain one lost point of Constitution. The character can use this ability at will; however, the character will not necessarily know what his exact lifespan is (see the *Dungeon Masters Companion*, page 21). *The first time demihumans use this ability*, halflings age 75 years, dwarves 150, elves 550. Effects are permanent.
- 5 Planar Phase:** The character can enter the Astral Plane and remain there for up to six hours. While there, the character can see into the Prime Plane up to 60' from his position.
- 6 Power Storing:** At the character's discretion, before damage is rolled, he can instantly absorb magical energy such as magic missiles, *fire* balls or lightning *bolts* cast at him. The character can later release the absorbed energy through a red steel weapon, when successfully hitting an opponent or an object. The energy causes a bonus of 1 hp damage for each hit die absorbed. The energy otherwise remains stored in the character up to one hour, after which it dissipates. Energy can be absorbed only once a day at the rate of 2 HD per degree of contamination. Unabsorbed hit dice that remain cause damage to the character normally.
- 7 Red Blur:** The character can move up to 10' each round at a blinding speed, either to automatically dodge all physical attacks that round or to pass through solid obstacles (e.g., walls and doors) without damage to either the obstacles or himself. The character may not dodge and attack during the same round. He may move through obstacles and attack normally.
- 8 Scarlet Storm:** The character creates a red shimmering force field to repulse opponents. The field instantly pushes away inanimate objects of less than 2,000 cn and all man-sized or smaller creatures, shoving them up to 60' away on a 30' wide front (no save). Any immobile obstacle in the victims' way inflicts 1d6 point of damage on the victims. Larger creatures must save vs. spells to move toward the character, and do so at half speed.

And monsters, too

Over thousands of years, mines and caves polluted with cinnabar have allowed for the existence of monsters that can assimilate cinnabryl ore. This contamination gives the monsters innate abilities that come with the higher contamination degrees normally caused by essence of cinnabar. These creatures were never able to spread beyond the Savage Coast since they carry within themselves the toxic essence of cinnabryl, which would kill them if the

seed of cinnabar poison faded from their blood. There are many tales about these horrid creatures. Rumor has it among common folk that those who abuse cinnabar die loathsome deaths, and return later to haunt their foes as cinnabar lichs.

Special thanks to the D&D Product Group, the DRAGON Magazine staff, and my wife for their invaluable help and patience in the design of Red Steel.

Letters

In *GAZ10 The Orcs of Thar*, I noticed King Doth had a 12th-level lizard man sidekick. I realize the lizard men were probably cut from the Gazetteer in editing, but I was wondering if they were the same as those in the *HOLLOW WORLD* set? If not, could you please state the differences?

The "normal" lizard men found in the *HOLLOW WORLD* set are assumed to be identical to the ones described in the new D&D game set (or the Basic Set for those of you who do not yet own a copy of the new set). Haarss the Ambusher (a critter from the *HOLLOW WORLD* set) is described as a 4-HD creature since he is a "unique" NPC. Nothing there would prevent you from using the GAZ10 guidelines for the creation of humanoid PCs to make Haarss a level 4 lizard man. That's what these optional rules were designed for. The same goes for King Doth's paramour, Gaakie-Green-Snout. Her adjustments are: St +1, In -1, Wi -1, Dx +1. Her XP advancement table would start this way:

Teenager: -1,200 XP, 1d8 hp, Lvl -1
Tribesman: 0 XP 2d8+1 hp, Lvl 0
Scout: 1,200 XP 3d8+2 hp, Lvl 1
Marauder: 3,600 XP 4d8+3 hp, Lvl 2

And so on. Gaakie has 8d8+13 hp at her level. You can figure the rest!



What about Myojo Katamura? He's a rakasta, as found in D&D module X2, but did you use GAZ10 to flesh him out in issue 165? What sort of racial bonuses did you apply, if any? What would the racial bonuses be for a minotaur?

More humanoid stuff! Rakastas have the same basic hit dice as lizard men, so we'll use the same XP advancement table. That makes Myojo a simple "Tribesman" (a standard rakasta). Rakasta racial bonuses are: St -1, In +1, Dx +3, Co -1. For a minotaur, I'd suggest: St +2, Dx -1, Cha -1. By the way, a box of D&D miniatures is now available from Ral Partha; among other neat figures, it includes a wonderful rakasta! This set also contains a description of a PC rakasta. It is simplified compared to what is suggested here, so it

could be used with the new D&D game set (without the GAZ10 guidelines, that is).

Has the *Creature Crucible*, series been discontinued?

No. We are planning a Creature Crucible on Glantrian lycanthropes for next year (PC4 Night Howlers). Be a party animal!

In DRAGON issue #161, you invited fans of the D&D game to send in their preferences for future installments of the Gazetteer series. I've responded with a list of my choices, but I have an interesting idea and I figured I'd run it by you.

One of the potential Gazetteer settings you mentioned was the Sind Desert. My personal D&D campaign has grown a bit stale, and in an attempt to liven it up, I

considered running module X10 *Red Arrow, Black Shield*, even though the Gazetteers say that Nomad Wars occur around 1,200 AC. To make a long story short, I thought it would be a good idea for TSR to revise the Desert Nomads modules (1983's X4 and X5, and 1985's X10) to set them in current Known World era. Why not bring in the maniacal Master and his desert minions? The FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting has the Horde, so why not threaten the D&D world with the nomad armies?

Funny you should bring this up just now! Our staff has been working on a major project for next year that will include not only a total revision of the Immortals set but also a major conflict rippling through the entire known World. And that, of course, should include the Desert Nomads faction. If your campaign has run stale, Wrath of the Immortals will definitely be an eye opener. This great saga will provide many events, both innocuous and ground-breaking, over decades of game time! Expect some earth-shattering changes to affect areas of the Known World. (As Prince Dharjee would say, "Elephant dung happens, Sahib!") As far as a detailed setting for Sind and Hule go, these two are definitely on our list for the future.

How does the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game relate to the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game?

The D&D game is a simpler, more flexible version of the AD&D game. If you are a prospective gamer who is unfamiliar with role-playing in general, you should purchase the new D&D Basic boxed set.

Are the Varellyans just a species of nagpas, or do all the nagpas (including those on the Flying City) have to return to their cocoons? What if they are in space? Do they have any other means of reproduction? At the time of the Gazetteers, is the Varellyan Curse broken?

Frankly, this is all up to you! If the nagpas are all related to the Varellyans, they would be bound to remain on the Known World forever. Should you change the setting, assume someone defeated the Varellyan curse, so the nagpas become biologically normal creatures.

I noticed a glitch on the Known World planetary map given in the HOLLOW WORLD boxed set. The area between the Arm of the Immortals and the Orc's Head Peninsula seems like land territory instead of water. What happened?

You can see the coastal line in blue that delineates the Yalu Bay and the small spot for the Trident Isle. An unfortunate error in production caused the blue color to end too far south. And, while we're at it, the Izondian Deep is also known as the Western Sea (see X9 The Savage Coast for a good map of the Orc's Head Peninsula and the coastal region north of the Izondian Deep). The Midland forest (also known as the Darkwood) also stretches too far south; it covers Hule completely Ω

Table 6

Special Abilities From Essence of Cinnabar: Degree 10+

1d6 Ability and description

- 1 Alchemical Ego:** The character instantly creates a double of himself. The new character is in all ways identical to the original at the time of its materialization, including age, contamination degree, abilities, memorized spells, personality, etc. The double acts as the character's twin (role-play as if *charmed*). The twin remains in play up to one hour. The twin vanishes when its time is up unless the original character died, in which case the twin permanently becomes the player's character; the original body vanishes. This ability does not duplicate magical equipment. If the original character dies, magical equipment remains on the floor. Note that a temporary twin cannot create an *alchemical ego* of himself while the original character still lives. Use: once per week.
- 2 Anti-Magic IV:** The character becomes immune to the effects of one first-through fourth-level spell, either clerical or magical in nature. The first eligible spell affecting the character automatically triggers this ability and alerts him of the activation. The character may cast spells normally.
- 3 Cinnabar Vampirism:** The character may partially "cure" a victim of cinnabar contamination. The victim must save vs. poison or permanently lose one degree of contamination. This process restores the use of one special ability (except *cinnabar vampirism*) that the "vampiric" character has already used that day. The victim must be physically touched for this power to work.
- 4 Enhanced Longevity:** The character instantly gains 3d10+6 years of life expectancy. Further, the character may use this ability each time his degree of contamination increases. The gain is permanent as long as the character remains contaminated with cinnabar. Use: constant, while contaminated, once activated.
- 5 Scarlet Gaze:** The character causes any nonmagical, living creature within his field of vision (a 30' long, 45° cone) to age 2d6 years per round of exposure (or 6d12 years for demihumans). The DM secretly rolls Intelligence checks for each victim each round, until one succeeds and warns the others. Victims otherwise do not realize what is happening unless someone specifically notices this tiny scarlet flicker in the character's eyes (a player must ask the DM if there is "anything unusual" about the gazer's appearance). A saving throw vs. death ray halves the effect of *the scarlet gaze* (round down effect).
- 6 Symptomatic Switch:** At one point of his life, the character gains the ability to cause all further doses of essence of cinnabar to reduce Charisma instead of Constitution. Two points of Charisma are lost for each new dose absorbed, causing odious deformities or disfigurement, repulsive body odor, detestable voice and behavioral alterations, etc. At a Charisma of 2 or less, the character becomes an evil, psychotic, chaotic creature of horror, a dangerous wretch hated by all, and falls under the control of the Dungeon Master. Use: once in a lifetime, at the character's discretion; once made, the decision to switch is irreversible (reroll on this chart if this ability has already been acquired).

Rolling the same ability twice: The character has the option of either selecting a twice-rolled ability a second time or rerolling for a new one on the same chart. Most abilities are usable once during a period of time; if selected twice, the character would then be able to use the ability twice during that same period of time. No other changes should be allowed.

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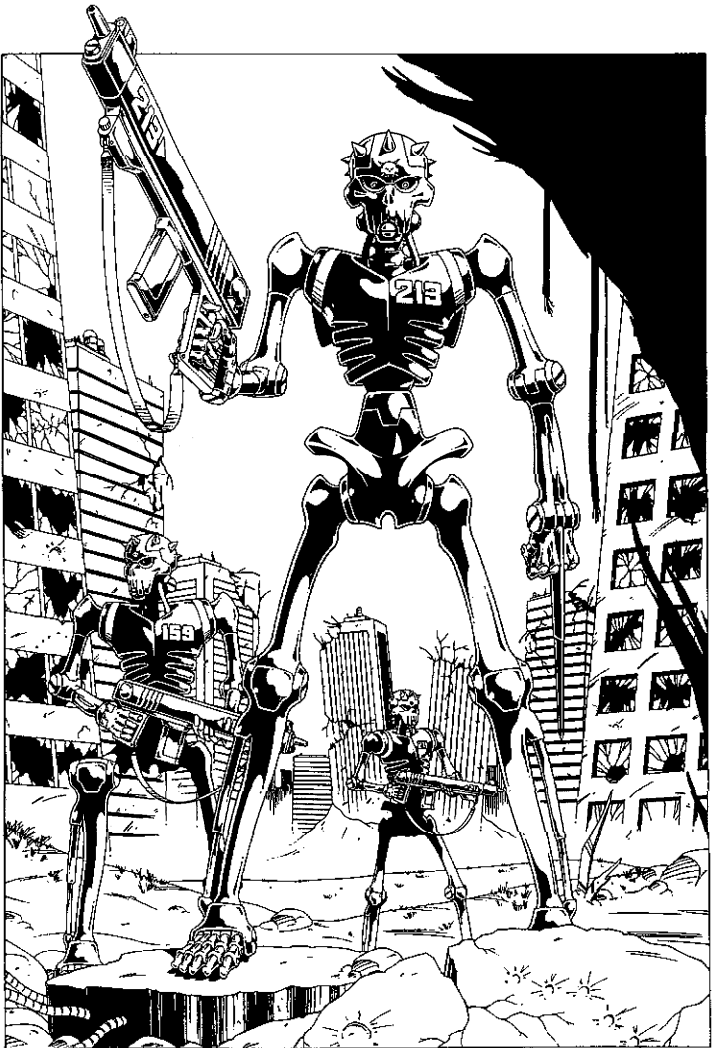
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FORUM



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I have been a DM for several years now, and I run a small campaign with a few friends of mine. I have grown accustomed to their styles of playing, but there is one problem that I have yet to solve. I would like some help if possible.

I try to be as fair as possible when I run an adventure. I give the PCs and the NPCs an equal and fair chance at solving and surviving problems that arise. When I create an NPC for the group, I try to be as fair as possible. I try not to make the character too powerful, because then the players have no fun as they sit back and watch the NPC do all the work and get all the experience. But I also try not to make the character too weak, because then that character is of no use to the adventure. I have made these mistakes before and I have learned from them.

But it seems that every time I create an NPC for the group, the players want to kill him off, get the NPC's equipment and any valuable items that might be carried, and keep all the treasure and experience that is gained during the adventure for themselves. Despite my best efforts to reason with them, they still have these thoughts and actions when I introduce any NPC.

Can any fellow DMs help me with this dilemma? Any input would be appreciated.

Andrew M. Curtis
Warren NH

I have just finished one of the most stimulating "Forum" columns (issue #1651 in years, and I just have to add my copper shavings to the pile).

I am providing thoughts in response to the letters of Dirk Waters, Bonnie Patterson, Ron Dippel, Michael Repka, and Rick Maffei. I have been playing the D&D games for about 12 years, with perhaps 80% of my games as DM.

There is just no substitute for experience in running an entertaining, durable game. You cannot run a game without great confidence in yourself. You have to invent rulings on the fly and judge situations no rulebook could anticipate. You have to lean more heavily toward what is fun (and within reason) than what the rules imply.

I don't like the thief class either—when treated as thieves. However, in my world, the various governments invariably train "agents" in skills remarkably like those of the thief class, and the streets generate somewhat less-expert versions of the same skills. The thief class is too interesting to reject on moral grounds, so tweak it.

I don't run DRAGONLANCE® campaigns (I leave that to my wife). However, I sympathize with a DM or player facing a well-played kender. The DM is deeply obliged to remember this is a game, and the people are gathered to have

fun. The kender will invariably get into situations in which no ordinary PC should be allowed to survive, and it is incumbent upon the DM to be "forgiving," nudge circumstances a bit, and let everybody have fun. I cannot say at what point a kender has misbehaved badly enough that his life is forfeit, but it is a lot further along than it would be for a greedy human rogue.

I am fortunate that I seldom encounter a player who wishes to dominate the game. I cannot claim that I have been very effective, either. But I do know, in principle, the DM is *in control*. You can turn your attention, blatantly and deliberately, to the other players, and ask them in turn, "So, what are *you* going to do?" The original game had one player speaking to the DM, and all the other players spoke to that player. No crowding or shouting at the DM to get your player preferential treatment, there. In the worst case, you can get away with favoring the other players until the pushy one gets the point. The hardest situation involves the quiet player, whose opinions and interaction are as hard to solicit as if the player had just had a bad day with his pet basilisk. He needs tender, attentive treatment. In time, with more confidence, players like that tend to blossom and are fun to have around.

Many of the games I play, I have only my wife to accompany me. And I am too deeply addicted to restrain myself to those occasions where we can gather a group. We routinely violate the two fundamental rules: one player to one PC; and the DM plays nothing but NPCs. It can be done. All you need is maturity and discipline. You have to have the right goals: fun, challenge, and role-playing. I have seen few young players who can let go of the thrill and self-aggrandizing nature of PC advancement. It is completely natural but cannot co-exist with multiple PCs or the DM playing a PC, for you will almost certainly cheat, and that takes all the fun out of the game.

Mistakes: Every DM makes them. There is just too much going on. If you realize it in time, you say, "Oh, no, wait—that die roll was good enough, after all." If it is too late, you can: a) start the scene over (not my recommendation); b) invent a circumstance, on the fly, behind the scenes, that accounts for it (use with caution); or c) make it up to the player in a subsequent encounter (usually the most harmless way). For example, you forget about the cleric's *prayer* spell, and someone dies of a poison sting that would not have landed. When you realize it, you can decide the character is not dead, only deeply comatose, and covertly sneak an *elixir of health* into the next treasure pile. Alternatively, say the character defeated a monster due mostly to your mistake and obtained a powerful wand thereby. Well, you can arbitrarily decide the monster had fewer hit points than it appeared (it could be an entirely new species, if necessary), and you can decide the wand only has one or two charges in it. If an *identify* spell said otherwise, so what? That spell is notoriously unreliable, anyway (grin).

I hope these ideas are of some help to others.

Lyle Wiedeman
Santa Ana CA

I am writing this letter in response to Mr. Dirk Waters' letter in issue #165. In his letter, Mr. Waters expressed several negative views about thieves. I disagree with many of his points,

First, most thieves are feared, hated, and illegally operating black-hearted scoundrels. However, this is not always the case. One has only to flip through the many literary works that feature honorable thieves. Consider Tasselhoff from the DRAGONLANCE saga books, Sure, he often stole from his companions, but it was his nature and he had no evil intentions. Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser were notorious thieves, yet they are also the greatest heroes in all of Nehwon. Bilbo Baggins, of *The Hobbit*, started out as a thief for a band of dwarves. Finally, one of the greatest heroes of all time was a thief. In my opinion, this character embodied the epitome of the honest thief. Of course, I am speaking of Robin Hood! I am sure even Mr. Waters' campaign could accept a thief who lived by the creed "steal from the rich and give to the poor."

As can be seen from the characters mentioned above, a thief is not necessarily distrusted by his party, significantly weaker than his companions, or looked down upon. Sure, Fafhrd, Mouser, and Robin Hood were feared, hated, and operated illegally, but so what? Practically all great fantasy heroes (the Fellowship of the Ring, the Companions of the Lance, Conan) are feared and hated by somebody, but those who oppose them are almost always evil beings trying to thwart the cause of good. Law is also subject to interpretation. People familiar with the Inquisition of Blackthorn in Origin's *Ultima V* computer game understand that the heroes (the Avatar and his companions) are hounded by the law of a mad monarch (Blackthorn). The fact that thieves have to go to a thieves' guild to train and are forced to lie about their occupation is really beside the point. Also, what better way to turn young urchins into honest thieves than to be trained by one?

This letter is not written to put down Mr. Waters or the DM and his campaign he mentioned. I only wanted to defend the thief class and show that it does have good points. One last thing: Aren't fighters, rangers, paladins, wizards, and priest also professions as well as character classes?

Anjuan Simmons
Wichita Falls TX

I would like to respond to Dirk Waters' DM (from the letter in DRAGON issue #165) with a simple message: Lighten up, will you? This DM makes the thief class seem utterly evil and self-interested. He seems to have taken too literally the maxim that there is "no honor among thieves." If this was the case, then they would be too busy double-crossing one another to go adventuring, and this is clearly not the case.

Although theft is illegal, it is not always hated; for the best example, read the Robin Hood stories. Describing a thieves' guild as a "wretched hive of scum and villainy" is purely a subjective judgment. If thieves ever want to aspire to great robberies, there must be order to allow intelligence gathering

and planning. How could these things ever happen if no one trusted each other?

And why can't a party trust its thief? As Mr. Waters (rightly) says, thieves are weak, so if they are ejected from their parties, they will have big problems unless very near civilized areas. My thieves never robbed directly from their companions simply for this reason.

Thieves should not be looked down upon, because they add essential skills to any dungeoneering group. If their weaknesses give cause to look down upon them, what do we say of 1st and 2nd-level magic-users or 1st-level clerics in the D&D® game? You shouldn't judge a character by lists of skills but by how that character is played.

Why should thieves have to make such feeble excuses about their origins when they excel at deception? A title such as "Professional Treasure Hunter," as used in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, is far enough from "thief" to be usable without causing trouble. Thieves could act as henchmen or guards, or cloak themselves so that any possessions would be unnoticed. Starting money for fighters can be as low as only 30 gp, barely enough for leather armor and a decent sword, so the "I'm a fighter" answer is reasonable. So long as the thief stays out of trouble, no one would have reason to suspect him.

Mr. Waters' DM seems to regard all thieves as irredeemably chaotic evil, but this is just not the case. The scout he created does exactly what my groups' thieves always did, and they had none of the magical protection that the 15th-level scout he mentions had.

As a final note, if that group wants to see how thieves can be used with humor but still as an effective class, I suggest they read any of the

Discworld novels by Terry Pratchett, in which theft is licensed by the government, and there are strict quotas to stop arbitrary thefts.

Graham Ross
London, U.K.

I am writing in response to Michael Repka's letter in issue #165. In it, he states: "This practice [when a DM plays one of his characters as a PC] is grossly unfair to the other players."

As a DM, I have played some of my characters as PCs, and I treated them like any other PC. Now, you'll notice the previous sentence was in the past tense. This is because I had a character, an assassin, and as a DM I knew where there was a sword that made its user invisible. The player characters came to a place where they could either swim in this green stuff and find the sword, or they could take a rickety old bridge across. The players' PCs took the bridge, and my PC swam and found the sword. As soon as the players realized I had "found" a magical sword, they said it was unfair, and the game stopped because everyone started arguing.

Upon thinking about my mistake, I realized the players were right, and now I don't use my characters as PCs. I guess this all boils down to the fact that I agree with what Michael said.

Here is a warning to all DMs: Never use your own characters as PCs.

Scott Wilbur
Carver MA

I would like to comment on the letter by Michael Repka in DRAGON issue #165. Yes, he is correct,

the PCs are more powerful if controlled by a power-hungry DM. In the gaming session that I have played in, the DM kept his PCs out of the fray if they were not needed. He did not use them to find or keep treasure, but they were most helpful in healing and other skills, if the PCs had them.

I would also like to comment on the placement of magical items in the game. In the sessions mentioned above, my DM gave us certain magical items, but he used circumstances that caused us to use those items rarely and wisely. One of the PCs had an amulet that could reveal *invisible* creatures. He almost died when he tried to use the amulet on a retriever (needless to say, lightning was always his phobia thereafter). Even though his game was a Monty-Haul campaign, the money and sometimes the magical items were used to buy information or other supplies. The campaign had all the alignments, classes, and races that any DM would be proud of. These differences often caused plots and grudges among the PCs that were quick to resolve themselves in the thick of battle. Having thieves in the party never made any difference until our semi-powerful deep gnome tried to pick a high-level ranger's pocket. We did not kill him for his crime; we had a high-level cleric in the next town put a quest on him. This was funny for the players and even that character.

My advice for DMs is that you should play your PCs as if they knew only what the party knows, and that you should always listen to your players if they think that things are unfair or you are favoring certain PCs. Remember, this is only a game, and the players should have fun playing and not arguing with the DM.

Eric Durfee
Barstow CA

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I am writing in response to Michael Repka's letter in DRAGON issue #165. I am now in an AD&D campaign in which there is a total of three people. I am the head DM, and my cousin and his friend DM some adventures. It usually ends up with each person having two or three PCs per adventure, even the DM.

We have found that it is very hard for the DM to play his PCs in a dungeon that he created. I even played my PCs as if they were totally stupid. Soon I found out that a DM cannot play his character in a dungeon that he created because a PC should give input about what to do next and not just sit there. To fix this problem, I let one of the other people in my campaign play my PCs at some kind of risk. Because no one believed a DM would kill his own PCs, the other members of the campaign always made my characters go first in dangerous or scary situations. To fix this problem, I let the players see that by putting my PCs in front was not going to help them. They were once facing a trap and said that my character would try to get through it first and deactivate it. I rolled to see if he would make it, and he didn't, so I killed him. This surprised the other players because they didn't think that I would kill one of my PCs so easily. I told them that I can always start a new character, and that they need to play my PCs as if they were their own.

Now, we have a lot of fun in our campaign because the DM can bring his character through an adventure that he created. I know that I can let other people play my PCs safely, and all the other members know that I will play their PCs as if they were my own. This way gets rid of the DM character that knows about every last trap, treasure, monster, and secret door in an adventure. This also allows everybody to have a PC in an adventure and not get into a DM-only-and-players-only situation all the time.

This way of playing works in our three-person campaign, but it could also work in a larger campaign. If a DM is going to have a PC in an adventure he created, then the DM must let someone else play his character, because it is hard for the DM to run the adventure and play a PC at the same time.

Christian Stoudt
Fort Worth TX

I'd like to reply to Michael Repka's letter in issue #165 on the subject of DMs running a character in an adventuring party in an adventure that he is DMing.

Basically, my conclusion after reading over Michael's letter was that his problem doesn't lie with this practice, but with the DM in question. To elaborate, I have been playing and DMing for over seven years. In all my campaigns—no matter the gaming system being used—the DM always has a character in the party. There are several reasons for this.

First, we normally alternate DMs within the same campaign. I'll be a DM for a time, then another DM takes over and runs an adventure, taking up from the point where I ended. This gives myself and our other DM a chance to play a character fully. As our adventuring parties tend to travel extensively (one campaign motto was: "Are we wanted here?" with the straight-faced reply: "Not yet!"), this precludes the option of the DM's character from staying behind at a campaign base while the other characters go adventuring.

Second, I have always felt that, by having a character in the party, I can feed information and hints about puzzles and problems to the players, especially when their line of reasoning meanders down the wrong track or they ap

preach a problem from the wrong angle, without having to resort to the sudden appearance of the ubiquitous crazy-old-man-type NPC. I have a ready-made character for inveigling characters into adventures, and I have a backup to aid the party if needed, all rolled into one character. The character will be far more trusted by the party than an NPC, making it possible for me to get the characters into adventures more easily and logically than have the NPC meet the party at an inn and hire them.

The third reason for a DM having a character in a party isn't one that I personally have had to face. This is the case where the DM only has two or three players in his group. In this situation, a DM-run character can cover areas where the party is weak or lacking in useful skills.

The final reason that I can see for using a DM-run character is actually the reason that I started doing so in the first place. When you are the only DM in a group, with no other gamers around, this is the only way you get to actually play a character, rather than a cast of NPCs who appear and disappear regularly.

To use a DM-run character fairly, the DM must remember that although this could be a favored character, the character is still actually only an NPC and must be treated as such—no pampering, unbelievable immunities, grandstanding during adventures, or overpowered magical items. The DM must use character knowledge in his dealings with other characters, though I feel it is acceptable for a DM's PC to act as a conduit of useful information that the character could logically know.

For example, a low-level party is exploring some ruined tombs when it disturbs an old casket containing a wight. The party hasn't found the enchanted sword the DM had placed in the area so they could fight this creature. They have never encountered a wight before and are ready to leap to their doom. The DM, not wanting to slaughter characters and deprive them of hard-won levels unfairly, can have his own character remember a bit of information he heard in a tavern tale, about how creatures that looked like this one are only supposed to be vulnerable to enchanted or holy weapons, or some such thing like that. In other words, warn them using DM knowledge, but in such a way that it sounds as though it's character knowledge. Certainly, the DM often should fudge rolls for his character, but only where it is of benefit to the flow of the adventure, not to the benefit of his or any other character. A DM's character can be very useful for finding secret doors, spotting the vital clue that has been missed, etc. But the DM mustn't abuse this; he must do this only when the characters have tried and failed, or have neglected to search the area.

The DM must always keep in mind that the players are the integral factor with which his adventure either succeeds or fails, not an awestruck audience for the grandstanding heroics of his own character. Yes, you can have your PC perform (or attempt) an act of heroism to save the party, but not until the PCs have had a chance to do this for themselves. What Michael said about the character being invulnerable to dragon breaths that injured the rest of the party—that was an abuse of the character by that DM, and was grossly unfair to the other players. Under no circumstances can the DM's character be invulnerable or have powers that the other PCs cannot have. In fact, as far as I'm concerned, my character is often more likely to be the victim of an attack, rather than a character—especially when the next blow could kill a PC who doesn't deserve to die. For example, we have just completed the AD&D Avatar

series of modules (FRE1-3). These were particularly lethal due to the disruption of magic and the lack of higher-level healing magic—we had 14 fatalities (including one execution and two ex-PCs belonging to players who dropped out) during the three adventures. My own character was killed twice, a record shared jointly by two other characters. There were a reasonable amount of means to *raise* slain characters about. However, characters were *raised* only if the party (i.e., the players) were happy to have that character back, and if the player indicated that he wanted to continue with that character. Both times, my character was *raised* without any intervention or pleading on my part, as the players felt that Morag was an essential part of the group and deserved to be *raised*.

As far as treasure and experience are concerned, my own character receives no more favoritism than any other character. Yes, I will put magical items especially for her, but then I will also do the same for the other characters. Regarding experience points, I feel that my character deserves more than the usual 50% XP award given to normal NPCs, but not as much as the actual characters played, and I don't consider my character eligible for idea points, role-playing points, or the constant goals points. The first two categories normally make up at least 25% of the award I give out. The character I ran in the Avatar series, Morag Rowanmantle, did end up the highest level (9th) of the PCs, but this was because of the characters who started back in Arabel at the start of FRE1, only Morag and two others lasted through to the end. The other two were both multiclassed; a fighter/cleric and druid/mage. They obviously didn't progress as quickly as Morag did, and the druid/mage was slain during FRE2. In general, I have found that my own character ends up the lowest level of the party, as he effectively gets less experience than the other PCs.

I will admit that the potential is there to abuse the system when using a DM-run PC. If you feel that you can't be fair to the players and other PCs if you run your own character, then don't use the PC when you are DMing. If, on the other hand, you do feel that you can run the character and be fair to the others, then go on ahead and do so. However, you should also listen to the feedback from the players. They will give a very good guide as to whether you are abusing the system.

In conclusion, if I was to try even half of the things attempted by the DM described in Michael Repka's letter, then I would have a graveyard full of dead characters (mine) and no players. The DM he writes about should be spoken to by the players and told to reform (or else). Everything he describes is a result of bad DMing, not the policy of a DM running his own character in an adventure.

Des Garrett
Ballincollig, Ireland
Ω

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Darkspyre (Event Horizon Software)

It's save-the-world time again in *Darkspyre*

Reviews

Darkspyre

Event Horizon Software (412-527-1519)
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95

*** ½

With *Darkspyre*, a new game-publishing company has made a good attempt to enter the lucrative world of PC/MS-DOS software entertainments. There is nothing revolutionary about *Darkspyre*; in fact, you might mistakenly believe you were playing an action/adventure game created about two years ago. You control a single character who must make his way through various mazes, battling all manner of vile opponents and finding a variety of goodies and not-so-goodies, all in an attempt to overcome the various trials within the *Darkspyre* itself.

The *Darkspyre* was created by the gods to locate a champion, one who could win this final test of mankind. If your hero cannot find the five runes of power within *Darkspyre*, he cannot enter the levels of the three gods: War, Magic, and Intellect.

And if he can't master these tests, the world will be totally destroyed. However, here the plot becomes somewhat strange. There are three gods who are intent on destroying mankind. Yet, should your hero find the five runes of power and unlock the five magic portals, each god has left behind a special gift that will aid him in the final portion of the adventure. (That's a mighty fine way for enemies of mankind to act, if you ask us. If the gods are so intent on destroying mankind, why assist the would-be champion of humanity in preventing their victory?)

You've got 100 years left of the original

300 years given mankind to succeed and prove that it is worthy of continued existence. Should you manage this, the gods will leave the world alone, pledging no further interference in human ways.

You can create your character quickly by having all of his stats generated by the computer. One nice aspect of this method is that you can sometimes gain exceptional characters. A second method allows you to assign a pool of points to the character's different attributes, while a third method is a combination of the previous methods. We enjoyed the quick-start method of play, as it negates the laborious story that is played for you each time you start a character from scratch. Your quick-start character is also assigned a weapon proficiency, which might be with large weapons, thrown weapons, or other types. When your hero reaches *Darkspyre*'s armory, you'll note that he can enter only one of the special-weapons areas to arm himself for the game. He'll need that weapon when he takes on the first mage!

Throughout the adventure, you'll find

Computer games' ratings

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

magic spells, potions, armor, and weapons lying about, usually after your hero defeats someone or something to get them. Your character will need lots of keys to open various doors. Don't avoid the teleporters; we found that the majority of them led to beneficial things.

What's not well implemented? After all, we enjoyed the adventure. However, the scrolling of the 3-D overhead map that reveals your character's progress is abysmally slow. Granted, we ran the game on a 80286 machine, but most gamers just don't have the funds to run out and purchase 80386 or faster PC/MS-DOS clones. Pity those who run this on a 8086 machine!

Secondly, the character screen and the 3-D overhead map are poorly implemented. To obtain information about your character, you must drag the character screen up from the bottom of the monitor and superimpose it on the overhead map. This slows down game action quite a bit as you change your character's inventory and the weapons he holds. To proceed, you must once again lower the character screen. We found that we could lower the character screen so that we could see all items our character possessed and the character's head and hands, while also viewing the overhead map, but it was not a convenient mode of play.

Far better would have been to create a smaller overhead map portion to occupy the top half of the screen, with the character screen and all of its information available in the bottom half of the screen. The mouse interface is quick, so weapon changes or armor additions could quickly be made without moving windows around to accomplish your orders.

Darkspyre is a decent first effort for this new game company, but it requires more thought as to how gamers will appreciate its interface. This game was reviewed using VGA graphics and an AdLib sound board.

RoboSport

Maxis (415-254-9700)

Macintosh version

\$59.95

Those who claim nothing new is released in the way of gaming for the Macintosh should bite their tongues! Maxis, the publisher of the smash-hit *SimCity*, has released **RoboSport**, a totally engrossing robot-combat simulation that is bound to rack up amazing sales for the company.

RoboSport could be described as a thinking man's shoot-em-up, as the package cover indicates, but this game is highly playable by everyone, and we guarantee enjoyment for all.

RoboSport features 24 battlefields, a well-written tutorial to get you into new combat scenarios quickly, an amazingly simple user interface to program your robots, limitless options for gamers to customize the environments, the ability to view a complete movie of an entire battle, the ability to be played on black-and-white or color Macintosh computers, and the



Darkspyre (Event Horizon Software)

ability to link with another computer by modem for head-to-head play.

In each game, you and a friend can battle each other, as well as one or two computer-controlled robot teams. This is set up at the quick-start window, where you decide each team's name, color, and home area (a corner of the square battlefield). If you are playing against a friend and want to include a computer-controlled team, order two computer-controlled teams. Otherwise, you'll find out (as we did) that the computer-controlled robots go all-out against one of the human teams, causing much consternation as your forces are decimated by both your friend and the computer team.

Once you've named the teams, it's off to the battlefield. You position your robots, one at a time, in their home area. From there, it's a simple matter of clicking the mouse cursor on the appropriate command in the Edit window. Here, you can select an appropriate height for your robots; reducing a robot's visibility to enemy robots makes it less likely that it will be struck by incoming fire.

Your robots are able to move to selected areas on the battlefield, aim and fire at targets, or scan and fire. For "scan & fire" actions, you use the programming control panel to select the direction in which a robot will scan and the length of scanning time. Should the robot detect a target during the time you have designated for the scan, it will fire the weapon you designated as "in-hand." Below the Height and Scan icons is the weapons box, which has icons that represent a rifle, burst gun, automatic rifle, missile launcher, and grenade launcher. The weapons that your current robot carries are detailed in black; the weapons not carried are grayed out. You simply click on the weapon you want in active use.

When you are using a grenade or missile launcher, ammunition is limited. A number next to the weapon identification informs you as to the number of rounds available with that weapon. We attempted to save our missiles and grenades for sure hits, when we identified an enemy robot in a particular area and were close enough for a kill. Usually, a direct hit with a missile or a grenade will destroy an enemy robot, whereas a rifle shot normally only causes injury—the enemy robot can return fire!

A message bar atop the display informs you as to the current robot's name and location. Your team's turn consists of several moves, with 1-40 seconds assigned for each turn. Each action consumes time. Therefore, it takes a great deal of thought to plan each robot's activities without wasting valuable time when ordering it to undertake specific actions.

With the program bar, each move is depicted with icons. Should a particular move you make not be to your liking, you can highlight that move and delete it. You can even order your last remaining robot into kamikaze mode and hope that when it blows up, it'll take enemy robots with it.

Your on-screen cursor is an informative tool. If your pointer is over an area that your current robot can enter, it turns into a target sight and the location indicator displays an "x,y" position. Should your cursor be atop an area your robot cannot enter, it turns into an X and the location indicator tells you why the move is impossible (e.g., "blocked" —perhaps a wall is in your way). If the cursor turns into a partial target sight with the word "OUT" beneath it, it means you have used up the allotted time for the current robot's moves. If you are targeting with your cursor and the target sight turns black as you move across an enemy, it means the opposing piece is within the optimum



Darkspyre (Event Horizon Software)

range of your robot's current weapon. The lighter the target sight, the worse the chance of an accurate hit. Don't waste your shots! Not only does it take important time away from additional moves, but it also allows the enemy to pinpoint your position.

One of the most unusual battlefields is the computer background, on which your robots hide behind and scramble over integrated circuits and resistors. Rubble is an interesting battlefield, as partial walls allow a robot who is using height to his advantage to become a highly accurate sniper. With the arena menu, you can select one of eight sizes for the arena, as well as magnify or reduce the arena to allow for a single screen view of the action.

The movie concept plays an important role in *RoboSport*. At the conclusion of each turn, you and your human opponent watch the turn unfold before your eyes. You can select the speed of the replay and can track each move, trying to learn the moves of your enemies. At the end of the game, when one side has won, you can watch all of your moves spliced together in a long movie, observing each opponent's attacks and maneuvering. This latter option does require disk space, so if you are not running *RoboSport* from a mass storage device but rather from a floppy disk, we recommend you don't activate this feature.

RoboSport offers extremely high dollar-to-play value in that no encounters will likely be similar. The manual is superbly written and possesses graphic as well as textual explanations. With a variety of game-winning options such as Capture The Flag or all-out Fire Fight, multiplayer capabilities, and play by modem or serial connections, this strategy game is an exciting offering for Macintosh gamers. This

software package won't gather dust.

Warlords

Strategic Studies Group (904-494-9373)
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95
with VGA and AdLib sound

As we write this, we've been totally engrossed in playing this outstanding medieval-strategy fantasy game from SSG for the past five days. The graphics aren't revolutionary, and the sound is minimal at best. But the play's the thing.

The basic scenario is that eight kingdoms (whether player or computer controlled) are struggling to control the Kingdom of Illuria. This is no easy task. For each move you make, one of the seven competing powers tries to counter you while establishing footholds for its armies within the kingdom. To win, you must be bent on the total destruction of each enemy.

The cities you conquer not only add cash to your coffers but also produce a variety of armies, such as light infantry (what we began calling spear-fodder), pegasi, and wolfriders. The stronger the army, the more expensive it is to produce and maintain over the course of the game. You must keep an eye on your treasury to ensure that you have enough funds to continue any production in progress as well as maintain your forces in the field.

We found that by limiting production to the stronger armies as the game progressed, we were able to build our treasury to a level that attracted heroes. Heroes can lead armies and are formidable fighters. They also sometimes manage to bring allies to the picnic, such as devils, demons, dragons, wizards, and the undead. You stack a hero with two or three units of dragons and devils, and there is little opposition from an enemy (unless the enemy has managed to attract similar forces!). One of the best allies a hero can

obtain is a wizard, who is not only powerful but also has 52 movement points per turn. However, just because a hero enters an interesting site and begins a search for allies or items of power, he is not guaranteed to survive the encounters awaiting him. We found it highly advisable to save the game just prior to issuing the command for the hero to search.

The game comes with a small full-color map of Illuria. Each empire's city control is shown on-screen in one of eight colors. Each empire has specific strengths and weaknesses that you can employ to your advantage and to the enemies' detriment.

Warlords' interface is simple to use. We preferred the mouse control on the PC/MS-DOS version. The playing map is depicted in the large window on the left side of the screen with a strategic map on the right side. The bottom window is the information area that offers such information as the current turn, how much gold you have, what armies are being built, and what items a hero might have found in a ruin (perhaps a monster like a dragon or a powerful weapon).

You can estimate not only your own forces' sizes but those of the enemy as well. Each army's icon carries with it a flag; the length and number of flags present indicates a force's total strength. As you can stack as many as eight armies together, watch those forces with two flags; this means at least five armies are stacked together. It is also a good idea to note, with great caution, where all heroes and their allied forces are located. Though each army possesses an easily identifiable icon, the only icon you see once they're stacked is the lead icon.

Empires with the ability to build navies will find themselves at an advantage in racing to points of interest, such as weakly defended enemy cities on the coast. They can also manage the transport of heroes to highly valuable ruins and temples. Pegasi can fly heroes to locations within the empires, but they carry only the hero and none of his allies. Once the hero arrives at a point of interest, only he can enter the ruin or temple to confront what lurks inside. (By the way, enter a temple and your hero and any associated armies might obtain a blessing, or your hero might have his strength increased.)

Other specialty commands include the ability to build the defenses of a city that your troops occupy, and to build defensive towers on the plains. These activities all require money. Movement costs for your armies vary with the terrain.

You may establish any city you own as the capital city of your territory. You can also disband any of your army units and remove them from the game, which you can do if you lack the funds to maintain your forces. Once you have captured an enemy city, you can raze it, destroying it completely (this can cause some hard feelings, however).

The reports menu is very useful. Here

you receive bar graphs identifying how many armies each empire possesses, which cities are controlled, how much gold each empire has, which empires are in production, and who is winning the game. Additionally, a "hatred chart" shows which enemies truly detest or loathe you, or simply hold you in distrust or just plain apathy. As for those whose hatred is high-well, look no further for where an attack might spring forth.

Warlords is a fine entertainment product combining elements of fantasy and strategy in a medieval setting. You'll obtain high dollar-to-play value. Given that you may have as many as eight friends involved, you've got a great game for group participation. **Warlords** is one of those products that should be ported to other systems, such as the Macintosh and Atari ST, and should make its way into video entertainment systems as well. Currently available for PC/MS-DOS and Amiga computers, **Warlords** is one of those rare strategy games that will appeal to fantasy role-playing gamers and adventurers from all walks of life. It is highly recommended.

Shadow Dancer

Sega (415-742-9300)

Sega Genesis version

Price n/a

After breaking up the Neo Zeed organization in the Sega game **Revenge of Shinobi**, Mushashi (also known as Shinobi) spent some time in New York with his former student, Kato, and his dog, Yamato. Kato learned of kidnappings at a local elementary school; he tried to stop them but was killed. Mushashi must now stop the Union Lizard who killed Kato.

Shadow Dancer is an extremely well-done sequel to the visually stunning **Revenge of Shinobi**. Mushashi must complete four levels of action in order to enter the Lizards hideout, where he will face the leader of this new and powerful organization. Each level consists of three stages. The first two stages call for Mushashi to rescue hostages. The last stage is a fight with the boss of that level, who must be defeated before you can continue to the next level.

Mushashi wields a sword, fists, feet, and throwing stars in battle. An option allows the player to handicap himself by not allowing Mushashi to have the throwing stars, thus completing the game with only close-combat fighting techniques. He is also armed with ninjutsu magic, which he can use once per stage to defeat his enemies. Columns of fire, tornadoes, or meteors can be summoned to quickly alter the odds in Mushashi's favor.

Finally, Mushashi can send Yamato to hold an enemy. This is particularly effective when an enemy is shooting at Mushashi from a distance, and Mushashi cannot defeat the foe without being shot. Yamato holds an enemy long enough for Mushashi to finish the job, but he cannot stop every type of enemy, nor can he hold one for long. If he begins to lose, Yamato

returns to Mushashi's side at a smaller size, no longer useful until Mushashi rescues a captive or uses magic. Mushashi isn't invincible, either, and perishes after taking one hit.

Mushashi's mission, in addition to defeating the Union Lizard, is to rescue hostages. He is well rewarded when rescuing captives and receives points, extra lives, or a power up. With the latter, Mushashi has a beam shot instead of his throwing stars, and his punches and kicks are stronger.

Another opportunity for additional points is a bonus stage after completing a level. Mushashi jumps off a skyscraper, his object being to hit the ninja who come out of the windows during his descent. Bonus points are awarded on the number of eliminated ninja.

Shadow Dancer offers incredible, flicker-free animation. The music and sound effects are good, though not up to **Revenge of Shinobi's** standards. The details are outstanding (enemies actually duck behind boxes to reload their weapons after firing at Mushashi), and the backgrounds are stunning. This is another game that shows off the high quality of the Genesis machine, and we highly recommend it.

Y's Books I and II

NEC (708-860-9500)

TurboGraphx-16 version

\$60.00

NEC's entrance into role-playing games through the use of CD-ROM technology makes this game an awesome hit. In Book I, you play Adol, a warrior who must recover six ancient books that hold the key to returning prosperity to the land of Y's Once that task is accomplished, Adol sets out in Book II to return those books to six statues and face the source of the evil that has been plaguing the land for over 800 years.

This game is played from an overhead point of view, with Adol, other characters, and his surrounding area displayed on the screen. At the bottom of the screen, Adol's hit points, magic points (in Book II), experience points, and gold are displayed. A bar at the bottom of the screen displays Adol's hit points.

Adol must gain experience to increase his hit points, strength, defenses, and (in Book II) magic points. This is accomplished by finding items such as swords, armor, and shields that increase his strength or defenses, or by using money to purchase these items that might help him on your quest. Gold is found by defeating the evil creatures throughout the land.

Combat is initiated by causing Adol to run into one of the creatures. A bar that displays the opponent's hit points appears beneath Adol's hit-point bar. The game determines the relative strengths and defenses of both combatants; To win the combat, Adol must continue to run into the opponent until the enemy's hit-point bar is gone. Adol will also encounter evil bosses who require more strategy than

simply headlong combat. Patience is required to win these latter encounters,

There are many parts of the land to discover in both books. (Darm Tower, a place Adol must visit in Book I, has 21 levels!) Adol will find villages, shrines, towers, mines, forests, and dens. Lots of time is spent traveling between all such locations, as there are mini-quests that help Adol accomplish his overall task.

Along the way, Adol runs into important characters whose voices can actually be heard, courtesy of the Turbographx CD player. Cinematic sequences at the beginning, middle, and end of the game are well done and are extremely satisfying to watch. The CD-quality music is quite good, although hearing it over and over again does make one edgy. Fortunately, there is enough musical variety to keep almost anyone happy.

The animation in the cinematic sequences is the best we've seen for a Turbographx game. **Y's Books I and II** is well worth the investment, as you get two games in one offering. Book II of **Y's** was not included in other computer or video game versions, but it is packed in with this CD. **Y's** is a great adventure game that offers long play value, music, cinematic sequences, and role-playing action. It is definitely a must-get for any Turbographx CD owner,

Zombie Nation

** 1/2

Meldac of America (213-286-7040)

NES version

Price n/a

Zombie Nation is a fast arcade shoot-em-up that scrolls horizontally. A strange projectile from space has landed, releasing an evil being, named Darc Seed, who turns the population of the U.S. into zombies and the Statue of Liberty into a creature that does his bidding. To make things worse, Darc Seed takes control of many deadly weapons, including the most powerful weapon of all, the samurai sword, Shura. You play Namakubi, a samurai in Japan who knows of the true power of this sword. You hear the news of Darc Seed's successes and fly to the U.S. to rescue innocents and to prevent Darc Seed from using the sword.

Namakubi flies through the air to destroy Darc Seed's earthly weapons as well as the zombies. Namakubi fires two shots at once: one falls toward the ground and the other moves horizontally, being useful against airborne targets. Along the way, hostages can be rescued to recover Namakubi's health or add to his shot power. The number of heads at the bottom of the screen show Namakubi's health; when all of them have turned into skulls, the game is over.

The graphics are decent, but flickering during this game occurs many times. This is not an original game, nor is it the best arcade entertainment out on the market. It is an average game that we would recommend only after you have played and won other shoot-em-up games.



Zombie Nation (Meldac of America)

Letters

Our thanks to Young J. Park of Edmonds, Wash., for his recent letter. In reply to some of his questions: The print size of the text is determined by the DRAGON® Magazine editorial staff. Yes, we would like additional space for more gaming reviews and tips, but pages within this magazine are at a premium and must be parcelled out equitably to cover all of the topics of interest to the magazine's broad readership. As far as game coverage, we also review video-game software, as many adventures are being released for these 8- and 16-bit systems. We do focus on software-based fantasy and science-fiction role-playing games, combat/strategy games, and other adventure simulations for both computers and video-game systems, but we sometimes come upon an arcade game that is too good to ignore. We feel other computer and video-game enthusiasts would appreciate knowing of its existence. We hope this explanation enhances your enjoyment of the column.

We receive many letters from readers like Bryce Harrington of Lake Oswego, Ore., asking us which computer system we recommend for purchase. As Bryce stated in his letter, his motivation for purchasing a computer system is not game related. Yes, we do have our personal favorites, but we feel it would be unfair to specify one or two systems to every user. After all, your system purchase depends upon which software you need to use for school, home, or office. If for the office, then a Macintosh or a PC/MS-DOS computer would probably be your best bet; both are also superb when running games. Certainly, if for school, an Apple computer is hard to beat, but check with your computer instructor to see which system he prefers for students. Usually, you can obtain a special student price for such

systems when used for class work. For those who will use a system more for games than anything else, either the Amiga 2000 or 3000 or the new Atari 1040 ST are bound to please. For dedicated game machines, the 16-bit video game systems such as the Sega Genesis or the NEC Turbographx-16 can't be topped. Please remember, however, that any computer system is of value to a user who enjoys that system. (Our personal preference happens to be the Macintosh, for those who are keeping score.)

Several good questions came in this month from software gamers, and they require our readers' collective brilliance in answering.

The first query comes from Eric Korman of Maryland, concerning *Might and Magic II*: "How do I get past the force field protecting Corak's body? I already possess his soul."

J. David Glaes of Los Angeles, Calif., has been searching for the Shard of Cowardice in *Ultima V* for weeks. "Would you please tell me where it is located? If it is beneath the Dungeon Doom, could you tell me where Doom is? I am at an impasse. I would like to start *Ultima VI*, but cannot until you or a fellow reader helps me."

Clue corner

The Bard's Tale series (Electronic Arts)

This trick allows you to acquire useful items quickly by copying them.

1. Go adventuring until you have an important item.
2. Let a wandering monster join your party (or, better yet, summon one).
3. Go to the inn where you can save the individual characters.
4. Transfer the item(s) to the monster and enter the inn.

5. Save the monster.
6. Add him to the party and give the items to the characters.
7. Outside, drop the monster from the party.
8. Reenter the inn and add the monster to your party.
9. Repeat the last three steps until you are satisfied. Remember, don't save the monster in the inn after he has dealt out the items!

Ian Burt
Edina MN

Battletech: Crescent Hawk's Revenge (Infocom)

1. In the fourth mission, the 'Mech at the gates is an Assassin. Tie it up with your two 'Mechs while the ammo carrier sneaks out.

2. To complete the final mission on Pacifica, you must either knock out the mobile HQ before it reaches the DropShip or destroy all other opposition (this is where everything you didn't destroy in the previous missions comes back to haunt you). The former alternative is far easier to accomplish. To do so, send two 'Mechs with long-range firepower to the northwest when the mission begins. Ignore all other opposition. The Mobile HQ appears directly north of your starting position. Head towards the DropShip at the far west side of the map. It moves a lot faster than your 'Mech, so try to cut it off (don't worry about getting in the DropShip's sights, as it will not fire on you). If you fail, you can still duke it out with the other 'Mechs and tanks.

3. For your first mission on your first trip to Luthien, choose the forest route, then switch to the mountain route where the two routes meet at the top of the map. This is both the fastest and safest route. You'll have to fight through a couple of tanks and maybe a light 'Mech or two, but you will not have any opposition for the rest of the mountain route.

4. Two warnings that concern the Luthien mountain route: Keep your formations tight, because stragglers can get lost for good; and do not continue out of the mountains if you are not allowed to save and continue at the end of the mountain route. If this happens, start the mission over, as a glitch in the game prevents you from entering the city.

5. After leaving the mountains, defeat all opposition and send all but one hovercraft down to the eastern city gates (do not complete the mission with these vehicles, however). Send the remaining hovercraft up the north road to the 'Mech base, then return it to the other vehicles. If you do so, then you will be rewarded by having a lance of heavy 'Mechs at your disposal for the next two missions.

6. In the city, the first attack comes almost immediately from the top left road. Move accordingly, or the APC will get toasted. After this, the only real opposition before reaching the prison is the infantry.



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Besides, you can always buy the hint book. Which could come in handy with a game that unfolds into four different endings. Of course, finishing Phantasy Star III will take a lot more than a hint book. It'll take endless skill and intense concentration. Not to mention a good chunk of your life.



**OUGH PHANTASY STAR III,
OLD, AND DIE THREE TIMES.**

SEGA
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However, you'll meet some stiff opposition at the prison.

7. For the "seize ground" training scenario later in the game, move your 'Mechs close to (but not in sight of) the objective, then do nothing but shell the enemy 'Mechs for about 17 minutes. At around 18 minutes, launch an all-out attack and get Jason's 'Mech to the objective, regardless of the combat. Do not seize the objective until near the deadline; otherwise, you'll have to contend with wave after wave of enemy reinforcements.

8. Stopping to help at New Vandebury will get you chastised by Morgan Kell, but it won't hurt you in the end (all damage to your 'Mechs is repaired at the conclusion of this scenario).

9. The first mission on the return trip to Luthien is probably the toughest in the game. Several groups of Elementals will come in from the far east to start, and a lance of Puma 'Mechs will eventually follow. You cannot survive a pitched battle against these adversaries, so hold your 'Mechs in a tight formation near the ammo carriers and use a lot of extremely aggressive strafing. Update your strafing targets every couple of real-time minutes; the more opposition you knock out this way, the better your chances for survival. Use the satellite map when possible, because the mountains may obscure targets from visual sighting until they are only a couple of squares away from you. For the best chance of surviving this mission, do not play it at a game speed faster than 2 (in fact, playing the entire mission at game speed 1 is highly advised).

10. In the succeeding mission, avoid the Clan 'Mechs as much as possible. Be careful not to get the Kurita leader's 'Mech destroyed when he shows up, because you cannot finish the mission without him.

Theron Martin and Marvin Rush
Elkhart IN

Dragon Wars (Interplay)

1. There is a secret room in the middle of the Lansky underground. Show the ank to the dragon there, and it will give you the dragon gem. With it, you can convince the Dragon Queen to aid you in your fight against Namtar.

2. Do not take the Sword of Freedom from the island in Freeport. It is a trap set up by Namtar.

3. Do not leave the Kingshome dungeon until you have thoroughly explored it, as you will not be able to go back; the magic quiver is there. With the quiver and the Gatlin Bow, you have a very powerful weapon.

4. Do not take anything from the dwarven mines until you have awakened them with a Soften Stone spell; otherwise, they will be angry.

5. To leave the Snake Pit, get the signet ring and the other items from the secret room in the middle of the large building, then show the ring to the boy guarding the dock house.

6. To get the Golden Toad Jumping Boots from the priests of the Yellow Mud Toad, patch the wall that has tar leaking out of it with a Create Wall spell.

7. You need a 17 strength to successfully wrestle Enkidu and impress him into granting you the knowledge of the druids.

Jae Brock
Montpelier VT

1. With the Golden Boots, you will probably try to jump the bay and the Sword of Freedom. Don't do this! It's a trap. You have to MAKE the sword.

2. In the Dragon Valley, do not fight the Brood Queen. This is suicide!

3. Also, in the Valley, you will find some really nice spells, a holy lance, some dragon eyes, and teeth. The latter can be sold for a bundle of cash.

4. Push over the Statue of the Deity of Home Computers. You'll be pleased!

Sonny Gelvan
Irving TX

Hillsfar (SSI)

1. Some of the buildings in Hillsfar where secret rooms may be found include the thieves' guild, fighters' guild, temple, haunted mansion, castle, and wizards tower. Rooms can be found in the uppermost section of a building. They are hard to find at first, but after a few tries it becomes easier to spot the area where the secret door is located.

2. Some buildings require a special lockpick to open the entrance, such as the castle and the wizards tower.

3. You can overhear interesting gossip in the taverns, but if you are caught eavesdropping, you might be beaten, sent to the arena, and lose some gold.

4. To gain success in the arena, go to the tavern and listen to the gossip. These are some of the fighting tips I've heard: Lefty the Orc drops his guard right before he attacks. If he attacks with a left, you counter with a left; if he tries a right, you try a right. He also fights in a pattern of three left blows followed by a right blow. Before Morin attacks, the feathers on his helm move; whichever end of his staff is higher is the end that will try to hit you. He has a strange pattern; he seems to attack with his left for a while, then with his right for a while, then he'll catch you off guard with a quick, low blow between the legs. The Red Minotaur twitches his head before each attack, twice when he plans to ram you with his head. He usually attacks with a left, followed by a ram, then an attack from the right. Sslader tries to fake you out by opening one of his hands. When he does that, you know he's going to hit you with the other one. If his left hand is open, then smack him with a quick right. He usually uses a right/left combination, but sometimes he opens both hands and attacks you with his tail. If you can hit him right after he attacks with his tail, he'll be dizzy and you can probably land a few more blows. Ottis the Orc has a basic

right/left combination, but he's still hard to hit. I also found it is easier to hit him when he bounces up and down after attacking. I was able to hit him twice each time, but you have to be very quick. Don't bother trying your overhead attack, because his guard is too good. Try using rights and lefts until you find an attack that works for you.

Russ Krook
Bemidji MN

Neuromancer (Interplay Productions)

1. Make sure to get Larry Moe arrested. To do so, link with the Chiba Tac Police (Keisatsu, Supertac) and edit a warrant. His BAMA is 062788138.

2. Don't bother with the AIs until you've raided the Turing Registry. You can seriously upgrade all of your AI break skills there. The coordinates are 3-432-240.

3. Half a million dollars is waiting to be stolen at the Bank of Berne (3-336-160). All the necessary codes are in the message bases there. Just make sure you already have an account (*write the number down*) at Bozobank for loot transfer. Oh, by the way, beware of GOLD.

4. Speaking of Bozobank, use Sequencer 1.0 to get in. This also works at Chiba Central Justice.

5. To get the ROM construct of McCoy Pauley, the Dixie Flatline, first buy the Sense/Net pass from Lupus Yonderboy. Then enter the Sense/Net building and access file 0467839.

6. The Bank Gemeinschaft Orbital password is BG1066. Inside the vault is jack 5.

7. To get Cybereyes, first break into the Maas Biolabs Database (6-112-480), wipe Sangfroid (the AI), then shut off the security systems. Return to Earth, and buy a gas mask from Julius Deane. Enter the Maas building (wearing the mask!) and have Cybereyes installed.

8. The Phantom has Hemlock 1.0, which he'll trade for Battlechess 4.0 (7-320-464). Hemlock will kill Greystoke (2-208-208), who in turn has Kuang Grade Eleven 1.0. This program will (probably) kill Neuromancer.

9. To kill Neuromancer, remember one thing: Thanks to modern technology, death is only temporary, and revenge is sweet.

10. The program Easy Rider is essential in winning the game. It allows the cyberspace cowboy to cross the jack boundaries and thus is the only way to get to several databases. It can be found at Screaming Fist (3-464-160), which can be reached through jack three in the Bank of Berne, orbital.

Following is a list of all the AIs, their locations, and their weaknesses. ICE strength is provided where available. They should be wiped out in this order.

1. CHROME—Computer Psychologist—Philosophy

2. MORPHY—World Chess—Logic

3. SAPPHIRE—Citizens Free Matrix—Sophistry

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David Grau
Howell NJ

Pool of Radiance (SSI)

1. "Lux" is the word that causes the ghostly figure in the Temple of Bane, guarded by the hobgoblin army and orcs, to reveal his name and some other useful information. This word can also be used on other ghostly figures that you'll encounter in Sokal Keep.
2. Samosud is for use against the remaining undead in Sokal Keep.
3. Be kind to all prisoners and bands of weak, scrawny monsters. Parlay with them kindly, and you could obtain useful information.

Geoff Morton
Spokane WA

1. There is a way to get the Manual of Bodily Health from the library more than once. To do this, you must have two parties of characters (you probably could do it with one party). Have the party that won't complete the game go into the library and get the manual (the basilisk has it). Then, save the party and reboot the program. Load up the party that has the manual, and remove the character that possesses it. Reboot the program, load the party that is to complete the game, and remove one character (he will be added later). Add the character with the manual to the party, trade the manual to a fighter, remove the character, and add back the original party member. This can be done a number of times to enhance your player characters. Manuals work best on fighter types. Manuals must be used in camp, and one must rest for approximately 20 game days for the effect to take place.

2. If there is no way for your level-one character to rest, save the party, then reboot and modify the characters' hit points back to their full value. This works only on characters who have not been trained.

Jonathan Witt
Orangeville, Ontario

1. In the slums, as well as in other blocks where you need to vanquish random encounters, locate an area with a wall in front of and flanking your party. Run into the wall in front of you while searching. This causes random monsters to flock to your party and lowers their numbers to

approximately six.

2. Before entering the training hall, remove the armor from the characters you wish to engage in the duel. During the duel, your opponent (who is a clone of your character in every respect) will not wear his armor. Thus, you can equip your character with the armor and kill your opponent quite easily. You will be awarded 100 XP for each level of the opponent you slay.

3. There is a jewelry shop in Phlan that sells a fine composite bow that is the equivalent of +3 to hit. I suggest that you get this bow for all of your fighters as soon as you get enough money. The bow costs 25,000 gp!

4. In Mantor's library are five special books that you will need.

5. You will need a certain holy symbol to enter the Temple of Bane, located next to the wealthy area.

6. Make certain you search everywhere in Kovel Mansion. There are tons of treasure, including +4 leather armor.

7. The kobolds at the nomad camp are tough as well as tedious. Save your game between each wave, and help the chief in the final battle.

8. In the buccaneer camp, buy a pass to see the captain. Make certain you have a Detect Magic spell, then attack him. His armor, shield, and sword are very powerful.

Mike Rhodes
Roscoe IL

Search for the King (Accolade)

This rhythmic hint comes from Accolade itself to assist you in solving Accolade's first graphic adventure:

Poor Les, though gallant, is a rather meager fella
And desperately wants to win the heart of lovely Stella
If he could gain some brawn, he might claim his precious Queen
Not to mention another step in his Search for the King.

The Lessers

Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)

1. The old man in the unlabeled house south of the mayor's house can give you some great information and artifacts.

2. The well (once you've killed the ancient red dragon) and the Temple of Tyr are safer places to encamp than the mayor's house (unless Marcus and the Fire Knives are all dead).

3. You really don't need a thief in this adventure; you can live without backstabbing. You'll also be bashing a lot of locked doors.

4. Check all of the acolytes' and priests' rooms in the Temple of Tyr. Check the glass behind the altar for a secret door.

Kevin Chase
Pennington NJ

Spellbreaker (Infocom/Activision)

1. Be certain to get some refreshments, even though you are never hungry.

2. Pay attention to dreams.

3. The zipper should be the main place for storage. It seems to have unlimited room.

4. The ogre will get tired of you eventually, as he has allergies. What commonly causes allergies? Where can you get this? How can it become really big?

5. Stop time when big chunks of disaster are coming directly toward you, then climb the chunks.

6. Visit the Roc's Nest before stopping this disaster, as you will obtain a hopeful spell.

7. Make sure nothing you have can be ruined by water before moving out of an air bubble (like spell books, especially).

8. While it's nice to shrink things, it's nice to be small sometimes, too, especially when you're in an oubliette. Remember the previous hint when you get small.

9. You aren't the only thing that can shrink.

10. The idol may have a cube in his mouth, but he won't swallow it. He also won't open his mouth unless a state (alive and something else, caused by a spell) demands him to. The other state has to be timed, or it won't work.

11. Don't move around on the glacier!

12. Haggle with the merchant, but remember how much money you possess. Start with something far below that, under one-quarter of your cash. Make sure you initially state which rug you want.

13. Did the merchant give you the right rug?

Andrew Mussell
Brandon WI

Spirit of Excalibur (Virgin Mastertronic)

1. Constantine has to use his mouth in the first scenario.

2. Ector and Nineve should be sent to seek Lancelot.

3. Bedivere is best suited to go to Dover, but don't forget the Dragon's Bane.

4. Mass your forces at either St. Albans or Rochester, then move them to London after that city has been attacked once.

5. Search through Camelot to find some useful items.

Kelly T. Loucks
Cooperstown NY

Thanks for staying with us for another column. Please send in your comments, and most especially your game hints, to: The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376. If you wish to send us a fax, our fax number is 1-209-832-5742. Remember, your hints and tips save desperate folk from untimely demises. Take care, and game on!





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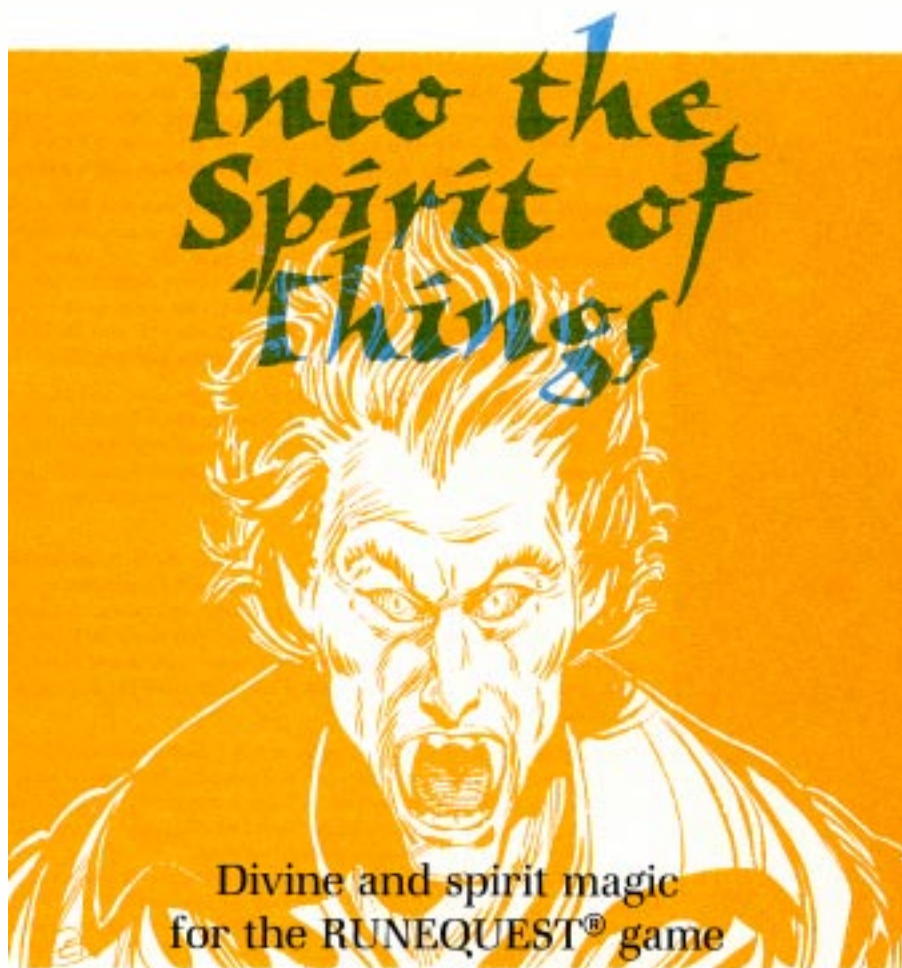
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This article is a collection of new spirit and divine magic spells for The Avalon Hill Game Company's RUNEQUEST® game.

Hibernation **Variable**
active, self temporal

This spell gives a caster the ability to hibernate for the duration of the spell. During Hibernation, wounds heal and Magic Points are regained. To regain points, the spell-caster must sleep in an unawaking trance for eight hours for each point regained. During this time he is completely unconscious, requiring spells such as Dispel Magic to awaken him. While hibernating, the caster regains Magic Points and heals at the normal speed. Food and other sustenance are not required during the spell. As a result, a starving adventurer could enter the spell to hold off the effects of starvation (but not disease). Air and proper conditions are required, and a hibernating character could die without knowing it if consumed by flame, attacked, asphyxiated, or such. At the end of Hibernation, the caster has zero Fatigue Points. Also, match the Magic Points the caster currently has (the active portion of the check) with those he had right after the casting of Hibernation (the passive portion of the check). If successful, this allows for a POW gain roll.

Mind Alter **2 points**
ranged, instant, passive

This spell allows the caster to implant memories in the mind of an intelligent creature; it also allows the caster to take memories away. When attempting to alter a minor memory, the caster must first successfully use his percentile skill with the spell, then match his Magic Points vs. the target's INT -2. If the caster is attempting to alter a major memory, he must match his Magic Points vs. the target's INT +2. For example, a minor memory is something such as a tally of the money in one's possession; a major memory is something on the level of one's own identity.

Once cast, the alteration stays without the victim noticing it. The victim, however, is allowed a roll equal to his POW each 8- (INT/3) weeks to attempt to remember what alteration has taken place. If the victim is successful, he has recollections first in dreams or nightmares, then remembrances when fully awake. The caster must know in advance exactly what is going to be altered, then must do so. Mind Delve can be used to find if what the caster is looking for is actually there.

Mind Delve **1 point**
ranged, temporal, passive

This spell enables the caster to read the mind of another being for information, memories, or facts. The spell can be cast against only those creatures with an INT

score. The spell doesn't allow characters to gain experience or skills. Spell-casters are not affected by anything from which the target suffers, such as Fear, Fanaticism, or Demoralize. The spell may be cast on those with fixed or normal INT, but the latter resist the attempt by matching their Magic Points against the POW of the caster. The user generally has to name what he is looking for before casting the spell. For example, a caster could say he is looking for the whereabouts of a friend of the target by searching the target's mind. The caster can find one piece of information per search; then the spell must be recast.

Mind Trap **Variable**
ranged, temporal, passive

Some spells and mental attacks require the attacker to enter the mind of the target. Mind Trap can feed off such spells such as Spirit Magic's Mind Delve, Control (Species), and Mindspeech; Divine Magic's Mindlink and Mind Read; Sorcery's Telepathy or Implant; or even spirits that can possess someone. This spell sets a trap for anyone that attempts to violate the caster's mind, springing the trap by attacking the invader's INT. The attacker, now turned victim, suffers the permanent loss of (1D3 + Magic Points spent) INT and is treated as though Mindblasted (as per the Divine Magic spell) for 20 -(CON/2) melee rounds. The Mind Trap remains in effect for the spells duration or until it is sprung (whichever is less); then it must be recast to stay in effect. This spell takes effect only if the caster has been successfully attacked against his will. For example, if a character has Mindspeech cast on him and the same character consents to this, Mind Trap has no chance of working; but, if the same character is Mind Read successfully against his will, the spell applies.

Reanimate **2 points**
ritual Enchant spell

With this spell, a caster may spark life into a dead body, allowing it to behave as if it were alive. The spell must enchant each hit location that the caster wishes to bring to life. This must be done in a scientific manner. For example, a dead friend is to be Reanimated. If the head location is Reanimated, the dead friend can now think and use his head; but because his chest and abdomen locations are not Reanimated, he cannot breathe, his brain has no fresh blood, and he begins to asphyxiate. A caster thus must first Reanimate the chest and abdomen, then the head, and finally the legs and arms.

For a dead humanoid adventurer to be fully Reanimated, it takes seven points of POW from the caster and seven enchantments. When revived, Hit Points are again equal to (CON + SIZ)/2, and all locations have normal hit points. When Reanimated, loss of limbs cannot cause death and do not reduce from general hit points.

The greatest drawback of Reanimate is that the target is still technically dead.

Every day after his death, he loses 1D3 STR, CON, DEX and APP. When these abilities drop to zero, the adventurer is actually dead and cannot be resurrected or Reanimated. He cannot heal damage, and any ingested foods sit in his stomach until they rot or burst his belly. The character's body continues to rot and degenerate, giving off a putrid odor that cannot be stifled. Additionally, while Reanimated, the adventurer can use POW only for Magic Points, not for ability rolls or sacrifices.

This spell is used to bring an adventurer back to life so he may tell an important fact, cast an important spell, walk to a temple for resurrection, etc.

Sustain 2 points
touch, instant

This spell heals the effects caused directly by hunger, thirst, and exposure. Each casting heals 1D6-1 points of damage done by these conditions. If the target is for some reason unwilling, the caster must make a Magic Point vs. Magic Point resistance check.

Transform to Undead 6 points
ritual Enchant spell

This spell allows the caster to enchant himself to the form of an undead. A caster may place his essence in the form of a ghoul, mummy, vampire, or zombie. The spell costs the full POW of the caster, and if it fails, he dies. When the spell is cast, the caster appears to die; any procedure for creating the specific undead must then be performed on the body. As an example, a mummy requires evisceration, spicing, binding, and drying. On the other hand, ghouls, vampires, and zombies need no real preparation. Upon emergence from the ceremony, the undead has Magic Points equal to what they were before the spell was cast, and he has all attributes, alterations, and special abilities of that specific undead. Magic Points must be regained through the method used by the specific undead. If the APP formula is different from the natural one, it must be rerolled. This spell is rare for two reasons: It is an especially vile and evil one, and it is used only once by the caster. Once used, the undead caster is reluctant to teach it to anyone else.

Transfer Soul 4 points*
ritual Enchant spell

Transfer Soul allows a caster to transfer the seat of intelligence, memories, and knowledge of spells and skills to an inanimate object. This provides the obvious asset of rendering spells such as Mindblast ineffectual; it also does the same to blows to the head. The target object for this spell must be inanimate. The method of enchantment is the same one used for capturing creatures within items, though the Control spell is unnecessary. If the enchantment fumbles, the caster dies. If the spell is successful, the target object must always be kept on the person of a being

possessing an INT. If removed, the object loses one point of INT per melee round until it is placed near a living being as defined earlier.

If the object of intelligence is placed on another being, spirit combat ensues between the object and intelligent being. The winner controls the body of the intelligent being, and the other being is suppressed and unable to act. This suppressed intelligence cannot be drawn upon for spells, skills, memories, or use of INT for spell memorization. The being dominant in the body uses its own skills and spells; only the INT of the being is changed if possessed by this person. When the object is removed, the natural being either regains control of the body, or, if the body had no INT (as with the original possessor of the object's intelligence), it falls into a trance for a number of rounds equal to its CON. It then loses one general Hit Point per melee round after that. Obviously, the separation of the object and being it dominates could prove fatal in a number of minutes. As a result, this spell is rare and should be found only with experienced Shamans.

*memorization only

Transfer Wound 2 points
touch, temporal, passive

This spell allows a caster to exchange wounds with a single target, meaning that a caster can heal the damage of another by casting this spell and receiving the target's wounds. For the spell to work, the caster must first match Magic Points vs. Magic Points with the target on the resistance table. Once this is done, the spell trades the damage to one location with the damage to the same location on the target. All protection from armor is ignored in the trading of damage. For example, if a caster is unharmed, and he casts this spell on the arm of a stricken companion who has taken four points of damage to the arm, the caster then has an arm with four points of damage and general hit points down by four. The target has the opposite effects and is thus four points better. If the damage were reversed in this case (the caster being damaged), the target would instead have received four points of damage and the caster would be better off.

If this spell is used between creatures with different hit locations, the nearest location is affected. For example, a dragon has wings and a tail, thus a human caster can only transfer damage *to* the dragon's corresponding hit locations; he can, however, have damage traded *from* the wings and tail. In such a case, the damage to wings goes to the other party's chest and the damage to the tail goes to the other's abdomen. Only one location can be affected per casting; subsequent locations that are given attention need their own castings. This spell is useful as both a weapon and a healing implement.

Forget 1 point
ranged, instant, stackable, reusable
Moon Goddess

This spell causes a spell-casting target to involuntarily forget a spell not currently in use. For each point of this spell, either two points of Spirit Magic, one point of Divine Magic, or one sorcery spell may be stricken from the mind of the target and completely forgotten. Once done, the spellcasting target must either memorize the spell (if it was written down somewhere), completely relearn the spell, or sacrifice POW again at a temple to relearn it. The caster can cast Forget at only those spells he knows are possessed by the target. Learning of the existence of these spells may be gained through using the Lankor Mhy Mind Read; by seeing the spell in operation, then postulating what it was; or by asking the spell-caster what spells he has. If the caster believes the target has a certain spell when he actually doesn't, his effort to eliminate it via Forget fails automatically.

Group Casting 2 points
ritual Ceremony spell, stackable, reusable
Common

This Ceremony allows members of the same cult to cast spells and add their effects. The Group Casting spell can be used

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only by members of one cult; if one or more casters are not of that cult, the spell automatically fails. Members of the Group Casting spell can share the same Divine spells, Magic Points, INTs, and effects of the spell cast using the Group Casting. The casting time for this spell is one melee round per member. The cost is one Magic Point per member, in addition to the points spent on the actual spell. At the end, the spell previously chosen to be stacked with this spell may be cast.

For example, an Orlanthy may choose to cast Shield 2 using Group Cast with seven other Orlanthy adventurers. For the next seven rounds, those involved can do nothing without causing the spell to fail. At the end of seven rounds, all seven casters have Shield 2 cast on them. As another example, the Orlanthis above wish to cast Lightning. Four of them have the Divine spell at one casting, and the spell is stackable. One uses Group Casting, and the others stack their Lightning spells to produce a four-point effect capable of doing 4D6 damage to one hit location. Also, the Magic Points matched against the target's are equal to the total of the seven: 60 points. This spell is uncommon and is found only with priests of cults, not with initiates or mere adventurers.

Remove Characteristic (Except POW) **3 points**
touch, instant, unstackable, one use
Ruling Deity

This Divine spell can remove any specific characteristic and make a creature incomplete, as per the rules in the *Creature Book* (pages 4-5). The characteristic must first be lowered to one or zero, temporarily or permanently, before this spell may be cast. Once cast successfully, the affected creature or character becomes incomplete, unable to use that characteristic, its related skills, and tallies.

Retrieve Weapon **1 point**
ritual Enchant spell, stackable, reusable
War God, Hunting God

When cast on a weapon by its owner, this spell gives the weapon the ability to return to the owner's hand. When enchanted, a point of POW is expended on the weapon; it can then be magically retrieved. If a weapon is lost, taken, or thrown, the caster need only think of the weapon and expend a Magic Point. If the weapon is within 100 meters, it flies or crawls back to the owner at one meter per second, taking the shortest route possible; the choice of which mode it uses for movement is defined by the spell-caster when the weapon is enchanted. If the weapon is grabbed by someone, it can only be pulled

free if the owner expends Magic Points to match against the STR of the withholder; the more Magic Points expended, the better the chance of the weapon being freed. When restrained from returning to its owner, the weapon hums faintly. The weapon cannot be ordered to return while it is attacking something. If a weapon has been moved beyond 100 meters from its owner, it cannot be ordered to return.

Undetectable to Species **Variable**
no range, temporal, stackable, reusable
Ruling Deity

This spell makes the caster's target completely undetectable by one particular species. This creates invisibility, silence, and any other masking effect to the senses and sensibilities of the members of the affected species. The point value needed pertains to the Danger Class in which the species is placed; a god or a Gloranthan dragon needs a 10- or 12-point spell, but these cases are exceedingly rare. The target remains undetectable until it either initiates a definite act (such as attacking, speaking aloud, or casting an offensive spell) or the spell duration elapses. Remember that only a particular species is affected by a spell. This may have some effect in the course of an adventure if some of the antagonists see a foe and some do not.

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SHINING ARMOR

by Thomas M. Kane

When you're surrounded by 50 tons of steel and shooting bullets the size of your arm, you're unstoppable, right?

These are guidelines and rules for using tanks in a TOP SECRET/S.I.™ Commando campaign. Commandos do not use tanks often, but never take anything for granted in the covert line of work. If your game agent or commando finds himself supporting a guerilla movement, the movement might give him an armored fighting vehicle (tankers call them AFVs). Most insurgents keep a few tanks, whether they're any real use or not. Guerillas figure at least the tanks will look mean in a victory parade if they win. In the meantime, they let the foreign advisors (i.e., your characters) drive them. On other missions, agents might use an armored personnel carrier

(APC) for insertion. An enemy tank might make the perfect getaway car, too. The Administrator may also want to know what the commandos meet if they stumble across an enemy armored force. Put the following information in your portfolio, just in case.

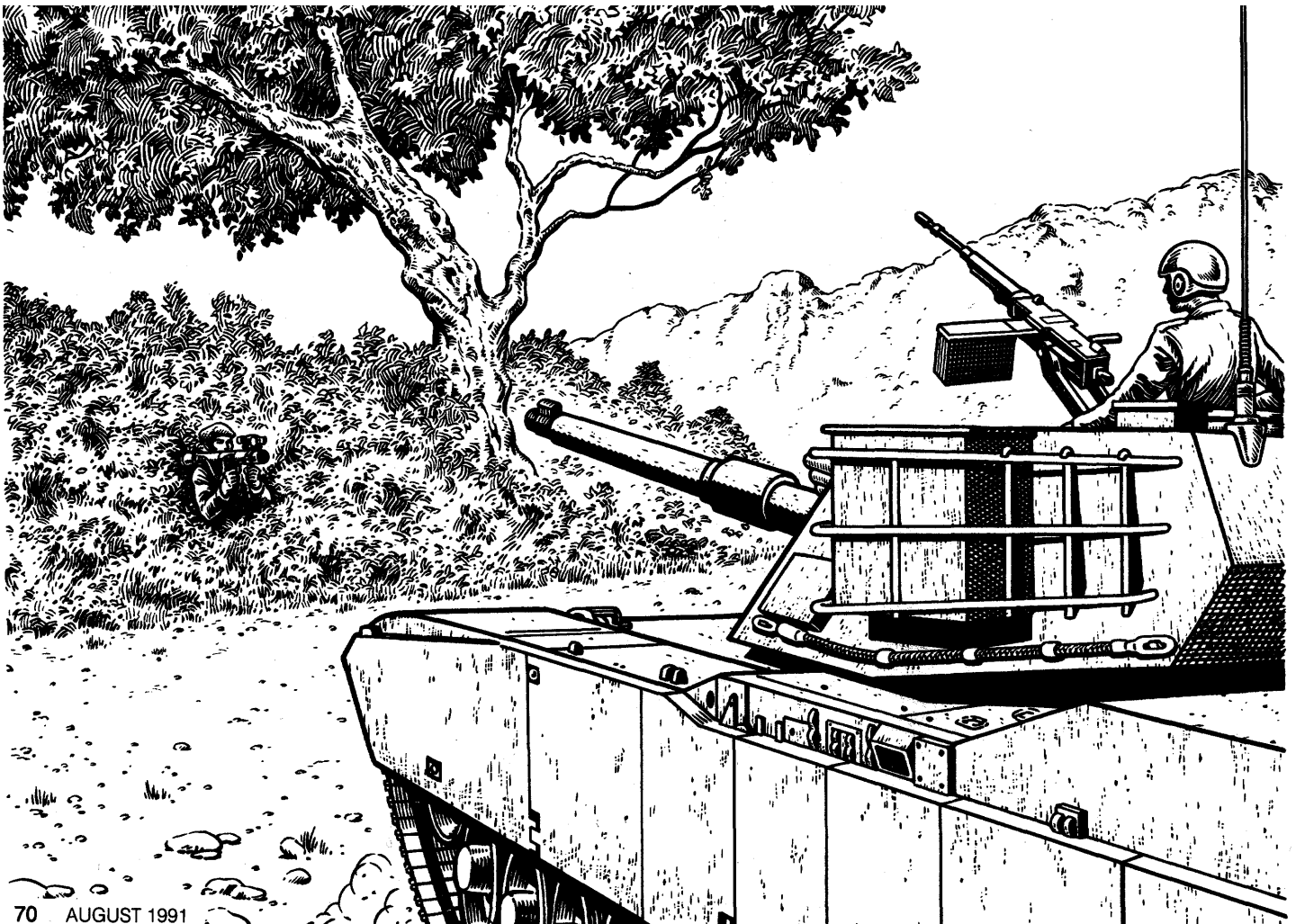
Tank tactics

Driving a tank would be easy except for two things: Tank drivers can neither see nor hear anything outside the tank. With the hatches closed, an AFV crew sees the world through metal slits, while head-splitting noise shakes the tank from all sides. Anyone outside can waltz up and write his initials on the tank's turret. Therefore, smart tankers seldom close their hatches. They keep their heads out

until the bullets come too close.

For game purposes, the crew of a buttoned-up (hatches closed) AFV cannot see anything within 30' of the tank. Beyond this, the driver can observe objects a maximum of 45° to his left and right. The gunner may only see things within 30° to the left and right. If the tank crew attempts an INT check to hear something, it suffers a -10 penalty if the engine is running and a -3 penalty if it is not. Characters have normal vision when extending their heads through the hatches, but they still suffer a -5 penalty on hearing INT checks if the engine is running.

When tanks stumble into a trap, though, they usually have help. Armored vehicles never travel alone. They operate in platoons of three to five vehicles and almost



Artwork by Dan Burr

always have infantry with them, men who can clear away ambushes. The foot soldiers ride armored personnel carriers which keep them from slowing the armored column too badly.

Tanks can also hide. In defense, they routinely use hills and other obstacles to protect their hulls, leaving only the turrets and guns exposed. Consult page 73 of the TOP SECRET/S.I. *Player's Guide* for the effects of cover. Armored vehicles use a special "reverse slope" tactic to protect themselves on inclines. They go to the side of a ridge that is away from the enemy and lower their guns as far as possible. Then they drive upslope until only the gun and turret protrude over the crest. The hill provides hard cover for the hull, but the tank can shoot into the valley beyond. To determine whether a shot hits an exposed part of its target, consult Table 1. One can use the normal called shots and bumping rules (page 73, *Player's Guide*) in vehicular combat. When moving, armored vehicles dash between "bounds" or covered areas. Ideally, a bound protects the tanks behind it but allows them to fire in support of other tanks. If no suitable cover is available, gunners create it by firing smoke shells (noted later).

Gunners suffer a -40 penalty to their skill checks when firing cannon from moving vehicles. Therefore, tanks move using "overwatch" maneuvers, in which half of a platoon remains still and ready to shoot while the other half advances. The faster form of overwatch, called "leap-frog," works as follows: 1) Group A advances to a firing position behind a bound; 2) Group B drives to group A and passes it, to a new bound; 3) Group A drives to group B and passes it; etc. This leaves the platoon divided at any given moment. Cautious tankers use "caterpillar" movement, in which, at step #2 above, group B joins group A at the bound before either advances to a new position, and so on.

Overwatch maneuvers give the stationary tanks a "watch" bonus of +5 on initiative (pages 62-63, *Player's Guide*). The real advantages of tactics appear through common sense, not numbers. Caterpillar movement does not receive any movement penalty, but the tanks only go half as far in each step. For the same reason, this maneuver makes it harder for enemies to catch the groups separated. If the Administrator keeps track of which tank is where and who can see what, astute tactics work the same way they do for real tanks, by concentrating maximum firepower at minimum risk.

Gunnery and equipment

Tanks carry many specialized sorts of ammunition. Common sorts include solid shot for carving through armor; high explosive for use against infantry; HEAT, which uses a shaped charge to penetrate tanks; and Hetz, HESH, and other specialized shells to defeat composite armors. For game purposes, assume that there are two

classes of offensive ammunition: high explosive and antitank. High-explosive shells cause more damage in a wider radius to exposed targets but always have an antivehicle (AV) rating of zero. The AV rating of antitank shot, along with explosion types for both kinds of shells, appears on Table 2.

When a vehicle is hit by a cannon round, it must immediately roll on the Crash Table (page 86, *Player's Guide*). A high-explosive hit causes a crash only if the operator fails a driving check. After checking the Crash Table, roll 1d6. On a 1 or 2, the tank loses its largest functional weapon. This can be fixed only at a military garage by a character with the appropriate weapons skill (Tank Gun, Machine Gun, etc.).

Cannon may also fire smoke or illumination rounds. Each smoke shell blankets a circle 50' in diameter. Anyone attempting to fire through the smokescreen suffers a -100 penalty on weapon skill checks. The wind disperses smoke after 1d6 turns, or faster if the Administrator rules that the wind is especially strong. A flare shell drops burning magnesium by parachute, illuminating a 1,000' radius for 3d6x10 seconds.

No tank cannon holds more than one round at a time. Most AFVs carry 50-70 rounds for the main cannon. Standard loading times appear in Table 2. Certain tanks have specialized loaders, described on Table 3.

The Administrator may design vehicles with customized devices. One example would be a flail, a rotating bar in front of the tank that beats the ground with chains. It detonates all mines in the vehicle's path, harmlessly and automatically. See "Watch Your Step!" in DRAGON® issue #148 for more details on land mines. Advanced tanks also carry night-vision equipment, which functions like a triple-range version of the infrared flashlight and goggles described on page 11 of the *Equipment Inventory*.

In the near-future setting of the TSAC4 *ER.E.E.Lancers* supplement, vehicles may depend on elaborate electronic equipment and can be hermetically sealed against chemical weapons. In order to steer, these vehicles must depend on video cameras, which make wonderful targets for sharpshooters. A mad scientist's custom-built tank might have hi-tech sensors, geiger counters, computer brains, or force-field generators. If any of this equipment is mounted outside the tank, gunners can disable it with called shots.

Vehicle notes

The following are special notes and comments on the vehicles described in Table 3. The "Weapons" column shows the bore in millimeters of a vehicle's main cannon. Cannon and ATGMs (antitank guided missiles) are described in Table 2. Page 5 of the *Equipment Inventory* covers HMGs (heavy machine guns) and LMGs (light machine guns). Many tanks also

mount an AAMG (antiaircraft heavy machine gun); it is not mounted for antipersonnel use, although characters might modify it with a successful metalworking check.

AIFV: This vehicle is used in the Netherlands, Belgium and the Philippines. Armies often use it to recover damaged tanks from the battlefield.

AMX-10: Many models of this APC exist. The French often put a 105 mm gun on the AMX APC, converting it to a light tank with a crew of four. The French export these tanks widely.

AMX-30: This widely exported and often-modified tank can reload its main gun in four game turns.

ASU-85: The Soviets air-land this light tank hunter to protect paratroopers and other elite forces from enemy armor.

BMP: This is a light APC often used by paratroopers or special forces.

BMP: The BMP is often adapted for scouting or carrying radar.

Centurion: This tank is used throughout the Third World.

Chieftain: A gunner can reload this tanks main gun in four game turns.

Leopard II: A gunner can reload this tanks main gun in four game turns.

Merkava: This inventive Israeli tank has wide rear doors, allowing the crew to load and change its ammunition quickly. Its large interior allows four passengers to ride along with the crew.

M4 Sherman: This World War II tank is still used in the Third World.

M48, M60: Both are still in the U.S. arsenal and widely used in the Third World.

PT-76: This light Soviet tank requires 10 game turns to reload its main cannon.

Scorpion: This tank is widely used in the Middle East.

S-Tank: This famous "defensive" tank has a low profile that allows it to protect everything but the gun behind cover while still firing. It carries a bulldozer blade to entrench itself. The S-Tank cannot shoot while moving, and its fixed gun can only fire straight forward. However, once it starts shooting, the crew can reload their main cannon in two game turns. Sweden is the only country that uses this tank, but others experiment with it.

T-34: The Soviets and Czechs ship this World War II tank to their less reliable Third World allies, including some insurgent groups like the PLO.

T-series: The Soviets export all these tanks to the Third World. Only the T-80 is exclusively Russian. The T-55 requires 10 game turns to reload the main cannon. The T-62 requires seven game turns to reload. T-72 and T-80 tanks can be reloaded in four turns, but their automatic loaders break easily. Add five friction points to any mission that involves them (see pages 36-38, TSAC5 *Commando*).

UDES: This experimental vehicle is intended to correct the disadvantages of the S-Tank. Current models use a Marder APC chassis. If it is ever produced, the Swedes

will probably develop a new body, more like the S-Tank. A special UDES, the XX-20, uses a jointed hull that can twist itself into new shapes for crossing obstacles or taking cover.

Tank driving performance: Armies neither build nor rate AFVs for fancy driving. Assume that all AFVs have the generic acceleration, handling, and braking statistics shown on page 15 of the *Equipment Inventory*.

Life inside

Tanks are hot, cramped, noisy, and often broken down. In the USSR and France, the army selects the shortest 5% of its recruits for tank crews. People over 5'6" can barely squeeze into their tanks. Tankers regularly suffer slashes, fractures, and amputations from their machinery. Commandos in tanks lose half a psychological-index point per hour (pages 27-28, *Commando*). P.I. losses increase to a full point in Soviet or French tanks. Anyone over 5'6" suffers doubled P.I. penalties in any country's vehicles.

Typical tanks carry four crewmembers. The driver sits in the hull and can put his head out his own personal hatch when he dares. A commander, gunner, and loader squeeze into the turret. If characters try to operate a tank without the loader, it takes twice as long to prepare each shot. Modern Soviet tanks use mechanical feeders and do not need a loader.

U.S. vehicles break down on average every 180 miles. We like to tell ourselves that Soviet tanks malfunction every 150 miles. Commandos accumulate 10 friction points on any mission in which they use tanks and 12 if they use Soviet models. The Israeli Merkava, however, contains large doors for easy servicing and costs only five friction points.

Characters suffer double friction-point costs if they fail to provide normal maintenance for their AFVs. All tanks require eight man-hours of work per day. Tankers

usually make their own repairs, using tool kits in their vehicle or from nearby bases. Generally, if characters have gotten a tank, they can get the tools to fix it. Up to eight people may work on the same vehicle (thereby reducing time to one hour). However, anyone without the basic mechanic skill must pass a default roll of ¼ DEX to contribute useful work.

Tank destroyers

Main battle tanks are always getting bigger, faster, heavier, and more expensive. A lot of forces would rather not try to keep up. However, they do not want main battle tanks to massacre them. Thus, they use tank destroyers, which are weak tanks designed to ward off bigger ones. Little nations, notably Austria, favor these vehicles since their governments cannot afford armies of super-tanks. Special-operations groups also use tank destroyers, since 80,000-lb. monsters will complicate airdrop insertion. Furthermore, a 90 mm cannon may be small in a tank battle, but it usually satisfies commandos who otherwise get only handguns.

The "little" APCs

In brushfire operations, "armor" does not need to mean the latest juggernaut fit for World War III. Guerillas and their enemies usually use APCs and reconnaissance cars in place of main battle tanks. Little vehicles often go faster, and, to an insurgent's AK-47, 2" of metal plate might as well be 2'. An armored transport makes a useful base for commandos on long missions, since it has room for supplies, rescued friends, captured enemies, etc. Furthermore, main battle tanks cost fortunes, and the recent ones have secret instrumentation on board. Anyone issuing ordinance for risky work prefers to give out APCs.

Against light opposition, APCs behave like tanks. In an armored battle, they disgorge their passengers and provide cover while the foot soldiers and tanks advance. An APC's infantry must dismount before it can fight. The Soviet Union once instructed foot soldiers to stay in their vehicles and fire through gunnery slits, but this tactic worked so poorly for Syria in the 1973 Middle-East war that all armies abandoned it. Riflemen suffer a -30 penalty on weapons skill checks when firing

through an APC's gun slits, in addition to penalties for firing while moving, etc. (page 74, *Player's Guide*).

An APC's foot soldiers ride as long as they can, usually leaving their vehicles about 600'-900' behind the front. Climbing out of the vehicles is dangerous in enemy fire. APC units try to release their infantry simultaneously, to keep enemy machine-gunners from concentrating on the dismounting squads one at a time. Once on foot, soldiers advance about 300' behind the tanks, and 300' in front of their empty APCs. They communicate with tank commanders using hand signals, loud voices, or, in some cases, telephones on the backs of the vehicles. In defense, infantry stands in front of everything, to stop troops with light antitank weapons (LAWs) from creeping up on their vehicles (see "Hunting Tanks is Fun and Easy!" in DRAGON issue #171 for details on antitank weapons).

Like other armored vehicles, APCs are finicky and uncomfortable. Characters receive five friction points for using an APC. Riders on transports do not need to perform the maintenance associated with tanks. Passengers in armored personnel carriers also pay one P.I. point per day, two in the BMP or BMD, but only one-half point in the M2, M3, M113, AMX-10 and Marder. The comfortable LVTP-7 has no P.I. cost at all.

Conclusion

Heavy weapons add more to the game than simply being deadlier toys for secret agents. They force characters to think before they fight. With clever tactics, agents can defeat tanks. Since their enemies can do this, too, game balance remains unchanged. Armored vehicle data also makes the TOP SECRET/S.I. world more complete. Special forces must expect to meet heavy weapons. It seems much more plausible for agents to trap a T-34 in some steamy jungle than to chase through New York firing Uzis from red Porsches.

Articles of this sort traditionally include reminders that the TOP SECRET/S.I. game is not a war game. It may not be, but spies—and especially commandos—certainly take an interest in military activity.

Table 1
Hit Location Against AFVs

1d10	Location
0	Cannon barrel
1-2	Turret
3-8	Hull
9	Treads

Table 2
Tank Weapons

Weapon	AV	Dam/Exp	Range			Load	Weight	Speed
			Min.	Med.	Long			
20-50 mm	+25	1d8/Gre	—	1,500	4,500	3	—	—
51-80 mm	+50	1d8/Mis	—	1,500	3,000	4	—	—
81-110 mm	+70	Gre/Tan	—	2,000	6,000	5	—	—
111+ mm	+90	Gre/Tan	—	3,000	10,000	5	—	—

AV = antivehicle rating; Dam/Exp = damage for antivehicle shot, and type of explosion for high-explosive shot; Gre = grenade-type explosion; Mis = missile type explosion; Tan = tank projectile (see page 80, TOP SECRET/S.I. *Player's Guide*).

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The information in this article is authentic, although standard trench/obstacle/grade data has been extrapolated to cover Soviet tanks where such information is unknown. The following sources were consulted:

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Table 3
Armored Vehicle Statistics Table

Vehicle (Nation)	Speed	Prot.	Crew + Pas.	Range	Trench	Obstac.	Grade	Weapons
APCs								
AIFV (NATO)	38/3.9	-80	3+7	304	5.3	1.5	60	25 mm, LMG, ATGM
AMX-10 (Fr)	40/4.4	-90	3+8	372	8	2.3	60	20 mm, LMG
BMD (USSR)	36/6	-80	3+6	199	8	2.6	60	73 mm, LMG, ATGM
BMP (USSR)	49.7/5	-80	3+8	310	8	2.6	60	73 mm, LMG, ATGM
BRDM (USSR)	60/6	-70	3	466	8	2	60	HMG, LMG
BTR-50 (USSR)	26/6	-70	2+14	156	8	2	60	LMG
BTR-60 (USSR)	48/6	-70	2+14	300	8	2	60	HMG, LMG
4K (Au)	40	-80	2+8	323	6.9	2.6	75	LMG
LAV 25 (Swi)	63/6	-80	3+6	485	8	2	70	25 mm, LMG
LVTP 7 (US)	45/8.4	-80	3+25	300	7	2	60	HMG
M2/M3 (US)	41/4.5	-100	3+6	300	8.3	3	60	25 mm, LMG, ATGM
M113 (US)	42/3.6	-70	2+11	300	5.5	2	60	HMG, LMG, ATGM
Marder (Ge)	46.6	-100	4+6	323	8	3.3	60	30 mm, LMG
MCV 80 (US)	46.6	-80	2+8	310	8.2	2.6	60	30 mm, LMG
MTLB (USSR)	38/3.7	-80	2+11	310	7	2.3	60	LMG
Main battle tanks								
AMX-30	39	-100	4	295	9	4.1	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
Chieftain (UK)	30	-135	4	280	10	3	60	120 mm, HMG, 2xLMG
Centurion (UK)	21	-125	4	150	8	3	60	105 mm, 2xHMG, LMG
Leopard I (Ge)	39	-125	4	225	9.8	3.7	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
Leopard 2 (Ge)	35	-140	4	210	10	3	60	120 mm, 2xLMG
M1 (US)	39	-140	4	336	8	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
M4 Sherman (US)	25	-100	4	120	7.5	2	60	75 mm, HMG, LMG
M48 A3 (US)	30	-100	4	288	8.5	3	60	90 mm, HMG, LMG
M48 A5 (US)	30	-125	4	288	8.5	3	60	105 mm, HMG, 1-2xLMG
M60 (US)	29	-125	4	280	8.5	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
Merkava (Is)	27	-130	4+4	311	10	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
OF-40 (Is)	40	-120	4	373	9.8	3.6	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
PT76 (USSR)	26/6	-70	4	250	7	3	60	76 mm, 2xLMG
S (Swe)	30/4	-125	4	242	7.5	2.9	60	105 mm, 3xLMG, AAMG
T-34 (USSR)	32	-90	4	150	8	3	60	85 mm, HMG, LMG
T-55 (USSR)	30	-90	4	180	8	3	60	100 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
T-62 (USSR)	36	-100	3	288	8	3	60	115 mm, LMG, AAMG
T-72 (USSR)	36	-130	3	300	8	3	60	125 mm HMG, LMG, AAMG
T-80 (USSR)	36	-135	3	240	8	3	60	125 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
TAM (Ar)	46	-120	4	342	8.2	3.2	65	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
Type 61 (Ja)	36	-100	4	248	8	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
Type 69 (Ja)	31	-110	4	248	8.8	2.6	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
Type 74 (Ja)	26	-110	4	166	8.9	3.3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
UDES (Swe)	46.6	-80	3	323	8	3.3	60	120 mm, HMG, 2xLMG, AAMG
Vickers (UK)	31	-100	4	373	8	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
Tank destroyers								
ASU-85 (USSR)	28	-100	5	161	7	3.6	70	85 mm, HMG, AAMG
IK-91 (Swe)	43/6	-100	4	342	9.7	2.6	50	90 mm, HMG
Jagdpanzer (Ge)	43	-100	4	249	6.6	2.5	60	90 mm, LMG, AAMG
Panzerjäger (Au)	40	-100	3	323	7.9	2.6	75	105 mm, HMG
Scout vehicles and light tanks								
Ratel (SA)	62.2	-80	3+7	620	6	1.5	60	20 mm, LMG
Type 63 (Ch)	25	-80	3	150	7	2	60	85 mm, HMG, LMG
Type 73 (Ja)	43.5	-80	3+9	186	7	2.3	60	HMG, LMG
Scorpion (UK)	50	-80	3	400	6	1.6	60	76 mm, HMG

Speed = Maximum speed (land/amphibious); Prot. = Protection; Crew + Pas. = Passengers (necessary crew + extra passengers); Range = range in miles; Trench = maximum width in feet of trench that can be crossed; Obstac. = Maximum height in feet of obstacle that can be overridden; Grade = maximum grade climbed, in percent.

Nations: Au = Austria; Ar = Argentina; Ch = China; Fr = France; Ge = Germany; Is = Israel; Ja = Japan; NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization; SA = South Africa; Swe = Sweden; Swi = Switzerland; UK = United Kingdom; US = United States; USSR = Soviet Union.

Completing the Complete Fighter

The Complete Fighter's Handbook is an excellent supplement to the AD&D® 2nd Edition rules, particularly for campaigns with a majority of warrior characters. It has detailed rules on fighting, new weapons, and tips on role-playing. Best of all are the warrior kits, which create warriors with specialized backgrounds and appropriate abilities.

There are a few quirks and gray areas in the book, however. For instance, a comment on page 58 implies that single-class fighters, paladins, and rangers can specialize in more than one weapon; they can't. The *Player's Handbook*, on page 52, states that such specialization is "an optional rule that allows a fighter (only) to choose a single weapon and specialize in its use."

Other gray areas involve the races and classes allowed to the warrior kits. While the book generally leaves these areas wide open, the following seems logical:

Kits allowed by class

Fighter: All warrior kits are allowed.

Paladin: The amazon, cavalier, gladiator, myrmidon, noble warrior, peasant hero, and outlaw/pirate (in evil lands) are allowed. The barbarian, beast rider, savage, and wilderness warrior seem too primitive but could be allowed. The swashbuckler is too roguish and chaotic, while the berserker is definitely too chaotic.

Ranger: The amazon, barbarian, beast rider, berserker, peasant hero, outlaw (in evil lands), savage, and wilderness warrior are allowed. The cavalier, gladiator, myrmidon, noble warrior, and swashbuckler are too city-based for a ranger's background, while the pirate is in the wrong environment.

Kits allowed by race

The barbaric kits (barbarian, beast rider, berserker, savage, wilderness warrior) seem best restricted to humans, since the demihumans are usually clannish and civilized, lacking the barbarian's grim demeanor. The amazon also seems uniquely human but could be extended to other races. The cavalier, noble warrior, and swashbuckler are appropriate for humans, elves, and half-elves (it's hard to imagine the shorter races being good at horsemanship or dueling). The gladiator, myrmidon and outlaw/pirate are appropriate to all races. The peasant hero seems right for humans, halflings, and half-elves.

These are only suggestions, and the are excellent examples of making a fighter's background affect his abilities. But the list of kits cries out for expansion. This article gives three new kits, using the same format as the handbook.

Assassins, nomads, and northmen —fighters all

by David Howery



Assassin

Description: This kit was detailed for thieves in the *Complete Thief's Handbook*, on pages 26-27, and this section is recommended for reading by the players of fighter assassins. While "assassin" is a general term for people of all classes who kill for pay, here it describes a particular type of hired fighter. An assassin may work freelance or belong to an assassins' guild. He must have a minimum strength and dexterity of 12, a minimum intelligence of 11, and be of any non-good alignment. Thus, only fighters among all warrior classes can be assassins.

Role: Assassins are paid killers. They care nothing about fair play or honorable combat, wishing only to carry out their contracts in the safest and most secret ways possible. Fighter assassins rely more on brute force than thief assassins, and the handiwork of the former is more evident as deliberate murder—which serves as a warning to other potential victims. While some assassins are dedicated to evil, others are just cynical or mercenary (neutral); a few might see their work as a necessary evil for a greater cause, particularly if they slay only evil-aligned beings. The assassin's goal is to

remain unknown and unseen, a feared agent of his guild.

Secondary skills: Any urban background skill is appropriate for the assassin. Agricultural or wilderness skills are possible, but unlikely.

Weapon proficiencies: The assassin can use any weapon, though many prefer small stabbing weapons that are used with one hand (particularly the dagger and short sword, but not the bastard sword or spear) and small, piercing missile weapons (e.g., a hand crossbow or short bow, or thrown daggers, shuriken, etc.). Assassins can specialize but only with a melee weapon, as restricted earlier; such favored weapons are frequently seen and serve as "trademarks" for a particular assassin's style.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Assassins may choose proficiencies from the general, warrior, or rogue lists, all at the listed costs (i.e., rogue skills are not doubled in cost). However, he cannot learn agricultural or wilderness skills. Required: Disguise, Trailing. Recommended: Alertness, Blind-Fighting, Gather Intelligence, Herbalism, Land-Based Riding, Observation, Tightrope Walking, Tracking, Tumbling, Voice Mimicry. (See the *Complete Thief's Handbook*, Chapter 2, for details on new proficiencies.)

Equipment: Assassins prefer to wear only leather armor. If they wear any heavier type of armor, they are unable to use their special benefits. Different types of deadly devices and unusual weapons are used by assassins, and fighter assassins might be trap or weapon collectors. In general, see the *Complete Thief's Handbook*, chapter 5, for details on items that fighter assassins might be allowed to use. Poison is also widely used because of its rapid killing power; see the *Complete Thief's Handbook*, chapter 7, for details.

Special benefits: The fighter assassin is able to move silently as a thief of equal level (use Table 19 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 23; dexterity and racial bonuses apply). If an assassin surprises an opponent, is not himself surprised, has a melee weapon in hand, and is within melee range, the assassin can automatically hit his opponent once and do double damage; this is in addition to his normal attack. This ability works only against humanoid-shaped creatures of small or medium size, and it assumes that the assassin does not require a magical weapon of greater power than he has in hand to hurt the target.

Special hindrances: The assassin's main drawback is the unlawfulness of his trade. If found out as an assassin and captured, he can expect no mercy from the law. If an assassin is identified but not captured, a bounty of 10x1d100 gp will be placed on his head.

Wealth options: The assassin receives the normal 5d4x10 gp.

Race: Humans and half-elves (and half-orcs, if such are allowed) may be assassins.



Nomad

Description: The nomad is a horseman from the vast steppes, similar to Mongols from our world. He excels at riding horses and shooting bows. A nomad's life is harsh, and he may place a low value on human life. Nomad armies of mounted archers are fearsome opponents because of their mobility. Horses, cattle, and sheep are vital to a nomads life, and loyalty to one's clan and chief is demanded of all. Nomads spend most of the day in the saddle. To be a nomad, the character must have a constitution of 14 and dexterity of 13.

Role: A nomad in an AD&D campaign will likely be an outcast if the campaign is set in a civilized land. Nomads rarely leave their clans. Others may consider him to be cruel and taciturn. Nomads value their friends highly but tend to be curt with outsiders. Rangers and fighters may be nomads, but paladins may not.

Secondary skills: Most of the secondary skills are urban in nature and thus inappropriate here. Nomads' skills could include bowyer/fletcher, hunter, and trapper/furrier. All nomads have a basic knowledge of livestock and horsemanship.

Weapon proficiencies: When created, a nomad must take proficiency with the short composite bow or short bow, the scimitar, and the lance. The fourth slot may be used for any desired weapon. Recommended: lasso, knife.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Bonus proficiency: Land-Based Riding (horse).

Recommended: Bowyer/Fletcher, Animal Handling, Endurance, Survival (Desert), Direction Sense.

Equipment: When created, the nomad must purchase either a riding horse or a pony. The nomad must also buy a bow as soon as possible.

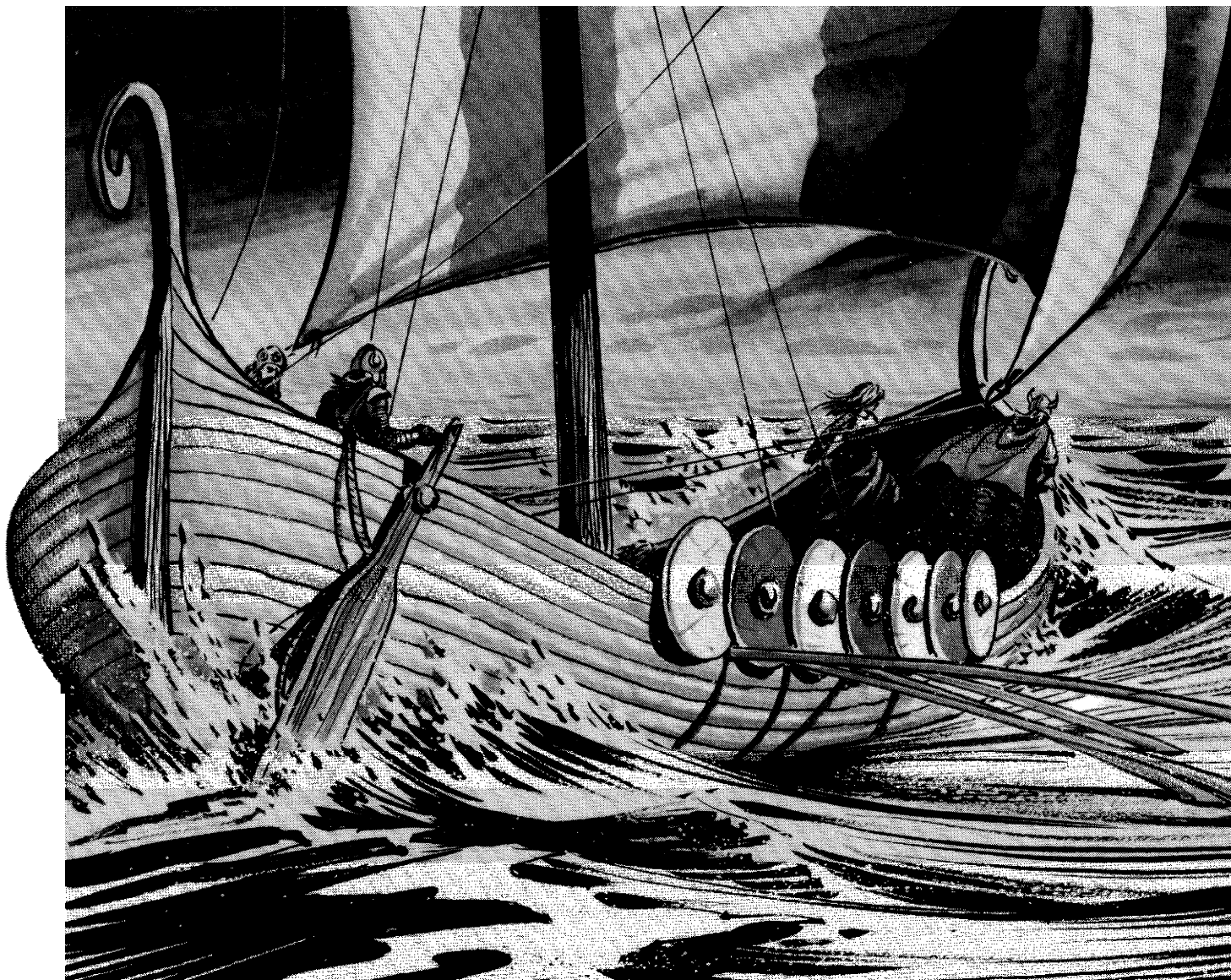
Special benefits: The nomad's background includes intensive training in archery and riding. Because of this, the nomad suffers no penalties to attack rolls or rate of fire (see the *DMG*, page 76) when firing from a moving horse. However, range penalties are still in effect.

Special hindrances: Nomads prefer mobility over heavy protection; thus, they will wear only leather, studded leather, ring, scale, or chain mail armor. Since they spend so much time on horseback, nomads walk with a bowlegged gait and suffer a -1 to their base movement rate on foot.

Wealth options: Nomads receive the normal 5d4x10 gp. As with other barbaric kits, the nomad must spend all but 3 gp or less. As noted above, the nomad must buy a horse or pony and a bow.

Races: Only humans may be nomads.

Note: The *Horde* boxed set for the AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign describes a setting appropriate for nomad-type characters.



Northman

Description: The northman is a warrior from the cold fjords and mountains of the far north (obviously, he can be from the far south, too, and be known as a "southman"). In our own history, we can draw on the example of the Vikings.

Northman lands are poor for farming, so the northmen take to the sea and raid warmer lands for food and treasure. Northmen are superb and daring sailors. Although they seem similar to the barbarians, northmen have a real civilization. They make excellent boats, armor, and weapons. Northmen are physically large, much more so than other peoples. They have pale skin, blue or gray eyes, and blonde or red hair. Rangers and fighters may be northmen, but paladins may not. When rolling height and weight, the player should use the above average random rolls. Northmen must have a minimum strength of 14.

Role: As with other cultures, northmen have a variety of attitudes. Some are cha-

otic and carefree, while others are grim and fatalistic. All have a zest for combat. Northmen adventurers are easily noticeable out of their home environment because of their size and appearance. Nobles often hire them as personal guards. Northmen are loyal to the death if they vow service to a chief or employer.

Secondary skills: The sailor skill is appropriate.

Weapon proficiencies: Required: battle axe, long sword. If the PC is a fighter and wishes to specialize, he must choose one of these above two weapons for specialization. Recommended: short bow, knife, spear, hand axe.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Bonus proficiencies: Swimming, Seamanship. Recommended: Navigation, Survival (cold), Endurance, Rope Use, Fishing.

Equipment: Northmen are disdainful of armor heavier than chain mail and often wear armor lighter than that. In combat, they prefer large shields. A northman's goal in life often is to command a longship with full crew, either hired or

volunteers, and go raiding to gain land and treasure. Ultimately, he wants to die gloriously in battle.

Special benefits: The benefit of being a northman lies in his bonus proficiencies. In addition to being a fine swimmer, the northman is skilled in oars, sails, and keelboats.

Special hindrances: Because of their raiding reputation, northmen have a +3 penalty on reaction rolls when in lands of the people who suffer from their raids.

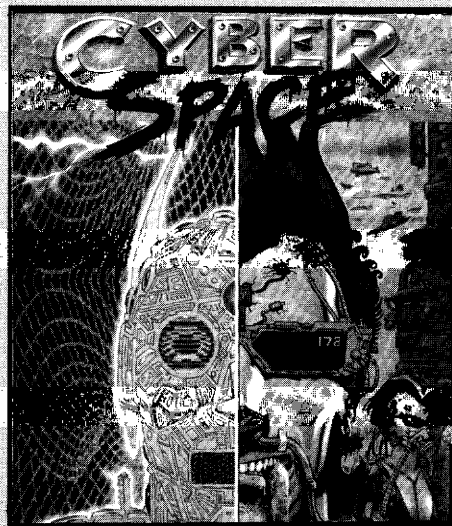
Wealth options: Northmen receive the normal 5d4x10 gp.

Races: Only humans may be northmen.

Note: This warrior kit would fit very well into the Norse campaign setting published in HR1 *Vikings Campaign Sourcebook*. This 96-page sourcebook (TSR Product No.: 9322) details a fantasy Viking civilization using the AD&D 2nd Edition rules and includes deck plans of ships, boats, a map of the Viking's world, and character classes and magic unique to the setting.

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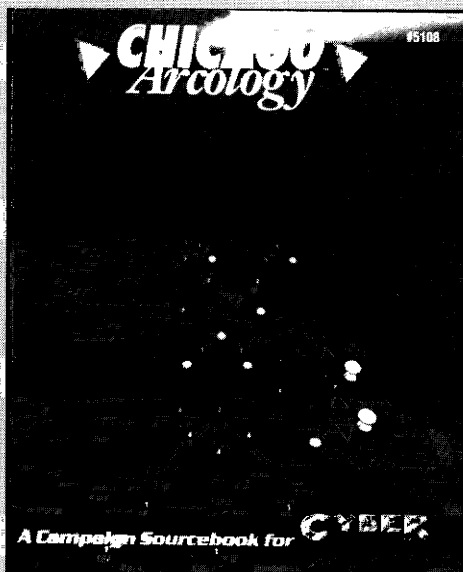


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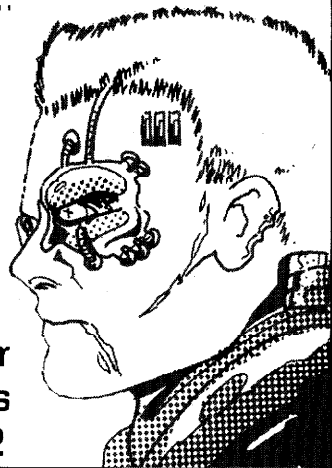
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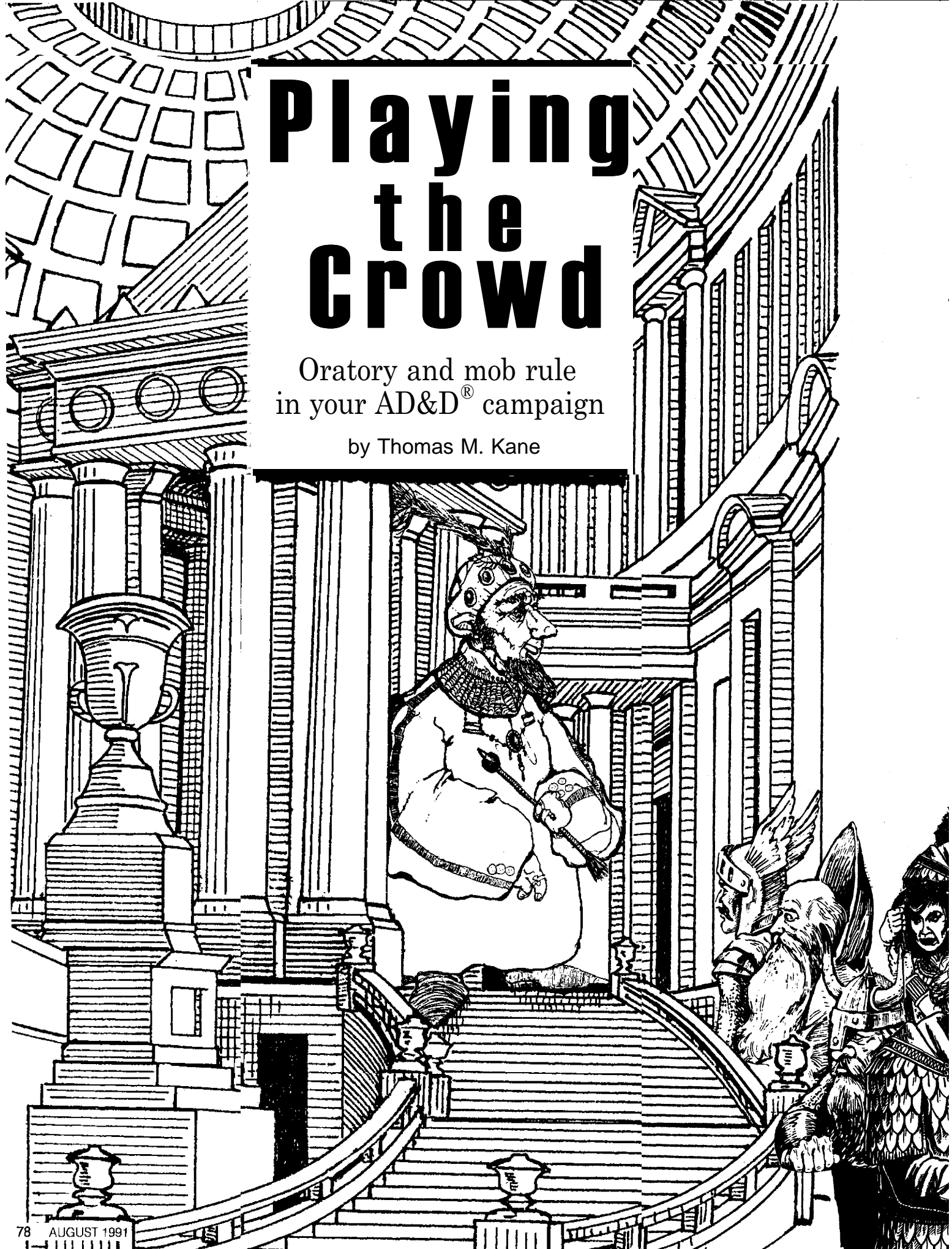
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Playing the Crowd

Oratory and mob rule
in your AD&D® campaign

by Thomas M. Kane



Duke Dedric had expected more mercenaries around the old rabble-rouser's hideaway, but his troops had little trouble breaking inside. He had watched for some sort of trick until the end, when a cell door finally slammed shut on the traitor, Jiak Pierus. Apparently, the rebels never had any real strength at all—except at talking. Now that Duke Dedric had eradicated the crown's enemies, he could start dreaming about his reward. The king always enjoyed hearing about triumphs, and as the duke urged his carriage through the streets, he happily anticipated telling his tale. He would describe the brief skirmish in a bland tone, and then observe that compared to baiting dragons, dispersing the Young Dynasty conspiracy constituted no more than a trifle.

It was at this point when Duke Dedric smelled the smoke.

A bonfire burned in the intersection ahead, fueled by furniture from a nearby villa. Townspeople flooded the streets on all sides. Urchins ran among them, delighted at the excitement of an insurrection. A red glow around the castle walls indicated that the people had surrounded the palace with their barricades. The mobs stamped, shook fists, and yelled slogans. It wasn't difficult to hear what they were shouting: "Down with the king! Hang the duke! Free Pierus! Free Pierus!"

Duke Dedric decided to attend on his sovereign another evening. Right now, he had to worry about escape.

Orators ruled the Roman mob, the Greek *polis*, and the Paris bourgeoisie. Adventurers will certainly want to sway the crowds of fantasy worlds too, following the tradition of Marc Antony, Pericles, and the heroes of the Trojan War. Oratory

and mob rule fit excellently into AD&D® campaigns, both because of their inherent excitement and because the DM can accurately depict the behavior of an irrational crowd with reaction rolls and ability scores. From a game-mechanics point of view, rules for crowd behavior open new strategies for adventuring by restoring importance to the charisma statistic, which too many players ignore.

Getting the point across

Persuasive speech influences only people who hear it. In a world without electronic amplification, orators with strong lungs have a potent advantage over quieter rivals. A clear, carrying voice certainly forms part of one's charisma score. Still, even the loudest speakers also relied on techniques such as posting friends throughout an audience to relay the speech to people in the back of the crowd. Alexander the Great liked to assemble his troops in natural amphitheaters before addressing them.

For game purposes, a speaker can address quiet listeners as far away as 120'. In the typical crowd, words carry only 60'. Members of a shouting, frenzied mob cannot hear anyone until quieted. A speaker may attempt a single charisma check on 1d20 to hush an audience with gestures. If the roll succeeds, a mob will become a crowd (60' speaking radius) and a crowd will become an audience (120' speaking radius). To appeal for silence, a character must be on a rooftop, at a podium, or otherwise at the center of attention. Wizards might use spectacular magic to get noticed.

After beginning to speak, an orator can attempt a second charisma check on 1d20. If this roll succeeds, it extends the speak-

er's range by 20'. Orators suffer a +2 penalty on this roll unless they have ideal acoustical conditions, such as those in a theater, cathedral, forum, or stone grotto. One can find a natural amphitheater in a city or countryside by passing an intelligence check on 1d20. The site will be 1-8 miles from where the character began searching. Finding a speaking site does not require any special proficiency, but the character must have lived in or at least explored the area.

The Speaker's Maximum Audience Table shows the maximum number of people likely to be within an orator's range. Assistant speakers can repeat a speech for distant parts of the audience, but this sort of oratory by committee negates all charisma bonuses on the crowd's reaction rolls. It does not prevent charisma penalties though, since an unpopular person has a stigma to overcome whether his representatives reinforce the public prejudice or not.

Getting results

Whether the audience decides to obey a speaker is one of those questions that can only be answered in the context of an adventure. However, one can establish general principles. Determine a crowd's response to oratory using charisma reaction modifiers and the table on page 103 of the 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Note which favorable reaction adjustments from the table on page 18 of the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* should be subtracted, not added, to the die roll. When deciding if the speaker is friendly, indifferent, threatening or hostile, consider not only the orator's demeanor but what the crowd expects. A beloved hero may roll on the "Friendly" column even when he delivers a scathing rebuke. When a hated tyrant pleads with a peasant mob, he must roll on the "Hostile" column no matter how obsequiously he behaves.

If a speaker gets a hostile reaction, the mob will attack. Its assault can take many forms. Patrons of the theater might throw fruit, while angry peasants prefer stones.



Politically astute demonstrators might simply gaze sullenly while one of their spokesmen makes arrangements with a local hit man. When the masses throw things, assume that 2-12 missiles come in each victim's direction per round, in addition to any missiles fired by particularly important (i.e., dangerous) characters. Even in a full riot, the adventurers deserve a chance to survive. Naked weapons can clear a path through all but the angriest throngs. If intimidation fails, remember that a maximum of six people can fight a single victim at once. The DM should also make a morale check for the attackers every time one of them falls; although crowds can be vicious, they are seldom brave.

The following guidelines show what reaction an orator needs for various feats.

1. To get a crowd to do what it wants to do anyway, any reaction above "cautious" will succeed. "Cautious" merely means the speaker needs to keep talking and make another roll. On a roll of "Friendly," the crowd gets a +1 bonus to its morale. This applies to actions like a prebattle "pep talk."

2. A speaker volunteering information the crowd wants ("He went thataway!") needs a reaction of "Friendly" or "Indifferent" to make people believe him.

3. To inspire a crowd with an attractive but new idea, an orator needs a result of "Friendly." On a result of "Indifferent," the crowd will listen long enough for the speaker to attempt another roll.

4. To calm an excited crowd, a speaker must achieve a result of "Friendly." "Indifferent" or "Cautious" mean the people refuse to listen, no matter how long the orator rants. A result of "Threatening" actually increases the chaos, if possible, and "Hostile" has the obvious effect.

5. To dissuade a crowd from its intent (e.g., to break up a lynch mob), one must first calm it, as described under #4, then obtain a "Friendly" result on a second reaction roll.

6. When the adventurers are members of a crowd, rather than speakers, they can instigate applause, boos, or calls for justice by setting a vigorous example and getting a "Friendly" reaction. The DM may decide what constitutes "vigorous," but PCs are encouraged to be flamboyant. Cheerleading involves far less danger than speaking before a mob. Although rioters might surge forward to attack an irritating speaker, a dissenter who merely shouts from the crowd can usually lose himself among the people. When the PCs are merely spectators in a crowd, any reactions of "Threatening" or "Hostile" apply to only 1-12 NPCs in the immediate area.

Note: Among many other things, point #6 applies to the moment when a triumphant gladiator lets the audience choose life or death for his victim by signaling "thumbs up" or "thumbs down."

Panic and insurrection

Some mobs respond much more readily to leadership than others. Panicked mobs have no organization and often have only vague ideas of why they are rioting. Orators must calm them before giving further orders. Speakers suffer a +3 penalty on all reaction rolls to reflect the crowd's irrational mood. Until someone takes control, rioters mill about without pattern, often wandering toward danger rather than away from it. Looters lurk around the fringes of such gatherings; if nobody suppresses them, thousands of people may join in the robbery. If something startles the people—be it an earth tremor, a monster, or archers firing into the crowd—the mob will panic (a general wisdom check on 1d20 may be rolled for the mob as a whole, assuming an average wisdom of 10). A panicked mob runs in a random direction. It is impossible to address running people, and any important character caught in such a mass must pass a dexterity check or take his armor class in hit points of trampling damage (e.g., AC 8 means 8 hp damage, AC 0 or less means no damage).

Crowds of political revolutionaries display almost the opposite characteristics. They are decidedly hungry for oratory, have definite objectives, and almost always obey established leaders. Even "spontaneous revolts" against tyrants cannot occur unless enough people know when and where to meet. Therefore, one can usually find manipulators behind a revolution, be they beggars' cartels, trade guilds, religious sects, discontented nobility, or professional agitators. If the party helped organize a revolt, it gains a -1 bonus on reaction rolls from the crowd.

Adventurers who want to put down a revolution must cope with the NPC agitators who will try to revive it. To simulate a debate before the crowd, have each opponent attempt a reaction roll for his speech. If both succeed, the crowd remains undecided, and both debaters must roll again. If both fail, the crowd drifts away either to pillage or follow a third leader. When resolving debates, remember that anyone opposed to a crowd-desired revolution must roll on the "Hostile" column of the reaction table. Any outsider who attacks a mob leader must immediately roll on the "Hostile" column to see if the crowd surges forward to kill him. Note, however, that use of this table can also make the mob run away (probably trampling people, as described earlier). To win the crowd's sympathy, a speaker must prove that he is a loyal rebel who simply believes in nonviolence, considers armed struggle premature, and so on.

Despite their leadership, revolutionaries seldom achieve the discipline of armies. People generally begin a revolt in a state of euphoria, thrilled by their collective ability to defy authority. But, once the demonstrators suffer setbacks, the uprising risks degenerating into a riot. The DM

should impose morale checks on mobs liberally. Even revolutionary leaders suffer a +3 penalty on reaction rolls when urging their followers to take such risks as provoking a battle with guards by striking the first blow. Therefore, leaders prefer to give their followers no choice, by enticing the police into attacking first.

Crowd leaders generally carry weapons that they use to provoke attacks by the constabulary. Missile weapons obviously provide the smallest chances of arrest. However, in a crowd of semi-armed people, it can be hard for guards to identify the source of a sword stroke or pike thrust. Resolve individual combats in a crowd using the normal AD&D rules. After each round, anybody friendly to the mob may attempt to escape among the people. On a successful dexterity check on 1d20, the fugitive gets 10' farther from his pursuers than he was when he started (this benefit is undone if the pursuers also make their dexterity checks!). If the above was successful, the fugitive may attempt a second check on the next round to vanish into the crowd, ending the chase. When city guards cannot capture their antagonists, they must pass a collective wisdom check to avoid attacking the crowd in general. If you do not have ability scores for the guards, assume they have a wisdom of 12.

Agitators usually display cunning strategy in streetfighting. They can escape pursuit through windows or sewers and know how to maneuver detachments of their mobs around city blocks, thereby isolating guards in specific streets. Mobs can also wall up alleys as forts, using furniture, wagons, dead animals, etc. If the insurgents have effective missile weapons, even trained soldiers will suffer terrible losses in storming such barricades. The BATTLESYSTEM™ rule book can be used to produce details on "mob units" in war.

Once a rebellion consolidates, an insurrection can take either of two courses. When the insurgent leaders have common ground with established authority, they can often reach a compromise with the government. This gentlemanly sort of uprising occurred fairly often in Paris of the late 1600s, when disgruntled noblemen incited riots against Cardinal Mazarin. (Gamers with an interest in this period should read *Twenty Years After*, by Alexandre Dumas.) When the rebels insist on completely overthrowing society, their uprising must usually end in a battle. Two classic examples are the French and Russian Revolutions. Note that, in both cases, the bloodiest fighting occurred not during the overthrow of the government, but in fighting among the victorious factions.

The price of fame

Public heroes often create crowds without meaning to—or wanting to. For example, any priest known for miracles can expect lepers and dying folk to dog his steps, hoping that the brush of his robe or

ring from his finger might cure them. Each such gathering steals 1-10 items (including torn pieces of clothing) as "relics." PC is quite aware of these thefts. Attacking these supplicants might start a riot. It would take 1-6 hours to attend to everyone in such a mob, but if the PC grows callous, one of the supplicants can always be a current or future emperor in disguise. Further excitement could occur if the PC's reputation exceeds his power, and many of the petitioners ask for the impossible. This becomes worse yet if the priest has a false reputation for curing highly contagious disease.

Other character classes can have related problems. People might follow a notorious thief to catch him in the act. Revolutionaries might proclaim a popular knight as their leader, hoping to force him into the role. No matter where his true loyalties lie, the knight may have to join the rebels or face arrest by constables who have heard and believed what the insurgents say.

The dangers of fame reach their full potential in a light-hearted campaign. Groupies, innocents, and admirers can plague any hero. A paladin might face moral dilemmas when young admirers

start hurting themselves by imitating his feats and a crowd of swooning damsels should thrill any bard, until he learns that

his publicity agent distributed souvenir chisels with stone tablets, and promised all the fans autographs.



Speaker's Maximum Audience Table

Type of crowd	Speaker's range (round down)			
	60'	80'	120'	140'
Village street	1	2	4	6
Village market*	10	20	50	65
City market***	30	50	108	150
Arena***	300	530	1,200	1,620
Mob	600	1,200	2,660	4,000

*Includes city streets.

**Includes crowds that gather around carnival acts, popular heroes, magic displays, public executions, etc.

***Includes theaters or assembled troops.

Note: This table assumes that a speaker's voice projects forward in an arc extending 90° to the front of the speaker. A few extra people might hear by standing directly behind the orator; but these will be scarce enough not to matter unless they are PCs or major NPCs.

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

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

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

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

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

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

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

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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✠

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This SF convention will be held at King Alfred's College, in Winchester, Hants, U.K. Guests include Bruce Sterling, Brian Stableford, and Josef Nesvadba. Themes include "The Image of the Future" (books/films/comics), and "The Art and Science of Storytelling" (books and films). Registration: £20 in advance, £25 at the door. Write to: WINCON, 38 Outram Rd., Southsea, Hants, PO1 5QZ, UNITED KINGDOM; or call: (0705) 754934.

VIKINGCON 12, Aug. 16-18

WA

This SF convention will be held on the campus of Western Washington University in Bellingham, Wa. Guests include Lois McMaster Bujold, Freeman Dyson, Poul Anderson, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Spider Robinson. Activities include AD&D®, SHADOWRUN®, and GURPS® games, with panels, a masquerade, an art show, a dealers' room, and 24-hour gaming. Registration: \$24 at the door. Write to: VIKINGCON, WWU Viking Union 202 Box V-1, Bellingham WA 98225; or call: (206) 733-9366.

BUBONICON 23, Aug. 23-25

NM

This convention will be held at the Albuquerque Four Seasons Inn in Albuquerque, N.M. Guests include Simon Hawke, Arlan Andrews, and Alan Gutierrez. Activities include readings, panels, movies, a masquerade, filking, hucksters, and parties. Registration: \$20 until Aug. 5th, or \$23 thereafter. Write to: NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque NM 87176.

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CA

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TX

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PACIFICON '91, Aug. 30-Sept. 2

CA

This gaming convention will be held at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo, Calif. Activities include role-playing and board games, a flea market, seminars, movies, painting contests, auctions, and SCA demos. Write to: PACIFICON, P.O. Box 2625, Fremont CA 94536.

CHAMBERICONE '91, Sept. 6-13

✠

This gaming convention will be held at the MJC de Chabery in Chabery, France. (Special room rates are available from a nearby hotel.) Events include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, with AD&D®, BATTLESYSTEM™, ROLE-MASTER®, SPACE HULK®, BATTLETECH®, and DIPLOMACY® tournaments, and PARANOIA®, STAR WARS®, MERP®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, TOON®, TORC®, and RUNEQUEST® games. Other activities include a costume contest, a video room, an auction, and 24-hour gaming. Prizes will be awarded for all tournaments and

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The Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan, Ill. presents convention at Friends' Hobby Shop. Events include miniatures games and fantasy and adventure role-playing games. Registration: \$6/day, or \$9/weekend. RPGA™ Network and HMGS members will receive discounts. Write to: Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan, c/o Friends' Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790.

TACTICON '91, Sept. 13-16

This convention will be held at the Ramada Hotel of Denver/Boulder, Colo. Events include games of all kinds, RPGA™ tournaments, auctions, figure-painting contests, seminars and demos, and a live-action role-playing game. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 363-8967.

EMPEROR'S 21st BIRTHDAY, Sept. 14

This convention will be held at the Century

Center in South Bend, Ind. Events include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, Napoleonic miniatures games, and a dealers' area. Registration: \$7. Write to: Mark Schumaker, P.O. Box 252, Elkhart IN 46515; or call: (219) 294-7019.

FRON 007, Sept. 14-15

This convention will be held from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. at the Stadthalle in Frankfurt Bergen Enkheim, Germany. Activities include role-playing games in German and English, SCA demos, live-action RPGs, a miniatures-painting contest, a PBM meet, and SPACE HULK* and BLOOD BOWL* tournaments. Registration: DM 3/day, or DM 5/weekend. GMs and those in costume are admitted free of charge. Lodging is available. Write to: "252," c/o Martin Kliehm, In der Roemerstadt 164, D-6000 Frankfurt am Main-50, GERMANY; or call: (49) 69-574579.

CAFE CASABLANCA, Sept. 27-29

This live-action role-playing game convention will be held at the Days Hotel in West Haven, Conn. Players will take the roles of characters from movies like *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon*. Registration: \$35 preregistered. Write to: Cruel Hoax Prod., c/o Lawrence Schick, 226 N. 2nd St., New Freedom PA; or call: (717) 235-2929.

VALLEYCON XVI, Sept. 27-29

This convention will be held at the Regency Inn in Moorhead, Minn. Guests include Margaret Weis and Erin McKee. Activities include an art show and auction, video rooms, RPGs, panels and workshops, a banquet, and a live game show. Registration: \$5/adults, \$4/13-17 yr. olds, \$3/3-12 yr. olds, preregistered. Children under 3 free. Dealers are welcome. Write to: VALLEY CON XVI, P.O. Box 7202, Fargo ND 58108.

NOWSCON '91, Sept. 28-29

This convention, sponsored by the Northern Ohio Wargaming Society (NOWS), will be held at the Brookpark National Guard Armory in Brookpark, Ohio. Events include an RPGA™ tournament, AD&D®, and American Civil War miniatures games. Other activities include a dealers' area and a game auction. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$10/day, both of which include a one-year membership in the NOWS. Event fees are included. Write to: NOWSCON '91, PO. Box 29116, Parma OH 44129.

NOVACON, Oct. 4-6

This gaming convention will be held at the Memorial Student Center on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Tex. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS*, TRAVELLER*, CYBERPUNK*, TWILIGHT: 2000*, GURPS*, AXIS & ALLIES*, CAR WARS*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, DIPLOMACY*, TITAN*, TALISMAN*, CIVILIZATION*, and microarmor games. Other activities include 24-hour Japanese and open gaming. Registration: \$8/weekend. Write to: MSC NOVA, Box J-1, College Station TX 77844-9081; or call: (409) 845-1515.

RUDICON 7, Oct. 4-6

This convention will be held on the campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in Rochester, N.Y., and is sponsored by RWAG and the RIT student government. Events include RPG and war-gaming tournaments, miniatures-painting and art contests, a large dealers' room, historical miniatures games, and a con party complete with a costume contest. Registration: \$5/weekend. Dealers are welcome. Write to: RUDICON 7, c/o Student Gov't, 1 Lomb Memorial Dr., Rochester NY 14623.

CON*CEPT '91, Oct. 5-6

This convention will be held at the Nouvel Hotel in Montreal, Quebec. Guests include Diane Duane and Peter Morwood. Activities include panels, exhibits, a dealers' room, a masquerade, an art show, an auction, and gaming. Registration: \$20 before Sept. 21; \$23 at the door. Write to: CON*CEPT '91, PO. Box 405, Station "H," Montreal, Quebec, CANADA H3G 2L1; or call (days): (514) 453-9455.

TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION IX Oct. 6-7

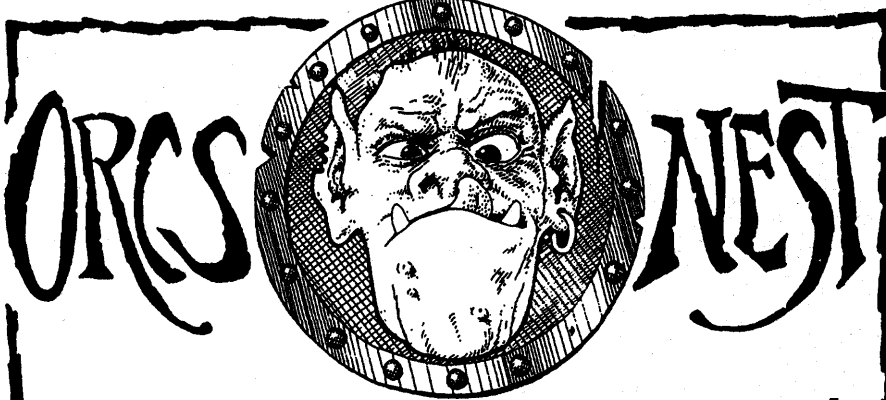
This convention will be held at the University of Toledo, Scott Park campus. Over 150 role-playing, strategy, tactical, and miniatures games will be run. Other activities include an auction, demos, painting contests, non-stop movies, open gaming, and a dealers' area. Send an SASE to: Toledo Gaming Convention IX, c/o Mind Games, 2115 N. Reynolds Rd., Toledo OH 43615.

NECRONOMICON, Oct. 11-13

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Airport in Tampa, FL. Guests include Piers Anthony, Andre Norton, Richard Lee Byers, and Joseph Green. Activities include a banquet, a fan cabaret, panels, an art show and auction, a dealers' room, dances, and an auction to benefit Wildlife Rescue. Registration: \$15 until Sept. 15; \$20 or \$8/day thereafter. Write to: NECRONOMICON '91, PO. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569.


QUAD CON '91, Oct. 11-13

This convention, held by the Riverbend Gamers' Assoc., will be held at the Palmer Auditorium, in Davenport, Iowa. Guests include Sam Lewis. Events include BATTLETECH*, SHADOWRUN*, CHAMPIONS*, TOP SECRET*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, AD&D®, RENEGADE



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WARP II, Oct. 11-13

OK

Sponsored by the War and Role-Playing Games Assoc., this convention will be held at the South west Airport Hotel in Tulsa, Okla. Events include an AD&D® 2nd Edition tournament, with RAVENLOFT™, BATTLETECH*, CHAMPIONS*, SHADOWRUN*, and AXIS & ALLIES* games, as well as a dealers' room, combat demos, and a movie room. Registration: \$8/weekend in advance, \$12/weekend at the door. Write to: WARP, 5103 S. Sheridan, Tulsa OK 74145; or call (918) 743-1025.

TITANCON '91, Oct. 11-13

VA

Sponsored by the Historical Simulation Society, this TITAN* game convention will be held at Old Caball Hall, on the campus of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Va. Our Game Point Average system insures continuous TITAN* play for all to see, and is used to determine Team Champions and seeding of individuals for the Individual Championships games on Sunday. Trophies will be awarded. Registration: \$5 until Oct. 4; \$10 at the door. Write (and make checks payable) to: Brian Bouton, 5 S. Dooley Ave., Richmond VA 23221; or call: (804) 358-5517.

BORDERCON, Oct. 12-13

NH

This convention will be held at the Salem, NH, Econolodge between Boston, Mass. and Concord, N.H. Events will include TITAN*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, TWILIGHT: 2000* games, and an APPA Baseball tournament. Other games and a dealers room are also featured. Write to: Denise Keller, c/o Econolodge, 1 Keewayden Dr., Salem NH 03079.

P.E.W. KHANU I, Oct. 12-13

PA

This convention, organized especially for gamers who enjoy political, economic, miniatures, and board games, is being held at the New Villa Inn in New Cumberland, Pa. Beyond the types of games listed above, other activities include a dealers' area and our guest of honor, Craig Taylor. Registration: Fees vary from \$5 to \$11, depending on date and length of registration. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

BORDERCON '91, Oct. 18-20

MO

Cohosted by the Role-Players Guild of Kansas City and the Heart of America Historical Miniatures Gaming Society, this convention will be held at the Rodeway Inn in downtown Kansas City, Mo. Events include RPGA™ sessions, with AD&D®, PARANOIA*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, TORQ*, SHADOWRUN*, TALISMAN*, WARHAMMER*, AXIS & ALLIES*, BATTLETECH*, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, and CHAMPIONS* games. Guests include Harold Johnson and Tim Beach of TSR, Inc. Other activities include a dealers' area, an auction, and a miniatures

contest. Registration: \$12 before Sept. 20; \$15 thereafter. Send an SASE to: BORDERCON '91, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City MO 64116-0157; or call: (816) 455-5020.

CUBECON '91, Oct. 19

PA

Sponsored by the BCCC Gaming Guild and the Circle of Swords, this convention will be held at Butler Community College in Butler, Pa. Activities include RPGA™ events, board, miniatures, and role-playing games, with a dealers' area, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$5 until Sept. 5; \$7 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003; or call Dave at: (412) 283-1159.

CONTRARY '91, Oct. 24-26

MA

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn & Conference Center in Chicopee, Mass. Events include several first-run RPGA™ events, AD&D®, GURPS*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, SHADOWRUN*, TORQ*, and RUNEQUEST* games. Other activities include a Halloween costume party, a painting contest, and an auction. Registration: \$15 in advance, or \$20 at the door. Write to: CONTRARY '91, 626 N. Main St., East Longmeadow MA 01036; or call: (413) 731-7237.

GaelCON '91, Oct. 26-28

IE

This convention will be held at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Kilmainham, Dublin 8, Ireland. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, PARANOIA*, WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY*, and MEGATRAVELLER* games, plus trade stands and special guests. Registration: £3/day, or £8/weekend. Write to: Irish Games Assoc., c/o 49 Russell Ave., Clonliffe Rd., Drumcondra, Dublin 3, IRELAND.

KETTERING GAME CONVENTION V

OCT. 26-27

OH

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include FRP board, miniatures, computer, and RPGA™ games. A special feature is a Masters of Gaming tournament based on "Double Exposure" by Piers Anthony. Write to: Bob Van Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429; or call: (513) 298-3224.

STAR CON '91, Oct. 26-27

This SF&F gaming convention will be held at Americano's Centre in Menasha, Wis. Write to: STAR CON '91, 1112 N. Lake St., Neenah WI 54956.

How effective was your convention listing?

If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

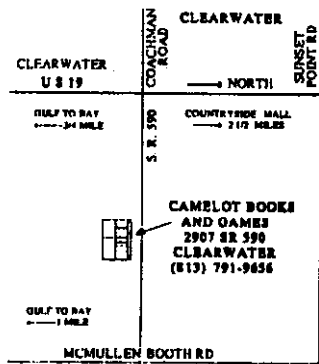
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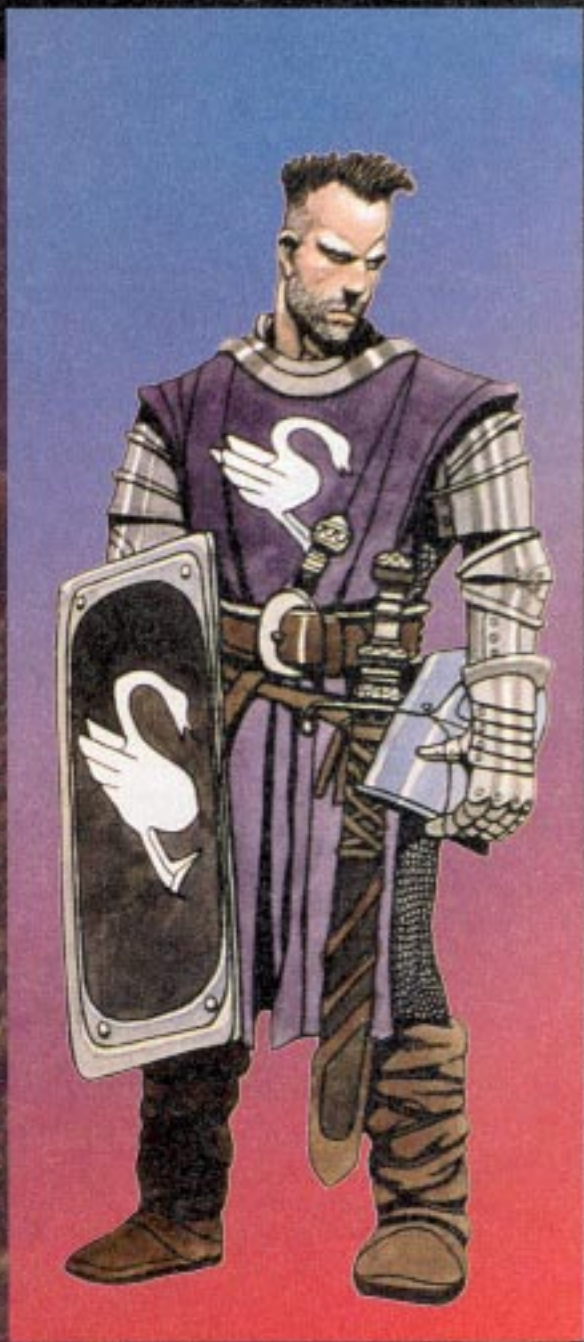
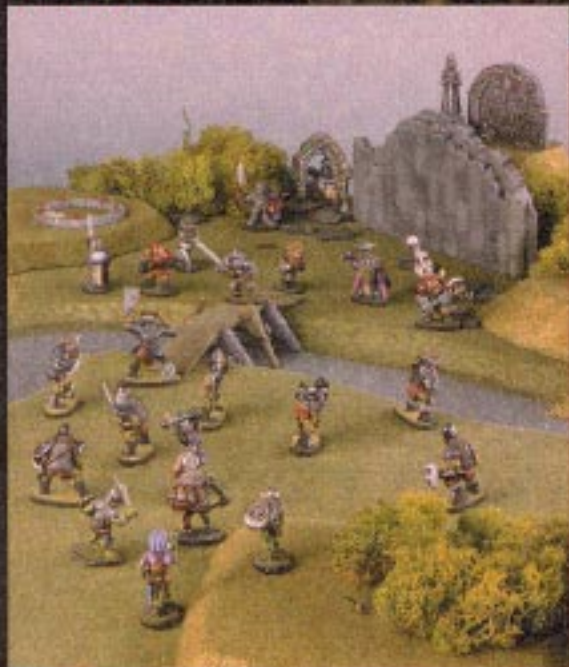
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Skullport

Continued from page 14

behind-the-scenes proprietress. Vhondryl lets people believe she owns the establishment, while Raella, a lawful-neutral 8th-level mage, acts as a simple barmaid. Raella and Vhondryl have been companions for years, having saved each other's lives numerous times. Vhondryl knows that Raella uses The Deepfires as a place to collect information for the Lords of Waterdeep, but this secret is kept between the two of them. Raella and Laeral are relatively close acquaintances and exchange information often. Laeral describes Vhondryl as a "powerful but vain and petty potion peddler."

The rumor mill turns

A lone adventurer was fished out of the Sargauth two weeks ago. He died soon after being rescued, muttering about "gold awash with blood, and thousands of eyes, horrible green eyes!"

There are rumors of a cave under Skull Isle—a cave with walls and floor of solid mithril! Local dwarves have laid claim to it, despite a number of threats from powerful foes. The cave is reached through the Skullpool river basin, and only small demihumans can fit through the tunnel that surfaces into the cavern. No mithril has been mined yet, though a few nuggets

have found their way into Skullport.

A sect of drow have taken over the abandoned temple complex to the northeast of Skullport and dedicated it to Eilistraee. Sources tell of their growing numbers, not only from new worshipers but from soldiers and slaves. Their purposes are mysterious, and they guard the complex closely and fiercely. There are fears abroad that this growing temple may disrupt the delicate balance of power within Skullport.

Iljrene, a purported witch, has stunningly executed one of the Hired Horrors in plain sight on the streets of Skullport with various pyrotechnic spells. To everyone's surprise, the Skulls didn't respond in any way whatsoever.

Of late, an assemblage of silent phantom humans has been wandering the streets and catwalks of the port. Ephemeral, mute, and totally oblivious to their surroundings, these phantoms are dressed in ancient battle armor, rich court clothing, or drab muslin robes. The figures seem to be from all walks of life with no connection to each other at all. No one has successfully communicated with the phantoms, and they disturb the patrons of Skullport, absently walking through people and buildings.


A recent adventurer entered Skullport with a wild story regarding the Skulls of the port. He claimed to have stumbled across a cavern in which he saw, as he put

it, "a whole ring of these skulls there! They were talking low, so I didn't hear much, but they were talking fast and furious. There were even a couple of fresh skulls hanging there, still having beards and flesh, but talking just the same!" When the adventurer moved and made some noise, the lights went out and the skulls disappeared. The fighter claimed to find this "Council of Skulls" somewhere on Level Seven of Undermountain. This can't be confirmed, since from the night he told this to patrons of the Burning Troll, the adventurer has been missing.

An ominous exit

Laeral paused thoughtfully, and we waited attentively for her to continue. "Alas, kind chroniclers, that is all I can readily impart to you now. Milord Khelben anticipates my return hence, and the Blackstaff is not one to be kept waiting." She readied herself to leave, and then paused, her black and silver gown swirling with her sudden action. Enigmatically smiling, she left us a final warning: "Do ye and yours tire of this dangerous port and plan to tread a path back into Undermountain? Some advice for ye, then: Avoid the passage known as Taglath's Gap, which is named for the ghost that lurks there, where he was murdered. Your pardon—which gap is it? Oh, but that would be telling!"

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, PO. 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 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writers' guidelines for the magazine).

Join the sage this month as he looks at spells and magical items in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game.

Just how quickly will a continual light spell consume an object it's cast on? If cast on a creature, will it cause harm if left in place long enough? If so, how quickly? Does the spell run out when it consumes the object it's cast on?

This is up to the DM, but the process takes hundreds of years for soft materials such as wood, and thousands of years for hard substances such as gemstones. Perishable materials, such as most foodstuffs, will rot normally long before a *continual light* spell can affect them. Likewise, most

creatures will be dust before the spell will hurt them. If an object is consumed by this spell, the spell ceases to function.

What is the duration of the second-level ghoulish touch spell from page 98 of The Complete Wizard's Handbook? The summary at the beginning says one round per level, but the text says 3-8 rounds.

The caster's ability to *use ghoulish touch* lasts one round per level. Victims who are touched and fail their saves vs. paralysis exude a carrion stench and remain paralyzed for 3-8 (1d6+2) rounds.

Can an anti-magic shell be cast on a building in conjunction with permanency? If so, could spells be cast inside the building? Could spells be cast from inside at targets outside?

Anti-magic shell cannot be made permanent. (*Permanency* affects very few spells; see the *Player's Handbook*, pages 190-191.) In any case, *anti-magic shell* has a spherical area of effect; it does not conform to the shape of the area where it is cast. No spell can pass into, through, or out of an *anti-magic shell*.

What happens to a character when he co-exists with his clone? Does a

character suffer damage if his clone is hurt? Can the clone automatically pass for the character? Could the clone steal a dragon's egg and frame the character for the deed?

There is a link between a *clone* and its original; this unfailingly alerts each creature to the other's existence, but it does not transfer damage between the two or provide any additional information, such as how far apart the two beings are. The *clone* is almost indistinguishable from the original, as it has all the original's memories and abilities. A particularly clever *clone* might try to make mischief by committing crimes in the originals name, but note that the *clone's* prime motivation is to slay the original before insanity sets in, which usually takes a week. Note also that beings who know the original quite well might be able to detect the *clone*, as the original invariably has at least 2-8 months' worth of recent knowledge that the *clone* does not. (The *clone* has the originals abilities and memories at the time the flesh sample was taken; once this is done, it takes 2-8 months to grow the *clone*. The gap in knowledge might be even longer if the *clone* wasn't started immediately after the flesh sample was taken.)

Finally, note that dragons are pretty hard to fool and even harder to steal from. A *clone* would have to be exceptionally clever and lucky to successfully make off with a dragon's egg, and a dragon hunting for a stolen egg isn't very likely to attack the wrong suspect. Very smart dragons, however, might try to force or convince the original to join the hunt for the egg and confront the *clone*.

Is the sunray power of a sun blade the same as the seventh-level priest spell of the same name? Can the wielder attack while using the sunray power?

This question sparked quite a bit of debate among my colleagues at TSR, Inc. However, the consensus is the sword's *sunray* power works exactly as described in the sword's description (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 185), not

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like the *sunray* spell. DMs are free to decide if the swords *sunray* power can be used while attacking; it's reasonable to assume the vigorous overhead swinging required to evoke the *sunray* would preclude attacks. On the other hand, the rules aren't precise about what vigorous overhead swinging really is, so it's not unreasonable to assume that the wielder can't just add an overhead flourish or two while attacking. If you decide to allow attacks while maintaining the *sunray*, you might want to impose a to-hit or initiative penalty (say, -2), or both. Note that a dim glow persists for one turn after the swinging stops, no matter which option you choose.

What are the dimensions of the beams created by the *sunray* spell? Is the caster continually surrounded by a sunny glow while the spell lasts? If not, does the caster know when the spell will end?

This question sparked only slightly less spirited arguments than the previous one. The "beams" are spherical bursts of light with a 5' radius. No glow surrounds the caster, but the caster can create one burst each round (unless he is attacking or performing some other action other than movement) anywhere within the spell's range. I can't think of any overwhelming reason to assume that the caster should know how long the spell will last. How-

ever, an unknown and variable duration might make casting this high-level spell far too chancy for some campaigns. A reasonable compromise might be to keep the total duration secret from the caster, but tell him if the spell has ended before he declares his actions for the round (see the *PHB*, page 93).

The description for the *ring of spell storing* says a "character of appropriate class and level" can restore spells cast from the *ring*. Does this mean the ring can be recharged without using an *enchant an item* spell? Or is the *enchant an item* spell required, as stated in the rules about recharging magical items on page 88 of the *DMG*?

One of the unique properties of the ring of *spell storing* is that it can be recharged easily. Any spell-caster who can memorize the appropriate spell can recharge the ring. This is an exception to the general rules on recharging magical items.

When an *enchant an item* spell is used to prepare an item for recharging, does the item have to make a saving throw for each spell cast into it? If the save fails and the item's enchantment is disturbed, can the item be reenchanted?

An item to be recharged must make one

saving throw when the *enchant an item* spell is cast at the beginning of the process. If the save fails, the item is destroyed (it crumbles to dust). If the save succeeds, no more saves are required, as charges replaced in the item are not "new" spells cast into it.

Can a *vorpal* weapon be used to sever an extremity, such as a tentacle from the *Evard's black tentacles* spell or a dragon's tail, if the wielder is attacking the dragon from behind? Can a weapon of *sharpness* sever a head or neck, or only extremities such as arms, legs, tails, and tentacles?

Vorpal weapons sever only heads and necks; if the DM decides the wielder cannot reach the neck, nothing is severed. Weapons of *sharpness* can sever all types of extremities except for heads. Whether or not the tentacles from *Evard's black tentacles* qualify as extremities in this case is up to the DM. Since the tentacles can be damaged by weapons, they probably should be treated as part of a creature, vulnerable to severing by weapons of *sharpness* and precisely targeted spells such as magic missile.

How does the gender change caused by a *girdle of femininity/masculinity* change the victim's



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ability scores? What if the victim changes to neuter gender?

There's nothing in the *girdle's* item description to suggest that the victim's ability scores change at all. Only the victim's gender changes. Note that the AD&D 2nd Edition game assumes gender has no measurable affect on a character's ability scores.

Can magical gauntlets be worn over magical gloves? Can magical bracers be worn with magical gauntlets? Can two different types of magical bracers be worn at the same time (e.g., bracers of defense and bracers of archery)? Can two different girdles be worn at the same time (e.g., a girdle of many pouches and a girdle of giant strength)? Can magical cloaks be worn with magical robes? Can magical boots be worn over magical slippers?

First, let's define a few terms for gaming purposes: A *bracer* is a forearm protector. It can be as compact as a very wide bracelet or large enough to cover the whole forearm; bracers are made of metal, leather, or heavy cloth. A *gauntlet* is a hand protector that covers at least the wrist and back of the hand, although it might also cover the fingers and most of the forearm; gauntlets are made of metal, leather and

metal, leather, or heavy cloth. A glove at least covers the palm and back of the hand, though it can go from the fingers all the way above the elbow. A *girdle* is a belt, simple or elaborate, worn about the waist or hips. A *robe* is a garment fitted to the body and usually worn over other clothing; minimally, a robe covers the torso from the neck to the waist, but usually is longer. A robe may or may not have sleeves. Any garment that covers the body, from a shirt to a dress, might be called a robe. A *cloak*, *cape*, or *mantle* is a loose, usually sleeveless outer garment hung from the shoulders and worn over other clothing. Generally, a cloak is long and full, covering the body from the neck to below the knees and sometimes to the ankles. A cape is shorter and narrower than a cloak, covering the back from the neck to the waist, but sometimes longer. A mantle covers the shoulders, front and back. Cloaks, mantles, and robes can be hooded, but capes are not. Boots are sturdy, close-fitting garments that cover the foot from toe to ankle and sometimes the entire leg as well. *Slippers* are lightweight and cover the soles of the feet, toes, and heels, but might cover the ankles as well.

Generally, two or more items can be worn together if they cover different parts of the body. There are both logical and game-balance reasons for this. Obviously, a character wearing two or more cloaks is

going to be just as overly powered as a character wearing three or more rings. Furthermore, game logic assumes a magical garment must fit reasonably well to function. The items cease to function if a character layers them on until he looks like a walking laundry basket.

Some garments do overlap in normal use. A robe can be worn with a cape, mantle, or cloak, but a character can wear only one robe and one cape, mantle, or cloak. Bracers can be worn with gloves or gauntlets. Some gauntlets are made to be worn over gloves; indeed, there is no reason why a campaign can't have some gauntlets that fit over gloves and some that do not. Many people in the Middle Ages wore two belts; one was high on the waist to hold up breeches or hose and to hold pouches and tools, and one rode on the hips, usually to support a sword or other large weapon. Sometimes people wore two belts crossed over the hips and a third on the waist. I suggest that two magical belts or girdles be the absolute limit, and only if they have different functions (e.g., one that augments ability scores or skills, such as a *girdle of giant strength*, and one for carrying equipment, such as a *girdle of many pouches*). A character can wear only one set of outer footwear. Any garment thin enough to be worn inside a pair of shoes or boots would be called a sock, not a slipper. Ω

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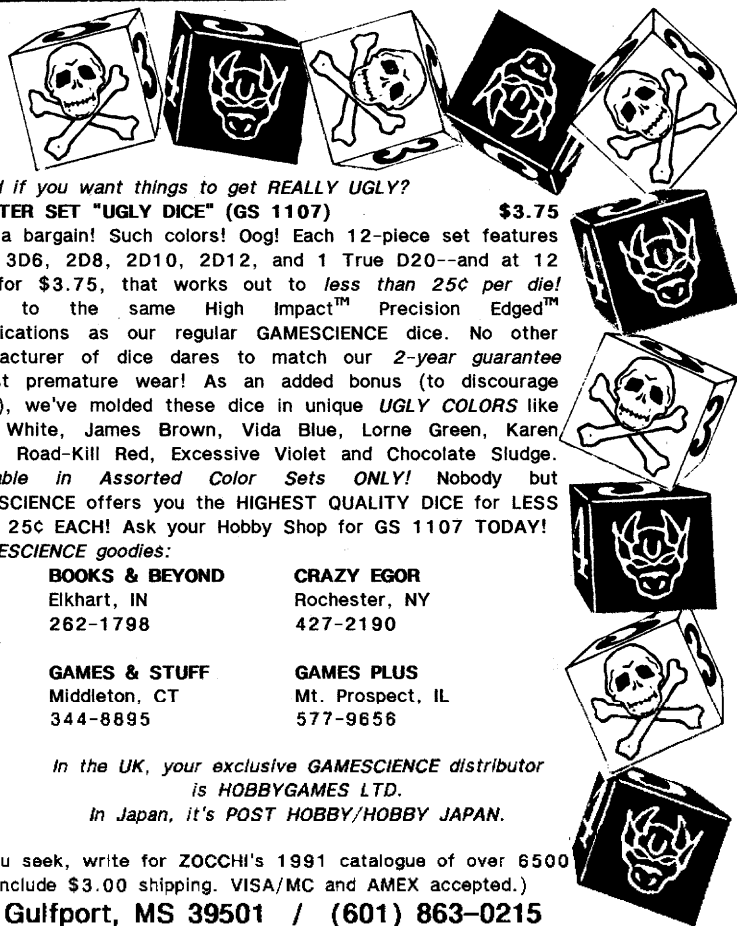
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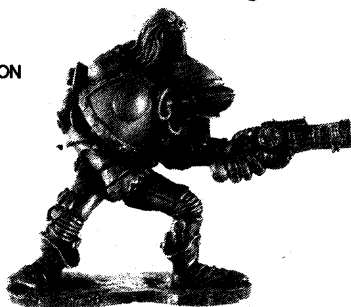
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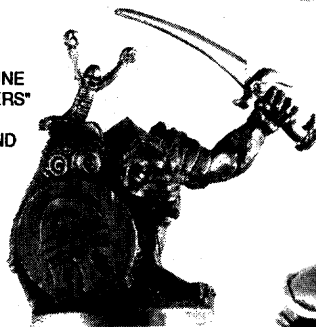
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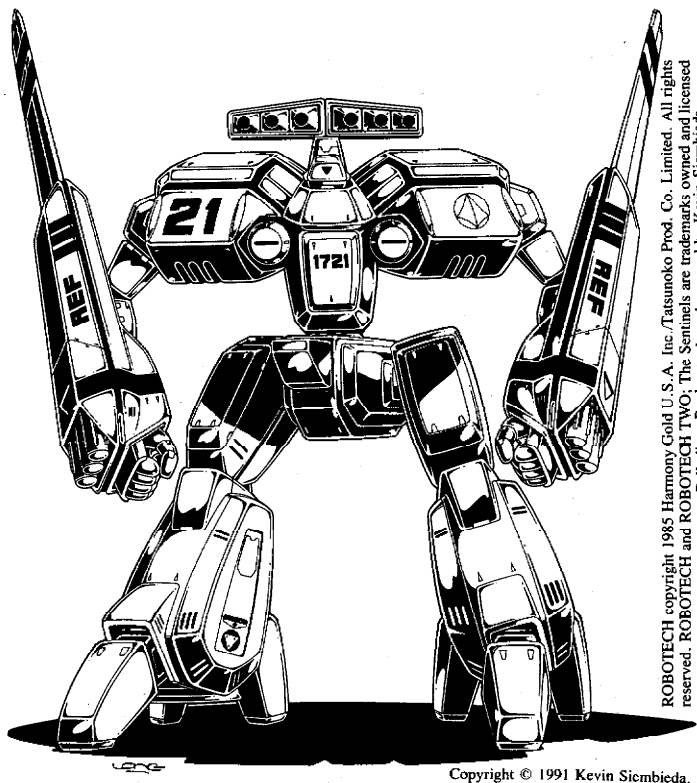
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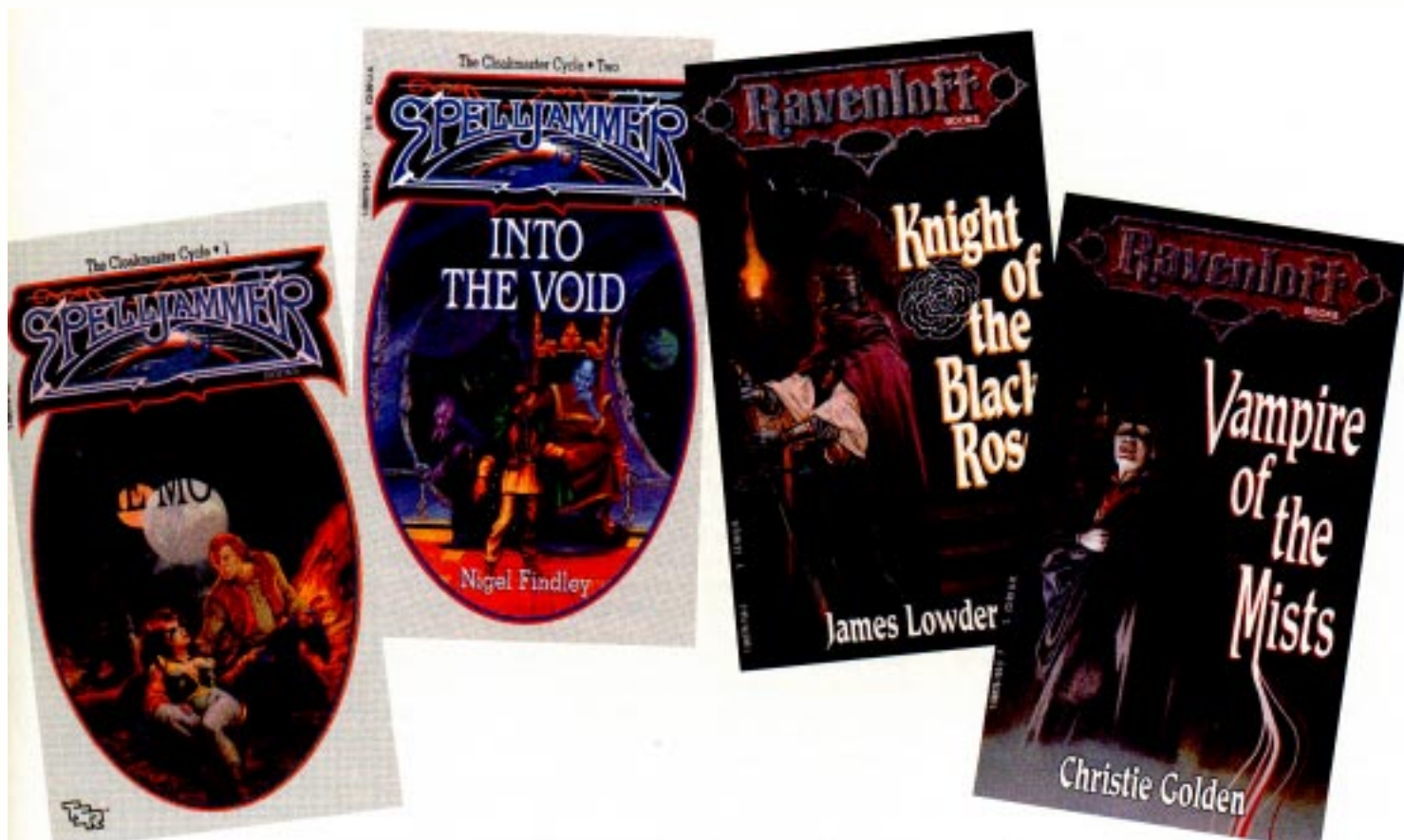
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The introduction of these two series allows characters from all of the worlds to intermingle on common—or, should we say, uncommon—ground. In the SPELLJAMMER books, magical helms allow normal ships to fly from one crystal-enclosed solar system to another. Along the way, they pass through the swirling, brightly colored phlogiston to encounter

strange lands and stranger beings. The characters in the RAVENLOFT books, on the other hand, are brought to that realm by its sinister mists. The dark powers that dwell inside evil souls attract the mists, which then entrap those individuals to pull them into Ravenloft. The mists, however, are indiscriminate and often take innocent travelers as well.

SPELLJAMMER™ novels

The SPELLJAMMER series began with the July release of book one of the open-ended Cloakmaster Cycle, *Beyond the Moons*. It was written by David Cook, who also wrote *Horselords*, book one of the Empires Trilogy. Cook, a game designer for more than 10 years, is the creator of Kara-Tur, the Oriental lands of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® fantasy campaign setting, and was the designer/developer of the AD&D® 2nd Edition game.

Beyond the Moons begins with the crash of an alien spaceship on the planet Krynn. The ship destroys both the home and

livelihood of a young farmer, Teldin Moore, who up to the time of the crash didn't even know space travel was possible. When a dying alien gives Teldin a mysterious cloak and a cryptic message, the Cloakmaster Cycle begins and the young man's future is no longer his own.

Matters are further complicated when the sole survivor of the crash, a giff named Private Gomja, takes it upon himself to become Teldin's bodyguard. Although Teldin at first considers the giff a nuisance, he is later grateful for the creature's stouthearted companionship as the two are hunted by murderous neogi, pursued by mercenaries, and nearly dissected by curious gnomes.

Moore and Gomja travel to see Astinus of Palanthas in the hope that the great historian will be able to aid them in their quest to find the cloaks creators. There they are told only that they must seek the aid of the gnomes of Mt. Nevermind, who live far across the ocean. Travel-weary and disheartened, the two companions take to

the seas in a seemingly endless search for answers. There they are faced with new problems, as the elves who reluctantly give them passage also demand labor in payment. The farmer and the giff are forced to learn the skills of sailing, skills that stand Teldin in good stead as he continues the search that eventually takes him into Krynnspace and beyond aboard a gnomish dreadnought, the *Unquenchable*.

Book two of the Cloakmaster Cycle will be available in October. *Into the Void*, by Nigel Findley, continues the story of Teldin Moore and his search for the mysterious cloaks creators. When the *Unquenchable* is attacked by space pirates, Moore is rescued by Aelfred Silverhorn of Toril and is taken aboard the hammship *Probe*. Moore's relief is short lived, when he discovers that the friendly human he assumed to be the captain of the ship in actuality answers to a mind flayer!

Unsure at this point whether possession of the cloak is a blessing or a curse, Teldin Moore finds it ever more difficult to know who to trust and conceals the cloak and its powers. He remains uneasy about traveling on the mind flayer's ship, but finds that he has little choice. Then the ship is attacked by neogi spiderships, and Moore accidentally reveals the cloaks powers, forcing him to take Silverhorn and the alien captain into his confidence.

When a female pilot is rescued from her damaged mosquito ship and comes aboard for the duration of the journey through wildspace to the planet Toril, Moore's mind turns to thoughts of love and what might have been, if only he hadn't been given the enormous responsibility of the cloak. Rianna Wyvernthane is a welcome distraction, but in Teldin's case distraction could be deadly, as an ever-growing ring of evil closes in around him.

In future volumes, the Cloakmaster Cycle will continue to follow the adventures of Teldin Moore as he seeks to discover the secret of the magical cloak entrusted to him by a desperate, dying alien. No one knows where that search will take him, or which of his traveling companions will prove to truly be friends.

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Far from the limitless dimensions of space lies another dimension, one of unspeakable horror: Ravenloft, the demiplane of dread, where evil spawns evil and creatures of the night hunger for human blood. It is a land of enchantment that bewitches with its beauty, even as its evil grows and spreads around the unwary and unsuspecting, enabling it to hold both the innocent and evil forever in its malevolent grasp.

The realm of Ravenloft is almost sentient in nature. Constantly changing and shifting, it stays in a state of flux, growing and receding as necessary to accommodate the evil within its amorphous boundaries. Many luckless souls wander into Ravenloft after becoming lost in the mists that sur-

round it, only to realize they not only have no hope of ever finding their way back out, but have no hope at all. Others come willingly, eager to bargain with the denizens of the dread demiplane, uncaring of the price that will be extracted bit by agonizing bit over all eternity. The land eagerly welcomes those who are truly evil, luring them with open arms into a place designed just for them—a place from which there is no escape.

The first of the RAVENLOFT novels for 1991 is *Vampire of the Mists* by Christie Golden, which will be available in September. Golden, a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, is a contributor to such publications as *USA Today* and *Orbit Video*. This is her first novel.

Vampire of the Mists tells the story of Jander Sunstar, an elven vampire from the Forgotten Realms who is pulled by the mists into the realm of Ravenloft. Jander forms an uneasy alliance with Count Strahd Von Zarovich, who is also a vampire, although a far more willing one than the golden elf from Evermeet.

Strahd was once a warrior who fought on the side of right. Worn down by too many years and too many wars, he became embittered and settled in the land of Barovia. Longing for a youth that was long past and jealous of a love he would never experience, Strahd made a pact with a dark power, bringing death and destruction to his family and his land. Barovia was drawn into the mists and became the first land in Ravenloft, with Count Strahd Von Zarovich its ruler and chief vampire.

In contrast to Strahd, Jander Sunstar finds vampirism an eternal hell from which he cannot gain release. His elven nature longs for the sunlight and all things beautiful, but these things are denied the undead. Only creatures of the night do not fear the elf. Brown and silver wolves hunt at his side. Zombies and skeletons guard the dark halls of Castle Ravenloft, mindless of his presence. A beautiful young woman keeps him company in the daytime dimness of the castle rooms, but changes nightly into a werewolf who answers eagerly to Strahd's beckoning call.

For Jander, time in Ravenloft passes slowly. At first he searches diligently for the identity of the person who drove Anna, the woman he loved, insane. But the land feeds itself on what remains of Jander's soul as he teaches Strahd vampire lore and reluctantly slakes his bloodlust on the frightened citizens of Strahd's domain. Resigned at last to his fate, Jander's memories of Anna dim and his desire for revenge fades.

But fate is not yet done with Jander Sunstar. A Vistani seeress, a thief, and a priest of the Morninglord are all players in a drama that will not end as long as vampires freely stalk the nights of Ravenloft.

Book two of the new Ravenloft series, *Knight of the Black Rose*, by James Lowder, will be available in December. Lowder, who wrote *Crusade*, book three of the

Empires Trilogy, has also written gaming material for several TSR products and works as a book editor for TSR, Inc.

Knight of the Black Rose tells the story of Soth, an undead knight. Lord Soth sends his seneschal, a ghost named Caradoc, on a mission to the Abyss. A member of the Knights of Solamnia before his defection to the dark queen Takhisis, Soth seeks the soul of Kitiara Uth Matar. He already has her body, now a rotting corpse with a permanent expression of fear and horror on its face. Known in life as the Death Knight because of the merciless way he ruled his lands (and because of the wives who conveniently died when he tired of them), Lord Soth wants Kitiara to spend eternity with him.

Soth inhabits the moldering remains of Dargaard Keep, where he is kept company by banshees and other undead spirits. He eagerly awaits Caradoc's return, anxious to place Kitiara's soul again within her body. When the ghost returns empty handed, Soth goes into a rage, but before he can finish wreaking vengeance on the poor ghost, the mists of Ravenloft wind their way into the castle to entrap both Soth and the luckless Caradoc in their possessive vapors.

The mists finally clear, and Soth and Caradoc find themselves in a strange land, surrounded by huge wolves. When the wolves depart, zombies approach, and Caradoc heads for the hills, leaving Soth to face the attack of the mindless creatures by himself. The death knight is victorious, but it is a hollow victory. He knows he is being tested but is unsure why or by whom. He follows the sound of the howling wolves to a Vistani encampment and meets an old gypsy seeress. True to form, death follows in Seth's path as he leaves the camp in ruins and kidnaps Magda, a young Vistani woman, to be his guide through the strange land he now knows is Barovia.

The two travel to—of course—Castle Ravenloft, and once again Count Strahd Von Zarovich welcomes his visitors graciously. The undead knight and the vampire count have much in common, including the total lack of fear each has for the other. Soth seeks a portal through which he can leave Barovia, so that he can continue his quest for Kitiara's soul. Strahd seeks that same portal and agrees to aid Soth, but his reasons for assisting the stranger are ultimately self-serving.

A black-hearted dwarf and a priest who remembers Seth's part in the fall of Palanthas complicate matters, as does the Vistani girl who wants nothing more than to escape her captors with her life intact. However, nothing is as it seems in Ravenloft, and even the undead learn that there is yet something to fear.

In October, we will take a look at another new fantasy world, as the DARK SUN™ novels make their premiere with the publication of *The Verdant Passage*. ☐

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LONE WOLVES

When you meet someone who travels alone,
remember your manners

by Ed Greenwood

In the Forgotten Realms, there are many fireside tales of lone adventures who appear out of the wilds to slay brigands, guide caravans out of danger, destroy taverns— and worse. Most tales grow in the telling, and over the years many loners have fallen victim to age, disease, swords, the elements or monsters. A few may still be met in the wilder stretches of Faerun; two are presented here. They know each other and have cordial (though distant) relations. They do not ride together.

Elsura Dauniir

Female human

19th-level wizard

ARMOR CLASS: 7 (6 in cat form)

MOVE: 12 (16 in cat form)

HIT POINTS: 49

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By spell or weapon type

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Shape shifting (cat form)

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Neutral Good

PROFICIENCIES: Weapon: dagger, dart, staff; nonweapon: cooking, direction sense, fishing, herbalism, singing, spellcraft, swimming, weather sense

LANGUAGES READ & SPOKEN: Common, Elvish

SPELLS COMMONLY MEMORIZED: Abjuration and divination spells often used when sighting potential foes; alteration and invocation/evocation spells used heavily in combat; few enchantment/charm spells and no necromancy spells used

S 14

D 17

C 18

I 18

W 17

CH 16

AGE: 37

SIZE: M

HT: 6'

WT: 140 lbs.

HAIR: Black

EYES: Gold-green



Artwork by Stephen Schwartz

POSSESSIONS: Necklace of missiles (*two 4-HD globes left*), dagger +1 (*enchantment upon it makes it invisible to all but Elsura and beings able to see invisible*), wand of magic missiles (*19 charges left*), *two potions of extra-healing (in steel vials)*, a teleport spell scroll, and a magical pouch (*see text*)

TREASURE: 1-20 gp, 1-12 sp, 1-10 cp

Elsura is "a shapeshifting witch," according to many who travel the Sword Coast North. She is said to be unpredictable and whimsical, with a temper as black as her long, raven-dark hair when she is aroused. Elsura is known to hate slavers and those who hunt for sport and not the feast. She is also said to prowl the wilds often in the shape of a dainty black cat. When in this form, Elsura can be distinguished from feral common cats by her eyes, a distinctive gold-green hue.

Born in Silvermoon, Elsura grew up in the company of elves and Harper folk, playing in the old, deep woods just north of the city walls. She was always adept at recognizing plants and knowing where she was in the forest, and was never afraid of

forest creatures or of wandering alone. While still a youth, Elsura met and befriended the old archmage, Tasirin, and soon became his cook and companion. Some in Silvermoon made efforts to confine Elsura to within the city walls and forbid her to see Tasirin. One night, however, she vanished, and was not seen in any city for many a year, returning only at the death of her father, Aumar "The Lion" (a guards' captain of Silvermoon famed for his battle valor and reasoned leadership). At Aumar's funeral, Elsura, now a tall and mysterious beauty, appeared at the tomb in cat form. While still a cat, she cast a *wall of stone* spell to seal her father's resting place.

Alustriel, High Lady of Silvermoon, befriended Elsura at this time and invited her to learn the Art with mages of the Harpers. The adventuress Sharanralee taught Elsura much about the trails and hiding places of the northeastern wilderlands, but found Elsura "a wild thing" —moody, shy, and very slow to trust. Elsura remains a friend to many Harpers and will aid those Harpers she meets, but she is fiercely independent of any ruler, band, or authority.

In cat form, Elsura is able to leap up to 30' forward and can both speak and cast spells. She retains her own intelligence while gaining a superb sense of smell and 90' infravision. The origin of Elsura's feline *shape shifting* ability is unknown; Elminster believes it is the result of an ancient and powerful curse-spell of a sort used in long-ago Netheril. Change from form to form requires six seconds and never involves system-shock rolls.

Weapons, items, and clothing cannot make the shift to cat form. Elsura customarily wears only a waist-and-baldric pouch for material components; the pouch magically shifts size to fit both her forms snugly. By touch and will, she can make the pouch *invisible* for up to four turns, or use *telekinesis* (by will, not requiring a spell) on it for up to three rounds. Both such powers of the pouch can be utilized once every nine turns. In the pouch, Elsura typically carries material components, a pair of sandals, a pair of leather leggings, a bit of coin, and her possessions.

'Rappers and hunters in the forests of the North often report meeting a black cat that sings or hums as it prowls. Most salute it and pass on, knowing they face Elsura. Those less wise—including such creatures as kobolds and quicklings, who regard the cat as a meal—soon learn wisdom, to their cost.

Baelam "The Bold"

Male human

12th-level wizard (10th-level thief)

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 51

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1



DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-8 (*hand*), or by *spell or weapon type*

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Magical weapon-hand*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic good*

PROFICIENCIES: *Weapon: long sword, short sword, dagger sling, staff, dart, knife; nonweapon: appraising, astrology blind-fighting, cooking, herbalism, rope use, spellcraft, tightrope walking, weather sense*

LANGUAGES READ & SPOKEN: *Common, others possible but unrevealed*

SPELLS COMMONLY MEMORIZED: *Abjuration spells often used when sighting potential foes; alteration and invocation/evocation spells used heavily in combat; few enchantment/charm, divination, or necromancy spells used*

S 15	D 18	C 15
I 18	W 15	CH 13

AGE: 31	SIZE: M
HT: 6'1"	WT: 207 lbs.
HAIR: Black	EYES: Hazel

POSSESSIONS: Ring of the ram, dagger +3 (*when grasped and commanded to do so, the dagger causes its wielder to blink for up to seven rounds, once every 200 turns*), rope of entanglement, ring of vampiric regeneration, and a *potion of healing*

TREASURE: 2-20 gp, 1-12 ep, 3-30 sp, 2-20 cp, 60% chance of 1-10 gems (any types and sizes possible)

Baelam "The Bold" was once an infamous thief of the Sword Coast lands. He was very successful and grew very rich-

until, of course, he robbed the wrong person.

In Baelam's case, it was the mage Throntimm Blacksilver. Blacksilver's hoard included many traps and guardian creatures that Baelam adroitly avoided or destroyed. It also contained a chest that chopped off all hands entering it. Baelam lost his left hand and barely escaped alive. Hurt and still beset by the mage's guardians, the thief dropped all his loot to seize up a man-sized metal automaton, and he bore it away.

The automaton soon came to animated life and nearly slew him, but Baelam used a precious item of magic to destroy its head and then sever the still-deadly limbs of the wizard's strange metal golem. He then took the golem's still-moving left arm and sought out the mage Irritym Wonderstar of Waterdeep.

The process that followed was long, difficult, and took most of Baelam's treasure, but when Irritym at last was done, Baelam had a dextrous, perfectly controlled metal left hand and wrist mated to his own flesh. The hand cannot be removed. It is a +2 magical weapon for attack purposes, can be made to glow with blue or amber *faerie fire* as Baelam wills, is AC 0, and has 66 hp of its own (it will take that much damage before being hampered in any of its functions, and can fight on, animated by Baelam's will, even if severed from Baelam's body or upon his death or disintegration). The hand strikes for 2-8 hp damage and can handle extremes of heat and cold without impairment of function or discomfort on Baelam's part. Acid and electricity will

affect it, however.

Baelam went through much pain during the grafting of the hand to his own flesh. Now, he cannot be adversely affected in combat by severe pain or nausea, even from magical causes such as a *symbol of pain*. He has also given up thievery for study of the Art. Admiration of Irritym's care and intelligent seeking after knowledge blossomed into an interest in magic—first for what it could do, and then for the Art itself.

Irritym was later slain by thieves seeking to plunder his house of magic. An enraged Baelam found and bloodily slew the thieves, but lacked the Art necessary to bring Irritym back to life. The grieving Baelam then sat down to learn all he could of Irritym's Art.

For months he studied, learning little. Then he hid many of the mage's most powerful grimoires somewhere beneath the city of Waterdeep and began a careful program of trading away the lesser items and tomes he found in Irritym's home, in return for training at the hands of others. In between, Baelam roamed the Sword Coast cities, slaying thieves known to him and taking their stolen wealth to further finance his training. In the process he made many enemies, including the sorcerer Garthagul of Calimport and the infamous thief Ssilban "The Silent" of Theymarsh.

In the end, a band of lesser thieves gathered in Waterdeep to slay Baelam and seize Irritym's remaining treasure. One night, they swarmed into the mage's nondescript house, armed to the teeth with magical protections and weapons. In an epic battle still told of in the taverns of Waterdeep, Baelam slew them all. Much of Irritym's house was destroyed in the process—and Baelam's mastery of the Art was convincingly revealed, with all in the city that night as witnesses.

When it was all over, Baelam strode through the smoking streets in the morning sunrise to Blackstaff Tower. There he gave what was left of Irritym's Art to Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun, apologized for the mess he had made (much of the debris from his battle was strewn about the streets and alleys around Irritym's house), and vanished from Waterdeep. Baelam now wanders the Realms, aiding those he wishes to and smiting thieves and evil mages alike, seizing the latter's treasure for his own. The DM should use rare and unique spells (such as those found in the "Pages From the Mages" series or in "Arcane Lore" in this magazine) extensively in determining Baelam's spells; he is said to use "strange magicks" gleaned from his many sources.

Baelam appears as a tall, broad-shouldered man with jet-black hair and a hooked nose. He is grim and black-humored, but he can be both gentle and courteous if he so desires. Ω

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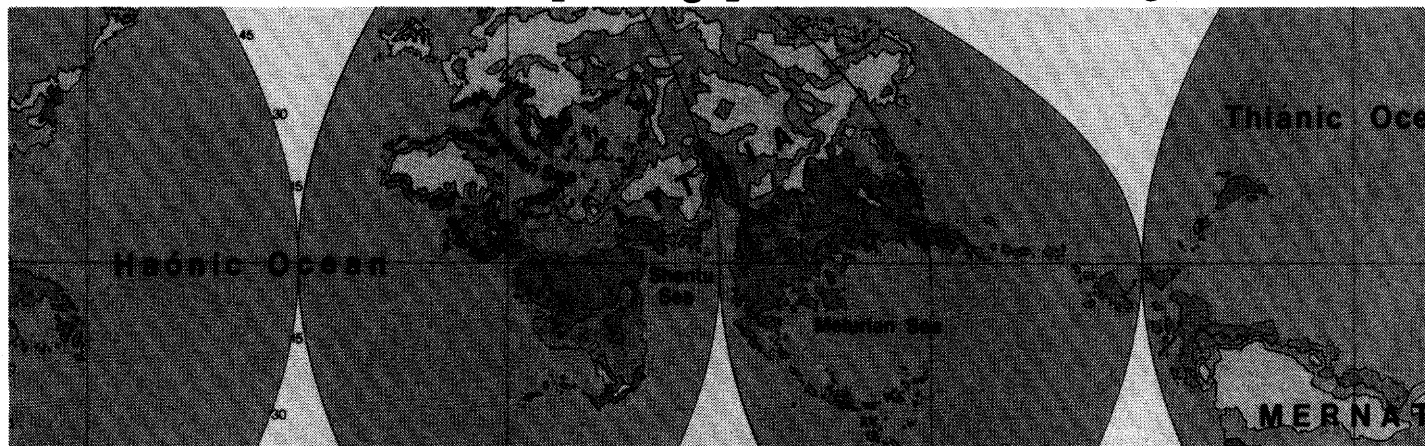
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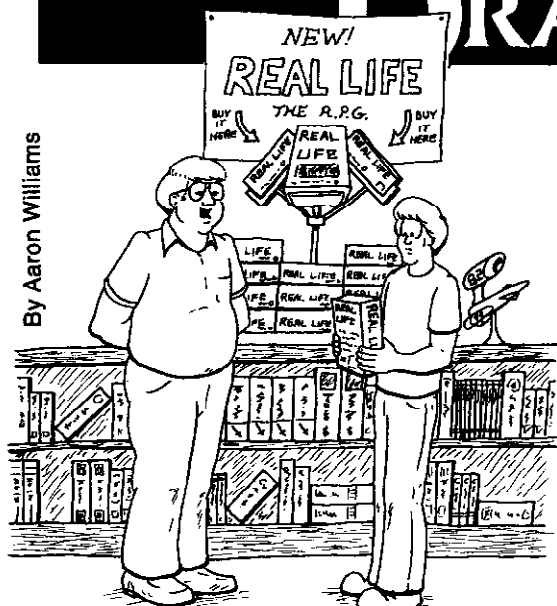
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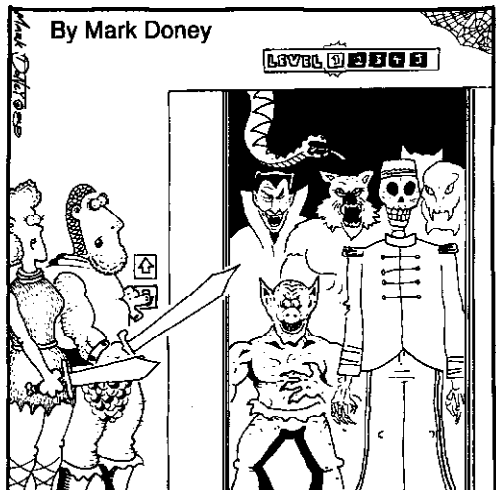
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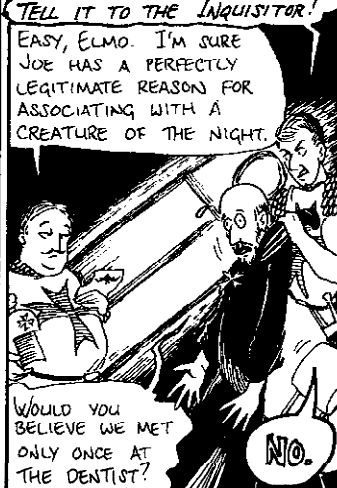
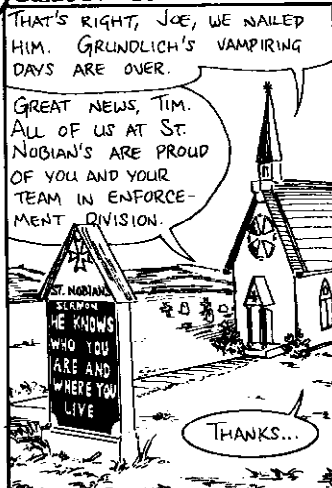
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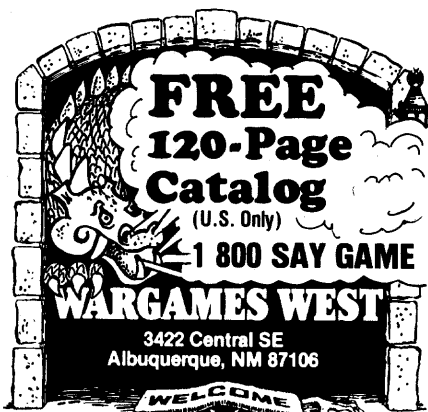
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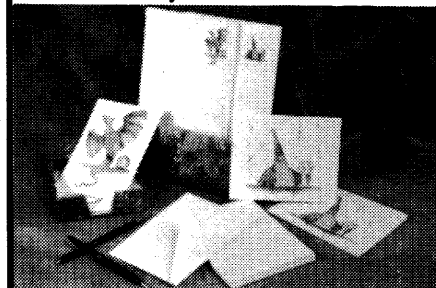
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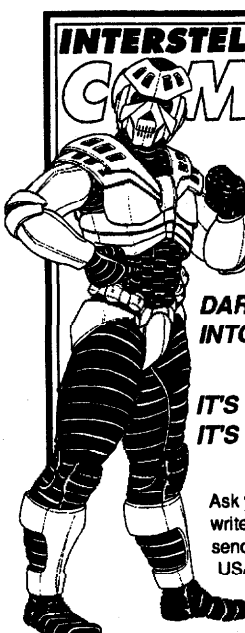
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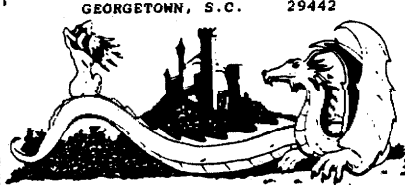
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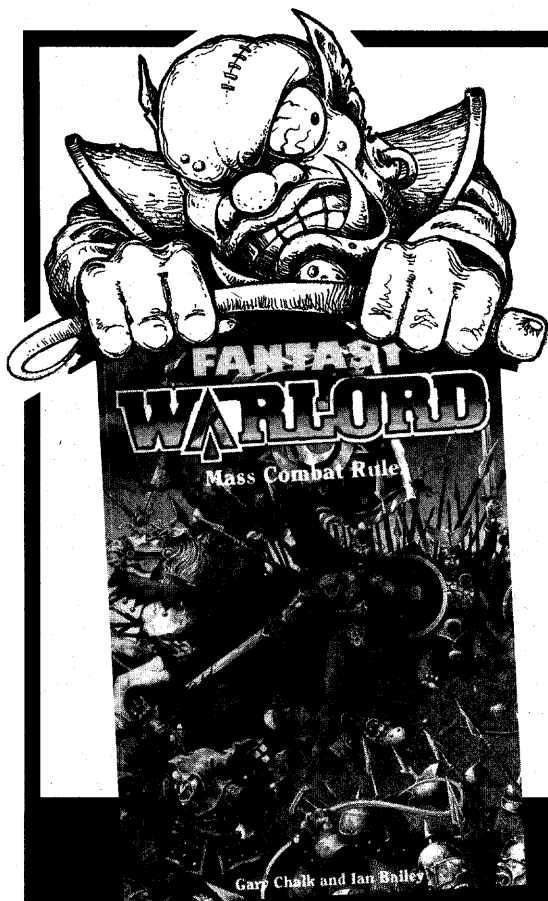
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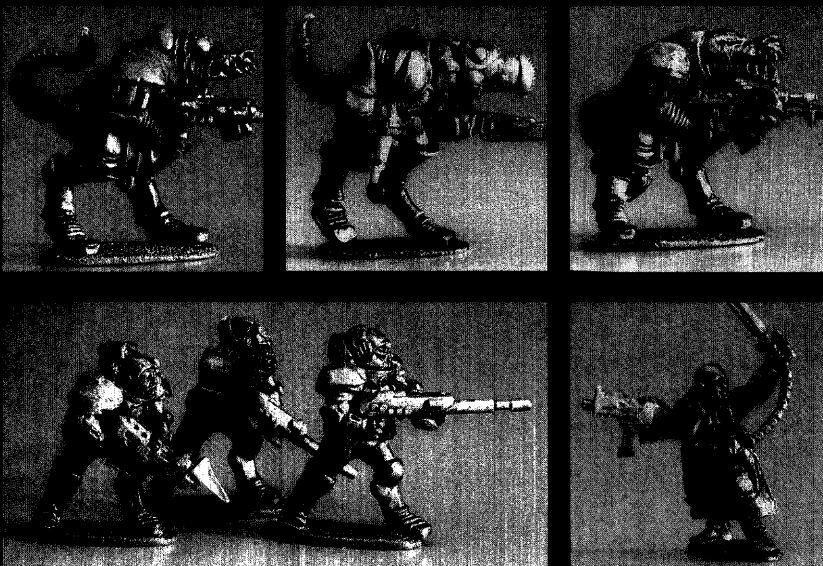
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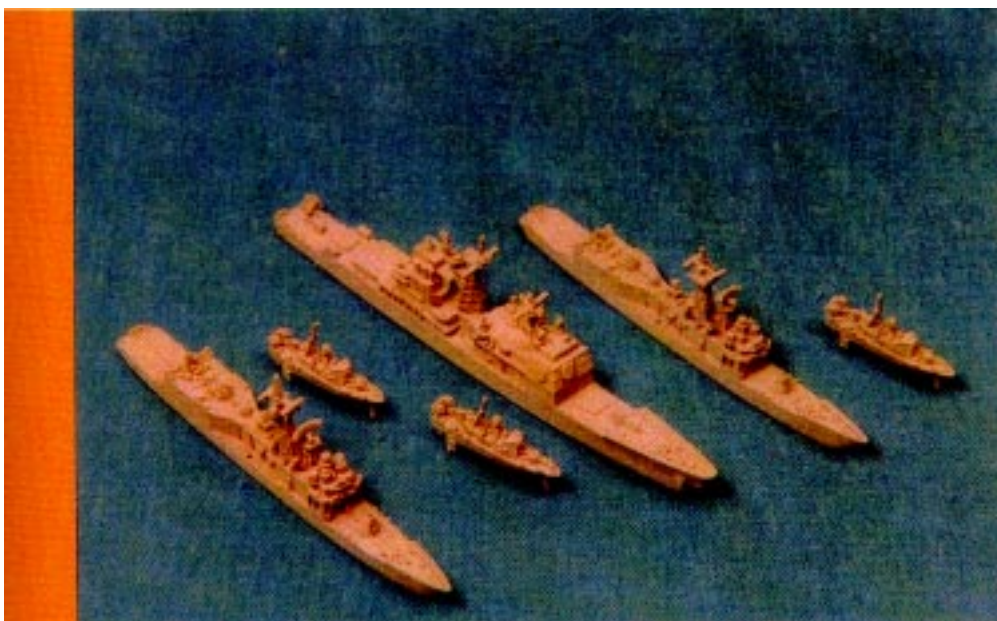


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HN-1: The U.S.S. *Bunker Hill* and friends (GHQ)

Nice products from small companies

August is traditionally a busy month, as we get ready to attend the GEN CON® game fair and a raft of smaller conventions that mark the final flight of summer. This month's reviews will focus on many of the smaller miniatures-manufacturing companies that we talked about at the start of last month's column. Keep in mind that there are many small companies whose products are not shown here but which will be tucked away in places here and there on convention floors. Look closely when you get to your next convention, and see what you can find.

I will be wandering around the GEN CON game fair this year, as my club is putting on several events, including an expanded PUPPY POUNDERS* (soon to be FLUFFY HEROES)* game with the assistance of Inner City Games. If you want to find me, check at our Great Lakes Hobby

Club/Game Masters' Guild booth.

Gaming Desert Storm

It is worth contemplating just how fragile the calm is that surrounds our enjoyment of gaming conventions. One year ago, Iraqi forces drove into Kuwait in an unprovoked attack, attempting to annex that smaller country as a new province. American, British, French, and other forces mustered to face this threat, and a naval blockade began.

Miniatures' product ratings

*	P o o r
* *	Below average
* * *	Average
* * * *	Above average
* * * * *	Excellent

I want to honor all of the forces that participated in the Persian Gulf War by introducing you to some of the equipment they used and some gaming items that will let you see how the war could have come out differently. One of the first things that I recommend for gamers interested in this action is Victory Games' second-edition GULF STRIKE* game, with the Desert Shield module included. This game provides you with a detailed map of most of the area of the conflict and a numbered-hex system that allows you to play a strategic game or a blind game in which you move by preplotted turns. The game contains most of the units available for the battle, including naval forces for all of the possible combatants. The game also contains counters that represent the planes and helicopters of all nations involved. These counters and the numbered counters to denote unit strength can be used in place of aircraft miniatures or as dummy raids. This game, although not strictly oriented toward miniatures, can demonstrate how such campaigns are run, and it will let you see some of the alternative outcomes of the war.

We also have pictures of miniatures of some American naval vessels involved in the Persian Gulf War, available from GHQ. Figure pack HN-2 represents a battleship, the U.S.S. *Iowa* (its sister ships, the U.S.S. *Wisconsin* and U.S.S. *Missouri*, participated in the Gulf War, serving long and hard as both missile-launching and gunnery platforms). Figure pack HN-1 contains an aegis cruiser (the U.S.S. *Bunker Hill*), two fast frigates of the Reuben James class, and three PHM Pegasus craft. Figure pack HN-3 represents three Knox-class frigates. All of these miniatures are excellent and could serve as gifts for the men stationed aboard these ships, as well as being highly recommended playing pieces. (I'm just a bit proud of my branch of service, being an ex-Navy man). I want to extend a hearty "well done!" to the British and French navies as well; unfortunately, I have not received any miniatures of their ships to photograph and review.

I will include more equipment and ideas for miniature gaming in the Persian Gulf theater in future columns. We owe everyone who served in the Gulf conflict a sincere "Thank you." As a veteran of another conflict, I welcome you back, and congratulations.

Reviews

Stan Johansen Miniatures

128 Peterson Rd.
Lake Worth FL 33467

SM023—Hawk Missiles on Grav Vehicle *** ½

Throughout history, the winners of battles have usually been those who got the most firepower to the scene of the battle first, and delivered it quickly and accurately. Today, armies use multiple



Hawk Missiles on Grav Vehicle (Stan Johansen)

rocket launch systems (MRLS) to deliver tremendous firepower over large areas. These systems are mounted on trucks or tracked vehicles that can go most places, but are still restricted since they must drive on the ground. The vehicles of the future will probably be used in even more places if they forsake the need for ground contact.

These Hawk missiles represent a futuristic MRLS system that could be used against flying vehicles or ground targets. They are mounted on an anti-grav vehicle with the assumed ability to go anywhere. This vehicle is scaled in the 20-25 mm range and includes two infantry operating as a gun crew. The vehicle is 73 mm long and about 35 mm wide in front, and is made of lead. The crew "cab" covers the first third of the vehicle and is not quite large enough for the crew to sit inside in comfort. Two headlights rest on hatches in front, with two doors on the side, several other hatches, and a control dome on the roof. The weapons system is mounted on a raised pedestal molded to the flatbed that covers the rest of the vehicle. The bed is undetailed, with only a ridge on the two sides and a box structure on the rear. The vehicle body has a rough mold line along both sides of the bed that can be fixed with some work. The bottom is rough but has a bolted pattern where the pedestal is, with nine propeller units scattered evenly. One detractor is that the cab area is hollow and open to the bottom, which defeats the purpose of detailing the rest of the bottom. If you want to have a detailed model, fill the cab using the impeller (the antigravity units) for a pattern. The missiles for the system come in three rows of three that must be glued first to each other and then to a firing platform that attaches to the pedestal with a peg. These nine missiles are identical, each measuring 30 mm long and just short of 5 mm wide at the base. Each firing tube includes inspection parts and a wire for igniting the

missile. A light mold line runs the length of the missile, but this is easily cleaned up. Care should be taken during assembly to keep the platform level and to stack the missiles together in straight rows.

The two troops are dressed identically in helmets with radios and large faceplates, and oxygen packs on their backs with lines leading to the helmets and suits. The suits also have equipment holders and automatic weapons. One trooper holds a rocket reload, and the other holds a keypad that is the remote control for the unit. Both figures are kneeling and have flash around the legs that is easily cleaned.

This vehicle does have some problems, including a lack of assembly instructions, but the miniature is still highly recommended. It shares many of the problems that plague many large lead models, but at \$8.50, it is a value.

Frantz Fusion Cannon on Grav Vehicle ***½

Firepower is not limited to just artillery. Direct fire weapons clear the field of enemy vehicles and fortifications that impede the movement of your own forces. These weapons can come out as either mobile fortresses that can take huge amounts of damage before being destroyed (but are very expensive) or as lightly armored but heavily armed vehicles. The last is a common solution, as these vehicles are cheap, and many of them can be fielded in place of one more expensive vehicle. They fight from ambush or hidden positions, and though they die quickly when found, they usually take many foes with them.

This vehicle uses the same chassis as the Hawk battery, but it has fewer mold lines and problems than the Hawk battery base, and the flatbed has an evident raised diamond pattern. The pedestal remains the same. Of the two infantrymen with this vehicle, the one with a remote control unit is identical to his counterpart with the

Hawk battery. The other trooper is a sitting gunner with no personal armament.

The fusion gun consists of three separate barrels bound together with a metal band. A power line is wrapped around the barrels then feeds back to the breech. Both sides of the gun support have instruments. A large radar dish is mounted on top of the gun, and a laser sight is mounted on the left side, with a lever and sight accessible from the gunner's seat on the same side of the gun. The gun has one visible mold line but is otherwise well done. Assembly is easy, but you will probably have to enlarge the hole in the base pedestal. If you get this gun, remember that the sights go in the groove on the upper left side of the gun assembly.

This miniature sells for \$8.50 and is highly recommended. Both of these vehicles can be used for Games Workshop's WARHAMMER 40,000* game, GDW's MEGATRAVELLER* system, or many other SF games with little modification. It is always nice to find inexpensive pieces that have multiple uses.

Houston's Ships/Lyzard's Grin

P.O. Box 14522
Oklahoma City OK 73113

C+G29—Belgium: Liege Gunboat ****

The colonial era in our world's history set the stage for many of the problems that ultimately produced World War I. The rapid expansion of many countries' territories and colonies led to open conflict with the natives of those areas. Often, these clashes forced armies to explore and use strategies and weapons foreign to them, which later became internal parts of their armies. GDW's SPACE: 1889* game has reintroduced these times with an influx of Jules Verne-style SF and the ability of these Victorian-era armies to take to the air as well as by land through the use of the ether and antigravity liftwood.

The armies of the SPACE: 1889 universe include the small country of Belgium. During this period in the real world, this small country was busy colonizing a section of Africa known as the Congo. (Pop quiz: What is the Belgian Congo's modern-day name?) This country was not as prosperous as many of the other European countries and built smaller vessels than those other countries were building. This science-fantasy gunboat, named the **Belgium**, is made of lead and scaled to 1/1200th scale; it is 54 mm long. The boat has an arrowhead-type bow that widens out sharply at one-third of its length to an almost square back. The rear consists of the hull and two other decks connected by stairs. The rudder for this ship is shaped like a fish's tail fin. Two long shafts jut from support decks and end in two large propellers. Several weapons grace the deck, and lifeboats are visible, as are deck and hull plate lines. The stack top is slight-

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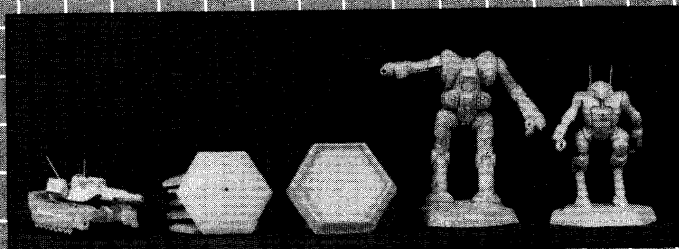
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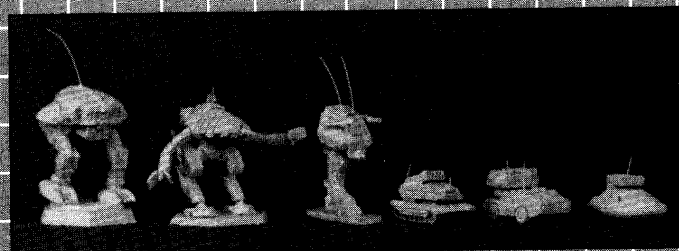
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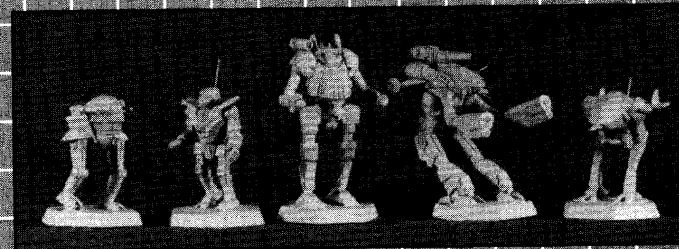
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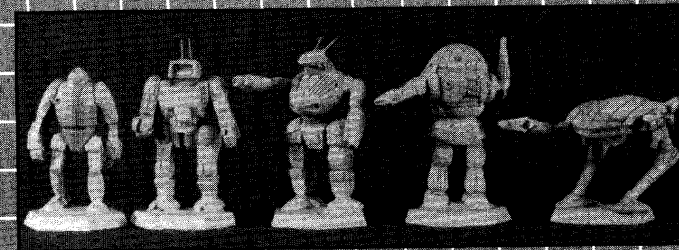
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Game Designers' Workshop

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#1843—Kraag Warriors

**** ½

Every good game has strong antagonists, and one of the main enemies in the SPACE: 1889* game are the Kraag warriors of Mars. These beastmen live in competing kingdoms in the mountains of Mars and attack all that moves in the air, other Kraags included.

These lead 25 mm figures are produced for GDW by RAFM Miniatures and come as a boxed set. The set contains 20 figures, divided between flying and standing poses. The flying figures are supported by wires in 18 mm square bases. All figures share large-veined wings that extend from their sides to their wrists, and out-thrust chest cavities with ribs and pectorals visible.

First is a king, shown both standing and flying. He has long layered hair, a long moustache, and body hair on his back shoulders. The king wears a T-shaped crown, a chain belt, and a criss-crossed loincloth. His armament consists of both a hammer-mace and a spear held in his "feet," with his right arm out.

Second is the war chief, with a long beard and moustache and windswept hair. He wears a girdle and loincloth, and wields a huge mace in his right hand. The figure comes in both in-flight and standing versions, too.

Next are two sets (standing and flying) of two warriors carrying short tridents. These figures have no facial hair, and their hair is swept straight back. Each also wears a cross-chest belt that holds a short sword in scabbard at the back. The flying versions are horizontal, each with a hole about where a navel would be. The standing figures are crouched in fighting stances.

Then come two sets of three shouting warriors with swords. None of these figures have facial hair, scabbards, or chest straps, and all have expressions that look like they are sucking lemons.

Finally are two sets of three screaming warriors carrying spears. These have no facial hair and wear protective chest armor of fabric or metal, with good detailing and ribbing. Each spear has both a large sharp double-edged arrow-shaped head and a sharp hook on the other end. The standing figures are thrusting with the sharp point rather than the cutting edge. The flying figures are almost standing and are fighting using their feet.

All the figures have strong, well-defined muscle structure that is accurate for their positioning. You will have to open almost all the holes where the wires will go, but the end result is well worth it. Also included with the set is a detailed painting and history book that is done in black and white, but is effective if followed. The figures could also be used as demons or flying fiends in other fantasy games. These are well recommended at \$22 per set.



Franz Fusion Cannon on Grav Vehicle (Stan Johansen)

ly off angle but can be fixed easily. There are some rough spots on the hull itself, but these are also easily fixed with some light putty or can be accented to portray battle damage.

C+G01—Heavenly Archer ****

The *Heavenly Archer* is the Martian response to human intrusions on their planet in the SPACE: 1889 universe. This is a ram-equipped vessel with numerous other weapons. The model is 46 mm long and is 25 mm at its widest point, the rear control stabilizers. Two propellers are joined to the hull by very short shafts that are protected by the tail structure. A mast and pennant adorn the front of the ship. There is one upper deck, a standard deck, and a below deck. Deck plating is engraved on the upper deck and hull, with lifter vents on the bottom.

Several details are shared by both of these SPACE: 1889 miniatures. Each vessel has a reinforced 25 mm hex base that supports the miniature with a 2" length of sturdy wire. Both vessels include sheets that help you fill out your battle sheets (which is good, since the Belgians do not appear at all in the *Ironclads & Ether Flyers* book from GDW). Both are easy to assemble, and both survived the ultimate miniatures-gamer's nightmare, which occurred when a large weight fell on them both as I returned from a convention. Minor repairs were all that were needed to fix them. You also must be careful when painting these miniatures, as thick paint coats will wipe out the shallow grooves in the deck. Both models retail at \$3 each and are highly recommended if you wish to expand your ether-flyer collection.

Kraag Warriors (GDW)



COMING THIS FALL....

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The Viking Forge

1727 Theresa Lane
Powhatan VA 23139

FM-27—Giant Armored Troll

w/Axe

Trolls are nasty, obnoxious creatures that most characters hate to fight. Viking Forge has now marketed a figure that will cause nightmares in even the staunchest character: an armored troll!

This 25 mm lead figure is an old Table-top Miniatures piece that has been cleaned up and reintroduced. The figure is 38 mm tall, fitting within the eight plus feet category specified in the AD&D® game's *Monstrous Compendium*, if you are using that set of rules. The troll stands straight up, daring anyone to fight with it. However, at this point, the figure deviates significantly from AD&D game references.

The figure is barefoot but has cloth and splint-type protection on his shins and ankles, with bare muscled thighs and knees. A set of high-riding chain mail drops to barely cover his groin and extends up to his neck and shoulders. This chain is covered with a fur pelt that extends from his rear up his back and joins an animal skull that forms part of his helmet. The fur wraps around his front and is held by a belt with a skull buckle. He wears plate protectors at midchest and a shoulder protector that looks like a form-fitted former shield, with long spike on his left shoulder. His right hand holds a large, double-bladed axe by the haft; his left hand is wrapped in chain and is covered by a heavy metal mitten and spike. A spiked plate also protects his left knee. A large sheathed sword, worn horizontally on his left side, completes the weaponry.

The face deviates the most from that of the average AD&D game troll. The face is flat, and his mouth has two large lower tusks. His nostrils are wide and flared. The ears are triangular and fold over slightly,

Giant Armored Troll w/Axe (The Viking Forge)

while the eyes look more pig-like than trollish.

The figure is very well done, but it would be much more believable in AD&D games as an ogre or a giant orc. It might fit the definition of troll in other fantasy games, however. This could be a nasty figure to fight, but even with the detail, it's very expensive at \$5 each.

Simtac Inc.

20 Attawan Rd.
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FGB-7—Goblin Cavalry

w/Swords

Goblins are among the AD&D game's simpler monsters, but many are the parties that I have seen wiped out by goblins and their "pets," whatever they may be. Goblins travel in packs and seem to be everywhere that you're not during a fight.

This package represents five giant wolves and their goblin riders in 15 mm scale, all made of lead. The riders share identical poses, but two different poses are provided for the wolves. The wolves measure 29 mm from snout to tail, making them useful in 25 mm scale as wild dogs or small wolves, but they are a little big for 15 mm scale. All the wolves appear to be very hungry, as ribs and spines are clearly visible through their fur. One pose has the wolf in almost a crouch, with its ears straight up and tail straight out behind. This animal's eyes are hidden by molded fur coming back from the muzzle, and the animal's mouth is shut. The second wolf pose is strolling along with tail up and mouth open as if baying. There is only one piece of flash on any of the wolves, but their bases all need filing to stand steady.

The goblins are strange. For those of you who read Marvel Comics, imagine a

Goblin Cavalry w/ Swords (Simtac)

small, 15 mm Hobgoblin character from the *Spider-Man* comics, dressed as he is in the most recent issues, with a sword in his right hand, a round shield protecting the left arm, and a provision bag on his belt. Fix his legs so he can ride a wolf instead of a sky sled, and you have these goblins. The figures are about 13 mm tall, so they are a little large for 15 mm even though their legs look a little stubby.

This pack is worth the price at \$3 per pack, even if you don't play in 15 mm. You have an entire pack of 25 mm wild dogs and can use the riders as whatever you want. These figures do lack much of the sharp detail and fine lines we are used to from companies such as Ral Partha.

Black Dragon Pewter

Unit 303
2437 Bay Area Blvd.
Houston TX 77058

#0357—Vincent, Limited Edition

One of the most enjoyed fairy tales is the story of Beauty and the Beast, which has been told and retold in books, movies, and even a television series. And the hero of that TV series is the subject of this pewter figure.

This figure is 120 mm tall, not including the wood base. The metal base of the figure is done in an old block-type motif, such as found on an old walk or a sewer. The figure itself is striking, so much so that it could have just walked out of the TV show. Vincent stands with his legs apart slightly as if at ease. Ragged, sewn boots cover from his feet up to mid-shin, and an old, wrinkled, but neatly patched pair of pants are tucked into these boots and held up by a stretch belt. His right, fur-covered hand clutches a worn book to his chest, which is covered by an old turtleneck and jacket. His left hand clutches a



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Danuvian Swordswomen (Lance and Laser Models)

patched, hooded coat.

By far, the most striking feature is Vincent's face. His long hair frames his feline face with its particular humanity. His eyes and expression denote intelligence but also project apprehension.

While I realize this is not a gaming figure, it is one that will interest many readers who were fans of this TV show. This would make a wonderful present for a female relative or girlfriend. It's very well done but expensive at \$100.

Vincent, Limited Edition (Black Dragon Pewter)

Lance and Laser Models Inc.

P.O. Box 14491
Columbus OH 43214

T-016—Danuvian Swordswomen

The Danuvian culture is Bard Games' TALISLANTA* version of amazon culture. All three women in this miniatures pack have flexible boots that extend to mid-thigh, girdles of metal that protect their stomachs and backs, and under-armor clothing. All three are bare armed except for bracelets on the upper arms and bracers on the wrists. Their faces are set with war cries on their lips. Mohawk haircuts fall in back to their shoulder blades. All the figures measure out to 25 mm scale, although they're not standing straight up.

The archer is standing, bent slightly forward, with a longbow in her left hand and an arrow nocked. Unfortunately, her method of firing would be very clumsy in real life. The arrow is well done, if a bit thick, and a laced quiver on her back is filled with arrows. There is also a sheathed sword on her right leg.

Figures two and three are both front-line fighters. Figure two has a two-handed sword held behind her like a baseball player swinging a bat. There is an empty sheath on her back and a knife on her leg. Figure three has a long polearm that looks like a peculiar combination of an axe and a bayonet on a pole. This weapon could be very efficient at stopping cavalry. Flash lies around the weapon end and where there should be empty spaces on the figure. (I would hesitate to lash my weapons together, as figure three seems to have done.) A sheathed long sword is on her back.

With their hairstyles and slightly pointed ears, these figures could work well as female elves or half-elves in GW's WARHAMMER FANTASY* game or as barbarian fighters or amazons in the AD&D game. These are well worth the \$3.50 price per pack, especially after cleaning.

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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.

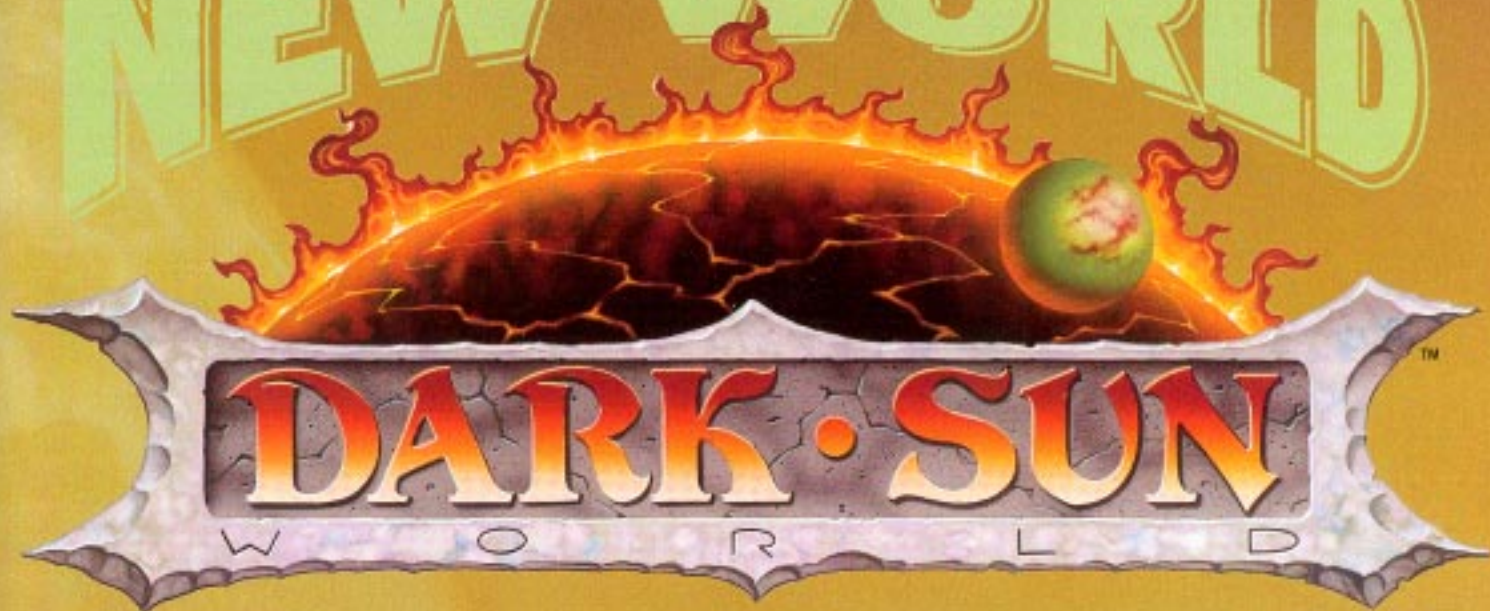
Experts recommend that people join The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer whether dining out or at home.

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!

AMERICAN
CANCER
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Public Service Message

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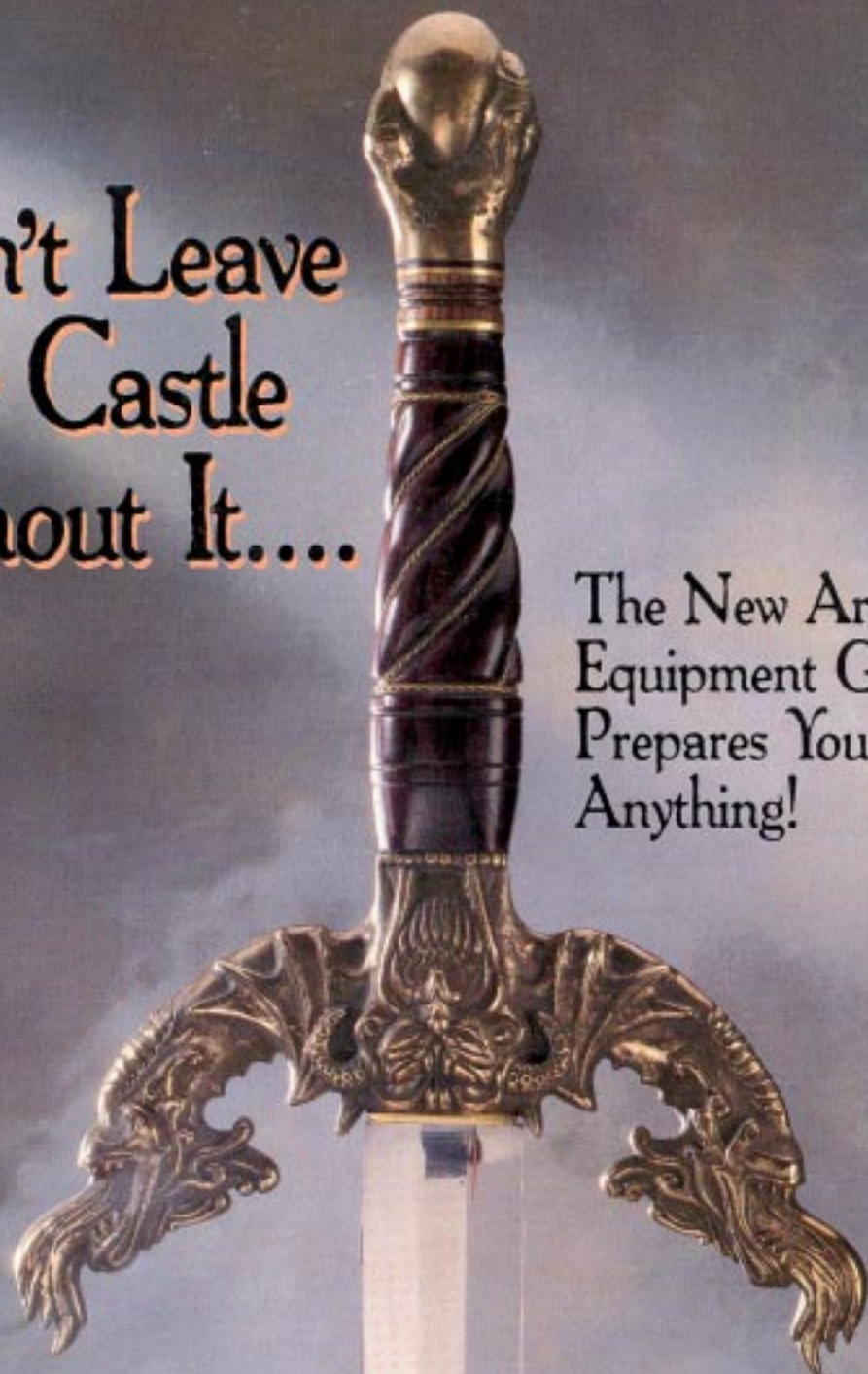
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