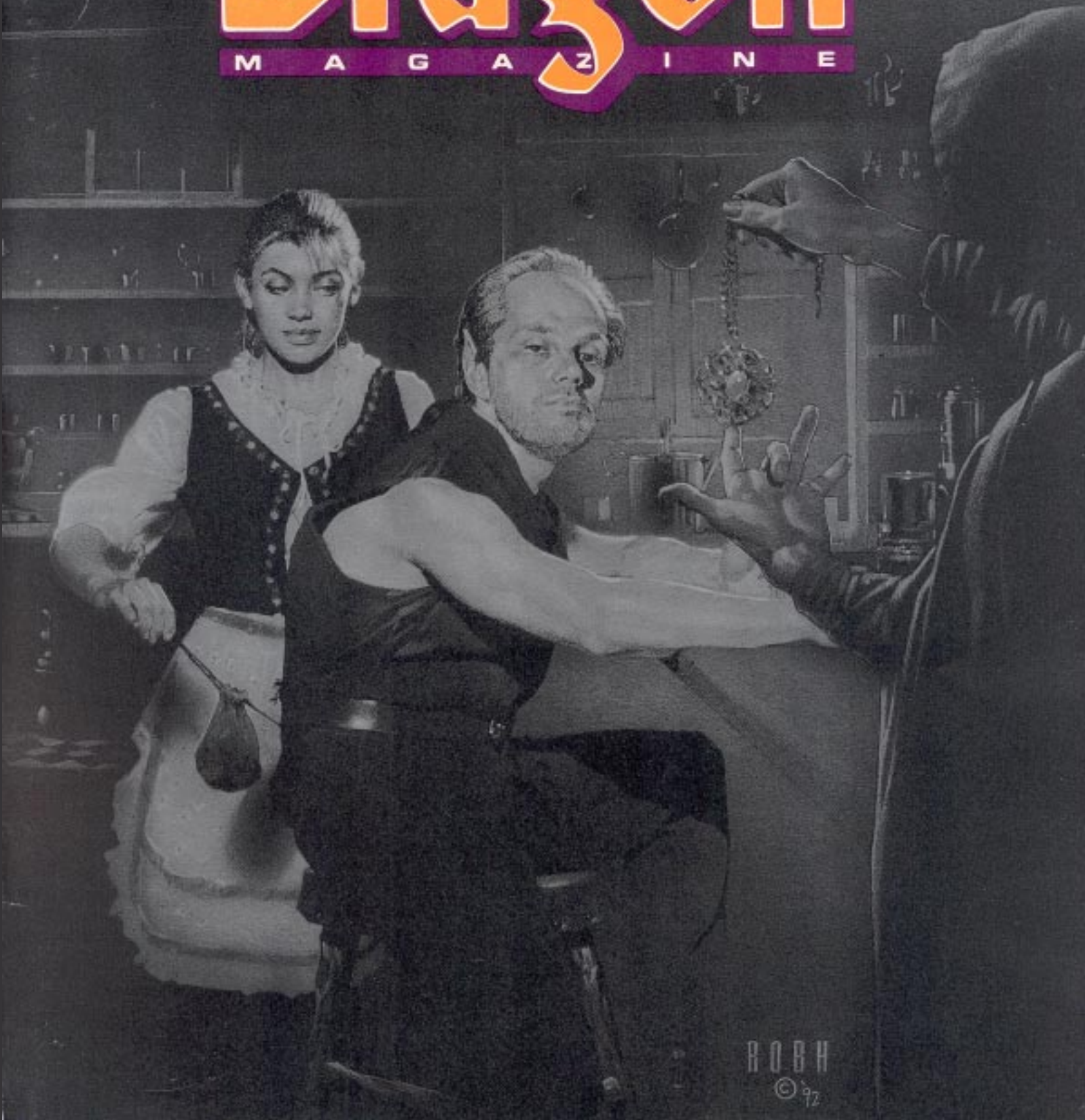


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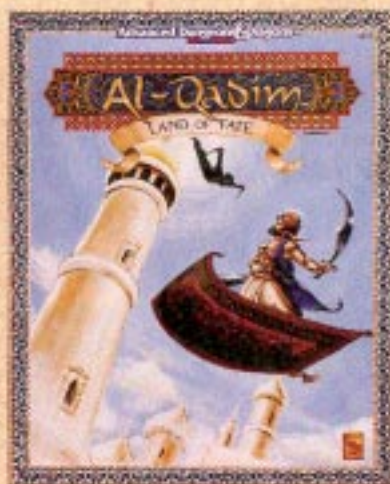
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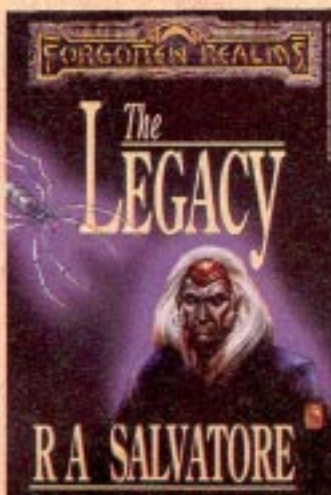
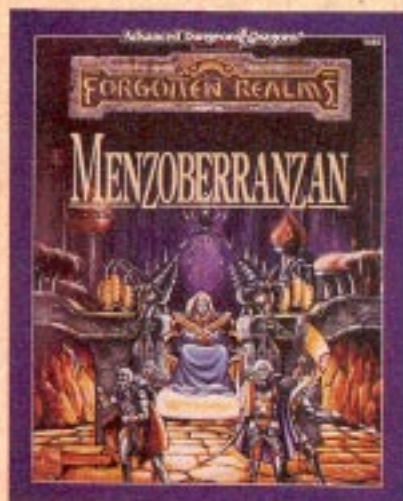
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Issue #184
Vol. XVII, No. 3
August 1992

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COVER

If player characters are so smart, why is this one having his pocket picked? Cover artist Robb Ruppel offers an innovative black-and-white look at a game master's best friends, the nonplayer characters, and the kinds of fun they can have.

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.

"Cro-hah, emberi!"

Dear Dragon,

I happen to be of Hungarian descent. As such, I couldn't help but notice that the lizard men (or trogs, or whatever) in the latest TWILIGHT EMPIRE™ installment seem to speak my parents' language. So, what's the scoop? How did these monsters come to know Hungarian? And how about a translation? I know *igen* means "yes" and *emberi* means something like "people" or "humans," but the rest is a bit hazy.

D. Mark Griffon
Kenosha WI

We turned your letter over to Steve Sullivan, the writer for the TWILIGHT EMPIRE strip, and he had this reply:

"About the language of the hideous Toad-Men of Valdor in my strip, THE TWILIGHT EMPIRE: Yes, it is indeed related to Hungarian. I find it useful to base fantastic languages on those of our Earth— less to make up that way. Lucasfilm did the same sort of thing in Star Wars. (There's also a rationale for this within my series, though I'm not ready to reveal what it is yet.)

"I chose Hungarian for the Toad-Men because the words I was looking for sounded appropriately guttural and exotic in that language. From there, I modified the language to suit exactly what I was looking for. Thus, while it is close, it is not exactly Hungarian.

"So, here is a primer on the language of the people of the sunken city, as seen in the comic:

Cro-hah: Hah (a laugh)
Emberi: Human(s)
Estal: Estal, the crystal-eyed god of the Toad-Men
Eszik: Eat(s)
Hala: Die(s), dead
Igen: Yes
Jon: Come(s)
Megy: Go(es)
Mosk: Now
Tapalek: Food
Var: Wait(s)
Zalad: Run(s)

"Now, those of you who are interested can go back and find out exactly what the Toad-Men were saying. If Rob and company had known, they could have avoided a bit of trouble.

"An interesting side note is that DRAGON Magazine editor Dale Donovan managed to catch an error in my translations without actually knowing the language I was using. Nice job, Dale!

"Since I've got the stage here, I should point out a minor error in "Just Who Are These Folks?" (the recap of the strip, which ran in issue #178). The recap said that Kalil was an elf, when in fact he is a faerie. This is something like confusing a rifle with an Uzi: While both are guns, they possess quite different characteristics. These differences will become more apparent as the series progresses.

"Etymologically yours, Steve Sullivan."

Cro-hah #2

Dear Dragon,

I am writing to point out the futility of continuing to print the TWILIGHT EMPIRE comic strip. It is quite obvious that Robinson S. Edgar, being from New Hampshire, is going to escape from the world he's lost in and make his way home with no problem. New Hampshireites, as everyone knows, are indefatigable, brilliant, shrewd, and generally unstoppable. Besides, no one who had ever seen New Hampshire would give it up for cheap adventure or magic or anything like that. This unfortunately spoils the story by giving away its ending. If you don't feel like ending the story, perhaps you should reveal that Rob was born in Vermont or Boston or some place like that. Thank you for your time and attention.

Tim Denby
Goffstown NH

Where's the teeth?

Dear Mr. Moore,

I can only assume that you are the sadist responsible for the blurbs describing each month's cover of DRAGON Magazine. I've been patient in the past, but no more. In issue #140, it was "Notice the pigs?" Sure, I noticed the pigs; no problem. Then, in issue #150, it was the arrowhead and "good luck finding it!" It took me an [expletive deleted] hour to find the stupid thing. But this time [with issue #181] you've gone too far. False teeth for a skull? FALSE TEETH FOR A SKULL!!!!!! AAAARRGGG!!!! I looked for an hour, my friends looked for an hour, I screamed and foamed at the mouth, and my now-former friends left. That was when the two men in white coats from the Sunnyside Mental Institute came to take me to my new home, where the doctors have counseled me to forget all about false teeth for skulls, claiming they don't exist. I'm feeling much better now.

Denise Olsen
No address given, but we assume it's now at the Sunnyside M.I.

Continued on page 30

DRAGON® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly by TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756 (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, United States of America. The postal address for all materials from the United States of America and Canada except subscription orders is: DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.; telephone (414) 248-3625; fax (414) 248-0389. The postal address for all materials from Europe is: DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom; telephone (0223) 212517 (U.K.), 44-223-212517 (international); telex: 818761; fax (0223) 248066 (U.K.), 44-223-248066 (international).

Distribution: DRAGON Magazine is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Distribution to the book trade in the United States is by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distribution to the book trade in the United Kingdom is by TSR Ltd. Send orders to: Random House, Inc., Order Entry Department, Westminster MD 21157, U.S.A.; telephone: (800) 733-3000. Newsstand distribution throughout the United Kingdom is by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE, United Kingdom, telephone 0895-444055.

Subscriptions: Subscription rates via second-class mail are as follows: \$30 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in the U.S. or Canada; £21 for 12 issues sent to an address within the United Kingdom; £30 for 12 issues sent to an address in Europe; \$50 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent by surface mail to any other address, or \$90 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent air mail to any other address. Payment in full must accompany all payment include checks or money orders made payable to TSR, Inc., or charges to valid MasterCard or VISA credit cards; send subscription orders with payments to: TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 5695, Boston MA 02206, U.S.A. In the United Kingdom, methods of payment include checks or money orders made payable to TSR Ltd., or charges to a valid ACCESS or VISA credit card; send subscription orders with payments to TSR Ltd., as per that address above. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. The issue of expiration of each subscription is printed on the mailing label of each subscriber's copy of the magazine. Changes of address for the delivery of subscription copies must be received at least six weeks prior to the effective date of the change in order to assure uninterrupted delivery.

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EDITORIAL

"And the survey says. . ."

As I write this, the deadline for our first survey, "The Power of the Pen," has passed. The staff of DRAGON® Magazine would like to thank every person who took the time to respond to that survey and its sequels— including "Son of Pen Power" in this issue. We'd also like to thank TSR, Inc.'s computer department for their invaluable aid. We've gotten a lot of useful and sometimes surprising information from you. Much of that information is briefly summarized here. A list of the prize-winners follows.

Just under 1,000 people responded to our first survey, close to 1% of our approximate circulation of 100,000 copies. Statistically, a response rate of 1% is pretty good, but think about it like this: Out of every 100 people who read DRAGON Magazine, only one person bothered to fill out the survey form and mail it to us. If

you want to have a say in the direction this magazine takes in the future, fill out the survey form in this issue and send it in— now!

Five percent of the respondents were female, and almost 70% of all the respondents checked either the "Completed grades 10-12" or "Completed college" boxes for the education question. This information gives us a picture of an "average reader" of DRAGON Magazine as a male in his late teens or early twenties.

The five most popular features of the magazine are (in order): "Dragonmirth," "TSR Previews," "Sage Advice," "Forum," and "The Game Wizards." Other popular features included the review columns, with "Role-playing Reviews" topping that list, followed by the "Novel Ideas" column and our short fantasy fiction. All of these features received a majority of votes in the "5" ("I always read the feature") or "4" ("I usually read the feature") categories. We'll do our best to continue to bring you these and other popular features as often as we can.

The respondents graded the artwork appearing in DRAGON Magazine very highly. Ninety-seven percent gave our cover art a "5" or "4" rating. Seventy-four percent also gave the interior art a "5" or "4."

The most popular topics covered in DRAGON Magazine were all AD&D® campaign settings. The FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting was the most popular, which was not a big surprise. Seventy-eight percent of respondents graded our Realms coverage with a "5" or "4." Other campaign settings that received a majority of "5" or "4" votes were (in order): the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting; the RAVENLOFT® Gothic-horror campaign, the DRAGONLANCE® world of Krynn; and the DARK SUN™ campaign setting.

Regarding the coverage of nonfantasy role-playing games (RPGs) in the magazine, the two most popular RPG genres were science-fiction and horror games. Other popular games or game-types were: the D&D® game; fantasy and science-fiction board games; and fantasy and science-fiction computer games.

Reading through the "specific comments" given by some of the respondents to the survey was very enlightening. Thanks to all who let us know they enjoy DRAGON Magazine; we'll do our best to "keep up the good work." Quite a number

of topics were addressed by respondents, and I'll briefly comment on some of the most common themes.

Many respondents commented that they enjoyed reading "The Ecology of . . ." pieces that have often appeared in these pages. We enjoyed them too, but we've received very few lately that were of publishable quality. If you want to see more "Ecology" articles, remember that someone has to write them before we can publish them.

A surprisingly large number of respon-

PRIZE-WINNERS!

We have randomly selected 10 winners from the respondents to our first survey, "The Power of the Pen," which ran in DRAGON® issue #180. The lucky winners are: Cindy Kula of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Elizabeth Woodward of Anaheim, Calif.; Eric Sidoti of Des Plaines, Ill.; Jeffery J. Hanshan of Ooltewah, Tenn.; Eric J. Carter of Warrensburg, Mo.; Michael Hachey of Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Phil Howlett of Norwich, England; Adrian Watts of Alresford, England; Oskar Backlund of Tystberga, Sweden; and Jonas Axelsson of Lidings, Sweden. Congratulations go out to the winners and condolences to those of you who did not win this time.

Speaking of prizes, it was interesting to note the products the winners requested. Four of the 10 winners chose the AL-QADIM™ *Arabian Adventures* campaign book. Other popular choices were the *War Captain's Companion* boxed set for the SPELLJAMMER® campaign setting, *The Complete Bard's Handbook*, and one game near and dear to my own heart, the new GAMMA WORLD® game.

If you'd like to get in on the winning, just fill out the "Son of Pen Power" survey in this issue (this is the last DRAGON survey of the year, we promise), clearly print your name, address, and the product number of the TSR product listed in this month's "TSR Previews" column that you want to win if we draw your name as a winner, and mail it to us before the listed deadline. Good luck!

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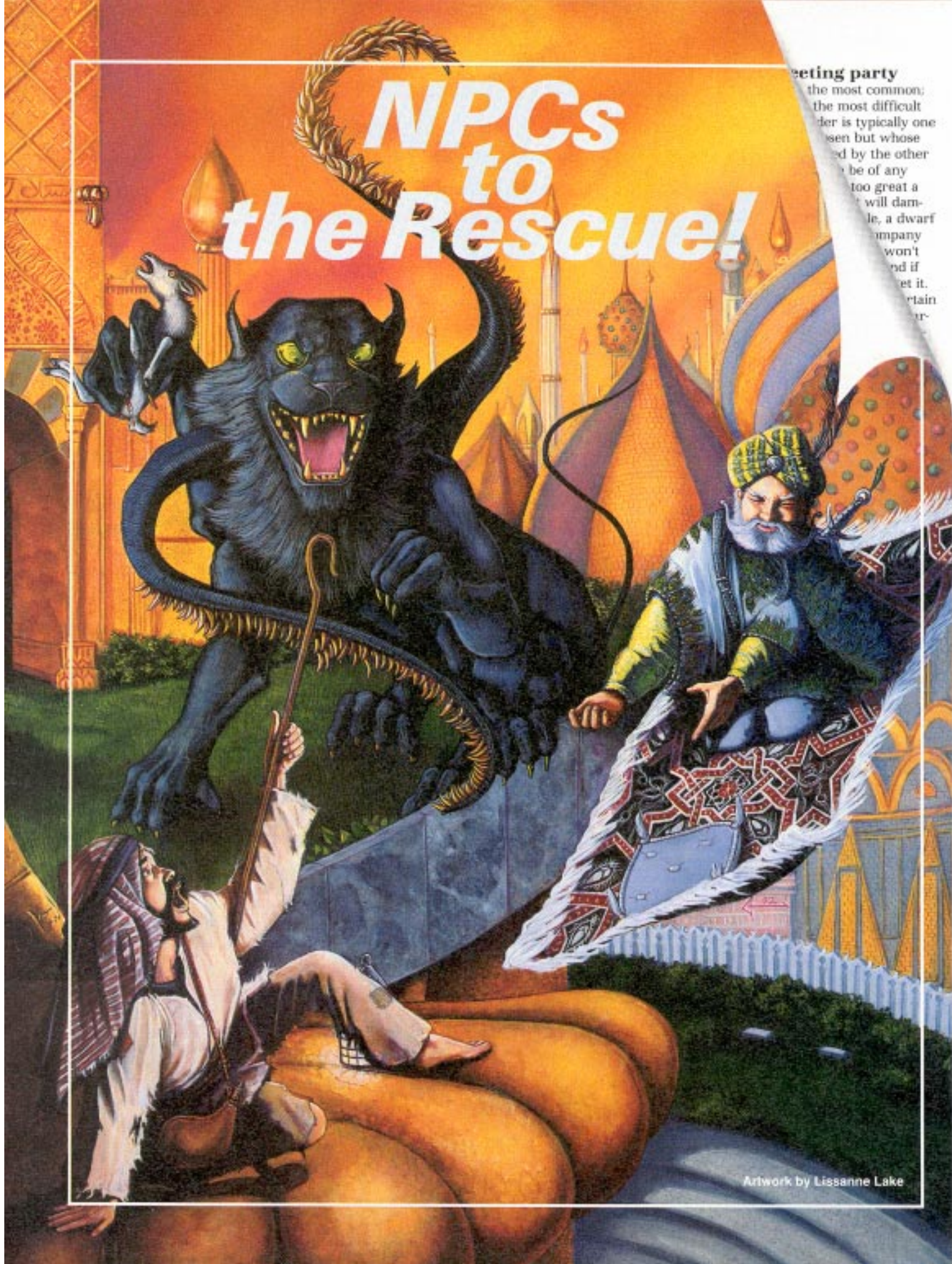


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NPCs to the Rescue!

meeting party

the most common;
the most difficult
order is typically one
chosen but whose
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Artwork by Lissanne Lake

Courts & Courtiers

by Larry Granato

Artwork by Lissanne Lake



Expert hirelings to flesh out your game's royal courts

Lord Chumley, envoy of the Grand Duke of Ralinor, shifted uneasily on the wooden bench in the great hall and sniffed daintily into his lace handkerchief. Sir Coromans' castle was strong, and he had a reputation as a grim fighter, but Chumley found the accommodations revoltingly primitive. The food was coarse peasant fare, and the few old and surly servants were apparently relatives of his host. The sloppy administration of the fortress was obviously a result of having henchmen more capable of hacking monsters than managing a fief. There were no amenities such as entertainment, refined conversation, music, or courtly etiquette. "My cultured Duke will agree to no alliance with this crude, petty lordling," thought Chumley.

There is more to running a castle than hiring soldiers. In the Middle Ages, the size and quality of a lord's court was a reflection of his prestige and wealth. Noble visitors expected to be wined, dined, and entertained in courtly style. This article lists additional expert hirelings that a player-character ruler in an AD&D® game may wish to employ, and it describes the activities of a court that PCs may visit. Characters who visit or are employed at court have opportunities for wealth, honor, and advancement not found in other places, as most of the money and political power are centered around the court.

The tables of standard hirelings and expert hirelings in the AD&D 2nd Edition DMG (see pages 104-111) list the most common types of people a lord will employ. Katherine Kerr's article, "The Care of Castles" in the Best of DRAGON® Magazine Anthology, volume IV, outlines the various assistants needed to operate a stronghold. The additional expert hirelings listed herein can be hired in the usual manner for attracting expert hirelings, but many will be available only in small numbers. They will also expect recognition, living arrangements, and compensation commensurate with their social status and occupation. The numbers, salaries, and duties of these servants can also be found here.

In addition to those who run the castle, more people will be needed for activities the lord of the castle wishes to enjoy. Will he want to hunt? Better hire a hunting master and some huntsmen. Does he want to go hawking? He'll need a falconer. Does he have children? A nurse and teacher must be employed. Are important guests coming for a visit? Musicians, entertainers, and a poet or orator should be on tap. Is he throwing a dinner party? He ought to have a chef and servers. Does he need expert advice on running his barony? Trot out the sages, scholars, astrologers, and lawyers. Does he want to be known as a man of culture and be immortalized in bronze? He'll have to become an artist's patron, of course.

Courts and courtiers

The size and affluence of a noble's court is directly proportional to his prestige. A ruler helps the economy of his domain by hiring many servants; he's usually the largest local employer. A large, efficient, and handsome retinue will impress both the locals and visiting dignitaries. The lord's courtiers can be highly useful. Permanent embassies did not exist in medieval times, so trusted members of the court can be sent on diplomatic missions. Courtiers can be appointed to positions in the government and authority can be delegated to them when necessary, since they will be skilled in governing and familiar with their lord's wishes. They can be relied upon to bring information from other courts. Foreigners are especially useful for their skills in languages, their trade contacts, and their knowledge of distant lands.

Courtiers are expected to be proficient in such skills as dancing, hunting, falconry, singing, heraldry, etiquette, poetry, gaming, sports, horsemanship, and playing musical instruments. They should also be well educated.

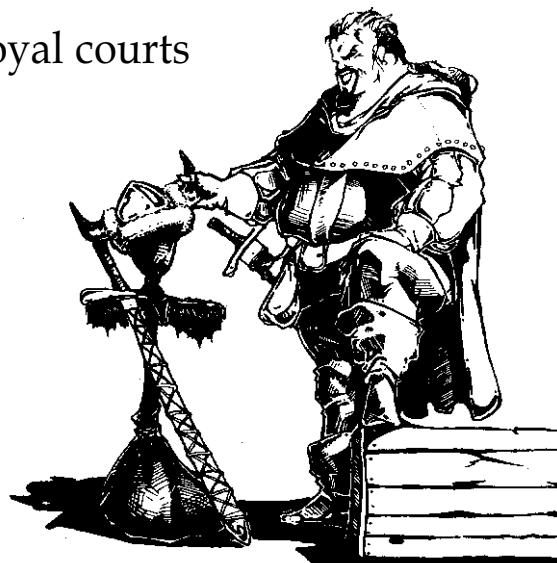
The court setting also provides a meeting place for learned men, nobles, merchants, knights, clerics, mages, and others. This allows the freeholder (ruler) to get advice or opinions, and keep in touch with the feelings of the common people through the members of his court.

A PC who receives a favorable reaction roll while visiting court may eventually obtain a position like those given here. Usually, these jobs do not require full-time attention if a capable assistant is at hand. However, if something goes wrong, the PC will be held responsible. The PC can use his appropriate skills to enhance his chances of success.

It is vital to maintain good relations with powerful courtiers, or they could undermine the PC's job with rumors or sabotage. Courtiers compete with each other for limited jobs, gold, and power, and newcomers are often the subject of jealousy. Courtiers strive to outdo their rivals in sports, games, elegant clothes, or polite manners. The activities of every courtier are the subject of intense gossip and speculation. Life at court can be a fascinating adventure, whether one is a visitor or ruler.

The accumulation of prestige is of vital importance at court. A job done well (or done badly) will probably attract the attention of the ruler and result in promotion (or disfavor). Continued successes will eventually bring wealth and a high-ranking position. This will give the PC influence and recognition outside the court itself as well. Too many mistakes and the PC will be ejected from court.

The DM can create an attitude of uncertainty about the members of the court. Is



Artwork by John Stanko

that bejeweled dandy a shiftless coward or expert swordsman? Could the trusted advisor be working for a rival? Are flatters or wishy-washy advisors hiding unpleasant news? Complacency can prove embarrassing— or fatal.

Court activities

The activities of a court fall into a common pattern. Although the lord determines most activities, the courtiers can have a great influence on his decision. There will be at least one activity a week in a PC's court to keep court interesting. The DM may use Table 1 in this article to inspire activities for PC rulers ("Well, milord, remember you're to spend the day at the opening of the Fishmonger's new guild hall, the Elf-King's envoy is expected tomorrow, and then there's the Swan Festival next week . . .") Use the nature of the ruler's domain to inspire more activities (harvest festivals in crop-producing areas, sea-god holidays and religious festivals in coastal regions, etc.).

Attracting new hirelings

Generous treatment of the PC's hirelings will attract the notice of other prospective employees. Wandering bards and minstrels, roving mercenaries, visiting merchants, and traveling knights can be paid to spread praise about the freeholder in other lands.

When a ruler has established a reputation for generosity, hirelings will begin to apply for positions. Every two months, there is a 10-60% chance that a prospective hireling appears. Determine the applicant's occupation using the tables in the DMG, or Table Two. Sometimes a courtier will recommend an expert hireling. Naturally, the new hireling will be indebted to the courtier, if he's not already one of the courtier's lackeys.

A negative side to fame and fortune is that a character's renown will also attract less reputable NPCs (20% chance per

month). Distant relatives, impoverished noblemen, sundry sycophants, con-men, and neer-do-wells will appear, hoping for hand-outs or cushy jobs. They appear to work hard when the PC is around, but loaf the rest of the time. Most of their efforts center around gossip, intrigue, and the acquisition of power and loot. They pretend to be loyal but are likely to desert when the chips are down.

Court personalities

The DM must create distinctive personalities for important members of the court, such as the marshal, royal steward, chief justice, etc. When a PC meets these NPCs, reaction rolls will determine if the PC enhances or lowers his prestige. Bribes, flattery, and personal appearance will modify the reaction roll.

PCs visiting court may also encounter unusual characters who may help, hinder, or merely irritate them. Jape Trostle's article in DRAGON issue #136, "Fifty Ways to Foil Your Players," contains information about NPC "foils" that can be used at court, especially the ignoble noble and the court schemers. The following 20 personalities can also be used to spice up court life.

1. The *knight errant* is a high-level, well-equipped, boastful fighter who makes a living by jousting in tournaments. He is likely to challenge other fighters (especially PCs) given the slightest excuses.

2. The *scheming bureaucrat* is a hunched, squinting scrivener who has exceptional talent for administration and is an indispensable part of the bureaucracy. His nocturnal scrutiny of documents and a network of informers lets him know almost every secret of the realm.

3. The *royal pretender* is a person who has some claim to the throne of a nearby land. He often bestows worthless titles and honors on visitors. There's an 80% chance he's involved in a plot to regain his legacy.

4. The *exiled noble* is a foreign noble who has been banished from his homeland for falling into disfavor or committing some crime. There's a 60% chance he is plotting to return home and take revenge on his enemies.

5. The *favorite* is an advisor or companion who can do no wrong in the eyes of the ruler. To offend the favorite is asking for big trouble.

6. The *nosy servant* is usually a curious loyal family retainer, but he may be a beady-eyed, unscrupulous underling with a grudge.

7. The *rake or flirt* is a debonair man or woman who pretends sincerity while using romance to manipulate others. A broken heart is the usual result.

8. The *old knight* is a relic of bygone days, as he endlessly repeats the stories of the adventures that brought him fame and a place at court. However, he still has surprising strength and courage if such is needed.

9. The *court gossip* is an influential noble

who acts as a matchmaker, chaperon, confidant, and arbitrator. This person has ears for all court gossip, high and low.

10. The *oily courtier* is a golden-tongued rascal who's a master of style and deviousness. He finds subtle ways to insult others, and makes plans to implicate them in some trap. There is a 90% chance he is involved in some intrigue, but he can usually talk his way out of trouble.

11. The *sycophant* is an ardent bootlicker who spends his time praising the ruler and running small errands for him. His favorite activity is informing on others.

12. The *dirty deed-doer* is a black-hearted knight or noble who uses the forms of chivalry only to gain an advantage. He enthusiastically performs unpleasant tasks for the ruler.

13. The *fop* is a languid and frail-seeming aesthete who complains of continual boredom and fatigue. He dresses in the most stylish fashions and looks down his aristocratic nose at social inferiors. Despite his appearance, there is a 25% chance he is a fighter of 1-10.

14. The *questing knight* is a cloudy-minded chevalier is always planning some ridiculous quest and will ask the PCs along. These adventures usually end in disaster, but once in a while he is wildly successful.

15. The *provisioner* is a wealthy merchant with an exclusive contract to supply the court. His prices are outrageous, but he is the sole source for certain merchandise. If the PCs deal with anyone else, he will charge them triple prices for items they can't get elsewhere.

16. The *bastard* is an illegitimate child of the royal house. The bastard has an ambiguous status at court, as he can neither be advanced nor ignored. Those who befriend him will attract much suspicion,

but they will gain his gratitude in the unlikely event he comes to power.

17. The *power behind the throne* is a spouse, close relative, or advisor, etc., who holds the true power, and the ruler always does what he says.

18. The *hostage or prisoner* is a famous or noble captive who is being held for ransom or as security, but who is treated as an honored guest.

19. The *imposter* is someone who impersonates a noble or royal figure. He may try to borrow money and valuables from PCs, putting up nonexistent lands and treasure as collateral.

20. The *sponge* is a professional party-goer, with a capacity for food and drink that is enormous. He is a skilled flatterer and is always looking for handouts.

Additional expert hirelings

Many of these expert NPCs must possess nonweapon proficiencies to perform their duties. Suggested proficiencies are listed with each entry. Also, the Reading/Writing skill is common at many courts; assume that these hirelings have that skill if their duties require any sort of record keeping or any of the "business" of running a court.

Also, for any of the occupations here that involve apprentices, lackeys, etc., the master's relevant ability should be higher than those of his assistants to reflect his expertise (although prodigies are always possible).

Accountant: An accountant is a specialist scribe who does calculations for business and bookkeeping purposes. Any business enterprise requires an accountant. Very large holdings or departments require a team of accountants under a chief accountant, who receives double pay. All accountants possess the Reading/Writing

Table 1
Court Activities Table

1d100 Event

01-08	Ball, masquerade, or party
09-19	Banquet or feast
20-28	Ceremony*
29-34	Concert, performance, or entertainment
35-38	Embassy or parley
39-42	Holiday or religious festival
43-52	Hunt or falconry
53-55	Procession, parade, spectacle, or display
56-60	Public appearance, oration, opening, dedication, or inspection
61-69	Reception, presentation, audience, demonstration, or interview
70-78	Sports or competition* *
79-83	Tournament, joust, or melee
84-96	No major activity (other than gambling & gossiping)
97-00	Uproar* * *

* Ceremonies include knightings, marriages, accepting vassals, funerals, religious observances, bestowing awards, births, coming of age, vows, etc.

* * Sports includes bowling, field hockey, tennis, horse racing, etc. Competitions include games, poetry, singing, courtly romances, etc.

* * * Uproar could be such things as outrageous behavior, horrible rumors, murder, discovery of a spy, thievery of a major item, disfavor, insubordination, duels, etc.

nonweapon proficiency (NWP) and also have some skill at mathematics (what we consider basic math—no algebra, geometry, etc.).

Almoner: An almoner supervises the disbursement of gifts to charities and the poor. Almoners handle all the clerics, charity-collectors, beggars, mendicants, cranks, and reformers seeking money and favors who often approach wealthy characters. Almoners, like accountants, have skill at mathematics.

Artist: Artists are skilled in the production of fine statues, busts, murals, or paintings. A work of art takes from a few days to many weeks to create. A huge sculpture or decoration of a palace can take years to complete. A few artists are masters who can produce a masterpiece that will bring acclaim to the artist and his patron. Artists will possess the Artistic Ability NWP.

Astrologer/soothsayer: Astrologers, soothsayers, diviners, and fortune tellers are common in many rulers' courts. In a magical universe, it is possible to make useful predictions on occasion. The accuracy of a prediction depends on the expertise of the astrologer; some may be charlatans. Fortunes are often given in cryptic forms, and are liable to be misinterpreted. These NPCs possess the Astrology NWP.

Attorney/lawyer: In urban areas, citizens may need legal advice about taxes, debts, rights, property, or inheritance. Rulers will need expert information on the cases brought before them. Lawyers can be kept on retainer and are also paid a daily fee while preparing or arguing a case in court. If a PC gains a sum of money from legal action, the lawyer will take 30-50%. Some lawyers are famous (5%), charging 5 to 10

times the normal fee, but can increase the chance of a favorable verdict at the DM's option. Attorneys all have knowledge of local laws and customs (treat as the Religion NWP, except the relevant ability is intelligence and it grants legal, rather than religious, information).

Bard/storyteller/minstrel: Every court needs a talented bard who can tell stories or sing and play music. History, legends, and poetry are passed down through the verses of bards, who are also the court composers. An NPC of this type may (if not a member of the bard adventuring class) exhibit the Artistic Ability, Musical Instrument, or Singing NWPs. Bards may also have some knowledge of history or languages.

Chamberlain: A chamberlain is the official in charge of a noble's household. The chief butler and master of the wardrobe report to him. Very large households require several chamberlains. Chamberlains will certainly make use of the Etiquette NWP and perhaps have the Heraldry skill as well.

Champion: A champion is a fighter who accepts challenges on behalf of kings or rulers who cannot fight themselves, or for mages and other characters who cannot engage in personal combat with fighters. Champions expect to be well rewarded after each victory. Create and equip an appropriate warrior NPC for this role.

Chaplain: Every estate or castle should have a chapel and chaplain for the religious needs of its inhabitants. Adventuring clerics usually don't have the time for such work, so an NPC cleric can be hired, as long as he gets the usual salary, upkeep, fees, tithes, assistants, and so on. Chaplains will possess the Religion NWP, and some may also have knowledge of history,

languages, or areas of special interest to their deity.

Cook: A lord's refinement is often judged by the excellence of his dinner table. A cook requires at least one lackey (apprentice) to assist him. Cooks have the Cooking NWP.

Court announcer: The court announcer regulates daily business at a noble's court. He announces visitors, observes protocol, schedules appointments, supervises audiences, and keeps his eye on guests. Announcers will have both the Etiquette and Heraldry NWPs.

Dance master: Dancing is a skill that is expected of every well-bred aristocrat. The dance master instructs the pages and damsels of the household in the rudiments of dancing and also teaches new dances to the court. Such instructors possess the Dancing NWP.

Doctor/physician: Doctors are skilled in the treatment of wounds and disease. Although clerics in the AD&D game perform the functions of doctors, DMs could have "healers" who cure wounds and diseases with the Healing, and possibly the Herbalism, NWPs.

Entertainers: Entertainers include actors, mimes, jugglers, acrobats, wrestlers, puppeteers, dancers, knife-throwers, animal acts, etc. Entertainment is expected at important social gatherings. Performers can be hired individually or in teams of 2-16. When a company has six or more members, there is a 25% surcharge to pay for the impresario, drivers, and lackeys. Famous troupes of entertainers fetch 2-4 times normal prices. Most troupes should have members who exhibit many of the following skills: Dancing, Singing, Musical Instrument, Juggling, Jumping, Tightrope Walking, and Ventriloquism.

Equerry/Stable Master: An equerry is an official in charge of a stable. He oversees the horse trainers and grooms, buys and sells horses, buys fodder, and maintains the stable. An equerry is needed if a stable has 30 or more horses. Such an NPC will possess the Animal Training and Animal Handling NWPs for horses (or whatever mount is most common in the campaign).

Falconer: A falconer specializes in the care of falcons and hawks. One falconer can care for four birds. For every two additional birds, he requires a lackey. Falconers will have the Animal Handling and Animal Training NWPs appropriate to the type of birds used.

Gatekeeper/porter/doorwarden: The gatekeeper greets visitors, makes arrangements for their stay, and maintains the gates and drawbridges in good operating conditions. Such an NPC will have the Heraldry NWP and may possess some knowledge of drawbridges, gears, etc. (Engineering NWP).

Gentleman- or lady-in-waiting: Gentlemen- and ladies-in-waiting are persons of noble birth who serve as assistants, companions, and bodyguards to a ruler. A minor noble might have 1-3

Table 2
Additional Expert Hirelings Table

Hireling	Daily cost *	Hireling	Daily cost *
Accountant	2 gp	Almoner	3 gp
Artist **	20 gp	Astrologer/soothsayer	10 gp
Attorney/lawyer	50 gp	Bard	20 gp
Chamberlain	4 gp	Champion	10 gp/level
Chaplain	10 gp	Cook	1 gp
Court announcer	2 gp	Dance master	1 gp
Doctor/physician	15 gp	Entertainer	10 sp
Equerry/stable master	5 gp	Falconer	4 gp
Gatekeeper	25 sp	Gentlemen/ladies-in-waiting* **	25 gp
Herald	6 gp	Horse/animal trainer	8 gp
Hunting master	15 gp	Jester	10 gp
Librarian	15 sp	Maid/butler/servant	4 sp
Master of the wardrobe	5 gp	Musician	8 sp
Nurse	3 sp	Orator	2 gp
Page/squire* **	2 gp	Poet laureate	9 gp
Scholar ***	25 gp	Scribe/clerk	3 gp
Secretary	5 gp	Steward/seneschal* **	8 gp/level
Teacher/tutor	1 gp	Trumpeter	15 sp

* Monthly cost is the daily cost × 30. Room and board must be also provided.

** Plus a fee for each item produced, plus the cost of materials.

*** Servants and quality room and board must be provided.

gentlemen-in-waiting; a king, up to 50. Such NPCs will possess a wide variety of NWP, but Etiquette is mandatory.

Herald: Heralds are skilled in the usages of heraldry, diplomacy, and chivalry, and hence possess the Heraldry NWP. There is often a hierarchy of apprentices (pursuivants), heralds, and chief heralds at larger courts. Chief heralds receive five times normal pay and pursuivants earn one-half that of a herald.

Horse or animal trainer: Animal trainers are skilled in the care, training, and breeding of animals. Normal training takes three months, with the trainer able to handle up to six animals. War training requires an additional three months, with three animals being the limit that can be trained at once. One horse trainer is needed to care for every 40 horses in a stable.

Hunting master/huntsmen/houndsmen: A hunting master is necessary to make arrangements for and to lead a hunt. The hunting master supervises the huntsmen, all of whom have the Hunting NWP. Houndsmen exhibit Animal Training and Animal Handling skills for hunting dogs.

Other common NWPs these NPCs could possess are Direction Sense, Fire-Building, Fishing, Riding Land-Based, Set Snares, Animal Lore, Survival, Tracking, or Weather Sense.

Jester: Jesters provide entertainment and keep themselves well informed of court gossip. They can give advice and defuse possibly hostile situations through humor. Jesters may also be skilled in magic-use and thieving. Jesters should have NWPs similar to those listed under "Entertainers."

Librarian: A librarian is needed to organize and care for any large collection of books and scrolls. Librarians can maintain written records; read languages; identify authors, handwriting, dates and places of publication; and repair and restore damaged books. In addition to the Reading/Writing NWP, librarians are often sagelike storehouses of information about history and languages.

Maid/butler/servants/lackeys: Maids and butlers clean and care for buildings. A maid is needed for every eight apartments, and a butler for each large hall. The chief butler (major-domo) works with the chamberlain, head chef, steward, and master of the wardrobe to assure the smooth functioning of the household. These servants should have the Etiquette NWP.

Every castle requires a barber, who often doubles as a surgeon. Such an NPC may possess the Healing or Herbalism NWPs. Noblewomen may need a hairdresser and seamstress, the latter of whom should possess the Seamstress/Tailor NWP. Each carriage must have four coachmen, and a sedan chair requires four to eight footmen. Grooms are necessary to care for each one to four horses, and formal gardens require a gardener who may possess the Agriculture or Herbalism NWPs. The servant/lackey category also

includes cupbearers, servers, chambervalets, ushers, messengers, laundry women, etc. These types generally display few talents, though exceptions to the rule are always possible.

Master/mistress of the wardrobe: The master or mistress of the wardrobe is responsible for the care of a noble's clothing and private chambers. He or she also disburse the lords' private funds for personal and miscellaneous expenses. Etiquette is an important skill for these NPCs, as is some skill at math.

Musicians: Musicians include flute players, lutists, drummers, horn-players, singers, bagpipers, harpers, fiddlers, etc. They are needed for balls, dances, masques, and the like. Musicians usually perform in groups of four to 12 members. If there are more than six musicians, they will be led by a music master who receives double pay. Five percent of musicians are virtuosos who perform alone and receive 10 times the normal pay. All musicians have the Musical Instrument NWP, possibly with multiple instruments (which would require multiple proficiency slots).

Nurse: Children of noble families are cared for by a nurse. Each nurse may look after up to four children.

Orator/rhetorician: Orators are professional speech makers. They may be hired to make speeches on a character's behalf, or may be hired on a monthly basis to teach oratorical skill. Each month a character takes oratory lessons (with several lessons a week), he receives a cumulative chance equal to his intelligence to receive Oratory skill, if he has a nonweapon proficiency slot available. Oratory skill gives a +20% reaction adjustment when making speeches in noncombat situations to those who can understand what the orator is saying.

Page/squire: Leading noblemen or rulers often have dozens of pages and squires, as their vassals are eager to send their sons to be educated and learn chivalric skills. They serve as messengers, aides, and servants to lords and ladies, and they form a guard of honor. Pages are usually adolescents with little combat skill; squires are older and may be 1st-level warriors. Both pages and squires may also have some Riding, Heraldry, or Tailoring skill (for sewing torn tabards, etc.).

Poet laureate/court chronicler/writer: A poet composes verses for any subject or occasion, and a court chronicler records events and supervises the archives. They may be sent as envoys because of their knowledge of etiquette and diplomacy. All writers must possess the Modern Languages and the Reading/Writing NWPs; some may be members of the bard class.

Scholar/professor/philosopher: Scholars are specialized men or women of learning. They may answer questions as sages in one field with a -2 penalty that is cumulative with any other penalties, but they require only half the upkeep and pay of sages. Select appropriate fields of study

for such NPCs, according to your campaign's background.

Scribe/clerk: Scribes maintain records, copy documents, and take dictation. For every 100 soldiers in a fortress, one scribe will be required to assist the officers in making muster lists, payrolls, inventories, and in writing orders. Scribes might be needed to assist the seneschal, chamberlain, equerry, librarian, almoner, secretary, attorney, scholar, master of the wardrobe, etc. All scribes exhibit the Reading/Writing NWP.

Secretary: A secretary is a type of scribe who personally assists a ruler or noble in the day-to-day operations of his domain. The secretary is knowledgeable in administration, screens visitors, makes appointments, handles documents, channels communications, and supervises other clerks. The Reading/Writing NWP is important for this NPC, as is the Etiquette NWP and familiarity (knowledge) of the ruler's interests, hobbies, etc.

Steward/Seneschal: A steward or seneschal is needed for every castle, business, estate, fief, or office belonging to a character that he does not personally supervise. Very large estates or fiefs will require several stewards, headed by a grand seneschal or chief steward. Stewards need a variety of skills, although a highly skilled staff is a great boon as well.

Teacher/tutor: A teacher instructs children between the ages of six and 16. A teacher may have up to 12 students in a class. Teachers should have at least some of the following NWPs (though others are possible): Reading/Writing, Local History, Ancient History, Modern Languages, Ancient Languages, and Math.

Trumpeters/drummers/standard bearers: Trumpeters and drummers are needed to play marches and fanfares at parades, tournaments, speeches, coronations, executions, and funerals. They also make signals in battles. Musical Instrument skill is essential.

A standard bearer is a soldier, usually a sergeant, who carries a lord's insignia into battle to rally soldiers. Carrying a standard into battle requires no special skills, but an unusually large amount of bravery is helpful.

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Really Good BAD GUYS

by Derek Jensen

Artwork by David O. Miller



Some challenging ideas to make challenging foes

Evil nonplayer characters usually get the short end of the stick when it comes to battle tactics in AD&D® games. They typically come off as twisted spell-casters or dumb fighters, and the tactics attributed to these evil NPCs usually consist of nothing more than casting a few horrible spells or just swinging away with magical swords before they are overwhelmed by the player characters.

These sorts of tactics do not accurately reflect the fact that most evil NPCs make their living by cunning, ruthless, cold-hearted (and sometimes cowardly) murder. Evil characters are almost never bound by any sort of code of ethics or restrictions on weapons or tactics. There is no reason why an evil character could not follow treasure-laden PCs around town until he could quietly poison them, except that it would abruptly end the entire game.

Evil characters whose actual dwelling is invaded would almost certainly have wicked traps and numerous preplanned tactics for counterattacks and escape. To keep the game interesting and balanced, the DM should give intelligent evil beings a few basic tactics and plans in case they are visited by a number of armed foes. After all, evil characters have to be on the lookout for both good *and* evil enemies. Intelligent ones know how both kinds of people think and how to counter their tactics. It shouldn't be so hard to think of some good tactics, because being the Dungeon Master has built-in advantages.

First of all, the DM has at his disposal a group of the most devious and fertile gaming minds you've ever heard of: the players. Take some tips from players as to what wizards do when they are in trouble

(use *teleport*, *dimension door*, *invisibility*, or a call for help from a fighter). Follow the free advice from players as to what a thief should do when he sees a spell-caster mumbling and waving his arms about (throw a dagger! throw a dagger!). Give a fighter NPC some weapon specialization, a *girdle of stone giant strength*, and a *long sword* +2, then see how your players' fighter likes a bit of his own medicine.

Second, use what your NPCs have already got. Evil clerics should make use of evil spells. Bestow curse (the reverse of *remove curse*) is a good one; *animate dead*, *cause blindness*, and *cause serious wounds* are other good examples. Don't hesitate to allow your players' opponents to drop back and heal their wounded with the help of a *staff of curing*, just like the one the PCs have. Evil wizards can use *shield*, *protection from normal missiles*, *protection from good*, *stoneskin*, and *mirror image* to defend themselves. Evil characters aren't stupid; they're just evil.

Of course, it ain't easy being evil. Being evil has inherent disadvantages that make Good the first choice of most intelligent creatures—disadvantages like the fact that your own partner might backstab you if he feels he can escape with your treasure in the confusion of battle. Maybe the evil cleric won't heal you because he's healing himself. Evil characters hold out on each other, sometimes fail to cooperate, and occasionally fail to notice that their own companions will be caught in their *fireball* blasts. Evil characters might also bargain for their lives with the treasure (or life) of a member of their party. More often than not, however, evil characters will work in consort against good characters at least

long enough to kill them; if they fail, they just scatter, every man for himself.

One problem with pitting good PCs against evil NPCs is that NPCs are adventurers, too, and adventurers usually have magical items. Conquering a lot of NPCs could seriously overburden a PC with too much "liberated" magic. A good way to limit this is make an evil character's items evil in alignment, and therefore unusable by the PC. A better way to do it is to give NPCs one-shot magical items like potions and scrolls, then have them use them up in the battle. After all, what fool wouldn't use a potion of *gaseous form* if he was hard-pressed by a gang of hardened adventurers? Always remember to allow NPCs to do whatever you allow PCs to do. It will shock them, but there's no way they can complain.

There are other things NPCs might try. Alter magical items. Consider the evil fighter/thief who attacks PCs from behind with a long sword that emanates *darkness 15' radius* (which does not affect the wielder's vision, of course). Assuming the heroes capture the sword, what party would put up with their own fighter blinding them whenever he wanted to fight?

Combine spells, too. How about dropping in an evil cleric who casts *darkness* on a stone, approaches the PCs enveloped in the mysterious blackness, then tosses the stone at them and casts *silence 15' radius* at them as well? If the cleric is with a party of his own, it might be better for him to toss a normal stone first in order to judge the throw that he will have to make in darkness, while the fighters keep the PCs busy. This would have the added benefit of confusing the PCs for a moment

while they run from the mysterious stone, kick it out of the way, or try to pick it up and throw it back. PCs are, as a rule, easily confused and prone to panic. Play on that.

Remember that NPCs will usually be the inhabitants of the area that the players are intruding upon. The NPCs will know the layout of the area, the locations of secret doors and pit traps, and the necessary passwords or alarm signals to allow them safe passage. Inhabitants of a cave complex should not sit idly by while their comrades are slaughtered in the next room; give them intruder-alert plans. What is unreasonable about orcs who have barricades that they can draw across a corridor to provide cover for safe missile fire? They might even have a way of dropping a portcullis behind the party to block the PCs' immediate retreat (and perhaps another portcullis in front of the party). Humanoids who are lawful have discipline and therefore make plans. The following are more examples to fertilize your mind and send players whimpering into dark corners.

* As the party fights an evil priest's group of guardian skeletons or zombies, the room begins to fill with a gas that causes breathing creatures to save vs. poison each round that they are in it or else fall unconscious for 1-6 rounds.

* *Rope trick* is the poor man's *mass*

invisibility. In moments, a wizard can create an extradimensional space where he and some friends can hide, drawing up the rope until the party passes. Once the party is engaged with the rest of the NPC party and no one is watching their backs—surprise!

* *Unseen servants* cannot fight, but they can bewilder PCs forever or lure them into a grand trap with virtually no effort or risk on the behalf of the caster. Added tip: *Ventriloquism* or *audible glamor* spells can help.

* *Strength* spells last for one hour per level! At that rate, what respectable party can afford *not* to walk around in a dungeon looking like steroid monsters?

* *Web* spells cover huge areas: 8,000 cubic feet. That's a dungeon corridor 15' high and 10' wide *webbed* for over 50' of its length! Spin the *web* during battle (the PCs will suffer -2 on their saving throws) or else cover the mess with a nice illusion and walk away. Remember, too, that webs burn like wildfire for 2-8 hp damage. Conclusion? *Fireball* the trapped PCs and attack them the next round when they're burnt and dazed.

* Speaking of which, reread the *fireball* spell and ask yourself what 33,500+ cubic feet means. Ill tell you: It means fire filling a 10'-wide, 15'-high corridor to a depth of 110' *on both sides of ground zero!* It means that a temple or great hall 20' high,

30' wide, and 50' long will be filled to overflowing! *Fireballs* also burn spell books and robes, set ropes and wooden beams aflame, melt treasure, and destroy magical items. Can you say "total destruction"? I knew you could. *Fireball* is an evil spell if ever there was one.

* *Command*, a first-level priest spell, would not allow poor Norman Crossblades, a 5th-level fighter, a saving throw (it requires 6 + HD or an intelligence of 13 +). He could therefore be *automatically* made to, for instance, eat or drink something he normally wouldn't, fall asleep for a moment, stop over a trap, or do any one of a number of unwise things, restricted only by your vocabulary. Make sure that the one round Norman is obeying the *command* is taken advantage of, but not with Norm's best interests in mind.

* The *sanctuary* spell doesn't last too long (two rounds plus one per level), but it gives a cleric a few minutes of safety to heal or run away. Its short duration allows it to be cast upon a thief, who can then proceed to slip around the melee in order to attack from behind a few rounds later. It could also give the wounded a few minutes of safety to scramble or be pulled out of harm's way.

* *Light* can be cast up to 120 yards away and can be cast upon a fighter's visor to effectively blind him. *Light* lasts a very long time (an hour plus one turn per

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level), but *continual light* would last until dispelled and would be devastating against a thief (what thief can afford to walk around announcing himself in a 60-radius sphere of bright light?).

* *Wyvern watch*, cast by a retreating party of NPCs, will hang up a party of pursuing characters for quite a long time, especially if they notice it before it strikes but are unable to accurately identify it.

* NPCs who have ways of protecting themselves against fire might dump oil all over the field of combat and wait until the middle of battle to set it ablaze. Then again, they might just set themselves ablaze in order to scare off the PCs or at least their horses, hirelings, and men-at-arms. They would also be less hesitant to use magical fire spells.

* Be imaginative with *glyph of warding* and bestow curse spells. The higher the level of the cleric, the greater the magic he should be able to unleash with these. A *glyph* from a 9th-level cleric might deliver a flame strike. A 7th-level cleric might be able to create a *glyph* that reduces the defiler to gaseous form or makes his body, but not his gear or clothes, invisible (but only to his companions) until lifted or dispelled.

* *Animate dead* is only third level, yet the zombies and skeletons created by it, at 1 HD per level, will hang around forever. There's no reason that every evil cleric

shouldn't be accompanied by a troop of well-armed and well-armored undead. And, since humanoid corpses can also be animated according to hit dice, even a 5th-level cleric could have a couple of undead ogres around to do his dirty work.

* A 7th-level cleric has a 60% chance of dispelling the magic of that pesky 5th-level wizard who likes to *fly* around or use *shield*. Even his two subordinate 4th-level clerics each have a 40% chance. Note that *dispel magic* affects a wide area, so it could also get that cleric who uses *protection from evil* or *resist fire*.

* A *lightning bolt* is preferable to a *fireball* underground because its area of effect is more limited and it can be bounced off a wall to further cut the area of effect as it retraces its path (striking most victims twice—victims who would likely make their saving throws at -2 or -4 for being dazed and wounded).

Of course, there's nothing to prevent PCs from utilizing some of these tactics, but they would be subject to the restrictions of their alignment, and some actions would require a ruling by the DM. It is important to remember that NPCs are just as worried about staying alive as anybody else, but they are more devious in the ways that they guard their lives. From the players' point of view, defeating an intelligent adversary is much more satisfying

than hacking up a monster.

When played well, the AD&D game can produce some of the greatest challenges and most satisfying fun of any game in the form of cunning adversaries. It is that aspect of the game that makes it great—the fact that the players' opponents are not predetermined, matrix-generated automatons controlled by a computer, but thought-generated deviants controlled by a cunning human being who is capable of changing methods of attack and defense whenever necessary.

The game should be something of a competition between the DM and his players, challenging one another to think harder and becoming more creative and cunning while staying within the bounds of rule and reason. It shouldn't be a frolic through blood and guts or a grim contest of wills; the DM controls the game and has to play *with* the players as much as (but no more than) he plays *against* them. The best kind of DM fashions people, places, and things as if he were a player, then disconnects himself almost completely and referees as if he were the players' best friend, because he is both of these things.

"Gee, Bob, I'm really sorry, but your cleric takes a *lightning bolt* in the back and is blown forward into the pit from which he was trying to pull the mage's lifeless body. Tough break, buddy. More pizza?"

Ω

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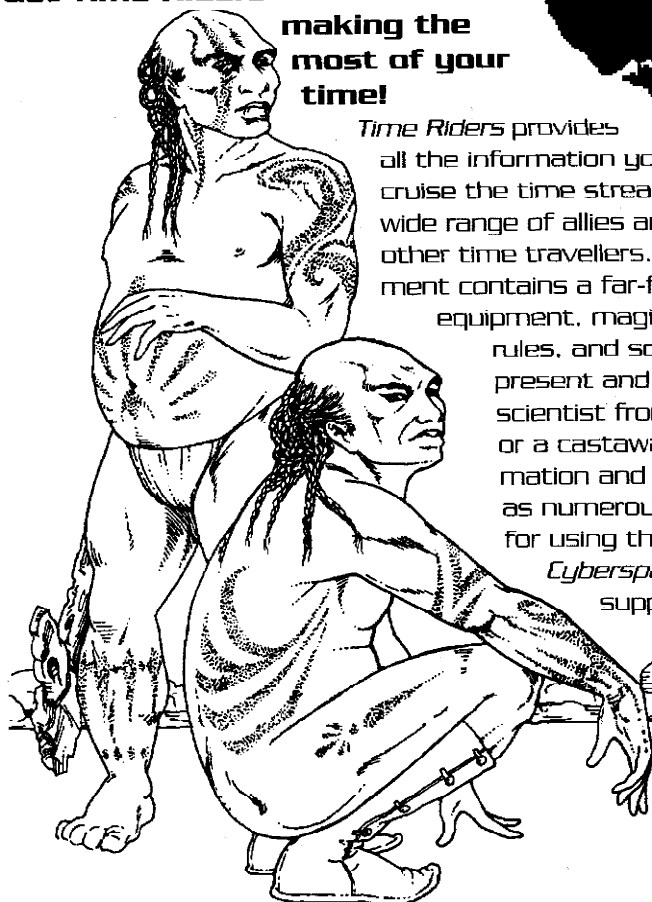
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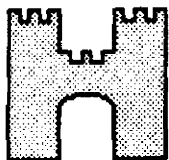
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Rolemaster





The 7-Sentence NPC

by C. M. Cline

Artwork by Jim Holloway

A new way to bring nonplayer characters to life (in the game, that is)

Rand the Elder is a blacksmith who has spent all his life in Arabel. He is a tall man with a heavy black beard. Rand is known for his great strength (16), skill as a blacksmith, and rather dim wit (Int 7). He values his family above all, is honest to a fault, and has a great fondness for music. Uncomfortable and a man of few words with strangers, he is talkative and likes to sing with his close friends. With his shop on the main thoroughfare, he hears many of the tales from outside the city, but often gets the facts mixed up due to his slow wit. He talks in a deep, slow drawl and pulls at his beard when talking to others.

Creating nonplayer characters for a game session is an interesting and challenging part of adventure creation. However, while great time and effort can be spent on major antagonists and player character companions, rarely does a DM have the time to put equal effort into NPCs

with "bit parts." All too often, the results of this are a few well-developed NPCs and a lot of stereotyped bit-part NPCs who seem to all look the same.

To give NPCs more variety while keeping down the effort in their development, I developed what I refer to as the "seven sentence NPC" (SSNPC). The seven sentences used to describe the NPC contain what I considered to be the essential elements to allow PCs to deal with and remember the NPC. Other Dungeon Masters may differ on what they feel is essential; if so, the SSNPC described here can provide a starting point for developing a new set of essential data.

Just because this NPC description is referred to as a "seven sentence NPC" does not necessarily mean each NPC is described in exactly seven sentences. For the sake of the English language and clarity, sometimes more than one sentence is used for a given point.

Occupation & history

The first sentence serves as the introduction to the NPC, describing his occupation and giving a brief history of the character. If the NPC has a front, such as being a gem smith who is a cat burglar at night, this information can be provided in this sentence. A brief historical note can give the NPC more depth and indicate skills and knowledge that are not readily apparent to the PCs. For example Rand the Elder, mentioned at the start of this article, may be the retired adventurer Randel the Giantslayer, renowned throughout the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting and with a vast knowledge of the Spine of the World.

Physical description

The second sentence is a brief physical description of the NPC. In some cases this may give a hint as to an NPC's hidden occupation, such as a note that a beggar has a flash of gold in his mouth.



Attributes & skills

The third sentence describes the NPC's attributes and skills. Here, any attributes above or below average should be noted. When describing attributes, it is easiest to reference those used in the game. In the AD&D® game, these would be intelligence, wisdom, strength, dexterity, charisma and constitution. Any attributes not mentioned are considered to be average.

Any special skills and the NPC's level of ability with these skills can also be mentioned. These skills do not necessarily have to be associated with the NPC's current occupation. For example, if Rand is an average blacksmith but a great song writer, the sentence may not even mention blacksmithing, noting only his undiscovered talent for musical composition.

These skills and attributes may be widely known or known only to the NPC himself. Whatever the case, this should also be noted in this sentence.

Values & motivations

The fourth sentence is one of the most important, from a role-playing point of view. This sentence describes the values that the PCs must discover and exploit in order to motivate a NPC to doing as they ask. This is particularly important if the PCs are asking the NPC to do something that is against the NPC's basic principles. For example, due to Rand's honesty, the PCs will have a difficult time convincing him to shoe a horse so that the horse will probably throw the shoe after a short distance. Money probably will not do it; however, if the PCs threatened his family, there is little doubt that Rand will shoe the horse as the PCs' desire (but he will probably hate them for it).

The values and motivations described in this sentence should not be directly revealed to the PCs. The PCs will have to search for clues in the way the NPC talks and acts in order to discover which buttons must be pushed to get the NPC to do as they desire. From the DM's point of view, the values and motivations described for the NPC help the DM decide how the NPC will react to the questions and offers of the PCs.

Interactions with others

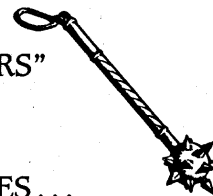
This sentence describes how the NPC interacts with others. Whether he is loud and obnoxious or condescending and rude, it can be noted in this sentence. Many NPCs will react differently to the PCs depending on whether they know them or not. If this is the case, it will be noted in this sentence.

Useful knowledge

This is also a very important sentence, from the PCs' point of view, as it describes what the NPC knows that may be of use to the PCs. This information might be simple, such as where a tired adventurer can get a good meal and a bed for the night. On the other hand, it can be a key clue leading to

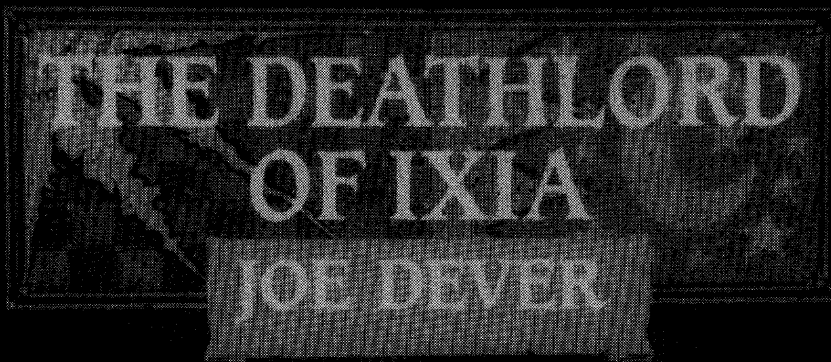


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the next adventure. The knowledge described in the given example for Rand is of general nature, which should be the case in most NPC descriptions. There should also be an indication of how reliable the NPC's information is. In some cases what the NPC knows may be very specific, such as the location of a dragon's lair or who to bribe to get a buddy out of jail. This will usually occur when the NPC is designed for a specific walk-in part in the current adventure.

Distinguishing feature

The last sentence is used to describe a distinguishing feature or characteristic of the NPC. This gives the PCs something to remember the NPC by, possibly helping them to locate him in the future. It is fairly common for players to forget the names of NPCs, unless they are in the habit of writing down the names of every character they meet. If a distinguishing feature is described, the players can often recall this description if not the NPC himself. If the PCs cannot remember an NPC's name, the DM should not give it out. The PCs can return to the city and enquire for the blacksmith with the deep, slow drawl who always is pulling at his big, black beard.

Sample NPCs

To assist with the understanding of how this NPC system can be used, several examples set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign are provided below.



Baron "Wardog" Muckdigger is the lord of a small land holding in east Sembia,

of which he is the seventh heir. He is a short man, clean shaven with a very upright posture. Wardog is a 9th-level fighter famous for his incredible stamina (Con 18) and his leadership abilities (Cha 15), as well as his alleged ability at musical composition (his works are described as being more like the sounds of war than actual music). Beside composing music, the baron's greatest love is war, and he will use almost any excuse to take up arms against anyone he thinks might prove an interesting adversary. The baron has a rather blunt and direct way of dealing with people, but mixes it with enough charm to avoid being abusive. He knows a lot about military tactics, different military organizations and how to defeat them, but virtually nothing about the back-room politics in Sembia (or music, for that matter). The baron always talks in a loud voice with his head stuck right in your face, so you can smell the heavy garlic on his breath.



Lady Erin of Loft is the demure third daughter of the Mayor of Espar in Cormyr—at least, during the day she is. At night, Erin becomes the infamous Lady Darkthreat, an assassin who employs magic and poison to destroy her targets. Erin is a petite blonde with delicate features, and men often wish to protect her (she finds this amusing). She is a 7th-level mage with an extensive knowledge of poisons and a high intelligence (Int 17), quick reflexes (Dex 18), and the constitution of a horse (Con 17). Lady Erin lives for the kill. She loves to get to know her victims intimately, using this knowledge to set up the perfect assassination. Lady Erin is always charming and warm, and appears to engage in idle gossip while taking

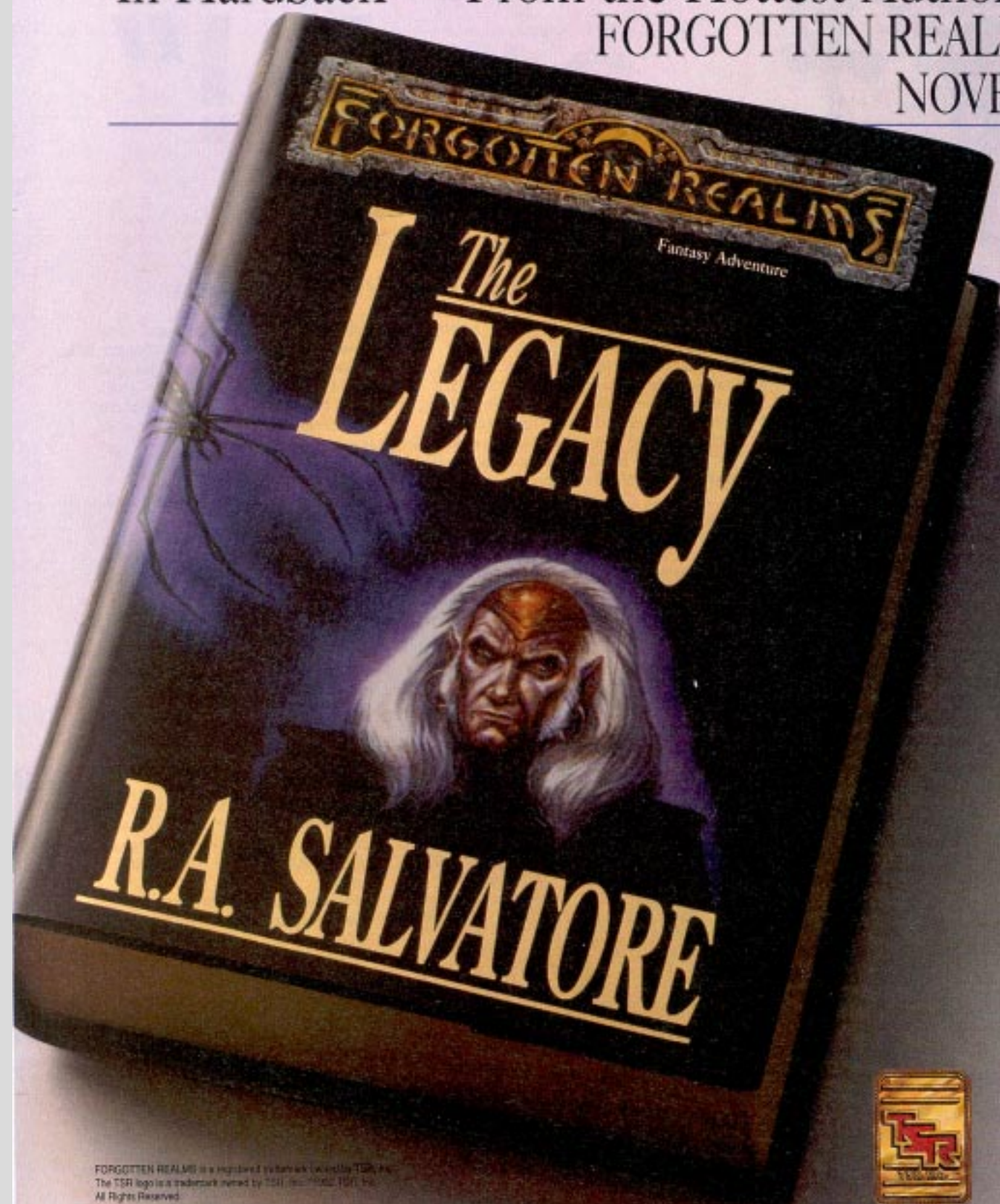
in her surroundings and subtly pumping the other person for information. Lady Erin knows virtually all of the gossip of the nobility and rich merchants of Cormyr, as well as many private facts with respect to these people. She has a small mole on her right cheek.



Durwald of Stonecleft is a dwarf originally from the Mines of Tethyamar, and is now the leader of a small dwarven mining and forging operation in the Thunder Peaks south of Tilverton. He is average in stature for a dwarf and has a dull gray beard that he wears in two braids tied loosely around his head. Durwald is a 9th-level fighter and capable leader, but a rather indifferent miner and smith. Durwald considers other dwarves' dreams of regaining lost kingdoms to be foolish and believes that only one thing matters: the survival of the dwarven race. This, he believes, is most easily obtained by earning favors and great amounts of treasure with which to buy mercenaries as cannon fodder. Durwald of Stonecleft is a clever dwarf who is always willing to deal with others and believes in "long-term investments" that he will always cash in on. He is quite familiar with the Thunder Peaks, from the Inner Sea to the Border Forest, and has personally fought many of its denizens. He is intimately familiar with the ways of the Mines of Tethyamar and, having no interest in returning, might be willing to sell this if the price is high enough. Durwald has a long scar down the side of his head that he often scratches while making conversation.

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"You again!"

by Scott Sheffield

Artwork by L. A. Williams

Enemies who never go away — and how to create them

Grub the gnome nervously eyed the glass case, focusing his thoughts on the tutelage he'd received at the local thieves' guild. He recalled stern Wesley drilling him on the intricacies of finding and removing traps. Grub bent low over the case to examine it, then smiled. "There it is," he said in hushed tones, spotting the tripwire leading to the magical canister beneath the case.

The short thief's fingers worked quickly to defuse the poison-gas trap. A minute

later, he straightened with a sigh, a palm-sized gem in hand. The job done, Grub turned and hurried to the open window, pausing momentarily to survey the dark street below. Deciding it was safe to descend, he swung out onto the ledge and deftly climbed down to the narrow alley. Seconds later, he had disappeared into the misty streets of Sombrialil.

What happens next? In many AD&D® campaigns, this encounter would earn the

successful rogue some gold and a few experience points, and nothing more. In a different campaign, however, the theft would have earned Grub much, much more. It would have earned the player-character thief a nonplayer-character nemesis.

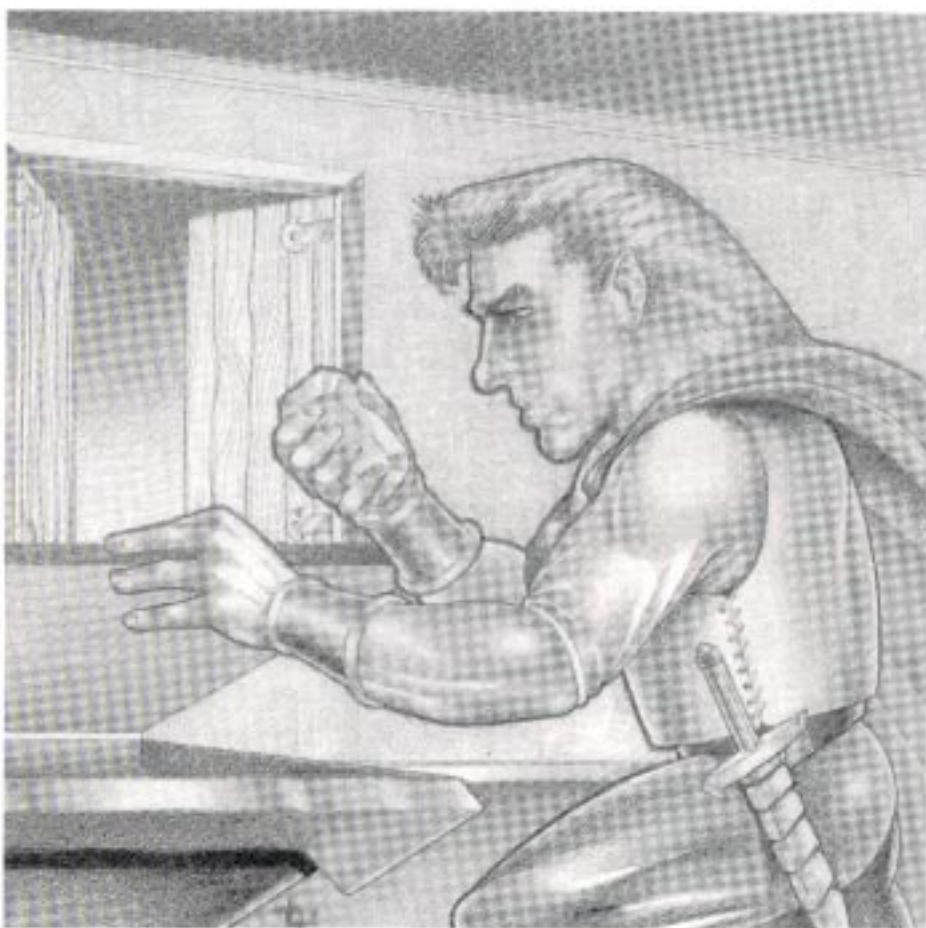
The recurrent NPC

Dungeon Masters who wish to add depth to their fantasy campaigns should consider making use of recurring NPCs. In a campaign that utilizes recurrent figures, the DM and his cast of colorful NPCs would not be content to let Grub off the hook. While the victim of a burglary might let the culprit go, it is more likely that the victim will use whatever magical and mundane resources he has at his disposal to track down his light-fingered visitor, like so:

The bald-headed high priest smoothed his crimson robes and waited for word from the sorcerer bent low over the crystal ball. "I have found him, master," whispered the mage at last. "He walks the streets of this very city. I even recognize the stall keeper with whom he now haggles."

"Excellent," replied the bald cleric, a broad smile crossing his weathered face. "Keep an eye on him. I want to know everything our little friend does." As he left, the priest thought, *I shall personally teach him that stealing from the Cult of the Thirteenth Circle is at best unwise, if not fatal.*

When a PC interacts with a DM's world, that interaction should reflect the reality that deeds don't go unnoticed. By using this notion of action/reaction, the DM can build a more believable and exciting adventuring environment. A well-run interactive campaign makes use of recurring figures to add both a dash of reality and a sense of continuity.



Recurring NPCs can be used to start new adventures or to link unconnected adventures together. A foe met first at the Pit of Despair shows up by surprise at the next city in the PCs' journeys. Coincidence? That's for the DM to decide, but the simple presence of that foe will serve to bind together the two settings and will lend the game world an air of connectedness.

Not only will the players begin to view their world as one that evolves and changes in response to their PCs' behavior, but they will also be motivated to role-play. If hack-and-slash play has enduring consequences, players learn that it is wise to review the alternatives before rushing headlong into the fray. Success then depends on the ability of players to be creative, rather than how many hit points their PCs have. Play becomes more interesting for all participants, DM and players alike.

Acquiring a nemesis

How is it that the PCs come to be the foe of a recurrent NPC figure? In the example here, the PC gnomish thief named Grub precipitated the relationship—it was his actions that began the bald cult leader's involvement in the thieves' affairs.

A different scenario is quite possible. In the course of play, the PCs might stumble onto an NPC plot. A party that inadvertently meddles with an organization's plans to depose the current ruler will earn that group's enmity as well as the ruler's praise. In this way, PCs can incite the wrath of a vast number of NPCs.

Recurrent NPCs need not all be arch-villains out to kill the PCs. The rivalry doesn't even have to be deadly to be interesting. Jealousy, pride, competition, and the desire for revenge can fuel the relationship. Some among your cast of recurring foes can merely trip up, annoy, or embarrass the PCs.

Perhaps the NPC who turns out to be a recurrent foe is a competitor. Every time the PCs attempt to retrieve a lost artifact or endeavor to defend the honor of a lady, the NPC shows up first and denies the PCs the glory. Think of the scene early in the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, in which Indiana Jones loses the idol he's retrieved from the death-trap tomb to another collector of antiquities. Do you recall the line, "Once again, Dr. Jones, what was briefly yours is now mine"?

If the PCs are adventuring in a city, the potential cast of recurring "foes" is vast. The captain of the city guard might take a special interest in them, imagining them likely candidates for stirring up trouble, and he will always have them followed by guardsmen. An unscrupulous tax collector might decide to relieve them of their excess gold whenever they return from adventuring. The local thieves' guild could even tell its apprentice thieves to practice their skills by lifting items from the unsuspecting PCs.

As the DM, you needn't limit your cast of recurrent NPCs to humans or human-

oids. There are many intelligent creatures that can be used as nemeses. There is only one caveat to remember: If you intend to use a monster on an ongoing basis, choose one that is not restricted to a particular locale. A monster that cannot leave a swampy environment will not be as versatile a foe as one able to function anywhere the PCs can.

Creating the NPC

Not all recurring NPCs need to be fully developed prior to their introduction into play. In some cases, the DM may reuse an NPC initially intended to be used only once in the campaign. Perhaps the NPC turned out to be memorable in some unexpected way, and the DM fancies using her again. There is nothing that prevents the DM from doing so, but before the NPC is reintroduced, time should be taken to flesh her out.

When designing an NPC for use on a recurring basis, the DM should try to give her some element of distinctiveness. A unique speech pattern, a style of dress, a particular gait or some mannerism peculiar to the individual is essential. Perhaps the NPC speaks with a lisp, has bushy eyebrows, and a broken nose. Or maybe she dresses in foreign garb or has an accent.

The selection of readily recognizable NPC traits shouldn't be haphazard. The DM should pick characteristics for the NPC that fit with the NPC's psychological

makeup and background. For instance, the individual who dresses in foreign garb may be a trader who deals in rare herbs and spends long periods in foreign lands. Being thus engaged, she's adopted the style of dress from another part of the campaign world.

Careful design of the NPC can give the PCs clues about the true nature of their foe. It will start the players thinking and prompt them to see their nemesis as more than just a cardboard character. Habits peculiar to an NPC can help the players gauge their foes. Maybe she coughs nervously or is forever scanning the vicinity, eyes darting to and fro. Perhaps she nervously strokes a feathered amulet whenever threatened with harm or grins broadly at the mention of hostilities.

What the DM should aim for in selecting quirks and physical characteristics is an NPC that is memorable. When the NPC next appears, the DM need only describe the identifying trait to elicit immediate recognition. If the DM uses miniatures in the course of play, it's suggested that the same miniature be used to represent that NPC whenever she makes an appearance. In time, just the placement of the miniature on the gaming surface will elicit groans and a flurry of action as the players scramble to meet the challenge.

DMs should also spend time developing a background for the nemesis. Whether the NPC was raised on the filthy streets of Gligthor and spent her childhood barely



surviving or instead was the daughter of a stuffy, depraved baron from the Duchy of Ultinsad will influence her perspectives, motivations, disposition, and general behavioral patterns.

For example, whereas the NPC with the cut-purse background would likely favor utilizing poison or an alley encounter to even the score with a PC rival, the baron's daughter might use her political connections to have the PCs arrested and detained in the cells of a castle in her uncle's duchy.

Having a background for the nemesis can make the DM's task of character portrayal easier. When the DM must decide how the nemesis reacts in a given situation, he can base the decision on what his own choice would be if he had the same background as the NPC. A consistent portrayal contributes to the believability of the nemesis and permits the players to identify with their foe more readily.

Before unleashing the recurring NPC it's also good to work out some of the NPC's connections. What organizations or religious group does she belong to? Who owes her favors? To whom does she owe debts? Are the authorities interested in her activities? NPCs, not unlike well-played PCs, should make use of whatever special connections they have. For instance, an NPC nemesis who belongs to a local thieves' guild may have the PCs tailed and their

conversations lip-read.

Any constraints on the NPC should also be considered when the DM portrays the nemesis. An NPC who is wanted in half-a-dozen realms for sundry misdeeds will prefer not to make his presence known and will opt to deal with the PCs in a way that preserves his secrecy. How a nemesis deals with PCs will be greatly influenced by that NPC's circumstances.

Sweet revenge

Once the background and connections of the recurrent NPC have been developed, the next step is to decide how the nemesis will seek vengeance. The NPC may choose to confront the PCs or take a more subtle or devious route.

Direct retribution would include attempts to physically attack the PCs. If the DM has decided that the NPC is craven, the nemesis may have someone else combat the PCs, but he will watch and hurl insults as the hired thugs engage them. On the other hand, if the nemesis is a noble, a member of the PC party may be called out to match blades with him.

The marking or maiming of a PC by an NPC enemy is another possible form of revenge. The fictional figure Zorro was famous for slashing a Z-shape onto his opponents. Instead of using a Zorro-style rapier, the foe might use a branding iron or mark the PCs with a magical symbol.

This particular type of revenge serves to knock the PCs down a peg or two and assaults their pride. It also fosters animosity and competition between the NPC and the PCs, and prompts the PCs to seek vengeance of their own. If that happens, great! You'll know you've really got your players involved and played the nemesis well.

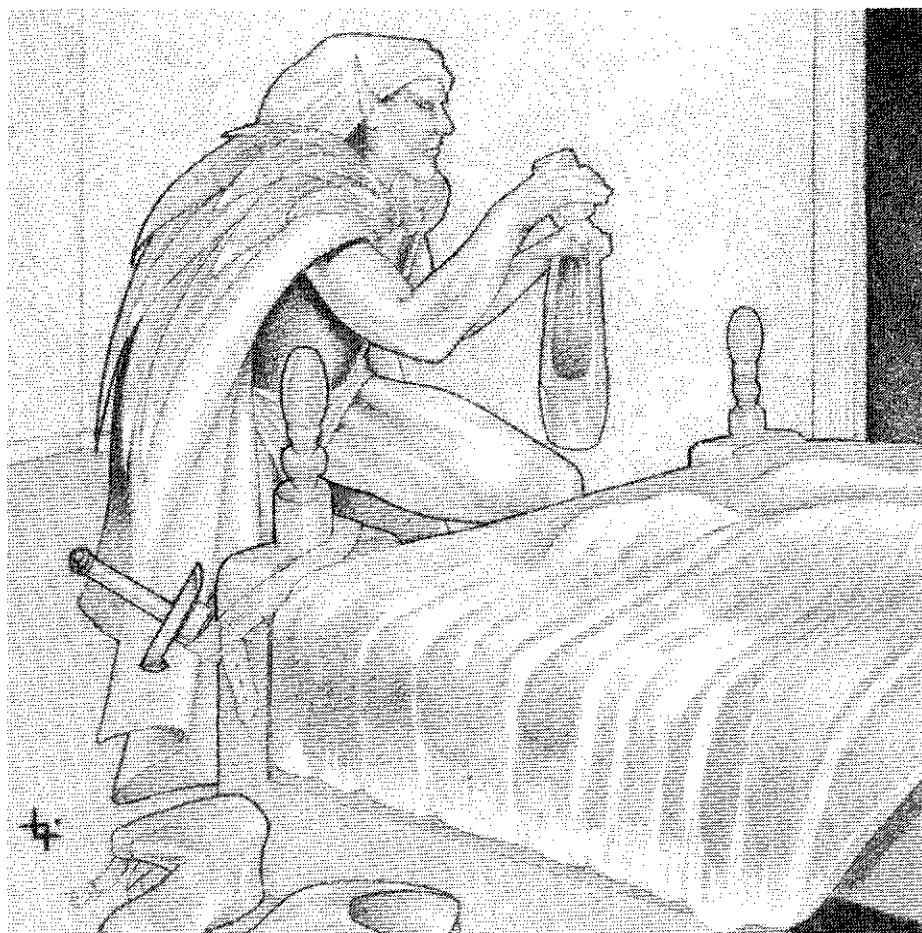
Generally, indirect forms of revenge are better suited to the more intellectual and calculating members of the DM's cast of NPCs. For these connivers, embarrassment of the PCs is an effective and popular revenge. The NPC might dig into a PC's past and reveal illegitimate heirs or inappropriate lovers. The NPC might also fabricate tales about the PCs that have no factual basis and spin them with an eye to discrediting them. The character assassination might, for instance, involve allegations of cheating at cards or tax fraud. A resourceful nemesis might frame PCs for the commission of a crime, contriving to have it look as if the PCs murdered someone, stole something, or plotted an overthrow of the king.

The type of revenge sought should depend both on the nature of the relationship between the nemesis and the PCs, and the personality of the NPC. For example:

Erimus the Black had watched the gnome known as Grub for two weeks. Tonight, Erimus would do as the cult-master had bid him do. With infinite stealth, the black-clad master thief slipped into Grub's bedchamber and retrieved the stolen gem from the satchel at the foot of the bed. Without a sound, Erimus took from his own pouch a royal seal that he'd stolen that same night and put it inside Grub's satchel. By morning, the royal guard would receive information implicating Grub as the thief, and a "witness" would emerge to testify to having seen Grub running from the royal treasury. By midday, Grub would be before the courts, his hours numbered.

In this example, the bald-headed priestly superior directed Erimus to achieve revenge in a way that would preserve the Cult of the Thirteenth Circle's secrecy and keep the authorities from inquiring into the doings of their clandestine organization. Because the magical gem was necessary for the ritual that would summon their extraplanar lord to the Prime Material plane, the cult needed it back. The bald priest got immense pleasure from the thought that Grub might be convicted for a crime that he didn't commit, instead of for a crime that couldn't be revealed.

The NPC's form of revenge should also be guided by the disposition, background, and character classes of the PCs. Nemesis will seek to find out where the PCs' vulnerable spots are, then strike where the PCs are most tender. If the player who runs Aethelward the paladin portrays him



as morally upright to a fault, the NPC might elect to besmirch the paladin's reputation. The NPC could spread rumors that Lady Emiline, wife of the local duke, is pregnant with Aethelward's child! Or he could leave "evidence" indicating that Aethelward used magical enchantments to cheat at last spring's joust. Whatever type of vengeance is chosen, remember to tailor it to suit both the PC it is aimed at and the NPC from whom it originates.

Keeping tension high

A recurrent NPC should serve as a constant and unpredictable element in play. The key is to maintain an aura of anticipation. Individual DMs will come up with their own techniques to keep up the suspense, but here are a couple of options to get you started. You may want to drop misleading hints to indicate the "presence" of a nemesis. Mistaken identity encounters should be kept to a minimum but keep PCs on their toes, like so:

Grub and his adventuring companions are strolling in the royal gardens when they notice a bald-headed man slip around a corner ahead. Grub and his friends quickly draw weapons and ready spells, intent on doing away with their bald priestly foe. Rounding the corner, they skid to a stop in front of a frail, open-mouthed gardener who is definitely not their elusive bald foe.

The liberal use of red herrings tossed into the mix keeps the PCs guessing and maintains the sense of an impending encounter. Curious goings-on can be used to give the appearance that there is method behind the madness the PCs experience. For example:

The four puzzled companions sat at a table mulling over the events of the previous three days. Caine, a cleric of the Morning God, pointed out that the barrel that fell from the supplier's shop the day before had missed Grub by only inches. "And then this morning," Cain said, growing excited, "after that cat walked by us, we were attacked by those cultists! In the name of the Sun, I'd almost swear that cat was a wizard's familiar."

"Then there was that merchant in the market who started yelling about me owing him money. No doubt he was paid to do that so no one would give us lodgings in this forsaken city," added Porthos, a fellow adventurer.

"Perhaps our bald-headed nemesis is up to his old ways," interjected Aethelward. "I wish Grub had never stolen that gem and gotten us mixed up with this Thirteen Circles gang."

Will Derkellian, the party mage, leaned back in his chair and turned the ring on his finger. "Then again, perhaps it's all just coincidence, and you're just jumping at shadows," he commented, a barely hidden smile playing at his thin lips.

During the course of play, PCs invariably suffer various misfortunes. Given time, players might attribute their unfortunate circumstances to the fiendish machinations of their slippery NPC foes. Sometimes their suppositions may indeed be correct, while at other times they may be wildly inaccurate. If a player incorrectly concludes that the party's nemesis is behind the PCs' misfortunes, you as the DM shouldn't disabuse the player of the notion. Instead, permit the players to draw their own conclusions, and have fun.

If the players' inferences are erroneous but nevertheless intriguing, a nimble DM can modify the story line in that direction. Done well, this enriches play as players start to see the adventuring environment as a living world where happenings are not a collection of random encounters without meaning or connection.

Whatever technique is used to keep the players guessing, the DM should aim for a state of mild paranoia. Players will become more embroiled if they perceive their nemesis as a real and continuing threat to their characters' well-being. To achieve this anticipatory atmosphere, the DM must periodically remind the party that their unseen nemesis remains behind the curtain of the campaign stage, waiting for the DM's cue to reappear.

If the tension is to be kept up, it's also essential that the nemesis keep the PCs

off-balance. To, do that, the DM should have some advantage over the PCs, be it financial, magical, or informational. This difference in capacities, whatever its form, should remain throughout play. Essentially, this means that parallel development of the NPC must take place.

As PCs advance in levels and gain magic and money, so, too, should the nemesis. If the PCs began adventuring as 1st-level characters and have risen to 4th level, then the foe who was 3rd level to start should now be 5th or 6th level. The nemesis' advancement should be roughly equal to that of the PCs in terms of experience points, but the NPC-PC level difference may shrink over time. If the nemesis is to remain a challenge and a threat, his constant and continuous growth is necessary.

Keeping the NPC alive

It is the nature of nemeses that they must return. The initial encounter between PCs and their soon-to-be nemesis will in some sense be indistinguishable from any other encounter. On the second collision, both parties may begin to develop feelings toward each other, perhaps animosity or curiosity. When the NPC and the PCs come together in the third and subsequent encounters, it is likely that the PCs will begin to either dread or eagerly anticipate the arrival of their elusive opponent.

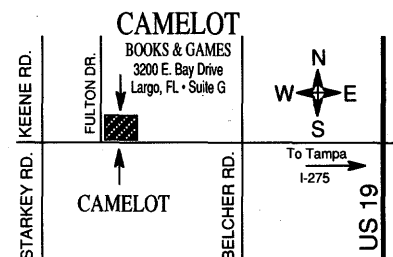
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How, though, does the DM manage to keep a nemesis in the campaign when the PCs are doing their best to remove him from play? There are a number of solutions to the dilemma. The most basic is flight. The foe could simply disappear from the scene whenever things look threatening. The easiest way for him to leave is by fleetness of foot, but in a magical world he has many other options for extracting himself from seemingly hopeless situations. Potions, oils, scrolls, and sundry magical devices can be used to beat a hasty and enchanted retreat.

While whisking NPCs out of harms way may frustrate the PCs to no end, it serves two valuable purposes: It will keep the NPC alive to do battle again, and it will also build the relationship between the elusive foe and your campaign's adventuring group.

At times, given overwhelming opposition or unfortunate circumstances, it may be appropriate to have the NPC foe "die." Even if this happens, the DM is not precluded from using him in future game sessions; his death could have been avoided by any number of means. (This is the "obscure death" option presented in the DRAGONLANCE® saga modules for the AD&D game.) For instance, the nemesis might have used a timely illusion to dupe the PCs into believing that the game was up. Even if the death isn't illusory, it need not be final. A truly dead nemesis might be resurrected by a loyal companion. This possibility should be used sparingly, though. Keep in mind that **resurrection** and **raise dead** spells are very costly and ought to be restricted to NPCs of wealthy background or those who have connections in religious organizations.

There is another entirely different solution available to DMs who are using monstrous nemeses. Keep in mind that for some creatures, destruction of their "body" is inconsequential. The destruction of a powerful extraplanar being's Prime Material form does not entail its final demise. While being barred from returning to the Prime Material plane for a time, the entity is not without means of evening the score. Such a "dead" foe could prove to be a continuing source of annoyance to the PCs. Minions on the Prime Material plane could be instructed to seek out the PCs and deliver retribution. Even worse, the minions might be instructed to bring the PCs to the being's home plane for a personal reckoning.

If you like running adventures with numerous plot twists, you might consider the following scenario for keeping a nemesis in the picture: PCs who slay a "nemesis" may be chagrined to realize that the persistent NPC was merely the stooge of a more powerful and equally persistent master. The clever puppeteer may have set the stage to lead the PCs to believe it was the vanquished underling who ran the show. Just how many hierarchical layers are interposed between the PCs and their

ultimate foe is for the DM to decide.

Then there is the classic vendetta. Family or friends of the recently departed could take it upon themselves to avenge the death of the recurring NPC. This eventuality is guaranteed to confuse and befuddle the PCs. A total stranger may appear one day and unleash a *lightning bolt* at the party for no apparent reason. If the PCs survive, they will be faced with the task of discovering why the mysterious robed figure hurled the spell their way. A DM might even wish to make the bolt-hurling stranger into a recurrent NPC foe in his own right.

If the DM has ruled out resurrection and concluded that no associate would ever seek vengeance on behalf of the nemesis, then there exists one last alternative. Such a friendless nemesis can rise of his own accord as a member of the undead legions, possibly as a revenant or an evil undead creature like a wraith. The shock value of facing the NPC again will be heightened if the PCs believe that they have faced their foe for the last time. . . .

Skalderskien the half-ogre leaned down and clapped his short companion on the back. "Did ya see de rocks fall on dat bald guy?" he grunted happily. "We got fm good dis time, eh?"

"Yes, indeed," sighed Grub in relief. "Old Baldie wont shadow us any longer now that our rock slide did him in. He should be flatter than a buckwheat cake." The companions left the area in high spirits, returning north to the city.

That night, however, a pallid, bloody form stirred beneath the rocks and debris. Slowly, the being that was once an arrogant and powerful high priest shook off its rocky tomb and arose, its shattered body mending in horrific fashion as its sunken eyes turned in the direction of those who had slain it. It slowly nodded. Undead power coursing through its limbs, the being started north.

As the DMs cast of recurrent NPC foes swells, care should be taken to select from the different modes of keeping the NPC in play. Using the same bag of tricks becomes tedious. When the alternatives presented here have all been used, be creative and design some of your own.

Ending the relationship

There will, no doubt, come a time when a favorite recurrent NPC has become (banish the thought) boring. When the reaction of your players upon seeing their nemesis reappear is no longer "What? You again? Well get you this time!" but instead is more like an "Oh, him again! What else is new?" response, then perhaps it's time to retire that particular recurrent NPC.

The retirement need not be permanent, but sometimes it's best that it is. Recurrent foes should engage the interest of the PCs, challenging and intriguing them. Letting go might be like losing an old friend but,

as all good DMs know, the next adventure will bring new foes— and among those foes there just might be another embryonic nemesis waiting to spring on the PCs.

Final thoughts

Although this article has been written with a particular bent toward fantasy adventuring, it can be readily adapted for use in other genres. The basic notions can be applied to horror, science-fiction, or super-hero gaming. No matter what type of game system you run, the creative use of recurrent NPCs will add to the enjoyment of role playing. After all, there is nothing like meeting an old foe . . . except perhaps beating him once and for all!

With thanks to the University gamers and Spike Y. Jones.

Ω

Letters

Continued from page 5

The next time that the doctors let you have a copy of DRAGON issue #181, with Robin Woods' wonderful cover depiction of a wizard's laboratory, look carefully at the toothless skull to the far left center of the cover (this only works with the American cover, as the British cover was heavily cropped). Look at the spot where the lower jaw connects with the skull. Now, move to the left about one-eighth of an inch, to the half-hidden thing in the darkness under the scroll. Hah! Isn't that incredible? They were right there the whole time! I love being a sadist—um, an editor. Actually, the only reason I know where they are is because two fellow TSR employees became frustrated with the search themselves and called the upstairs art director who called the artist and got the answer I'm glad you enjoyed our little game.

Wild dice revisited

Dear Mr. Moore,

I really enjoyed Michael J. D'Alfonso's article, "The Wild, Wild World of Dice" [in issue #182]. Many of my gaming buddies have some of those weird habits, too. My favorite dice story is one that a good friend told me. He was DMing an AD&D® adventure for a single player. When the player's characters were badly injured in a surprise attack, the player became excited and yelled "Fire seeds!" [for one of his characters' attacks]. He then grabbed up all the dice and threw them across the room to illustrate.

Joel Patton
Travelers Rest SC

The only weird dice story I recall comes from the habit of one gamer I knew who put dice in his mouth and spit them out on the table when he had to roll them. Needless to say, no one ever stole his dice.

Ω

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Six simple ways to earn players' trust

Any AD&D® game DM™ must be trusted by his players if he is to run a successful role-playing game. It is almost impossible to run a game if the players always whine that you cheated on a die roll or were too tough on them with your choice of monsters and adventure tasks. Players must trust the DM so that he has the freedom to take on special situations that call for role-playing, not just roll-playing.

There are several things that a DM can do to earn this sought-after trust. What follows are six guidelines for DMs to follow that will insure that they are as fair to the players as possible.

1. *Always treat your players with respect.* This may sound simple, but it is not always that easy. I've seen DMs who actually chastise players for allegedly not being smart enough to figure out a puzzle, or who even yell at them and stop the game when the players do something that the DM believes wasn't very bright. It should go without saying that you should treat your players as human beings. Remember: They are not really fierce fighters, brilliant mages, and crafty thieves; they are students and workers and husbands and wives. They play as best they can, but sometimes they may take actions that their characters likely wouldn't. If they do something wrong, let them find out through the play of the game itself. Don't sigh heavily, roll your eyes, and close the module. That is out of context of the game and will only serve to embarrass those who made the mistake.

Think of the times when you screwed up; did the more-experienced players yell at you, or shake their heads and mutter? ("John, John, John, what are you doing? This is not the time to use that spell. You should save it for when we come across something more powerful.") Remember

that feeling; it is all the worse when a DM does that to a player. Some players will be very embarrassed and may become quiet and unsure of themselves for the rest of the game. Others will be irritated, taking a hostile stance and bringing about the “players vs. DM” syndrome. This is to be avoided at all costs. Role-playing success depends on the entire group—the DM included—working together. The DM “wins” when the players have fun.

Instead of taking out your frustrations on a player (“How could they be so dumb as to miss that? Now the whole adventure is messed up!”), think about what you, the DM, did wrong. You are the players’ eyes, ears, and everything else; you are their only link to the game world. Perhaps you were a bit unclear in giving the long, drawn-out monologue the priest gave at the beginning of the mission; the players might have been bored because you were just reading some speech you wrote earlier. Next time, role-play the speech. Let the players interrupt and ask questions, instead of saying, “Wait till the end to ask questions,” then sticking your nose down into the text—which is, of course, behind the DM’s screen. Players will know by the impassioned speech of the NPC when not to say anything. Maybe, too, the puzzle you laid out had too few clues, or the clues you did lay were too obscure for the players to figure out. The clues might refer to a passage in an ancient text, for example, that you feel the characters would know about, but unless you provide the information beforehand, the players will miss it.

2. *Never take a character away from a player.* There are two instances in which many DMs will take a character away from a player: magical control of some sort, and death. In the case of the former (*charms*, possession, and the like), the DM must remember that the character and not the player is controlled by the spell. Whenever possible, let the players role-play through the situation (e.g., the NPC mage gives commands to the player character). This is one of the most tricky situations for a player; it takes a good role-player to correctly play an other-controlled character. The player must have a knowledge of the spell or power in use, including guidelines and restrictions for both the controller and person being controlled. For example, a player whose character has been *charmed* should know that if the PC is commanded to kill himself, he would not do it and would have a chance to break the spell then and there. Sometimes, a brief explanation to the player (in the form of a note, usually) on the specifics of a spell in relation to a character’s reactions is necessary.

As far as death is concerned, the control I am talking about is related to the dice. Characters should not die because of roll of the dice alone. Give characters a chance to role-play out a life-and-death situations.

For example, I have seen in published modules certain cursed items that immediately kill their users without a saving throw (*cloaks of poisonousness* come to mind). Instead, try to help the player make a decision based on role-playing. Consider the difference in these two examples:

DM: “You see a statue of a werewolf. The statue wears a real cloak.”

Player, *figuring the real cloak on a statue must mean something*: “I take the cloak and put it on.”

DM: “Your character dies, no save.”

DM: “You see a statue of a man, but the man has been twisted somehow into the form of a wolfman. His face is contorted in an angry snarl, but his eyes belie a deep sense of pain. A black cloak is draped on the terrible statue, hanging limply in contrast to the motion of the statue. You feel a knot form in the pit of your stomach as you gaze upon the horrible sight.”

Player: “The cloak is real? I try to examine the cloak.”

DM: “How are you examining the cloak? Do you touch it in any way? Where are you touching it? Do you touch the clasp? Do you touch the statue at all?” The DM may even drape a coat over a chair at this point and say, “Show me exactly what you are doing.”

All of this gives the player more information about the cloak. It is not just a piece of cloth on a statue; it is a black cloak on a horrible stone figure, and a sense of dread tweaks at the character’s innards. Doing this gives a player more choices in deciding his character’s actions; he knows something is not right, but is it because of the cloak or the statue? He can proceed from here. It is his decision; the risks have been well presented.

One note about giving details: It is very easy for a DM to manipulate players by portraying things in a certain way. In the previous example, instead of the DM hinting the cloak had a backdrop of dread, he could have given the player the opposite impression: “The cloak is draped majestically on the powerful back of the creature, lending an impressive quality to the statue.” A description along these lines makes the cloak seem desirable, emphasizing power (which many characters crave). So, if the DM wanted the PC to try the cloak on and get killed, he could steer him in that direction while still having an air of innocence. (“Well, he took the cloak, so it’s his fault. It wasn’t like I fudged a roll or something to kill him.”) Be careful that you give fair descriptions that do not deceive characters. Such deception will only make the players overly suspicious of you, and you will lose their trust.

3. *Don’t take on more than you can handle.* DMs who are unprepared or who aren’t good at improvisation can run into this problem very easily, but in truth it can

jump up on any DM who has big plans for a campaign. The DM may initially provide a couple of hints at something, and the players bite at the bait. Then the DM leads the players on a bit more, but the players are really getting into the DM’s “stuff.”

They get going too quickly, wanting to go on ahead faster than the DM can keep up, and he makes up something that goes too far; perhaps it leads to a war or a conflict with a campaign fixture, maybe even an encounter with a deity.

Let me give you an example of something that happened to me. Throughout one campaign, I had characters catch glimpses of a creation of mine, the “great orc” (based on Tolkien’s Uruk-hai). The PCs would be on their way from one town to the next, and I would occasionally let them encounter a couple of great orcs in the woods at night. It soon became an obsession; the players figured that every new adventure had to do with these orcs. I let this go on for awhile, enjoying the effect it had on the group. Then, once they finally killed one, they examined it very closely. They decided that they needed to get to the bottom of this mystery. I had not figured on this, that they would jump in this quickly dropping everything else, but I succumbed to the players’ wishes (they were so excited).

For the rest of the night, I DM’d off the top of my head. Everyone had a great time but, as the players delved further into the mystery, I let myself go too far. I wove in a particular rumor that had been going around about a powerful being controlling many of the goblinoid tribes in the area. Through stealth, one character found the lair and went deep into it. He overheard some of the denizens discussing their plans to start an organized takeover of the local village to carve out their own orc nation. Their leader was discovered to be an illithid. The character went back and told the rest of the group. In the next few sessions, they continued to infiltrate the place and gain more and more information. All was going well, until it became time for the actual war.

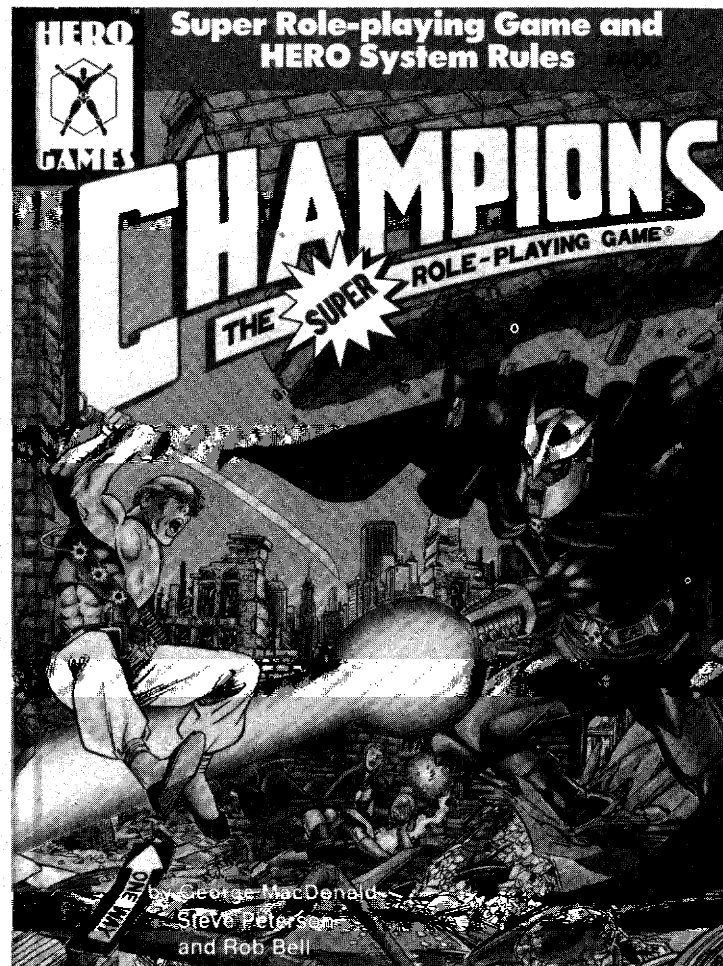
What had I done? I didn’t want a war! But one night of wild improvisation had started one. The characters had seen the lair, the troops, and the equipment. There was a massive underground complex, deep in the earth. Now I had to resolve this. The players weren’t interested in playing the war out with the BATTLESYSTEM™ rules. I could have just said that the war had taken place and this is what happened, but I wasn’t prepared to deal with the aftermath. The world would be forever changed; many of my designed adventures would be ruined as those areas were hit by the war. Nations would maybe even be realigned if the monster army had any success; even if they didn’t, certainly many cities and towns would be changed or destroyed. I could have worked through this, but I was overwhelmed by the task. To top it off, I really didn’t have the time to

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deal with it. The campaign soon died off.

What I had done was take on a grand task without thinking first what it would entail. This is where reality comes into play. None of us can afford to spend entire weeks of time on our hobby; we have work, school, families, friends, and other outside commitments. Don't take on something before thinking how much time it will entail. This means sitting down and putting on paper what needs to be done and how long it will take. Be careful when playing improvised games that you do not do something that you will regret later.

4. *Be reliable outside the game.* If you want to be trusted during the game, you must be trustworthy outside of it. Don't say that you can play Sunday afternoon when you know you have a paper and a major test to deal with on Monday. You may find that you didn't get it done that week and will need to spend time on Sunday studying and writing (especially if you're a big-time procrastinator). It's not fair to the players to cancel at the last minute; they've probably reserved this time for the game and could have been doing something else had you told them sooner that you couldn't make it.

Players have a concept of you as a person. It is rare to be perceived in two entirely different ways by people who know you; the players will have difficulty trust-

ing your word during a game if your word is worth little outside of the game.

5. *Make the game fun for the players and yourself.* There are as many types of players as there are types of people. No matter how you may categorize a player, each one is still unique. One thing that all players share, however, whether they are problem-solvers or role-players, is the desire to have fun. That is the primary reason they play the game. How do you know if the players are having fun? The best gauge is if they still play in your game. Players will let you know they are not having fun by not coming to your game. If the players always come away from the game having enjoyed themselves, they will trust the DM in most situations because they know that the DM will make that situation fun to play. Conversely, if the players do not always have a good time or don't get some satisfaction from every game, they will protest many bad situations that get thrust upon them because they fear that this will be another one of the DM's "drags." They just don't trust the DM to make this fun for them.

You, the DM, should be having fun too! You are not there to be a tool to provide amusement only for the players. Do some things that you'd like to try in your game. If the players are predominantly hack-and-slashers, provide them with action but

make sure that you allow periods of NPC interaction if you like to role-play. Variety is the spice of the game. Players may even begin to enjoy the role-playing part more than combat if you role-play well.

6. *Take pride in your work and also in the group.* DMs have to do a lot of work, but they also have the opportunity to be proud of what they do. Writing an excellent adventure that challenged the PCs to their limits, playing that necromancer NPC so well that the mere mention of his name causes heroes to look over their shoulders, even getting all of the mundane things done to prepare for a game (experience updates from the last adventure, setting up props and music, getting the food ready, etc.) are all things that a DM should be proud of. While a group effort is needed to really have a fun evening of role-playing, most of the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the DM. The best ones gladly take that responsibility, and they pride themselves on a job well done. This also extends to the group as well. If you have a good group of players, you should realize that you are at least in part responsible for that. When a younger player begins to show gaming maturity, you can be proud that you had a lot to do with bringing enjoyment to that person. Ω

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The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 31: Letters, letters! More letters!

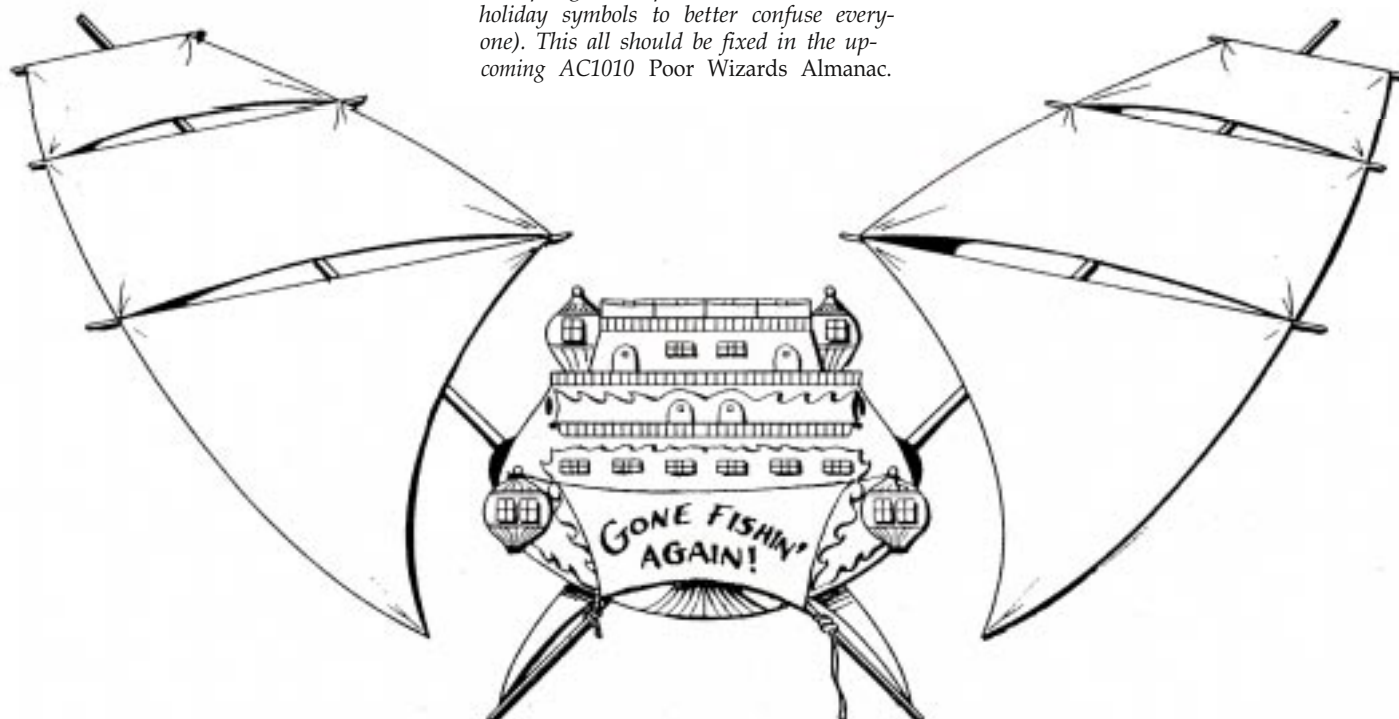
by Bruce A. Heard

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alpathian explorer and his crew as they journey across mountains of letters! So, here we go again, trying to keep up with all these little notes of encouragement and criticism. Readers will find answers they were looking for to their D&D® game questions.

Letters

The dwarven calendar on page 27 of GAZ6 *Dwarves of Rockhome* only shows the Thyatian names of the months. Are there any dwarven equivalents?

Yes, they are Wharlin, Morlin, Hralin, Hwyrin, Styrlin, Bahrlin, Buhrlin, Klintin, Birrlin*, Biflin, Jhyrlin, Kuldlin (*instead of Barrlin, which sounded too much like Bahrlin). To add insult to injury, the dwarven calendar shows cryptic symbols that aren't explained in the main calendar key (our pet gremlin penciled in Glantrian holiday symbols to better confuse everyone). This all should be fixed in the upcoming AC1010 Poor Wizards Almanac.



Page 36 of GAZ2 *Emirates of Ylaruam* shows only 11 months in the calendar. Are they using a different calendar or is there an omission?

Surely, our favorite editorial gremlin must have taken the twelfth month away, and stashed it with the lost dwarven months! The missing month is the month before Ramadan, Shaban.

The Verdier Calendar in GAZ9 *Minrothad Guilds* consists of 336 days (12 complete lunar cycles). Therefore the calendar dates for the lunar phases should not change from year to year, which contradicts page 13 of the *Adventurer's Guide*.

This issue has always been rather confusing. First note that there is a small glitch in the month of Onmun – the first-quarter moon waning should be on the 26th (not on the 29th), and the second new moon should be on the 28th (instead of the 30th). With this being corrected, and since both calendars have the same total numbers of days and lunar phases, the yearly two-day adjustment then seems indeed superfluous.

Page 52 of GAZ3 *Principalities of Glantri* claims Nuwmont is in early spring. Since most supplements contradict this, should we assume that it is an error and that all events should be pushed forward two months to the corresponding time of the year?

Sigh. Only those events that are tied to seasons should be moved up.

Are the villages of Mar and Hinmeet on the color maps of Darokin transposed? According to the descriptions on page 42 of GAZ11 *Republic of Darokin*, Hinmeet would be close to the Malpheggi Swamps.

Correct. Mar and Hinmeet were acciden-

tally transposed on the very first color map (the error has been perpetrated on all later maps of the region).

It's about time we got D&D™ novels! I would like to find out how ideas are selected for novels that fall under the TSR banner.

The book editors are thrilled to hear that the new line of D&D novels is receiving so much support from DRAGON® Magazine readers. It's an even bigger compliment that the books and the games have inspired fans to do some writing of their own.

All the D&D novels will be written on a work-for-hire basis, just like other shared-world lines, such as the DRAGONLANCE® Saga, the FORGOTTEN REALMS® books, etc. D.J. Heinrich is now busy writing the Penhaligon Trilogy, the first book of which, *The Tainted Sword*, will be in stores this October. The two other novels in the trilogy will be released in 1993.

We know readers have some very creative plot and character ideas for this new line. Unfortunately, we cannot accept any unsolicited manuscripts or book proposals. The D&D novels, like other shared-world settings, are plotted out well in advance to ensure consistency within the series. It would be nearly impossible to keep the plots and the characters in line if we did not maintain this control.

However we are always interested in learning what our readers would like to see published. If you want to let us know what you think, send a letter to the Books Department at TSRS address (P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.). We read every letter and we pass the ideas along.

Where would Blizzard Pass (of module M1 of the same name— the old D&D game invisible-ink module) be on the map? It's supposed to run between the Five Shires and Darokin. Does it lead to Mar or Hinmeet?

The location was never established, but it would be logical to place the pass between the villages of Ringrise and Hinmeet (looking at the color mapsheet of the region). The pass between Sateeka and Mar is too well travelled and at too low an altitude for this type of adventure.

Are there critical fumbles in the basic D&D game?

No. However it is customary to automatically miss a target on a natural roll of 1, or to automatically hit it with a natural roll of 20. Some DMs like to have their players make a Dexterity Check on an attack roll of 1 to see if a fumble occurs, or on a roll of 20 to see if the attack causes double damage.

I have a small problem with my cleric player. She doesn't like to say she's praying to her god because she feels it is not right in reality.

The D&D game does not have "gods,"

but rather Immortal heroes who act as superpowerful patrons on behalf of one cause or another. Up to a point, they have the ability to answer prayers, and for a DM, they are convenient tools to put back on track a game that is going out of control. Immortals aren't gods; they are more like super heroes straight out of comic books! Your player should understand that everything in the game is make-believe, which includes the "praying," for clerical spells. This is a very common theme in fantasy role-playing games. It was never intended to offend anyone or conflict with anyone's faith. There are two things you can do: either replace the "praying" terminology with "meditation" terminology (likewise replace "religion" with "philosophy"), or ask your player if she wants to switch characters. The latter might be the simplest. If you need to go one step further, you can remove the concept of Immortals from the game altogether. Clerics will then become simple representatives of the abstract philosophies of Law, Neutrality or Chaos. They draw their mystical powers from those forces. This, however, does take away a lot of the game's flavor and uniqueness.

I always thought the city scales for Thyatis and Sundsvall were inaccurate and far too small. A little calculation using the Coliseum from DDA2 *Legions of Thyatis* as a measure proves this. A thousand yards per inch might be a better scale (also measure the cities versus real-world Constantinople and Cordoba).

You are probably right. However the task of making a more realistically sized city such as Thyatis fit inside a single mapsheet is often limited by the designer's ability or our staff's workload. The other problem is that a correctly scaled street map for a medieval city of 500,000 to 1,000,000 inhabitants means that the streets would become mere lines with street names and few dots for points of interest (check your Rand McNally city maps). Alternatively, the city map could be limited to the very center of the city. Finally, most TSR products offer the country map first and then— maybe— the capital city, if enough space is left.

I think the "Rich Resource" rule (*Rules Cyclopedia*, page 140) is a bad one. It encourages subinfeudation to an extent that is inconsistent not only with the real world but also with the world described in the Gazetteers. Rich hexes don't seem to have a ruler for that hex alone. Obviously, nonfeudal, efficient administrations can do the job at least as well as subinfeudation, without the hassle of a vassal.

This all depends upon the type of era the campaign setting is emulating. In history, the use of vassals to manage territory was established by the Carolingian dynasty (6th-9th centuries in France) that later led to the feudal system that is more familiar to D&D players (9th-13th centuries).

Back around the time of Charlemagne, barons and counts were no more than administrators (chosen among the Frankish tribal aristocracy) in the service of the emperor. It is only afterward that these various administrative functions became nonrevokable, hereditary titles at the source of the more familiar medieval nobility. Monarchs and powerful nobles developed the bad habit of "donating" a piece of their domain to weaker nobles in exchange for their loyalty (thus creating vassals). Many nobles in history accepted such land gifts from different suzerains, and the fealty that came with them.

The medieval system eventually fell apart when powerful nobles went to war against each other trying to call upon vassals who effectively owed fealty to both sides! It then boiled down to basic greed, politics, or fear of which side might win and exact revenge upon the "treacherous" vassal. Short of going to war, it also proved very difficult for a suzerain to recover whatever land was given a way to unruly vassals.

The D&D game tries to simplify this and maintain the myth of feudalism. The system of economics prescribed by the D&D game is imprecise, incomplete, and unrealistic because of this— but it is a solution. Others exist that are far more complicated. Otherwise, you are right in pointing out many Gazetteers are not really compatible with the true medieval tradition (after *Wrath of the Immortals*, the new "kingdom" of Karameikos will work better with standard D&D rules on chivalry and dominions). Of course, there were far more efficient administrations in history (like the ancient Romans who, for centuries, successfully managed millions of people and their various lands).

How did the Heldann Freeholds become more potent than Thyatis and Darokin, and possess more magical power than Glantri? If Thyatis has 250 + L36 mages, and fosters strong clerical and fighting arms, why is it so feeble? While 250 L36 mages may pale before the might of Alphatia, it towers above that of other countries, including Glantri. Thyatis, being more efficient and less chaotic than Alphatia, should be able to make better use of its mages. If it's because the mages are not loyal and don't trust the Imperials, why don't they abandon them entirely, muscle in on Glantri, and get hold of the Radiance instead of hanging out on a puny island? Do the Heldannic Knights have 250 L36 mages and clerics? Everyone seems to portray the Thyatians as evil and sinister. Why is that? If it's so bad, why didn't the populace (ahem, citizens) welcome the Alphatians as liberators in 959?

The Heldann Freeholds were the Nordic tribes occupying the land north of Vestland. Over the years, they have been effectively taken over by a growing group of expatriate Hattians who established an aggressive order of knights— the Heldannic

Knights, under Vanya's guidance. Native Heldanners are not "free" anymore, nor do they "hold" much since the knights' arrival. No, the knights are nowhere near as tough as the Thyatians. But they do have several advantages. They know the Thyatians very, very well, since they originally were Thyatians themselves. Their order is one of fanatics. They also possess something Thyatis doesn't — an artifact upon which they draw power to lift their skyships (comparable to long range telekinesis). That's how they got flying ships.

The problem with this is that their artifact has a limited power and that the flying ships need an onboard consecrated temple to receive the artifact's power. This means the number of ships they can send up in the air (or through the Skyshield) is definitely limited. Finally, the Heldannic Knights have been draining some of the ebullient Hattian youth, keeping their ranks full while ever so slightly depleting some of Thyatis' Heldannic Knights, of course, rely heavily on hundreds of knights and clerics (preferably heavy cavalry and infantry), and the direct support of Vanya, their chief Immortal. So, for now, the Heldannic Knights are still a minor power compared to Thyatis, but a fast-growing one. As far as possessing more magical power than Glantri, this remains to be seen. Glantri is awfully tough in that field, and certainly not a pushover.

You qualify Thyatis as "feeble?" A nation as geographically small as mainland Thyatis possessing such a disproportionate colonial empire doesn't look "feeble" to me (consider England at the height of its colonial period). Compared to the size of mainland Alphatia, Thyatis has done incredibly well as a foreign land-grabber! There is nothing in Thyatis (or Alphatia for that matter) that can possibly be qualified as "puny."

You have to realize that Thyatis' permanent rivalry with Alphatia drains much of both empires' attention and national energy. Why would the Thyatian mages not muscle in on Glantri? Because Thyatian mages are perfectly happy where they are. An army of 250 L36 mages — something totally out of character for high-level wizards in the first place — is not going to take over Glantri in any case. Glantri has enough wizards to give any Thyatian visitors a run for their money.

You should realize that those Glantrians involved with the Radiance are utterly secretive about it. It is just not common knowledge among either Thyatians or Alphatians. So no, they wouldn't "muscle in" and seize the mysterious Radiance (there is a certain Immortal guarding it anyway). Everyone outside Thyatis could indeed portray the empire as evil and sinister (if that were true in the first place) because they fear its power. If a few years ago you stood at the border with the old U.S.S.R., you might have thought it to be threatening and sinister. But Soviet citizens

certainly didn't think of themselves that way! My guess is that the same would be true with Thyatis. Life in Thyatis is still far better than many other chaotic or economically depressed places. And Thyatians are notorious for their national pride. Alphatian liberators? Heck, no!

In DRAGON issue #164, we learned that the Princess Ark cannot return to Alphatia because the crew knows too much about the HOLLOW WORLD™ setting and the Skyshield. Why not? Wouldn't this information be of great service to Alphatia? Wouldn't this knowledge give the Known World an edge against the Heldanners, who are apparently flying regular expeditions in space and to the HOLLOW WORLD lands?

The information has already been provided to Empress Eriadna. Eriadna's problem lay in the presence at the Imperial Palace of powerful and unscrupulous wizard aristocrats (an opposing faction — got to have palace politics!) who would inevitably come to the conclusion that Haldemar and his companions are indeed who they claimed to be. They would suspect Haldemar of holding some mysterious secret explaining his bizarre return from the past. (Aha! Perhaps a clue on eternal youth!) These wizards would stop at nothing to "extract" from Haldemar or any of his companions whatever information they might have.

The best way to protect Haldemar and his companions is simply to send them away as far as possible into the unknown, to make it hard for those wizards to track them down. Alphatian jails would offer little protection against these kinds of people — or else Eriadna would've had to execute the whole crew and throw their ashes away, and this she simply refused to do. So they sailed away. Haldemar could always be recalled at a later time.

The Heldannic Knights do have some colonies in the HOLLOW WORLD setting, but their problem lies in the fact it is almost impossible to fly in and out of Mystara's polar gates without crashing. What travellers have to do is fly to the edge of the anti-magical region, disembark, cross the dangerous polar region on foot, and then re-embark on a ship presumably waiting on the other side — either this or mount the skyship on skis like Haldemar did once. This means that Vanya's artifact (see the previous letter) can sustain a skyship's flight inside the Hollow World, but as soon as the ship's onboard temple enters the anti-magic area, it becomes incapable of receiving the artifact's power and the ship crashes.

The Heldannic Knights managed to get one skyship through the polar opening. They failed in all other attempts. Those knights inside the HOLLOW WORLD setting managed to build several more skyships there, but they are stranded there. As far as space colonies are concerned, Heldannic Knights are experiencing in-

creasing difficulties with the Myoshimans. The knights' arrogant, bellicose attitude is not endearing them to the other civilizations there either. That typical Hattian temperament tends to get in the way when it comes to exploration. In any event, space and HOLLOW WORLD expeditions are a risky proposition at best.

Why weren't the Sea Machine rules included in the Rules Cyclopedea?

Unfortunately, there was no room left. Trust us, we tried!

Why are the Thyatian armies so feeble in X10 Red Arrow, Black Shield?

The module represented only those forces Thyatis deigned to send against the Master of Hule. What the module should say is that Hule should never attack mainland Thyatis, since it has a much larger army. Provided that the Master made it that far across the Known World (an unlikely feat), it would be outright suicidal to invade Thyatis.

Isn't the Thothian enchantment used to create the Princess Ark just a tad too powerful, even for a 9th-level spell? Just casting the first portion of the spell can save a mage hundreds of thousands of gold pieces in enchanting costs in the creation of the flying toy. The second, while dangerous, is even more potent, not only in giving the vessel more powers, but in creating more magical items and enchantments. And don't try to sneak around it: If an NPC with no connection to the ideology of the spell's creator can cast this spell, so can any other PC.

The first part of the spell is almost useless without the second part, as you should have noticed in the earlier adventures of the Princess Ark, since without the creature's intelligence, most of the special abilities cannot be used at all. The spell, partially completed, did indeed provide the Princess Ark its ability to fly, but all of the other abilities of the skywyrm were not available then. Some weird, minor phenomena were observed occasionally — purely for dramatic purposes — and that's about it.

If you find this too much of a giveaway, don't allow the spell to be interrupted at all, or give the caster a 10% chance of obtaining the desired result (failure meaning no results at all). If the caster fails, then he must begin the whole enchantment again — with all the risks involved. Have you tried to actually complete the whole sequence of the enchantment (without cheating)? It's really tough for the character not to go insane. This wonderful character — who took so long to reach the experience level necessary to cast such a dangerous spell — has a greater chance of being doomed than anything else. Then, there is the problem of the caster's soul being forever bound to his creation.

Indeed, it's a monstrously powerful spell, but awfully risky, too. And don't forget it's

ultimately rare; it's just not going to fall into anyone's hands unless a DM wishes it to. If your character survives an epic quest to piece this spell together, then why not allow amazing results? The spell could be "made available" to a party of adventurers as a DMS device to allow them to create a wondrous vessel and go on fantastic adventures on their own. That's part of the game too. Otherwise, I would agree that the description was rather vague. A few more lines would have helped dispel this confusion.

It was a joy to watch the Princess Ark fly over medieval Spain, France, and Celtic England complete with medieval jousts. Of course, the exception was DRAGON issue #176, which featured the American Old West. I personally thought it was a bit silly, but it was very entertaining. By the way, shouldn't Sir John of the Wayne be a Duke, instead of an Earl?

Ouch— Yes, he definitely should have been a duke! The bit on the Old West was meant to be silly; there was no way it couldn't have been. That one was for laughs. By the way, the Robrenn were inspired from ancient Gaul, not Celtic England.

DRAGON issue #165 has the description of Lady Abovombe, who is a Master of the bola at 4th level! How? DRAGON issue #167 describes Ramissur the Boltman. He's only second level, but has Expert mastery of the dagger! I don't mind fudging the rules and making new ones, but what we have in above examples are some no-nos that knock over the game balance enough to reduce the credibility of the Princess Ark campaign.

This was a mistake on my part. That was the bad news; the good news is that we definitely have a Princess Ark accessory in the works where— hopefully— these shameful glitches will be fixed. Any other comments about rules "no-nos" found in the Princess Ark campaign will be greatly appreciated. Thanks.

DRAGON issue #156 introduces Heldonnic Knights, an order of clerics who wield edged weapons. Is this right?

Yes, this is correct. However, it deserves an explanation. According to standard rules, clerics don't use edged weapons, period. There has been a number of comments about the logic of such a rule, particularly when specific Immortal patrons come into play. Vanya is an Immortal of war, and his followers form an order of sword- or lance-wielding knights. That's why their clerics are allowed to use swords. This new material will be reflected in the upcoming Wrath of the Immortals boxed set (due out this August). Many of Wrath's clerics end up acquiring some new advantages over the "standard" cleric as a result of rules development presented there. This was done for color and background, but

should not unbalance the game.

In DRAGON issue #155, we are introduced to the boltmen, who use rechargeable wands of lightning bolts. Since when are wands rechargeable?

This approach was necessary for the Princess Ark, not to make the boltmen better than anyone else but simply because the skyship leaves for extended periods of time. The boltmen would soon run out of power. And I've yet to find a note in the Rules Cyclopedia about wands not being rechargeable. Why not make this an option?

Please keep the Princess Ark campaign down to earth (Mystara), both figuratively and literally. The series is most enjoyable without the Ark hurtling through space and other dimensions. The enemy Heldonnic ships with squadrons of magic missile-shooting fighter jets (DRAGON issue #161) are a bit hard to swallow and best left to the AD&D® SPELLJAMMER® supplement. Mystara already has so much going on inside it and on its surface. To fly through space and time on galactic, cross-dimensional adventures in a ship that can already do some outrageous things would be pretentious.

The flight plan for the Princess Ark has been down to earth for about a year (and will remain so). Now that the Savage Coast has been almost completely mapped out, suggestions are welcome for where in Mystara our readers would like the Ark to go. The subject of space and the HOLLOW WORLD setting were briefly touched on (had to try them at least once!). Where could we go next? If the knights' space fighters get in the way of your campaign, the Myoshimans could chop them into sushi during some epic battle. There are otherwise no current plans to develop this unusual aspect of the Heldonnic Knights.

I am a fan of the BATTLESYSTEM™ rules. I like what was done with the Ethengar Gazetteer. The special maneuvers were great. Players might be interested in a war almanac that gives statistics on armies and strategic points throughout the Known World. This war almanac would require the use of some form of the BATTLESYSTEM rules.

There is an Almanac due out at the end of this year. It does contain War Machine statistics of many armies (Known World and HOLLOW WORLD settings) after Wrath of the Immortals' great war. It would be hard to adapt them for AD&D BATTLESYSTEM rules since the armies shown in the AC1010 Almanac sometimes reach well over 100,000 troops. A D&D War Machine to AD&D BATTLESYSTEM rules- or troops-conversion article might make a great topic in this magazine.

Just how much space do 100 troops need to live in? I know it sounds pretty picky, but can they all live in a single

square keep? At the cost of 75,000 gp per keep, this does make a great difference for an impoverished noble.

Your best bet is to turn to history books. Otherwise, the following guesswork might do. If you assume a three-tiered bunk, a chest, and some surrounding space require approximately 8'x8'; you would need a 2,135 square foot room to house all 100 troops. That's approximately a 50'x 50' room. Throw in some extra space for several tables, stools, a large barrel of water, coal braziers for heat, some elbow room near the crossbow slits in the walls, a stairway, and a weapons rack, and you get, say a 60'x60' room. It's packed, but it should work considering troops will not be in the barracks all at the same time— some will be on night patrol, others pacing the battlements on guard duty, etc.

Your typical 75,000 gp stone keep is 80'x 60'x 60'. This means it probably has six 60'x 60' floors, not counting the thickness of the walls, but including a tall main hall on the lower level. Voilá! Your 100 troops could probably occupy a single floor in the keep. The rest of the keep could easily be taken up by a well room, stable, latrines, kitchen, mess hall, storage for food and other goods, sergeants' or captains' quarters, a chapel, etc.

Remember, this is a game. Absolute reality is not required. Think about this: A single large galley as described in the rules has a total crew of 250 people, including rowers, sailors, and marines, sharing a total deck surface close to 8,000 square feet (presumably with a top deck, a rowers' decks, and a cargo deck). If they can live that way, so can a band of 100 warriors in a rather spacious 21,600 square-foot keep! Right? Ω



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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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BUBONICON 24, Aug. 14-16 NM

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn East in Albuquerque, N.M. Guests include Thorarinn Gunnarson, Dell Harris, and Walter Jon Williams. Activities include panels, readings, movies, a play, parties, an auction, filking, and the Green Slime awards (Saturday is Toga Day). Registration: \$23 at the door. Write to: NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque NM 87176; or call: (505) 266-8905, 10 A.M.-10 P.M. local time. No collect calls, please.

REALM OF ROLEPLAY V, Aug. 14-16 ⊙

This convention, hosted by TROA, will be held at Loewangskolen in Denmark. Events include role-playing games, with additional local games. GMs are welcome. Registration: DKK 80. Write to: TROA, Martin Laursen, Vestergade 25 - 2, 9400 Noerresundby, DENMARK; or call: +45 98 19 22 09.

SARASOTA-MANATEE FANTASY FAIR 92 Aug. 16 FL

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Airport in Sarasota, Fla. Guests include Scott Ciencin and comics artists. Activities include gaming, dealers, trading cards, anime, a costume contest, and door prizes. Registration: \$3.50 at the door, \$3.50 game fee (if applicable). Write to: The Time Machine, 5748 14th St. W., Bradenton FL 34207; or call: (813) 758-3684.

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This gigantic gaming convention will be held at the MECCA Convention Center in Milwaukee, Wis. Events include hundreds of role-playing, board, miniatures, war, and computer games. Other activities include panels, seminars, workshops, the Exhibit Hall, an art show, and a games auction, with RPGA™ Network games. Registration: \$35/weekend preregistered; \$40/weekend at the door. Write to: 1992 GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ Game Fair, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

DRAKCON 92, Aug. 22-23 ⊙

This fund-raising convention for famine relief will be held at the Northern College of Education in Aberdeen, Scotland. Events include an RPGA™ Network tournament and a figure-painting contest. Registration: £5.50. Single-day tickets will be available at the door. Write to: Sandy Douglas, 13 Springbank Terrace, Aberdeen AB1 2LS SCOTLAND. All checks should be made payable to Dragon Aid.

CON-SPIRACY 92, Aug. 28-30 NC

This convention will be held at the Omni Durham Convention Center in Durham, N.C. Guests include Greg Porter and Allen Wold. Activities include RPGA™ Network tournaments, workshops, Japanimation, speakers, an SF movie room, miniatures and open gaming. Registration: \$25/weekend or \$15/day. Write to: NAARP P.O. Box 2752, Chapel Hill NC 27515-2752. Make checks and money orders payable to NAARP.

PACIFICON 92, Aug. 28-31 CA

This gaming convention will be held at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo, Calif. Ask about special room rates. Activities include role-playing and board-game tournaments, a flea market, seminars, movies, painting contests, dealers, auctions, and miniatures and open gaming. Write to: PACIFICON, P.O. Box 2625, Fremont CA 94536.

TACTICON 92, Aug. 28-30 CO

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Convention and Trade Center in Denver, Colo. Events include the first NASAMW WRG Ancients Final west of the Mississippi River. Other activities include gaming of all kinds, RPGA™ Network tournaments, auctions, a figure-painting contest, and miniatures events. Registration: \$15/weekend. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 665-7062.

GATEWAY 12, Sept. 4-7 CA

This convention will be held at the L.A. Airport Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles, Calif. All types of strategy, family, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming. Other activities include seminars, demos, flea markets, auctions, an exhibitors' area, and special guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (310) 326-9440.

TEXICON 92, Sept. 4-7 TX

Sponsored by Greater Houston Gaming, this convention will be held at the J. W. Marriott Hotel in Houston, Tex. Events include RPGA™ Network games, with role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction, a video room, and open gaming. Registration: \$20 until Aug. 14; \$25 thereafter. Special room rates and one-day passes are available. Send an SASE to: Greater Houston Gaming, P.O. Box 631462, Houston TX 77263-1462. Checks should be made payable to TEXICON 92 or Greater Houston Gaming.

EMPERORS 22nd BIRTHDAY, Sept. 5-6 IN

This convention will be held at the Century Center in South Bend, Ind. Events include Napoleonic miniatures and RPGA™ Network games. Other activities include a dealers' area. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$7/day. Write to: Mark Schumaker, P.O. Box 252, Elkhart IN 46515; or call: (219) 294-7019.

ANDCON 92, Sept. 11-13 OH

This gaming/PBM game convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Independence in Independence, Ohio. Guests include Darwin Bromley and Jim Landes. Events include RPGA™ Network games; role-playing, miniatures, and board games; a national PBM expo; a PUFFING BILLY* tournament; a dealers' room; and a luau. Registration: \$17.50 until Sept. 1; \$22.50 at the door. Write to: ANDCON 92, P.O. Box 142, Kent OH 44240-0003; or call: (216) 673-2117.

DEFCON IV, Sept. 11-13**NJ**

This gaming convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Edison, N.J. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, and RPGA™ Network games. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 at the door. Single-day rates are available. Write to: DEFCON, 16 Grove St., Somerset NJ 08873; or call: (908) 249-0570 before 11 P.M. local time.

MIRACLECON 92.2, Sept. 19**OH**

This convention will be held at the Liedertafel Club in Springfield, Ohio. Events include gaming, a dealers' area, an auction, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$5 preregistered until Sept. 1; \$6 at the door. Visa/Mastercard are accepted. Write to: Wolfs Lair Games, 601 W. Leffels Lane Ste. P, Springfield OH 45506; or call Tim at: (513) 325-0059.

CAMELOT IV, Sept. 25-27**AL**

This convention will be held at the Huntsville Hilton and Towers in Huntsville, Ala. Guests include Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, and Bob Gadsditch. Activities include role-playing and miniatures games, videos, a masquerade and computer room, and dealers. Registration: \$20 preregistered; \$25 at the door. Write to: H.A.G.A.R., P.O. Box 14242, Huntsville AL 35815-0242; or call: (205) 837-9036.

FANTASY FOLLIES I, Sept. 26-27**SD**

This convention will be held at the City Auditorium in Burke, S.D. Events include RPGA™ Network games and many popular board games. Judges are welcome. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$15 at the door. Write to: Eric T. Benoit,

Fantasy Follies Event Coordinator, c/o General Delivery, Burke SD 57523.

RPG HIGH ADVENTURE, Sept. 26**VA**

This convention will be held at the Moose Lodge in Mechanicsville, Va. Events include RPGA™ Network and open role-playing, board, historical, fantasy, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, anime, videos, food, and prizes. Registration: \$7.50/day before Sept. 11; \$10/day at the door. Send an SASE to: Tom Kube, 6405 Ewell Cir., Mechanicsville VA 23111; or call: (804) 746-8375 evenings and weekends.

I-CON 3, Oct. 2-4

*

This SF/gaming convention will be held at the Harbour Towers Hotel in Victoria, B.C. Guests include Dave Duncan, Dr. John G. Cramer, and Betty Bigelow. Activities include two costume contests and RPGA™ Network and other gaming events with prizes. Registration fees vary with age, and special "gaming only" rates are available. Write to: I-CON 3, P.O. Box 30004, Saanich Centre Postal Outlet, #104-3995 Quadra St., Victoria, B.C., CANADA V8X 5E1; or call Mark evenings at: (604) 595-1104.

ICON 17, Oct. 2-4**IA**

This SF/gaming convention will be held at the Best Western Westfield Inn in Coralville, Iowa. Guests include Mercedes Lackey, Rex Bryant, Joe & Gay Haldeman, Rusty Havelin, Larry Dixon, Mickey Zucker Reichert, Glen Cook, and Roger E. Moore. Activities include gaming, panels, dealers, an art auction and print shop, a masquerade, videos, Old English dancing, falconry, and the Trans-Iowa Canal Company,

Registration: \$25/weekend or \$15/day. Write to: ICON 17, P.O. Box 525, Iowa City IA 52244; or call John at: (319) 377-3738, or Michelle at: (319) 626-6962.

WORLD TITAN TOURNAMENT 92**Oct. 2-4****VA**

This convention will be held at the Best Western Cavalier Inn in Charlottesville, Va. Events include continuous TITAN* games. Trophies will be awarded. Registration: \$9 preregistered; \$11 at the door. Write (and make checks payable) to: Bill Scott, 2317 Barracks Rd., Charlottesville VA 22901; or call: (804) 293-9265.

HIGHLAND V, Oct. 3**TN**

This convention will be held in the University Center of Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tenn. Activities include a con suite, dealers, art exhibition, computer/video games, and gaming. Registration: \$2 general admission. Write to: Alpha Psi Phi, Box 5226, Cookeville TN 38505.

PHANTASM 92, Oct. 3-4

*

This convention will be held at the Peterborough Public Library in Peterborough, Ontario. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Activities include dealers, RPGA™ Network events, and an art display. Registration: \$10 (Canadian) preregistered; \$15 (Canadian) at the door. Single-day rates are available. Write to: PHANTASM 92, 276 Parkhill Rd. W. (Rear), Peterborough, Ontario, CANADA K9H 3H5; or call: (705) 748-0796.

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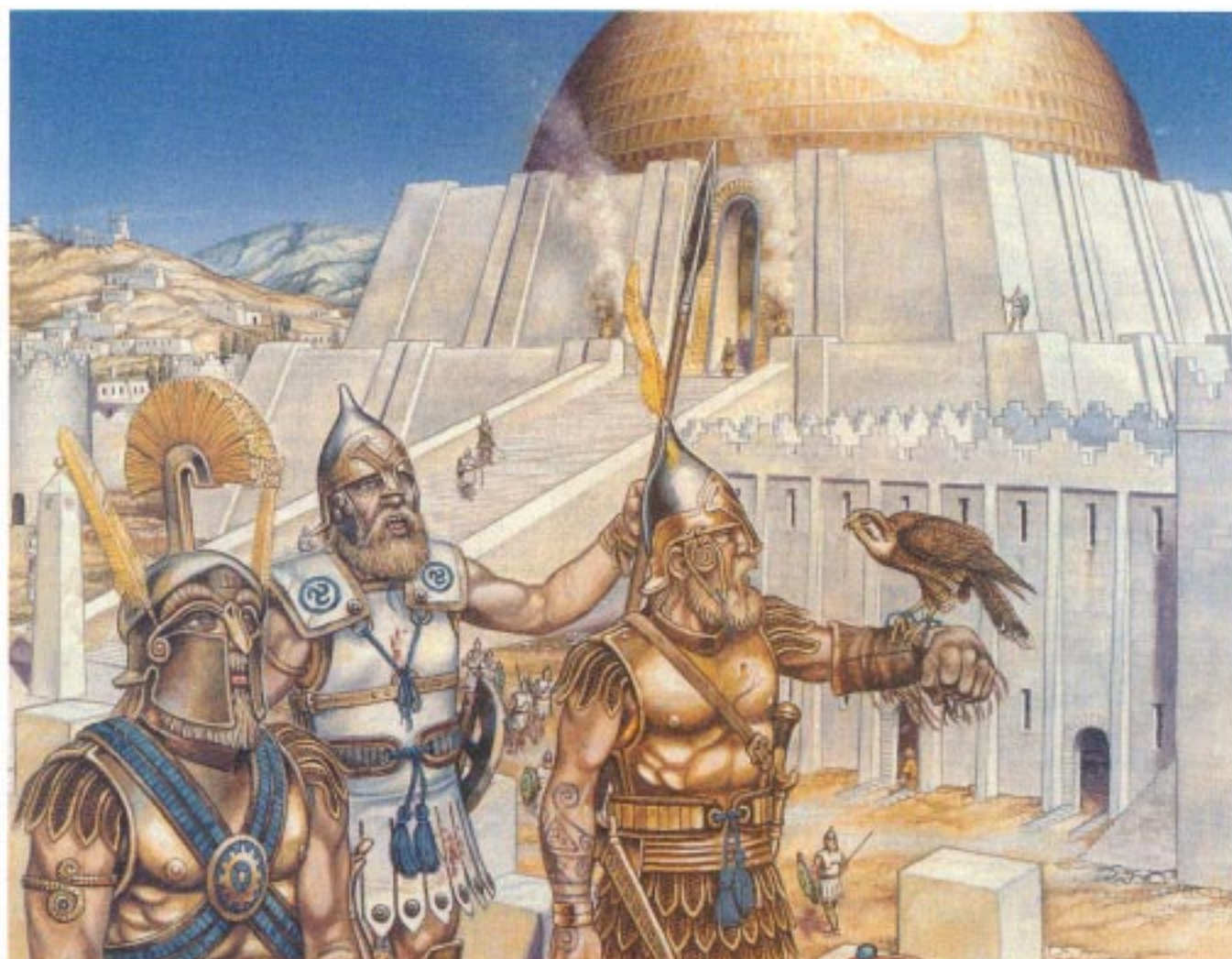
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This convention will be held at the University of Toledo, Scott Park campus. Events include over 150 games, with nonstop movies, demos, an auction, painting contests, and open gaming. Send an SASE to: TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION X, c/o Mind Games, 2115 N. Reynolds Rd., Toledo OH 43615.

COSCON 92, Oct. 9-11**PA**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Beaver Falls, Pa. Guests include Jean Rabe. Activities include many RPGA™ Network events, dealers, a gaming auction, a miniatures-painting contest, and an anniversary gift for every registrant. Registration: \$15 until Sept. 30; \$20 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003; or call Dave at: (412) 283-1159.

COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS 18**Oct. 3-11****NY**

This convention will be held at the Washington Inn in Albany, N.Y. Events include RPGA™ Network events, with role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, seminars, miniatures and board games, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration varies, going up after Sept. 15. Write to: COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS 18, Schenectady Wargamers Assoc., P.O. Box 9429, Schenectady NY 12309.

NECRONOMICON 92, Oct. 9-11**FL**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Tampa, Fla. Guests include James P. Hogan, Ray Aldridge, and Glen Cook. Activities

include panels, an art show, dealers, a charity auction, a masquerade, an Ygor party, a trivia contest, and workshops. Registration: \$15/weekend before Sept. 15; \$20/weekend thereafter, or \$8/day. Write to: NECRONOMICON 92, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569; or call: (813) 677-6347.

QUAD CON 92, Oct. 9-11**IA**

This convention will be held at the Palmer Auditorium in Davenport, Iowa. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and historical games, with a silent auction, a miniatures-painting competition, dealers, and on-site food. Preregistration materials will be available after Aug. 1. Registration: \$9/weekend or \$4/day preregistered; \$12/weekend or \$6/day at the door. Games will cost \$2-3 each. Send a long SASE and two stamps to: QUAD CON 92, c/o Game Emporium, 3213 - 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265; or call: (309) 762-5577 (no collect calls, please).

GAMEMASTER 92, Oct. 10**ID**

This convention will be held at the Student Union Building of Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. The guest of honor is Gary Thomas. Registration: \$5 before Oct. 7 (students with I.D.s: \$4). At-the-door rates will be slightly higher. Write to: Gamemaster's Guild, 3531 Sugar Creek Dr., Meridian ID 83642; or call: (208) 888-6851.

KETTERING GAME CONVENTION VII**Oct. 10-11****OH**

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include fantasy role-playing, board,

computer, miniatures, and RPGA™ Network game events, plus a game auction. Registration: \$2/day. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Wilowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429; or call: (513) 298-3224.

WHITEWATER GAMERS CONVENTION 3**Oct. 10-11****WI**

This convention will be held at the Campus Activities Center on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Registration: \$5/weekend, or \$3/day. Judges are welcome. Write to: Vince Reynolds, 1380 W. Main St., Apt. #111, Whitewater WI 53190; or call: (414) 473-4206.

ENBICON IV, Oct. 16-18*****

This convention will be held at the Student Union Building on the campus of the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Guests include Margaret Weis. Activities include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, plus game auctions, dealers, seminars, and miniatures and art competitions. Registration: \$12 (Canadian). Write to: ENBICON, c/o UNB Student Union, Box 4400 UNB, Fredericton NB, CANADA E3B 5A3; or call James at: (506) 459-5689.

NOVAG VII, Oct. 16-18**VA**

This convention will be held at the West Park Hotel in Leesburg, Va. Activities include role-playing and miniatures games, with raffles, dealers, and contests. Registration: \$10 preregistered, \$12 at the door or \$6/day. Preregistered GMs will receive a discount. Write to: NOVAG, c/o Ralph Allen, P.O. Box 5094, Sterling VA 22170; or call: (703) 450-6738.

TACTICON 92, Oct. 17-18**CT**

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Stratford, Conn. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with open gaming. Other activities include dealers, movies, and a miniatures contest. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 at the door. Write to: TACTICON 92, c/o Jim Wiley, 100 Hoyt St., Stamford CT 06905; or call: (203) 969-2396.

WIZARDS' GATHERING III**Oct. 17-18****RI**

This convention will be held at the Days Hotel in Providence, R.I. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, a costume contest, awards, and a raffle. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$10/day before Oct. 3; \$25/weekend or \$15/day at the door. GMs are welcome. Write to: WIZARDS GATHERING, c/o SMAGS, P.O. Box 6295, So. Sta., Fall River MA 02724; or call: (508) 324-4717.

WARP III, Oct. 23-25**OK**

This convention will be held at the Trade Winds Central Inn in Tulsa, Okla. Guests include L. Neil Smith, Ron Dee, and Randy Farran. Activities include role-playing, miniatures, and board games, plus a costume contest, dealers, an art show and con suite, videos, music, parties, and open gaming. Registration: \$8 preregistered; \$14 at the door. Write to: WARP, 415 S. 66th E. Ave., Tulsa OK 74112.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our 'Convention Calendar' served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

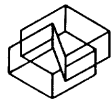
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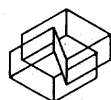
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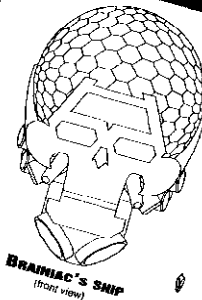
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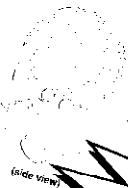
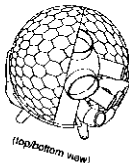
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SAGE advice

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We cannot make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writers' guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage clarifies a few items before venturing into the untold reaches of optional material for the AD&D® 2nd Edition game.

Does the wizard spell project image allow the caster to extend the range of his spells? If not, what good is it? What happens when the caster wants to change a projected image's relation to himself? In other words, if the image is facing in the same direction as the caster, what does the caster have to do to make the image face to his left? What happens to the image after the relationship shifts?

The text in the spell description (*Player's Handbook*, pages 180-181) does say that the image duplicates all the caster's actions, including spell-casting. That doesn't really make the spell's effect on spell-casting very clear, but the spell's description in the 1st Edition *PH* (page 85) includes this line: "A special channel exists between the image of the magic-user and the actual magic-user, so spells cast actually originate from the image." I don't think the 2nd Edition team left out that line to strip the *project image* spell of this property. As people on the GENIE computer network have pointed out, the spell does very little to deserve its sixth-level power ranking without this ability.

Running the spell this way does, however, force the DM™ to consider what

happens to touch-delivered spells and spells that affect only the caster. I suggest that touch-delivered spells originate at the image, which the caster can then use to "attack" targets within his own movement limits. I also suggest that all spells with a purely personal effect (range 0, or area of effect limited to the caster) take effect only upon the caster; assume that such effects stay with the caster and don't "flow" through the channel. Note that *project image* extends a spell's range only indirectly by virtue of the fact that most spells originate from the image and not from the caster. Likewise, clever casters might use *project image* to cast spells around corners or into areas where they'd rather not be.

The caster is free to change the image's facing relative to himself just by concentrating for one round, which limits the caster to half movement and no attacks. Once the relationship changes, the image goes right on duplicating all the caster's actions, all the way down to spell-casting.

My friends and I have been trying to find the rules for adjusting initiative rolls in the AD&D 2nd Edition game according to the character's dexterity score (reaction adjustment). However, there is no mention of dexterity in the Standard Modifiers to Initiative table or in any of the optional initiative rules.

You can't find any mention of the effects of dexterity on initiative in the AD&D 2nd Edition game because there isn't any, and there weren't any in the AD&D 1st Edition game either. Raw reflexes can affect surprise, but their only effect on combat is to adjust armor class. The AD&D game's one-minute combat rounds make individual quickness much less important than the character's defensive value and general class of actions; that's why things like weapon speed factors and spell-casting times do affect initiative. Of course, DMs are free to add their own house rules incorporating reaction modifiers. The simplest way is to just subtract the modi-

fier from the die roll. If you do this, I strongly suggest the DM take a long look at the monsters that populate the campaign and assign a reaction modifiers to some of the quicker beasts; otherwise, the PCs are going to win initiative far too often.

Many of the thief kits in *The Complete Thiefs Handbook* require or recommend the Gather Intelligence nonweapon proficiency. I cannot find this skill listed anywhere.

"Gather Intelligence" is a typo. The proficiency's real name is "Information Gathering."

It's raining monsters in my campaign! It seems that anyone with the Dimensional Door devotion can place a dimensional door under any poor, unsuspecting fool and watch him fall 60 yards or more to his death. Unless my DM and I are misreading the description (*The Complete Psionics Handbook*, page 69), anyone with this power can kill anything that can't fly or slow its fall.

Boy, are you ever misreading this devotion's description! First, while it's fine to assume that a creature automatically steps into a door created beneath it, it doesn't have to be so. The DM is free to allow the creature a save to avoid "falling in," or the DM can decide that a creature never falls in and is just displaced onto safe ground instead.

Second, there's nothing in the description that suggests creatures passing through the door suffer damage of any kind. Any creature entering one door automatically appears at the other one, and vice versa. This movement is instantaneous and interdimensional. This is not the same as falling or running an equivalent distance; the creature does not gain any velocity or kinetic energy, it appears at the other door just as if it used a *teleport* or *dimension door* spell to go from

one door to the other. Note that a creature falling 60' into one door probably will suffer 6d6 hp damage when coming out the other door, as the dimension between the doors doesn't reduce kinetic energy or velocity any more than it increases it.

Note also that one of the two doors the psionist creates appears *in front of the psionist* (the description does not say how close, but I suggest from 1" to 5' at the psionist's option), and one pretty much wherever the psionist wants it. This means that if the psionist wants to create a door immediately underneath a foe, he'd better be ready for a fight.

Psychokinetic devotions seem impossible to get. Every psychokinetic devotion has Telekinesis as a prerequisite, which is a science. You must have twice as many devotions in a discipline as you have sciences, so to add a psychokinetic devotion to your repertoire you'd have to add Telekinesis and two devotions. The only time you get to add a science and two devotions (according to the table in the CPH, page 12) is when you go from 2nd to 3rd level. However, you also are not allowed to have as many sciences or devotions in a discipline as you have in your primary discipline, and at 3rd level you only get two sciences. You can't just pick up Telekinesis alone, then add devotions later, because you must always have at least twice as many devotions in a discipline as you have sciences. Am I misunderstanding something, or is there a problem here? The difficulty could be solved by adding a psychokinetic devotion or two that does not have Telekinesis as a prerequisite.

Actually, there are several psychokinetic powers that don't require Telekinesis: Animate Shadow, Control Light, Control Sound, Molecular Agitation, Soften, and, of course, Telekinesis. This is an official piece of errata that was included with the DARK SUN™ boxed set. (For a free copy of the CPH errata sheet, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Steve Winter, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.)

Even so, if psychokinesis isn't your character's primary discipline, it's pretty rough to add Telekinesis to your psionist's bag of tricks. This difficulty is not limited to psychokinesis. Since you can never have as many sciences or devotions in a secondary discipline as in the primary discipline, the additional science earned at 3rd level *must* be in the primary discipline, no matter what the primary is. This is deliberate. Learning psionic powers is an orderly process that does not allow the character to jump willy-nilly between disciplines. That's why psionists must be lawful. No psionist has the mental wherewithal to become a dilettante. Psionists aren't meant to plunge head-

long into new devotions—they explore them slowly and deliberately.

What happens if a character with a wild talent decides to become a psionist? Does he add all his PSPs together? Do his wild talents count as prerequisites for new powers? Do wild talents count toward the character's limits on disciplines, devotions, and sciences?

All the rules on dual-classed characters in the *PH*, page 45, apply. The character temporarily sets aside his wild talents and sets out to study how psychic powers really work. (Note that most DMs probably wouldn't make a character set aside wild talents if the dual-classed character was picking up any other class except psionist, since wild talents have nothing to do with any character class, but this is a special case.) The character gains a separate pool of wild-talent PSPs and powers, and he cannot use powers or PSPs from this pool without giving up experience as described in the *PH*. The wild talents do not affect the types of psionic powers the character can learn; they are locked away in a separate part of the character's mind, just like all the other class abilities the character has chosen to ignore for the moment.

As soon as the character's psionist level exceeds his old character-class level, he theoretically has access to his old character abilities and wild talents. However, he also still must abide by all the restrictions of the psionist class. The simplest way to handle this is just to assume that the character has a few rogue powers and a pool of PSPs to support them. Such powers would never count against the numerical limits on the psionist's powers or be used as prerequisites for other powers. However, the DM might allow the character to integrate his wild talents into his list of psionist powers. This should not be a problem if the character does not exceed the number of disciplines he normally is allowed, and if he does not exceed the number of different kinds of sciences and devotions he can have within those disciplines. That is, the character can have "bonus" sciences and devotions but not extra disciplines, and the total number of devotions and sciences he has in his primary discipline still sets a limit on the number of sciences and devotions he can have outside the primary discipline (the primary discipline is the first discipline chosen when the character is a 1st-level psionist). Proper play balance requires that the character's total number of disciplines remain unchanged and that the ratio between powers inside and outside the primary discipline be maintained. The effects of lifting these limits would be something like letting wizards and priests choose their daily spells as they need them instead of studying or praying for them in advance.

The character should be able to make

free use (for purposes of prerequisites, PSP expenditure, and otherwise) of any power that does not violate the limits. For example, a character with a Mind Bar wild talent could choose telepathy as his primary discipline and have free access to the power, since Mind Bar is a telepathic devotion. (The total number of devotions within a primary discipline is limited only by the psionist's level. In this case, Mind Bar is a "bonus" power.) Powers that exceed the limits must remain separate; for example, a character whose primary discipline is psychometabolism might not have "room" for Mind Bar, since the number of nonpsychometabolic devotions he can have is limited to at least one less than the number of psychometabolic devotions he has. So long as the character has even one excess power, his wild talent PSPs can be expended only to establish and maintain wild talents (and PSPs gained from the character's psionist level cannot be spent on such rogue powers). If the character has a power both as a wild talent and as a psionist's power, he should be allowed to merge the two and gain a point on his power score. Likewise, if the character manages to fit all his wild talents into his limits, he should be allowed to add his wild-talent PSPs to his psionist total. The easiest way for the character to do this would be to choose a primary discipline that includes his wild-talent powers.

The text and illustrations in *The Arms and Equipment Guide* identify a morning star as a kind of club with a spiked head. I always thought a morning star was one or more balls attached to a short handle by a chain or chains, but *The Arms and Equipment Guide* describes that kind of weapon as a flail. Also, where is the mace entry on the Master Weapons Chart?

In both versions of the AD&D game, a morning star is a big club with a spiked or ridged head, something like a hardwood baseball bat with a lot of large nails driven into the business end. That also is the definition given in every reputable treatise on medieval weapons I've ever read.

A flail, in the AD&D game and anywhere else where an accurate nomenclature of medieval weapons is used, is a weapon with the business end separated from the handle by a chain or other flexible joint. The ball, chain, and short-handle version is called a horseman's flail in the AD&D game. Another common form of flail is a long handle with a big club attached to the end by a very short length of chain; this is called a footman's flail in the ADD game. Flails of all kinds are the direct descendants of agricultural flails used to thresh grain; before the Industrial Revolution, the only way to separate grains of wheat, oats, rice, etc. from their stalks was to pile up the harvested plants and literally beat (thresh) them. The extra "snap" provided by the flails' jointed head

allowed the farmer to hit the pile of grain with more force and get the job done faster.

Both morning stars and flails were mainstays of the common folks weaponry because they were easy to make and use. No commoner—certainly no farmer—would ever mistake one for the other. I personally have never seen a flail improperly identified as a morning star in print, but I have met a lot of people who apparently have. I've also met people who confuse flails for maces, probably because they both can have round heads studded with spikes. If using an alternate nomenclature for medieval weapons makes you happy, fine, but when you're playing the AD&D game use the game nomenclature to avoid confusion.

[Webster's Third New International Dictionary (*Unabridged*, 1986) describes a morning star as "a weapon consisting of a heavy ball set with spikes and either attached to a staff or suspended from one by a chain—called also holy-water sprinkler" (page 1471). "Holy water sprinkler" is used as an alternate name for the morning star in both the 1st Edition PH (page 37) and AEG (pages 82-83). Obviously, some confusion on this matter exists even among authorities. — Editor]

[Don't depend on the dictionary for definitive information on game topics. Dictionaries and encyclopedias are fine places to start looking, but the people who compile them are unlikely to be experts on medieval weapons, and they certainly aren't experts on the AD&D game. — Sage]

The two forms of mace, horseman's and footman's, don't appear on the AEG's Master Weapons Chart (page 108). The typo monster strikes again. The statistics for the two types of maces presented in the PH, page 68, are correct.

In the RAVENLOFT® setting, will a paladin or good cleric lose his special class abilities if he fails a Ravenloft powers check? If a resurrection or raise dead spell fails and instead turns the target into an undead, would the spell-caster have to make a powers check? If so, why? Isn't casting one of these spells a good act? Is there any way to remove the stages and effects of failed powers checks?

First, take another look at the altered spell descriptions for *raise dead* (*Realm of Terror*, page 44) and *resurrection* (RT, page 45), and you'll find that each of these spells requires a powers check if they succeed or not. Bringing the dead back to life sends ripples through the Demi-plane of Dread. No matter what the spell-caster's intention, plucking a being out of the afterlife and returning him to the lands of the living is an event that the powers of Ravenloft always find interesting. It is true that powers checks are intended to start evil PCs down the road to ruin, but anyone who tampers with fate or with other

basic forces in the multiverse while adventuring in Ravenloft takes the same risk.

When a character first fails a powers check, the powers of Ravenloft essentially invite the PC to become one of their own "part of the furniture," as TSR's Jon Pickens puts it. A stage-one failure is a subtle enticement that shouldn't give the PC any obvious clues about what's really going on. When paladin or cleric abilities disappear, the character is getting a strong clue that he's started down the wrong path. Also, as you point out, you can fail a powers check by doing things that would be considered good deeds anywhere else. Since powers checks are intended to punish players who wander off the straight-and-narrow path of heroic fantasy, play balance and overall campaign health dictates that the DM allow characters to redeem themselves once they've gone astray. For the moment, DMs are on their own when deciding how and when a character properly atones. However the upcoming *Forbidden Lore* boxed set, available in November and previewed in POLYHEDRON® Newszine issue #74, has extensive new material on powers checks.

Here are some suggestions until something better comes along: At the minimum, a character who wishes to reverse the results of a failed check should act scrupulously good. If the character has taken any special vows or represents a particular system of beliefs (a paladin, for example), his new behavior must absolutely embody the tenets of his sect or order. Furthermore, the character should avoid making use of the rewards and enticements a failed check brings. It might be hard to avoid using a +1 saving-throw bonus, but in such cases I suggest the DM allow it, especially if the character role-plays the attempt to give up the bonus ("Yeah, I know Bruce Bonecruncher gained a +1 bonus on fear checks after wrecking that altar, but he really looks long and hard at the swarm of killer bees just to be sure he has the gumption to stand up to them."). Of course, an *atonement* and a suitable quest should reduce or remove the effects of a failed powers check. So might a simple *remove curse*, especially if the character has left the demi-plane or has spent some time actively resisting the powers. For a stage one failure, I suggest one month as the minimum period of atonement.

Page 46 of *The Complete Wizards Handbook* says a starting witch character has 1,500 gp worth of magical items, but the rules don't give gold-piece equivalents for magical items. Is it supposed to say 1,500 xp? Even if it does, you can't choose from many items, as most rods, staves, wands, and miscellaneous magical items are worth more than 1,500 xp.

This is a design/editorial error, as the core rules for the AD&D 2nd Edition game

don't list any monetary values for magical items. The upcoming *Magical Encyclopedia* does list a gold-piece value for just about every item ever created in the AD&D game (volume one, of two, will be available this fall). Gold-piece values, however, are even higher than experience values, and a starting witch probably could afford to "buy" only a single cursed item or a useful potion or two. This is because the witch is supposed to have an old item or two just left laying around from the old days, not so that she can have a leg up on everybody else in the magical-treasure department. As a rule of thumb, an item's monetary value is three to seven times its xp value (usually five times), and most cursed items usually are worth 100 gp (for potions) to 1,000 gp (for miscellaneous magic).

The descriptions of both the Dwarf Runes and Endurance non-weapon proficiencies in *The Complete Book of Dwarves* say that all dwarf characters get them at no cost. Yet the Nonweapon Proficiency Groups section on page 39 lists the cost of both as one slot. Which is correct?

Both are. Dwarves get these nonweapon proficiencies for free but must "spend" a slot to improve them (PH, page 55); non-dwarves can obtain both these proficiencies at the listed cost of one slot each.

While reading the *Tome of Magic*, this question occurred to me: If wild mages cannot specialize in any school except wild magic, and if only wild mages can cast wild-magic spells, why are all the wild-magic spells put into schools other than wild magic?

First, wild magic is not a school; it is a chaotic magical force and a method of studying magic that capitalizes on that chaos. As the TOM points out (page 5), wild mages are not true specialist wizards, but their unusual approach to magic gives them many of the same benefits that specialist wizards get.

As unpredictable as wild magic is, it still functions within the school framework. That is, wild-magic spells serve to alter, summon, block, etc. just like other spells in the game do. Note that priest spells aren't arranged into schools, either, but each spell still is assigned a school that helps define how and why it works. Various game mechanics that make use of spell schools work normally in regard to priest and wild-magic spells. For example, a *detect magic* spell can be used to determine a spell's school, which in turn reveals clues about what the spell is doing and how it might affect an adventure. Likewise, a specialist wizard who receives a bonus or penalty to saving throws against spells of a particular school gets that bonus or penalty even if the spell in question is a wild magic spell or priest spell.



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You think you've engaged in top-notch computer fantasy role-playing? Well, hang on, folks! We have just experienced a demonstration of Origin's *Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss*, and it's the finest first-person game perspective we've seen. There are no difficult movement commands to worry about—everything is mouse driven. All objects look correct from any angle, and your motion is extremely realistic. Master the magical rune stones and learn as many as 40 spells. But watch out—the creatures in *Underworld* are quite intelligent. And, best of all, there's truly exceptional auto-mapping. You can bet your shield that it's going to take you quite some time to make your way through the 25 miles of nightmarish traps and corridors. Naturally, all this great gaming is going to require something

from your computer as well: two MB of memory plus an expanded memory manager are required! Also making their debut from Origin are their new clue books, and they're just in time. These new insights will prevent many gamers from going absolutely crazy trying to figure out a puzzle or two. The clue books are *Mysteries of the Abyss* for *Ultima Underworld*, and *Key to the Black Gate* for *Ultima VII*.

We are always happy to see major game

system manufacturers address the issue of price. Usually, if one is patient after a game platform has been introduced, the price eventually decreases. Sega has announced that the price of its 16-bit Sega Genesis system is now \$129. By the end of this year, it is estimated that there will be somewhere around 350 titles for the Genesis system, making the system even more enjoyable.

Also, Sierra has announced that its on-line game service, *The Sierra Network*, has reduced its price to a flat rate of \$12.95 per month. With fully-interactive games, this flat rate gives gamers 30 hours of on-line time per month. Options are also available for those who wish more than 30 hours of on-line game time.

Strategic Simulations, Inc. is bringing the results of its new game development system to the public. These new engines

Computer games' ratings

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

velop, resulting in broader ranges of game play. Additionally, the company has developed a new simulator. The evidence of these technologies will be offered in three new products. The first is *DARK SUN™*: *Shattered Lands*, based on TSR's hit AD&D® game campaign setting. The games will be released for PC/MS-DOS, Macintosh, and Amiga, with an additional release on CD-ROM in early 1993. You must create a rebel force with enough power to destroy the sorcerer-kings' army.

The second offering is *M*, a science-fiction and fantasy role-playing adventure. The game engine was designed using Autodesk's 3-D CAD system and features a continuous score, full-screen isometric view that scrolls smoothly, as well as detailed animation and special effects, giving the look and feel of a full-scale film production. This is the first in a series of *M* games that feature an undercover team that is called to the planet Monsoon to help free kidnapped diplomats.

The third game is *Great Naval Battles: North Atlantic 1939-1943*. This is SSI's first combat simulator and is a single-player game that allows you to be either an admiral, fleet commander, or ship captain. You can simulate certain scenarios or the entire campaign. This game features instant replay and a large database. Even weather conditions affect game play.

Some really outstanding games debuted at the Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago last May. LucasArts Games debuted *Star Wars: X-Wing*, a high-action space-combat simulator for PC/MS-DOS computers. You'll find yourself in the struggle of the Rebel Alliance against the evil Imperial Forces. For the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), LucasArts Games is releasing *Super Star Wars*. Also from this high-visibility game publisher, *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis* will be released in both PC/MS-DOS and CD-ROM versions.

H.E.L.P.

Fellow gamers, we have a reader who states that without some assistance, he's going to take a magnet to his *Neuromancer* disks. Eric Heikkila of Westland, Mich., asks, "I am really stuck in *Neuromancer*. I have been playing it, on and off, for about 18 months, and I find myself clueless. I need help with Comlink 5.0, Comlink 6.0, Panther Moderns level two password, Freematrix level two password, and what should I do with the sake? Any help would be greatly appreciated!"

Our thanks to all the readers who have come to the assistance of gamers needing H.E.L.P. If your answer doesn't appear in our column, it's simply because another reader has already taken care of the problem. We figure you deserve thanks, regardless of whether or not your individual tip is printed. In answer to Brian Donner of Gary, Ill.: Yes, a BBS would be a great service to provide, but unfortunately we

going.

Reviews

Out of This World

Interplay
PC/MS-DOS, reviewed using SoundBlaster and VGA graphics mode \$59.95

Interplay and Delphine Software have combined their efforts to create this action/adventure game that uses brilliant cinematic zooms, pans, close-ups, and scaling to make it more than just an action game. *Out of This World* uses polygonal graphics normally found only in topnotch flight simulators to create the figures and animation. Interplay has achieved a look that is— well— out of this world!

You are a working on a nuclear experiment when something goes awry and you are blown into an alien dimension. The object is to survive the hostile environment and return home. Using the joy stick or keyboard, you can walk or run left or right, jump, or attack with your feet or a weapon. This game reminds us a bit of the laser disc classic *Dragon's Lair* with its cinematic style. One wrong move could prove to be fatal. Unlike *Dragon's Lair*, however, this game gives you far more control of your character and his actions. The game also provides access codes upon your death, and these can be used to skip sequences that you already completed.

Out of This World is an action masterpiece. There is enormous attention to detail, even in the backgrounds, with rocks shattering as they hit the ground and beasts that watch and react to your movements. You even leave footprints when you walk. One of the best features in this game, in the age of CD-ROMs and 15 MB hard-disk game-eaters, is that this product only uses 1.5 MB of disk space!

If you are looking for an action game that we guarantee will keep you in your seat for many hours of excitement, look no further. *Out of This World* is an adventure that will keep you on the edge of your seat for some time to come.

Spectre

Velocity
Macintosh, supports color and black-and-white Macintosh computers, play via network or as single player Price n/a

You're about to enter the world of cyberwarfare. You are dropped into the Arena, where you control a single cybertank. You must capture enemy flags to build your score. You have three "lives" with which to attain the highest level possible. There are 50 levels and, once you get above the tenth level, hang onto your cerebellum. You're in for some pulse-pounding action that can't be topped by too many other offerings. When you consider that all this action is happening to you in single-game mode, imagine what your blood pressure's going to do when

you play against human opponents via an AppleTalk network.

As with most Macintosh entertainments, all you have to do is move the game icon from its game disk to your mass storage media. There is no copy protection. Velocity trusts Macintosh gamers to have the common courtesy of respecting authors' rights and to pay for their gaming pleasures. It's a most reasonable request, and one all should be delighted to support.

If your Macintosh is equipped with either a color or gray-scale monitor, *Spectre* boots up in the best video mode available. To view the Arena with filled polygons and gradient backgrounds you need at least 1350K of free RAM. Otherwise, you'll be playing with vector line representations. For those with less than 950K of RAM, the full sound set won't be heard. If your system is eating up your RAM, consider temporarily moving out some INITs or CDEVs to decrease the demand on your memory. The polygon fills are certainly the best way to play *Spectre*. If you are playing this game on a Macintosh Plus, Classic, SE, or Portable, there is no filled-polygon option.

The tutorial allows you to learn how to play this action game in less than 10 minutes. We noted that the best control method is through use of the keypad. You can use your mouse to control your cybertank, but we found it harder to use, especially when pinpoint accuracy was required.

You may select to operate a well-balanced Spectre tank, one that is very fast but has little shielding or ammunition, one that has a lot of shielding but is rather slow and has little firepower, or customized version. If you decide to try the latter, you have 15 points to distribute between speed, shields, and ammo. You also decide on how much Coast your cybertank will have— the higher the Coast number, the greater your momentum, no matter which direction you're facing. Once you've selected the tank you wish to use, you click on the Play button and you've dropped into the Arena.

There are three views you can request. The first is the 3-D front view. What you see ahead of you is what you must confront. To see other areas of the arena in this view, you must move your cybertank.

The second view is the 2-D top view. You are looking down upon your position and can see surrounding edifices and tanks. This is a great view for checking your surroundings but we found firing at the enemy in this view quite difficult, as there is no targeting crosshair.

The third view is the map view. This is a flat view of the entire Arena and is great for determining where flags, ammunition dumps, and enemy units are located. However, it does little to aid you when you decide to attack an enemy cybertank.

You must collect all of the flags for each level before you can proceed to the next level. Time management is critical for your continued success. The radar screen in the



Treasures of the Savage Frontier (SSI)

upper right corner of your screen shows the flags as flashing crosses. When you see them in the 3-D screen, they are rotating flags. To capture one, you simply run over it with your tank.

When you use the keypad to control your cybertank, you fire your weapon by pressing the space bar. You'll often find yourself running out of ammunition as the thrill of the hunt takes over and you fire too many shots to kill a target. Fortunately, there are small flashing squares located throughout the Arena. Run over these squares—they are ammunition dumps and each affords you 20 rounds. Plus, when you retrieve your ammo, you receive one extra point to your shielding! At the higher levels of play, the enemy robots will guard not just the flags, but the ammunition dumps as well.

There are two kinds of enemy robot *Spectre* tanks. The first group—the flag guards—are not all that bright. They have only one armor shield, and a direct hit can do them in, although do take care. They can surprise you with a maneuver you weren't expecting.

The second robot type is actively hostile. You'll run into them after you complete level four. Not only do these tanks fire at you a great deal, but they are also far more intelligent than their flag-guarding counterparts. These robots also possess more armor, making them harder to kill. They move in groups and know how to lead their shots. Once you complete Level 10, these robot *Spectres* gain an extra shield every five levels. When or if you ever get to Level 50, these robots are darn near indestructible.

You can also access Hyperspace. If you depress the Backspace key, you'll find

yourself immediately transported to another area of the Arena. You can see how much Hyperspace power you have by checking the vertical H power bar on-screen. The power to command this action resupplies over time. Just don't try Hyperspace if you aren't at full power. If you do, you might witness your tank's implosion.

If you have other friends who each have their own copies of *Spectre*, or if you've purchased the LAN pack, *Spectre* can be experienced to its fullest potential. Multiplayer games are a superb test of your capabilities. You can decide whether the game is to be played until a certain number of points have been acquired by the winning player, or until a certain number of minutes have passed. All participants in the multiplayer game have an unlimited number of lives.

Few games on any platform offer the excitement and variety found in *Spectre*. For single or multiplayer gaming, this action and strategy game not only operates on a wide variety of Macintosh computers, but also in a variety of black and white or color modes. With thoughtful assignment of keys to control your tank, any gamer can enjoy the delights of cyberwarfare. The sound effects add genuine value to the total game environment. A well-written user reference manual informs you not only how to play the game, but adds a novella to initially inspire you to the role cyberwarfare plays in the future. There is absolutely no excuse why every Macintosh gamer shouldn't rush out and purchase *Spectre*—it's really worth the price of admission.

Sierra
PC/MS-DOS, reviewed using VGA graphics mode \$12.95

We recently received a subscription to *The Sierra Network* (TSN), a new telecommunications package for PC/MS-DOS computers. We are impressed with this entertainment bulletin board's ease of use and high entertainment factor. This network provides gamers the opportunity to play bridge, checkers, chess, cribbage, hearts, and backgammon, all in full VGA or EGA graphics. If those games are not your cup of tea, there's always Sierraland where you can engage in a game of paintball, miniature golf, or a multiplayer version of *Red Baron*.

Installation of the product is quite simple, and TSN supports major sound boards! You build your on-screen persona from hundreds of different facial parts until you have constructed yourself or an alter ego. Hobbies and favorite pastimes are selected from a list of dozens. You then rate your skill level as to how well you play the six games offered.

Connecting to TSN is as simple as clicking the mouse on the Play button when the information service's main menu appears. Once you are on-line, you are shown the waiting room. Here, all other users who are on-line are revealed by name with an icon representing the activity each one is involved in at that moment. By simply selecting one or more names, you can then click on several options to the right of the waiting room. You can view the other gamers and see their on-screen personas, hobbies, and skill levels at the games. While viewing others, you can also put them in your address book with a click of a mouse button, then recall that information later when you want to send mail.

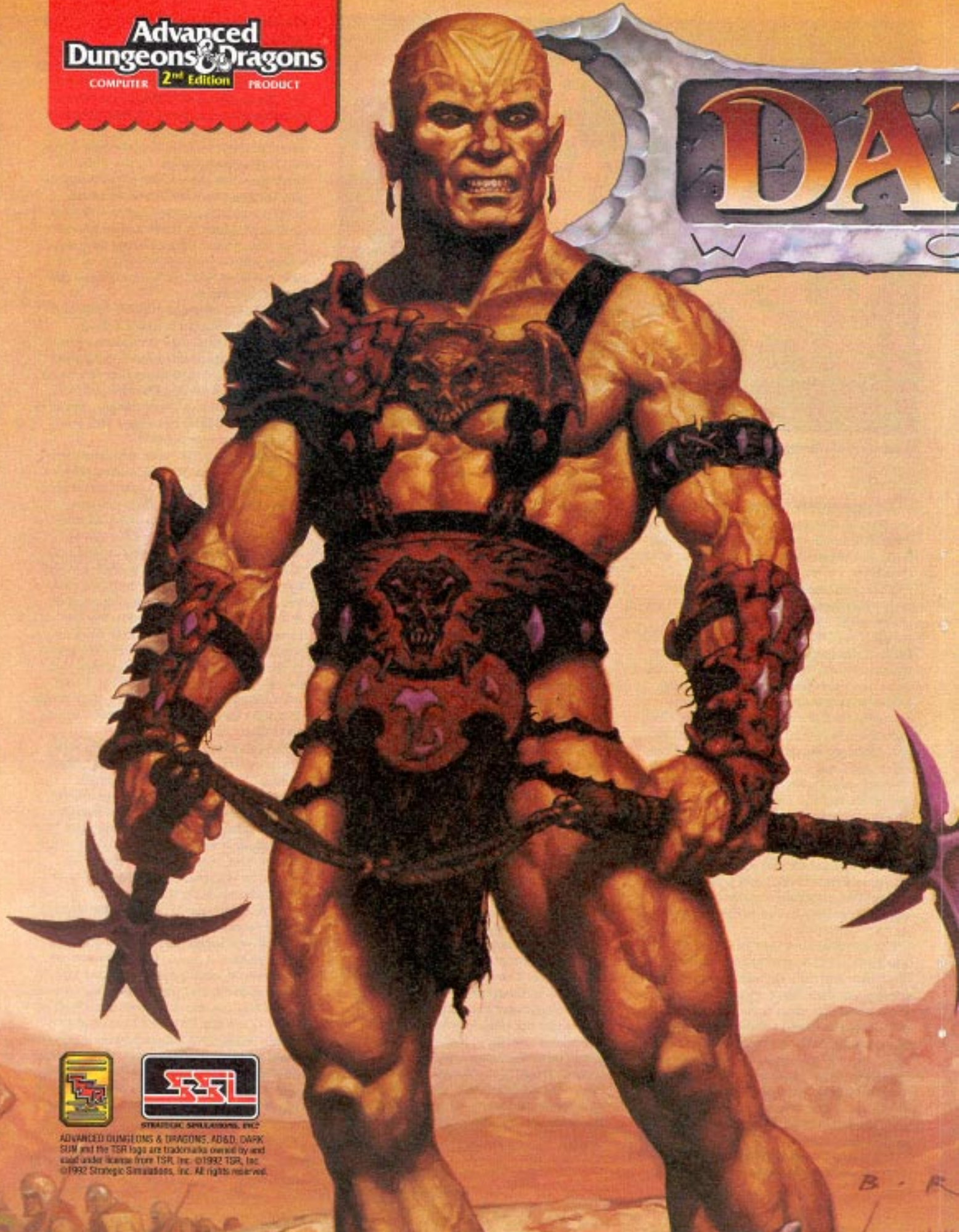
You can move out of the waiting room and check out the bulletin-board system, read a hint board for Sierra-specific games, go to a conference room where many different groups meet to discuss a variety of topics, or collect your mail. The mail room is as user-friendly as any other part of TSN. Any mail you receive is shown as post-marked envelopes. By simply double-clicking the envelope, you can read the message. Mail is sent by clicking the Send button and addressing the envelope. If you forgot the person's address, you can look it up in your address book. Afterwards, simply type the letter and click on Send, and the E-Mail is on its way.

You can also move to a different host on TSN. There are 10 Sierra hosts and two Sierra lands. This allows certain groups to meet within a specific host on a preselected night and time to find other people to play a specified game. The user can move around and deal with fewer people than one huge mass of on-line personas all at once.

Continued on page 62

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Screens shown: 256-color IBM VGA.

Role of Computers

Continued from page 59

Now to Sierraland: This is a unique experience unlike the regular TSN network. It reminded us of stepping into a Sierra graphic adventure but, unlike other Sierra games, you cannot make a wrong move. The best entertainment we found in Sierraland was in the arcade. Here, you can play against other people in multiplayer games of *Red Baron*. The software is already included with the TSN software. The controls are simple, and when you have four biplanes in the sky trying to shoot each other down, the action becomes quite intense. Sierra is planning to include a *Stellar Seven* multiplayer game in the future.

There was a problem with this network, however. Many times, while talking to people in the waiting room, we were disconnected for no discernible reason. A few times, it took four or five tries to log on back onto the network. We're sure Sierra will have these bugs fixed in the future, but it can be an annoyance to suddenly be disconnected when you're talking to someone.

TSN now has flat rates in effect. For \$12.95 a month, you receive 30 hours of TSN time. For \$2 extra you can send mail, and for \$4 more, you can access Sierraland. If you are an avid user and run over the 30 hours, the charges change to \$7/hour weekdays, and \$2/hour on weekends. TSN is simple enough for the novice user, and experienced users will have fun on this service as well. With plans for a Larryland and other exciting games in the work, The Sierra Network is the next step in on-line gaming; it is an ingenious and well-crafted network. Let's hope versions become available for Macintosh and Amiga computers as well!

Treasures of the Savage Frontier

Strategic Simulations Inc.
PC/MS-DOS, EGA, TGA, VGA/MCGA;
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sound

\$49.95

This is SSI's second volume in its Savage Frontier FRPG series. As you may have guessed, because a sequel has been released, the victory scored at Ascore in the first volume apparently was not as decisive as everyone had thought! Now you find yourself in the city of Llorkh, hearing about the terrible defeats suffered by the Zhentarim forces inflicted by the very monsters you summoned in the first adventure. You are now asked by Amelior Amanitas to assist the dwarves in pushing Lord Geildarr, that Zhentarim misfit who killed the dwarven King of Llorkh, out of dwarven lands once and for all. Plus, you must also save the entire frontier from a cataclysmic war.

In order to compete at a level of success in this FRPG, you must have at least 5th-level characters. For those who want

to play right away and don't have that level of character available to import from the first adventure, SSI has included in the game disk a party of adventurers. We used them and continue to do so, as their combination of fighting ability and magic skills have so far managed to defeat all enemies. However, this has not been without cost—better remember where the healing temples are, as well as Memorize your spells at every opportunity. You are going to run into some brand new creatures not seen before in an SSI AD&D® game, and you'll need your wits to accomplish every mission.

The interface remains identical to previous SSI AD&D game gold-box adventures. There are no technological or game-interface firsts in this game. If you've played one gold-box adventure, you should have absolutely no difficulty in starting play in another one.

Don't forget that if you find yourself repeatedly losing a specific encounter, check the difficulty level at which you are playing. You may select Novice, Squire, Veteran, Adept, and Champion. For solid play, yet with a difficulty level that's fair to both yourself and the SSI programmers, we recommend the Veteran level.

However, keep in mind that the higher the difficulty level at which you play, the more experience points you receive in combat.

One helpful aspect of this FRPG is that, although it is sometimes easy to become lost or not know what one should try next, there are items you can find throughout the game that can help you. One of these is the Crown of Amanitas which allows you to speak directly with Amanitas and obtain his critically needed advice. You can also find Lucky Papers in most locations. These will not become readable until after you've found three colored crystals. You'll note on occasion that when you attack a group of powerful enemies, some will start smashing their crystals before the battle begins. It's no wonder—they certainly don't want you to be able to decode anything!

You're going to find yourself not only encountering nonplayer characters (NPCs) but also controlling them as well. This is a nice addition, especially when your party finds the beautiful and highly talented Siulajia. Please keep in mind that she really doesn't have a twin, and a Detect Magic might be able to offer you insight into the real NPC.

No longer does the Fix command both heal your party and memorize used spells. To obtain the latter you must Rest. Clerics can cast a Cure Disease spell, but that does nothing to restore any lost hit points.

As the developers of this FRPG suggest, we strongly endorse that all magic-users memorize Charm Person, Stinking Cloud, and Fireball spells right away. Additionally, when facing enemy clerics and magic users, charm them if you can. Larger monsters are still susceptible to Stinking

Cloud spells. Remain on marked trails or riverways. The Savage Frontier didn't receive its name because it's a quiet and peaceful area. When you have encounters, they are going to be quite difficult to win. The wise gamer knows to save the game continuously.

There are a total of 83 Journal entries in the game. Each Journal entry imparts critically needed information, such as a hint or a map.

As far as your character choices are concerned, you may select dwarves, elves, half-elves, gnomes, halflings, or humans. The constants of Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma remain the bounds within which characters are created and developed. You may have your characters (depending upon their racial characteristics) become clerics, fighters, paladins, rangers, magic-users, or thieves. Multi- and dual-classed characters are also possible. We found a fair mixture requires half remain single-classed, and the other half dual-classed; otherwise, it takes too long for characters to gain the experience necessary to move ahead in level. With gains in levels come critically needed additional skills, such as magic.

Treasures of the Savage Frontier is a highly enjoyable FRPG. There is nothing really new within its game boundaries, but the conclusion to the Savage Frontier adventure is satisfying. Experienced players will have no problem immediately accessing the adventure, although many will be surprised at the ferocity of the initial combats. We recommend this FRPG to all.

Clue corner

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI, generic hints)

1. In the Sphere of Annihilation duel, let a paladin take the challenge and he should win every time. Just be certain to save the game outside. You'll receive a nice reward for your trouble.

2. If you transfer your characters from *Pool of Radiance*, and your character has a covering from the Manual of Bodily Health, plus a strength of 18(00) "Gauntlets of Ogre Power," he has the permanent strength stat of 18(00). This works well on humans, and not only fighters. This does not work on demihumans.

3. In the caves before the Rebuizard's Tower, find the Salamanders, then cast Resistance to Fire on one of your characters. Parlay with them slyly, then loot the chest and you'll receive a couple of scrolls, a Dragon Slayer sword, and more platinum than you'll know what to do with!

4. Javelins of Piercing work great against everything.

5. In Myth Drannor, don't loot the graves.

6. Blessed crossbow bolts kill rakshasas

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7. For the exploding paper in the Red Wizard's Tower, have a cleric cast Detect Trap and your magic-user will be able to disarm the trap.

8. You can use the shield and the plate mail from the Dark Elf Lord without it becoming destroyed by the sun.

Jason R. Moore
Charlotte NC

Might and Magic II (New World Computing, Genesis and Macintosh hints)

1. This is a useful trick I stumbled upon. Leave the Middlegate Inn. Go one step east. Go one step south. Now, drink.

2. Try this hint after you've completed the one above. In the inn itself, there is a secret door. From the starting point, go west one step. Turn south. There is a wall there, but you can go through it. Once in the secret room, go two steps east. You'll meet some monsters. Perhaps it's not spectacular, but it works.

Ben Rosengart
New York NY

Spectre (Velocity)

1. Don't capture that last flag until after you've destroyed all of the robots on your current level. It's worth a bonus of 50 points if you get rid of all the robots, then capture your last flag.

2. The time bonus is a great incentive,

but it is not as valuable as the robot bonus described above when you're still at the lower levels.

3. You've been dropped into the Arena and you immediately suffer damage from a surrounding bevy of enemy Robots. Fire that grenade and run for open space.

4. In your haste to grab those flags, an enemy tank has maneuvered behind you. Don't bother wasting time by turning your tank around to fire on the enemy—hold down that "2" on your keypad and back your tank up. You'll have the enemy tank in your sights far faster than if you tried to turn on it.

The Lessers

Wasteland (Electronic Arts, Apple IIe)

1. The four keys are used to make Base Cochise self-destruct. Incidentally, if you're missing some keys, try fixing your toasters. The weirdest things seem to be hidden inside them.

2. Once you have destroyed Base Cochise, you have won the game. Explore the world as much as you want, and kill all those people you've always wanted to terminate but never had the chance to before.

3. There is no easy way to destroy the gigantic monster Finster at the end of the mind maze. The best way is to give the poor guy in the maze loads of Anti-Tank weapons, 7.62 mm clips (for an assault

rifle), and lasers. Give him the best armor you have and just blow the thing away! Fire full auto a lot. If the guy in the maze falls unconscious, just shift to the party outside the maze and wait for several hours. Then, the guy in the maze is fully healed and raring to go.

4. As far as I can tell, there are no levels beyond command cadet, and the grazer bat fetish is useless, as well as are mirrors, matches, and fruit.

Frederic Bush
Rochester NY

We have now been writing this column in DRAGON® Magazine for nearly eight years. In all that time, we have missed only one column. We figure it's time to take a vacation, so we are going to skip the next two issues of DRAGON Magazine and work on some outside projects as well as update ourselves on some of the new games and prepare for one terrific column in DRAGON issue #187. Please, continue to send us your letters and hints and we'll start afresh in two months. Our address is: 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376. Please, no phone calls and no long FAX messages—especially at two o'clock in the morning! Good heavens, even orcs don't work at that hour! Thanks for all of your support and we look forward to writing to everyone again with DRAGON issue #187. Until then, game on!

Q

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The Game Wizards

Secrets of a trading-card guru

by David Wise



I got into the fantasy trading-card business in a hurry. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that I was *hurried into* the trading-card business. That's because you, the gamers, hurried out and bought the AD&D® Collector Cards Premiere Series in droves last year. The 1991 TSR trading cards were so incredibly successful that only Jim Ward, the project's creator, remained insufferably unsurprised throughout the deluge of demands for more. That kind of popularity is too good to rest on, and Jim is not the type to put off until tomorrow what can be done yesterday.

So, a full two months before the 1992 trading-card project was scheduled to begin, Jim called me into his office, gave me one of his patented pep talks ("David, tell your wife to be very nice to you when you get home tonight, because I'm about to ruin your day"), then gave me an ambitious assignment with an ambitious deadline ("I want a 750-piece art order by next Friday."). Thus, only one week after joining the TSR staff as a fledgling editor, I began working on a project of monstrous content, size, and popularity. It was a fearsome task for a guy so new on the job that he wasn't even sure where the bathroom was, but I had no time to feel insecure. That's Jim's way of making you feel right at home—at least he was willing to point out the men's room.

All new for 92

Now you're seeing the product of that work, and I'm sure the temptation to compare the 1991 and 1992 sets is irresistible, so I'm going to start off by telling you a little about the differences between the two collections. As we approached the 92 collection, our main objective was to continue the highly successful format of the premiere series, but also to develop new and interesting angles on the theme—in other words, we were out to reinvent an already-excellent wheel. There may be a few staunch conservatives out there who question the wisdom of this, but I think a new tire beats a retread every time.

The first difference that people notice when they see the 92 cards is in the artwork. This year's card art is almost entirely new, while the 91 series was produced almost exclusively from existing art in the TSR catalog. All of the fabulous color art that adorns our fantasy game products was first painted on canvases, then photographed and stored on 6" × 8" transparencies. Last year's trading-card editor, Anne Brown, gathered together those transparencies with the help of graphics coordinators Peggy Cooper and Stephanie Tabat, and cropped them into a full-sized collection of trading cards. The finished package yielded a slick, highly detailed collector-card series that has been valued at as much as several thousand dollars.

Needless to say, a 750-card art order uses up a lot of transparencies, as well as the art that they came from. As we began to work on the 92 series, we didn't have that huge library of art by Easley, Elmore, Brom, Fields, and all the rest to draw upon. Therefore, we contacted a dozen free-lance illustrators and put them to work drawing over 700 separate pieces of art for an all-new collection.

The result is a wide variety of cards in styles and colors that you won't find anywhere else. Even better, this art is completely original and designed specifically for the trading-card venue, so you're getting a player aid that may be even more valuable than its predecessor. There's a nice, even blend of classes, levels, races, and fantasy realms that comes of starting the order from scratch, rather than having to write the cards to match what's already drawn. The only unoriginal characters in the 92 set are those that we *wanted* to include in the trading-card series (like Strahd Von Zarovich and Mordekainen), so you're going to see more new faces in this one project than you can find anywhere else.

An even bigger difference between last year's series and this year's lies on the backs of the trading cards. Last year's set was written by veteran gamer Rick

Brown. This year's set was written by *everybody!* The entire research-and-development staff of TSR, Inc. divided up the character cards and created over 400 original personalities to go with the original art on the other sides. On top of that, we included about three dozen characters submitted by members of the RPGA™ Network.

Perhaps you have noticed that the magical items are slightly mutated in this year's collection. After a few people complained that last year's magical-item cards were a bit on the dull side, because they were just getting a rehash of the material in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Tome of Magic*, Mr. Ward suggested that we "personalize" this year's selection by giving each of them an owner. I took that idea one step further and subtly (okay, sometimes blatantly) changed the functions of the items. I also put rather vague labels on the fronts of the item cards to make them a more useful gaming aid. Now, when the DM shows a magical-item card to one of his smug, seen-it-all players or rules lawyers and says, "You find this," that player's character may be in for a little surprise when he attempts to use the item.

Unhappily, one other change that we attempted to make this year put a small wobble in the new wheel: We thought that we would group the rare cards all together, rather than scatter them across the collection. The specific idea was to make the last 30 cards of each half of the series (#331-360 and #691-720) the designated rare cards. But when we reviewed cards #331-360 just before printing, we realized that there were only character cards among them, and we wanted to include at least a few monsters, too. Therefore, we borrowed 17 cards from Part 2 of the series to fill out a more balanced selection. This has resulted in some confusion over the numbering of Parts 1 and 2, but such anomalies are what make the trading-card business an interesting one. Realizing that a hand-picked rare card is a beautiful rare card, we abandoned our attempt at

Trading-Card Trivia Test

Here's a little trading-card trivia test for you. The answers are printed on page 70 of this issue.

1. Designer Slade Henson created five DRAGONLANCE® campaign world character cards featuring people who were associated with a certain feared criminal, yet the criminal himself does not appear in the collection. What is his name?
2. One of the wizard characters in this collection owns nothing but cursed magical items, but he manages to make good use of them anyway. What is his name?

3. Two of the characters in this collection also appeared in the RPGA™ FORGOTTEN REALMS® game accessory, LC4 *Port of Ravens Bluff*. Who are they?
4. One character from the AL-QADIM™ campaign world is seeking a certain fabled city—so fabled, in fact, that it does not yet exist in any TSR game or accessory. What is the name of this city? (Hint: You might need a Factory Set to answer this.)
5. One dwarf character in the collection is quite aptly named because he killed a dragon with his bare hands! What is his name?
6. Only one card in the entire 92 series features two characters. Which one is it?

7. What is wrong with the picture on card 243?
8. There is a sweet and lovable young lady wandering around Ravenloft who unwittingly enjoys a -10 Armor Class, thanks to a curse. Who is she?
9. One character in the collection is a *polymorphed* human who likes his new form so much that he's decided to keep it. However, at a party of creatures like him, he would definitely clash. Who is he?
10. One card in the series is that of a rogue character with a cat burglar kit, but this thief takes her job title a bit too literally, as she actually steals cats. Who is she?

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!



Cards 001-100

001 002 003 004 005 006 007 008 009 010
011 012 013 014 015 016 017 018 019 020
021 022 023 024 025 026 027 028 029 030
031 032 033 034 035 036 037 038 039 040
041 042 043 044 045 046 047 048 049 050
051 052 053 054 055 056 057 058 059 060
061 062 063 064 065 066 067 068 069 070
071 072 073 074 075 076 077 078 079 080
081 082 083 084 085 086 087 088 089 090
091 092 093 094 095 096 097 098 099 100

Cards 401-500

401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410
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Cards 101-200

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191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200

Cards 501-600

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571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580
581 582 **583** 584 585 586 587 588 589 590
591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600

Cards 201-300

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Cards 601-700

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621 **622** 623 624 625 626 627 628 **629** 630
631 632 **633** 634 635 **636** **637** **638** **639** **640**
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651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660
661 662 **663** 664 665 666 667 668 669 **670**
671 672 **673** 674 **675** 676 677 678 679 **680**
681 682 683 **684** 685 686 687 688 689 690
691 **692** 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700

Cards 301-400

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311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320
321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330
331 **332** **333** **334** **335** **336** **337** **338** 339 340
341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 **349** **350**
351 **352** **353** 354 355 356 357 358 359 360
361 **362** **363** **364** **365** **366** **367** **368** **369** **370**
371 **372** **373** **374** **375** **376** **377** 378 379 380
381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390
391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400

Cards 701-750

701 702 **703** 704 705 706 707 708 709 **710**
711 712 713 714 715 **716** 717 718 719 720
721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730
732 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740
741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750

Note: Rare cards numbers are listed in bold face and promotional cards are listed in italics for ease of reference.

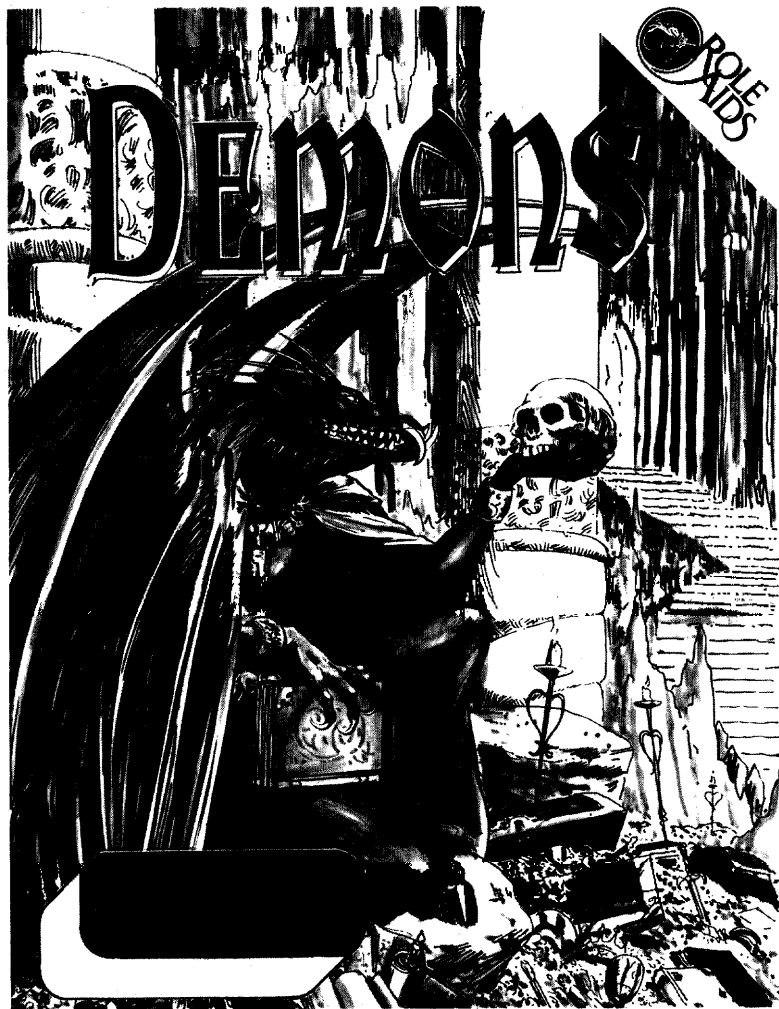
numerical symmetry and went back to the original method of choosing them card by card. I guess some parts of a wheel just can't be improved.

Now, let me fill you in on a few trading-card features that will *not* change in the foreseeable future. First, we have established a format of using a gold border around the art of each card to designate the first print run and a silver border on the factory-set cards. This color scheme will serve as a standard for all AD&D Collector Card Series, past and future,

Second, this year we adopted the practice of decorating checklist cards with logos from our many game lines. We think that this is an attractive way to set them apart from the other cards, so we're going to stick with it. Finally, we're pleased to boast that everyone is happy with the game content of the cards. These babies don't lay around in a plastic sleeve like pictures of Nolan Ryan and Joe Montana—they're bona fide game-playing aids, not just a bunch of pretty faces!

A First in Fantasy Role-Playing

This 4-piece
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Building the batch

Putting this collection into the form that you see has been quite a learning experience. I learned how to enjoy designing and editing trading cards in my office every day and in my dreams every night. I also learned what it must have been like to be a foreman during the construction of the Tower of Babel. Collating the creative juices of the entire TSR Creative Staff is a bit like running a 200th-level party without your DMG — everybody has their own interpretation of the rules, and all you want to do is keep playing the same game. Dori Watry took the allegorical approach to card design, combining famous literary personages with fantasy settings in a way that would make Shakespeare roll over in his grave, and Rob King could never quite get his tongue dislodged from his cheek. Andria Hayday kept me sensible of political correctness with her contributions, while Jeff Grubb whipped up a dozen-and-a-half extremely interesting characters with an air of expertise that made me nervous about editing any of it. The volume of description on each card written by Jon Pickens made for some wonderful characters, but to use it all we would have had to shrink the type enough to make a mouse squint. Then there were the suggestions for mini-series from jokers like Roger Moore, who treads a line so fine between the ingenious and the absurd that his shoes must have notches in them. (Actually, nine views of Jim Ward in the buff might sell a lot of trading cards . . . nah.)

What new features are we going to include in sets to come? Sorry, we're not talking about that, but I can tell you that a lot of great possibilities came from DRAGON® Magazine readers. In my last "Game Wizards" article, published last December in issue #176, I invited you all to send me your favorite trading-card ideas, and you sent me a few gems. Interestingly, some of the best ideas were shared by several of the folks who wrote me, so there's a good chance that much of what you're hoping for in a trading card will appear in the 1993 series.

By the numbers

One thing that I've learned about trading-card collectors is that they love to know the numbers, so here's the breakdown for Part 1 of the 1992 series (Part 2 has not been printed yet, as of the writing of this article): There were 2,453,184 16-card foil packs of trading cards released for sale. There are 115,969 copies of each regular card and 27,763-35,684 copies of each rare card. Approximately two out of every five foil packs will contain one rare card. The purchase of four boxes of the foil packs should yield a complete or near-complete set of cards. The rare card numbers for the entire 750-card series are printed in bold type, for your convenience, on a checklist sheet included

with this article.

Here's a few other tidbits of information for you. There are 15 nine-card mini-series included in the entire collection. They are: magical portals (#36-44); special corridors (#45-53); fiendish traps (#156-164); Mordekainen and the Circle of Eight (#165-173); SPELLJAMMER® campaign ships (#276-284); vampires of the RAVENLOFT® campaign world (#285-293); FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign world cities (#396-404); famous artifacts (#405-413); genies of the AL-QADIM™ campaign world (#516-524); special dragons (#525-533); familiars (#636-644); undead creatures (#645-653); a Road to Urik series, featuring characters from that module in the DARK SUN™ campaign world (#654-662); and two "Create-Your-Own" series, featuring cards with blank backs for players to fill with their own game stats (#464-472 and #534-542). The familiars mini-series is in the rare-cards set of Part 2.

Cards #721-750 are the promotional releases, and here's where you can find them: Cards #721-737 were printed in issue #34 (March/April 92) of DUNGEON® Magazine and issue #180 (April 92) of DRAGON Magazine. These were all character cards. Cards #738-741 (monster cards) were sponsored by Capital City Distributors. Capital City has spread these four cards out across the country — check with your local comic-books store if you want these cards in gold-bordered, first-run copies. Diamond Comics sponsored card #742, of Maligor the Red Wizard, in special foil printing. This card, too, was distributed to comic-book dealers across the country. Cards #743 and #746 have yet to find their official way into a promotion. Cards #744 and #745, which are DARK SUN™ campaign world cards, have been produced by Barnes & Noble company, the owners of B. Dalton bookstores. When you buy a TSR product at one of their stores, you may receive these cards as a bonus. Finally, cards #747-750 (AL-QADIM™ campaign world cards) have been sold to Waldenbooks. When you buy a TSR product from them, you may receive these four cards, printed on one large sheet.

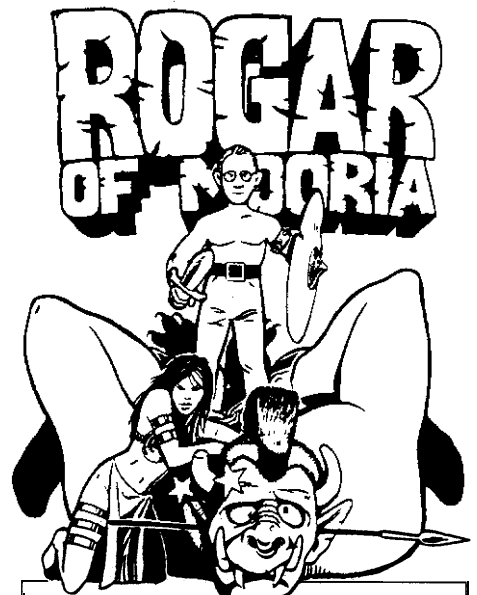
The card numbers and legal statements were omitted from cards #118-120 (checklist cards) in the final printing. Card #118 features the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign world logo, card #119 features the SPELLJAMMER campaign world logo, and card #120 features the GREYHAWK® campaign world logo.

And on to 93

With the 1992 series through the presses and into your hands, I am passing the mantle of Trading Card Guru on to Thomas Reid, who will design and edit the 93 collection, but I'll still keep a hand in all the collections to come. After all, trading cards have become as much a part of my day-to-day business as breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I now explore every new card I find as if it were a 64-page module, and I

revel in the tiniest, seemingly most insignificant innovations. Some of my fellow game makers suggest that I have begun to describe everything in four sentences or less, and that any combination of nine makes me foam at the mouth, but the truth is that trading cards are, as Jim Ward would describe them, "way cool." They're fun to collect and trade, they constitute a legitimate investment, and they make gaming a little more colorful and fun. What's more, if you can't find an NPC in these collections to suit your campaign, then you must be playing a completely different game! Finally, this is the only trading-card collection that seeks your input. If you've got an idea for the perfect trading card, I'm always happy to hear and use it. Just address your letters to me, David Wise, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Ω

- Trading-Card Trivia Answers:**
1. Devan Cory
 2. No! the Double-edged (card #423)
 3. Catherine "Cat" Kincaid (card #55) and Otto "Mouse" (card #72)
 4. Suj (card #750)
 5. Talgat Hardist (card #345)
 6. Card #463 (Dame Doree and Boy Howdee)
 7. Kelpies are strictly underwater creatures, and this one's sunning on a rock! (A misinterpretation of the art order caused this little faux pas.)
 8. Bright Galea (card #441)
 9. Red, a leprechaun who doesn't like the color green (card #219)
 10. Kiara of Chendil (card #194)



Were we great what?

What do you think of this magazine? What do you like best or want to see changed most? What do you want to see next? Turn to "Letters" and see what others think, then write to us too!



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Role-playing reviews

Getting started in role-playing is getting easier



Like driving a car, performing brain surgery, and changing diapers, role-playing is best learned from somebody who already knows how to do it. However, not all of us are lucky enough to have a good teacher handy when we need one.

My first experience with the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game is a case in point. About 10 years ago, two grade-school-aged cousins of mine were bugging me to teach them how to play the D&D® game, which we'd all heard of but none of us knew much about. To get them off my back, I invited them to spend the weekend, promising that we'd give it a shot. I'd learn the rules in the meantime.

The day before they came, I visited the local K-Mart and bought the pink-boxed D&D Basic Set and what I presumed was an introductory adventure, *The Sinister Secret of Saltmarsh*. That night, I gave myself a few hours to master the rules and prepare the adventure. I couldn't make heads or tails of a lot of it, but I got the general idea, figuring I'd improvise the fine points as they came up.

To make a long story short, that first adventure was a lot of fun, but the rules we used weren't exactly RPGA™ Network-sanctioned, if you get my drift. In our version of the game, there was no significant difference between rounds and turns, hard-to-fathom concepts such as encumbrance and alignment were ignored altogether, and when a cleric turned undead, the undead rotated in a circle, then kept coming. We had a particularly hard time with the concept of "levels," particularly as applied to magic; I ruled that first-level spells functioned only in the first level of dungeons, second-level spells worked in the next dungeon level, and the really powerful spells operated only in the depths of the basement.

Most telling, I think, was that every module we used in our D&D games was actually intended for the AD&D® game (as was *The Sinister Secret of Saltmarsh*); I figured that the AD&D game was a more complicated version of the D&D game, and that we'd just ignore the advanced rules whenever they came up. How was I supposed to know the AD&D game was a completely different game? It didn't say anything about it in the pink box.

So we bumbled along and everything eventually worked itself out, but looking back, I wish I'd gotten it right from the beginning. Of course, maybe I was just a bonehead, but I prefer to believe that the first round of RPGs weren't as user-friendly as they could've been. I'd have appreciated an approach that was a little more sympathetic to the novice, where new concepts were plainly and precisely defined, detailed examples of play were given to illustrate every facet of the rules, as much care was given to clear writing and tight editing as dreaming up monsters and spells.

That's why I envy today's first-timers, who have it a lot easier than I did. Design-

ers may not be any smarter than they used to be, but they're certainly more experienced, and they've sniffed out and eliminated many of the ambiguities that plagued the Stone-Age RPGs. This month, we'll be taking a look at several state-of-the-art beginners' games, any of which would make an ideal introduction to the hobby, even for those who don't know a PC from a pea shooter.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® * * * * 1/2
game

Boxed game with 64-page rule book, Dungeon Master's Screen, Dragon Card Learning Pack, fold-up counters, color map sheet, dice

TSR, Inc. \$20

Design: Troy Denning (based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson)

Rule book: Timothy B. Brown

Developmental Editing: Jonatha Caspian

Cover: Jeff Easley

Interior illustrations: Terry Dykstra

Map: Spectrum Graphics

Playing pieces: Brom, Clyde Caldwell, Jeff Easley, Fred Fields

If only this had been available when I was getting started, you can bet my early campaigns wouldn't have had any rotating undead or spells confined to the basement. Lavishly packaged, logically organized, and lucidly explained, this is as close to a perfect beginner's package as I've ever seen. Anyone who can read can now learn to play the D&D game as it was intended.

Realizing that novices are often intimidated by the amount of rules required in an RPG, even in one as simple as the basic D&D game, the designers present the rules twice, once in the rule book and again in the Dungeon Card Learning Pack, a set of 48 cards, each 6 1/2" x 9 1/2" that also includes a few four-page supplementary miniadventures. The front of each card features a discussion of a single facet of the rules, such as nonplayer characters, hit dice, or initiative rolls. The back of the card describes a brief scenario to illustrate the rules discussed on the front. For instance, the card featuring initiative rolls explains in clear language the difference between initiative and surprise; it not only outlines the nuts and bolts of the rules, but also gives players an idea of what's actually happening to their characters

when the rules are in effect ("If both sides

are surprised, then both sides spend the first round of combat doing nothing. They just stare at each other in disbelief."). After they familiarize themselves with the rules, players are instructed to flip the card over to the "Goblin's Surprise" encounter, lay out the map sheet of Zanzar's Dungeon, and place fold-up counters of the relevant characters in specific locations on the map. Using both narrative elements ("Wake up!" Axel says. "We can escape!" You open your eyes to see Axel's face. It is covered with bruises) and simple prompts ("Move your counter and Axel's counter into Room #2"), the card walks the players through a nine-part scenario involving an uncooperative door and a skittish goblin, painlessly introducing the concept of initiative along the way. It's a remarkably efficient and entertaining method of instruction. If public schools were this much fun, we'd all know calculus by the time we finished junior high school.

The four-page miniadventures that pop up in the card pack at regular intervals incorporate the rules discussed up to that point into a linked series of encounters that give the beginning referee a chance to hone his skills. The encounters include directions for setting up counters on the map, boxed text to be read to the players, and a list of responses to the probable actions of the PCs. Faced with a whip carrying hobgoblin at the doorway of their prison cell, the PCs may choose to rush the door (in which case the referee is directed to slam the door before the PCs reach it), refuse to cooperate with the hobgoblin's demands (the hobgoblin whips them through the bars), or fake an illness (the hobgoblin ignores them). The first mini-adventure uses a stripped-down version of the combat rules and ignores magic entirely, but by the time the new GM reaches the final mini-adventure, he's assessing damage and juggling spells like a pro.

The new rule book tightens up and reorganizes the material in the original D&D set, though the fundamentals are left intact. The tone is less formal, and there's more emphasis on character classes; where mages and thieves were limited to only a few paragraphs of description in the previous edition, here they each earn a full page. The differences between rounds and turns are clearly distinguished, spells now feature listings for effects as well as ranges and durations, and a few new monsters (among them the chimera, cockatrice, and gorgon) have been added to the basic roster. A revised monster reaction table slightly increases the likelihood of hostile encounters, while new restrictions on retainers (for instance, they can't be higher than 1st level) force the PCs to be more dependent on their own skills.

Hard-liners might grumble that the revision wasn't radical enough; in fact, all the rules that drive nitpickers crazy are pretty much untouched. Elves and dwarves are still treated as classes, align-

Role-playing games' ratings	
X	Not recommended
*	Poor, but may be useful
..	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	The best

ments remain rigid (there are still only three— Lawful, Chaotic, and Neutral), and the overall system is far less sophisticated than that of the AD&D game. None of this particularly bothers me; anybody who can accept talking dragons and magical fireballs ought to be able to handle elven character classes. But even though I'm comfortable with the system, I wish more effort would've been made to explain some of the esoteric rules; inquiring minds may want to know exactly why mages can't wear armor or why alignment languages are necessary in the first place, but they'll have to look elsewhere for answers. And what happened to the index?

Evaluation: Whether you find the D&D game's approach charming or anachronistic depends on your tolerance for adventures that focus almost exclusively on dungeon crawling, treasure grabbing, and monster bashing. As for me, I'm solidly in favor of the D&D game; I've never met a new player who didn't get a kick out of a basic dungeon crawl, and I've GMed everybody from grade school kids to Ph.D.s. The revised D&D game is an excellent introduction to a fascinating hobby, recommended for curious newcomers and nostalgic old-timers alike.

LORD OF THE RINGS* game ****

Boxed game with 32-page rule book, 64-page adventure book, 32-page floor plan and character book, fold-up counters, color map sheet, dice
 Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc. \$18
Design: Jessica M. Ney and S. Coleman Charlton
Editor/developer: Jessica Ney
Cover: Angus McBride
Interior illustrations: Liz Danforth, Marco Aidala, Ron Hill, Jaime Lombardo
Map: Eric Hotz
Playing pieces: Marco Aidala, Liz Danforth
Black and white maps and floor plans: J. M. Ney

The LORD OF THE RINGS* game is, of course, inspired by the classic fantasy trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien. While those who've never read the novels will be a step behind, familiarity with the source material isn't absolutely necessary, thanks to a sparkling approach that serves both as an introduction to role-playing and a guide to the wonders of Middle-earth.

The format is similar to that of the revised D&D game. Both products feature a wealth of attractive components (including ready-to-use floor plans and colorful fold-up counters corresponding to the characters in the introductory adventure), a congenial style that rightfully assumes the reader has no previous experience with role-playing, and a presentation of the rules not once, but twice— the *Guidelines Book* is a formal compilation of the rules, while the *Adventure Book* teaches the rules in a programmed format, not unlike the revised D&D game's Dragon Cards.

As with the revised D&D game, new players are advised to begin with the programmed adventure, and it's a good one, an exciting, atmospheric scenario titled "Dawn Comes Early" that features the rescue of an imprisoned companion, an encounter with a pair of nasty trolls, and a cameo by Gandalf, one of the most noteworthy characters from the novels. The adventure is structured as a series of simple scenes that include numerous examples of play and plenty of Game Master Notes to guide the first-time referee. For instance, Scene One details the initial gathering of the PCs at a hobbit-hole, where they're encouraged to get to know one another and discuss their plans for a rescue attempt. In addition to scene-setting text read directly to the players ("Despite the warm summer breeze blowing in through the open windows, a small cheery fire burns in the hearth . . .") and tips for the referee ("Instruct the players to place their stand-up cardboard figures on the floor plan of the sitting room to indicate where their characters are located"), there are sidebars that clarify the concept of experience points and explain methods for communicating the location of physical objects. For confused players, a section of sample dialogue shows them how to introduce themselves ("My character is Lily Greenthumb. Lily is a hobbit and therefore quite short and . . .").

In later scenes, when the action becomes more complex, the referee is referred to the Action Sequences in the *Guidelines Book*, which are among the game's most innovative and useful features. There are 14 different Action Sequences, ranging from "Sneaking Through Town by Night" to "Picking a Pocket" to "Ambushing an Enemy." Each sequence lists specific steps for the referee to execute in order to simulate the intended action. "Sneaking Through Town," for example, begins by instructing the referee to describe the scene to the players. He then asks them what precautions their characters are taking to pass unseen and unheard. A chart describes the penalties or bonuses for each likely action (+1 for wearing soft-soled shoes, -1 for talking), while a second chart provides a variety of results based on each character's modified die-roll (a roll of 7 indicates that "the breeze ruffles your cloak, but your steps make no sound."). Though some of the Action Sequences are complicated — "Escaping from Capture" involves nine detailed steps that could take a novice referee as long as an hour of real time to complete— overall, they're excellent templates for teaching referees the intricacies of handling common RPG situations.

If the rules were as elegant as the adventure they support, the LORD OF THE RINGS game would be an unqualified winner. Unfortunately, the game system leans a little too hard on statistics and modifiers, which could easily scare off players with a phobia for numbers. Char-

acters are delineated by a dozen basic attributes, ranging from the expected Strength and Agility to the less obvious Subterfuge and Perception. While the calculation of the attributes is coherently explained, their application isn't always so clear; I'm not sure a novice GM would be able to tell if a character uses Subterfuge or Agility when trying to untie a bound companion. Combat tends to bog down in a morass of attack bonuses, fussy movement restrictions ("A character that is moving at a walk may move up to 50' plus 10' multiplied by his movement bonus"), and hard-to-remember special circumstances ("A moving character may shift items and equipment on his person, but the distance that the character may move is decreased by 10 feet for each item shifted for that round.").

Compared to the combat rules, the magic system is smooth and straightforward. Spell-casting is treated as a skill; a die-roll of 7 or more, modified by the applicable magic bonus, results in a successful casting. But there are only 15 spells, with *fire bolt* the most spectacular of a rather dull selection. The equipment list is likewise skimpy, including basic armor types, generic weapons, and not much else. Hack-and-slashers will be disappointed by the absence of a monster roster.

Evaluation: Quibbles aside, role-playing novices in general and Tolkien fans in particular ought to be tickled pink by the LORD OF THE RINGS game. It's as well-written and graphically attractive as the revised D&D game, only a bit harder to learn. Best of all, it successfully captures the fairy-tale ambience of the novels. Conceivably, this could be used as a bridge to Iron Crown's ambitious MIDDLE-EARTH ROLE-PLAYING* game, but I'd be just as happy sticking with the simpler and more satisfying LORD OF THE RINGS system.

5th edition TUNNELS & TROLLS* game * * * 1/2

96-page softcover book
 Flying Buffalo, Inc. \$10
Design: Ken St. Andre
Editing: Liz Danforth
Cover: Liz Danforth
Interior illustrations: Rob Carver, Liz Danforth, Victoria Poyser

Since its inception in 1975, the TUNNELS & TROLLS* (T&T) game has been dogged by an undeserved reputation as a superficial knock-off of the D&D game. The two games certainly have a lot in common. The T&T game employs many of the same concepts (such as character levels and experience points— here called Adventure Points) and maintains a similar tone (PCs stomp monsters and snatch treasure to acquire ever-increasing levels of power). Even its name sounds suspiciously similar to you-know-what.

But the T&T game presents itself as a reaction to what designer Ken St. Andre

sees as an unnecessarily complicated approach to role-playing. "I just wanted something I could play with my friends at a reasonable price, with reasonable equipment," he says. If you judge an RPG by the thinness of the rule book and the scarcity of charts and tables, he largely succeeded. Whether the T&T system works as a game depends on your ability to improvise within an intentionally loose set of rules and your willingness to overlook the inevitable holes.

Though the writing, editing, and production values of the T&T game have come a long way from its shaky 1st edition, the basic concepts are essentially unchanged; this new edition is virtually identical to its predecessor (by my count, this is the second version of the 5th edition, distinguished only by a better cover and some minor corrections). Players choose from four character classes—warriors, wizards, rogues, and the less-common warrior-wizards—whose randomly determined attributes include Strength, Luck (analogous to saving throws in the D&D system), Intelligence, Constitution (comparable to the D&D game's hit points), Dexterity, and Charisma. After selecting weapons from an impressive list featuring sword canes, piton hammers, and other exotic choices, the PCs are off to the dungeon—make that "tunnel"—to face off against the orcs and ogres who stand between them and untold riches.

What the combat system lacks in realism, it makes up for in simplicity and speed. Essentially, each opponent rolls a fixed number of combat dice, modified by a handful of bonuses or penalties. The low roll is subtracted from the high roll, and the difference is taken as damage by the loser. Monsters have only one pertinent attribute, a "Monster Rating" that represents both the strength of the monster and how much damage it can take. With only a single rating to worry about, referees won't have any trouble running T&T monsters, but they'll have a tough time making them memorable.

Players who don't gag on the cutesy-poop spell names like *Take That You Fiend* and *Hidey Hole* will find the magic system to be exceptionally clever. Mages cast spells by expending strength points. Each spell costs a particular number of points, and when the caster runs out of strength, he can't use magic until he recovers, regaining lost strength at the rate of one point per turn of rest. The effects of certain spells may be increased by expending more than the required number of strength points, and low-level mages may pool their strengths to cast higher-level spells unavailable to them as individuals. Magic staves, which may be created by enchanting regular wood (at a cost as high as 5,000 gold pieces and the risk of an explosion if the enchantment fails), lower the cost of spells by an amount equal to the level of the mage; a *Whammy* spell that ordinarily costs 10 strength points

only requires eight points from a staff-wielding wizard. Overall, magic flows more freely in the T&T system than it does in the basic D&D game, as beginning mages have more options than their D&D equivalents, and high-level spells are more accessible.

A game this simple is imprecise by definition, and the T&T game remains a hair-splitter's delight. Due to the Monster Ratings, there's no meaningful distinction between fighting a giant slug and a drunken swordsman. Spell effects are open to broad interpretation, as are the details of combat. And the experience rules are downright goofy; by my calculation, it takes 712,000,000 experience points to reach 25th level.

Evaluation: The TUNNELS & TROLLS game is by no means the most sophisticated alternative to the D&D game—the AD&D game, the Avalon Hill Game Company's RUNEQUEST* game, and even the new LORD OF THE RINGS game are all better designs—but it's certainly the easiest to learn. A beginner should be able to master it in an afternoon, and a veteran will probably nail it in under an hour. The game's casual approach works best in short spurts rather than extended campaigns, as the system tends to spring leaks once the PCs leave the confines of the dun—...er, tunnel. The game is especially well-suited for solo play, as demonstrated by Flying Buffalo's excellent line of solitaire adventures; check out *Arena of Khazan* and *Sea of Mystery*.

Deluxe Edition TOON* * * * 1/2 game

208-page softcover book
Steve Jackson Games \$20
Design: Greg Costikyan
Development: Warren Spector
Editing: Steve Jackson
Additional material: Allen Varney, Gerald Swick, Kyle Miller, Steve Jackson, William Herz, Caroline Chase, Joseph J. Anthony, Chad Duncan, Russel Grant Collins, Dave Sals, and Andy Egan
Cover: Kyle Miller
Interior illustrations: Kyle Miller and Carl Anderson

I've been reading game reviews for a long time, and I've never run across a product that's received as much attention as the TOON* game. In the pages of this very magazine, it's been covered no less than four times, reviewed in DRAGON® issues #92 and #144, discussed in Michael Dobson's "Bad Idea, Good Game" article in issue #106, and plugged again in DRAGON issue #178's editorial. The attention has been almost universally positive, and deservedly so. From conception through execution, the TOON game is a brilliant design, as appealing to beginners as veterans, and easily the hands-down funniest RPG ever to see the light of day. With the publication of the deluxe edition—a single volume that combines the original 1984

game with the *TOON Silly Stuff*, *Son of TOON*, and *TOON Strikes Again* supplements, as well as a few all-new bonus adventures—the hold-outs have run out of excuses; this is the definitive TOON game, and it's worth a look from anyone who's ever laughed out loud at Daffy Duck or empathized with Wile E. Coyote.

Aside from some light editing, the rules are identical to the those in the original edition. Briefly, the TOON game is set in a world of cartoons, not unlike that of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (which the TOON game predates by a good four years), a wildly chaotic setting where the laws of physics are as unwelcome as common sense. Players assume the roles of animated characters, literally any creature or object they can dream up; I've been Irma the Ironing Board, and my wife is fond of Willy the Weremouse. PCs are loosely defined by four attributes—Muscle, Zip, Smarts, and Chutzpah—and individualized by an imaginative assortment of skills called shticks, ranging from the self-explanatory Incredible Luck to the off-the-wall Coat of Arms (the ability to generate a mechanical arm from a cloak or other garment to produce ray guns, cream pies, or whatever else the character desires). To round him (it?) out, a character is assigned a natural enemy to serve as a recurring villain (Willy the Weremouse's natural enemy is Frankencheddar the Undead Cheese), along with a belief, a personal credo that centers the PC's personality (Irma the Ironing Board's Belief is *I Must Smooth Out Wrinkles Wherever I May Find Them*, which had interesting consequences in our nursing-home adventure).

The referee—or Animator, in TOON-talk—regulates the action by simple dice rolls and random whims. Should the game get out of control, baffled Animators are encouraged to use the Fifty-Percent Rule, where an ambiguous situation is reduced to a "Yes or No" question; a 1-3 result on a six-sided die means "Yes," 4-6 means "No." Characters who run into walls or fall into food processors lose a die's worth of hit points. A PC reduced to zero hit points doesn't die, he just Falls Down; the player sits out for three minutes of real time, after which he rejoins the game, his character fully recovered. An adventure usually lasts an hour or less, ending abruptly with a crackpot finale. Suggested climaxes include an avalanche of hot fudge that buries all concerned, and a garbage truck that mistakes the PCs for litter and hauls them all to the dump.

The adventures themselves emulate Warner Brothers' cartoons—that is, they're heavy on slapstick violence and light on Walt Disney-ish whimsy. The TOON Deluxe game features more than a dozen adventures of various lengths, the best of which are Warren Spector's "The Better House-trap," where the PCs take on a gang of hostile kitchen appliances, and Allen Varney's "Now Museum, Now You Don't," a light spoof of D&D-styled fantasy sce-

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narios featuring a magic mirror that displays public television documentaries and a cursed gem called the Hatsabad Diamond. For the industrious, the "TOON Adventure Generator" shows how to create cartoon plots from scratch. The "Places to Go" chapter details the Robot Factory, the Incredibly Busy Street, and other generic settings in which to stage original adventures, while the "Cartoon Stars" chapter lists statistics and background notes for Morty Tortoise, Professor Main-spring, and thirteen other oddball NPCs.

Evaluation: So if TOON is so great, why the qualified recommendation? Like West Ends PARANOIA* game, R. Talsorian's TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* game, and other humorous RPGs, the TOON game places a disproportionate burden on the referee; not only must he adjudicate the rules and keep the story on track, he's got to have a flair for funny business. And if you've ever suffered through an attempted joke from a humor-impaired friend, you know that comedy doesn't come naturally to everyone. However, for a referee with an affinity for the absurd and a group of like-minded players, the TOON game can be terrific fun.

Short and sweet

TALES OF THE FLOATING VAGABOND* game, by Lee Garvin, Nick Atlas, and John Huff. The Avalon Hill Game Company, \$14. I like adolescent humor as much as the next guy, and I've got the Three Stooges videos to prove it. This is why I was looking forward to the TALES OF THE FLOAT. ING VAGABOND game, the new RPG from Avalon Hill that unapologetically celebrates dumbness.

The game takes place in a lunatic version of the bar from *Star Wars* (The Floating Vagabond), a hang-out for insectoid swashbucklers, brain-dead wizards, and other assorted weirdos, including the PCs. Using the Vagabond as a interdimensional launching pad, characters bounce through a variety of logic-free adventures in just about any era and genre of the referee's choice, periodically finding themselves locked in mortal combat with the evil Space Nazis or the People's Revolutionary Temperance League.

The PCs derive from a gallery of motley archetypes, such as the Tough Guy and the Bounty Hunter, souped up with gloriously stupid shticks (shades of the TOON game!). Typical shticks include the Schwarzenegger Effect, in which the PC remains totally oblivious to the damage he's taken until he drops dead, and the Rogers and Hammerstein Effect, where the PC's every move is heralded by his personal theme song. Skills, acquired through the expenditure of skill points, include Swing Nasty Pointy Thing, Party Like A Madman, and Belching For Effect.

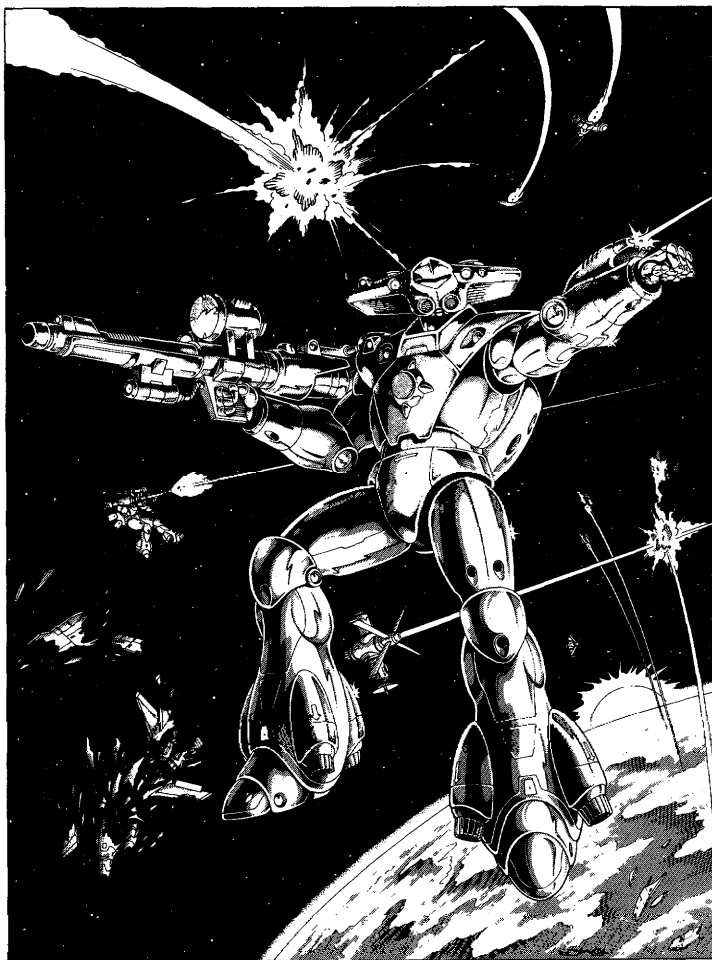
The game lacks the courage of its own convictions however, as the engaging inanities are dulled by a set of rules that rely too much on number crunching and not enough on low comedy. The combat system is a yawner employing hit bonuses, weapon ranges, and damage tables. Skill use involves difficulty levels, skill modi-

fiers, and default penalties. Who cares about the mass category of the Militech laster-blasters? I want to know more about Projectile Vomiting. There's enough inventive material here for veteran role-players to develop into a suitably crazed campaign, but novices are likely to flounder. Meanwhile, I'm keeping my fingers crossed for a revision; here's hoping that when the designers get around to it, they spend less time with weapon tables and more with Larry, Moe, and Curly.

D&D Rules Cyclopedia, by Aaron Allston. TSR, Inc., \$25. A compilation and revision of the old D&D boxed series (comprising the Basic, Expert, Companion, and Masters boxes), this stunningly comprehensive volume begins where the revised D&D set barely scratches the surface, carrying characters all the way to the 36th level. The book includes more detail than most GMs will ever use in all my years of D&D gaming, I've never needed to know the cost of keeping an archduke in my stronghold (it's 700 gp per day), but if you want it, you can probably find it here. Of particular interest to old-timers are the special sections on skills (including such entries as Intimidation and Food Tasting, notably absent in both the secondary skill and non-weapon proficiency lists in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Players Handbook*) and the informative look at the Known World and HOLLOW WORLD™ game settings. Best of all, the material is a joy to read, thanks to the breezy style of Aaron Allston, who must've been genetically engineered to write RPG rules. This is a must for serious fans.

Tharkold, by Paul Hume and Greg Gordon. West End Games, \$18. I didn't get too excited about the first round of TORG* game supplements, as the blend of science-fiction, fantasy, and horror never seemed to jell. But the designers have hit their stride with *Tharkold*, a bone-rattling sourcebook describing a decadent Los Angeles besieged by the Tharkoldu, a demonic race of aliens who relate to humans like sharks relate to raw meat. A compelling array of new monsters and exotic technology complements a week-by-week accounting of the Tharkoldu invasion and a grim tour of Beverly Hills, Compton, and other hot spots. Absent in previous TORG products but delightfully present here is an undercurrent of black humor. For instance, we're told of a Burbank TV studio that's home to a program titled *L.A. Challenge*, where desperate citizens are enticed to perform suicidal stunts with a promise of impressive prizes for their designated heirs; being meticulous entrepreneurs, the producers are planning to film 130 episodes so they can sell the series in syndication. Can a Tharkoldian version of *Jeopardy* be far behind?

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I am writing in response to the first letter in DRAGON® issue #177, entitled "DM's dilemma: Fee or free?" I agree that this can be a very touchy subject, and a good case can be made for either side of this issue. Still, I felt motivated to write and express several ideas I have on the subject.

First, the writer is correct that many players who do not themselves act as referees may not appreciate the amount of work that goes into running a game. Gaming is not cheap if you go into all the extras, such as figures, elaborate props, maps, modules, character sheets, and extra dice to replace the ones your mother vacuumed up. Then there are all the supplies that you need but don't use during the game itself, such as brushes and paints for the figures, reference material, gaming magazines, etc. And don't forget the nongaming items that you need during the game itself: drinks, munchies, napkins, ice, and so on.

I have found the best way to organize all this is to have as many different people in the group as possible run games, ideally each one running not only a different campaign but also an entirely different game system. Play one adventure through in one game, then switch to the next one. This way, the expense and work of DMing is more or less evenly distributed between everyone in the group, plus you get to play different characters in different games so you don't get burned out playing the same one all the time. The group should rotate the location of the game each session, playing at a different person's home so that no one person gets stuck with "entertaining" the group every time. Lastly, let everybody take care of bringing his own drinks and munchies. This solves problems such as one person always "forgetting" to bring something, or bringing something that somebody else in the group doesn't like or can't eat.

However, on the topic of actually charging for your DMing services, I have to agree with Mr. Moore that this idea creates more problems than it solves. He makes a good point that players, too, spend money on their gaming. Money is very dear to most people, especially in these tough economic times, and disputes over money

can easily destroy friendships and break up gaming groups. However, if the referee uses modules a lot, there is one way that it's feasible for players to more or less "pay" their DM. Instead of paying several dollars each for the honor of playing in the DM's game, the players can all chip in and pay for the module that the DM is going to use next. This way the players aren't paying the referee personally, and there isn't as much pressure on the DM to perform as he's not using his own adventure, merely running a pre-made one.

Ian Johnson
Asheville NC

After reading about the "DM's dilemma: Feet of free or free?" letter in DRAGON issue #177, I was slightly shocked. Although it is labeled a "very touchy" topic, this was the first I had ever heard of it. From the moment I finished the column, I had already formed an opinion of it: I strongly disliked the concept. To me, it seemed, well, for lack of a better word, an abomination of the position of the Dungeon Master. I have DMed various games (most notably TSR's AD&D® game and Palladium's ROBOTECH® game) for about seven years. It is impossible to express in words the sense of fulfillment it gives me. Strangely enough, I can count the number of adventures I have participated in from the player's perspective on my left hand, and not use all my fingers.

By the letter author's various gripes about the amount of work involved, I can discern that he is not cut from the cloth true DMs are made from. Sure, I have experienced exactly what he has, sometimes worse. At the moment, I am organizing a campaign for my high school's strategic games club. Immediately, I had 11 people eager to play, and I turned away none of them. For the past week, I have been writing the module in which they will play. This translates into many late nights (up to seven hours a day) and missed schoolwork (unwise, I know). I will not kid you: It is tremendously difficult, mostly because of the sheer volume of work I must do. Yes, I have been known to let a complaint slip out from time to time. But every minute of effort will be worth the satisfaction I will get when I see the player characters defeat the kobold leader/shaman and liberate Kurtulmak's Temple. Simply put, the satisfaction I get out of my labors far surpasses any effort I put in. If the author does not feel this personal satisfaction from his DMing, I suggest he try a new position, or the selective crown of DMing is too small for his head. I am in full agreement with Mr. Moore's comment, "I strongly feel that being a DM is a labor of love."

Jay Kirkman
Fairfield CT

I could not believe the audacity of the unnamed person [in issue #177] who wrote to your magazine and proposed that DMs should charge for the adventures they write (and presumably run). Admittedly, this question arose in our group, and we settled it in a mature fashion—for our group we have three DMs, each of us with our own "specialty" that we run; we buy our own munchies and freely cover for someone else who may be short on funds, and transportation fees are handled the same way. When it comes to the adventures that are run, they are either "store-bought" or the DM has written his own. The cost is defrayed by having every one participate and have fun—it doesn't matter who bought what, or how much time went into preparation, because between three DMs it all balances out in the end.

The best advice I can give to those DMs who write great adventures and want to get paid for it is to send for the writers' guidelines for DUNGEON® Adventures [Send an SASE to: Module Guidelines, DUNGEON Adventures, PO. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.] and send in those ideas!

Tracy Greathouse
Bedford Heights OH

It is sad that it took the death of a close friend to make me write this letter.

I've read your magazine since I was about 12 years old, rarely missing an issue, and I've had very few complaints. The most bothersome item has been letters from players or DMs who have had problems with the others in their groups. I'm talking about problems that occur during a session, such as characters killing or stealing from other characters. This problem plagued our campaign several years ago.

There were nine of us in the beginning, around 1983. We played just about every weekend, and it was expected of the group to have at least one all-night session each month. We lived for those games. For myself and others, it was the ultimate social event. Because of this, I was labeled a misfit (geek, nerd, and worse) by my classmates. I didn't care, though. I had the game, and more important, I had my friends to share it with. Who could ask for more, right?

During our junior and senior years in high school, the first problems arose. There were a lot of arguments, fights, and hatreds toward each other. Vendettas were started and flourished in the game. Someone's PC would steal from or kill someone else's character, and the problem would become more and more uncontrollable. Eventually, it developed into an out-of-game problem. Some of us stopped talking to each other, and there was an endless repetition of verbal back-stabbing. The group split up.

I happened to keep all those individuals as friends. We had a few gaming sessions, but they didn't compare with the games we used to know. When you're used to eight-PC games and then have to make do with only three PCs, the game starts to lose its appeal. Then, I became disenchanted with it all and left the fold.

Last January, I received a letter from my parents. They also enclosed a newspaper clipping about one of my old gaming pals. During the Persian Gulf war, he was assigned to the 82nd Engineers. While his platoon was clearing an Iraqi mine field, one of the mines went off, killing him and seven others.

The news came like a thunderbolt. I stood there dumbfounded. I refused to accept his death. "He's not dead. He's not dead" I kept repeating to myself. The news also struck my

friends hard.

My wish was to have at least been at his funeral, but I was assigned to a military training school at the time and couldn't leave by orders of my superiors. The others did go and, possibly for the first time in years, talked to each other.

We all regretted that we couldn't tell him how we felt about him as our friend. We loved him. We just wished he could have lived long enough for us to become friends again and forgive everything we'd said about him and the others.

It's too late to do that now. At least, we can't tell him face-to-face like we'd hoped. All we can do is visit his grave and ask the silence to forgive us for what we've done.

My message to the players and DMs is: Don't let differences interfere with your friendships. It can be hard at the time to just let it go when Bork the fighter has just killed your favorite character, but think of what can come of it. I made that mistake years ago and now I have to pay. Don't let a bad game ruin a good friendship.

If you print this, please withhold my name. Thank you,

In response to Geof Gilmore's "Forum" letter on psionics in DRAGON issue #178, I have brainstormed and come up with a few suggestions.

As a DM for the last six years, I have found few opponents that are as vile or powerful as a villainous psionist. Since the introduction of the *Complete Psionics Handbook*, I have had an archvillainess behind the scenes wreaking havoc with my campaign's characters and their friends. The requirements to be a member of the psionist character class virtually guarantee an intelligent and devious opponent. While this has been beneficial for the mood and intensity of my campaign, if I unleashed her upon my PCs with no restrictions other than those in the above-mentioned book, they would be mere fodder feeding the giant space hamsters of great renown.

To tone down the power of the psionist, I have made a few alterations and included a few more restrictions on the class. Included in these restrictions are all non-humanoid psionic creatures.

Psionists may no longer engage in any other actions during the use of a psionic ability; this includes the loss of half movement for the character and dexterity bonus to armor class. (This is the price spell-casters pay to cast a spell.) Failure on a power score roll results in the full loss of PSPs, not half (a disrupted spell is wiped from the spell-caster). Only one power may be maintained at a time, although a one-shot ability is still usable. Matching a power score results in an extension in duration instead of an enhancement of power. (Do wizards get "super" fireballs?) Any failed ability that was directed at an individual alerts the victim to "something tampering with your mind or body." In addition, that particular ability is of no use to the psionist against that opponent until next level or, in the case of nonhumanoids, until a month has passed. Multiple conflicts, as per page 24 of the *Complete Psionics Handbook*, should be restricted or eliminated where it pertains to individual minds being in contact with a single psionist—there's simply too much input for the psionist to handle effectively.

I hope my input will be helpful in determining any changes to the psionist character class that may be deemed necessary in a campaign to balance the odds. I do believe psionists are too powerful in comparison to other, more traditional character classes. Imagine the shock experienced when my 16th-level paladin slew two of his friends at the behest of a 9th-level psionist with the Body Control ability! I would

like to hear the official TSR argument in this matter as well.

Maurice Sprague
Phoenix AZ

Okay, now that everyone has had a chance to playtest the psionist, I want to know what other people think of the class.

The psionist character was a great idea. The first time I read through it, I decided that the CPH was the best written of all the handbooks. But now that I've had a chance to see it played, I decided that it's way too powerful. Unlike the mage, the psionist character never goes through a stage of weakness. He never need worry about spell components or even being interrupted during casting. Mages have saving throws and magic resistance to deal with, but nothing of the sort ever comes the psionist's way, except for maybe a power check failure (but with decent placement of ability scores, this is a rarity).

This is the first campaign I have had the pleasure of playing along with a psionist, and I had a feeling that maybe they were a bit powerful when our 2nd-level psionist single-handedly Disintegrated a greater wolfwere. I suggested to our DM after our psionist alone defeated a shadow dragon with the Invincible Foes power and a handful of caltrops that he might want to start granting powerful creature psionic resistance equal to their magic resistance.

Something must be done to restore balance to the game. Magic has lost its arcane power to the influx of psionics. I have suggested to our DM to drop all of a psionist's base power scores by four, thus giving him a chance to fail every once

in a while.

And what about wild and dead psionic zones? If wild-magic and dead-magic zones were created after the Time of Troubles in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, and seeing how psionic power is a natural, "nonmagical" art, why not have wild and dead psionic zones, too?

I guess I'm just another player of an angered mage who would like to see the shadow of the psionist removed and the power of centuries of arcane studies return mages to their positions in the ever-changing power structure of the realms.

Brad Allison
Laurinburg NC

After reading Mr. Detwiler's article in DRAGON issue #173, "Magic Mangling Made Easy," I found many of his ideas quite disturbing. While it is possible that a poorly run campaign might allow spell-casters to become overly powerful, I don't believe the suggestions in the article are the answer. Rather, they will probably prove to be unnecessary, unwelcome, and damaging to the campaign in the end.

Although there are a wide variety of wizard classes in the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, none of them are disproportionately powerful when compared to the other classes. As long as the rules concerning spell-casting are properly enforced, there should be no problems; any class can become unbalanced when the rules are ignored. Although Mr. Detwiler makes reference to the rules in his article, he is not suggesting you enforce them as written. The point of the article is to render spell-casters, primarily wizards, useless through bizarre and detrimental coincidences, inflicting all manner

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of unrealistic hardships upon them.

While it is true that spell-casting requires complete concentration, the mage is not totally oblivious to everything around him, nor is his concentration so feeble and easily disrupted as Mr. Detwiler suggests. I strongly resist the notion that light (nondamaging) pebbles thrown at the caster could disrupt his concentration. Unless they were hurled with considerable force (such as from a sling), such a light object wouldn't even be felt through the mage's robes, and an armored cleric would be totally oblivious to such a feeble attempt. Unless you can hit the caster in the head consistently, you can forget that idea. There are many distracting things that will not ruin a spell-caster's concentration; the din and confusion of battle is a good example. If every loud noise ruined a spell, mages would be practically useless in a campaign and a distinct liability in combat.

Now, in the midst of a furious melee, just try telling the party's mage that his spell was ruined because one of the other party members bumped him or a hacked-off bit of armor hit him, all this despite the group's perfectly executed attack formation. Most players don't appreciate this kind of high-handed manipulation of their characters. Players like difficulties they can overcome and foes they can vanquish. When they begin falling prey to bizarre feats of bad luck that they can't resist or overcome, their senses of humor will wear thin. Some might simply roll their eyes and decide the gods hate them, but most, especially after repeated incidents, will feel cheated by some whim of the DM and grow to resent his mage-bashing. No one wants to feel like the DM's helpless play-

thing. If you tell your party's mage that his best spell was ruined when the noise of indoor combat makes a stone or bit of plaster fall from the ceiling and hit him on the head, see how he likes it (especially after the third or fourth time it happens).

On the subject of spell components, while it's true that the loss or destruction of a mage's components can ruin him, it should be a very rare occurrence indeed. Any good mage will realize that his components are nearly as valuable as his spell books and take measures to protect them. Perishable components would be preserved if possible and kept in good containers if not. Mages will generally have all their components safely sealed away except for the few they plan to use for spells they currently have memorized. If an absent-minded mage decides to cross a river without taking precautions to protect the sugar in his pouch despite his high intelligence, that's one thing. On the other hand, if he's not bright enough to keep his spare supply in a tightly closed bottle, one must wonder how the numbskull ever got to be a mage in the first place. Many mundane things must be taken for granted in the game to prevent it from bogging down completely. You assume the warriors in the party spend some time each day cleaning and oiling their arms and armor. If they didn't, these items would quickly become pitted, corroded, and useless. All characters should be given enough credit to know their own business.

The article's treatment of allergies is simply ludicrous. First, the tendency to be allergic, if not having a specific allergy, is genetic and hereditary. You cannot catch an allergy like you

can a cold or flu. Second, an allergic reaction occurs when a foreign protein enters the body and is attacked by antibodies; the resulting wastes damage nearby cells. At any rate, no reaction can occur until the antibodies are produced by the body. Although a very allergic person can produce them faster, it still takes time.

The idea that a mage could be prevented from casting a *fireball* because of an allergy to one of the components is ridiculous. If the momentary contact with that small amount of material caused any reaction at all, it would be very minor and appear several minutes later. The only circumstances that might possibly cause a problem involves sustained exposure to the allergic substance, and in most cases this wouldn't affect spell-casting in the slightest. Some spells, like *spider climb* and *identify* (in which the material components must be ingested by the caster), probably would cause a reaction from an allergic caster, but not until several minutes after the spell is cast. Components applied to the skin, as in the spell *friends* for example, also might cause reactions.

At any rate, the very idea of making characters allergic to things they need strikes me as cruel and unusual. If you think your players will be upset when a character is made allergic to horses, just tell a mage that he's now allergic to his familiar. Trying to remove some magically inflicted allergy from the party might make for an interesting adventure, but inflicting these vicious and unrealistic allergies on a character could quickly turn your normally cheerful gaming group into a lynch mob. And no, mages should not be more likely to have allergies (even normal ones) than fighters, unless the mages' parents did.

As a DM, I'm not totally opposed to relieving characters of their "extra" magical items, but it must be done with a certain amount of tact. Occasionally an item will fail a saving throw and be destroyed, or may be lost or bargained away in a deal. A powerful NPC may even offer to buy the item. But just remember, you can only encounter so many rust monsters and disenchanters before your players cease to take your campaign seriously.

In closing, let me say that if you play either the AD&D or D&D® game by the rules, you won't have any problem balancing the characters in your party. Only you, as the DM, can make someone too powerful. You determine what spells a wizard can find and add to his book, and you decide the number and power of magical items in the party. The best way to prevent spell-casters (or any other character type) from overpowering your campaign is to keep them legal in the first place, and the best way to correct the problem once it starts is to enforce the rules you've neglected. Finally, always use your head. You can create challenges for your group without resorting to unrealistic manipulations; these will only make your players feel like they're being toyed with.

Allen McMillan
Vancouver WA

This is regarding Justin Kelley's letter in the March "Forum" (DRAGON issue #179). I have one question. Who said you had to throw the spell on the target? There is nothing in the rules that says you can't take an indirect approach.

For example, take the dig spell. At 25th level, the caster can dig a hole as large as 3,125 cubic feet, and holes don't glow in the dark. Or this master mage could cast *transmute rock to mud* which, at the 25th level of effect, can change as

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much as 500 cubic feet of rock into goopy mud. Remember, the term is "magic resistance," not "mud resistance."

A good spell for priests is *earthquake*. Take a look at what it can do in caverns and tunnels. Keep in mind that a collapsing cavern roof is not magical, so magic resistance won't help. To paraphrase a modern-day military term, you can't magic-resist a rock. By the way, the area of effect for an earthquake spell cast by a 25th-level cleric is 125' in diameter. Depending on the composition of the cavern or tunnel, this could mean tons of stone on the poor monster's head. At least this could mean a delay in his plans concerning your party.

By the way, the first monster in the basic *Monstrous Compendium* that has a magic resistance rating is the young adult black dragon; having 10% is hardly a formidable rating.

Many monsters with a magic resistance rating also usually have underlings, not all of whom also have a magic resistance rating. Instead of throwing that *confusion* spell on the mature adult red dragon, try throwing it on the accompanying gnolls, and watch the fun. In one adventure, my mage and a dwarf were the last survivors of a disastrous expedition. We were heading for the exit on a *flying broom* when we were beset by a swarm of bats. I cast my very first *lightning bolt* and did a total of 29 hp of damage (out of a possible 30). We later learned the vampire who had set the bats upon us had decided, when he saw his "flock" go poof, to leave us alone. We got out of the dungeon.

Encourage the person playing the party wizard to be inventive, to come up with new and interesting ways to use spells. A *lightning bolt* cast at just the right spot can cause damage far

beyond its usual effects. A simple *charm* spell cast on a baatezu's underling could do wonders. Encourage her to experiment. The party magus could surprise you.

To paraphrase a theater saying: There are no ineffective spells, only stodgy magi. Be creative, use those spells in ways the designers never intended, and watch the monsters run away.

Alan Kellogg
San Diego CA

This is in response to Justin Kelley's letter in DRAGON issue #179 about how he feels that the AD&D 2nd Edition game is "killing off" the mage class. Before I continue, I assume that all his arguments are concerning the wizard group in general, including all the specialist schools such as those in the 2nd Edition *Players Handbook* and the *Tome of Magic* supplement.

In my 10 years of contact with the AD&D game and role-playing in general, I have never encountered anyone who feels that wizards are a weaker class. Generally, the consensus is that they are the most interesting, dynamic, and colorful of characters to play—my own first character was an illusionist, when I was seven. As a DM, one of my problems is trying to persuade the players to pick a varied selection of character classes—most want to be specialist wizards. To date, most of the PCs in my campaigns have been wizards.

In my view, all Mr. Kelley's friends' problems stem from the fact his group plays in such unrecommended "troubled waters"—his group plays at very high levels. The only campaign I know of that is still running (and has been doing so for four years now) in which such levels of play are used is a "one-on-one," with the charac-

ter being a mage with a strong liking for necromantic spells. Most of these adventures take place on the Outer Planes, where magic-resistant creatures are most commonly encountered. The mage is now 24th level and has survived many deadly scrapes, but he usually hasn't too much problem with magic resistance, since his tactics involve affecting the areas around creatures, such as *disintegrating* the area under the creature. One favorite is to *telekinetically* lift rocks and boulders above a creature, then cause the spell to stop, dropping the load on the victim. At such high levels, a great deal of matter could be unloaded in this fashion. Tactics are what makes the wizard character so interesting and attractive; just look at all the villains in adventures who are wizards! If the designer didn't think wizards were, in all their deviousness, challenging enough, he would have stuck in a fighter or cleric instead!

All I can recommend to remedy this situation is for the group to cooperate better tactically. Who's to say that the wizard ever has to participate in the battle, anyway? Why can't he concentrate on defenses for the party or himself, reconnoitering (there is a huge number of spells available for this) or performing many other tasks. Two other schools of magic spring to mind that would help: conjuration/summoning and illusion/phantasm. Indirect help—such as mentioned earlier—can often be as good as the more direct effects that, say, a fighter would have. This is readily shown by using the example of conjuration/summoning spells, such as the *monster summoning* variants. Add the use of *animate dead* and abjurations to these, and the mage could easily turn the tide of many battles—even those above 20th level.

Since a greater number of spells to choose from means a greater range of possibilities, the logical conclusion would be that there are then more possible tactics. Because of this, I recommend that the group and, in particular, the player of the mage, purchase AD&D supplements (especially the *Complete Wizard's Handbook* and the *Tome of Magic*). The latter would be of special value since it contains a spell that could solve many problems—the spell is called *lower resistance*, and the title is self-explanatory.

I think the idea that not only are mages a weaker class but that the AD&D 2nd Edition game is killing them off is absurd. A huge amount of material is produced for wizards, more than any other class. It is not often you see new weapons or combat rules at the end of published scenarios, for example, but you often see new spells.

I can suggest one thing to the player of the mage that has been the butt of all the jokes—don't take it! Warn the players to lay off, and if they don't, fry them! No, honest! Fly above them with *improved invisibility* and other defenses, and let fly with those *meteor swarms*! Maybe then you can get some respect, since the party is not likely to get up to the position you are now in, let alone stand up to a potential number of five barrages of *meteor swarms*.

Arlo J. White
Northern Ireland
Ω

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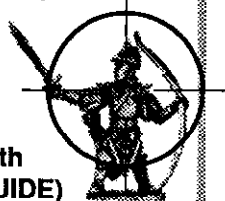
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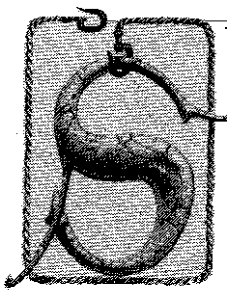
A Main Selection of the Science Fiction Book Club



A BANTAM SPECTRA HARDCOVER







ome years ago, Nemra required a pledge of me that I would never reveal the location of his home. I gave my word, because I thought the temptation would likely prove too much for most of us, and because it is always unwise to reject Nemra's requests. For though his artistic nature forbids any killing in the line of duty, this scruple does not extend to murders that are necessary for concealment.

So it will have to do to tell you that Nemra lives in a certain house on a certain street in a certain city, without going into the north, south, east, or west of it. The house is a large one but more than a little frayed at the edges. Seeing it, you might wonder why anyone, particularly a successful artist such as Nemra, would live inside.

But inside, where few go, the rooms are furnished with items so old, so new, so large, or so small that their market value is above that of the common run of human lives. Everything is stolen, of course: some things on commission and others for the challenge they presented. For Nemra is a master in the Guild of Thieves. Do not rate him too high; I do not mean to suggest that he is a Zagrajosa or a Macavity. But in these lesser, latter days, he is the master of masters, the premier artist of his trade, and it is from this building that missed its calling when it was not turned into a slum that he conducts his commissioned works.

Customers do not enter the building; business with Nemra is conducted on the doorstep. A man or woman with more funds than morals knocks in a certain way on the door. The door opens, and the customer says, "There is a certain emerald which is owned by a man named Schiel."

Nemra nods. A quarter of all the inanimate valuables on the Earth have passed through his hands, and the locations of the rest are known to him. He speaks one word, generally a number. The customer must agree at once; one does not bargain with an artist. Nemra names a date and closes the door.

On the date named, a hand holding a jewel that Mr. Schiel has not yet missed reaches through a window of the customer's house. The customer holds out a bag that would clink prettily if Nemra allowed it to do so. If the sack contains the sum agreed upon (and Nemra will know, by the feel of it), the jewel falls from the hand, and hand and sack withdraw through the window.

Various wild tales describe what Nemra does with the money he earns, ranging from the buying of children to sacrifice to some god of thieves, to the bribing of government officials throughout the world that they may move in accordance with some great game of chess Nemra plays to relax his mind. For my part, I feel there is nothing Nemra would buy that Nemra could not steal, and so I have no theory. But I have little faith in tales of some god of thieves, for Nemra has demonstrated very little fear of gods.

On a certain day, a certain number of years ago, a certain art dealer, who if I mentioned his name would have his lawyers hound me through the streets, walked down a certain street and knocked on a certain door. When the

How Nemra Added a Line to the *Book of Thieves*

By Dan Crawford

Illustration by Kevin Ward

door was opened, the dealer whispered, "There are four statues in the Hall of the Priests of Mokhra."

Nemra did not speak for a moment, though he did nod. When he did speak, it was to name a sum that made the dealer, accustomed to buying for such kings and emperors as could afford his services, turn pale. But he quickly agreed and turned away, mentally computing the sum he could realize on the sale of his wife and children.

Behind the rough wooden door, Nemra was likewise thoughtful, counting on his fingers and muttering names. Once he had muttered the names of Klipton, Lamor, and Tetion, he nodded again and took down a shapeless gray hat from a jade hatstand. He left the house and walked toward the sea.

For though it is written in the *Book of Thieves* by the hand of Semag that "The true professional prefers to work alone," still it is written in older ink by the hand of Lap-poirtime that "The true professional need not be a pack horse." Nemra had never seen the statues of Mokhra, but he knew them to be large and heavy, and he knew also that the temple which sheltered them was awake and watchful. Even Nemra could not make four trips into an unsleeping building and return, and he could not carry the complete set of statues in one trip. Then, too, the sea came between his home and the Temple of Mokhra, and he could not carry even one statue across water.

You and I, we could not have gone into the places Nemra entered and come out again breathing. But the master thief returned from those unfriendly dives, followed by three assistants, one of whom he had called from a table, one from a bed, and one from a cabinet. These three would do his bidding and receive no pay for it. What profit they derived would come in the form of whispers: "Nemra used them." This was an endorsement to be neither bought nor stolen. Also, they knew it is written in the *Book of Thieves* by the hand of Widh that "By watching the true professional are true professionals made."

When the foursome arrived at the Temple of Mokhra, they found it unpopulated but unlocked. Each thief knew the significance of that, but when Nemra slid the door open, wide enough for a kitten to pass but not a cat, each slipped through without pause. Klipton had gained weight. When he pushed through, the door slid open an additional eighth of an inch. Nemra frowned, but he kept his hand from his knife. He would have need of Klipton's wide back.

The first room of the Hall of the Priests of Mokhra glittered with diamonds and other gems, brought in appeasement by Mokhra's worshippers. The thieves gave these only as much thought as was required to walk over them without making noise. The unlikely form of Mokhra rose above them, rendered in granite with accuracy and artistry to drive a dozen sculptors to despair. The clawed hand of Mokhra gripped a weapon of strange design, the blade of which was buried in a granite victim. Studying the supple and sinister grace of the piece, Nemra wondered whether the price he had named was too low. But he nodded to Tetion. As she unwrapped a long strap from around her body, Nemra and the other two thieves moved into the second room. Klipton stumbled over an emerald. Nemra frowned again.

Noon seemed to shine around the second room, but this was only the glow of silver ornaments polished with human blood. Having no need of more silver, Nemra gazed only on the statue. Here Mokhra twisted the webs that hung from one crooked arm, winding them around the neck of another granite victim. The carving was precise, perfect, from the smallest claw on Mokhra's knees to the last constricted vein in the victim's throat. Nemra nodded to Klipton and went on with Lamor to the third room.

They stood in the door when they heard a faint sigh. Nemra frowned again and pursed his lips. Nemra's third frown is invariably fatal. When he turned, his knife was in his hand, but Klipton was not to be seen.

Lamor saw him first, taking the place of the victim in Mokhra's webbing. Yet Mokhra seemed not to have moved.

Nemra looked beyond, to the first room in the Hall of the Priests of Mokhra. All that could be seen for certain was Tetion's strap, poured across the floor, unrolled, unmoving.

Lamor looked at his master. Nemra nodded toward the third room. Lamor did not hesitate.

The price of several continents was strewn around the base of the third statue. Mokhra here exerted himself. Three granite hands held down a struggling granite victim (whether female or male it was too late to tell) while the rest of Mokhra's hands were engaged in unkind processes involving notched and edged instruments. Lamor's hands trembled a bit, but at Nemra's next nod he brought forth long tongs and levers with which he could move a heavy object and never touch it. Nemra moved on alone.

He stood motionless for two hours, waiting for Lamor's screams and their echoes to die. When startled silence resumed, and no sign that outside attention had been attracted could be perceived, he stepped into the fourth room. This statue was said to be the largest of the lot. If he could deliver it to the dealer, he might redeem as much as a fifth of what he had asked for the whole set.

Paper littered the floor, each slip being a pledge of such things as humans would do best not to bargain away. Nemra did not see them, fluttering around his feet. His eyes were on the statue that filled half the room. He studied it for some time, holding motionless in his hands the instruments with which he could have lifted the temple, had he a buyer and the inclination.

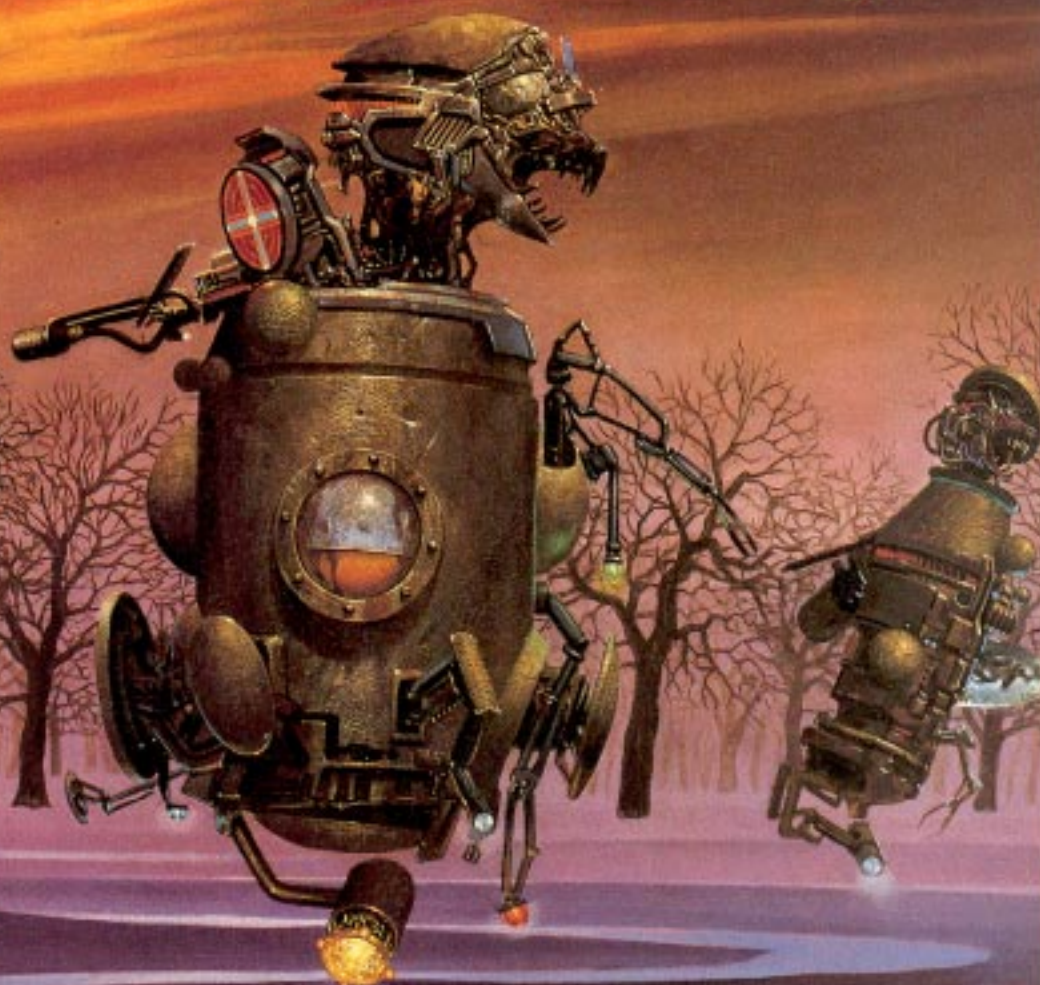
When his examination of the statue was complete and he had taken in all the details of the operations being performed by the various limbs and claws, Nemra silently tucked the tongs and levers back into place about his person and walked from the temple, sparing no glance for the petrifying bodies of Lamor, Klipton, and Tetion. He took Lamor's boat and returned through the darkness to his tumbling home.

Thus it was that a certain art dealer retained possession of his family, and thus it was that the Hall of the Priests of Mokhra went again undefiled.

And thus it was that you can see written in the *Book of Thieves*, in the hand of Nemra, "The true professional knows when it is better to return empty-handed."

Ω

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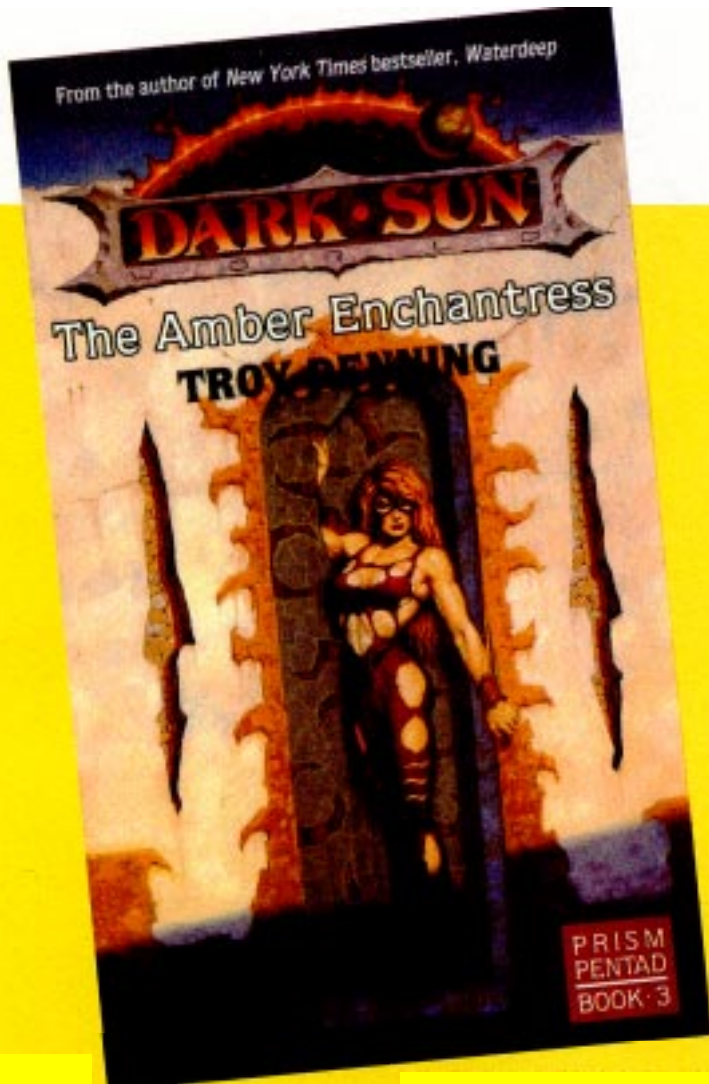
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NOVEL

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by Sue Weinlein

Author sheds light on DARK SUN™ books



What can readers expect from *The Amber Enchantress*, coming in October? Author Troy Denning provides a few advance peeks into the plot of the third novel in the DARK SUN™ Prism Pentad.

The book follows the sensual enchantress Sadira on her journey to the Pristine Tower, a place guarding many secrets to Athas's magical past. At the end of her quest lies a confrontation with Borys, the Dragon. "I think the readers will definitely be interested in finding out about the Dragon and his relationship to the history of the world," Denning said.

While readying herself for this immense challenge, Sadira must resolve her internal struggle between the powers of dark sorcery and the curative magic that could heal her world. "*The Amber Enchantress*

is the book in the series that deals most overtly with good and evil," the author explained. "Sadira's the one that straddles the line the most."

On her quest, Sadira meets her long-lost father, Faenacyon, an elven smuggler, gave up his half-breed daughter to slavery when she was a child. "Their relationship is a particularly Athasian one," Denning said. The sorceress's encounter with her father gave Denning the opportunity to reveal more about the Athasian elf heritage. He explores the culture of Athasian elves, including their architecture and ambivalent personalities.

However, Denning is not yet ready to shed light on all the mystery surrounding the race of Athasian elves. "That's something people will understand by the last book, why the elves are the way they are."

*The gaunt figure of King Tithian crept across his antechamber on all fours, his limbs splayed to the sides and moving in the disjointed rhythm of an insect. The lower mandible of his jaw worked constantly, as if gnawing a stalk of thornstem, and his glazed eyes remained fixed on the stones of the floor. The king reached a corner, then clawed his way up the wall until he stood more or less upright. He spent a few moments trying to pull himself higher, then abruptly fell back to the floor and continued his journey in a new direction. Two disembodied heads followed the king. . . .**

CRASH!

Author Troy Denning jerked in surprise as the unexpected noise catapulted him right out of Tithian's palace on Athas and back to his office at home in Lake Geneva, Wis. Startled, he sent his ball-point pen flying across the room. Denning glared at his three-legged elkhound/shepherd, Angie, who lowered her head in apology for bumping into the trash can and spilling wet tea bags, candy-bar wrappers, and crumpled paper all over the floor. It was not a good idea to disturb her master while he was engrossed in putting the final touches on his new DARK SUN™ novel, *The Amber Enchantress*.

This scene is not an uncommon one, especially during Denning's final weeks of work on a novel. By this point, he has become intensely involved in his writing, allowing the rest of the world to fade into the background. "I don't really want to do anything else, be bothered with doing the dishes or mowing the lawn. I guess I get kind of grouchy and absorbed in what I'm doing. It gets to be a matter of hibernating for a month. I come out of it and the world has changed."

Considering his rapidly growing list of published works, Denning must have missed quite a few world events of late. He has completed the first two novels in the DARK SUN Prism Pentad, *The Verdant Passage* and *The Crimson Legion*, and the

* Taken from the forthcoming novel, *The Amber Enchantress*, by Troy Denning ©1992 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Troy Denning: Game Fair Guest of Honor

Troy Denning has attended the GEN CON® game fair for a number of years now, and he's worn many hats there. He's made appearances as the author of DARK SUN™ and FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels and has represented various game companies, including TSR, as an editor and designer. However, 1992 marks his first time attending as the RPGA™ Network guest of honor.

"I always look forward to conventions," Denning said, "to talking to people about the DARK SUN world, about the books."

Denning said his reader feedback would be quite limited without the opportunity to talk with fans at conventions. "It's always neat to see someone really involved in the characters or pick up the subthemes."

In fact, comments from attentive readers have helped Denning shape forthcoming books. He said he began to receive ques-

tions from readers about *The Verdant Passage*, the first novel in the DARK SUN Prism Pentad, just as he was wrapping up his first draft of the sequel, *The Crimson Legion*. He was able to incorporate some of these suggestions into the second book and more recent questions into the third novel, *The Amber Enchantress*.

At the 1992 GEN CON/ORIGINS™ game fair, which takes place August 20-23 at the MECCA Convention Center in Milwaukee, Denning will be a busy man. Look for him at various seminars, including the "DARK SUN World Q&A," "Fiction and Gaming," "Brainstorming Tournaments," and "Brainstorming Tournament Characters." In addition, he will sign his work in the TSR Book Booth on Friday, August 21, and Saturday, August 22.

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third, *The Amber Enchantress*, is due out in October. In addition, he penned the FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels

Dragonwall, *The Parched Sea*, and the *New York Times* best seller, *Waterdeep* (under the name Richard Awlinson). A former manager of TSR's game design and editorial departments, Denning is the author of numerous game products as well and is one of the creators of the DARK SUN fantasy setting.

It's easy to get wrapped up in the goings-on of the world of Athas, in large part due to the complexity of Denning's characters. Critics and fans alike have praised the multifaceted nature of the three main characters in the Prism Pentad: Sadira, the half-elf sorceress; Rikus, the mul gladiator; and Agis, the nobleman psionicist. Denning said this dimensionality leads readers to assume he has based his characters on actual people.

"People often say, Well, I think this character is so-and-so.' But I don't do that," Denning stressed. "I'm really careful not to do that with people, because I don't want to insult anyone."

Once, he explained, a reader leaped to the wrong conclusion regarding the rather unpleasant character Tamar, a wraith featured in *The Crimson Legion*. "I had a guy come up to me and ask how I knew his wife so well."

Basing a character around a real-life personality can also limit an author's options. Instead, Denning builds a character

from the ground up. "The character's personal traits are defined by what purpose I want him to serve," he said.

Denning credits the complex moral system of Athas for aiding the development of his protagonists. "There are no gods in the DARK SUN world, but people still have to make moral choices. Each person in the DARK SUN world is struggling to find out what is good and what is evil. That's the central conflict. Once you have that, you can start building characters around it."

Athas has conflicts to spare. In the Prism Pentad, Denning's trio of heroes encounters constant obstacles to survival, including beasts such as the insectlike thri-kreen, the harsh conditions of the arid planet, and the cruel power wielded by the sorcerer-kings. Ultimately, each one decides to take his or her own destiny in hand. The motivation provoking the character to act becomes a cornerstone of his or her personality.

"The story is always pulling the characters in directions that they don't want to go. The seed is always the motive and what it is in the character that prevents him from getting his desire. I think that's the key to making the characters round."

But, while Denning's characters come alive in the face of adversity, the kind of adversity they face on Athas has readers biting their nails as they turn the pages. Denning recalled a letter from one fan upset with the ending to *The Crimson Legion*, which de-

tailed Rikus's effort to defend his free city against invaders. "He was so mad, he said, I'll never, ever buy your books again! I thought, well, he may be mad at me, but he definitely likes Rikus."

Denning takes such heated defense of a character as a compliment, though he offers no apology for making his heroes face incredible trials. "I seem to have a habit of doing bad things to my characters. To me, to make a book work is to show them [the readers] that bad things can happen." In fact, that's what Denning enjoys most about writing these particular novels. "I don't have a very romantic personality in the Arthurian sense; I'm much more gritty, and DARK SUN is very gritty. Things don't always turn out for the best for the heroes; the hero won't always get what he sets out to get."

Denning is not alone in relishing the realism of the DARK SUN novels; readers, too, find the grittiness of Athas compelling. "People seem to be a lot more involved in the story than I expected them to be," the author said. "I think they like the fact that people are out there trying to figure out what's right and what's wrong. That's the basic problem of human existence."

Another fascinating discovery for readers of the Prism Pentad is the altered nature of some familiar fantasy races. "That's one of the most popular things," Denning said. "They love it that elves are slimy and halflings are ferocious. I think it's good to take the races people have

DARK SUN

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known for so long and kind of warp them."

Readers have responded favorably to subtopics in the novels as well, especially the theme of environmentalism. Athas is depicted as a desert wasteland whose life-force is sapped even further with each use of magic by the tyrannical sorcerer-kings and other enchanters who pull energy from the land to cast their spells.

The impoverished environment of Athas was designed into the world by Denning, who began working to create the DARK SUN setting in October 1989, along with Tim Brown, a games designer, and Mary Kirchoff, then managing editor of the book department. "Athas is very much a warning of what will happen to our planet if we don't do something, and what will happen to us if we don't watch what our political leaders are doing." The sorcerer-kings, who have crushed the world's city-states with their thirst for control, illustrate the height of corruption through absolute power.

Denning admitted that protecting the environment and guarding one's political freedom are very important issues to him. "As I put more and more of my heart into the book, more and more of what I care about in the real world tends to creep in." However, a novelist's chief goal is to entertain readers with a good story. Despite alluding to these societal threats in his

books, Denning said he tries never to write "message" fiction.

"Write for the story, don't serve another purpose," he advised aspiring writers. "That's not to say that the other conflicts we're talking about in the real world aren't in the story, but those are all secondary to the story. If something doesn't fit the story, then it doesn't go in."

When all is said and done, there is a lot of Troy Denning to be found between the pages of his DARK SUN novels. A Colorado native, he nourishes his love for the desert by camping and hiking in the arid wilderness of Arizona and Colorado. And don't forget Denning's self-described "gritty personality."

"I don't like to see a lot of compromises made where they don't belong," he said. "If you make a mistake, you're going to get hammered."

Would Denning get "hammered" if he found himself transported to Athas? Would his desert survival skills be enough to sustain him against the forces of nature and desperate peoples? "To a certain extent, I think it comes down to luck," he said. "Ninety-nine percent of the people in the DARK SUN world don't survive. We don't write about the unlucky ones because there's not that much to write about."

He shrugged. "I guess it would depend on when my luck runs out."

Top 10 DARK SUN™ Mysteries—Solved?

While DARK SUN author Troy Denning isn't promising to reveal the answers to all these questions in his forthcoming novel, *The Amber Enchantress*, he does say that the solutions will be made clear—eventually.

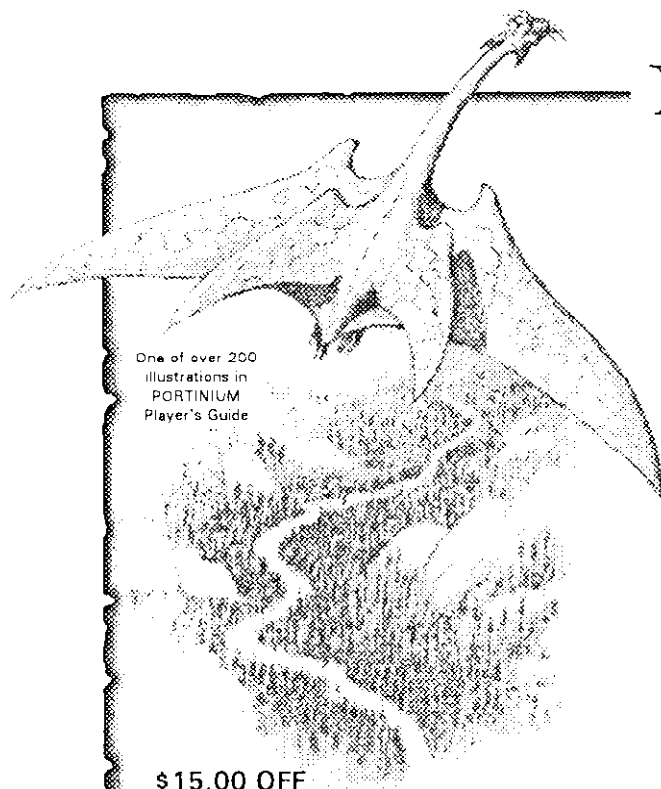
10. Who is Umbra, and why do his shadow-people need obsidian?
9. Why does Neeva put up with Rikus?
8. What is Agis's relationship to Durwadala?
7. Who are Sacha and Wyen, the talking heads?
6. Will Tithian turn out to be a good guy or a bad guy?
5. Does Sadira really love Agis?
4. Does Sadira really love Rikus?
3. How are half-giants made?
2. What's the nature of the Dragon?

And, the No. 1 DARK SUN world unsolved mystery:

1. Can the Agis/Sadira/Rikus/Neeva/Caelum love pentagon ever be resolved?

Stay tuned.

Ω



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The neogi are among the most feared creatures in the AD&D® SPELLJAMMER® settings Known Spheres. Their xenophobic attitude makes them the enemies of all that live. Although the SPELLJAMMER boxed set mentions the neogi's magical abilities, little is said about these powers other than what their limits are. Described herein are a few new spells and magical items as well as a very rare magical creature, all created and used exclusively by the neogi.

Magic With an Evil Bite

by Jason M. Walker

Artwork by Thomas Baxa

The neogi have a few surprises in store for
SPELLJAMMER® campaigns

New spells

Venom bite (Evocation)

Level: 2 Components: V,S
Range: 5 yds. CT: 1
+ 5 yds./lvl.

Duration: Instant. Save: Special
Area of Effect: 10' square

This spell is the neogi version of a *magic missile* spell. When cast, the spell brings into being a small set of pointed teeth that are fired outward from the caster's body. One set of teeth is created for every two levels of experience beyond the 1st possessed by the caster (e.g., a 3rd-level caster would create two sets of teeth) to maximum of four sets of teeth. The teeth strike as 5-HD monsters; any creature struck by a set of teeth must save vs. spells or be *slowed* for 1-4 rounds. The caster can divide the sets of teeth among as many opponents as he desires so long as they are all within a 10' square selected as the focus for the spell. Hits from multiple sets of teeth require multiple saves, unless a save is failed and the victim is slowed. Further bites from the same casting of this spell have no effect once the victim has already been slowed.

Spider gout (Conjuration)

Level: 2 Components: V,S,M
Range: 10 yds. CT: 2
Duration: Instant. Save: ½
Area of Effect: One creature

This spell creates a magical glob of spider venom in the caster's mouth, which the caster spits out at any single target within range. The caster may retain the venom for a number of rounds equal to half his level. If he retains it longer, he suffers the damage detailed below, without any saving throw.

The caster can spit the venom up to 10 yards, whether he normally is capable of such an action or not. The caster must make a successful attack roll to strike the target (no range penalties apply). Failure indicates the venom glob missed, causing it to dissolve harmlessly. Creatures struck must save vs. poison or suffer 2d4 hp damage plus 1 hp per level of the caster to a maximum of +10 hp damage at 10th level. A successful save indicates only half damage. The material component is the neogi's own poisonous saliva.

Arachnophobia (Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 3 Components: V,S
Range: 5 yds./level CT: 3
Duration: 1 rd./level Save: Neg.
Area of Effect: Special

Upon casting this spell, the caster creates the illusion of thousands upon thousands of crawling spiders. Only a number of creatures equal to the level of the caster can be affected by this illusion, and all must be within a 10-diameter sphere. Any creature targeted by the spell must save vs. spells, success indicating that the spell

has no effect. Any creature who fails its initial save must save vs. spells again.

Success now indicates the creature flees from the area at its fastest possible movement rate for 2-5 rounds. Those who fail are so frightened that they are unable to do anything except try to remove the spiders they believe are crawling all over their bodies.

The illusion this spell creates is different for each individual. It might be argued that, for example, umber hulks have little to fear from spiders. But when those spiders are 1' in diameter with armor-piercing fangs, there is much to fear. The neogi tend to use this spell to disrupt and disorganize enemy forces when boarding actions are taking place.

Note: Regarding the initial saving throw, DMs must decide whether the target creature has reason to believe that what he is witnessing is an illusion. It is not unreasonable to assign a beneficial modifier to the initial save roll if the target has reason not to believe in the illusory spiders.

Identify race (Divination)

Level: 4 Components: V,S
Range: Touch CT: 4
Duration: 1 rd./level Save: None
Area of Effect: One creature

This unusual spell is used by the neogi to identify the capabilities of a newly encountered race. The spell provides for the caster the name of the race (as it is known

to the creature itself), its general combat abilities, a brief knowledge of the creature's customs, and what the creature needs to survive. The spell can identify only one piece of information (e.g., the usual methods of attack) per round. The DM must decide if the information being sought is available. The spell will only identify with that particular creature's life, not the race as a whole, so different readings are possible. For example, the lifestyle and abilities of a human wizard of Thay from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting will differ greatly from those of a human Knight of Solamnia from Krynn of the DRAGONLANCE® saga.

This spell is used by the neogi to determine the abilities and needs of a potential slave without serious risk to the slave's life. Although this spell may seem somewhat trivial to other races, it has been witnessed that ships bearing neogi wizards capable of casting this spell have far more powerful slaves than those that do not.

Lethal hatchling (Necromancy)

Level: 5 Components: V,S
Range: 10 yds CT: One round
Duration: Special Save: Special
Area of Effect: One creature

Upon utterance of this spell, the caster conjures up a small, 1" -diameter egg that fires outward from the caster and toward the target. The target is then entitled to a save vs. death magic. If the save succeeds, the spell has no effect. Failure indicates a most gruesome fate: The egg enters the victim's body and begins to grow. For the next four rounds, the target is entitled to another save vs. death magic each round at a -2 cumulative penalty (i.e., -2 on the first save after the egg enters the body, -4 on the second, etc.). Each failed save results in a loss of 25% of the target's original hit-point total. If the target makes a successful save during this time, the spell is halted and the egg's growth stops and then deteriorates. If the target dies, a newborn neogi erupts out of its body.

Some neogi wizards have been known to cast this spell to replace neogi lost in earlier combats. This is a rare occurrence, however, as it usually requires the sacrifice of a slave to do so.

New magical items

Charm of distraction

This minor magical item is usually shaped as a pendant in the form of a neogi's head looped through a chain. The wearer of this magical item gains several benefits. First, the charm acts as a standard *ring of protection* +1. The charm also bestows upon the wearer an additional +1 (for a total of +2) on saves vs. enchantment/charm spells. Lastly, the charm provides the function of magically *holding* an opponent for one round. This can be done once per day and is otherwise similar to the wizard's *hold person* spell,



cast at the 8th level of ability. The neogi can attempt this *hold* on any single target he can physically see. The target of the *hold* is entitled to a save vs. spells. If successful, the target is unaffected. If the save is failed, the target is unable to take any actions until the following round.

The neogi are very fond of this item, as it often buys them an extra moment to escape from the clutches of an enemy or distract the foe long enough for the neogi's umber hulks to rip them apart.

XP Value: Nil (cannot be made by PCs)

Bands of the serpent

Only neogi possessing magical ability can make use of this item. These metal bands, always found in pairs, are worn around the spiderlike legs of the neogi and bestow upon the wearer the following abilities:

1. The wearer of the bands receives a +1 bonus on all saves vs. poison. This bonus is cumulative with other forms of protection.
2. The wearer can communicate with any form of reptile through a limited form of *telepathy*. This includes lizard men and other sentient reptiles as well as the mundane forms. This *telepathy* does not give the neogi any ability to control reptiles, however.
3. The wearer can transform himself into a giant poisonous snake. The wearer gains all of the abilities listed in the *Monstrous Compendium* under "Snake: poison, giant." The wearer retains his own hit-point total. The wearer can transform into snake form once per day, each change taking one round to complete and lasting up to six turns.

This item neither has nor requires charges. Neogi who possess these rare items will go to great lengths to keep them out of the "hands" of other neogi as well as adventuring parties.

XP Value: Nil (cannot be made by PCs)

Bands of the arachnid

These bands are always found in pairs and are very similar in appearance to the *bands of the serpent*. The bands are worn around the spiderlike legs of the neogi. Only those of that race who possess magical ability can make use of them. The wearer gains the following abilities:

1. The wearer receives a +2 bonus on all saving throws vs. poison. This is cumulative with other forms of magical protection.
2. The wearer is immune to the effects of any spell or spell-like ability that affects movement (e.g., *slow*, *hold*, etc.). This power is always in effect, regardless of the wishes of the wearer. A side effect of this ability is that the wearer can move freely through any web, magical or otherwise, as if he were an actual spider.
3. The wearer can transform himself into a giant spider. The wearer gains all of the abilities listed in the *Monstrous Compendium* under "Spider, giant." The wearer retains his own hit-point total. This transformation lasts a number of turns equal to the wearer's experience level. The wearer can transform into spider form once per day.

These items neither have nor require any charges. Neogi who possess these rare items will go to great lengths to keep them. Neogi cannot wear more than one type of magical bands at any time.

XP Value: Nil (cannot be made by PCs)



New monster

Recently, a new terror was found aboard a neogi mindspider. Since its discovery, more of these terrible creations have been found among the neogi arsenal. Detailed here are the statistics on this new menace to spacefarers everywhere.

Undead hulk

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Any neogi enclave*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*

DIET: *Nil*

INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*

TREASURE: *Nil*

ALIGNMENT: *N*

NO. APPEARING: *1-4*

ARMOR CLASS: *4*

MOVEMENT: *6, Br 6*

HIT DICE: *10*

THACO: *11*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *3 + special*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *3d4/3d4/1d10*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *10%*

SIZE: *L (8'tall, 5'wide)*

MORALE: *Fearless (20)*

XP VALUE: *4,000*

The undead hulk is a magical construction created through the use of special enhancements developed by the neogi. The creature is formed from the remains of dead umber hulks and to all appearances seems to be nothing more than a typical monster zombie. An undead hulk reeks of death, and its undead nature is obvious to anyone within 10' of it. Other than its obviously unliving state, the undead hulk appears as any other umber hulk.

Combat: An undead hulk attacks in much the same way as a typical umber hulk: with brute force. However, the undead hulk is totally mindless and incapable of forming any strategy or tactics. It only obeys its master, to the best of its abilities and heedless of any danger to itself.

In addition to normal attacks of two claws and a vicious bite, undead hulks can bear-hug any opponent of any size smaller than themselves. This requires two successful claw attacks, which do no damage. Success indicates the victim is crushed against the undead hulks massive frame and suffers 6d4 hp damage each subsequent round, with no attack roll required. The undead hulk cannot bite a trapped opponent, nor can it attack any other being while hugging a foe. Unlike the

monsters they resemble, undead hulks no longer possess the *confusion* generating power of their magical eyes.

An undead hulk can be turned by a cleric as a special undead.

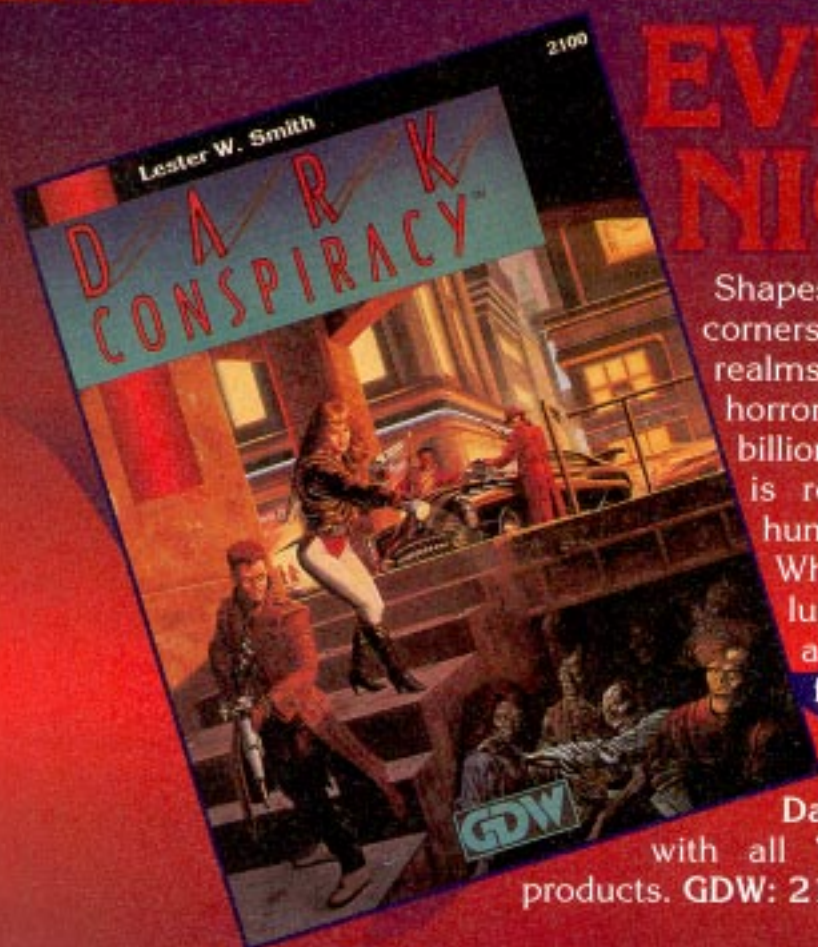
Habitat/Society: Undead hulks are under the absolute control of their creator and have no culture of their own. They serve their "small lords" without question. Undead hulks are created through a bizarre magical ritual developed by the neogi (the details of which are left up to the DM) and the magical joining of dead umber hulk parts. Each part (head, right arm, right leg, etc.) must come from a different umber hulk.

Ecology: Undead hulks are magical constructs and play no role in an ecology. They simply exist, doing the bidding of their masters, until they are destroyed. Ω

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Learn what new TSR releases are coming to a bookstore near you. See 'Novel Ideas' in this issue for the latest word on adventure.

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Audible

"You see that this forty-foot room is kind of bigger than the last one, and twenty feet wide. Apart from the door you entered, there is a door in one wall, dust on the floor, a doorway in another, and a portal in the wall next to that one. There is also a medium-sized desk at one wall."

"There are five walls?"

"No, the desk is next to the portal."

"What does the portal look like?"

"Like the door."

"The one we opened?"

"No, the one across from the fireplace."

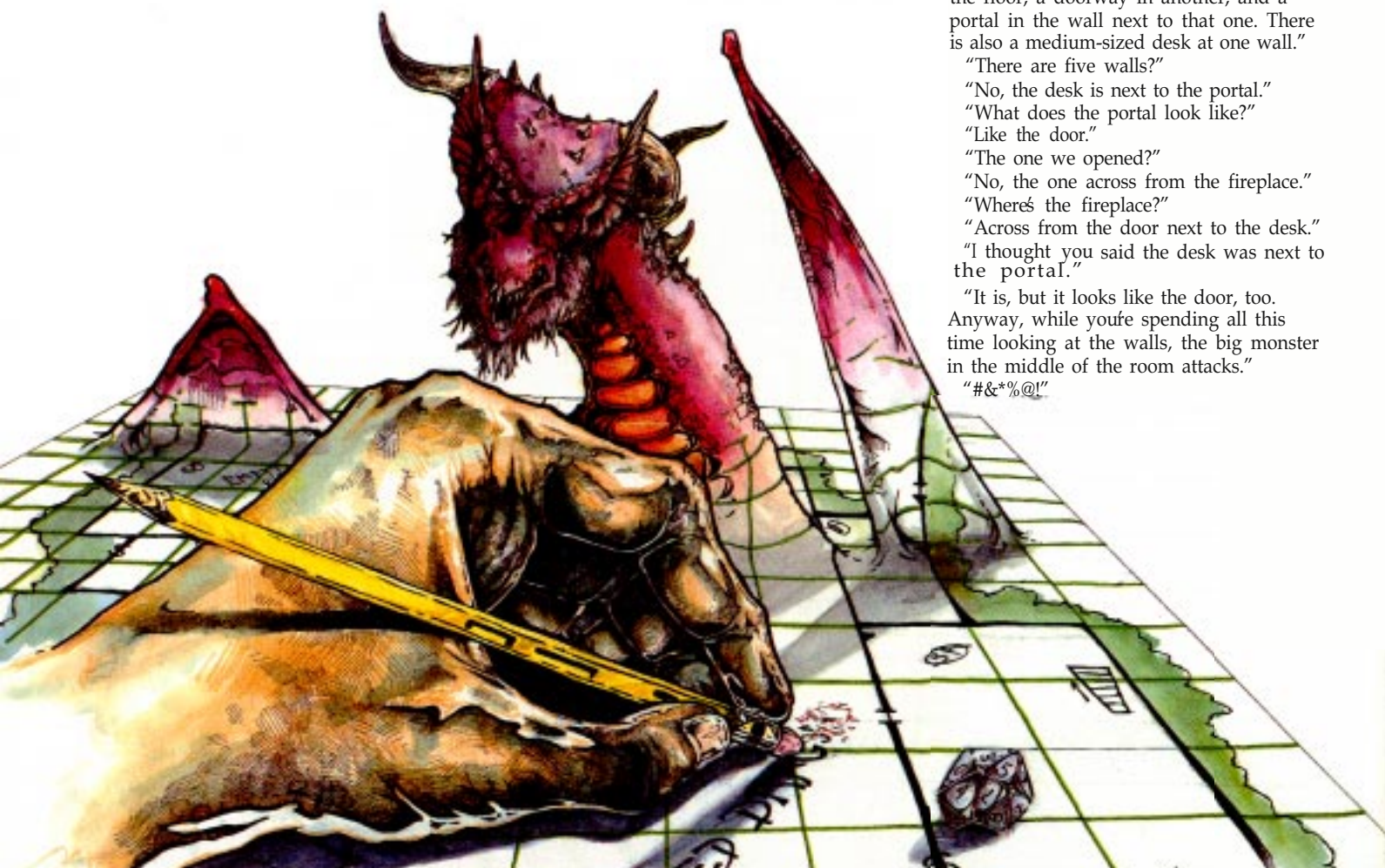
"Where's the fireplace?"

"Across from the door next to the desk."

"I thought you said the desk was next to the portal."

"It is, but it looks like the door, too. Anyway, while you're spending all this time looking at the walls, the big monster in the middle of the room attacks."

"#&*%@!"



Glamour — Not Clamor

©1992 by Mike Shema

Artwork by John Stanko

We've just visited the Land of Confusion, a game setting that can infiltrate any fantasy role-playing scenario and conflict with smooth play, especially for the enterprising GM who wishes to create his own scenarios. The problem lies in conveying ideas and effective descriptions to players. In the opening example, the GM clearly has a problem describing the room to the players. The description of the items in the room proceeds illogically, sizes and locations are vague, references are unclear, and well, it sounds like a shopping list—hardly a narrative worthy of the players and their fearless characters.

Many GMs create their own dungeons, aiming to build brilliant adventures loaded with traps, monsters, loot, and (one hopes) excitement. There is often a problem, however, in "painting" the scene with words so that the players become as excited with the dungeon as you are. The task need not be daunting. With practice and the thoughtful use of a thesaurus and dictionary, you, too, can learn to create exciting adventure descriptions.

I would like to clarify some points before we begin. The use of the term "room" is used in this article to mean many things. A "room" here is a limited physical setting that could actually be a wagon, tent, bridge, roof top, tunnel, or a real room. Likewise, "dungeon" means a broad setting in which there are many "rooms" (smaller settings). A "dungeon" may be the Purple Pig Inn, the mystical tower of Corathule the Sublime, or the entire sleepy town of Gatorsburg.

A descriptive system

You need to introduce your newly de-

signed dungeon to the players in a specific, formulaic manner. Begin with the approach: what the characters hear, see, and smell as they near a particular room. Then describe the room as they enter it. The depth of detail you give will be affected by the environment, local monsters, and character actions. Less-important details that may be necessary for proper mapping or exacting searches for traps or treasure, such as the room's size or the composition of the furniture, may be explained later at the GM's discretion.

Approach: This step is purely optional as it is not always possible. Doors, walls, and other obstructions might block a line of sight into the room. The range of the party's light sources and visual abilities also limits the extent to which the party can see inside a room. Hearing and identifying sounds coming from the room depends upon the party's hearing abilities and the noise the party itself makes as its armored warriors clank up the corridor or its scurrious thieves slink silently in the shadows. Monsters are, of course, a primary source of noise, but spells, machinery, weather effects, supernatural effects like ghostly music, or mundane effects like a dripping keg of ale should also be considered. Smells coming from the room hint at the presence of monsters or materials, possibly hinting at the purpose of the room as well (i.e., spices and meat imply a kitchen or pantry).

Even so, describe the approach only if it benefits the scenario. Putrid smells, flitting shadows, and monstrous grunting add much suspense for characters infiltrating an evil dungeon. They will not be equally

interested in a passageway lacking such sensory warnings.

Details: When characters enter a new room, begin your description with large visible objects, particularly monsters and doors. If there is time for a more casual inspection (see "Monsters"), choose a wall (usually the one opposite the direction the party enters) and describe anything of importance on it: doors, light sources, tapestries, etc. Move clockwise to the next wall and repeat the process, keeping all descriptions brief. Do the same for large pieces of furniture, machines, and objects not adjacent to any walls.

Feed uncertainty. If there are no doors, then say that there are no apparent doors. If the room is empty, then explain that it appears empty. Keep 'em guessing!

Use your own discretion as to the amount of detail to include in the beginning. Do not proceed to list the contents of a wooden chest if it is locked shut, or inform the players of the existence of a door hidden by a bookcase. Try to give just the right amount of surface detail to whet the players' appetites. Then, if they become interested in something and investigate it, give more exacting details.

Monsters: The most dynamic part of a room are its monsters, if any are present. A monster can obviously interact with characters in positive and negative ways, and its presence can affect the room's description. For example, a devious thief could be leaning against a wall, thus hiding a secret door behind which he threw all of his gold and which he then hurriedly and improperly closed. A beast lurking on a high ceiling will not likely affect the de-

scription, but a large one standing in the middle of the room will obstruct things directly behind it.

Action is as important as location. From ravenous beasts to chattering rats, each monster has an effect on the immediate description of the room. An angry orc that attacks on sight will leave little time for the party to pace the length of the room or even take a glance at the surroundings. You may wish to describe an outstanding feature (such as a quick exit) that would be impossible to miss, but keep it to a minimum. If the party flees, then it leaves an unknown portion of their map—something to explore later.

While small, furry creatures are rare outside of forests and glens, there are many other incidents where a neutral or friendly monster (or a talkative evil one, like a dragon) will affect the room's description. Suppose that a guard was asleep on duty, therefore indifferent to the characters and obstructing nothing (except maybe the lock on the chest he guards). The description of the room could proceed normally, although pacing the room for its size might be avoided at first.

On the other hand, the guard might wake up and start ordering the characters' surrender, keeping the characters occupied with talking—and thus ignoring the chest and other aspects of the room, unless a player says his character is specifi-

cally doing otherwise.

Size: Description of room size is dependent on the time that the characters spend pacing it out and recording. A party that takes the time to carefully pace the room will have accurate maps, but this takes much time. On the other hand, players may wish to hurry the action along because the characters are being chased, must meet a deadline, or lack interest in the current room. Size would be approximated and finished quickly. (Remember, a bull's-eye lantern could easily increase the margin of error in measuring a darkened room because of its narrow beam.) In my opinion, the quick-and-dirty mapping method proves much more entertaining to game play than an accurate one. A slightly inaccurate map could suggest imaginary secret passages or even hide real ones. It keeps the mystery alive!

The measuring of distance need not be limited to using English units. A 10'-square room could be a "halberd square," as a halberd is about 10' long. A long hall with many statues of warriors could be a spear's throw in length (90'), an ancient tunnel could be dwarf-high (4'), and a sword thrust (6') might span the length of a storeroom. Use imagination, trying to reference distances to familiar units. This will add variety and may reinforce the intent of the room (such as a "spear's throw" in a hall of warrior statues).

In this article's opening example of a poor room description, the GM gives the dimensions of the room, but the distances are separated and give no indication of their orientation. This brings out another point: Give the dimensions in a set format, such as north-south by east-west. It is best to agree with the players beforehand about this and thus refrain from always repeating, "So-and-so north-south by so-and-so east-west!" Replacing cardinal directions in size measurements with a more realistic ahead-back/left-right system helps to maintain a fantasy atmosphere. The characters can turn thus right or left at a T-junction instead of east or west. Remember also that a fleeing party does not pay close attention to which direction it runs (except to move away from what is chasing it). If the characters become lost, switch to the left/right system until the characters can reorient themselves.

Signature: The final touch, this personalization of the room can be nonexistent or could include a detailed history of the room and its previous inhabitants. Legend, song, rumor, advice, or written works might mention a room as the site where Lord Merrin was assassinated nine years ago, or the fact that merchants here will fence "lost" goods. The "signature" does not have to be elaborate; it could be a simple but bizarre "The room you have entered looks familiar, probably because you just left it" in the case of a room with a no-exit teleporter. A tag line works beautifully to create atmosphere.

Word choice: There is one last complication that may lead to confusion. Return to the opening example of room description and note that the GM gave three different terms with only shaded differences in meaning: portal, doorway, and door. This caused much confusion among the players even though the GM thought he would make things simple by assigning synonyms to the doors in each wall. Other word groups to watch out for are: room, chamber, and vault; and tunnel, corridor, and passageway.

Keep in mind that these guidelines exist not in stone but on paper. Change the order sometimes in detailing a room to avoid overdoing the formulaic bit. (I do this a lot, mainly because player characters draw their weapons every time I read a boxed monolog. "It's written in the module," the players say. "It's got to be important or bad.") Above all, do not become frustrated if first-rate descriptions do not suddenly spring forth from your mind. Remember, you can be your own worst critic. Perseverance is important. Ω

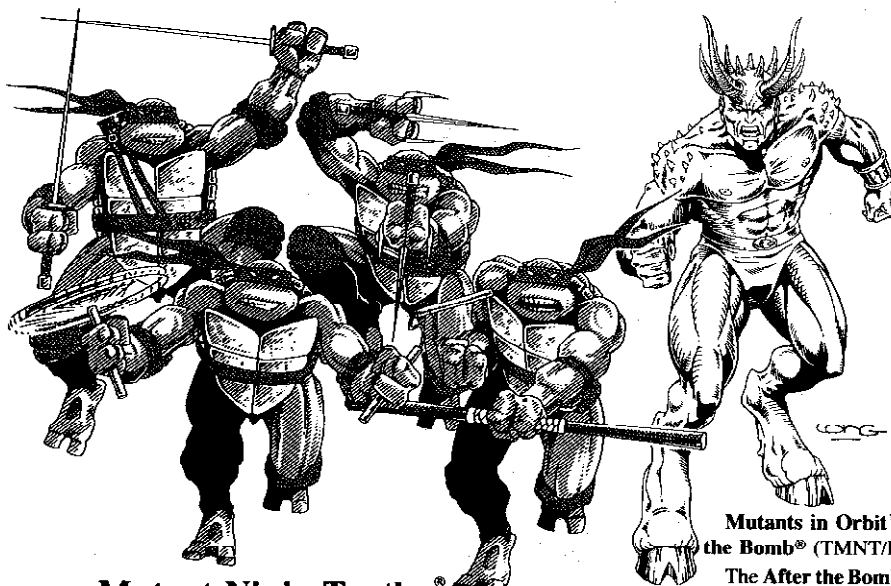
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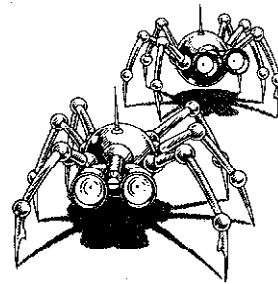
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DRAGON 99

Son of Pen Power

Your last chance this year to talk back—
and win!

by the DRAGON® Magazine staff

One last time this year, we are asking you, the loyal readers of DRAGON® Magazine, to give us some insight into how you feel about this magazine. We will use this information to tailor our product to your gaming needs. In addition, we are going to award prizes to 10 randomly selected respondents, and you'll be able to choose your own prize should you win!

Photocopy this page, check one *and only one* box or space per numbered entry, drop the form into an envelope, and mail it to: Son of Pen Power, DRAGON Magazine Survey #3, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

As you know, almost every issue of DRAGON Magazine contains a group of articles centered around a particular theme in role-playing, usually related to the AD&D® game. This survey asks you to rate a series of possible issue themes for DRAGON Magazine. We'll use this material to better select articles and topics that you want to see.

Complete this survey and mail in this form, and you could win any product listed in this month's "TSR Previews" column (be sure to correctly note the product number of the TSR product you want, which is listed at the bottom of each "TSR Previews" entry). Incorrect or unreadable product numbers, names, or addresses will forfeit your prize. Only one response per address, please. Not only will multiple responses from one person skew the results of this survey, they will also cause you to forfeit any prize you might have otherwise won. All response forms must be postmarked by September 30, 1992, to be eligible for the prize drawing.

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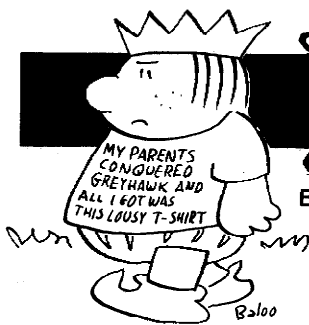
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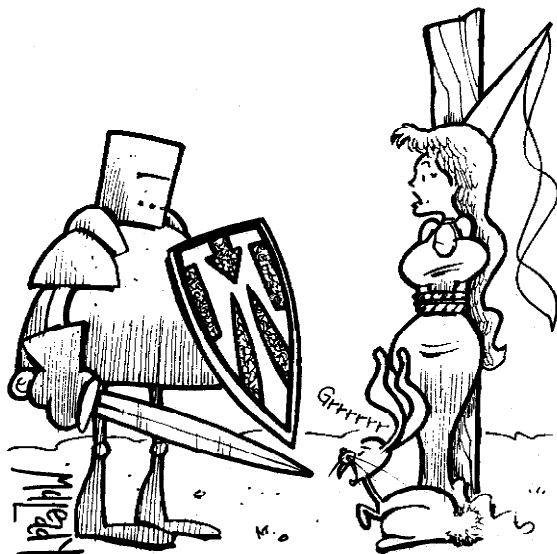
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By Rex F. May

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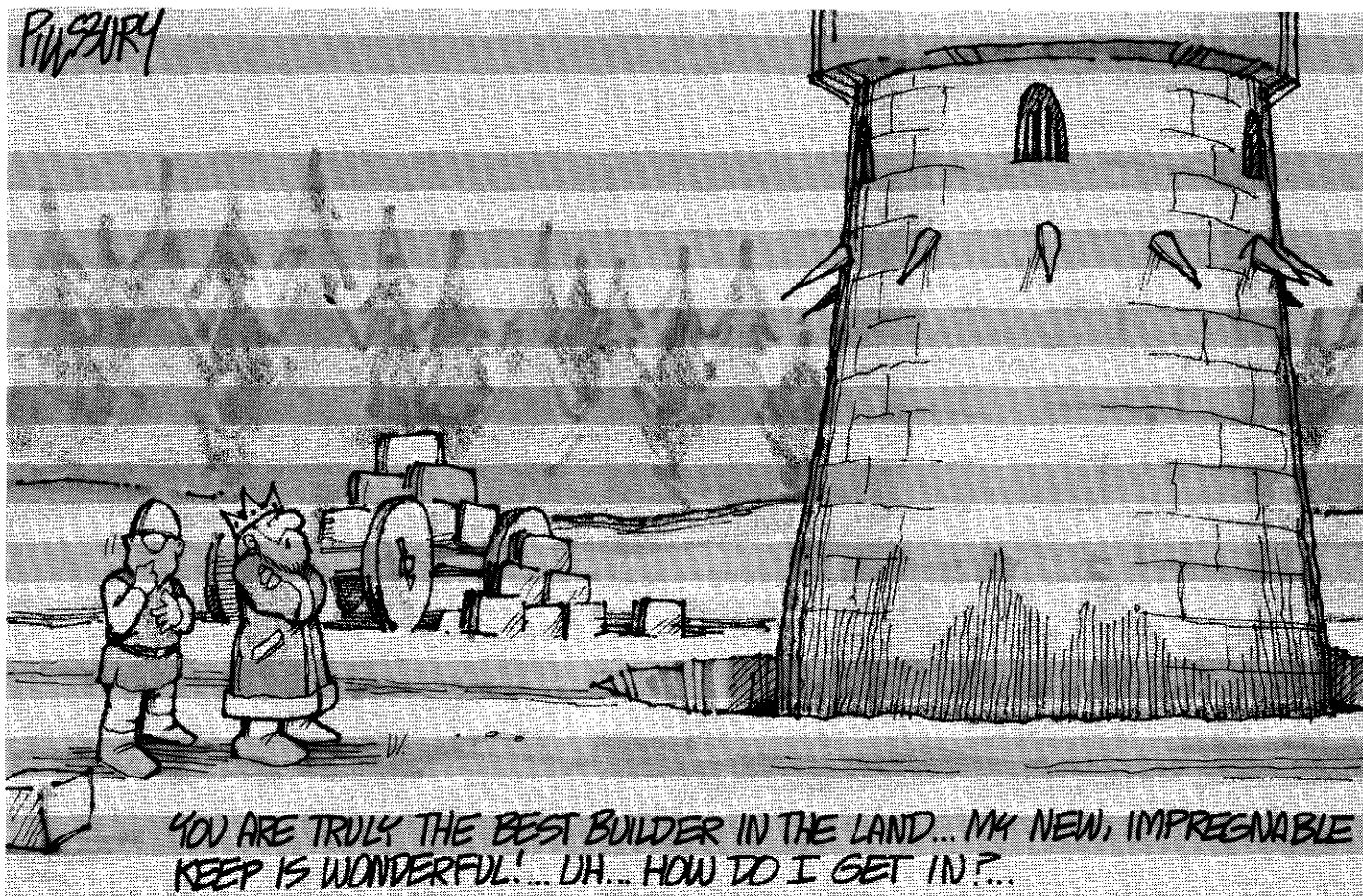
By Bob Muleady

"It's just not the same since the dragons became extinct."



By Jaime Lombardo and Ron Hill

"Are you going to tell him he has seven items?!"



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"You're doomed."



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REMEMBER, KIDS- JUST SAY "NO" TO EVIL!



WHILE FEA KEEPS THE PRESS BUSY, LET'S DISCUSS INFILTRATING PERSEY'S LAIR. JOE, WASN'T PERSEY A HIGH-LEVEL THIEF IN LIFE?

I RECALL HER MENTIONING HOW ROBBERY LOST ITS EXOTICISM ONCE SHE BECAME A VAMPIRE.

I GET IT. WITH MY MILLION NEW XP'S I CAN KNOCK ON HER DOOR AS AN EAGER TRAINEE-



PARDON ME, BUT COULD YOU HAND ME THAT FEMUR?

BUT OF COURSE

NO, WAIT. SHE MUST HAVE SEEN ME ON CVN. SHE'LL JUST GRIN AND HAVE MY LEVELS FOR BRUNCH.



AH, BUT SHE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO RESIST TRAINING YOU AS HIGH AS YOU CAN GO- AND THEN DRAIN YOU OF ALL YOUR LEVELS.

I THINK YOU GET A KIND OF THRILL THINKING UP THESE IDEAS, OGREK.

PLEASE RECALL YOUR NAME

SEVERAL DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE OUR HEROES WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS — ROB AND BRENNIA TO FIND THE DRAGON, BILL AND FIN TO SAVE QUILLIAN...



WATCH IT, BUB.

JUST 'CAUSE THEY WON'T LET ME INTO THE CASTLE DOESN'T MEAN YOU HORSE JOCKEYS GET TO PAAAT ME.

GREETINGS, PRINCESS FINELLA. I'VE SENT A HERALD TO TELL HIS LAIRDSHIP YOU'VE ARRIVED.



THE COMBINED ARMY IS ADVANCING TOWARD MIDLAN, LAIRD. THERE'S NO SERIOUS RESISTANCE BETWEEN UGO'S NORTHEASTERN BORDER AND GREEN LAKE.

AND THEY'LL BE COMING AFTER YOU, RANDALL.

IF YOU LET THEM PASS THROUGH YOUR LANDS TO THE FREE PLAINS, THEY'LL ONLY COME BACK FOR YOU LATER.



I FEAR YOU'RE CORRECT, AALANDRIA.

VERY WELL, I'LL TAKE YOUR ADVICE. CONTACT THE OTHER FREE LORDS. SET UP A MEETING HERE AS SOON AS YOU CAN.



THANK YOU, MY LAIRD.

THE PRINCESS FINELLA GIRL.

PRINCESS! HOW UNEXPECTED AND WONDERFUL TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

TO WHAT DO I OWE THE PLEASURE?



I'M HERE TO SEE QU... ER, RAYNARD.

THAT SCOUNDREL? WHY? THE ONLY REASON WE HAVEN'T EXECUTED HIM IS THAT THE TIDINGS OF WAR HAVE KEPT US TOO BUSY.

I'M SURE HE'S INNOCENT. PLEASE? IT'S VERY IMPORTANT.



VERY WELL, YOU KNOW I CAN'T REFUSE YOU ANYTHING. BUT HIS SQUIRE MUST STAY HERE.



AND SHORTLY,
IN RANDALL'S
DUNGEON...

I CONVINCED
THEM TO LET
ME SEE YOU
ALONE.

DON'T WORRY.
WE'LL GET YOU OUT.
I'LL FIND AN
ALIBI FOR YOU.

NOT MUCH
CHANCE OF
THAT, I'M AFRAID.



WHAT?
WHY NOT?

BECAUSE
I'M GUILTY.
I FIRED
THAT
ENCHANTED
CROSSBOW BOLT.

?!
B-BUT...

WHY, QUILLIAN?



I CAN'T TELL YOU, BABY
SISTER — NOT YET, ANYWAY.
I HAD A GOOD REASON,
AN IMPORTANT REASON.



AND THERE'S NO CHANCE
MY EMPLOYER'LL VOUCH FOR
ME. I'VE BEEN TOLD AS MUCH.
I'M ON MY OWN.



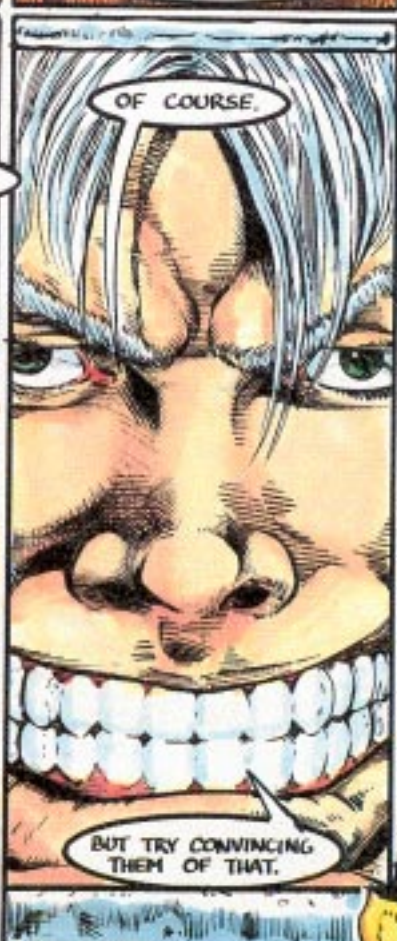
BESIDES, THIS IS MY FAULT.
I SCREWED UP, LET MY GUARD
DOWN. GUESS I SHOULD HAVE
GONE WITH YOU AND ROB
AFTER ALL.

I COULD SPRING
YOU. WE COULD
FIGHT OUR
WAY OUT.



NO! I CAN'T
RISK RANDALL
BEING HURT
IN THE
MELEE.

YOU CAN'T
RISK...?!
YOU MISSED
KILLING
HIM
DELIBERATELY!



OF COURSE.

BUT TRY CONVINCING
THEM OF THAT.

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John M. Hebert

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Paul Hook

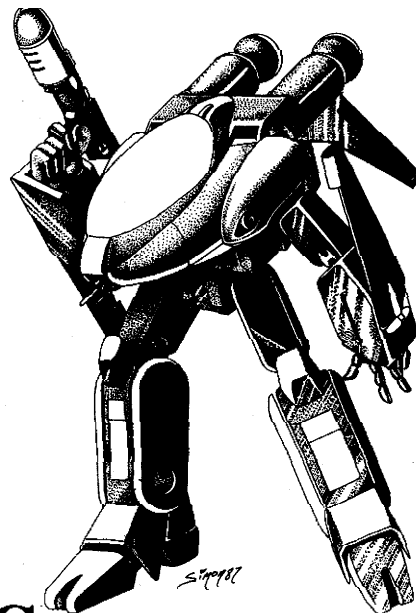
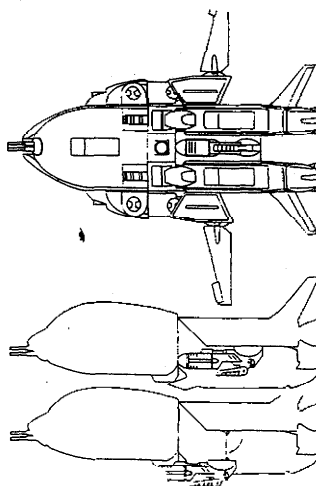
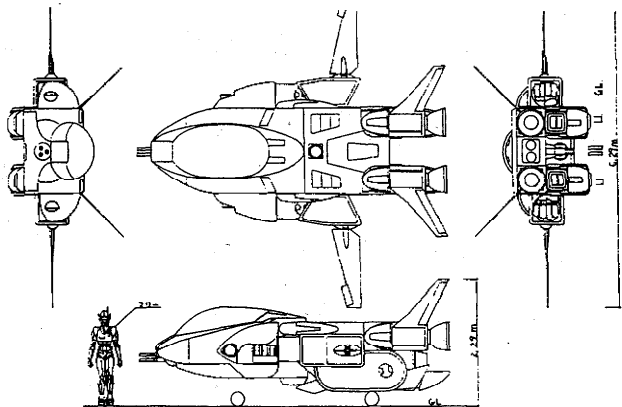
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Southern Cross takes place 20 years after **Macross** and opens with the invasion of the **Robotech™ Masters!** The RDF and REF have gone off on a long space journey. Earth's defenses are left in the hands of the valiant but inexperienced Armies of the Southern Cross. The army rises to meet the challenge of this new alien attacker and engages the insidious **Robotech™ Masters** in a life and death struggle.

The most notable characters include **Dana Sterling** (Max & Miriya Sterling's daughter), **Bowie Grant**, **Louie Nichols**, **Nova Satori**, **General Rolf Emerson**, and the enigmatic **Zor Prime** (a clone of the original Zor!). Mecha includes the **Veritech Hover Tank**, **Veritech Copter**, **Veritech Logan**, and **Bioroids**, as well as other war vehicles, jets, spaceships and battroids! Lots of great fight sequences in space and on the ground!

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Volume Five: Presents episodes 49: *A new Recruit*, 50: *Triumvirate*, and 51: *Clone Chamber*. It is decided to induct Zor into the army of the Southern Cross. A full scale assault is launched against the Masters. Zor, Dana and Bowie get closer to the secret of the **Robotech™ Masters** and protoculture. Plus epic space battles! Available late March, 1992.

Volume Six: Contains episodes 52: *Love Song*, 53: *The Hunters* and, 54: *Mind Game*. Louie Nichols creates the *Pupil Pistol*, Dana is involved in more intrigue, while the savage space battle continues, with exciting fight sequences featuring the Veritech Copter. Available late April, 1992.

Volume Seven: Presents episodes 55: *Dana in Wonderland*, 56: *Crisis Point*, and 57: *Day Dreamer*. The battle continues to escalate, with terrible consequences. Zor seems to be going mad, Dana is becoming more rebellious, Bowie finds love and the mystery continues. Available late May, 1992.

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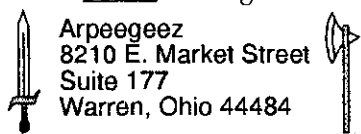
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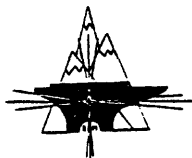
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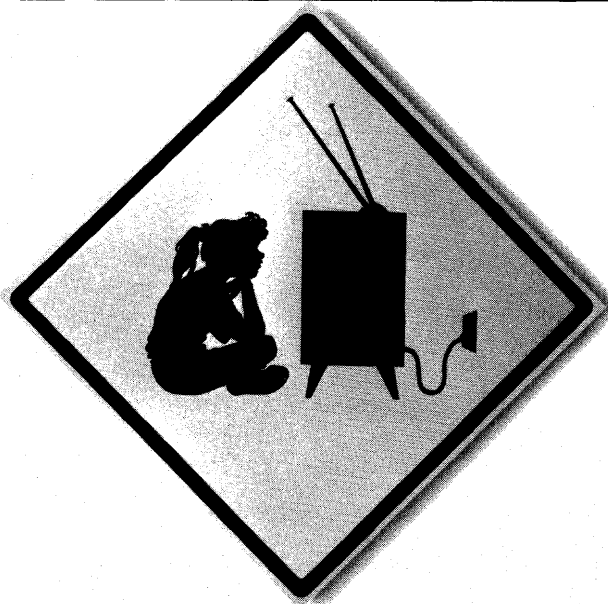
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Through the LOOKING Glass

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Shambling Death (RAFM)

Shambling and silent deaths

As you read this, the GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ game fair is less than one month away, and there is sure to be a large number of miniatures events on tap. These miniatures games range in difficulty from very simple games to full-scale recreations. A number of events from last year, including the huge Middle-earth siege, will be repeated at this year's game fair. Several large-scale World War II, Napoleonic, FASA's BATTLETECH*, and naval games will provide you with entertainment and a chance to experiment with many types of miniatures gaming. To showcase this convention, we are going to review products from a number of companies that will have representatives in attendance. Look for these and other miniatures companies and see what is available. If you have any questions or comments for me, I will be at the Gamemasters Guild of Waukegan

booth upstairs at MECCA. I look forward to seeing you.

I want to thank a number of people for their help this month in preparing and painting the figures to provide you with a better looking column. I also need to apologize to Eric Petersen and Chris Osburn for the misspelling of their names. This month's painters and their contributions are: Mike Bethke— Shambling Death and Emperor Dragon; Tina Druce-Hoffman—

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

Riding the Cold Wind to Valhalla; Fred Hicks— Firedrake; Kevin Brewick— Hippogryfe.

Now, on to the reviews.

Reviews

RAFM Company Inc.

20 Park Hill Road
Cambridge, Ontario
CANADA N1R 1P2

2006 Shambling Death

Skeletal armies are always a source of horror on the battlefield. The Shambling Death release from RAFM stands as either a terror weapon or as an interesting (but taxing) painting project that will make a beautiful display. The box contains 18 lead figures in 10 poses. The kit is labeled as being 25-mm scale, but the figures measure just over 28 mm on the average.

One group, the archers, consists of two groups of three figures. The skeletons in the first group wear rotting pants and boots; their chests are covered in chain mail, and an armored spiked plate is on each right shoulder. On their backs are quivers secured by wide straps. A small hole is in the back of each skull on the right side. These figures clutch bows in their left hands. Detail is very good.

The second group of archers wears long, rotting robes with holes that expose underlying bones and damaged chain mail. The left foot of each juts out from beneath its robe. Both arms are bare, with the left hands clutching bows. A tuft of hair juts from each skull, which is adorned by a small death's head symbol on the front. Each figure's arrows are in a quiver on the right hip.

The third group consists of four figures. The first is a standard bearer, armored with a chain-and-plate-mail combination; a wound lies high on the right side of its chest. The mouth is wide open and has some light flash. The only thing wrong with this figure is that the flag is slightly too thick.

The second figure is a champion, fully armored in plate and chain from just above its feet to the top of its helm crest.

Its left hand holds a thick shield sporting a skull-and-crossbones motif and a pair of half globes. A long, ripped, rotting cape drops to the ground. The right hand clutches a hawksbill-shaped axe with a spiked ball at the top.

The third figure is a mounted officer on an undead horse that wears uneven chain and rotting cloth barding. The latter's bone structure is excellent, with good definition at the joints. The beast has a long shaggy mane, a tail of twisted strands, and a well-preserved saddle and tack with a skull plate. The rider carries a huge spear, a thick shield, and a great sword on the left hip. It is unarmored except for some chain and a small shoulder protector. The figure is grinning; its last tuft of hair is in a tassel on top of its skull.

The main fighting unit of this set are the four groups (with two figures each) of pikemen. These figures range from very simple peasant types with tattered clothes and boots, to a plate-armored fighter complete with rotting fur cape and a long, jagged-edged spear. Another group's most prominent feature is the absence of the entire top of each skull, with a cavity in the cranium. They wear capes and rotting jerseys covered by a mixture of plate and chain mail bound by a belt. Metal bracers adorn their wrists. The figures are set to stop a charge.

The last group is armed with long spears. Each figure is heavily armored on the hands and shoulders, wears a helmet, and has a shield on its back. The figures are missing their entire lower jaw and some teeth from the upper jaws. A great sword hangs from each skeleton's left hip, with a large provisions pouch on a rotted and ripped belt. The shoes and jerkins are rotting, hanging off of the bodies.

These figures are excellent as stand-alone figures but can be readily used as leaders for a large skeleton army from other companies. The price is extremely reasonable at \$19.95 per box.

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 East McMillan
Cincinnati OH 45206

1022 Firedrake

The firedrake from Thunderbolt Mountain is listed as a 25-mm-scale creature. The base is molded to represent a wind-swept desert, with rocks and a center formation that also acts as the flying firedrake's support and holder.

The drake consists of four parts: a lower jaw, a tail, two wings, and the body. The lower jaw fits nicely into the head, with the mouth in the open position. Small gaps are in the side and back, but these are easily filled with gap-filling super glue. The wings join to the back. More easy-to-fill gaps lie on the back, and some intentional gaps in the front form the separation



Firedrake (Thunderbolt Mountain)



Hippogryfe (Thunderbolt Mountain)

between the body and wings. Wing detail is good, with bones clearly defined and formed. The wing texture is leathery with ample small folds, no scales, and hooklike claws. The body muscle detail is excellent. The feet are thick, and the claws are short and stubby. The bit of thin flash on the claw tips and between the claws is easily removed with a knife. A triple row of spikes runs down the back from the wings to the rear legs, and a single row runs down the neck and tail. The tail is a sore spot, as it was about 20% larger in diameter than the part of the body to which it connects and had to be worked with putty

to look correct. The mouth is open as if attacking.

A major flaw in the support system is that the holes in both the body and stand were too large and needed to be filled. I then mounted the figure as shown and left it to dry overnight. When I returned the next day, the support rod had bent. I had to redrill the hole and change the point of balance. The figure now stays up, but it does bob about.

This figure is one of the few "dragon" miniatures designed and molded to represent a dragon in flight. The figure can be used as a battle miniature or as a display.



Emperor Dragon (Viking Forge)

Even with the work involved, this miniature is recommended at \$11.95.

1021 Hippogryfe

This Thunderbolt release is entitled "The Rescue of Angelica by Ruggiero" on the back of the package. The 25-mm-scale kit consists of eight highly detailed pieces that must be assembled using adhesives. When joined, these pieces form a knight and lady, a base, and the hippogryfe. The circular base has a wave pattern broken by a scaly, reptilian head whose gaping mouth is lined with sharp teeth. Nostrils and hints of eyes mark the left half of the head. The hippogryfe is supported by a peg on the right rear foot that is inserted into the base. Be careful not to cut this peg too short when you remove it from the sprue.

The knight wears plate mail that covers his entire body except for his rugged face. He thrusts downward with his spear in an attempt to discourage the sea monster from attacking. The knight is supporting in his left arm a mostly nude female who is trying to climb onto the hippogryfe's back. The female figure is well done but could be considered offensive by some people.

The hippogryfe's wings are in a position to lift the figure into the sky. The upper part of the creature is covered by a layer of detailed feathers. The rear portion is a lion's body with a bird's tail. The front legs end in claws, and the rear legs in cloven hooves.

The model went together well after some trimming on the wing slots, which were marked left and right. My figure has the spear thrusting into the sea monster's mouth not only to cause damage but to provide extra support to the miniature.

This miniature took a little work but is

highly recommended as a display figure. It costs \$11.95.

The Viking Forge

1711 D Anderson Highway
Powhatan VA 23139

Emperor Dragon

*** ½

The AD&D® 2nd Edition rules have beefed up the dragon to very respectable standards in hit dice and size. Unfortunately, the producers of dragon miniatures have not kept up. Grenadier, RAFM, and now Viking Forge have all beefed up some dragon sizes, but the largest submitted for review is definitely the Emperor Dragon.

Before I get into this review, I need to point out that this dragon is rated the way it is because it takes a great deal of work and effort to assemble a good-looking figure from this kit; this set is not made for the majority of modelers who are looking for a quick and painless miniature to throw into their game that night. This model is definitely one for experienced modelers, and for them the figure's rating would be considered higher.

The dragon consists of 13 separate castings scaled to 25 mm. When assembled, the figure weighs nearly 4½ lbs and is over 560 mm long. The dragon has a baleful stare and a row of spinal spikes down his back that end in a spear-shaped tail-tip.

The tail is a solid piece that connects to the top half of the main body, which is then secured by the bottom half of the body. The front of our bottom torso piece had to be bent considerably to meet the bottom of the neck when these parts were assembled. Filling was needed at the tail/body connection, especially at the bottom. The legs fit into their sockets using different slots that not only prevent the legs

from being put on wrong but provide considerable support as well. The neck assembly consists of two parts, the upper and the lower halves, which fit inside the upper half of the body and contain the lower jaw. The tongue and the upper head and horns are two separate pieces.

A lot of small flash was on the model, mostly on the upper half of the torso throughout the scales, which can be cleaned using a small knife. Extremely thick flash or a mold line runs along the right side of the bottom torso along the belly plates, and a thick mold line is on the right side of the tail. The spikes along the back needed to be cleaned, as there was flash at the back of each one. Care must be taken in removing all flash, using a knife, a file, and a file-cleaning brush.

The dragon's ears are Oriental in appearance (as in Oriental dragon) but slightly thick. The eyes are engraved to allow you to set expression. Considerable filing is needed at the joints; I recommend that you test-fit all parts extensively to ensure fit before gluing. These pieces are all very large and can easily warp during the pouring or cooling processes. I do recommend bending the front left leg outward slightly; the dragon is using a tripod stance and is slightly unstable if assembled as intended. The front foot is also slightly cocked and not totally flat.

This figure is highly recommended if you want a truly intimidating dragon and are willing to work at it. The legs are not quite as muscular as I would like to see them (for comparison, see this column in issue #182 for the Gold Dragon from Thunderbolt Mountain), and very light pitting is on the wing, but neither of these detract from the miniature. Be prepared to watch almost a whole bottle of paint disappear when painting. This is well worth its price of \$59.95.

Black Dragon Pewter

Unit 303
2437 Bay Area Blvd.
Houston TX 77058

9681 Never Anger a Wizard

This 54-mm pewter sculpture is fairly self-explanatory and should provide everyone who plays a mage in a role-playing game with a slight chuckle (though it might send a chill down the back of everyone who plays a fighter).

The figure is cast on an oval base, with the scenario title engraved on the front of the base. The floor is mixed sand and stone with a crystal ball, clothes, and a breastplate on the ground. A simple but well-detailed wizard, with an expression more of amusement than anger, shoots a bolt of magic from his left hand. An empty helmet and sword hang in mid-air where the spell ends, and a frog leaping away from the result leaves little doubt as to whether the spell was successful.

I highly recommend this sculpture to all

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Never Anger a Wizard (Black Dragon Powder)



Riding the Cold Wind to Valhalla (Ral Partha Enterprises)

gamers, and I suggest that it be prominently displayed when fighters get too uppity. The price for this piece is a very reasonable \$30.

Ral Partha Enterprises

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212

Ral Partha Enterprises

c/o Minifigs
1/5 Graham Road, Southampton
UNITED KINGDOM SO2 0AX

RP 10-462 Riding the Cold Wind to Valhalla *****

The dragon is a multipiece lead kit scaled to 25 mm, consisting of 18 pieces, chain, and three pieces of wire for support. The kit's good set of instructions for assembly of the miniature includes visual cues and some tricks of assembly. The base is a solid V-shaped bar sculpted in a pattern that resembles a mountain peak.

The finished miniature is roughly 11" long from nose to tail. Scale, wing, and muscle detail are all excellent. Only a few areas needed to be filled when the miniature was painted. There were several

gaps, but they were easily filled with gap filling adhesive that also added extra strength. Two gaps needed to be filled with green putty. There was also a lot of thin flash, especially in the tail curves and at the ends of the extremities. A very low ridge of hardened scales runs down the back in place of spinal spikes. The dragon has a full set of tack molded onto his body and two tracks for the chain that secures the lower basket; a necklace of gold disks surrounds the neck. The posture of the dragon suggests that he is actively contributing to his own defense.

Two automatic heavy crossbows provide cover and discourage airborne or ground enemies. These weapons are molded to baskets secured to the dragon and are somewhat protected by molded-on shields. The small basket has a skeletal ram emblazoned on the back, while the main crew basket has the moon, the sun, and two other symbols emblazoned on shields that not only protect the basket but are the anchoring point for the chain that supports this basket beneath the dragon. The baskets are highly detailed, with well-done wood grain, metal edging, and rivets. All of this is nice, but the joke lies in the composition of the crew.

The "dwarf zeppelin" is staffed by a crew of four. Figure one, in the basket on the back, is dressed like a British or American infantryman from World War I, including goggles, long coat, canteen, dispatch sack, and heavy boots. The dwarf pilot is dressed in a World War I aviator's cap complete with goggles, a brown flight jacket over chain mail, and high boots. His long, braided beard, parted by the wind, is tossed over both shoulders. Thick gloves protect his hands as he grips the dragon's horn in his left hand and a battle axe in his right, much in the spirit of a flying ace with his pistol. Javelins are secured to his back; the fact that the tips are covered makes me think they could be explosive. He sits on a small saddle, molded to the dwarf figure, that rests on the dragon's neck just behind the head.

The lower basket's crossbow is crewed by a dwarf dressed in World War I German flying gear, including the traditional spiked helmet and gold-eagle visor markings. He also wears goggles, heavy gloves, a canteen, a belt pouch, a vest, and a billowing shirt. The observer is dressed like an ancient mariner with a short beard, flashy clothes, and a spy glass in his right hand. His left hand holds a parchment that could either be a map or notepad. This is almost a perfect observation platform.

This is an excellent miniature and is highly recommended for either display or game use. I do recommend that you use heavier rods for supporting this miniature, as the ones that are included tend to bow out. You can also set up accompanying ground forces using the Orc Foes boxed set from Ral Partha. The totem for the cleric in this set is a dragon and goes perfectly with this kit. If you want to increase



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Shadow World

the figure's combat value, use Ral Partha Imports' figure FA79 (trimming the base from the feet), move the spyglass dwarf over, and put the human in the front of the basket with a small mounted crystal for viewing. You now have air-to-ground communications and a side-firing weapon system or back-up defense system. The kit is a great buy at \$20.95.

RP 20-773 Guillotines ***** 1/2

This is an Inner Sphere response Mech for the BATTLETECH* game and is a new release from Ral Partha. This 70-ton Mech can be found in *Tech Manual 3050: The Return of Kerensky*, from FASA Corporation. The figure is made of lead, measuring 45 mm tall, 28 mm wide, and 10 mm deep. It is molded on an oval base; no hex base comes with the miniature. This Mech is almost an exact match with its book illustration, with only some line differences. The miniature has some problems: Raised mold lines lie on the inside of the left arm and on the inside of the right leg, the tripod light holder on the upper shoulders had one area almost totally filled with hard flash, and the left shoulder must be leveled to correct a slight molding flaw.

Generally, this is a recommended set, but quality control does need improving. It costs \$4.75 each.

RP 20-502 Street Samurai *****

Ral Partha has gained the rights to produce miniatures for FASA's SHADOWRUN* game. Among the packs now available is the Street Samurai, heavily armed and loaded for bear. The pack consists of three lead figures scaled in 25 mm.

Figure #1 is a human measuring 28 mm to the top of his hair, armed with a CMDT combat gun in his right hand. A mold line runs across the top of his right boot. His long coat is secured by a belt that supports his sword and pistol. Another belt supports a line of flash grenades and explosives at about heart level on his chest. His face is gaunt, and facial features are well done; his hair is short, with a long ponytail in the rear. The hands are well done, too, and his knuckles look like they have implants or brass knuckles. The figure is posed as if stepping down. The base is circular, representing pavement and a manhole cover. The mold line across the base requires very little work to clean.

Figure #2 stands on a circular base representing a sidewalk, complete with cracks and pits. The figure is of a grim, over-30 fighter with a cigar stub clenched in his mouth. He wears glasses, and his hair is long and pulled back. His ears look like he might be part elf. The trousers have a multitude of pockets; his belt supports spare ammo clips, grenades, a sword sheath, a holster, and a pistol. His armored vest is trimmed in fringes and flaps. An AK-74 is strapped to his back. His right hand clutches an Uzi, and his left has a sword raised over his head. His feet are covered by high-topped, Velcro-strapped

boots.

Figure #3 is on a circular base with a cobblestone surface. He is posed as if walking against the wind, with his coat open and flowing out behind him. Ammo bandoliers cross his chest. His right hand holds a flash bomb, while his left holds an Ares MP LMG. A submachine gun hangs on shoulder straps; spare clips are on his right side. He wears a laced pair of combat boots, long pants, and possibly an armored vest. The face has sharp African features with an almost neutral expression. His "earmuffs" are probably a communications device. His hair is extremely well done, with tightly curled hair peaked in the front and cut in a flat-top style. This figure is excellent.

These are excellent figures, and the detail is very good, but I do miss the variety present in the Grenadier Samurai set. These figures can also be used for a variety of different SF and dark-future role-playing games. The set costs \$4.25 per pack and is highly recommended.

Iron Crown Enterprises

P.O. Box 1605
Charlottesville VA 22902

I want to offer an explanation to those of you who asked why I didn't do any follow-up reviews after the SILENT DEATH* game review many months ago. The review miniatures given to me to go with the game's first supplement were made by a company that no longer has the license to produce them. I had requested new miniatures, but the reply is wandering in postal lines somewhere. Therefore, we will examine ships from the *Blackguard* supplement.

ICE 920 Talon Fighter *****

The Talon fighter's stats can be found on page 10 of the *Blackguard* supplement. The design is a basic three-boom model joined at the middle. Observation and control points are located in the middle pod. The total miniature size is 36 mm by 15 mm. The center section looks a little like the hull of the American F-117A.

When the miniature is compared with the illustration of the Talon in the book, differences are immediately noticeable. There is virtually no engraving on tail control surfaces or on wing vents, nor is there much engraving on the front part of the engines. The illustration appears to have a more rounded cockpit and center areas, but this may be an illusion. Detail is also lacking on the inside of the engines and fuselage sides. These figures could be used for other space-combat games and are a good buy at \$4 per package of two.

ICE 919 Dart Fighter *****

This fighter reminds me a little of the Colonial Viper from the TV show *Battlestar Galactica*, except it is missing the latter's vertical stabilizers. The ship is 29 mm long, 14 mm wide, 7 mm tall, and shaped like an arrowhead. The ship is made of

soft lead and should allow for good detailing, but there is almost no detail on the ship when the miniature is compared to the game's illustration of the same. Whole sections of panel lines, engine accesses, and secondary latches and plates are missing on the miniature, leaving it very plain. It's still good for the game, with three to a pack for \$4.

ICE 921 Lance Elektra Fighter *****

The Lance Elektra is a large catamaran-hulled fighter weighing 420 tons in the game. The miniature is about 1 mm longer than the Talon and is about 1.5 times as thick. As with the others, it is underdetailed when compared with the illustration of the same in the game. This pack also has the peculiarity of containing two previously unmentioned variants of the Elektra. One ship is missing a turret, while the other has different turrets than those illustrated. These are available at \$4 per package of two.

These miniatures are made by RAFFM, which usually does better work. While there was no flash, there is the capability for much more detail. I hope this is only a temporary problem.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the GEN CON/ORIGINS game fair. If you need to reach me outside the convention, you can do so at this address and phone number: Robert Bigelow, c/o Friends' Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington St., Waukegan IL 60085, U.S.A.; (708) 336-0790; MWThF 2-10 P.M., SSu 10 A.M.-5 P.M. Ω

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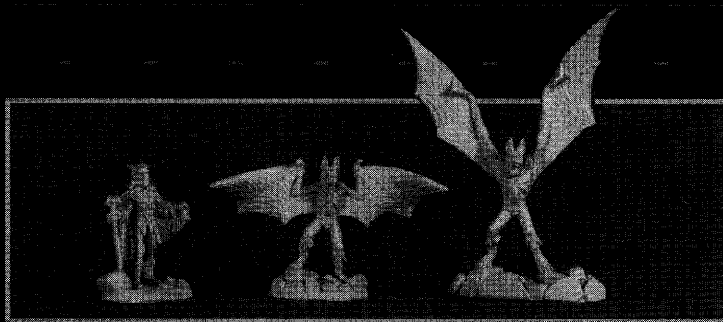
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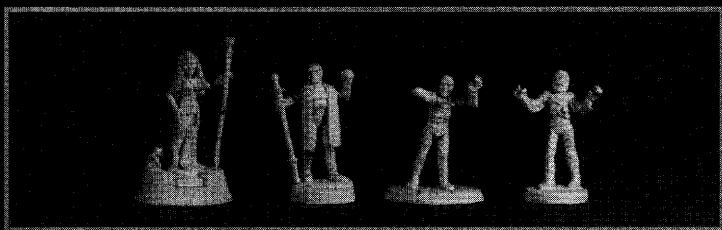
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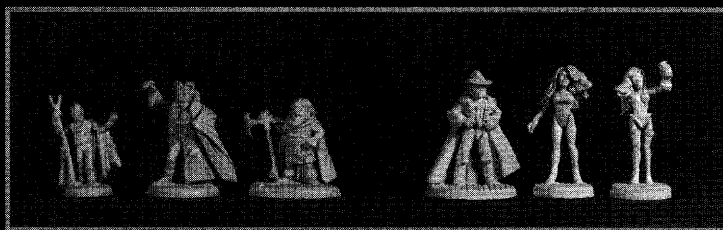
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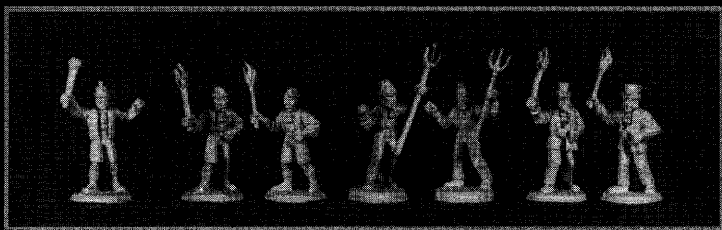
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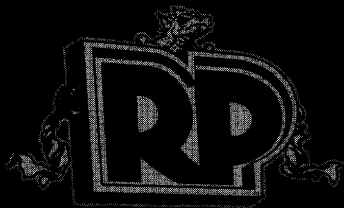


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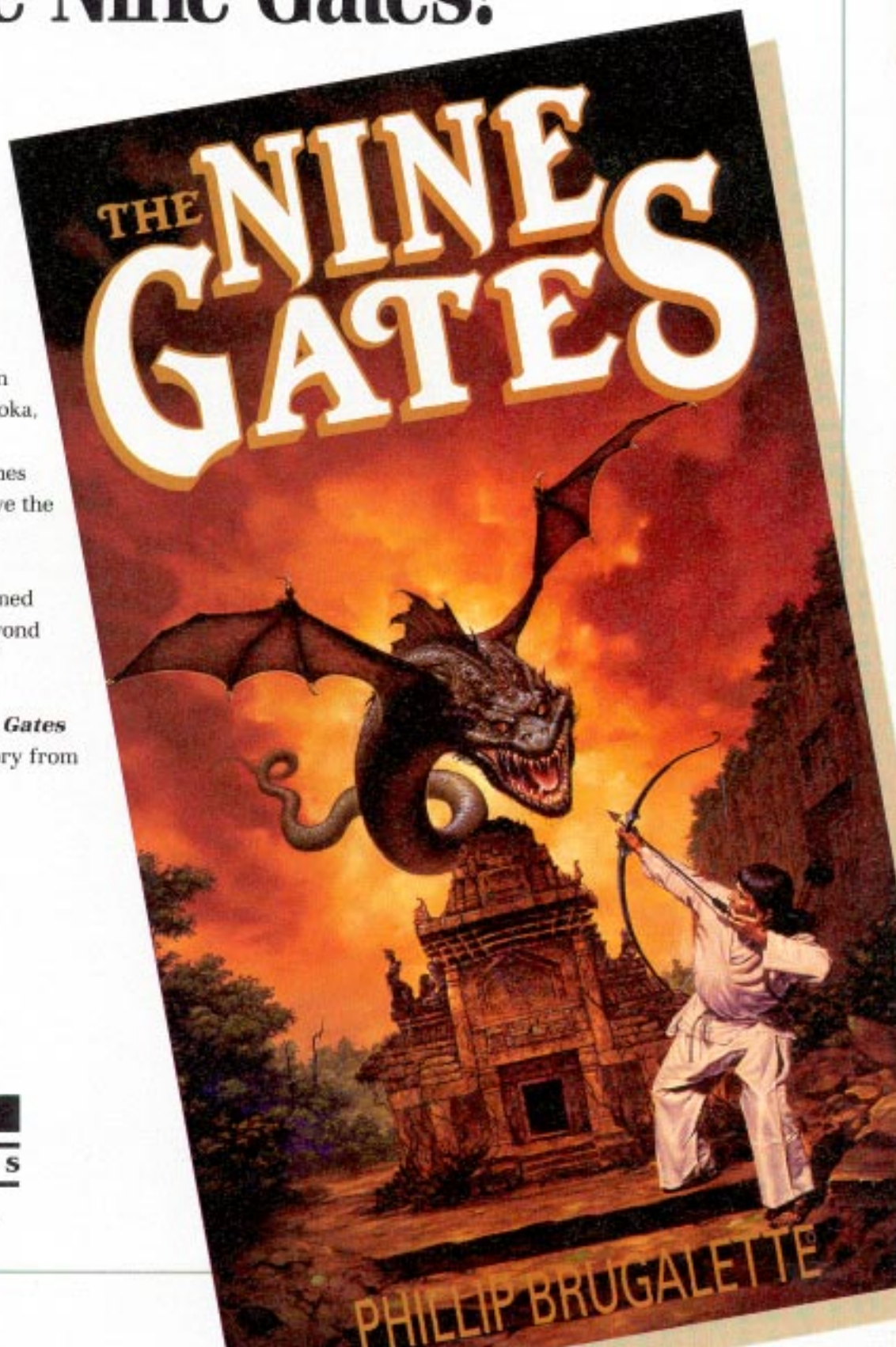
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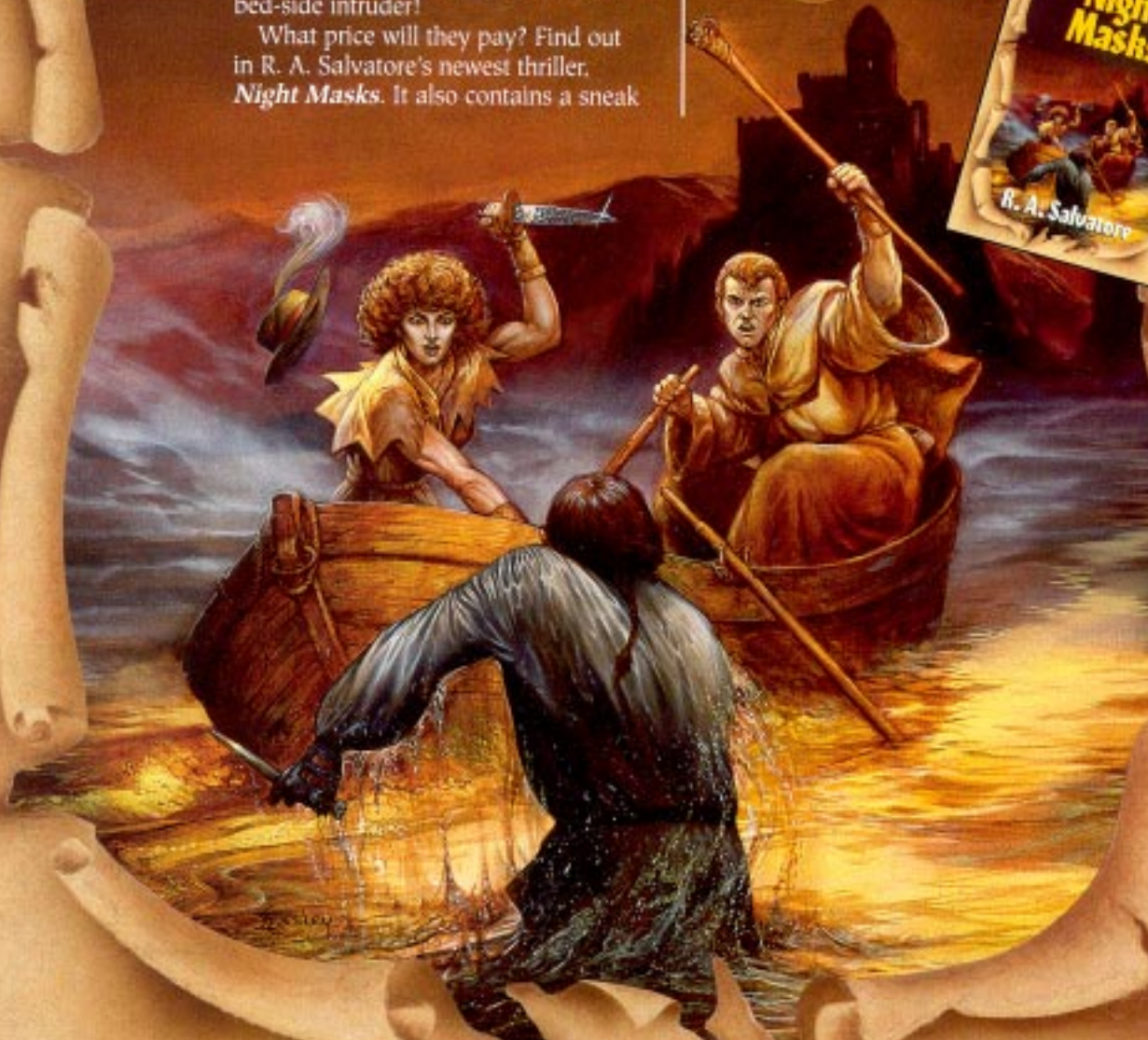
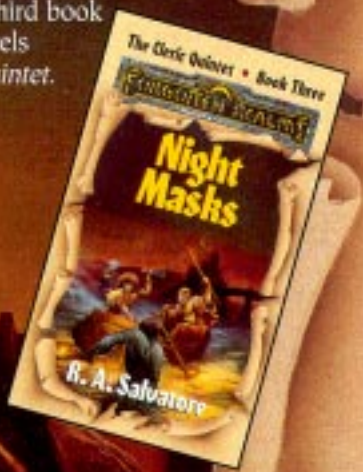
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