

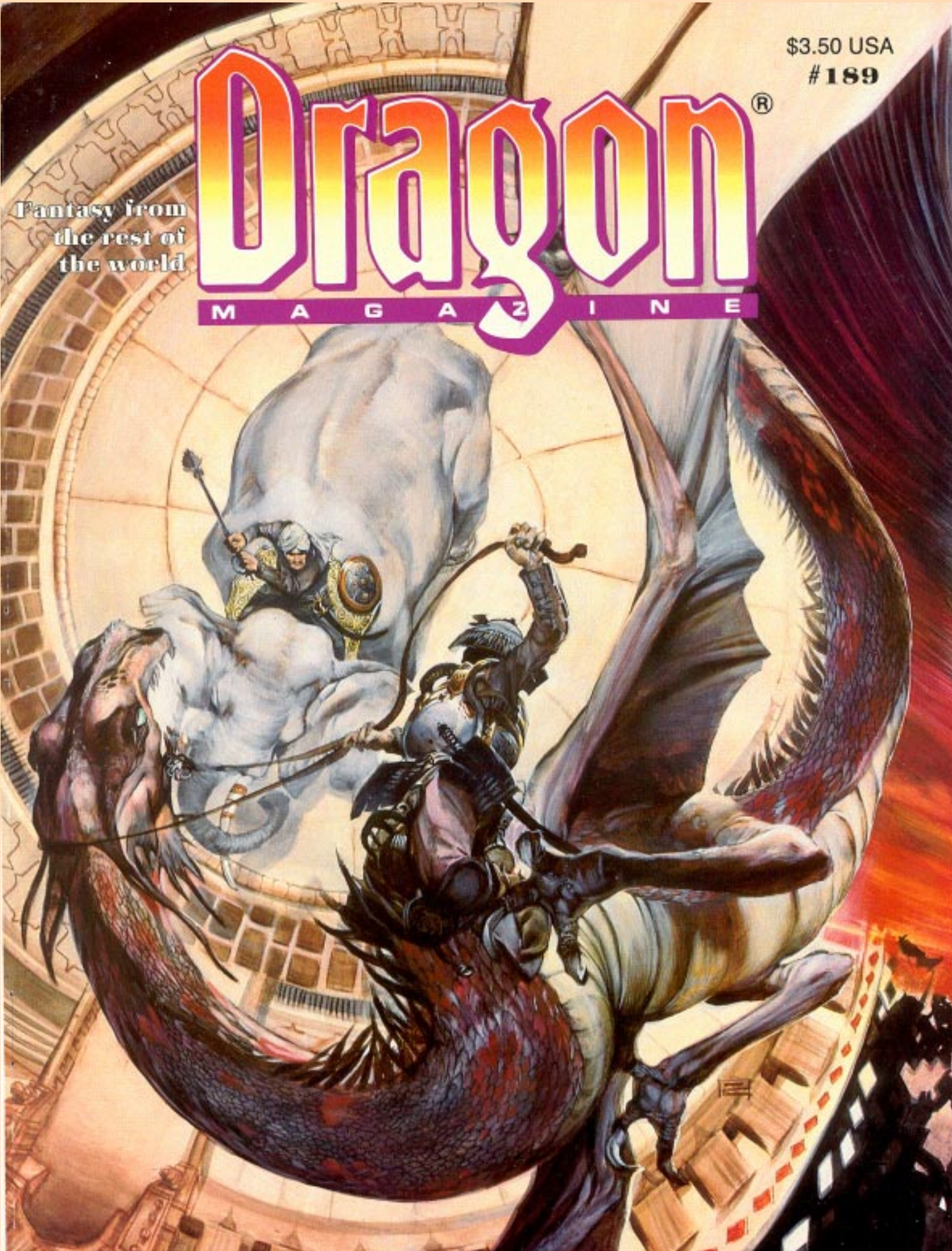
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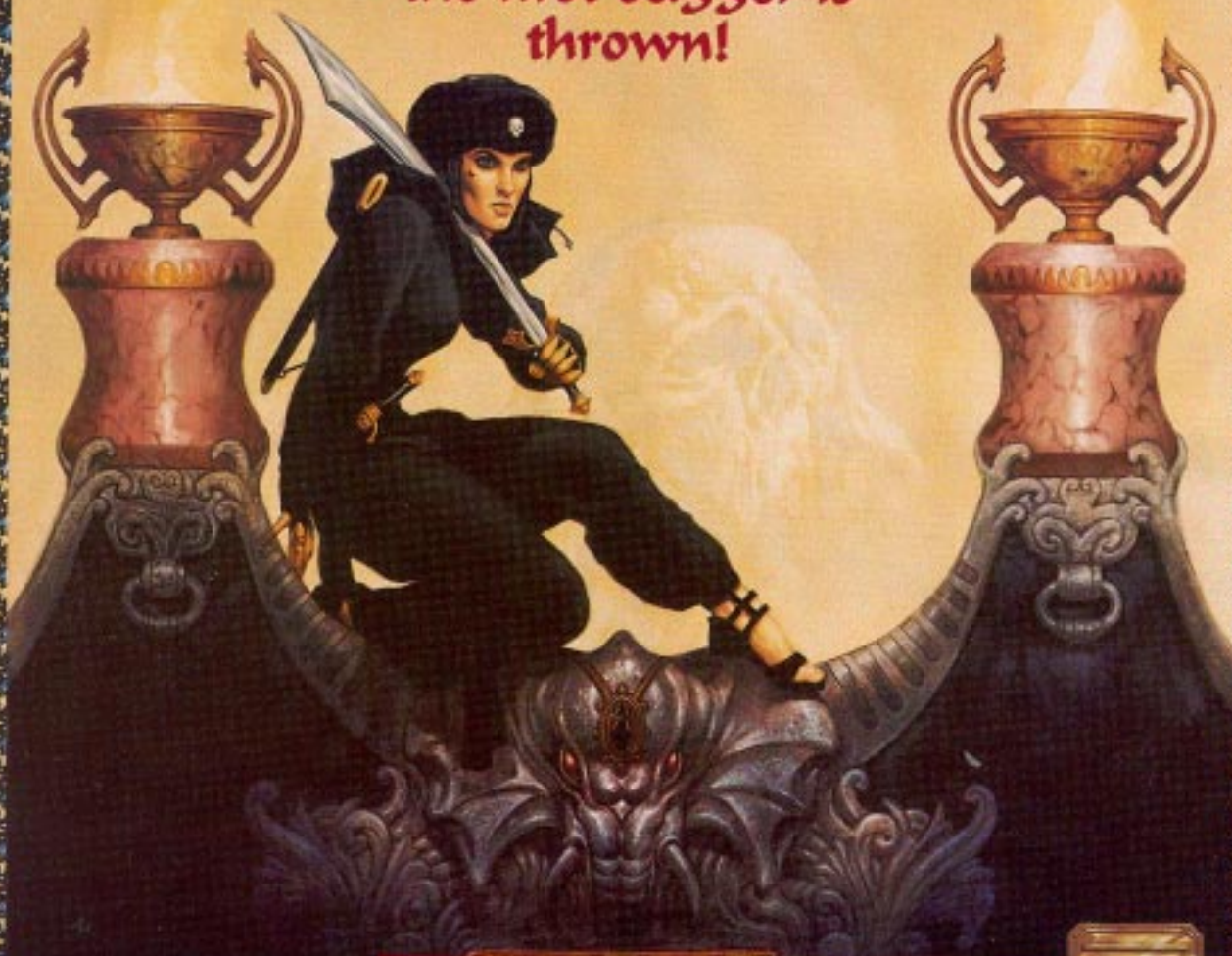
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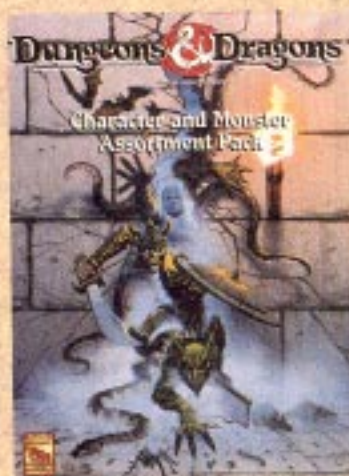
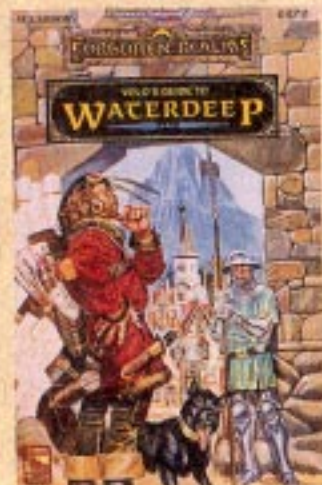
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Issue # 189
Vol. XVII, No. 8
January 1993

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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 distribu-

tion 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.; \$36 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in 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 cheques 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

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Second-class postage paid at Lake Geneva, Wis., U.S.A., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to DRAGON Magazine, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. USPS 318-790, ISSN 1062-2101.

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, PO. 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,

The Army life

Dear Dragon

I don't think you will remember me, considering all of the people you meet and talk with, but maybe you will. I wrote to you back in 1985 concerning the "World Gamers Guide" column. I indicated that I had just left the Army and was concerned about the lack of attention paid to the people in the military stationed overseas.

Much to my surprise, you called me on the phone; you said you had been in the military as well and remembered what it was like, I have never forgotten that phone call. Well, now I find myself in the military again, stationed overseas, I had searched for players for several months when suddenly Operation Desert Storm came along. I thought it had ruined my plans, but it had not. In the middle of a combat zone someplace in southern Iraq, I found myself playing an AD&D® game. The cease fire had just been called, and we were waiting for our illustrious command to tell us what it wanted us to do next when I spied several guys sitting around on cots, with character sheets, books, and figures scattered all over the place (thanks to a wind storm), and they were yelling and screaming about the powers of something called the Sword of Chaos. The next thing I knew, I was sitting with them screaming about the powers of this same sword. We, the military gamers, are still out here in the world, come rain or snow, come Saddam Hussein or whomever, come bullets or land mines; just look real hard and you will find us. It seems like we always have been and I feel quite sure we always will.

Now, I do have another reason for writing, I have been using my computer to assist in the creation of character sheets, maps, modules, and so on for several years, but I still find it very difficult to create the dungeons and maps that accompany my modules. I turn to graph paper every time. I have a very nice IBM-compatible system with several thousand dollars invested in it, yet I must still spend endless hours trying to draw maps and dungeons. Every time I open a copy of DUNGEON® Adventures and look at the drawings, I get sick with envy. What does TSR use to draw those maps and dungeons? How is it done? How much does it cost? In issue #177 I found an advertisement from a company that has a computer program that assists DMs in the creation of characters and so forth, but not maps and dungeons. This is the only company I have seen that offers computer aids. Please point me in the right direction! Who can I contact that can provide

me with the right software?

Again thanks for the memories Please never forget that we're out here, somewhere. We're definitely out here!

David A. Casey
APO Europe

I remember you very well, and it's good to hear from you again A number of my old Army buddies ended up scattered around the Persian Gulf two years ago, and I am grateful to hear that you came out of it okay as did they.

We had some trouble coming up with IBM computer programs that let you map dungeons and the outdoors. (The maps in DUNGEON Adventures are hand-drawn.) If any readers know of such programs, for any computer system, please write in and let us all know. We'll publish that information here.

Thank you for your letter I'll never forget

Viva Atari!

Dear Dragon

I usually let others make vociferous political attacks and I stay clear of the melee, but events surrounding the letter from William K. Briggs in issue #185's letters got my dander up. I read your statement that SSI was not going to produce games for the Atari ST system and was disappointed. But Jim Wards statement that the Atari ST system was defunct made me furious. I understand that Milatari and Atari were part of a handful of computer groups that supported the 1992 GEN CON® game fair you recently featured. I had hoped that after reading September's issue that the actions of the people from Milatari would have made Jim Ward's statement regarding Atari's rumored demise be retracted. I beseech you to reassure those panicked by this statement, born out of a lack of information and please print some sort of retraction.

Jeff Hays
No address given

A correction is called for. Although the Atari ST computer system is not itself "defunct," as I was led to believe (sorry about that), there are not enough Atari-using customers to make it worthwhile for Strategic Simulations, Inc. to make its TSR-licensed computer games for that system. The Atari ST may be alive and well, but there will be no further TSR games for it.

Alhoon error

Dear Dragon

In DRAGON issue #185, page 63, the alhoon have an armor class of 12, while an unarmored man has the lowest armor class possible, AC 10. How is that possible? Does a player character gain a +2 on his attack roll?

Min Sheng Lu
Impington, Cambridge, U.K

The AD&D statistics for the illithilich (or alhoon) seem to have been slightly garbled in that article's text, but they also changed in the product in which they were finally produced. The correct statistics for the alhoon are these: INT genius (18); #APP 1-4; AL NE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 8 +4; THACO 11; #AT 4; Dmg 4 tentacles, each doing 1-4 hp/round and reaching brain of victim in 1-4 rounds (causes instant death); SA psionics (includes Mind Thrust; 7th-level psionics powers with all standard mind flayer powers) and spells (as 9th-level mage), MR 90%; SZ M (6' tall); ML 17-18, XP 9,000; Menzoberranzan boxed set, Book One: The City, page 88. Other changes in powers and abilities appear in the Menzoberranzan set book

£ and \$

Dear Dragon,

I try to make sure I buy DRAGON Magazine every month, but I get very frustrated every time I read "Gamers Guide." I am very interested in one of the advertisements on casting your own figures, but I have found that, just as with eight out of 10 of the monthly advertisements, there was only an American address! This is terrible! It would cost a fortune in airmail postage, and I obviously cannot pay for the goods with English money. What shall I do?

Pete Fox
Barnsley, S. Yorks., U.K.

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We had a similar comment from Simon Khoury (Waterlooville, Hampshire, U.K.), who asked if we could print the price in British pounds for games and other products that we review. This is often very difficult to find out; I used to have a hard time trying to get the U.K. prices for TSR products! You might simply have to consult with your local hobby shop or games distributor for the prices, since they might get advance notice in catalogs or fliers from the game companies themselves.

Never too young

Dear Dragon

I am 11 years old, and I have been playing role-playing games ever since I was six or seven.

Continued on page 7



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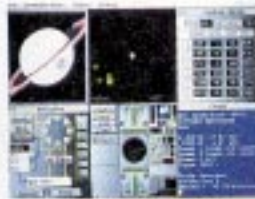
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EDITORIAL

No mercy, no quarter

As is obvious from the title of this article, I want to start off the New Year by talking about a game master's proper attitude toward player characters in a role-playing campaign. The best game masters want their adventures to be just a little more exciting than any sane person would ever want to experience. What self-respecting hero would ever want to charge into a pitch-black cavern filled with man-eating ghouls while armed with only a *short sword + 1*? Right. But, if you set it up right, they'll do it anyway—and the players will love it.

When you run an adventure, you want to fill your players with fear and panic and terror and excitement, the vicarious thrill of avoiding death by the narrowest scrape, followed by the joyful moans of exhaustion from the survivors (or the agonized screams as everyone is eaten alive). The point is that you want the players to remember the evening happily and forever.

One good way to inflict unusually exciting adventures of this sort on your players is to have a cinematic mental view of your adventure before play starts. Visualize the upcoming scenario in detail as if it were part of an action/adventure movie. You want to be able to describe, in full color, the major action scenes that you anticipate

will occur, right down to the last strand of drool trailing from the lead ghoul's mouth as it gibbers and howls and flings itself upon the party's forward scout. While you should avoid forcing an adventure to turn out in a certain way, you do want to try to second-guess the players' moves, fleshing out the "what if" possibilities so that you can add special color to them as you run through the adventure. Doing a little research on the setting you plan to use will do wonders for the adventure, too. The more you know, the better the adventure will be.

As an example, I ran an adventure a few years ago in which the PCs were asked to investigate the disappearance of a ship at the Isles of Thunder, a minor atoll about which little was known. The heroes dutifully rented a ship and sailed off, arriving at the deserted isles in the evening. Discovering that the isles were arranged in a circular fashion, they dropped anchor in the middle of the islands' bay and went to sleep.

That was a mistake.

See, this particular adventure was born with my reading of Edgar Allan Poe's short-story masterpiece, "A Descent into the Maelström." In less than two dozen pages, Poe depicts a scene of such primal terror as to leave the reader shivering and

breathless. The Maelström itself is a gigantic tidal whirlpool off the western coast of Norway. Sailors avoid it because it eats ships whole. Poe spent a lot of time researching the physics of whirlpools before he wrote this story, and his outstanding ability to detail a scene made the story invaluable to me as resource material for the adventure—as well as terrifying to the nth degree. Read this passage from Poe, told by an observer on shore who watches the sea where the Maelström is forming:

In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half shriek, half roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven.

This is only the beginning of a terrific story, which I won't spoil for you here. I had decided to send the heroes down the Maelström—and there they went.

Just after midnight, the heroes were awakened by the shrieking and screaming of tens of thousands of sea gulls taking off from the Isles of Thunder and fleeing the scene. In the moonlight, the characters on deck saw the smooth sea turn choppy as they heard a distant, low thundering build all around them. Their ship rocked as violent gusts of wind tore across the surface and shook the masts. As the howling of the winds rose and huge whirlpools began to form across the bay, the heroes made a desperate effort to escape aboard their ship, but the anchor could not be raised.

A titanic whirlpool then began to form in the bay, with the heroes' ship in its center. As the ship began to spin and sink with the descent of the center of the mile-wide vortex, and old wrecks from the sea bottom were brought up to the sides of



the pool and hurled like wood chips around in its black grip, the characters hung onto railings and masts for dear life. The players shouted to each other and to me in a frenzy, pouring out their last commands and actions in the face of doom. The ship dropped half a mile to, the bottom of the full-blown whirlpool—and disappeared into an alternate universe.

This was only the beginning of the adventure. I had also been reading a copy of a rare fantasy-horror novel called *The Boats of the Glen Carrig*, by William Hope Hodgson, an author who died in World War I. In this tale, a party of lost seamen discover a small island surrounded by a vast bed of seaweed in which various old wrecked ships still float and enormous man-eating monsters dwell. Hodgson, like Poe, was able to capture the essence of horror and the unknown in his writing, and he was further able to project the existence of ghastly supernatural powers that were completely hostile to all life, doing it in such a way as to make your skin crawl when you put the book away and tried to go to bed. Can you guess where the heroes went when they were *gated* out of the whirlpool? I knew you could.

After being attacked by several giant squids, sahuagin, prehistoric sharks, and I forget what else, the heroes made it to the island and met up with the (few) survivors of the ship they had been sent to find. Bringing the castaways aboard their own ship, the heroes then managed to find a way back to their home plane by sailing directly into a waterspout—a tornado that touches down on the sea to create a violent funnel of wind and mist. What was left of the ship, the heroes, and the rescued sailors limped back into port, with many satisfied smiles and personal promises never to set foot on so much as a rowboat again.

For days before the adventure, I kept picturing the heroes caught in the whirlpool, then attacked by unearthly monsters, then slamming into the tornado at the end. I pieced together as many details as I could of the happenings and wrote them down, often rereading the original sources to flesh out the imagery, then used it all as the adventure unfolded. It worked great.

Give this a try in your next adventure. Think big. Think of the Maelström. Think of Indiana Jones. Think of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, *Aliens*, *Ghostbusters*, or *Total Recall*. Visualize your adventure and sharpen up the details for maximum impact. Then hit the heroes with everything you've got, and listen to them scream.

The players will love you for it. Trust me.

Roger Moore

Letters

Continued from page 4

I've been told, though, that I'm too young and shouldn't be playing them until I am older. Is there a certain age when people should start playing role-playing games?

Dillon P. Biedul
San Luis Obispo CA

As far as I'm concerned, if you can read and understand the rules to a particular role-playing game, or if someone can explain the rules to you clearly, then you're old enough to play it. Age is generally unimportant except to a few other gamers, and you can always find other people to play with. Enjoy!

Overdue attention

Dear Dragon,

Finally! I am glad to see that TSR and DRAGON Magazine are paying some overdue attention to the first and best fantasy world in the AD&D game. The WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting has been mostly ignored by the TSR crew, and it's time that they did something for all of us fans out here. If as much time and effort were spent on this campaign as was spent on the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, the result would be the brightest gem in the TSR crown. Many newer players are missing out on the rich traditions and background available for years in the GREYHAWK® setting.

That brings me to my first point. My sincere thanks and appreciation go out to Ed Greenwood for his "Magic in the Evening" piece in issue #185. I really hope that this line of conversation between Elminster, Mordenkainen, and possibly Dalamar continues for many issues to come. It was one of the best and most original features I've seen in recent years from DRAGON Magazine. Thank you for finally coming out of the "FORGOTTEN REALMS setting-only" approach.

I also wanted to ask about the AD&D 2nd Edition game's revision for the WORLD OF GREYHAWK set, mentioned in the GREYHAWK Wars boxed set. When is it coming out? I haven't seen any mention of it in "TSR Previews," but I thought that it was due out this fall. Also, is there any possibility of getting a preview of the set in DRAGON Magazine?

H. I. Nichols
Savannah GA

First, thank you for the comments on "Magic in the Evening." As you saw in our last issue, we do indeed plan to continue this feature. Who knows what will be revealed in future columns, or who else will join the conversation?

Second, the From the Ashes boxed set, which contains information on the restructured WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting, went on sale last November. I should point out that, contrary to your remarks, the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting has received considerable attention from TSR's game designers and editors. Our 1991 and 1992 TSR catalogs listed the following items for sale, all relating to this universe: WGR1 Greyhawk Ruins, WGR2 Treasures of Greyhawk, WGR3 Rary the Traitor, MC5 GREYHAWK appendix to the Monstrous Compendium, The City of Greyhawk boxed set, the GREYHAWK Wars boxed set, T1-4 Temple of Elemental Evil, WG8 Fate of Istus, WG9 Gar-goyle, WG10 Child's Play, WG11 Puppets, WGA12 Vale of the Mage, WGA1 Falcon's Re-

venge, WGA2 Falconmaster, WGA3 Flames of the Falcon, WGA4 Verna Lives, WGS1 Five Shall Be One, WGS2 Howl From the North, WGQ1 Patriots of Ulek. I assume that you've already picked up older modules such as WG6 Isle of the Ape and the humorous WG7 Castle Greyhawk. This strikes me as quite a load of material for a setting that has been accused (by several other writers as well, actually) of being ignored by TSR. In fact, WORLD OF GREYHAWK products are promoted in our catalogs for selling well to experienced gamers who recognize it as the longest-running AD&D game world (heading into its 19th year).

This year, four other WORLD OF GREYHAWK products are on the schedule: The Marklands, an accessory due out in February; Iuz the Evil, an accessory due in April, The City of Skulls, an adventure in June, and Border Watch, another adventure for August. Stay tuned for more.

Straight survival

Dear Dragon,

There are various role-playing games around. I have played many of them, enjoyed a few, and spent a great deal of money. One thing I have found true in all cases is that the games revolve around violence. I enjoyed this when I started playing in fifth grade, but now I would like something more. I would like to find a game that concentrates on survival by normal people in a city, a cave, a deserted island, or somewhere else. Does anyone make an RPG that has no violence and no magic? The TOON* game by Steve Jackson Games is not what I am looking for. Please print my full address.

Randy Jennings
8800 Billings Road
Kirtland OH 44094

One of my favorite books when I was in grade school was Swiss Family Robinson, so I think I understand what you are looking for. The Avalon Hill Game Company publishes the OUT-DOOR SURVIVAL game, a board game that teaches many basic techniques of wilderness survival using a map showing 13,000 square miles of rugged terrain. The game sells for \$25. To order it, write to: The Avalon Hill Game Company, 4517 Harford Road, Baltimore MD 21214; or call toll-free: 1-800-999-3222, and use your credit card (there may be shipping and handling charges as well). It is interesting to note that some of the earliest D&D games ever played by its creators used this very same game for its map. There may be other board games or computer games that also simulate survival situations; if any readers know of them, I hope they'll drop you a postcard and let you know. Good luck!*

Suspend disbelief!

Dear Dragon,

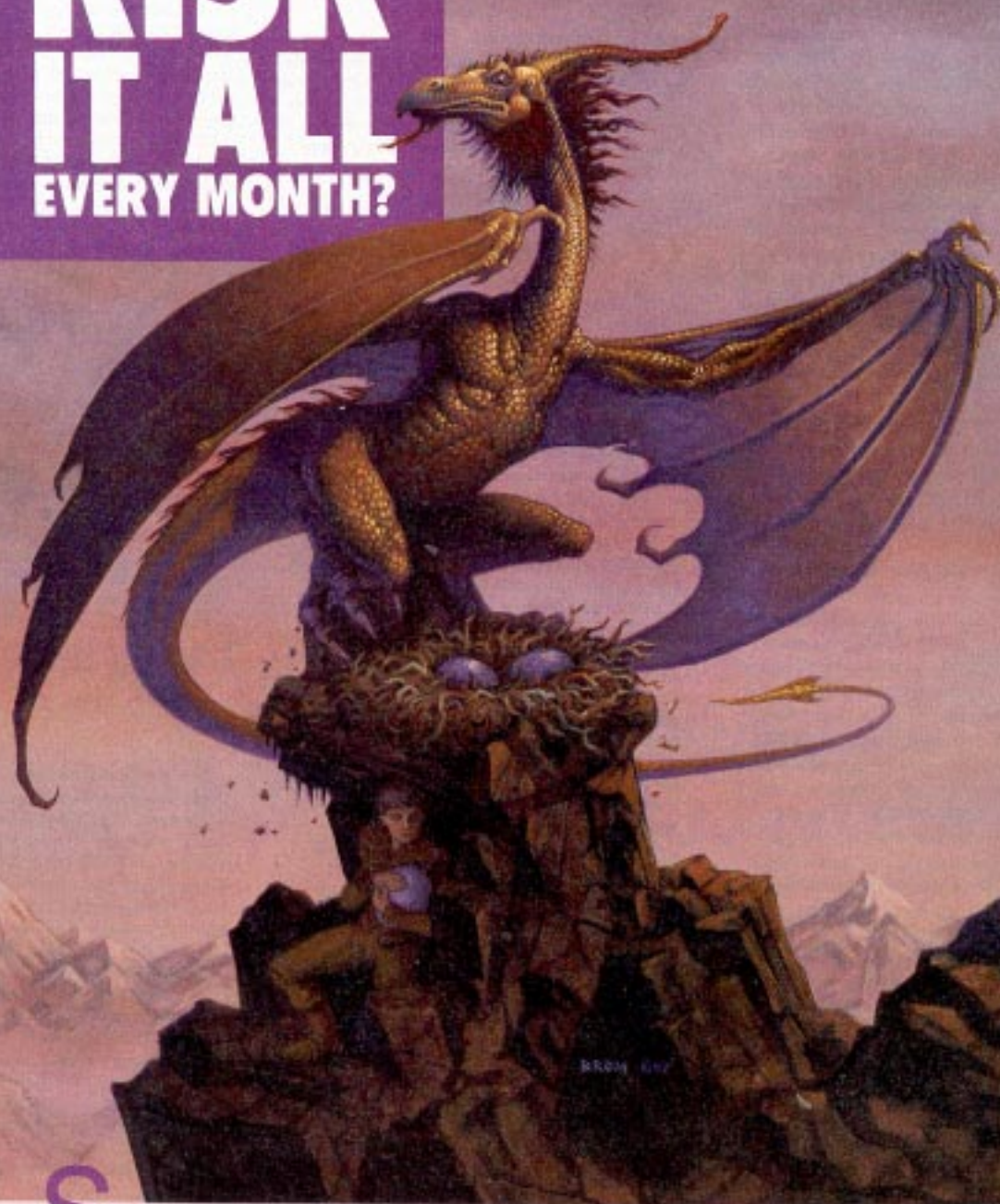
I'm glad that artist Tom Baxa was able to convince you of the existence of chain-mail pants in issue #186, page 3. Apparently, you already accept such things as magic and vampires. Get a grip!

Joe Wiegand
No address given

Thanks. I needed that.

Ω

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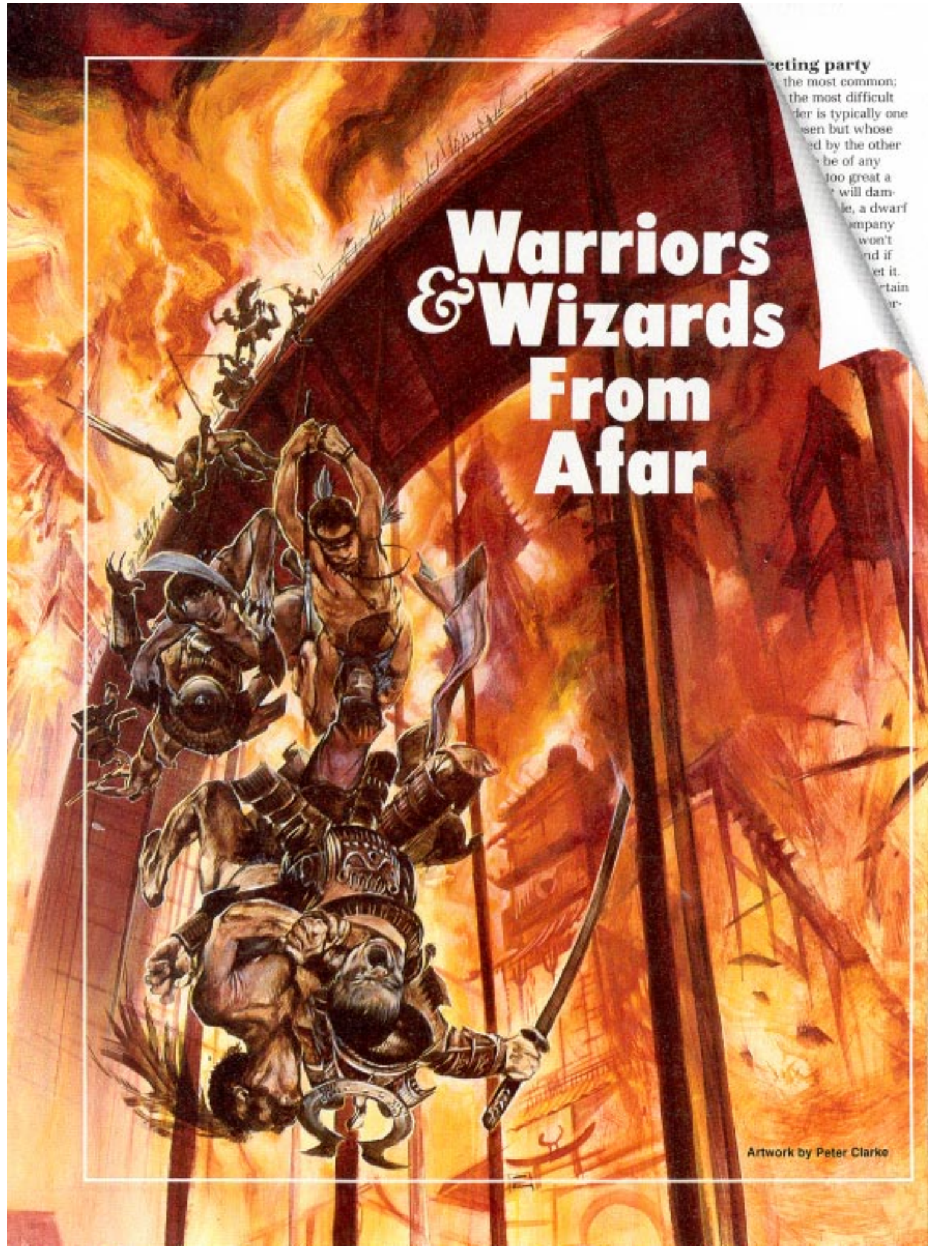
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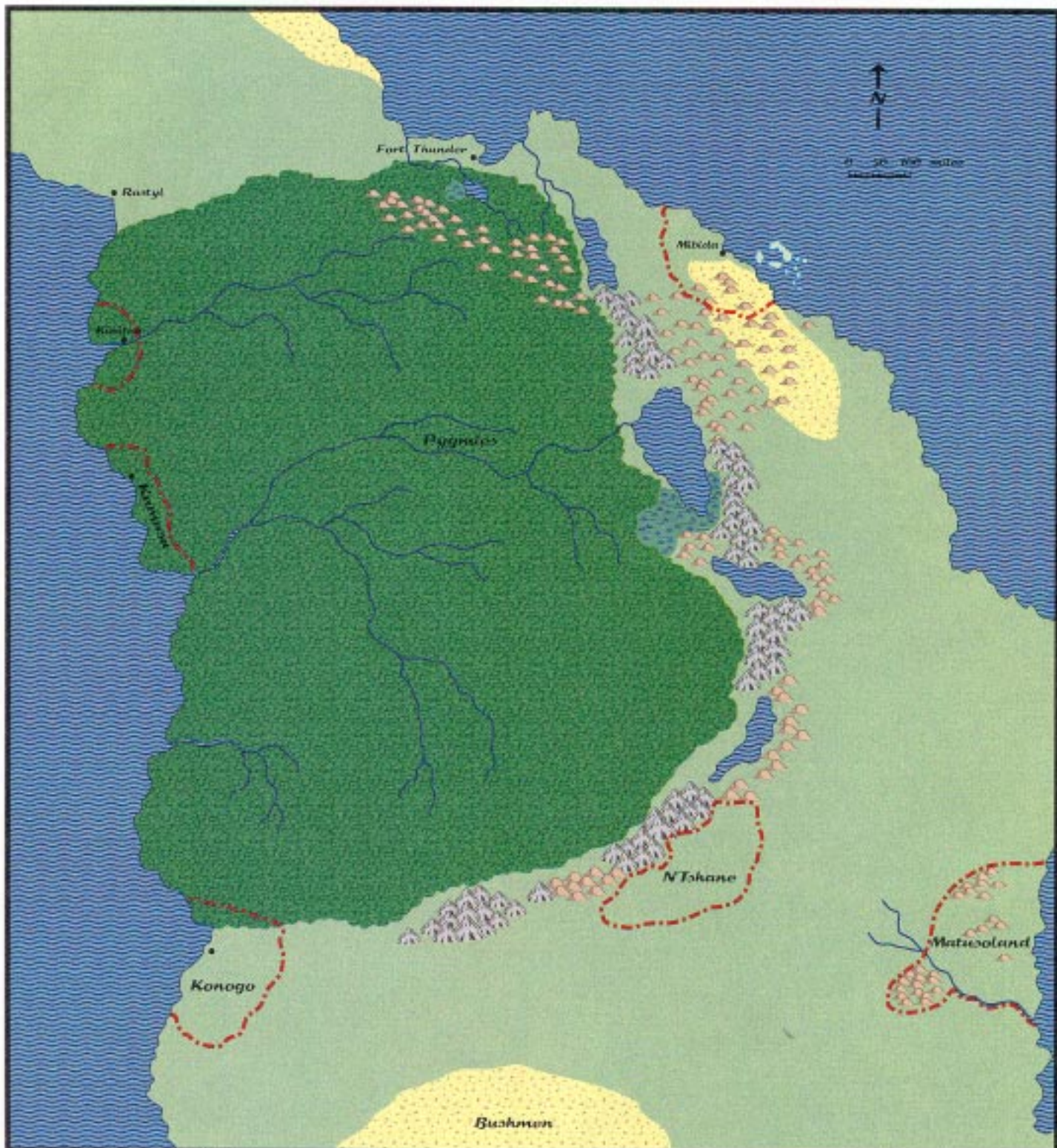


Warriors & Wizards From Afar

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Artwork by Peter Clarke



Cartography by John Knecht

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The Dark Continent


 National Boundary

 Town

 Desert
 Rainforest
 Plains

 River
 Sea or Lake
 Marsh

 Mountains
 Hills

The Dark Continent



Artwork by John Stanko

Add African to your campaign world

by David Howery

Artwork by Jim Holloway

The wilderness of Africa has been a setting for fiction writers for over a century. It's a common setting for tales of lost races, ruined cities, and hidden kingdoms. Stories ranging from H. Rider Haggard's "King Solomon's Mines" to Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan stories and the recent Congo by Michael Crichton use Africa as a background. The pulp-fiction adventure spirit of African stories is ideal for the AD&D® game, due to the presence of

monsters, magic, and mysteries.

African settings have been mostly ignored in existing AD&D game worlds. This article presents a way to add an Africa-like continent to your AD&D game, using examples, from real African history and folklore. Of course this setting is not the real Africa, any more than the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® is the real medieval Europe or Kar-Tur is the real-world Orient. It is a setting influenced by myth, our

western perceptions of Africa, and movies and literature about Africa; many of the same sources that were used to design Kara-Tur. I have tried to keep the classic pulp-fiction spirit for the setting, which is perfect for designing adventures. Note that "Africa" in this article refers to sub-Saharan Africa, not Arabian lands, which are covered well in the AL-QADIM™ game supplements or Egyptian-inspired cultures which are covered in such diverse sources



as *Legends & Lore*, *FR10 Old Empires*, and *I3-5 The Desert of Desolation* module series (for the AD&D 1st Edition game), plus the D&D® game product *HWR2 Kingdom of Nithia*.

This article presents part of a generic Africa-like continent ("the Dark Continent"? that can be dropped into most normal AD&D settings. Unusual campaigns may not include an African setting. SPELLJAMMER®, DRAGONLANCE®, DARK SUN™, and the Maztica settings may be inappropriate, although imaginative Dungeon Masters can still make use of the information presented here (an African planet or entire crystal sphere for SPELLJAMMER, or a "new" continental land mass on Athas, Krynn, or Toril, for example). The other TSR campaign worlds are discussed below.

The WORLD OF GREYHAWK

campaign: For my original WORLD OF GREYHAWK campaign, I drew up an extended map of Hepmonaland, making it into a vast and wealthy continent of spice traders, ivory hunters, warring natives, lost cities, and all that wonderful African flavor. This was the original setting for "The Elephant's Graveyard," and "The Leopard Men" (see DUNGEON® Adventures, #15 and #22). Recent events on Oerth (detailed in *Greyhawk Wars* and *From the Ashes*), invalidated this set-up by revealing that Hepmonaland is a backwater area that had been conquered by the Scarlet Brotherhood. With this knowledge, the best place for an African continent is southwest of the Sea of Dust. It would be difficult, but not impossible, to set up trade routes to this area. DMs will have to draw up an extended map of Oerth to include the Dark Continent.

The FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting: To date, the southern hemisphere of Toril has not been developed. The Dark Continent could easily be placed southeast of Faerun and southwest of Kara-Tur. It may be difficult for trade routes to develop to this area, but the obstacles are no worse than those between Kara-Tur and Faerun.

The AL-QADIM setting: While technically part of the Realms, Zakhara is a land quite different from Faerun. The Dark Continent is a logical adjunct to Zakhara, since the real Africa is adjacent to the real Arabia. Due to proximity, the people of Zakhara are familiar with the Dark Continent, and have long-established trade routes there. DMs should feel free to place the Dark Continent off the western edge of the High Desert.

The RAVENLOFT® campaign: While the Demiplane of Dread is too small for a whole continent, one of my adventures sent the PCs to a small island with a twisted and evil version of an African jungle. This island was ruled by a cruel witch doctor who practiced voodoo and sorcery. He broke the PCs' limbs with voodoo dolls, and had werehyenas and undead for servants, plus doll golems and demon-possessed animals. The island included a

small native village, the jungle, and a river.

If you do not campaign in a published TSR world, it is up to your DM to determine where to place his or her Dark Continent setting. Wherever it is placed, the Dark Continent follows all normal AD&D rules. The land has a different culture, climate, and ecology than the lands the players and their PCs are familiar with however, and wise adventurers must adapt quickly to the new conditions, or become one of the many skeletons that litter the Savannah.

The land

The Dark Continent is a varied land but is hot nearly everywhere. The famous rainforest roughly follows the drainage of large river basins. It is bordered on the east and south by a chain of mountains, hills, and lakes. The hills and mountains are low and weathered. Rainforest soil is poor for European-style farming. The daily rainfall leeches most of the nutrients from the soil. Once the tropical growth is removed, the soil turns to hard clay in only a season or two.

To the north and south of the jungle, the thick trees gradually give way to open scrub and chapparal, and eventually to the wide savannah. The tropical plains are broad and level, broken by numerous hilly ranges, plateaus, and gullies. The soil is better for crops here, although water can be scarce at times.

Water is plentiful elsewhere, and the continent has numerous lakes, rivers, and swamps. The rainforest has interlaced systems of rivers and lakes, which form large drainage basins.

There are deserts in several places around the Dark Continent. The largest is in the western part of the southern savannah. This is the last home of the ancient bushmen tribes. All these deserts are hot and arid lands of thorny scrubs and salt sinks. To those who know how, a surprisingly wide variety of game and forage can be found even there.

The people

The natives of the Dark Continent have become superbly adapted to the harsh heat of the land over eons of evolution. Dark skin and tightly curled hair seem odd to northerners, but they are excellent adaptations to harsh sunlight. The natives are also immune to many of the deadly diseases that lurk in the air and water. The natives know the land well and can find food and water there. Northerners find that they must adopt the natives' ways or perish.

There are three main races of humans. Tall, dark-skinned natives dominate the Dark Continent and are found in most areas. The two other peoples are very scarce now but once were far more numerous. One race, the pygmies, live only in the center of the jungle region. Once they lived throughout the entire rainforest basin, but have lost much of their territo-

ry to their taller neighbors. The other race, the bushmen, were once found all over the Dark Continent. Now, their last stronghold is the brutal desert to the southwest. A few packets of them are found in other areas, but only in very small numbers.

The pygmies and bushmen live quiet, nonmaterialistic lives and do not have nations or wars of conquest. The other natives have numerous warring tribes, kingdoms, and even large empires. They are the main participants in gathering trade goods. Unfortunately, they are also the main targets of slavers.

Traditional AD&D demihuman races (elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings) are not native to the Dark Continent but are found in the trading posts run by northerners. [Editor's note: For DMs who feel that demihumans deserve their place on the Dark Continent, pygmies may be a race of dark-skinned halflings, and the bushmen could be a race of nomadic elves.] Many humanoid races are also absent. There are no orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, bugbears, ogres, or ettins. In place of these, other humanoids have filled the niches the other races normally fill. Tasloi and trolls live in the jungle. Gnolls live a primitive life among the hyenas of the savannah. Kubolds and hill giants live in the rough terrain, and utuchekulu stalk through the forests. Other intelligent creatures include lizard men, bullywugs, gripli, mongrelmen, jackalweres, nagas, eblis, and yuan-ti. Aarakocra, brightly colored like parrots, live in the mountains. Sahuagin, lacathah, and nixies live in the warm seas.

Animal life

The Dark Continent is home to the largest "normal" land animals in the world. The elephant, rhino, and hippo are common. Predators include many of the great cats, such as lions and leopards, as well as hyenas and hunting dogs. The savannah is home to huge game herds, including antelope, buffalo, zebra, and giraffe. The jungle holds no large herds, but game is still abundant. There are several species of small antelope, deer, okapi, and wild swine. Great apes live in the forests, including gorillas, chimpanzees, and small communities of dakons (see DRAGON® issue #187 for the "Ecology of the Dakon"). Monkeys are numerous, and baboons live in the hills.

The hot climate is ideal for cold-blooded creatures. Snakes and lizards are common. Poisonous snakes thrive in the hot lands, including cobras, asps, mambas, and vipers. These kill more people than any other animals. Crocodiles are a hazard on the rivers, where they feed on the hundreds of species of fish. Insects and arachnids by the millions are found in the jungle, ranging from tiny (disease-carrying) mosquitos to huge spiders.

Giant forms of common animals are found in many areas: snakes, lizards,

frogs, insects, etc. The behemoth, a larger relative of the hippo, inhabits isolated waterways.

The most dangerous animals are not the rhinos, elephants, or even the cobras. The remnants of several dinosaur species live deep in the jungle. These huge beasts are rarely seen, even by the natives.

Note: For complete stats on African wildlife, DMs should have a copy of the AD&D 1st Edition *Monster Manual*. Several common animals did not make it into the 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, including the rhino, gorilla, and hippo.

Plant life

The jungle is famous for its layered depths. The tree canopy stretches unbroken for hundreds of square miles. Plants of the jungle adapt to the daily rainfall by growing leaves with pointed tips; these shed water quickly.

The jungle does not give way suddenly to the savannah. The change is gradual, with the trees slowly thinning out and shrubs growing abundantly. Eventually, the trees become scarce, even the shrubs thin out, and the savannah sweeps from horizon to horizon. The grasses here are very hardy. They have adapted to the dry climate by developing deep root systems and thin leaves, to reduce the area available for water loss. The animal herds are migratory, passing through areas quickly and grazing the plains almost down to the soil. Thus, the grasses are very hardy, allowing for a quick recovery once the herds have moved on.

Due to the influence of magic, several plants have developed a crude intelligence. These have devised a number of deadly attacks, as a way of supplementing the poor tropical soil. Plants like the blood-thorn, yellow musk creeper, and choke creeper are infamous among the natives. There are also many plants of the "slime" category, such as green slime, yellow mold, and zygom.

Monsters

In addition to the threats of men, beasts, and plants, many types of unnatural monsters live on the Dark Continent. The fiercest monsters of all, dragons and their kin, are found in several areas. Black dragons thrive in the swamps, and green dragons live in the jungle-clad hills of the interior. Blue dragons prefer the arid savannah, while red dragons live in the mountains. There are few metallic or neutral dragons, although cloud and mist dragons may be encountered 'on mountain peaks. Bronze dragons live in the hills.

Dragons are scarce on the Dark Continent, but their relatives are not. Wyverns and hydras are common, and behirs infest the hills. Worst of all, every type of thessalmonster has been seen on the continent. Dragon turtles live in the seas, near the mouths of large rivers.

Some undead are found among the evil tribes. Savage priests raise skeletons and

zombies to be their servants. Ghouls haunt the jungles in packs of a dozen or more.

Unique types include the tyerkow and tuyewera. The lists below give those monsters most appropriate for an African setting, along with the source book:

Monstrous Compendium, Vol. 1-3: aarakocra, aboleth, herd animal (camel, buffalo, antelope), ant (all), ant lion, carnivorous ape, baboon (all), barracuda, basilisk (all), bat (all), beetle (rhinoceros, stag, water), behir, bichir, boar (warthog), bullywug, great cat (cheetah, leopard, lion), centipede (all), crocodile (all), crustacean (all), dinosaur (all), wild dog, dolphin, dragon (black, blue, bronze, red), dragon turtle, dragonfish, eagle, eel (all), elephant, giant fish (catfish, gar), frog (all), fungus (all), ghoull (all), gnoll, hawk (all), hornet (all), horse (use the "pony" entry for zebras), hydra, hyena, jackal, jackalwere, kobold, leech (all), lizard (all), lizard man, locathah, mold (all), mongrelman, muckdweller, myconid, naga (all), giant octopus, ooze/slime/jelly (all), piranha, carnivorous plant (choke creeper, mantrap, strangle weed, sundew, trillium frond), rat (all), ray (all), sahuagin, scorpion (all), tasloi, thessalmonster (all), toad (giant, poisonous), troglodyte, troll, vulture (all), wemic, wyvern, yellow musk creeper, yuan ti, zombie.

MC4 DRAGONLANCE Appendix: insect swarm, kani doll, trapdoor spider, stag.

MC5 GREYHAWK Appendix: beastmen, bonesnapper, dragon (cloud, mist), giant dragonfly, gripli, grung, giant iguana, kech, sea snail, sea sprite, turtle (all), sea zombie, zygom.

MC6 Kara-Tur Appendix: hannya, histachii yuan-ti.

MC11 FORGOTTEN REALMS Appendix II: avian (all), cat (wild, change), harrier, loxo, carnivorous plant (all), retch plant, rohch (dark), sand cat, monkey spider, saurial, tincalli, tren.

MC13 AL-QADIM Appendix: debbi, elephant bird, jungle giant, reef giant, living idol, lycanthrope (werhyena, werelion), maskhi, mason wasp, sabu lords, serpent lord, winged serpent.

MC14 FIEND FOLIO® Appendix: crabman, darter, emerald dragon, gorb, sussurus.

Monster Manual (AD&D 1st Edition): ape (gorilla), hippopotamus, masher, rhinoceros.

FIEND FOLIO book (AD&D 1st Edition): afanc, basidiron, bloodthorn, boalist, dakon, giant fly, frogemoth, hybsil, wereshark, giant mantis, ophidian, giant pedipalp (stats for this creature also can be found in FOR2 *Drow of the Underdark*), solifugid, giant termite, verme.

Creatures from issues of DRAGON Magazine: #122, "Gaming the Dark Continent:" chemosit, chepekwe, dingonek, getiet, ingogo, ngojama, nunda, nzefu-loi, silwane-manzi, tyerkow, unthlatu, utuchekulu; #137, "What's for Lunch:" giraffe, okapi. Creatures from issues of DUNGEON Adventures: #10, "The Shrine of Ilsidahur:" Ilsidahur, Tanar'ri lord; #15, "The Elephants' Graveyard:" snake, giant fanged

python; #22, "The Leopard Men:" tuyewera.

Jungle adventuring rules

Although the *Wilderness Survival Guide* (WSG) was designed for the AD&D 1st Edition rules, it is still useful due to its detailed treatment of wilderness travel. In this section, the WSG is referred to by page numbers.

The main problems with jungle adventuring are the heat and humidity. Soldiers and adventurers do not wear heavy metal or padded armor. Only leather and hide armor are commonly worn. Characters who insist on wearing heavy armor run the risk of suffering heat stroke; there is a 20% cumulative chance per hour of this occurring (WSG, page 28). Magical spells or items can negate the heat. However, the rainforest humidity plays havoc with metal armor (WSG, pages 28-29), causing it to rust at a rapid rate. Weapons of steel suffer similar fates. [Editor's Note: For those with access to the *AL-QADIM Arabian Adventures* book, see the 2nd Edition rules on heat and dehydration in *Zakhara* on pages 78-82.]

Pack animals are available for sale in the trading cities. Animals from outside the Dark Continent cannot be brought there, due to prevalent hoof-and-mouth disease carried by local flies. Native-born animals are immune, but others will catch the disease in 1-4 days, become weak and sick, and die in another 1-4 days. In addition to normal horses, camels, oxen, and donkeys, the PCs can buy tamed water buffalo. These are docile animals with the same statistics as wild buffalo (MC1, "Herd animal"). Their encumbrance and weight limits are equal to those of a draft horse.

Natives may be hired in the trading cities as hirelings on expeditions. They are skilled at a variety of tasks: bearer/porter, pack-animal handler, valet, or spear bearer (askari). Pay for these men averages 1 sp per day but can be adjusted by each DM. If more than ten are hired, one will be a village headman in charge of the others, paid at a rate of 1 gp per day.

Disease lurks in the air and water of the tropics, and is carried by insects. People who are not native to the Dark Continent have a base 5% chance per day (noncumulative) to catch some form of disease. This chance increases to 10% in swamp areas and to 75% if untreated water is consumed. There are two types of diseases: debilitating (70%) and fatal (30%).

Debilitating diseases reduce a character's Strength by one point per day, until the Strength score is down to half the original value, rounded up. There is a cumulative 10% chance every day that the disease will break on its own. Once the disease breaks, Strength is recovered at one point per day of rest.

Fatal diseases rob a character of one point each of Strength and Constitution every day. When one of these abilities drops below three, the character must

make a system shock survival roll, based on his or her original Constitution, not the reduced score. Success means that the disease breaks, and the character will recover one point each of Strength and Constitution for each day of rest. Failure means that the character will slip into a coma and dies in 1-3 days.

If a character contracts a fatal disease, there is a 20% chance it is the dreaded jungle fever. The rules for this are the same as for other fatal diseases, except that the rate of loss and recovery of Strength and Constitution is two points each per day.

When reducing the Strength of a fighter with exceptional strength (18/01 or higher), reduce the score to 17 the first day. Note that a *heal* or *cure disease* spell will cure a disease at any time. Anyone who recovers from a disease without the aid of magic is permanently immune to that disease. Magical curing grants only one month's immunity. There are dozens of strains of debilitating and fatal diseases. Immunity to one strain does not guarantee immunity to any others.

Warfare

No northern realm has ever made a successful conquest of the Dark Continent. Two elements conspire to defeat all invaders: the climate and the natives.

Soldiers from the north are used to fighting in temperate weather and in heavy armor. The tropics, with its humid jungle and burning plains, play havoc with men and metal. Men cannot bear the heat of heavy armor or the padding beneath it. Dizziness, unconsciousness, and heat stroke affect those who insist on such armor. Magic can negate the heat, but such magic is never found in enough quantity to equip a large body of troops. In any case, the humidity of the jungle rusts metal quickly. Thus, most northern troops are forced to wear leather armor, which gives them no advantage over the natives.

Weapon choices must change in the jungle. Small to medium weapons (swords, axes, maces, etc.) cause no problems and are often used by the native kingdoms. Polearms, and the infantry block formation based on them, are unwieldy in the jungle. Siege weapons, such as catapults, are hard to move in the dense jungle or trackless Savannah.

The natives of the tropics have adapted well to warfare there. The warriors wear light armor equivalent to leather. Their shields are large and oval, providing more body protection than round shields. The preferred weapon is the versatile spear, which can be used one-handed with a shield, two-handed, when mounted, or can be thrown. Knives, warclubs, and machetes are common melee weapons. The bow or blowgun is used by many tribes. Javelins are used by some Savannah tribes.

[Editor's note: For more on African arms and armor, see "Arms & Armor of Africa"

in this issue.] The natives' tactics emphasize ferocity and cunning. They excel at ambushes, and will drive home their charges into the teeth of any resistance. The native kingdoms have organized armies of trained soldiers equal to anything found in the north, and sometimes of far larger size than feudal armies. The most fearsome allies of the natives are the diseases that lurk in the drinking water. Northerners have no natural immunities, and the diseases spread like wildfire through their military units.

For a northern realm to conquer the Dark Continent would require a tremendous investment in acclimatizing soldiers, forming units without polearms or cavalry, and recruiting regiments of clerics to combat disease. This is beyond the capability of most realms, and the rest have not felt confident they would win such a war. The Dark Continent remains free because of the people and the land itself.

Slavery

The real Africa of the Middle Ages was home to numerous kingdoms. Compared to European nations of the time, the African kingdoms had large armies and vast wealth. However, the Africans never developed rifles or the ruthless exploration urges of the Europeans. In the end, nearly all the native kingdoms fell to outsiders.

The slave trade was one factor in their downfall. While slavery has existed for all of known history, it was the European slave trade that devastated the continent. In a vicious circle, native slavers caught slaves to buy guns to catch more slaves. This practice destroyed whole kingdoms, such as Kongo. European colonialism in the 1800s destroyed the rest.

In the pseudo-medieval AD&D worlds, slavery is abhorred by most lands and peoples. However, there are evil countries in these worlds too, who base their economies on slavery. Among their victims are the natives of the Dark Continent. [Editor's note: DMs may be able to adapt the module series A1-4 Scourge of Slave Lords for use in this setting.]

Slaver caravans move into the native lands across the continent, searching for small villagers or stragglers to put into chains. The native kingdoms are not usually targeted, as they have large military forces to discourage such predation. The usual targets are the more primitive and isolated villages. Men, women, and children are taken, and the elderly and infirm are slain or chased off. Once captured, the natives are chained into long, single-file lines and marched to the coast. Some die on these merciless treks. On the coast, the natives are packed tightly into ships for passage to the northern lands. Many more die on the voyage. The slave trade is an inhumane practice of cruelty and death.

Several of the northern nations have set up friendly trade agreements with the nations of the Dark Continent. These nations have an intense hatred of the slave

trade and destroy slaver bands wherever found. Unfortunately, these efforts are not united. Thus, the slavers are able to move from area to area and continue their wicked trade.

Trade goods

The Dark Continent is a wealthy land. The mineral wealth alone includes the most valuable metals: gold, platinum, iron, copper, and silver. Gemstones are found in many places, but mainly are of low value. There are rumors of ancient diamond mines lost somewhere in the mountains. No one knows exactly where they are. One item that is rarely thought of as valuable is salt; this item is valuable in medieval cultures. The Dark Continent has valuable salt deposits in its deserts.

Products of nature are another source of wealth. Spices are abundant in the forests, including pepper, nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon, and ginger. Resinous saps are tapped from trees and made into incense and perfumes. A few types of wood, such as mahogany and tropical cedar, are found in the forests. Many animal hides are valuable, including leopard, zebra, giraffe, cheetah, rhino, and hippo. Ivory is taken from elephants and hippos, but at great risk to the hunters.

The native kingdoms manufacture some items valued in the north. Art objects of bronze, gold, and ivory are exported, along with cotton cloth, millet, and sorghum.

Native kingdoms

Africa was the site of many organized kingdoms and cities in the Middle Ages. Their armies and culture surpassed nearly all of Europe at the time. However, these cultures were also rather stagnant, and were destroyed by Europeans of the Industrial Age.

For a fantasy Africa, DMs are encouraged to design their own kingdoms and tribes, based on real African peoples. Some examples of real cultures are given below.

Asante: The Asante (or Ashante) was a union of west-African tribes. In their traditions, the kingdom was established when the priest Anokye called the Golden Stool down from the heavens to alight on the knees of the first king, Osei Tutu. The Golden Stool was the symbol of the Asante king and union, and was sacred. One of the Asante/British wars began when a British governor declared he would find the stool and sit on it. This whim caused hundreds of deaths. In spite of its primitive culture, the Asante Union was a tightly controlled country, led by the Asantehene (king). The capital, Kumasi, was clean and orderly. The Asante were prosperous traders and fierce raiders. The last Asantehene, Kofi (King Coffee), had the misfortune to engage the British in a series of wars (1873-1900) that shattered the union.

Benin: This prosperous empire was founded in west Africa about 900 AD, by a Yoruba people called the Bini. Their leader

was the Oba, a combination of king, high priest, and warlord. Their holy symbol was the leopard. The capital city of Benin was protected by an army wielding swords, spears, and bows. The Bini were shrewd traders who sold ivory, pepper, cloth, metal, and slaves for copper and other goods. Benin was famous for its bronze castings, ivory crafting, and skilled artists. The Bini also practiced human sacrifice on a large scale in times of crisis. The greatest crisis of all was when the British conquered Benin in 1897. As the redcoats advanced on the capital, they found hundreds of sacrificed corpses on the trail and more in the city. This didn't stop the British, and Benin was destroyed.

Ghana: This was the first of several west-African kingdoms that controlled the local gold and salt trade routes. The people called themselves the Ouagadou, after Ouagada-Bida, a great spirit snake that lived in the capital city of Koumbi. Ghana was ruled by a king who served as leader, high priest, supreme judge, and warlord. In the Dark Ages, Ghana had a treasury and army that surpassed all of Europe. Armed with iron swords and spears, Ghana defeated an invading Arab army. Koumbi was actually a pair of cities. One was for government and religion, the other was for business. Many trade goods passed through Ghana: cloth, metal goods, leather goods, and cotton. The king's main income was the taxes from merchants. Ghana had a system of courts and courts of appeal. Legend says that Ghana fell when the warrior Amadou slew Ouagadou-Bida, the protector of Koumbi. In truth, Ghana was conquered by an Almoravid invasion in 1067 AD. Ghana was able to put 200,000 men into the field and still lost. This was one year after William the Conqueror was barely able to gather 7,000 men to invade England.

Kongo: This kingdom arose in the northern area of modern Angola. From the capital of Mbanza, the Mani-Kongo (king) ruled over thousands of subjects. The land was divided into numerous provinces and subject states. Like most African states, Kongo prospered through the trade routes in its territory. Kongo was destroyed in the 1500s, like so many others, by rampant slave raiding.

Mali: This west-African kingdom rose on the ashes of Ghana, to control the gold and salt trade routes. Established by a Mandingo people, the capital was originally Kangaba but was later changed to Niani. The near-legendary founder of Mali was Sundiata ("hungering lion"), who led the Mandingos to victory over the Sosso people who had subjugated them. Sundiata established his control over several neighboring lands and came to rule a wealthy kingdom. He is still revered today as a legendary warrior. The ruler of Mali was called the Mansa. The kingdom was divided into numerous provinces, administered by governors and mayors appointed by the Mansa. The large army included

cavalry (camel and horse) but was mainly composed of infantry. For a brief time, Mali controlled the mysterious city of Timbuktu. Mali slowly fell into decline as the Songhay empire arose, and eventually faded away.

Sokoto: Another west-African kingdom, this loose empire bore a striking resemblance to feudal Europe. The Caliph ruled over a number of Moslem emirates who provided "knights" and "men-at-arms" to the national army. Much of the army was mounted men with mail shirts and lances, while the infantry organized around banners. The emirs had a penchant for slave raiding, although most of their income came from trade routes. The army of Sokoto clashed with the British redcoats and was destroyed piecemeal from 1897-1903.

Songhay empire: This nation was one of the last to rise in west Africa to control the gold and salt routes. Established by the Songhay people, the empire gained in power as Mali declined. Originally fishermen and farmers, the Songhay also became traders, craftsmen, and warriors. Their capital was at Gao, but they also controlled the important cities of Timbuktu, Jenne, and Takedda. Songhay was divided into numerous provinces ruled by governors. A crude caste system was developed, mainly to create a professional army and avoid drafting skilled craftsmen. Much of the army was infantry, but there were a few cavalry units. The Songhay empire fell to Moroccan troops in 1590.

Swahili: The coastal area of southeast Africa was home to several large Swahili cities. The most important was Kilwa, but the others included Malindi, Mombasa, Pemba, Zanzibar, and Mozambique. The cities traded with India and sometimes China; one of the cities sent a giraffe to the Chinese emperor. Gold, ivory, and cloth passed through these cities. In the end, all were devastated by the Portuguese, who first raided and then established a protectorate over the area.

Zimbabwe: This mysterious kingdom arose in the area of modern Zimbabwe, once called Rhodesia. The empire around it, set up by the Rozwi Bantus, was first called Monomotapa. The empire controlled a number of gold-producing areas, and traded with the cities of the southeast coast. A revolt in the south led to the establishment of another kingdom, Zimbabwe, based on a capital city of that name. Ruins of the capital can still be seen today. The city's walls were 30' high and 20' thick. The kingdom had a roughly feudal culture that lasted 300 years. Zimbabwe was overrun by Bantu invaders from the south, who did not reestablish the kingdom.

Zulus: This south-African people enjoyed only three generations of empire but are famous for their bravery in battle. One man, Shaka, arose from a primitive background to create a kingdom by conquest, much like Genghis Khan. He developed the

Zulu military organization (the impi), tactics (the famed buffalo formation), and their main weapon, the assegai. After conquering a large swath of savannah, the Zulus were halted from further expansion by the Boers. The Zulus were dependent on their cattle herds and gardens for sustenance. Their villages, called kraals, were collections of huts. In spite of their bravery, the Zulus were outmatched by British guns. Although they won a handful of impressive victories, the Zulu culture was swept away by war in 1879.

Other cultures

Tribesmen: This catch-all term includes the primitive tribes of natives who live throughout the continent. Many are concentrated in the rainforest region, but several live on the savannah. In spite of the rise of the native kingdoms and empires, 75% of the Dark Continent's population live in primitive villages, surviving on hunting and subsistence agriculture.

Although there are numerous tribes, they all have a few features in common. Housing, adapted to the tropics, is thatched huts, which can be repaired quickly after the fierce tropical storms. Communication between villages is by drums made of hide stretched over hollow logs. Messages can be relayed from village to village by drum codes. It's possible to send a message 100 miles in two hours, in the more densely settled areas.

Tribesmen live by a combination of gardening, gathering, and hunting. As the game herds are migratory and undependable, agriculture is the most important source of food. Some tribes on the savannah live almost entirely off their herds of cattle. The appearance of wild game is a bonus source of protein. Garden plots are protected by thorn bomas, to keep out raiding animals.

The tribal system of the primitive natives is usually a loose collection of villages of people united by a common language or religion. While there may be an overlord for the whole tribe, in general each village goes its own way. Only in times of war, festival, or crisis does the entire tribe gather in common cause.

One of the main differences between the social system of the Dark Continent and feudal Europe is the importance of the family over the individual. This concept carries over into the village structure, and eventually to the whole tribe. This system offers some advantages: the elderly and infirm are provided for, not out of charity, but out of a sense of family duty. On the other hand, there is also a loss of individual initiative. The tribesmen are less likely to unite and overthrow evil chiefs or tyrants. Their system is not superior to the feudal culture of the north, just different. Many outsiders have been confused by the natives' system. Those who have learned to adjust have found many friends among the natives.

Pygmies: These people once lived

throughout the rainforest basin, but now live only in a small part of the center of it. Competition with taller neighbors has reduced their territory and numbers. Superficially, they look much like the other tribesmen, only shorter. They have dark skin, black hair, and stand 4' to 5' tall.

The pygmies are a hunting/gathering people. They have no crops or herds. They live in harmony with nature, never threatening wildlife populations; they don't even cut down trees. The men are hunters, and carry spears and small bows. Their arrows are often poisoned when hunting game. Women are gatherers of plants, nuts, crabs, insect larvae, and wild honey. Some tribes use large nets strung across game trails to capture small game. The women act as beaters to drive animals into the nets.

Pygmies live in small groups of 6-15 families. Their huts are small domes of leaves over bark strips and woven branches. The groups move to new locations once per month, to find new foraging grounds. Since they are nomadic, the people own only what they can carry. Pygmies are a monogamous and generous people. Food is shared according to complex rules, but everyone eats.

Pygmies are not isolated. They trade with their taller neighbors, obtaining salt, tobacco, and metal for meat and hides. Unlike other natives, the pygmies have little art beyond painting their bodies and on bark. They do not carve wood or sculpt stone or metal.

Pygmies have a complex religion. Their supreme deity is the "Lord of the Forest." He rules everything because he created everything. He sends leopards to the camps of those who offend him. Lightning storms are signs of his displeasure.

Bushmen: These people were once common all over the woods and savannas of the Dark Continent. Now, their last stronghold is the desert south of the savannah. The bushmen call themselves the First Race. As newer tribes took over the land, they actively hunted the bushmen, intending to exterminate them; they nearly succeeded.

Bushmen are a short race, averaging 5' tall. They have yellowish-brown skin, slanting eyes, and round heads with delicate ears. Their feet are small and delicate. Their society is a typical hunting/gathering society, with no crops or herds. They live in small family groups of up to 30 people. Bushmen are nomadic, and their huts are easily-made domes of grass over woven branches. They move frequently, forced to find new foraging grounds. Bushmen own only what they can carry. Water is stored in ostrich egg shells.

The desert is not as barren as is commonly thought. Most of the game found elsewhere on the continent is found in the desert, although in smaller numbers. Numerous types of antelope are hunted, from the tiny duiker to the huge eland.

There are also hares, bustards, warthogs, and ostriches. Predators include lions, leopards, wild dogs, hyenas, snakes, and ratsels (a nocturnal carnivore resembling a badger). Huge elephants, larger even than their kin on the Savannah, roam the coastal fringe. Flocks of ibis, storks, and herons are found in the scarce water areas, dodging the hippos and crocodiles. Fodder for large game is sparse, but the hardy grasses and thorn trees can support creatures as large as elands. While barren when compared to the rest of the Dark Continent, the desert provides for the needs of the bushmen.

Bushmen are well adapted to the desert, and wear little other than loincloths and sandals. Their hunting arrows are often tipped with a venom made from beetle larvae. Their weapons are of wood and stone, and include javelins, bows, and clubs. Snares are used to capture small prey. Women are gatherers, and collect the plants that make up the bulk of their food. Half the bushmen's diet is a nut called mongongo. Wild honey is a rare treat.

The bushmen society is appealingly peaceful. The various villages get along very well, and individuals frequently move between them without prejudice. Children are raised very leniently. On the negative side, the bushmen have no strong leaders and are disadvantaged when facing more aggressive neighbors. The bushmen are a happy and sympathetic people, laughing at misfortunes in order to ease their burden.

Like most native tribes, the bushmen are artists. They paint images of men and beasts on cliff walls. These paintings are durable and examples thousands of years old have been found in dry areas across the continent. Jewelry is made from egg shells and beads.

The bushmen have a complex and colorful religion, and numerous folktales. All of these are passed on orally, as they have no writing. Much of their folklore focuses on the animals around them. The most revered animal is the mantis, and numerous tales are told of him and his gifts to the bushmen. Other tales tell of the wars and schemes of other animals. The moon is the symbol of renewal, as it waxes and wanes ("regrows" and "dies").

Religion and magic

Medieval Africa had a great variety of native religions, but most were eventually replaced by Christianity or Islam. In spite of this diversity, most had several points in common.

The creator of the world is a single high deity, not human, but a life energy. The high god once lived among men but left them in anger. The reason for his leaving is sometimes said to be an abusive woman, excess sin among men, or men who are too greedy. Death is thought to be a rejoining to the life energy. The spirits of the dead and the yet-to-be-born exist among the living, which commonly leads to ances-

tor worship. The living are thought to owe a debt to the dead and vice versa, so each must look out for the other.

Lesser gods and spirits are localized to small areas, and exist in huge numbers and in great variety. Spirits may live in areas as large as a mountain or as small as one animal. There are no large and grand churches, only small and humble shrines, but these are respected and revered. Priests are an important part of the community and serve a variety of roles. Some are counselors to nobility, some are healers, some are prophets, some are psychologists, and some are frauds.

The witch doctors of the native villages are not the savage evil priests of common perception. They are the intermediaries between spirits and men. Some turn to evil and become threats to mankind. Most are benign priests who use their spells to aid their villages. To the natives' minds, there are no accidents. All misfortunes are due to evil spirits and the wicked priests who control them. The role of the witch doctor is to intercede on behalf of his village to prevent misfortunes.

Character classes

All of the basic character classes are found among the natives of the Dark Continent: warrior, mage, priest, and rogue. The druid and bard are inappropriate, and should be restricted to northerners in the trading posts. Rangers are found among primitive peoples across the continent. At each DM's option, paladins and specialist mages can be found in the native kingdoms. Armor and weapons may be restricted, as noted earlier.

The "Complete Character Handbook" series describes numerous "character kits" that add more details to the basic classes, creating unique characters with specific backgrounds and skills. Those appropriate to an African campaign are given below. An asterisk (*) indicates that the kit is found only in native kingdoms of high culture.

Fighter: amazon, beast rider, gladiator*, myrmidon*, peasant hero*, savage, wilderness warrior. *Thief:* assassin*, bandit, beggar*, bounty hunter, scout, smuggler*, spy*, thug*. *Priest:* amazon priestess, peasant priest*, prophet, savage priest, scholar*. *Mage:* academican*, amazon sorceress, anagakok, militant wizard, peasant wizard*, savage wizard, witch.

Magical items

The variety of magical items differs from those found in the feudal north. Magical weapons work the same as in other lands, but magical spears and bows are far more common than swords or maces. Metal armor is very rare, while leather armor is common. Crossbows, staves, and polearms are absent, and metal shields are rare. Potions are very common, but scrolls (and writing) are rare. Rings may be worn in the nose or ear, not just on the fingers. Rods, wands, and staves are very scarce.

Among the miscellaneous items, only bags, amulets, beads, gems, and stones are commonly found. Items like books, robes, and helms are rare. There are also unique items on the Dark Continent, described below [Editor's note: Also see the 'Bazaar of the Bizarre' in this issue for more 'sav- age' magical items.]:

Boli: This is a man-sized statue of humanoid shape that is dedicated to some type of craftsman skill: metalworking, etc. If the *boli* is given a small offering of food or drink every day, the craftsman will automatically fail a proficiency check only on a roll of 20, and receives a -1 bonus to the die roll. If the offering is not made, the craftsman will always fail proficiency checks until he begins to make offerings again.

Calabash of plenty: This bowl is a favorite item of nobles and chiefs. On command, the bowl will fill with whatever normal food and drink the owner desires, twice per day.

Hunting charm: This small amulet is prized by tribal hunters. With this charm, a hunter automatically encounters some type of game animal, but must close and kill the animal normally (WSG, page 59).

Jar of comprehension: This water jar holds special powers for those who wash their hands in it. One variety (75%) allows communication in any human language for two turns. The second variety (25%) gives the same ability with animals. The jar may be filled with any water.

Ngoni horn: This is a short piece of antelope horn that has one of a variety of powers. These powers are to be determined by each DM, but often copy those of minor miscellaneous magical items. Some horns allow the bearer to breathe underwater, some allow silent movement as *boots of elvenkind*, and some confer the benefit of fire resistance, as the ring of the same name. Each horn has only one power, and the power is never destructive or overwhelming.

Potion of neutralization: This potion is valuable in emergency situations. If a character who has been poisoned by any means drinks this potion before death occurs, the potion will neutralize the toxin instantly.

Potion of seeing: This potion instantly cures blindness in the imbiber, whether it was the result of natural or magical means.

Spirit hut: Rarely, the deities of the natives will grant their priests a special place of worship that focuses their power. This boon is rare; *spirit huts* are found in one village in a thousand. The hut looks like any other hut from the outside, but the interior is decorated with religious symbols and items appropriate to the deity. Only the village priest can enter the hut safely. All others must save vs. spells or be stricken with fear and flee for 2-5 turns. Inside the hut, the priest is never surprised, has a 25% magic resistance, and is immune to *fear* and *confusion* spells. He

may also cast spells as if he were two levels higher than his actual level. All these benefits are lost if the priest steps out of the hut. The hut is immobile.

Spirit mask: Many tribal religious ceremonies involve the wearing of wooden masks, that depict stylized men or animals. The masks serve to focus power, and enchanted masks actually focus magical energy into the priests who wear them. With the mask, a priest achieves the maximum result in spellcasting. Thus, healing spells always heal the maximum amount, and other spells will last for the maximum possible duration. *Spirit masks* will function only for a cleric of the deity who enchanted it, and work only within the boundaries of a single village.

Tabele: This famous war drum (there is only one) gives great power to the warriors of a single village. To be effective, the *tabele* must be set up within a village. If it is sounded during the religious ceremonies that are done before battles, the warriors within the village gain the following benefits: immunity to fear (no loss of morale); +1 to attack and damage on melee attacks; increase of 2 on movement base.

These benefits last for one battle only. The *tabele* may be captured and moved to another village, which will then gain its benefits. Currently, the *tabele* is lost, and its location unknown. Any tribe that finds it would gain great power and respect, as well as attracting the attention of others who desire it.

Geography & politics

The map with this article outlines a fantasy African continent. It is loosely based on my original campaign maps. Rainforest dominates the center, bordered by mountains, lakes, and hills. The jungle is centered on the drainage basins of two large river systems. Vast expanses of savannah stretch to the north and south. Deserts are found to the far north, southwest, and northeast.

There are two trading cities maintained by the feudal north, both on the northern coasts. Fort Thunder is a prosperous town that coexists peacefully with the natives. Friendly trade agreements bring prosperity to both sides, and many adventurers are found within the town's walls. Rastyl is a town founded by an evil nation to the north. It is a base for many slaving bands, raiders, and hunting groups. Although separated from Fort Thunder by many miles, the two towns hate each other intensely and try to foil each others' plans at every opportunity.

There are native kingdoms present that rival or surpass the feudal north. Mibida (modeled after Mali) is an opulent city that exports gold and salt to Fort Thunder. It is one of the wealthiest nations in existence. Far to the west, the city of Kinitah (based on Benin) rules a large territory of jungle. Famed for its artists and merchants, Kinitah has fallen under the influence of an evil cult of priests, who have greatly in-

creased the number of sacrifices made. Far to the south, the kingdom of Konogo (based on Kongo) stands on the edge of the rainforest. This land is wealthy but suffers badly from the organized slave raiding of Rastyl.

Several more primitive kingdoms have appeared in recent years. On the western coast, the union of Kumasa (modeled after the Asante) rules a land of unified tribes from the city of the same name. The king rules from the Golden Throne, an ancient and sacred relic. On the opposite coast, hundreds of miles away, a very new kingdom has arisen, under the rule of the Matuso tribe (modeled after the Zulus). The Matuso chief, N'Kosi, is a brilliant military leader who has used his genius to overwhelm his neighbors and now rules over a wide area of Savannah. His nearest rival is the land of the N'Tshane to the west. Long ago, this tribe domesticated a species of zebra called the quagga and now uses them as mounts and pack animals. The wild riders of the N'Tshane carry long spears and clubs; their culture is still fairly primitive. The N'Tshane cavalry and Matuso impis have often clashed in the no-man's land between them. Neither has proven to be dominant over the other.

The rest of the continent is a primitive land of numerous independent tribes and villages, as well as large unknown, unexplored areas. The natives are as varied as people elsewhere. Some, like the Watanagas, are friendly to outsiders. Others, like the N'goti, are fierce and independent savages who war on all strangers. A few, like the hated Kanakres, are evil cannibals. Most of the Dark Continent, particularly the interior and its peoples, are unknown to the feudal north. Those who go there are discoverers and explorers as well as adventurers.

Conclusion

Once again, this article does not create a very close copy of the real Africa of the Middle Ages. It has been designed for fun and a good adventuring atmosphere. The real medieval Africa was not as primitive or as unexploited as the lands and peoples given here, and was home to numerous kingdoms. If desired, DMs can create a land more like the historical record.

The Dark Continent is intended to be connected to the normal AD&D feudal lands, to add a further adventuring area with a unique culture. The land serves equally well as an extension for a European campaign, an AL-QADIM campaign, or even a campaign composed entirely of African adventures. In any case, DMs are encouraged to read more about the real medieval Africa, to add to the already interesting setting.

Ω



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Arms & Armor

A foreign feast for AD&D® game

African weapons are as rich and varied as the people of that massive continent. Just as many aspects of an African-based fantasy milieu are unlike those of a typical AD&D® game milieu, many of those weapons are also distinctly different from the ones you see in medieval-type campaigns. This article presents some unusual but well-known equipment used by warriors of that vast land.

The weapons described and the generalizations made here apply for the most part to Africa just prior to the age of European colonization. Very ancient cultures, or those which are so unique in their arms and armor that they are best treated as subjects unto themselves, are not included here. Thus, for example, the weapons and armor of Egypt and Carthage are not discussed at all.

Warfare generally had a tribal basis in African history, rather than one based on a state or feudal system as in Europe and the Orient. Even in what seem to be exceptions to this rule, such as the military state founded by the Zulus of southern Africa, one can usually find a tribal root.

Africa, too, is devoid of many aspects of warfare associated with Europe and the East. Having few walled cities meant that siege engines were never developed; pyrotechnics were unknown until contact with Arabs or Europeans; cavalry was almost unknown; armor other than shields was very rare.

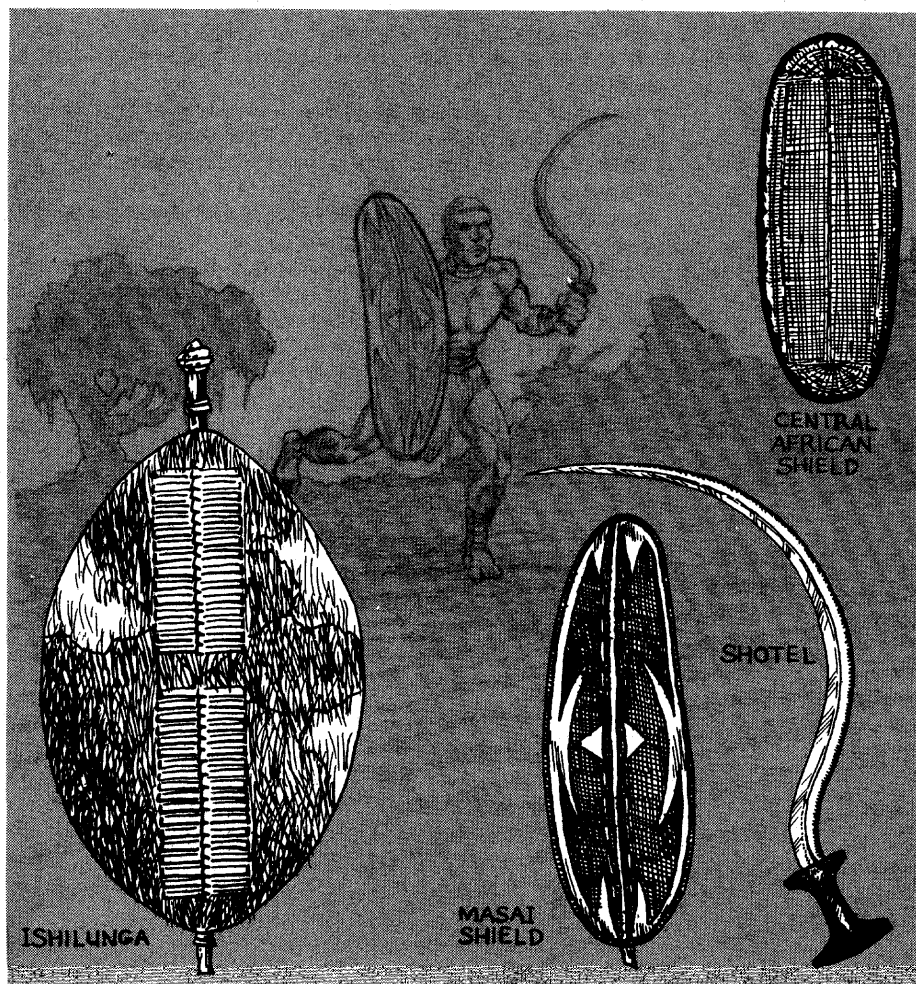
Arms commonly used throughout Africa in the pre-colonial period were bows, clubs, daggers and a wide variety of spears and shields. Various other weapons were developed by individual peoples, and there are a plethora of variations on known weapon types.

Major African weapons

Assegai: This short stabbing spear was unique to the Zulu people of southern Africa. Known to them as an *iXwa*, this weapon was kept so sharp that it was used for shaving. The assegai was about 4' long, with a swordlike blade about 18" long. It was more fearsome in melee than a normal spear, inflicting 1-8/1-10 hp damage in AD&D games. It was not really a throwing weapon, however, and could be hurled only half as far as a normal spear. The assegai was usually used in conjunction with a shield, but if used two-handed in games it adds +1 to damage rolls.

Bolas: Used more in hunting than in warfare, bolas consisted of three hide cords joined together with weights at the cords' ends. The weights were usually stones held in leather pockets. Damage from the bolas was incidental, as the weapon's main function was to entangle.

If a successful roll to hit is made using a bola in campaign play, the target takes damage and must make a saving throw vs.



by Michael J. Varhola

Artwork by Scott Rosema



warriors of Africa

paralyzation. Small creatures save at -2, and large creatures at +2. If this save is failed, the bolas wrap around the target's legs and stop it, causing it to fall down if it was moving when struck. Normally, creatures without legs cannot become entangled by bolas, though long arms make good targets. Entangled but standing creatures attack at -1 to hit, are themselves attacked at +2, and must make a Dexterity check on 5d6 every round they move or else fall over. Prone creatures attack at -2 and are attacked at +4.

Removal of entangling bolas can be undertaken automatically if a full round can be devoted to the attempt. Entangled creatures who are attacking or defending, or who are bound or without hands, must make a successful Dexterity check on 3d6 to disentangle themselves from bolas. This may be attempted once per round.

Bolas were a Stone Age weapon and are usually used only by the most primitive peoples in an African campaign. *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* describes bolas that allow for somewhat more dramatic effects than this simple hunting weapon.

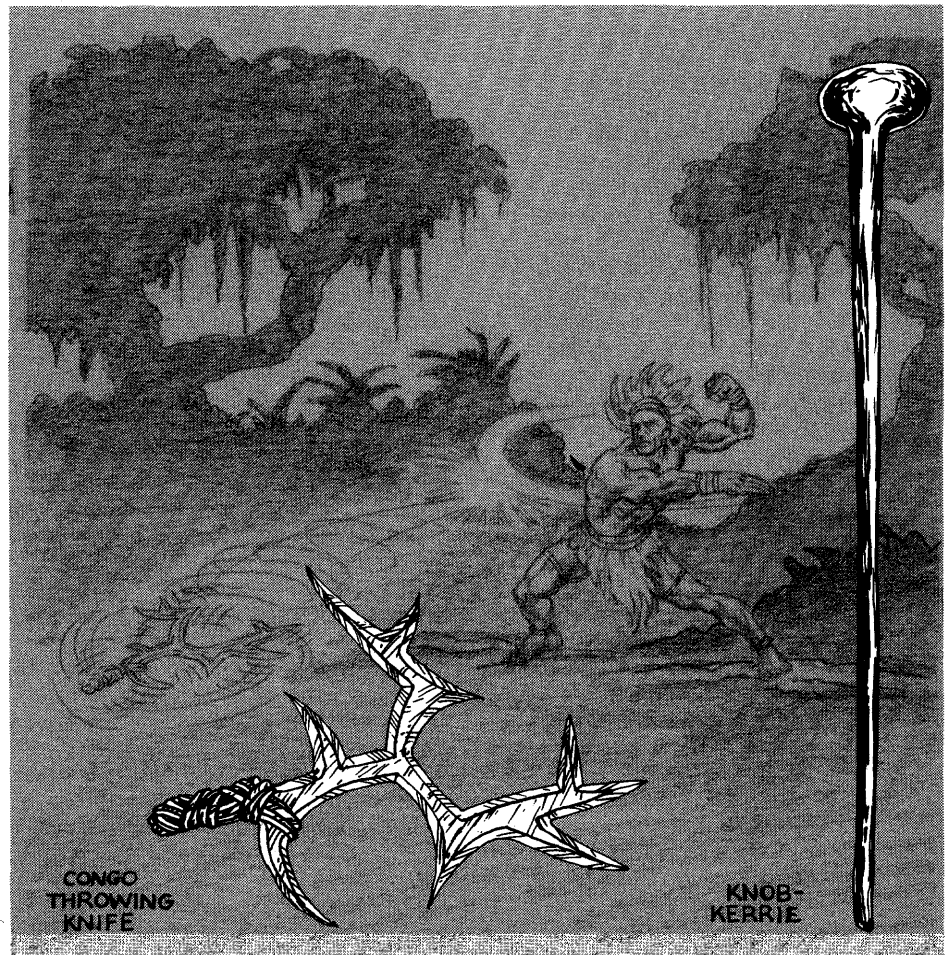
Knife, throwing: These weapons were not really knives as commonly envisioned; they had complex blades with two or more edged or pointed protrusions. Because of their size and extravagant shapes, they might just as well be called throwing axes. Such weapons were used throughout Africa, notably in the Sudan, the Congo, and by several peoples of central Africa.

Unlike most hurled weapons, throwing knives were often thrown along a horizontal plane as well as a vertical one. Because of their size and form, these weapons inflicted more damage than most hurled weapons. Their multiple-edged branches increased their chances of hitting an opponent, and they were even known to bounce over or around shields to strike an enemy. Thus, they have a nonmagical +1 bonus to hit when hurled.

Knobkerrie: Also known as an iWisa, this weapon is a club fashioned of hardwood with a long, straight haft and a head that typically looks like a slightly flattened ball. This knob is sometimes faceted and can vary in size from that of a fist to much larger. The knobkerrie is often associated with the Zulu people, who use it to this day, or the neighboring Xhosa and Basotho folk. However, it was also used elsewhere

in Africa as far north as the Sudan. In addition to its use as a melee weapon, the knobkerrie can also be thrown. Some oversized varieties of knobkerrie are thought to have been used either for executions or ceremonies.

Longbow, Kenyan: The Kenyan longbow was one of the strongest simple bows, far more powerful than the famed English longbow. The average English bow had a



draw weight of 80 lbs., whereas the average Kenyan bow had a draw weight of 130 lbs. An arrow from it inflicted impressive damage. However, because it had such a heavy draw weight, the Kenyan longbow had a slower rate of fire than a normal bow.

Nyek-ple-nen-toh: Nothing more than a huge straight razor, this weapon had a very broad, 30"-long blade projecting from a short handle. The nyek-ple-nen-toh was wielded by "razor-women," a company of female warriors maintained by the king of Dahomey. It was a two-handed weapon whose sharp steel blade was engraved with symbols and often richly embellished. These fearsome weapons were used for executing enemies of the king. (For ease of reference, these can be called "razor swords.")

Paddle spear: A multipurpose weapon, the paddle spear was primarily a paddle used by river tribes to propel their boats. A paddle spear had a long, broad, spearlike head with sharpened edges, and was made entirely of wood. The head was often half the length of the weapon, and it was sometimes considered to represent a step in the evolution of the sword. The paddle spear was better suited for melee than for throwing; it could be hurled as a normal spear but at -1 to hit.

Shoka: This is a variety of battle axe about 2½' long. The weapon typically had a hardwood haft and a triangular iron head; the head was attached to the haft by a spike on its back, driven into the wood. The shoka was the weapon of the Basuto people, who inhabit the area around Lake Tanganyika in central Africa. Other tribes, including the Basotho of southern Africa, used similar axes. If this heavy weapon is wielded with two hands rather than one, it gains +1 to damage. The shoka is not a throwing weapon.

Shotel: A descendant of the khopesh, this double-edged weapon looked like a large sickle. Also called an Abyssinian sword, it was used by peoples in what is now Ethiopia. The shotel was awkward to use, having a small hilt, and was slow to draw from its scabbard because of its wide curve. Its only advantage was that, because of its curve, it could be swung so as to strike behind an opponent's shield. Thus, shields in AD&D games are one step less effective against this weapon (i.e., normal shields are wholly ineffective, and magical shields or those used by warriors with shield proficiency are less effective; shield proficiency is described later). Smaller versions of this weapon also existed; such dagger-sickles function just like normal shotels but inflict damage like daggers.

Spear, heavy: Some African peoples, such as the Masai, favored spears that were slightly longer and had broader heads than normal spears. These heavy weapons were primarily intended for melee rather than as missile weapons. They were designed for two-handed use

and inflicted less damage if used one-handed, so they inflicted greater damage than normal or throwing spears. If thrown, heavy spears are -1 to hit and inflict damage as if wielded with one hand.

Spear, throwing: The throwing spear was the most common weapon of Africa and was generally superior to spears used elsewhere in the world. Such spears inflicted the full damage of normal spears, but could be thrown as effectively as if they were javelins.

Swordlet: The swordlet was a short swordlike weapon used by some of the forest dwellers of central Africa. It was generally as broad and nearly as heavy as a short sword, but not quite as long. Furthermore, such weapons usually had a round, broad, axelike tip, making them more effective at slashing than thrusting. Some were of impressive quality. Various "knife-swords" and "cleaver-knives" appeared as tribal weapons throughout Africa, and these usually conformed to the characteristics of the swordlet.

Trombash: This distinctive weapon, a type of throwing stick, was used by the Sudanese. About 2' long and made of hardwood, the trombash had an acute striking edge and a sharply upturned end. Its evolution and use can be compared with the more familiar boomerang. This weapon inflicted damage from the way it flew into a target, so it inflicted more damage when thrown than when used as a melee weapon. It was better suited to hurling than a normal club, and had a better range. Various other types of throwing sticks were used throughout Africa, but most had the same general appearance as the trombash and conformed to the same characteristics.

Other African weapons

Some weapons popular in typical AD&D campaigns were used in Africa. However, these have almost always been modified to some extent or decorated in accordance with the customs of the users.

The weapons of an African campaign will often be of materials familiar to players. Iron, often tempered into steel in small clay forges, was used to forge weapons by African smiths. Indeed, a high level of metallurgical and weapon-smithing ability existed among many of the peoples of the African continent. Quite often, skillful and artistic metalwork represented the highest form of technology possessed by an African people. Iron nuggets were collected and cold-forged into spear heads and other weapons. Weapons were made of copper where it was available, or even bronze if tin could be procured. Some weapons, like swordlike clubs, were made of wood covered with sheets of copper. Arrows, bows, and the shafts of weapons such as spears or axes were almost always of hardwood.

Listed in parentheses after each weapon are the names of similar weapons that conform to the same basic characteristics.

Arquebus: Matchlock gunpowder weapons were not indigenous to Africa and appeared only in the hands of European or Arab adventurers. These weapons were envied and sought by many African rulers who learned of them. Ultimately, however, firearms heralded an age of darkness for African cultures, and DMs may wish to omit them from African adventures.

Battle axe: Axes were used in many parts of Africa and ranked second only to spears in popularity as melee weapons. Several different types were produced. Axes were common in the Congo, in what is now Zaire. Most of these axes have a heavy wooden handle with a large bulb at the top of the haft, from which projects the head. Ceremonial axes may have complex heads or hafts embellished with copper foil, or be decorated with the images of heads or other motifs.

Bill hook: The use of this weapon by a tribe of the Congo River is a reminder of the great variety of weapons that were used throughout Africa.

Bow: Long and short recurve bows are the most likely kinds to be encountered in an African milieu. Many peoples used bows, from the Pygmies with their short bows to the Kenyans with their powerful longbows (q.v.). Other bow-users included the Hadza, a nomadic people of Tanzania, who used normal longbows.

Club: Many forms of clubs and sticks could be found in an African adventure, both for use as melee and as thrown weapons. Most of them conform to the characteristics of normal clubs, but some thrown varieties are more akin to the trombash (q.v.).

Crossbow: Light crossbows were used in the Congo and other parts of Africa, but more for hunting than for warfare. These weapons were simple affairs, triggered by squeezing a long spine that ran perpendicular to the bottom of the weapon.

Dagger: Daggers of many descriptions were used by virtually all the peoples of Africa. For example, the *telek* was a long fighting knife used by the Tuaregs of northern Africa. It was worn on the inside of the left forearm with the hilt pointing downward, and drawn with the right hand. Teleks were long and slim, and had a large, cross-shaped pommel. Another arm knife was used in the Sudan and worn on the upper left arm. This sort of dagger typically had a broad, T-shaped pommel, and sometimes has a wide cross guard.

Hand axe: Hand axes were used by several African peoples, particularly in the central and southern parts of the continent. Sometimes there is a fine line in distinguishing African battle axes from hand axes. Many hand axes had narrow, V-shaped iron heads, the point of the V being the striking portion of the axe. A straight spine typically extended from the crotch of the V and was embedded into the haft of the weapon. These were almost

always used in melee, rather than for hurling.

Javelin: Javelins and throwing spears will be encountered throughout an African milieu. The *intshuntsh* was the light throwing spear of the Xhosa, who would carry seven or eight into battle. When closing for melee, a warrior often broke the shaft on the last javelin, reducing its speed factor to 3 as a hand-to-hand weapon. Another javelin, also used by the Xhosa, had a sharpened spike for a head, rather than a blade.

Knife: As with daggers, many sorts of knives were used in hunting and warfare in Africa.

Lance: Spears are often referred to as lances, but true lances—weapons used by mounted warriors who have stirrups—were almost unknown in Africa. One exception were the light lances used by Bornu cavalry in northern Nigeria.

Spear: No other weapon is more universal to hunting and warfare in Africa than is the spear. Because it is such a staple weapon, several varieties of spear, in many forms and sizes, will be found throughout an African milieu.

The "long spear" described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* was not common, as most spears were intended for throwing as well as melee. The most common variety of spear is the throwing spear, described earlier. Some tribes, such as the Masai of eastern Africa, used spears with long, wide blades; these are the "heavy spears" also described previously. The Dervishes of the Sudan used a spear with a bamboo haft and a broad, leaf-shaped blade. It should be treated as a normal spear, as should any other normal-sized spear that is not intended primarily for throwing.

Barbed spears were used by some tribes, such as the Mobati of Zaire. On a roll attack of 20 or better, a barbed spear sticks in its victims. The spear's wielder must then roll his Strength or less on 1d20 to wrench it out. If successful, the victim takes an additional 1-3 hp damage. If the attacker fails to pull the spear free, the victim can make a saving throw vs. paralysis to try to remove it without taking additional damage. If this save is failed but the number rolled is also less than his own Strength, the victim takes 1-3 hp damage while tearing the spear from his wound.

Sword: Swords were far more rare in Africa than in a medieval milieu. They were used predominantly in northern Africa and by several tribes of western Africa. However, it is certainly possible that swords of ancient or foreign manufacture could have found their way into the hands of certain tribes.

Broad sword: In western Africa, heavy curved broad swords were symbols, rather than weapons, of the Ashanti state. They were carried by their blades, hilt upward. Swords such as these were sometimes carried by envoys as symbols of their authority. The blades of Ashanti

swords were pierced with geometric patterns and had hilts and round guards and pommels of worked gold. Swords such as these could very well be magical, but would probably not have any combat bonuses. Instead, they might bestow some power or benefit to a ruler or envoy. Similar swords were used by the peoples of the Gold Coast and Dahomey, usually for ritual sacrifices or executions.

Long sword: Only a few true long swords appeared in Africa. Of note was the *kaskara*, a variety of Sudanese long sword also used by the Baghirmi people of the Sahara. This sword might easily be at first mistaken for one of medieval European manufacture, as it was straight and had a cruciform shape. The *kaskara* was used for slashing and thrusting, and was carried in a leather scabbard distinguished by its coffin- or lozenge-shaped end. Many *kaskara* had blades etched with mystical-looking sigils and letters, and there were several of ancient manufacture that were considered to have magical properties. Some legends have it that *kaskara* were relics of the Crusades. The *flyssa*, used by the Kabyles of Morocco, was about 3½' long, single-edged, and straight-backed. The blade bowed out somewhat about midway up the weapon's edge, doubling the width of this slim sword, then tapered again toward the tip.

Scimitar: Wherever the scimitar ap-

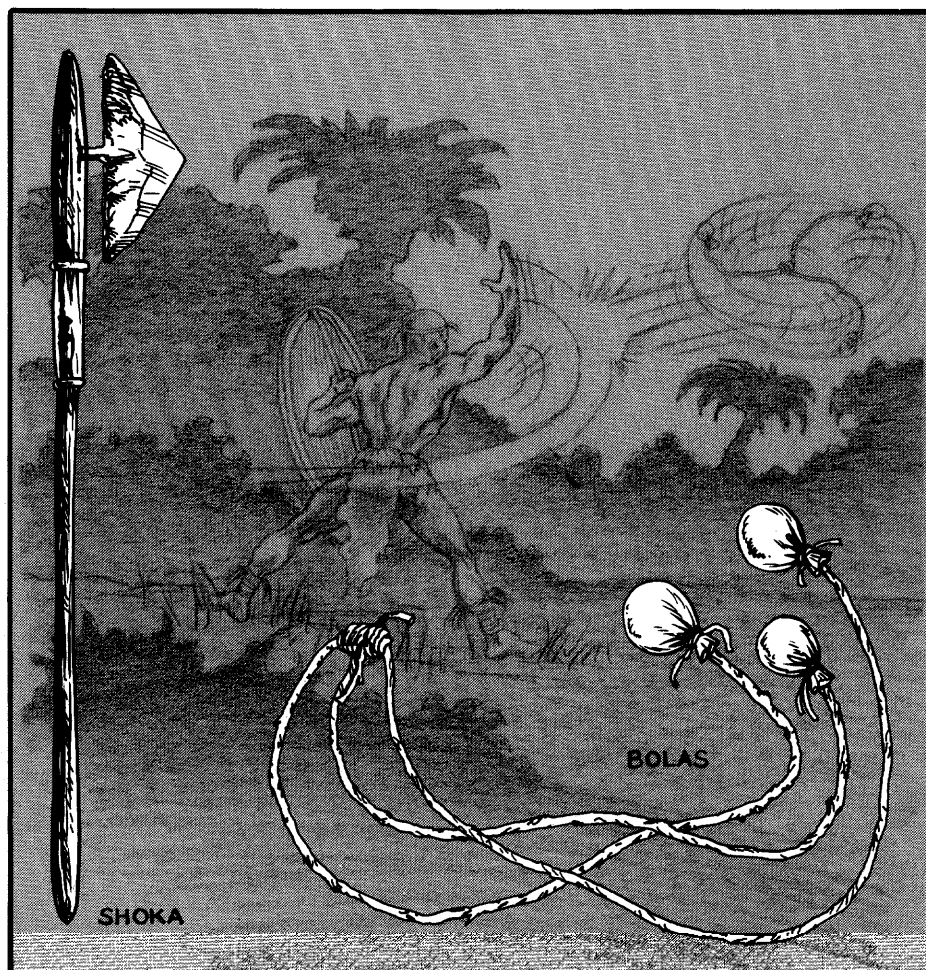
peared in Africa, it was brought there by the Arabs.

Short sword: Short swords were used in northern Africa but appeared in other areas as well. For example, various short swords were used by central African tribes in the vicinity of the Congo. The *takouba* was a thin short sword used by the Tuaregs. It looked much like a large telek (q.v.), the Tuaregs' dagger. **Babanga** were produced by natives who lived along the Gaboon River. These swords had leaf-shaped blades and squared tips. The people of Gabon used wide, thin, double-edged, steel short swords, with hilts bound with copper and brass wire. In East Africa, the Masai used a short sword with a diamond-shaped cross-section, leaf-shaped blade, wire-wrapped hilt, and no guard.

Shields and armor

Shields were used by nearly all the peoples of Africa, and many distinct varieties existed. However, whereas shields were common in Africa, body armor was virtually nonexistent, with a few exceptions. Some of those exceptions are examined here.

African shields were light, well made, and well suited to parrying the blows of melee weapons. Most were medium or large in size, although bucklers and small shields were all used by various African



peoples. All, however, conformed to the general characteristics of shields as described in the AD&D game.

Most shields were of hide or basketwork. Such shields were quite durable, but weighed only half as much as normal shields of the same size.

Hide shields generally consisted of a frame of bent sticks, with a stick running from top to bottom in the middle of the shield, projecting a few inches above and below it. The hide was stretched over this frame, and the central stick was used as the shields grip. Many tribes deliberately left the hair on the hide, which gave the shields distinctive appearances. Indeed, some peoples or war bands used hide only from certain kinds of cattle to give their shields a uniform look.

In southern Africa, the Zulus used a cowhide shield that they called *isiHlangu*. The *isiHlangu* is oval-shaped, about 2½' wide and 4½'-6' long, depending on the height of the warrior it was made for. The bottom end of the stick was used when resting the shield, and the top end was adorned with a pompon of feathers or hair. A wide, double row of binding laces ran down the middle of the shield. The color and patterns of these shields were

quite significant to the Zulu. For example, new regiments of Zulu warriors carried shields that were black. As they gained experience, they would be allowed white spots on their shields. The most experienced veterans might have white shields, with few or no black spots.

Other tribes also preferred shields of hide, and these often had distinct appearances. Those of the Masai, for example, were highly convex and decorated with paint.

Basketwork shields were typically woven from palm fronds. The soldiers of Benin used shields of such material, basically rectangular in shape but wider at the top than at the bottom.

Basotho warriors, in southern Africa, used small hide shields that each had a pair of winglike projections at their top and a smaller pair at the bottom. These shields were used for parrying hurled weapons. In game terms, such "winged" shields function as medium shields against hurled weapons but as bucklers in melee.

Large, round shields of hippopotamus hide distinguished the Sudanese. Wealthy or successful warriors embellished these shields with worked strips of brass or silver, and some decorated theirs with

pieces of lion skin, indicating that they had killed one of these beasts.

The Ashanti, a fierce West African tribe, used large rectangular shields consisting of a wicker framework over which hide was stretched. Ashanti commanders also used a lightweight form of armor: the war-smock, or *batakari*. The *batakari* was covered with leather pouches that held magical talismans, reputed to protect their wearer from harm. The *batakari* in the AD&D game bestows only AC 9 and is treated as leather armor in all ways. However, it should be considered magical armor and may have potent magical properties.

The Bornu of northern Nigeria used a form of quilted cotton armor for protecting both mounted warriors and their horses. The armor covered the warrior from his shoulders to his ankles, and a set included a quilted cotton helmet. It was typically dyed into patterns of large blue, red, and white checks or diamonds. Such armor should be treated as padded armor in all ways, and the horse armor has the characteristics of half-padded or padded barding, as appropriate (*Player's Handbook*, pages 67 and 71).

Helmets were more common than body armor, but still far more rare than in a European milieu. These were usually constructed from the same materials that shields were. For example, in Benin, round helmets were constructed of leather or basketwork. These helmets had a round crest or comb on top of them, and earflaps.

Most helmets in an African milieu will be the cap or open-faced helmets described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* (page 108), which also describes the benefits of helmets in some depth. Warriors wearing helmets and no other armor will not be subjected to called shots against their heads (called shots are also described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, pages 65 +, and the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 58).

Shield proficiency

Because armor is all but unknown in an African milieu and warriors depend so much on their shields, it is appropriate to allow warriors to become proficient with the shield.

Characters who do this devote one weapon-proficiency slot to shield use, receiving the following benefits. These benefits apply regardless of the size or type of shield being used.

In a proficient warrior's hand, a shield reduces armor class by two places, rather than one. Thus, a proficient warrior protected by nothing but a shield would have a base AC 8, rather than 9.

Furthermore, the shield of the proficient user is effective against one more attack than it otherwise would be. Whereas a medium shield can normally be used to defend against two attacks in a melee round, the proficient user can use it against three.

Table 1
African Weapon Statistics

Item	cost	Weight		Size	Type	Speed factor	Damage	
		(lb.)					S-M	L
Assegai ¹	2 gp	1	M	P/S	4	—	1-8	1-10
Bola ²	10 sp	1-2	S	B	5	—	1-4	1-2
Knife, throwing	3 gp	3	M	P/S	3	—	2-5	2-5
Knobkerrie	10 sp	4	M	B	4	—	2-6	2-5
Longbow, Kenyan	60 gp	4	L	—	13	—	—	—
Arrow, Kenyan	1 gp/20	1/10	S	P	—	—	1-10	1-10
Nyek-ple-nen-toh	40 gp	10	L	S	12	—	2-9	1-8
Paddle spear	10 sp	3	M	P	6	—	2-5	2-7
Shoka ¹	6 gp	7	M	S	7	—	1-7	1-7
Shotel	3 gp	4	M	S	7	—	1-6	1-6
Spear, heavy (one-handed)	3 gp	7	L	P	8	—	1-8	1-10
Spear, heavy (two-handed)	3 gp	7	L	P	8	—	2-12	2-16
Spear, throwing	1 gp	3	M	P	5	—	1-6	1-8
Swordlet	8 gp	2	S	S	3	—	2-5	2-5
Trombash (thrown)	10 sp	2	S	B	3	—	1-6	1-4
Trombash (melee)	10 sp	2	S	B	3	—	1-4	1-2

1. This weapon is +1 to damage when used two-handed.

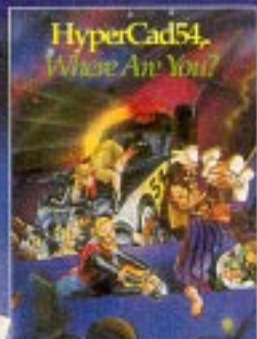
2. On a successful attack roll, the victim must make a saving throw vs. paralysis, or become entangled.

Table 2
African Missile Weapon Ranges

Weapon	Rate of fire	Range		
		S	M	L
Assegai	1	1½	1	1½
Bola	1	2	4	6
Knife, throwing	1	1½	3	4½
Knobkerrie	1	1	2	3
Longbow, Kenyan	1	7	14	21
Spear, throwing	1	2	4	6
Trombash	1	1½	3	4½

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A warrior proficient in shield will also receive +1 on saving throws that would be affected by magical armor (e.g., breath weapon attacks).

This sort of proficiency in no way grants the ability to attack with a shield, which light-weight African shields are ill-suited for in any case.

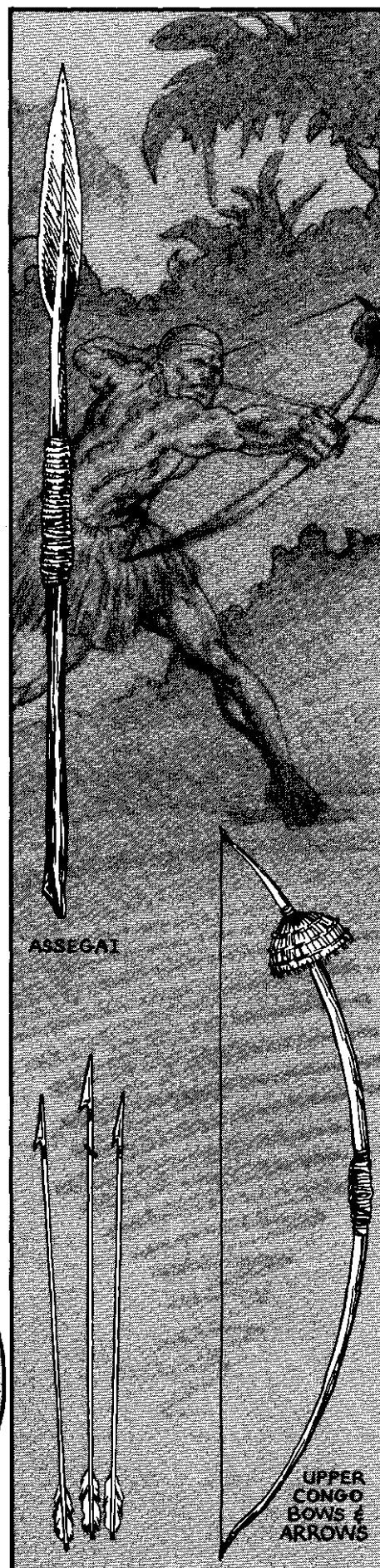
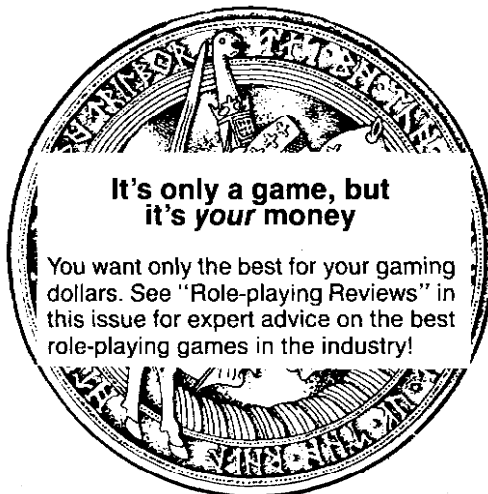
An African adventure

An exhaustive cataloging of African weapons, shields, and armor is beyond the scope of this article. Indeed, inclusion of a description of every variation of weapon or stylistic difference of shield would be tedious to all but the most resolute gamers. Besides, simply knowing the arms or armor of African people does little more than hint at the appearances of those people, much less all the other aspects of life and adventure on what to the gaming world is still a dark continent.

However, specific examples of arms and their variations and uses has been provided here to give the framework and first colors of a picture of an African adventure. It is up to individual DMs to create the rest of that picture, building upon what has been presented here.

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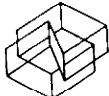
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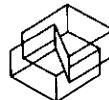


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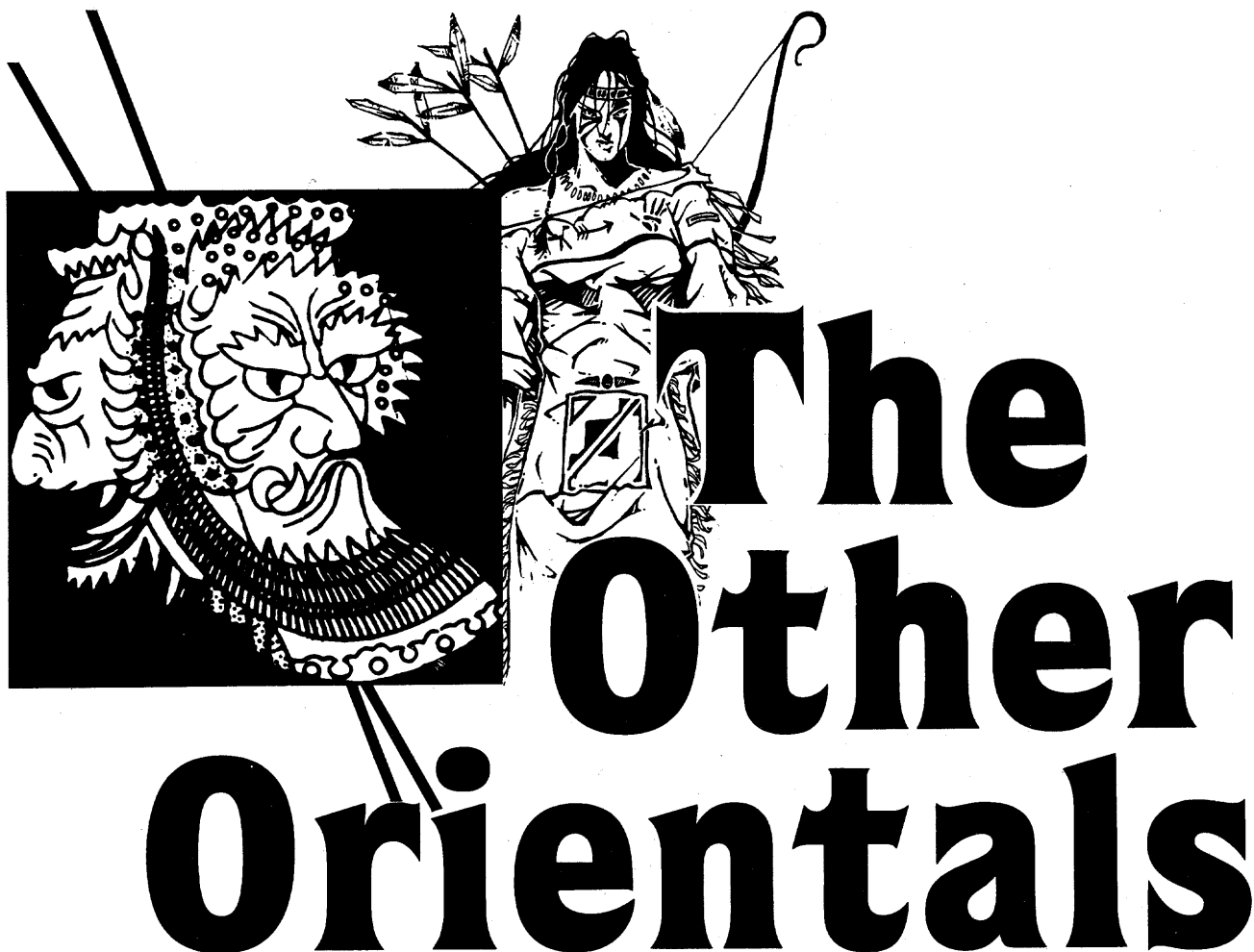
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The Other Orientals

Ninja, kensai, yakuza, and more for your AD&D® 2nd Edition game

by Tom Griffith

Artwork by Jim Holloway

With the publication of the AD&D® 2nd Edition game's Complete Handbooks for the fighter, wizard, and priest, the samurai, wu-jen, and fighting monk from the AD&D 1st Edition *Oriental Adventures* tome were brought up to date. These character classes became character kits, and were simplified and made compatible with the new rules.

This article gives the same treatment to other character classes from *Oriental Adventures*. These new kits follow all the standard kit rules. Now your players can bring their sohei, shukenja, bushi, kensai, ninja, and yakuza into the AD&D 2nd Edition world of fantasy.

New fighter kits

Bushi

Description: The bushi is a warrior from a culture similar to that of medieval Japan. Bushi are not from the same noble caste as the samurai, representing instead

the common fighters, the men of low birth who wish to lead the life of a warrior.

As the samurai is the equivalent of the mounted knight of the European world, so the bushi represents the common foot soldier, the mercenary, the bandit, and practically every other low-born warrior but the barbarian. Because the more powerful and wealthy lords have their own samurai retainers, the majority of bushi wander from village to village, seeking work from peasants and merchants. The pay is usually poor but provides the bushi with the basics of food and shelter.

Bushi need a minimum of 9 in Strength, and 8 in Constitution and Dexterity.

Role: The bushi can add a hint of the mysterious East to a non-Oriental campaign. In his constant wanderings, the bushi might find his way to non-Oriental lands. Maybe the bushi has left his homeland in shame. A bushi who turned criminal and was exiled is another example of an Oriental warrior who may have come to a western-style campaign.

Secondary skills: If the campaign uses secondary skills, the character must take the Armorer skill.

Weapon proficiencies: *Required:* none. *Recommended:* battle axe, dagger, halberd, hand axe, javelin, long sword, mace, pike, short sword, spear, tetsubo, trident, two-handed sword.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Bonus:* Armorer, then either Weaponsmithing or Bowyer (player's choice). *Recommended:* Appraising (two slots, from the rogue group), Direction sense, Endurance, Gaming, Set snares, Survival.

Equipment: Typically poor, bushi have become masters at finding "loose" equipment, as well as modifying pieces of cast-off junk to fit another need. They have a base 20% chance to find a common piece of equipment or a workable substitute in any village. This chance can be increased to as much as 90% in a large city (at the DM's discretion). Finding the equipment, however, is not the same as obtaining it. Often some sort of payment is due, wheth-



er it is half the item's normal price in coin or trade, or some kind of menial service for the owner in exchange.

Special benefits: Like the samurai, the bushi also possesses the ability to focus internal energy. In the bushi's case, by shouting a fierce *kiai* (battle yell), he can temporarily raise his effective level by two. He gains the hit points, fighting ability, and saving throws of a fighter two levels higher for one full turn. All lost hit points are first taken from the temporary ones, without harming the character. Subsequent wounds cause normal damage. This ability can be used once per day.

Special hindrances: Bushi, as a rule, have a hard time finding and keeping money. Both the player and the DM should keep this in mind while playing, and endeavor to keep the bushi in a constant state of poverty, at least at lower levels. Thieves may single out the bushi as a target, the poor warrior might be overcharged for services and equipment, or his aged backpack might sprout a hole in the bottom.

Wealth options: The bushi starts the game with 4d4 X 10 gp, but must spend all but 5 gp before play begins.

Races: A bushi can be of any race, although it is hard to visualize carefree elves or gold-hungry dwarves in this constantly poor and struggling kit.

Kensai

Description: Kensai, or "sword saint," is the name Oriental cultures have given to a warrior whose life goal is the complete mastery of a particular weapon, usually the sword. The kensai seeks the perfect blend of wielder and weapon, a harmonious balance possible only through constant study and practice with a body and spirit purified by clean living and challenge. The kensai welcomes any ordeal that will enhance this proficiency.

To become a kensai, a character must have at least a 12 Strength, and minimum scores of 14 in both Wisdom and Dexterity. He must be of lawful alignment, although he can be good, neutral, or evil.

Role: Kensai are highly respected by any other type of warrior, as well as by the general populace. High-level kensai are always in demand as teachers. Kensai are often approached by poor villagers who are too lowly for a mighty samurai to notice and lack even the limited funds to hire a bushi, to beg for assistance in ending a threat to their homes. As kensai welcome combat, they usually respond positively to these requests.

Kensai typically belong in an Oriental campaign, but several reasons can be created for their inclusion in a western-type campaign. Perhaps a kensai has traveled to a new land to learn how the natives use a weapon similar to his chosen one, or maybe he is chasing a criminal or monster at the request of peasants.

Secondary skills: *Required:* Weaponsmithing

Weapon proficiencies: When a kensai character is first created, he must choose the weapon he wishes to master. He automatically becomes proficient with that weapon, but not specialized. Weapon slots can then be filled as usual.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Bonus:* Weaponsmithing (weapon of mastery only). *Recommended:* Artistic ability, Blind-fighting, Endurance.

Equipment: A kensai does not have to buy a weapon of mastery when he begins play; it is assumed he already has one. Also, a kensai cannot wear armor, as it shows a lack of confidence in his fighting ability.

Special benefits: Being the master of a certain weapon gives the kensai several advantages when using that weapon. First, due to his blocking and parrying skill, the kensai subtracts two from his armor class. Second, the kensai's attack and damage rolls increase by +1 for every three levels attained, to a maximum of +5. Also, his initiative drops by one for every four levels he attains, down to -3. Finally, the kensai can choose to automatically cause maximum damage with a single attack. The player must announce the kensai is using this ability prior to making his attack roll. If he does hit, the weapon automatically causes maximum damage, plus any other damage bonuses the kensai has. The kensai can use this ability a number of times per day equal to his level.

Note that all of the above abilities are usable only when the kensai is using his weapon of mastery; otherwise, he attacks as a fighter of his usual level.

Special hindrances: A kensai can never use a magical weapon of the type he has chosen to master, since doing so is not a true measure of his skill. If a kensai fights with a weapon other than his weapon of mastery, he gains only one-half of the experience points from the encounter.

Wealth options: The kensai starts the game with the usual 5d4 X 10 gp.

Races: Any race can become a kensai, although the majority of demihuman kensai will be elves and half-elves.

New priest kits

Sohei

Description: Sohei are religious soldiers who protect large monasteries or temples in Oriental campaigns. In medieval Japan, several large temples, such as the one on Mount Hiei during the 11th and 12th centuries, maintained armies of warrior-priests for use against rival temples, or to advance their political views in the outside world. Sohei were formidable warriors but untrustworthy allies, as they always put the best interests of their temples first.

Due to a sohei's total dedication to his temple, this kit cannot be abandoned. In order to qualify as a sohei, a character must have a minimum of 13 in Strength

and a 10 or better in both Constitution and Wisdom.

Barred: The following types of gods will not have sohei as followers: Peace and Prosperity.

Role: Almost as much warrior as priest, a sohei receives limited religious training. Nonetheless, he will defend his temple with a fervor unmatched by any other type of priest. These temples are dedicated to a single god, force, or philosophy, and are too esoteric for the common people to be comfortable worshipping there.

Because of his role as a temple guardian, it is unusual but not unheard of for a sohei to leave his temple grounds. Occasionally, fleeing enemies must be tracked down, plots against the monastery uncovered and ended, or exploration for new temple sites undertaken.

Secondary skills: If you use secondary skills, allow the player to choose from the table in the *Player's Handbook*.

Weapon proficiencies: Military training allows the sohei to select a weapon of choice. Thereafter, the sohei gains a +1 bonus on both attack and damage rolls when using that weapon. *Required:* none. *Recommended:* bo stick, chain, dagger (tanto), hand axe, long sword, mace, pike, sai, short sword, spear, tetsubo, two-handed sword. Historically, sohei were famous for their use of the naginata.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Bonus:* Local history. *Recommended:* Healing, Herbalism, Religion; (warrior, two slots each) Blind-fighting, Endurance, Running. **Equipment:** None.

Special benefits: All sohei possess a religious fanaticism that can cause them to become filled with an almost berserk energy they can use to increase their combat skills. This fanaticism lasts for one turn and can be used once per day. While in this frenzied state, a sohei gains the following bonuses: 1) an additional +1 on attack and damage rolls; 2) an additional attack per round; 3) armor class improves by 1; and 4) dodging or deflecting non-magical missiles by making a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon.

Further, the sohei's fanaticism allows him to fight on even after he reaches zero hit points. If already fighting in a fanatic state, he can continue to fight until he reaches -10 hp or the enemy is defeated, whichever comes first. At that point, the sohei collapses and dies.

Special hindrances: Limited religious training means that the sohei can only select spells from the Charm, Combat, Guardian, Protection, and Wards spheres.

A sohei must also live by certain religious principles. He must refrain from eating meat and from excesses in personal behavior, such as gluttony, lust, expressions of pain, etc.

Finally, the character gains full experience points only for defeating opponents in the cause of defending or upholding his monastery goals or any task assigned to him. All other cases earn the sohei half

experience points.

Wealth options: The sohei gets the usual 3d6 X 10 gp starting money for priests.

Races: Normally a sohei must be human. A DM may make exceptions in a campaign, the most likely exceptions being for dwarves and half-elves.

Shukenja

Description: Shukenja are humble priests from Oriental lands who have taken up lives of hardship and poverty in order to serve their communities. To become an impartial judge and servant to all communities, the shukenja has cut all ties to family and home. A shukenja's life is a hard one, wandering the land giving aid and comfort with only a few possessions carried along, but he accepts this with dedication and good cheer. Typically pacifists, shukenja can be roused into becoming fearsome opponents when protecting their charges.

In order to become a shukenja, a character must have at least a 12 in Wisdom, and a 9 or better in Constitution. He must also be of good alignment, although he can be lawful, neutral, or chaotic. This kit cannot be abandoned.

Barred: Priests of the following types of deities may not become shukenja: Death, Disease, Evil, Mischief/Trickery and War.

Role: Although shukenja are priests,

they rarely serve a particular deity, as in the Orient all religions are respected.

Practices and beliefs of one religion are often intermingled with another. Unlike sohei, shukenja do not build temples. Instead, as they wander the land giving aid and instruction to those who need it, they show their religious beliefs and dedication by their daily living. Shukenja are much more visible and accessible to the general public than the martial sohei in their fortresslike temples.

Along with the sohei and fighting monk, shukenja form the third part of the Oriental religious triumvirate. Sohei build temples to a particular deity and cater primarily to the influential. Monks and their monasteries are typically dedicated to fulfilling a particular cause or mission rather than handling society's religious needs (for more information on this, see "Bonds of Brotherhood," in DRAGON® issue #164). Shukenja fulfill the need of the common man for religious instruction and ceremonies.

Secondary skills: All shukenja must take the scribe skill.

Weapon proficiencies: All shukenja must choose one of the unarmed combat styles (punching, wrestling, or martial arts). Other proficiency slots may be spent as the character wishes. Some recommended weapons are bo stick, chain, nunchaku, staff, and tetsubo.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Bonus:* Religion. *Recommended:* Artistic ability, Direction sense, Etiquette, Healing, Herbalism, Read/Write, Spellcraft, Weather sense.

Equipment: This priest may not wear armor. Also, shukenja are limited to the amount of equipment they can comfortably carry with them.

Special benefits: Before beginning their wanderings, shukenja receive training in three rituals that translate into these benefits:

First, a shukenja has a 5% chance per level of lifting curses on any person, place, or item.

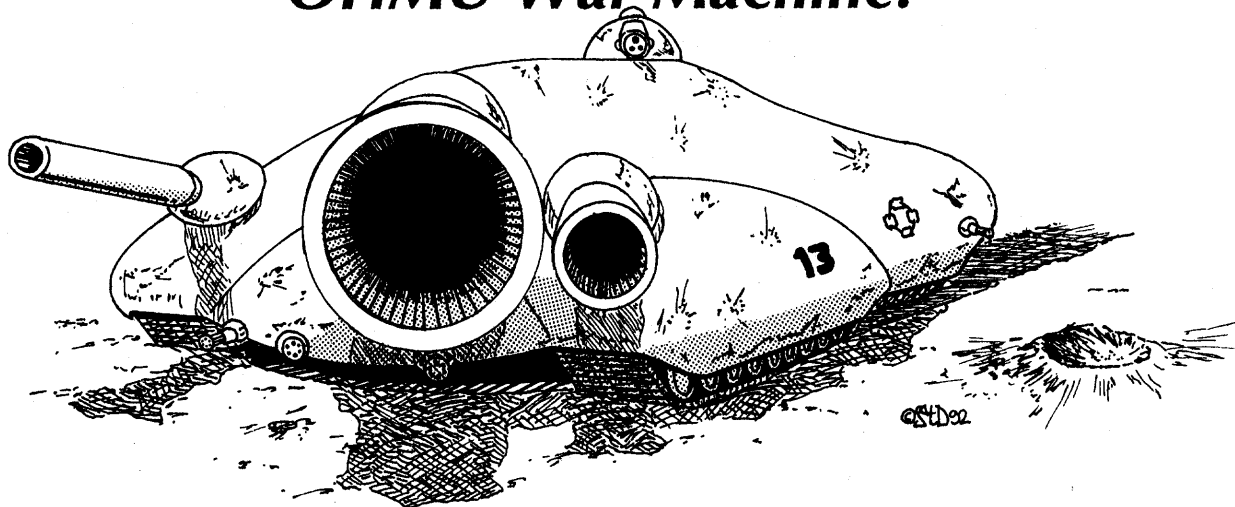
Second, the shukenja learns to meditate. By entering this state of intense concentration, the priest regains his internal energy levels. While meditating, the shukenja is oblivious to hunger, thirst, heat, or cold. He is, however, still conscious of his surroundings. One hour of meditation is as good as two hours of sleep. This state cannot be maintained for more than four hours at a time.

Finally, a shukenja can focus his internal energies to improve any saving throw by +3. He can do this a number of times per day equal to his level.

Special hindrances: As stated before, a shukenja cannot wear armor or own more than he can carry on his back. In addition, a shukenja must live by certain religious rules. He cannot eat meat and

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must avoid excessive eating and drinking. A shukenja must also avoid violence whenever possible. Breaking any of these restrictions results in a special punishment to be determined by the DM.

Wealth options: The shukenja gets the usual 3d6 X 10 gp at the game's start.

Races: The majority of shukenja are human. Typical demihuman exceptions are the gentler elf and halfling races.

New thief kits

Ninja

Description: The ninja, or "shadow warriors," are a well-known legend in the Oriental lands. They are well versed in the arts of concealment, stealth, and trickery. Clad in their infamous black uniforms and armed with a deadly arsenal of weapons and gadgets, ninja are the master assassins and spies for those who can or will hire them. Terror usually accompanies the mere mention of their name, even among the stoutest samurai, and many common people ascribe supernatural powers to the ninja, who do nothing to discourage these stories.

A ninja must have minimum scores of 12 in Strength, 15 in Dexterity, and 11 in Intelligence.

Role: The abilities of the ninja are clouded in mystery. Despite their infamy, they are very secretive and unseen. Living out their days as common townsfolk or farmers, their nights are spent performing their missions of spying and assassination. Every ninja has an everyday identity that *must* be maintained.

Every ninja belongs to a clan, or organization of assassins. The head of the clan assigns various missions to the lesser ninja. These missions must be completed, or the ninja is expected to die trying. Defiance of the clan head means an all-out attempt on the life of the offender, ending only with his death or the far less likely success of the offender in taking the clan heads place.

Secondary skills: The player may freely choose the ninja character's secondary skills, keeping in mind the ninja's need to maintain a cover identity.

Weapon proficiencies: *Required:* ninja-to (treat as a short sword). *Recommended:* blowpipe, chain, shuriken. Many of a ninja's weapons are used only to administer a fatal dose of poison to their victim.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Required:* Tightrope walking. *Recommended:* Alertness (*Complete Thief's Handbook*), Blind-fighting, Disguise, Herbalism (*CTH*), Jumping.

Skill progression: Ninja tend to become most proficient in the skills of moving silently, hiding in shadows, detecting noise, and climbing walls. The open-locks skill often comes in handy for getting to their victims.

Equipment: Ninja are known for the

variety of special equipment they use to complete their missions. Typical examples include metal climbing claws, and special grenades filled with smoke powder, pepper, or flash powder. Even their sword scabbards often have multiple uses. Some have secret compartments, while others are open at both ends for use as a blowpipe or breathing tube. The player is encouraged to be imaginative in the creation of special equipment, subject to the DMs approval (see "Tools of the Trade" in the *CTH*).

Special benefits: In addition to standard thieving abilities, ninja possess several special talents that help them complete their deadly assignments.

1. A ninja can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his level. He can do this once per day.

2. A ninja can fall without taking any damage, for a distance of 5' per level of experience he has attained. To do so, he must not be wearing metal armor and must be able to make periodic contact with a vertical surface in order to slow his fall. If he falls further than the allowed distance, he suffers normal damage.

3. Finally, a ninja is trained to slip out of ropes, chains, and other bindings by twisting and contorting his body. This ability is at a base 10% chance at 1st level and increases by 4% for every level of experience gained.

Special hindrances: As mentioned previously, a ninja must maintain a secret identity known only to other clan members. Should this identity be discovered, all law-enforcement officers in the area will begin a massive manhunt for the ninja, stopping only when the ninja is captured, dead, or runs too far to follow. The ninja is then dismissed from his clan, and his fellow clan members will conduct their own manhunt to preserve their secrets.

Races: The vast majority of ninja are human, as other races might be too easy to identify in an all-human environment. The DM may make exceptions if his campaign will support them. Typically, these exceptions will be elves and half-elves.

Yakuza

Description: The yakuza is both the name for the underworld in Oriental societies as well as the name of its members. Yakuza know all that goes on in their territories and control all illegal activities within it. Fear, intimidation, and even an occasional helping hand are all tools that this moblike organization uses to maintain control of its criminal territory.

A yakuza has a pattern of tattoos on his body. This pattern tells other members of the yakuza profession all about the character's rank, abilities, and ties within his organization. Higher-level yakuza are often completely covered by tattoos on their backs, chests, and arms. In order to prevent easy identification by nonyakuza, these tattoos are never placed upon the face, hands, or feet.

To be a yakuza, a character must have a minimum score of 12 in Intelligence and a 9 in Dexterity.

Role: Each yakuza belongs to a "family," an organization of yakuza similar to a thieves' guild that controls a particular urban area; the bigger the family, the larger its district. Each family is very protective of its area, which is the very source of its power and income. Within cities and towns, secret wars are often waged between yakuza families as they try to protect or usurp a particular district of the city. A yakuza is expected to treat all criminal "family" members with the same respect as accorded to natural family members.

Although yakuza are sometimes condoned or even respected, they are still criminals and thus subject to legal action. They all constantly risk arrest, imprisonment, and even execution to maintain their unlawful empires.

Secondary skills: All yakuza must have the Gambling skill.

Weapon proficiencies: *Required:* None. *Recommended:* chain, dagger, nunchaku, sai, short sword, shuriken.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Required:* Gaming, Information gathering (*CTH*). *Recommended:* Gaming; Intimidation, Trailing (*CTH*).

Skill progression: As a major part of their duties includes information-gathering, the thieving abilities most useful to a yakuza include move silently and hide in shadows (to eavesdrop and shadow contacts), hear noise (to make sure that they are not being tailed), and open locks and pick pockets (to get to information not easily accessible).

Equipment: None special

Special benefits: As a benefit of their constant dealings with all sorts of people, yakuza can sense and anticipate an opponent's offensive moves for a short time. This lets the yakuza position himself to minimize the damage from an attack by sidestepping at the last instant or partially blocking an attack. Although this maneuver doesn't stop the attack, it does reduce the amount of damage the yakuza suffers by one-half (round fractions up). The yakuza must announce that he is performing this maneuver immediately after an opponent's successful attack roll. This ability can be used a number of times per day equal to the yakuza's ability level.

Special hindrances: All yakuza suffer a -4 reaction adjustment to any law-enforcement personnel they meet if (accidentally or by force) their tattoos are revealed.

Races: Yakuza may come from any race, although gnomes and halflings may find the intimidation part of the job a bit difficult.

Ω

Rolemaster



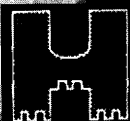
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Turban and
four mirror armor



Rhino's ARMOR, Tiger's CLAWS



What the well-equipped warrior
of India wears

by Michael J. Varhola

Artwork by Michael Scott
and David O. Miller

A great variety of defensive arms were used throughout the hundreds of tiny states that once made up the sprawling Indian subcontinent. The use of armor and shields in India dates from at least the second millennium B.C. and continued almost into the beginning of our own century. Indeed, in the Indian wars of rebellion against British domination in the 19th century, armor and shields, little different than those used in the Middle Ages, were used by Indian warriors.

Historical records are often vague or conflicting with regard to the defensive arms of the Indian subcontinent. However, when studied as a whole, a comprehensible picture of the subject begins to take shape. The earliest accounts telling of the armor used by Indians comes from the 4th century B.C., when the Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great subdued portions of the subcontinent. Indian mythological epics also say much about arms and armor, but, as with any such material, they must be regarded cautiously.

One benefit to the student of martial equipment in India is that it changed little from century to century, with little to distinguish the arms of ancient India from those of its medieval period. However,

foreign invasions left their influences. What is most important for DMs to consider when equipping the warriors and monsters of an Indian milieu is that there should be a great variety of such equipment, and that innumerable tiny kingdoms and enclaves will have their own varieties and styles of armor.

Historically, common soldiers did not have access to the best armor. Most had quilted linen armor and shields, and the most impoverished might not even have that much. However, armor appears in typical AD&D scenarios in quantities far beyond what was really available in Dark Ages Europe, and DMs may do the same in an Indian milieu, if they wish.

The finest Indian arms and armor were richly embellished, often with *kofgari* work, an inlay of gold or other precious metal applied to the surface of the item in thin layers. Those who could afford expensive arms often had them crafted so as to be works of art unto themselves.

Much of the appeal of an Indian-style adventure rests on the assumption that the diverse states of India are not about to come under the yoke of a unified, technologically superior empire. To most players and DMs, that is probably a dreary option

and would certainly ruin the color of such a milieu in the game, much as it did in reality.

Nonetheless, there were many invasions of India, in whole or in part, and many less-violent incursions by outsiders. These have all been influences on the diverse varieties of armor and shields found throughout India.

Indian body armor

Varman is the Sanskrit word most often used in historical and epic writings to refer to the various sorts of body armor, as opposed to shields. Some of this armor gives a base armor class in the AD&D game, such as chain mail (AC 5). Other pieces can be worn individually, either by themselves or to augment other armor. These benefit the wearer's armor class, like a shield does. Unlike a shield, such piece armor need not be actively used but only worn. Details appear on Table 1.

Chahar-aina: Also called "four mirror" body armor, this armor consisted of four metal plates strapped around the wearer's body: one on the back, one on the chest, and one on each side under the arms. Chahar-aina was usually worn to augment another suit of armor, often in conjunction with the *khulah-kud* (helmet), *dastana* (bracers), and shield. Chahar-aina was often worn over a quilted coat for base AC 7 (AC 8 for quilted cotton, + 1 for chahar-aina). It was usually of high quality and often embellished and highly polished. In AD&D games, it is the most likely to be enchanted of any of the Indian armors.

Chain mail: This was so commonly encountered in India, that several weapons evolved with the express purpose of piercing it. A suit of chain mail often included both a full-length tunic and mail trousers. Chain mail is a bit more expensive in Indian adventures than in typical AD&D worlds, so fewer low-level warriors will possess it. Inferior sets of mail, costing 70 gp, weigh the same as good chain mail but give only a base AC 6. *Ghughuwa* was chain mail that combined torso armor and a mail coif in a single piece, often padded with velvet; it costs 110 gp.

Dastana: These were forearm guards, also called *bazubands*, typically a pair of hinged plates that fully encircled the arm with mittens of cloth or mail to protect the hands. Dastana were often worn with chahar-aina; a pair of them improves a wearer's armor class by one place.

Dhenuka: This was a full set of armor made from the hide, hooves, and horn of an Indian rhinoceros. Such armor was of somewhat higher quality than regular hide armor. Dhenuka could also be made from the components of other beasts with thick natural protection, such as elephants, water buffalos, or even crocodiles. Dhenuka would definitely be popular in regions where other armor components are scarce, but where the creatures it is made from are common. It might also be used by characters who are prohibited from

wearing cowhide or metal, or by those who are required to wear the skin of the beast in question.

Magical varieties of this armor might bestow powers on their wearers sympathetic with the abilities of the creatures they are constructed from. For example, a character wearing magical rhinoceros dhenuka might have the ability to smash into opponents with greater force than normal, as a charging rhinoceros would.

Helmets: A great variety of helmets can be found in an Indian milieu. Specific benefits of the various helmet types can be found in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. All of the helmet types listed in that book will be available, except for the great helm, which is bigger and heavier than those found in India. Two unique forms of head protection are described here.

Khulah-kud: The Persian influence on Indian armor is most apparent in this helmet. The khulah-kud is a round, domed helmet with a spike on top, a nose guard, and a pair of tubular supports for plumes a few inches to either side of the center front of the helmet. A chain-mail neck guard sometimes hung from the back of the khulah-kud, and a turban was often wrapped around it. It conforms to the characteristics of the open-faced helm described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* page 108.

Turban: Various sorts of turbans were worn throughout India, many for religious reasons. The thick padding of a turban provides some protection to the wearer's head, functioning like the cap variety of helmet described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, page 108.

Hide: Hide armors would be common in areas of Indian adventures where metal is uncommon, the people are poor, or religion dictates that hide must be used. Typically, such armor will be of elephant or rhinoceros hide. Nonetheless, it can be quite handsome and functional, and has the same chances of being magical as any other armor in areas where it predominates. Heavy hide armor includes full skirts, and arm and leg guards. Lighter hide armor conforms to the characteristics of *sadiqi* armor (described later).

Kantha-trana: This broadly refers to a piece of armor that protects the neck and is worn independently of a basic suit of armor or a helmet. It does not improve armor class as such, but it bestows certain conditional benefits. Against attacks meant to strangle or decapitate, the wearer of a kantha-trana has an armor class for his neck either equal to that of the rest of his body or to base AC 8, whichever is better. Whenever a character wearing such an item must make a saving throw against attacks against the neck, such as decapitation or strangulation, he has a bonus of + 2 on his saving throw. Magical versions of kantha-trana clearly suggest themselves. Note that a normal garrote is ineffective against someone wearing a kantha-trana; a

Quilted linen
with metal
plates



magical version or one wielded with superhuman strength is required.

Lamellar: This sort of armor was similar to scale mail but was of higher quality. Thus, lamellar provides the same protection as scale mail, but it weighs less and is more expensive than the scale mail available in an Indian milieu.

Leather: Because the cow is a sacred animal in Hindu India, leather armor will not be used in many Indian campaign areas, and certain characters might be prohibited from its use. However, it may be used in non-Hindu states or by barbarians or other non-Hindus who dwell on the fringes of the world of Indian adventures.

Nagadarika: This was a shooting glove worn by archers. Most were leather or hide finger guards sewn onto straps that were wrapped around the user's hand to keep the devices in place.

Poshteen: The poshteen was not actually armor as such, but rather a heavy sheepskin coat with the fur on the inside to protect against cold. Such garments were worn by dwellers of the craggy hills and mountains, historically by Afghans. Because of its thickness, the poshteen gives +1 to the armor class of the person wearing it. However, if the poshteen is worn over armor heavier than leather, the Dexterity of the user is reduced by 1. Furthermore, spell-casters prohibited from wearing armor have a 5% chance of spell

failure if wearing a poshteen alone. Because of its thickness and construction, however, this coat gives a +1 on saving throws vs. cold attacks.

Quilted linen: Many Indian armors, particularly those of northern India, used quilted linen instead of leather, producing an armor similar to padded (base AC 8). Lighter-than-normal coats of this armor would cost and weigh one-half normal and give a base AC 9. Such armor increases the chance of success of some rogue abilities, giving +5% to move silently and climb walls. The least expensive of these armors contained only linen, but some were improved with studding with small gilt nails, or the addition of scale, mail, or metal plates. Improved versions of this armor could provide a base AC 7 or 6, at cost and weight of 50 gp and 20 lbs. for AC 7, and 90 gp and 30 lbs. for AC 6. Such armor could be further augmented with chahar-aina, dastana, and shield.

Reinforced mail: The best Indian armors were of quilted linen reinforced with chain mail and metal plates. The chain mail and plates were fastened within the armor with metal studs and nails, and could not be worn separately or easily removed. A complete set of this armor included protective trousers, boots, dastana (q.v.), and a helmet, typically a khulah-kud (q.v.). It was not especially bulky or heavy for the protection it gave,

but was still too bulky for chahar-aina to be worn over it. This is the best sort of armor available in an Indian adventure, giving a base AC 3, and only the most affluent characters will own it. Most of it was very ornate and attractive, and the components of many suits, including a shield, were often crafted as matching pieces.

Sadiqi: This is the name for any suit of armor, such as chain mail or leather armor, that protects only the torso and does not cover the arms. The protection such armor provides is one place less than normal, and the cost and weight are two-thirds normal. Thus, sadiqi chain mail would have base AC 6, cost 50 gp, and weigh about 26 lbs. Rogues wearing sadiqi leather armor add +5% to their move-silently and climb-walls abilities, and the penalties for wearing sadiqi studded or padded armors are 5% less than for full suits of such armors (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 39, Table 29).

Scale mail: Coats of scale mail were found in many Indian regions, and they revealed again the martial influence of Persia. Such armor was more common in India than in a typical AD&D milieu and is correspondingly less expensive as a result.

Studded leather: Because of the unlikelihood of leather being used for armor, studded leather has the same chances of being present in an Indian campaign as does leather armor.

Talatra: Known by several other names, this device was an arm guard or bracer worn by an archer to protect his inner arm from the slap of a released bowstring. Traditionally, the talatra was made of iguana skin.

Indian shields

In the historical and mythic texts that describe the arms of India, *avarna* is the Sanskrit word most often used to refer to shields, as opposed to body armor. Shields were of three basic types throughout India: parrying shields, round shields, and curved oblong shields. However, in such a vast, diverse area, exceptions to this exist.

Body: Indian infantry often used body shields that had bamboo frames covered with hide. These were the kind of shields used by the warriors who battled Alexander the Great. Because of their size, body shields reduce armor class against missile weapons by two places, rather than one.

Buckler: These small shields were favored by some in India, and many of them were augmented with blades or spikes, allowing them to be used for both attacking and defending. Such spiked bucklers are discussed in "Indian weapons."

Dahl: The small or medium-sized round shield, called the dahl, was the most common Indian shield, particularly during the age of encounters with European powers. The dahl was circular, commonly of embossed leather or steel, and was used throughout India and the regions to its northwest. Its form changed little over the

Turban over helmet
and dastana



centuries. The dahl typically had four or five metal bosses on its face and two handles on the inside: one to slide the shield arm through, and the other for the shield hand to grasp. Some, often referred to as "Persian" in style, have six bosses and three handles, two of which the arm passes through. Some dahl were made of up to 50 layers of silk and used by Brahmins or others who eschewed the use of leather. Other dahl were constructed of equally rare materials, even tortoise shells.

Maratha shield: Such shields were typically medium in size and highly convex, almost coming to a point. They were lacquered and light, and highly effective against missile weapons. They give a +1 bonus to their user's armor class against melee weapons, but are +3 against missile weapons. Thus, a warrior wearing chain mail and armed with a Maratha shield would have a base AC 4 in melee but a base AC 2 against missiles (this missile bonus applies only to frontal, unsurprised attacks to which the character can react).

Medium: It is likely that some combatants will carry medium-sized shields that do not conform to the appearance of any of the specialized shields of India. Such shields could be of any construction or appearance.

Parrying shields: Many parrying implements were used in India, devices intended both for attacking and defending. Parrying devices may not look like shields at all, but like pairs of metal bars or horns held by a grip between them. One example of such an item is the *madu*, discussed in "Indian weapons." Generally, parrying "shields" can be used by nonproficient characters to either attack or defend; those proficient with these devices can use them for both attack and defense in a single round. Most improve the user's armor class by one place against up to two frontal attacks.

Small: Various kinds of small shields that do not conform to the characteristics of more common shields might be encountered in an Indian scenario. The *fari*, a small shield made of bamboo or cane, is an example of this. Other small shields might be made of hide and used by hill people, of woven palm fronds and used by jungle-dwellers, etc.

Weapon vs. armor modifiers

Certain weapons are more or less useful against various kinds of armor, as explained on page 90 of the *Player's Handbook* and reflected on Table 52 there. Table 2 in this article can be used during Indian adventures instead of Table 52.

Indian weapons

The Indian subcontinent produced a wide variety of exotic, lethal, but often beautiful weapons. Naturally, many of the weapons used throughout India had equivalents in the West. However, many of them were unique, having neither Western nor Oriental counterparts.

Historically, there was an early Persian influence on Indian arms, from around 1500 B.C., and a resultant overlap in the weapons of these two regions. Much later, many sorts of weapons and equipment were introduced by Arab invaders and settlers, for about 900 years, beginning in the 7th century A.D. The weapons listed herein are primarily those that were indigenous to the Indian subcontinent itself, but naturally include those that bear the influence of outside cultures. Certain Indian weapons were developed and used predominantly in specific areas; others had widespread usage. Notes regarding this are made where applicable to assist DMs in campaign planning.

Indian steel was quite good, and some weapons were constructed entirely of it, including the hafts. Nonetheless, much steel was imported from Persia or Damascus, despite a reputation of superiority that was spurious at best. Indeed, Indian weapons were among the highest quality in the world.

Ornate decorations and embellishments were often characteristic of Indian arms and armor. Many were chased with brass, silver, or gold, or fitted with ivory or jade hilts. The prices given for weapons in Indian campaigns represent only the base values of the weapons, and any sort of decorative work can easily increase their value from two to ten times at least. The

level of craftsmanship of many Indian weapons exceeded that of contemporary European weapons.

Some Indian weapons were specially modified or designed to penetrate chain-mail armor, which was generally the most formidable sort of armor encountered. The mail-piercer arrow, the *peskkabz*, and the *zaghnal* were so designed.

Arrow, mail-piercer: Mail-piercing arrows were designed to penetrate chain mail, and have a +1 bonus to attack opponents clad in such armor. Such an arrow typically had a long shaft, four painted flights, and a hexagonal, steel, armor-piercing head.

Bagh nakh: Also called "tiger's claws," this weapon consisted of five metal claws fitted to a metal bar with a ring at each end. The first and fourth fingers were slid through the rings, and the middle two fingers between the claws. An upward slash was the typical employment of the weapon. Bagh nakh were not generally a weapon for war, but rather for assassination or murder. The wounds they inflicted were often meant to simulate those caused by an animal. Although similar to the *nekode* of *Oriental Adventures*, bagh nakh do not assist in climbing. Such weapons would rarely be embellished in any way.

Buckler, spiked: An Indian spiked buckler typically consisted of a sturdy



Dahl and padded linen

buckler with a pair of small, iron-shod horns protruding from the center. It can be used to defend against a single frontal attack. Furthermore, characters who take the spiked buckler as a weapon of proficiency may also use it to attack in the same round in which it is used to defend, at a penalty equal to that assessed for an off-hand attack (*Player's Handbook*, page 96). Nonproficient characters may use it only to either attack or defend each round (but not both), with the attack made with a nonproficiency penalty.

Chakram: A flat, steel ring, with a razor-sharp rim, the chakram was used in the northwest of India by Sikhs. Each one was spun around the index finger, then released. Warriors typically carried a half-dozen of these weapons, either around their arms or around a conical turban. This weapon's game statistics are as follows: rate of fire: 2; range: short 2, medium 4, long 6.

Gada: The gada was a large war club with a large round wooden head mounted on a haft. The gada's great damage can be attributed to the fact that it was a two-handed weapon and had an unusually large head. If used one-handed, the gada is at -1 to hit and inflicts the damage of a normal club (1-6/1-3). The gada was associated with various Indian martial-arts.

Hora: This weapon was a horn knuckleduster, typically having five spikes along its front edge and one on each side. The hora was used in the brutal Indian martial

art *vajra-musti*, which combined wrestling with savage armed blows. Due to its size and shape, the hora can be easily concealed. Although a simple weapon, it might even be found in the hands of a king who practices the martial arts associated with it.

Katar: This was a punch dagger. Rather than having a straight hilt, the katar had two parallel metal bars holding a crossbar grip at a 90° angle to the blade. As a punch dagger, the katar did a bit more damage than an ordinary dagger. In form, it was a uniquely Indian weapon, carried in the sash of a warrior.

Many varieties of katar existed. Some were made so that when the two metal bars forming the grip were squeezed together, the blade opened into a three-pronged weapon. Others had a blade split about halfway along its length, giving it two blade ends with a space between them. Still others had three fixed blades, the extra two protruding from the hilt at 90° angles to the primary blade. A DM may treat each of these varieties differently as outlined below, or may simply state that they all function identically.

Scissors katars have more blades to potentially stab an opponent. If a user strikes an opponent with a roll attack of 4 or higher than what was needed, the weapon does 4-7/3-6 hp damage, rather than 2-5/1-4.

With the scissors katar (the "split-blade" variety), the user may attempt to parry

rather than attack, gaining the benefits of that option (page 100, *Player's Handbook*). If parrying an edged weapon, the user gets a chance to trap it with the katar. To see if this is successful, the character must attempt to hit an armor class equal to the speed factor of the weapon. If the attack was successful, the foe's blade is been caught, and its wielder must make a saving throw vs. petrification or have it jerked from his grasp. The save is at +1 if the weapon is size M, or at +2 if size L.

Varieties with three fixed blades had more points to attack with. To reflect this, give them a +1 bonus on all attack rolls. However, the side blades are smaller and less lethal than the main blade, so the weapon inflicts 1-4/1-3 hp damage.

Modified katars are more expensive than normal ones. Scissors katars cost 15 gp, and three-bladed and split-bladed katars 10 gp each.

Khandar: A sword with a straight, reinforced blade, the khandar was intended for hacking. Often a bar projected from the weapon's pommel, allowing it to be gripped with two hands to deliver a more forceful blow. Another sword, called a *sosun pattah*, had a forward curving blade, but its intent was the same; for game purposes, these two weapons have identical characteristics.

Kora: This was a heavy short sword with a wide, forward-curving blade, used in northern India and Nepal. It was a hacking weapon, sharp only on its inner edge, and had no thrusting point. It was often decorated with etchings in the steel of the blade. Nepalese warriors might carry one of these and a *kukri* (q.v.).

Kukri: Perhaps the most characteristic weapon of Nepal and northern India, the kukri has a heavy, single-edged, forward-curving blade for slashing. Despite its shape, it is not meant to be thrown. The kukri has been traditionally used by Nepalese warriors since the 12th century.

More than just a formidable fighting knife, the kukri is a rugged tool that can be used for skinning game or chopping wood. The kukri can do almost anything that either a knife or a hand axe can do, sometimes even better. The only decoration likely to be found on one is a small pair of notches on the blade near the hilt. These notches mean "divinity" and reflect the kukri's status as a religious symbol. The kukri was accompanied by a pair of small utility knives in its sheath. These are not weapons as such, inflicting only 1-2/1 hp damage, and are not capable of being thrown.

Madu: The madu was a sturdy buckler with an antelope horn, sometimes tipped with iron or steel, projecting from either side. Although the shield is buckler-sized, the horns assist in parrying, and because of them the madu can be used to defend against up to two frontal attacks. Furthermore, characters proficient with the madu may also use it to attack (while defending) with one of the long horns at a penalty

Talwar

Tiger's claws and kukri



equal to that assessed for an off-hand attack (*Player's Handbook*, page 96). Non-proficient characters may use it only to either attack or defend, with the attack made with a nonproficiency penalty.

Pata: A gauntlet sword, this long sword had a steel guard to protect the hand and wrist of its wielder, and had a punch grip like the katar (q.v.). If applicable, the pata user's hand and wrist are given AC 3 by the gauntlet. A pata used by a character on a charging mount inflicts double base damage at the end of a charge. Such swords were quite often chased

with precious metals or engraved with designs.

Peshkahz: This dagger, normally a straight-bladed weapon, has a reinforcing rib along its back edge. This reinforcement gives it a T cross-section that makes it especially useful for penetrating chain mail, against which it gains a + 1 attack bonus. However, it cannot be used as an effective throwing weapon. DMs who use weapon breakage rules should take this reinforcement into account, giving the peshkabz half the normal chance of breaking.

Continued on page 118

Table 1
Armor Costs, Weights, and Ratings

Armor type	cost	Weight (lb.)	AC benefit
Chahar-aina	75 gp	10	+1
Chain mail	100 gp	40	5
Dastana	25 gp	5	+1
Dhenuka	30 gp	20	6
Helmet	-	-	-
Khulah-kud	25 gp	5	*
Turban	1 gp	1	*
Hide	15 gp	30	6
Kantha-trana	3 gp	2	**
Lamellar	85 gp	35	6
Leather	10 gp	15	8
Leather scale	25 gp	25	7
Nagodarika	1 gp	1	-
Poshteen	5 gp	5	+1
Quilted linen	10 gp	10	8
Reinforced mail	600 gp	50	3
Sadiqi **	2/3 normal	2/3 normal	- 1 normal
Scale mail	75 gp	40	6
Studded leather	25 gp	25	7
Talatra	2 gp	1	-
Shield	-	-	-
Body	10 gp	15	+ 1 (+ 2 vs. missiles)
Buckler	1 gp	3	+1***
Dahl	5 gp	5	+1
Maratha	15 gp	10	+ 1 (+ 3 vs. missiles)
Medium	7 gp	10	+1
Parrying	6 gp	5	+1***
Small	3 gp	5	+1

* This item bestows special benefits, as described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*.

** The special characteristics of this item are discussed under its description.

*** This item may also be used to attack, as noted in its description.

Table 2
Weapon Type vs. Armor Modifiers

Armor type	Slash	Pierce	Bludgeon
Chahar-aina*	- 2	- 1	- 1
Chain mail	- 2	0	+2
Dhenuka**	0	+2	0
Lamellar ***	0	- 1	0
Poshteen	0	0	0
Reinforced mail	- 4	- 1	- 1
Sadiqi	As per the armor type		
Studded leather****	- 2	- 1	0

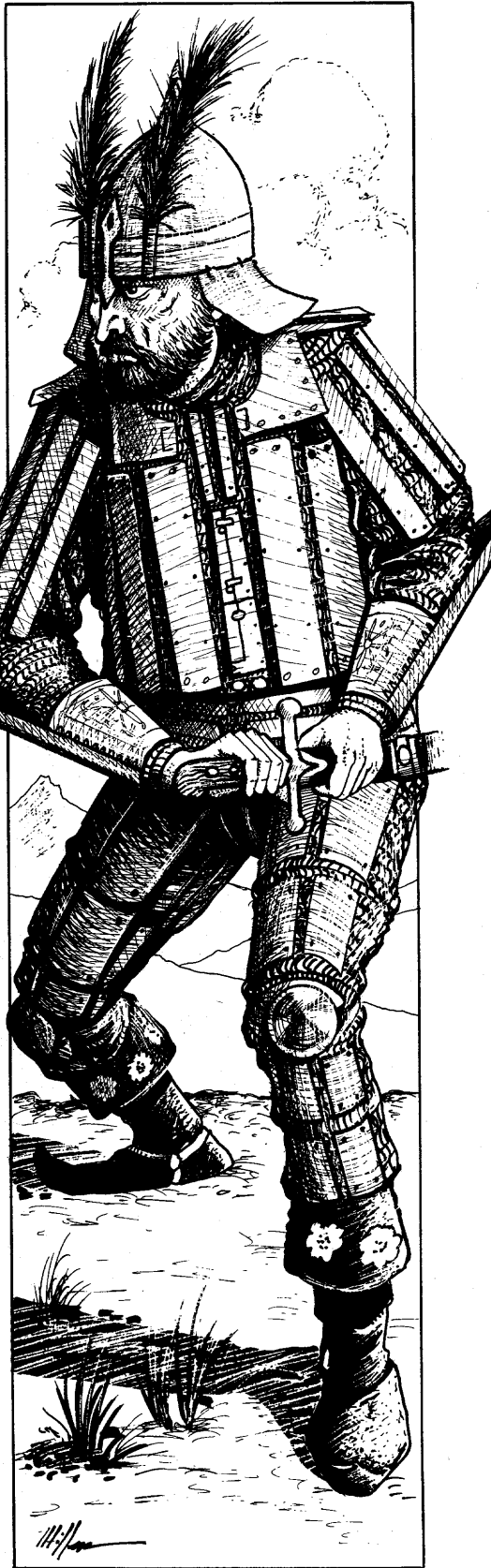
* These modifiers are cumulative with those of the armor the chahar-aina is augmenting.

** This includes hide, leather, leather scale, and quilted armors.

*** This includes scale armor.

**** This includes reinforced quilted armors.

Khulah-kud and
reinforced mail



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The Known World

Crème de la Crème

by Bruce A. Heard

Just over three years have passed since I approached the staff of DRAGON® Magazine with some nebulous ideas for a series of D&D® game articles. There was (and still is) a need for more regular D&D game coverage. This column slowly grew into what most of you are familiar with—the logbook entries of Haldemar's adventures, followed with a Dungeon Master's background section. It grew—then it grew some more!

Writing these monthly adventures became rather time-consuming for me. Be-

cause of this and because the development of the upcoming *Princess Ark* boxed set demanded an end to the adventure, the time has come for me to catch my breath. The adventures of Haldemar and company have come to an end.

For the time being, I'll continue to do my best to answer your letters as usual, and I may include occasional articles on various D&D game topics (perhaps offering more development of Mystara). Your letters could spark some new development—as you may have noted in last November's

issue (#187) with the suggestions on dominion economics.

With a new year beginning, it is time to change what many of you have become accustomed to. More than ever, I wish to thank you all for your letters, suggestions, and criticisms. I'd also like to thank the DRAGON Magazine staff for its patience and support. Let's get to your mail.

Letters

I have to comment on one letter in the May 1992 issue of DRAGON Magazine (#181); the objections to the use of Irish place names in the Thyatian Province of Redstone, on the Isle of Dawn. The writer is entitled to his or her opinion, but, as one who claims descent from Brian Boru, I like the idea. Also, I'm quite a student of the former Soviet Union, thanks to Uncle Sam's military, and got a kick out of seeing names from old Soviet Central Asia turn up in game products.

The AD&D® game's *Oriental Adventures* rules are a favorite of mine, too. The adapted Japanese and Chinese settings are delightful. One of my sons is a student of French, and I enjoy dropping him into French-speaking New Averogne in Glantri, or the Savage Coast's Kingdom of Renardy. If nothing else, it gives him a chance to laugh at my accent.

Maybe some gamer tracking down places like Ylaruam's Urst-Urt Valley might learn about the people and culture of the real-world's Urst-Urt desert in the Kazakh and Uzbek Republics, or one looking into the origins of Karameikos might learn something of ancient Greek pottery. Those Irish-sounding names on the Isle of Dawn could lead some curious gamer to investigate their background and learn of the fascinating history and lore of the Celtic peoples—Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Breton, and all. I vote for using them and the names from any other culture you can imagine basing a game or a campaign on.

Communication and understanding have to be keys to peace on any level. Whatever catches one person's imagination and leads to further investigation may lead this poor, battered world one step closer to the understanding and acceptance that we all so desperately need.

Thanks for your thoughts. Note that the original letter complained more about misusing foreign names rather than not using them at all. I can deal with most western European languages (more or less), but I guess I would get an "F" in Gaelic. Anytime a game setting is inspired at least in part from a real-world setting, either current or historical, it is almost guaranteed that some totally goofy names will come up (we never intend to offend anyone, though). The point is to make our proud "creations" sound like the inspirational source.

Some DMs' favorite method of creating a new setting is often to grab that ultra-detailed, 30-lb. atlas of a distant and mysterious nation somewhere in our world,

and pick neat-sounding names, complete with accents and other outlandish punctuation. With luck, they'll be absolutely unpronounceable. If the map is detailed enough, your DM might think, "They'll never find that one!" Your DM might shamelessly tweak what look like name roots, preserving the same syllable patterns. That's how we ended up with a village in Mystara called "goat dropping"! (I won't tell which one.) At worst, this could still improve your DM's grasp of world geography.

It's not the first time an overseas reader gave us a tap on the shoulder with an "ahem" comment about our latest faux-pas in an article here or a module there. Fortunately, it is often accompanied with a broad smile, if not a laugh! It's all in the spirit of the game.

Wow! The *Wrath of the Immortals* set is awesome! I never intended to run an Immortals-as-PCs campaign, but it does appear that the rules have been simplified from the old D&D Immortals Set—good move. The descriptions of the game's major Immortals was also a welcome sight; perhaps you could publish a more detailed list of the lesser Immortals (Ahmanni Turtlerider through Yav) in a future D&D accessory. What I liked about *Wrath of the Immortals*, however, was the adventure included in the set. The Great War of the Immortals and the resulting shake-up to the lands of the Known World are a boot in the pants for sagging campaigns (like my own).

Thanks for the compliments. Some of the minor Immortals may get development in forthcoming accessories. If our plans hold together and space allows, we may give you more on Yav in the upcoming Princess Ark boxed set. By the way, the adventure in *Wrath of the Immortals* is written for mortal heroes, not Immortal novices.

Are the good and bad magic points of Alfheim (GAZ5, pages 19-23) affected by the elven land's transformation into the Shadow Elf realm of Aengmor (in *Wrath of the Immortals*)?

The good magic points went dormant. They will come back to life when the forest returns to its natural shape. Treat these areas as deserted, twisted forest. Immortals "mothballed" the Good Kingdom of the faeries (see PC1 *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*). The whole kingdom has "disappeared" from Mystara, and remains in suspended animation in a pocket plane. Depending on what happens to the trees in Aengmor, the faeries will be returned to the Known World or relocated to the Hollow World. The bad magic points, unfortunately, remain.

Which elven clans migrated north to Wendar and which ones travelled south to Karameikos, after the transformation of Alfheim?

Migrated north: Feadil, Long Runners, Mealidil, and Grunalf. They went through Canolbarth, tiptoed between Yellow Orkia and Gruuk, skirted the Ethengarian border along eastern Broken Lands and Glantri, fled in to Glantrian territory near Estoniarsk (Boldavia) after savage Ethengarian attacks (in the fall of AC 1008), continued toward the Barony of Pavlova, moved northwest through forested hills of the Wendarian Ranges, and finally went due north from there into Wendar. Feadil settled south of Sylvaire; Mealidil north of Sylvaire; Grunalf west of Woodgate; Long Runners north of Woodgate. Each clan was given a 2,000 sq. mile wooded area (pine forest) in exchange for swearing fealty to the King of Wendar. They had a long, difficult trek, but it was a rewarding one.

Migrated south: Chossum, Erendyl, and Red Arrow. They gathered south of Selenica, then headed south down the Duke's Road (now called the King's Road) to Penhaligon and Kelvin. As of AC 1010, those unable to fight have been allowed to set camp in the woods east of the unnamed Moor. Chossum and Erendyl warriors went south into Calarii territory to help them exterminate the goblins there. Calarii Elves have greeted them with mixed feelings. Red Arrow warriors went east to fight other humanoids in the heavy forest north of the Vyalia Elves. So far, these three clans have the status of undesirable refugees at best. Frictions between them and the Karameikos elves are beginning to be felt. Erendyl has begun petitioning the King for a separate dominion in Radlebb Woods to help defuse an explosive situation.

I noticed that the villains of Karameikos' Black Eagle Barony were unusually inactive during the events of *Wrath of the Immortals*. Duke Stefan declares himself King, gets an Alaphatian wizard (Master Terari) and an advanced magic school, and allows Alfheim elves to settle in Karameikos. Baron von Hendriks does nothing to balance this tremendous influx of good?

Before AC 1010, Von Hendriks made a total pest of himself with his western halfling neighbors. He also is partly responsible for setting up Callarii, Chossum, and Erendyl elves against each other by spreading lies, committing crimes, then framing one elf or another, etc. He hopes for a Calarii revolt. The Baron also tries to establish a diplomatic link with Thincol (as well as with Von Klagendorf), hoping for some sweet deal if the empire steps in. The Almanac reveals a surprising turn of event for the Black Eagle Barony by the end of AC 1010.

The Poor Wizard's Almanac

At last, it's here! By the time this sees print, many of you will have gotten your own copies; for those of you who haven't picked up this supplement yet, let me fill you in. This is a 240-page "pocket" book

(\$9.95 retail in the U.S.) packed with a geographic, historical, and political atlas of the Known World, including post-*Wrath of the Immortals* Thyatis and Alaphatia, a listing of the Known World is and Hollow World's armies, a who's-who in Mystara, calendars, and a year's worth of game events for AC 1010. If you're not familiar with the world of Mystara, you'll need to have access to the campaign maps in the *D&D Rules Cyclopedia*.

After a quick glance, I found no glaring mistakes! All the precious information, the maps, and the illustrations were where they were supposed to be. The index in particular (a nightmarish feat to put together in this kind of book) seemed to work just fine, as I feverishly flipped through the pages to randomly cross-reference various data.

What quickly caught my eye was the color mapsheet bound at the back of the book. I realized that it wasn't possible to open it without pulling the whole sheet out of the book. Fortunately, the perforation in my copy was good enough that the map came out easily, without irksome rips and tears. Then followed the foreboding thought of losing the sheet after pulling it out. For those of you with the same fear, I have a solution.

Open the mapsheet, and glue the upper left corner of the map to the inside the book's back cover. Make sure the map corner is properly centered and aligned with the cover's edges. Then, refold the map inward, carefully restoring the map's vertical and horizontal fold lines. You'll never lose the mapsheet this way, and you also can keep it unfolded while consulting the rest of book, easily displaying seven-eighths of the map's surface without obstruction.

The book splits into two major chunks, as originally planned. The first section deals with past and present information, the second provides the "future" AC 1010 events (almost 70 pages worth of information). I found the second part the most interesting since it brings to light new developments in the game world, but unfortunately it also is the shorter of the two sections. I caught myself flipping back to the who's who and the armies chapters of the first section out of sheer curiosity or to refresh my memory on some of the more uncommon details of Mystara.

Although I reviewed the material in earlier drafts, the second section in its final shape still offered a fun read. Game events are listed in the practical format that had been used in the *Wrath of the Immortals* boxed set. They are guaranteed to offer an unlimited source of world-wide adventure ideas.

In contrast, the first section does not read as smoothly (it was never intended to), but it does its job well. It offers a handy, well-organized, and amazingly complete dictionary, especially when one considers the amount of space available in the book versus the mind-boggling quanti-

ty of data that had to be researched or created to fit the Almanac’s format. Kudos to author Aaron Allston for a job well done!

Errata

I found some minor glitches in the text. On page 163, for example, the Ascendancy label in the Date of Birth chart should be next to the Week label, above the Sun-Sky column.

Small geographical discrepancies appeared in the description of some of the Isle of Dawn’s nations. Here are the updates:

The Northern Province marked on the mapsheet is the layman’s version of Provincia Septentriona (septentriones referred to north stars in real-world Latin, thus the Northern Province meaning). The Province of Furmenglaive was listed as “Castle” Furmenglaive, which is wrong.

The “Northern Territories of Dawn” marked on the mapsheet aren’t listed in the book’s atlas section. These bleak lands belong to Thyatis, but are administered by the Grand Duchy of Westrouke on behalf of Thyatis. It also should be noted that the actual Barony of Caerdwicca is part of the Southern Province (Provincia Meridional under Thyatis’s control. Furmenglaive isn’t, but still claims part of that province as land it legitimately owns (a mapper’s headache).

Part of the vast Dunadale Bogs are marked on the mapsheet as Unclaimed, although they are theoretically part of the Dunadale Confederacy. This is mostly wilderness infested with monsters and humanoids, especially in the wake of the Great War’s troubled times in *Wrath of the Immortals*.

Finally, areas listed in the book for some of the Isle of Dawn’s nations need to be adjusted to match their borders on the mapsheet. The change was because the format and scale of the new mapsheet, and some last-minute modifications that didn’t make it into the book. The surface listed in the Almanac for Dunadale includes the Dunadale Bogs. The surface listed for Westrouke includes the Northern Territories of Dawn. Here are the corrected (approximate) areas:

Nation	Area
East-Portage	79,690 sq. miles
Ekto	38,160 sq. miles
Furmenglaive	9,875 sq. miles
Helskir	8,980 sq. miles
Kendach	6,285 sq. miles
Southern Province	92,035 sq. miles
Trikelios	17,960 sq. miles

Other clarifications

The Kingdoms of Blackrock and Faraway and the region of Esterhold visible on the mapsheet aren’t covered in the book. This was our decision due to lack of space.

The town of Princetown in Bellissaria is part of the Kingdom of Notrion (the border location was ambiguous on the mapsheet).

There should be a trail between Cairnport and Alchemos in Bellissaria.

There is a mislabelled “Whalers’ Island” northeast of Oceansend (due to a wandering map tag originally intended for the island south of Qeodhar). This island should be called “Walrus Island” instead. Likewise, the unmarked island in Dobar Bay should be named Dobar Island.

On the north edge of the mapsheet, the label “To Qeodhar (700 miles)” refers to the small arrow on its left. The arrow on its right refers to the “Flying Islands” label (the Kingdom of Floating Ar in case you wondered).

Despite the glitches, the Almanac provides a staggering amount of information, and its mapsheet is the most detailed version so far of the Isle of Dawn/Bellissaria region. No doubt, new material and corrections will be added to a possible Volume II of the Almanac next year. We may start pushing westward toward the Savage Coast, on the trail of the *Princess Ark*. We hope AC 1011’s events will be as exciting as AC 1010’s. As usual, your comments on this first Almanac will be greatly appreciated and would certainly affect the development of a second volume.

More economics—population and food

In DRAGON issue #187, I responded to one letter on economics. I gave an example of how to figure out dominion income and some of the ruling costs to be expected. I did not give a system of determining the population per hex. If you’re not interested in researching historical data on medieval population densities, here’s a quick system that should help you.

The first thing to do is to divide the land into general categories—Suburban, Rural, Borderland, and Wilderness. Simply mark which hexes belong to which categories on your map, using the guidelines below (remember, this system is based on 8-mile hexes).

The actual population figures for urban centers (villages, small towns, large towns, and cities) are those given in the *Rules Cyclopedica*, and are repeated here for your convenience. Note that population in a hex is always in addition to people living inside villages, forts, towns, or cities in that hex. People living inside these urban centers are considered “urban” population. Those living outside urban centers are considered “agricultural” population (food-producing, farming communities).

Area	Population
Village	50-999
Small Town:	1,000-4,999
Large Town:	5,000-14,999
City:	15,000 +

Suburban: A hex containing a large town or a city should belong to the “suburban” category. For a city of 100,000 inhabitants or more, the six adjacent hexes should be suburban hexes as well, provided they are inhabitable—ignore forested, desert, lake, or sea hexes, for example. If a city covers the entire surface of its hex, then don’t count that hex for suburban population.

Rural: These are settled areas supporting farming families, loggers, hunters, and possibly villages, fortifications, and small towns. Rural areas should separate urban areas from borderland or wilderness territories.

Borderland: These areas are in the process of being settled. Laws are often poorly enforced there, and the local population is low. Borderland hexes may support villages, keeps, or fortifications.

Wilderness: These areas are uninhabited for the most part. Very few people may be found there. Wilderness can support the villages of primitive hunter-gatherer tribes only. Medieval military garrisons and other nonagricultural settlers would need to receive regular food supplies from agricultural areas.

Basic population per hex

Once the various land categories have been defined on the dominion’s map, it is possible to assign a Basic Population, as follows (with 1 hex = 56 sq. miles).

Area	Pop. density
Suburban	300 people/hex
Rural	100 people/hex
Borderland	50 people/hex
Wilderness	5 people/hex

Agricultural population often gathers in typical families of five people, small farming communities, and minor hamlets (fewer than 50 people) too small to appear on a Gazetteer-style map.

In regions with low agricultural potential (desert, steppes), population may consist of nomads (in Ethengar, for example). Although national population densities still hold true, a large portion of the population may travel in tribes or caravans rather than spread out evenly throughout the land. Local populations thus may vary with seasons and regional events.

Urban Population Relying on Maritime Resources				
Urban Area	Populations	Land-oriented	Average	Sea- oriented
Village	50-999	up to 40%	up to 65%	up to 90%
Small town	1,000-4,999	up to 30%	up to 50%	up to 70%
Large town	5,000-14,999	up to 20%	up to 35%	up to 50%
City	15,000 +	up to 10%	up to 20%	up to 30%

Terrain modifiers

Population varies with its hex's topography and vegetation. The terrain modifiers given below affect the basic population in each hex. Terrain modifiers themselves vary with other factors such as vegetation, the presence of water, and roads.

Area	Pop. modifier
Flat terrain	BP×5
Hills	BP×4
Mountains	BP×3
Badlands*	BP×2
Desert	BP×1

* Include marshes, swamps, bogs, steppes, grasslands and broken lands.

Terrain	Modifier
Jungle	-3 to terrain modifier
Heavy forest	-2 to terrain modifier
Light forest	-1 to terrain modifier
Volcano	+1 to terrain modifier
Trail	+1 to terrain modifier
Road	+2 to terrain modifier
River or oasis	+2 to terrain modifier
Lake/seashore	+2 to terrain modifier

Trail and Road modifiers are not cumulative. If both are present, use the Road modifier. Likewise for vegetation; it's one or the other. Volcanoes often cause surrounding lands to be very fertile. If a combination of terrain types yield a modifier equal to zero or a negative modifier, as with swampy jungle for example, assume the final population to be 1 inhabitant per hex (wilderness).

Example: We have a borderland oasis (two hexes), with a fort of 50 soldiers. The terrain is borderland (basic pop. = 50). It is in the desert, so the terrain modifiers starts at X 1. The oasis adds + 2 to the terrain modifier, which then becomes X 3. The local population should be: $50 \times 3 \times 2$ hexes = 300, plus the 50 soldiers.

The total population of the two oasis hexes adds up to 350 people. If there had been a trail crossing both hexes, the total population would have then reached 450 people instead.

There are limitations on some terrain types as to what basic population categories they can support. Heavy forest, jungle, forested hills, mountains, badlands, and desert hexes should be limited to wilderness or borderlands. Suburbs should be either on flat or hilly terrain (no forests, no swamps, etc.). Finally, forested hills are considered "heavily forested" (Gazetteer map symbols do not differentiate lightly forested hills from heavily forested hills.) Note that wood elves ignore limitations imposed on forested areas, and dwarves ignore limitations on mountains.

Real-life comparisons

To give some comparative insight to population levels, we could compare these numbers to current standards. Today, the real-world Netherlands support 910 inhabitants per square mile, compared to

36 people per square mile in Zaire, or 13 people per square mile in Saudi Arabia. Nowadays, it is common to see 80% or more of a nation's population concentrated in urban areas. In medieval times, it is likely to be just the opposite, with a least 80% living outside urban centers.

For simplicity's sake, let's assume medieval population is a mere tenth of our modern population levels. In other words, "medieval" Netherlands—a highly populated, mostly urban area—would show a population of 91 people per square mile. Zaire, largely jungle, would have a population of about four people per square mile. Ancient Saudi Arabia, a vast desert, ends up with a mere one person per square mile. Although this may not be historically correct, it is conceivable in game terms.

In the oasis example above, the total population reached 350 people in the oasis, which breaks down to about three people per square mile ($350/112 = 3$, rounded down). Throw in 10 extra hexes of true, wilderness desert without trails, and we end up close to ancient Arabia's population.

Feel free to tweak these numbers to get desired results. Although this system may not cover all eventualities, it should get you on the track to establishing predictable population levels.

Now you can start collecting those dominion taxes and build your armies! Assuming a provost can collect taxes from 100 people a day and there are 28 days in a Mystaran month, you'll need one provost and his armed guards for each 2,800 people in the dominion to collect all the monthly taxes. These are handy, average statistics for the game, which should be applied to the entire population (agricultural and urban put together) and not to specific segments of the population.

Food

We know at least 80% of the total population lives outside urban centers. These are the people producing food. Urban and other nonfood-producing population relies on services for its survival (commerce, military, manual trades, etc.) and purchases the food it needs from nearby farmland. Any kind of serious mining also wipes out farming in that hex. Note that wilderness population should not be counted as an agricultural force in this context since the infrastructure does not exist to collect and transport any "surplus" food from wilderness to settled regions. Wilderness population only produces what it needs to sustain itself. For the same reasons, wilderness population cannot be taxed.

In the case of the borderland oasis mentioned earlier, all its civilian population, 300 people, qualify as agricultural (farmers). They can produce food for up to 75 people in addition to themselves ($300/4 = 75$). This is more than enough to supply the 50 soldiers inside the fort.

Had the oasis covered only one hex, the

civilian population would have included only 150 farmers—enough to support no more than 37 soldiers ($150/4 = 37$ rounded down). As a result, food supplies would have to be regularly carted in from other regions of the dominion to feed the remainder of the oasis's military garrison (13 soldiers). This little detail implies either that this garrison's military strength should be reduced to become self-sufficient, or that a trail be built to consolidate the fort's supply lines. This is an example of how economic considerations can affect military strategy.

Fishing

Ports, either on a lake or a sea, may change the 80/20 urban to agricultural balance. Part of the urban population could count on maritime resources, such as fishing, as way to feed itself and generate extra revenue. The number of fishermen in an urban area varies with the region's traditions and naval skills. The name table provides guidelines on how much of an urban population may rely on fish to feed itself, as opposed to food drawn from the land.

Land-oriented: This would be people relying mostly on agriculture, either because of their culture or poor navigational and shipbuilding skills. This would include desert raiders, mountain dwarves, wood elves, orcs, Ethengarians, Darokinians, etc.

Average: This would be people with reasonable navigational and shipbuilding skills (Karamaikos, Five Shires). The majority of human cultures living on mainland coastal areas belong to this category.

Sea-oriented: This would be people with generally good maritime skills, or a tradition of reliance upon produce of the sea or of the lakes. These would include civilizations native to islands and such notorious seafaring people as Ostlanders, Ierendians, Minrothadians, or Pearl Islanders.

If agriculture is abundant, the surplus could be traded to another region lacking these resources. This, in turn, fuels urban commerce as well as the politics.

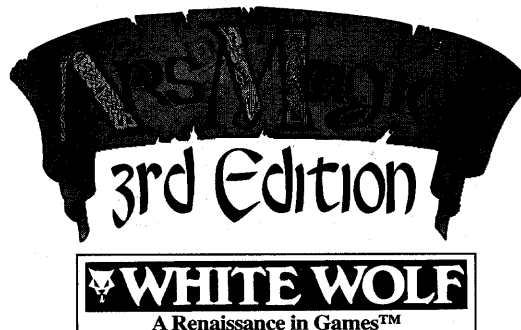
Make a list of the urban centers that can draw upon fishing resources. Apply the percentages listed in the chart above to find out more exactly how many people rely on fishing. Treat that part of the population as "agricultural" rather than "urban" when dealing with the food factor.

The same kind of reasoning applies for entire nations. If the agricultural population of a nation is unable to provide enough food for its urban dwellers, several things could happen. Either townspeople starve (with riots and revolts ensuing), or they import food from a neighboring kingdom. This can happen only if their neighbors have a sufficient food surplus (they have more than 80% of their own population living outside urban centers.) Otherwise, it may be time to invade the neighbors' farmland. Ω

'Never Forget'



A Mage's spells are his life.
He knows each of them as a mother knows her children.
Once learned, they can never be forgotten.
He savors every syllable as he brings the power within him to bear.
For what he performs is not a dry, boring science . . . It is Art.
The Art of Magic.



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Long ago in the Age of Ignorance, O my lord, the mad Emir Khalid's seventeenth wife bore him a son with a donkey's face. This portent betokened the destruction of the city of Ma'rib, so the Emir ordered all citizens to undertake purifying disciplines. To escape these ugly and painful rites, the resourceful Imbu Eight-Finger hoped to become a camel driver on a caravan bound for Yathrib.

Both handsome and agile, Imbu had five light fingers on his right hand, three nimble ones on his left, and supple propriety throughout. He knew no more of the art of camel driving than did a camel of cutting purses, but he ranked a glib tongue above a narrow-minded idolatry of truth. So at Ahmunkar's Sumptuous Refectory, a merchants' restaurant on the Street of Cymbals, Imbu sought the caravan owner, Ahmunkar the Perfumed.

Under a bright sky, on an avenue loud with wayfarers and ox-carts, Imbu found the painted sun-brick facade he sought. But a tall, knife-nosed man in a red-sashed bur-noose stopped him outside the door. The guard's black hair hung in braids threaded with gold, as did the long tips of his drooping mustache.

"Curb your appetite, commoner," he said, waving his ringed fingers in Imbu's face. "A caravan lord of high esteem breaks his fast here, and he insists on doing so alone."

Incensed at this cavalier treatment from one who seemed of no higher station than himself, Imbu answered, "The esteemed Ahmunkar the Perfumed shows wisdom not to share his meal with a dhow-barnacle such as you, she-camel's son. I have no wish to share his meal—" (actually, the penniless and famished Imbu had not eaten for a day) "—but only to report as lead driver for his caravan. He has reserved the position for me, Imbu, these three months."

"So, dog-filth, you know of Ahmunkar?" The guard gave Imbu a withering smile. "Perhaps, then, you also recognize his caravan partner: I, Ghol al-Kafur."

"I recognize only delusions, you hawkspittle. Would the revered Ahmunkar consign a trading partner to the lowly job of guarding his meal? The thought provokes mirth."

Ghol, infuriated, made to shove Imbu's tanned chest, a clumsy effort that Imbu lightly swatted aside.

Red in cheek, neck muscles bulging, Ghol shouted, "Follow, if you dare face me, O half-breed son of a dog!" His high nasal voice drew glances from merchants, drivers, wayfarers, and urchins on the Street of Cymbals as he ran into the roadway, kicking up dust with each stamping step.

Imbu belatedly wondered if he had behaved rashly. This episode could hardly improve his chances to join Ahmunkar's caravan. Yet he could not retreat now; honor hung in the balance. He followed until he stood behind Ghol. The crowd ringed them both, filling the air with a murmur of joyful whispers.

Ghol turned to face his tormenter. "Slave! Ill-omened kite-bird. I will flog the skin from your flesh, the flesh from your bones."

"A complex operation for the befuddled Ghol," Imbu

Djinn Coffee

by Allen Varney and Aaron Allston

Illustrations by Pam Shanteau

shouted back. "He loses track in tasks of greater moment than strapping on his sandals, and grows woozy when faced with door latches."

Ghol's flush of anger deepened. His hand darted to a small metal flask hanging on a chain around his neck. The mystic decorations on the flask, inlaid filigrees of silver and copper, aroused Imbu's instant desire.

Ghol seemingly caught the widening of Imbu's black eyes. He turned to and fro to address those who watched. "O citizens of Ma'rib, see and remember this lying rogue, and hold tight to your purses on his approach. Deceiving Imbu, he of magpie greed and invisible virtue, desires all your lawful property."

Then he spoke again to Imbu, his voice cold and threatening. "Turn your eyes from my property, venal one, lest I call forth a dust of lasting blindness." He suggestively fingered the seal on the lead flask.

Imbu laughed. "Better to go blind than gaze on the distorted jaw and vulture beak of Ghol al-Kafur."

Such a rage gripped Ghol that he shook like a man possessed. "Enough!" he roared, and held up his flask before him. "Wretch, I will show you what sort of man you face. In the name of Solomon the Great do I invoke the spirit of the flask: Bring to life yonder wagon" — he indicated a peasant's ox-cart, standing unyoked not far away — "and crush the life from this glib pretender!"

Now the crowd laughed too, and Imbu joined them, for even then, in the time of miracles, ox-carts did not suddenly spring to life at the words of a blustering guard.

Yet the yoke of the cart lifted and swayed to and fro like the head of a beast sniffing the air. Imbu felt cold doubt cut at him, and those of the crowd who had applauded him now backed away as though suddenly remembering other duties.

Then the cart began a slow turn until it faced the nimble Imbu, its yoke pointed forward like a ship's ram. Though pulled by no agency the eye could see, it lumbered forward.

It moved like a cart drawn by oxen, but Imbu's mind raced like a fleet Arabian steed. He did not run, but instead backed away farther into the street, while those behind him, less mindful of their dignity, turned and fled to a safer distance.

As the cart came rumbling and thundering upon him, the agile Imbu sprang at it, and even Ghol expressed surprise at his sudden desire to die well and quickly. But extinction was not Imbu's plan. He placed his hands upon the cart's high rail and vaulted nimbly into the noisome hay that filled the wagon. In a trice, he leaped over the cart's rear and landed with an acrobat's grace on the dusty street behind, then bowed to his audience.

Yet the cart was not done. It slowed, but its great mass kept it hurtling forward for many long paces. It turned clumsily, its wheels dashing through a merchant's street-side collection of pots of indigo from nearby Timna, scattering precious wares across the street and into the air. Then, finally, it faced Imbu again and creaked its way into forward motion.

Imbu smiled and turned toward Ghol. "I concede that I have met my match. Before I die, let me give you this bauble, that you might remember Imbu fondly whenever

you pass by the spot where he perished." From a finger on his complete hand he drew a ring of beaten copper, jewelry of little worth, and held it forth as he walked toward Ghol.

Unthinkingly, Ghol awaited the prize of his victory. Yet it was no more than a few heartbeats before he understood that Imbu, mere feet away, walked directly toward him, and the cart behind was now racing in the same direction.

"Stand fast!" Ghol cried. "I will retrieve my prize when you are no more."

"I would not think of it," Imbu replied. "You must take it from my hand as a gift of friendship." Now the cart was scarce ten paces behind him, still increasing in its speed.

"Sun-mad fool!" Ghol turned away and hurried up the street.

"No, stay, O victor!" cried Imbu, and swiftly ran after the fleeing man. "Your ring, your ring!"

The ox-cart said nothing, but steadily increased its pace.

A rut in the street was Ghol's undoing. He tripped across it and fell, sprawling in the dust. Imbu took two more long paces forward, then again turned and leaped at his pursuer, continuing as before to land safely in the street. Though the cart's wheels began to slow, they could not stop before they ran across the prostrate form of Ghol.

The fallen man did not speak a prayer. Instead, he held aloft his prized flask and shouted, "Djinni, save me!" and the second miracle of the day took place.

Into the air rose the cart, passing harmlessly above Ghol. Men and women seeing this breathed sighs of awe or called prayers to their gods. The cart flew on, rising in an arc like a well-launched arrow, and finally dropped from sight far beyond, landing with a distant crash of wood, mud-brick, and pottery.

It is said that it came to rest on the home of Salim, a young camel-drover. It is said, too, that Salim, crawling from the ruins of his home, saw the morning moon still hanging low on the horizon, interpreted it as a sign from the moon-god Almaqah, and so became a priest of that god. For years he preached that the devout should offer proper sacrifices lest they perish under the wheels of ox-carts dropped from the skies.

But Ghol knew nothing of this. He rose, dust from the street caking his finery, and drew the knife at his waist. "I need no djinni to settle you," he shrieked. Then his expression changed to one of horror. "The djinni! Did I invoke Solomon's name?"

Then he vanished from this world. Like a man drenched with lamp-oil and ignited, he flared up with bright and awesome flame, whose heat drove Imbu and others back. When the flame faded, Ghol was gone, leaving behind no ash, no cinder.

Yet he did leave something behind. In the street lay the lead flask, its silver tracings gleaming in the sun like a wicked thought in a vizier's eye.

Imbu looked upon the flask but kept any smile of triumph from marring his humble expression. To the watching citizens of Ma'rib he announced, "I will collect this item and deliver it to the late Ghol's legitimate heirs." So speaking, he strode forward and reached for his prize.

Yet as his fingers closed upon it, it vanished under his

hand. He pawed through the sand of the street, but the flask was no longer there. Only an indentation remained where it had lain.

He could not contain the expression of fury that crossed his face. To be so cruelly denied, after earning that flask in battle deadly! But not all his anger brought the flask back to him.

Then, smooth as the finest oil, came words from behind him. "I thank you for your courtesy. I am the legitimate heir."

Imbu forced his face into the semblance of polite curiosity and turned. There, in the doorway of Ahmunkar's Sumptuous Refectory, stood Ahmunkar himself. Well-endowed of fat, garbed in enough costly cloth to make a nomad's tent, Ahmunkar was the very picture of what every lesser merchant wished he could be.

Yet his words to the coarsely clothed Imbu were kindly. "I congratulate you on the death of Ghol, noble one."

"You congratulate me?" Imbu, all innocence, gestured at himself. "I am but a witness to his fate—"

Ahmunkar's smile deepened, forming deep dimples in his fleshy face. "Would I not know the truth of these events?" He pulled at the heavy silver chain that lay around his neck, and drew up the selfsame flask of Ghol, or its duplicate. Imbu was hard-pressed not to gape. The merchant continued, "But you have nothing to fear. I am not angry. Indeed, I admire your prowess.

"Please, visit my most humble business, dine on my poor fare . . . and I will introduce you to a most tantalizing beverage unique to my establishment." He gestured for Imbu to enter.

Ahmunkar, obese and shapeless as a beached whale, reclined on a brocaded dining couch. To cool him, his servants waved ostrich-feather fans in stately fashion, so that odors of aromatic woods wafted from him. Gesturing Imbu to another couch, Ahmunkar invited him to share the morning meal of roast peacock and cashews on a bed of five-colored rice.

Dizzy with delight and hunger, Imbu ate with such intensity that he ignored Ahmunkar's serving woman. Only when the first fires of his hunger had been quelled, and the woman set out tiny drinking cups before him and Ahmunkar, did he glance up at her and find his gaze arrested.

She stood tall and upright with dignity and poise. Her skin was dark and so perfect that not one blemish showed upon it. Her hair, which hung straight and long down her back, was black and shone like polished onyx. Her eyes too were dark, but cool. The eastern silks she wore concealed little of her graceful form, and her veil, of the sheerest silk, enhanced more than concealed exotic features of extraordinary beauty.

She could have been from the harem of a god, yet she stood less than an arm's reach away. So enrapt was Imbu that he barely noticed as she, from a delicate pot, poured a dark beverage into the two tiny cups. Only when she had departed did he notice the racing of his heart. Only then did he remember his breakfast companion.

Ahmunkar's smile was a gloat. "She is Julnar, my devoted servant. A Berber. Perchance, do you speak their

tongue?"

"It is not among my languages."

"A pity. She is only one of my many treasures. Before you is another. Please, drink."

Steam rose from the tiny cup. At Ahmunkar's urging, Imbu took a careful sip. The bitter flavor made him wince, then raise his eyebrows.

"Distinctive, is it not?" asked the merchant. "It is potent and grants its vitality to he who drinks it. It clears the sleep-drenched mind. It keeps tiredness at bay. It delights the palate and turns mere speech into true conversation. It is called *coffee*, and I alone of all men possess it."

"The great Ahmunkar deserves such a novelty to himself," was Imbu's smooth reply. "How did you come by this treasure?"

The merchant smiled with self-appreciation. "There was a time, nimble Imbu, when I was as reed-thin as yourself. I was a far traveler and bold seeker of fortune and fame. I found both.

"I slew a sailor, a notorious thief, and found among his belongings a lead flask—the selfsame one that Ghol carried." He lowered his voice and leaned forward to lend intimacy to his tale. The couch creaked ominously under his shifting weight. "In it, under the cap sealed with the mark of King Solomon, was a djinni, bound to serve the true owner of the flask."

Imbu found that his thoughts had gone awl. What greatness could he achieve with a djinni for a servant! Yet he strove to keep this longing from his face. "It is good to hear of bravery and diligence rewarded, great one," was his ingenuous reply.

Ahmunkar nodded, which set his many chins to shaking. "And the rewards have been many. With the djinni's aid—and my own mighty merchant's instincts—I have become the greatest trader in Ma'rib, and confidant of the emir. I needed only wish for a beverage to delight the gods, and the djinni brought me the coffee you admire. I needed only demand the most beautiful woman in the land for my servant, and Julnar was my devoted slave.

"My life being as close to perfection as mortals may enjoy, I now allow the djinni to serve others instead of myself."

Disbelief swelled within the world-wise Imbu, but he restrained himself to an expression of respect. "Your generosity is too great for the mind to conceive, honored one. But let us not speak of your treasures. I seek not to covet, but to serve."

Ahmunkar took another sip of the steaming liquid. "Oh?"

"Auspicious sir," Imbu said, "I have driven camels for two hundred caravans since boyhood, like my father's fathers these four hundred years."

Ahmunkar regarded Imbu blandly from his couch. "I find such diligence praiseworthy," he said. He dusted a plover egg with nutmeg and popped it whole into his mouth. The caravan owner's teeth showed pink stain, after the latest fashion. "You appear ready for higher responsibility," he continued. "With the loss of the besotted Ghol, our caravan requires a new leader. Would you honor me by becoming my partner?"

Imbu narrowly avoided choking on a fig. "I accept this

honor wholeheartedly!" he said, then drew up short. "Mmmm. What duties and commitments does this station require?"

"A prudent question, however blunt," Ahmunkar said, "but you will find your duties light and to your liking." He drew the djinn flask from within his robes and its chain from around his neck. "You need only supervise the supplies I need to maintain my business. Oh, and this trifle would be your responsibility." He held out the flask to Imbu as though it were a lowly bauble.

Imbu stared at it, the treasure of treasures, but did not reach for it. Could a man such as Ahmunkar bear not to keep it with him always? Yes, Imbu reasoned—were it cursed. Doubtless some dark magic doomed those who wielded its power. His desire for the flask vanished like a nomad camp in a sandstorm.

"Responsibility?" he asked, weakly. "No, that would be an honor. Too great an honor for such an unworthy one as myself. Better for that treasure to be kept safe in a box wrapped with chains, guarded by wily brutes with swords."

Ahmunkar shook his head, again setting his ladder of chins into quivering motion, "No guards could protect it against a man of wit. So I must have a man of wit to wield it and keep it safe. You are that man: strong of thew, nimble of motion, sharp of mind. The only man in all of Saba suitable for this task."

Imbu's mind twisted other arguments into new shapes, but none was pleasing enough for him to offer it to Ahmunkar. Finally, he said, "Great one, I must refuse your offer of employment. I know my place and my worth, and I would merely contaminate you with my lowliness."

"You make me sad." Ahmunkar's gaze fell upon Imbu's left hand. "Such a pity about your fingers."

"An old injury. It does not distress me."

"No. I mean—but you could not have known." Ahmunkar looked mournful. "Not a day ago, the emir—may Almaqah cure his madness before he destroys all Saba!—told me that he had plans for those who display any sort of deformity. All are to suffer his purifying rituals. He has guards waiting at the gates to capture any who try to escape the ceremonies he plans."

"A pity indeed." Imbu thought of the city walls. Somewhere, surely, they presented a weakness, a place by which he could secretly leave this night.

"Of course, those whom I employ are exempt from this duty, for the emir is my good friend."

"I cannot count the ways in which Ahmunkar is blessed." Imbu could hide until nightfall. He would then be silent and graceful enough to cross those walls, to elude the guards.

"I understand the emir has units of soldiers marching the streets, capturing participants for his first rituals."

"Unfortunate for the victims-to-be."

"I understand," Ahmunkar repeated, in a louder tone, "that the emir has units of soldiers marching the streets, capturing participants for his first rituals!"

Imbu frowned. Was Ahmunkar becoming deaf? Or did he imagine Imbu to suffer from loss of hearing? For his own part, he responded agreeably but more loudly, "How

unfortunate for those who will be his first victims!"

It was then that one of Ahmunkar's servants burst into the room from the street; his eye was wild, his manner fearful. "Master! Soldiers of the emir scour the street, looking for subjects for his rituals! They come from north and south!"

The vast merchant assumed an expression of tragic sympathy. "What great misfortune. Imbu, I admire you, so tell me swiftly, before the emir's men arrive: Have you wives or children? Tell me their names, so that I might support them when you are gone."

Imbu looked in anguish at the door. So close must be the emir's men that he would probably not escape their grasp—especially as he was now, weighed down by the meal he had just devoured.

The servant, having returned to the door to look without, now began hopping up and down in worry as he glanced left and right up the street, and Imbu knew what he had to do.

"I have reconsidered, great one," he said with all the dignity he could muster. "I maintain I am not worthy of your generosity now—but I wish to be. I will accept your offer."

Ahmunkar's smile was brilliant. He leaned forward to press the flask into Imbu's hand. "I will gladly employ you. First, though, to be legal, I must ask you to repeat a few words."

Imbu kept his eye on the door, inwardly quailing as he expected the soldiers' shadows to fall across it. "Speak the words. I am ready."

They were not a few words—they were many, and in a difficult language Imbu did not know. As the speech grew longer and longer, Imbu glanced with greater frequency at the door the servant guarded, but still the soldiers did not come.

Finally he was done with all the many strange syllables. Ahmunkar leaned back, satisfied. "It is done. You are my partner and ally, a merchant prince to my merchant king."

Imbu smiled and preened, preparing himself for the futile intrusion of the emir's men. "How far away are the soldiers?" he asked of Ahmunkar's servant.

The man leaned out to look both ways. "Soldiers?" he asked, vaguely. "I must have been mistaken. Or perhaps they turned down another street."

Shame crashed upon Imbu like an ox-cart falling on a house. He had been tricked, and by a mere servant. There never had been any soldiers in the street outside. And now he held the flask he did not want and a position with an employer clever enough to use him cruelly. All hope left his face.

Ahmunkar looked at the servant with the fierce fondness of a prince chiding his favorite daughter. "Idiot. I will punish you, later, when I have thought of something appropriate. For now, begone." The servant left, a look of accomplishment on his face.

Then Ahmunkar turned to his new employee. "I have told you your duties. And always remember—for nothing is more important!—that when you deal with the djinni, always invoke the name of the ancient king, Solomon."

Dully, Imbu asked, "And if I do not?"

"Your fate will be horrible. You would prefer to become

part of the emir's ceremonies, this I assure you.

"But for now, the emir himself and his entourage dine with us this afternoon. We must serve him our best. Imbu, you will now meet the djinni, introduce yourself as its new master, and fetch a fresh supply of coffee. Julnar will instruct you in the details of summoning."

Recovering just a trace of his pride, Imbu bridled.

"You would have a servant instruct me? I am your partner now!"

"Wallah! A plague on you, snipe, and to your business at once!" Ahmunkar's glare was as fierce as an eagle's. In it there was now no mercy or affection for Imbu. "Julnar, come. Teach this wretch his duties before he does something to earn his death . . . or worse!" Ahmunkar heaved himself from his couch and waddled into the depths of his restaurant, leaving Imbu alone, his mind numbed at the way he had been duped.

Her manner quiet and gentle, the serving maid, Julnar, led Imbu up to the second story of the high mud-brick dwelling. In her presence, he forced himself to think again. His desire for her swept aside the injury Ahmunkar had done to his self-esteem. He would have to save her from Ahmunkar, so that she would fall in love with him—assuming she had not done so already.

In a small, aromatic room, they knelt on either side of a small teak table. Into a porcelain incense burner, Julnar placed three golden teardrops of frankincense, and the room was flooded with sweet perfume.

"I must prepare an oil with which to anoint you," she said, her voice enticingly accented. She set to work, combining oil with powdered frankincense and other spices. "Then, you will meet the djinni and inform it you are now its master . . . for Ahmunkar. And you must fetch the coffee, of course."

Imbu fought for the breath her presence seemed to steal from him. "Ahmunkar told me you were his 'devoted servant.' How has he earned that devotion?"

She did not look at him as she continued mixing her oil. "He has not. I loathe him. He is treacherous, petty, wicked, obvious, and cruel." Her tone, as she pronounced her distaste, was calm and reasonable.

Relief washed over him. "I swear this then, fair Julnar. I will extricate myself from this foul bargain. I will rescue you and take you away, where you may be my servant instead."

Finally she did look him in the eye. Imbu could then recognize what was in her gaze, not humble acceptance and servility but exasperation and cool intelligence. "Why ever would I want that? Ahmunkar is vile, but you are an idiot."

For a long moment he could not speak, so great was his shock. He could not have been more surprised had she stabbed him. "I, Imbu? Imbu the Fleet, Imbu of the Knife-Edge Wit—"

"Imbu who is not clever enough to look out a door?" She placed the bowl over the incense burner, to warm the oil. "How many like you have I seen? They come with grand plans for Ahmunkar's fortune, for the djinni, for me. They pursue Ahmunkar until he catches them. They serve him for a time, then they are taken by the djinni. That is the fate that awaits you, Imbu of the Knifed Wit."

"How, then, can I save myself?" Imbu cried, "and you, while I am about it?"

She was silent a long moment, stirring the warming oil. "The words he had you speak are in my tongue. They were your first wishes on the djinni of the flask. Each of them was made in the name of Solomon the Wise."

"First, you wished that anything good you wished for go to Ahmunkar instead. Wish for a fortune, and it will be settled upon him. Wish for escape, and that opportunity will befall him."

"Second, you wished that nothing bad happen to Ahmunkar. Try to stab him; you will cut yourself. Try to poison him; he will compliment the cook."

"Third, you wished that should you try to inform anyone—who does not already know of it—of the djinni's existence, that you should be made silent by the magic of the djinn."

"Fourth and last, you wished for two things to happen should you flee Ahmunkar, or voluntarily leave his service, or should he decide to employ you no longer: The flask will return itself to Ahmunkar, and the djinni will come forth and take you away to be his servant for a thousand sleepless years in the City of Brass."

"And do these wishes come true? Have I doomed myself, then?"

She nodded. "You are doomed. For there is an older rule than the ones Ahmunkar has imposed. Should you make a demand of the djinni—or any wish, whether to the djinni or to the open air, whether mighty or casual—without also invoking the name of King Solomon of antiquity, then the djinni may take you. And you will be his servant for a thousand sleepless years—"

"In the City of Brass," Imbu finished, as dazed as a man kicked in the head by a camel. "That is what happened to Ghol al-Kafur. He wished for his own salvation, but not in King Solomon's name."

"Sooner or later, you will make a wish without calling on the fabled king, and then you will be gone."

"Perhaps I *am* doomed." Then sudden hope seized him. "What if I wish that my wishes were undone?"

Julnar shook her head, sending graceful waves down the cascade of her hair. "Some wishes do not work. You cannot change events that have already happened. You cannot wish promises into nothingness. You cannot bring harm to one to whom you are beholden, else Ahmunkar would be emir. You cannot mold the thinking of others. Ahmunkar discovered that when he wished for me to be his devoted servant, but found that he could not instill devotion. I stay here only because I cannot escape. The djinni always comes to return me to Ahmunkar."

"So, you have tried to escape? You long to be away from here?"

"It is my greatest wish."

He gazed upon her and felt tenderness for her fill his heart. "If I am able to free you, will you be mine?"

Her reply was firm. "No." Then, for the first time, she smiled. "But if, contrary to all I have seen, you are able to free me, I will travel with you for a time. Perhaps then you will be able to prove your worth to me."

"Then I shall—"

"Hush. Now I anoint you to complete the ceremony."

So saying, she lifted the bowl of heated oil and casually poured it over Imbu's head.

In sudden anger, he dashed the warm liquid from his eyes and sputtered, "Woman, how dare you mock me in this way?"

She spoke as though she had not heard his words. "Remember: Always invoke Solomon's name. Do not give in to the djinni's persuasions. And do not forget the coffee."

"Persuasions? What persuasions?"

But Julnar pried the cap from the lead flask, and the very world changed around Imbu.

First, he saw the tiny black hole in the top of the flask grow until it was the size of a dozen seas. Mighty winds struck his back, lifted him, and dropped him into that black ocean.

He fell an enormous distance in the blink of an eye. Then, finally, his feet settled on a solid floor, his stomach ceased its sea-sick motions, and his eyes began to adjust to the darkness that surrounded him.

It was not full darkness, after all. He found himself in a large room, a dozen yards deep, much wider than it was deep, much taller than it was wide . . . indeed, he could not see its upper reaches. It was uncomfortably warm, as though a fire raged beneath the floor.

His gaze was first drawn to the near wall, which was deeply incised with a complex symbol. First, the wall was divided into four quadrants, and in each quadrant was cut a statement in a language Imbu did not know. Then, crossing all four quadrants and statements was cut the many-pointed star Imbu knew to be the seal of Solomon, the seal that topped the flask's lead cap.

Nearer to Imbu was a table made of dark wood. On it was an enormous book bound up in rich leather. Then his eye was drawn beyond the table, to the glinting objects on the far wall.

But they were not treasures. On this wall, on inset shelves, stood row after row of glass flasks, each a few inches tall. In each flask stood a man or woman scarce as tall as the width of a man's palm. Seemingly, they came from all nations and ages, for Imbu saw black ones and pale ones, dusky ones and yellow ones, some wearing forms of clothing that were familiar to him, others wearing garments that were marvelously strange. These little people still lived, and saw Imbu too, for they waved and jumped and shouted to gain his attention. But the glass must have been too thick, for he could not hear their words.

He counted forty flasks to a shelf and, if his eyesight did not fail him as he cast his gaze upward, twenty-five shelves. Thus there were a thousand flasks. All of them were occupied.

No—that was not quite true. The last flask on the bottom shelf, the thousandth flask, was empty.

And the one next to it, the nine-hundred-ninety-ninth flask, contained Ghol al-Kafur.

Ahmunkar's former partner made vulgar gestures, and the words he shouted, which Imbu was happy he could not hear, must have been insults. Imbu ignored the tiny wretch and looked about once more, but there was nothing new to see.

"Is there, then, a djinni to meet?" he asked, but heard only echoes in reply.

Then he remembered. "Announce yourself!" he shouted. "In the name of Solomon, I command you!"

Next he heard the moving of wind, like the sigh of an enormous beast. "I am here," came the reply, words as deep as the seas and as big as mountains. They battered Imbu, forced him back against the wall, brought him to his knees with their immensity and power.

"Be more quiet, I implore you, and show yourself!" cried the nimble one . . . and then, after a moment's panic, finished, "In King Solomon's name, that is!"

"As you wish." The voice modulated to that of a mere giant, and the djinni coalesced into view.

The djinni was like a man but twice as large in all dimensions. He wore garments suited to an emir's favorite guard, rich but not cumbersome, and fine jewelry brought golden glints to his fingers, his ears, his neck. Upon that neck, like a brand, was a complex mark. It was the same four-part inscription that graced the wall, but without the many-pointed star.

The djinni looked down upon his guest, and Imbu could not read his half-shadowed face. He might have been bored, angry, or merely impassive. "Ask what you will of your willing slave, O mortal," he said in his booming voice.

His confidence returning, Imbu rose. "I am Imbu, your new master. I will indeed ask what I will of you. But first, tell me—I-command-you-in-Solomon's-name!—what is the meaning of these tiny people?" He gestured toward the wall of flasks.

"They are my many masters of uncountable years. Each forgot himself. Each became mine. And when I have taken the thousandth, we will all return to the City of Brass, where they all will be my servants—"

"—for a thousand sleepless years. So I thought. You must look forward to having a thousand slaves for a thousand years."

The djinni did not reply, but he smiled, and Imbu saw cold covetousness in the smile. He gulped and took a step away from the giant one. "I am here for coffee. Give me coffee. In Solomon's name I command you."

"Coffee is the eight hundred thousandth, two hundred and thirty-third item," pronounced the djinni. He gestured, and though there was no sound or sight to mark the occasion, a hide bag full of a dark, fragrant substance appeared at Imbu's feet. "But I long to grant you greater treasures than mere coffee."

"I long to give you the opportunity," Imbu admitted. "Show me what you have to offer, mountainous one. This I command in the name of Solomon."

The djinni pointed at the book. Though no hand touched it, it opened itself to the first page. "There you will see all that your heart desires."

Imbu moved beside the table with the book, then looked up at the djinni and narrowed his eyes. "Now tell me, I demand in the name of King Solomon. Can you bring me anything I ask?"

The djinni shook his huge head. "I, too, have my limits. I may bring only that which can be found in Arabian lands—today, and in times gone by, and in times yet to come. But that encompasses more than mortal mind can comprehend."

"Then show me what you have to offer—I command you, in Solomon's name."

Imbu turned his attention to the book. On the first page was a painted image of a great king's treasure chamber, stuffed with bursting with coins and jewels. "The first item," said the genie, "is gold. Allow me to give you the ransom of a king."

"I will take it—to make you happy," Imbu allowed.

"You must command me. Tell me how much. Enough to make you happy—demand it of me!"

"Very well! Give me gold, ten times my weight, for now." Imbu blinked. "Solomon! In Solomon's name I demand it." A shudder overtook him; very nearly had he forgotten. He dared not look over at the glass flask beside Ghol's, the flask he was doomed to occupy.

"Done." Beside Imbu appeared a sarcophagus overflowing with the precious metal. Imbu's face was painted on the lid.

"The second item is silver. Ask all you want! The third item is wine. Demand fine wine, I will bring it! The fourth item is discontinued. The fifth item is a sword that will split stones as easily as an enemy's breastbone—force me to bring it to you, so that you may slay those you despise! The sixth item . . ."

As the djinni announced each new, wondrous object, the page's colors swam and the image changed to show it.

He saw horses and ships, great orchards of frankincense, vast marching armies, well-appointed harems, moving boxes that carried men across the sands, houses that stretched upward into more stories than he could count, water that was made hard by intense cold, and many more miracles than he could number.

But before he asked for anything more than the gold and coffee already beside him, he grew suspicious and asked, in Solomon's name, "Is there any harm or danger to me demanding such wonderful things?"

The djinni was slow in responding. "Too many demands could provoke the collapse of everything in existence."

"Would this happen soon, I-ask-in-Solomon's-name?"

"No. Far, far in the future."

"Ah, for a moment I was worried. Now I shall make my choices!"

He demanded, all in Solomon's name, a herd of Arabian stallions, a giant silver bird that carried men in its belly and let them leave again, a rag with which to mop the oil from his head, a great number of bright and delightful garments, a curious and cumbersome rod that shot flame, a giant building seemingly made of glass (an "office building," claimed the djinni, and Imbu, who wished someday to be of high office, desired it greatly), and a finger-ring into which one blew to make a strange whirring noise. As he demanded each item, it appeared within the djinni's domain, which grew larger to accommodate each new thing.

Imbu was arrested by the picture of a lapping sea of blackness. "What is this, in Solomon's name?"

"Item four million and one. It has many names. Its simplest is oil. In the future, it is wealth, and power, and even self-esteem for nations that have lost their pride."

"This?" Imbu tried not to sneer. He could see the black

stuffs slick, disagreeable sheen. "The future must be mad indeed. Perhaps everything in existence *should* collapse in such a time. But let us continue. In Solomon's name."

They did. And with each new demand, Imbu found that the djinni's voice rang more powerfully in his ears, that the invocation of Solomon's name was harder to remember. Soon he could not hear even his own voice when he spoke. The djinni's words were the only things to hear, the djinni's book the only thing to see, the djinni's thoughts the only ones to think . . . and panic struck Imbu like a blow from a poisoned knife.

"Enough!" he shrieked, and could barely hear himself.

"In Solomon's name, enough! I am done for now!" He shook from fear of the times he had nearly forgotten to mention the name of the legendary king, and knew it was time to leave with his treasures, before he made a fatal error . . . before he became Ghol's neighbor for a hateful millennium. It was time to reappear in Ahmunkar's home with treasures to make the merchant's look pallid, Ahmunkar would twist with envy, and Imbu smiled, relishing his triumph.

Then the smile froze on his face. All good things he wished for would go to Ahmunkar instead. That was the bargain! All he had just acquired would be the merchant's, despite what he had risked to gain it.

Pained, he looked up at the djinni. The spirit stared impassively back at him, awaiting his next order.

Imbu said, subdued, "In Solomon's name, I command you to send everything I asked for back where it came from. Except the coffee." He sighed mournfully. In a trice his treasures were gone, and the djinni's home had resumed its normal proportions.

Imbu picked up the leather bag of coffee. He could scarce control the trembling in his limbs, and did not know whether it came from exhaustion or his fright of a moment ago. His next command was a sad, tired whisper. "Now, in Solomon's name, I command you to send me back to Julnar."

A moment later he stood in the same little room where oil had recently drenched his brow. Julnar still sat there, her pose little altered—how much time had passed for her in the long, tiring hours he had been gone?

"Did it go well?" she asked.

He gazed upon her blandly. "Of course. I had only to acquire some coffee. Here it is. Imbu is as good as his word!"

As the day passed, Imbu watched Ahmunkar's staff prepare a lavish meal for the Emir Khalid, but he had no part in those duties. So he sat alone in the main dining chamber. Ghol's doom replayed itself before his eyes, and it gnawed at him that a similar fate awaited him. To help forestall it, he chanted to himself, over and over, "In Solomon's name, in Solomon's name," until everything he said and thought was accompanied by those three words.

Slowly, the heat of the afternoon died—and with it, the wrenching smell of baking dung, offal, sewage, and other garbage that afflicts every city. Once the worst smells faded, and as the shadows grew long, the distant sound of cymbals and pipes, drums and singing voices announced the imminent arrival of the emir. Ahmunkar filled the doorway him-

self to greet his most noble visitor, then withdrew like a cork from a bottle to let the emir's retinue pass.

The ruler was accompanied by a parade of musicians, acrobats, advisors, courtiers, body-servants, and parasites, each richly garbed and decorated. And then there was Emir Khalid himself, a rival in fleshy vastness for Ahmunkar.

But Khalid had none of Ahmunkar's verbal grace. His first words, to Ahmunkar, were "Bring drink, you lick-spittle!" His second noise was a mighty belch, and Ahmunkar's servants scurried madly to remain clear of this royal eruption. The emir seated his favorite servants on the couch Ahmunkar was to have occupied, so that the merchant had to sit on the floor at the emir's feet.

Nor did the meal go well. The emir threw his ostrich egg, brought from Africa, at the servant who had tricked Imbu with the story of soldiers in the street. The egg caught the man in the temple and laid him low. Then Emir Khalid found the main dish, honeyed gazelle, not to his liking and demanded instead a large pot of spiced lamb's meat in rice, such as he had eaten on the two occasions he accompanied his army into the field.

The merchant Ahmunkar was not to be caught out by such demands. He simply sent Imbu to fetch the emir's preferred feast. Imbu, after a quick visit to a private room with his leaden flask and leaden heart, returned with any dish the ruler chose.

Soon after, the emir demanded wine of faraway Samos, and Imbu was again able to oblige him.

Immediately thereafter, the emir demanded a taste of the mysterious coffee, rumor of which had lately reached his ear. For this, Ahmunkar's staff was prepared, but because Imbu had been sent for all the other late demands, he was dispatched for this treat, too. He led Julnar, bearer of the coffee-tray, back into the emir's presence.

His versatility caught the attention of the emir. After sampling the bitter drink and finding it to his liking, Khalid asked, "Who is this, so capable at serving his ruler?"

Ahmunkar, busily chewing a handful of lamb's meat, gestured for Imbu to announce himself. Imbu answered, "May it please your exaltedness, I am Imbu, a lowly seer-to-details . . ." Then, to his horror, he heard himself conclude, "in Solomon's name."

The emir's eyebrows crawled up his forehead like furry caterpillars in search of escape. "In Solomon's name?" the ruler asked. "It must be interesting to do one's work in Solomon's name. How would you like to serve your emir in a similar fashion?"

"My heart swells with honor that you ask," Imbu replied, "but I am bound by mighty oaths to serve the great Ahmunkar," and Imbu found he could not censor the last three words, "in Solomon's name,"

"Again, the name of a long-dead king," said the emir, with the faintest of edges to his tone. "I swear, his name has not been invoked so often in my land since the time of my ancestress Balkis, who knew him. I would hate for his name to be mentioned more often than mine own. Tell me, what is your fascination with Solomon?"

Trapped by the emir's gaze, Imbu inwardly quailed . . . and then the answer came to him. He smiled in sudden

bliss.

"Magnificent one," he began, "I have long been fascinated by tales of centuries past. In the greatness of the past, I can see the greatness of the future.

"As you know, the wealth of our land of Saba was built on the frankincense trade. Yet we now trade less than in generations past, since the faraway Romans grew too poor for our luxuries."

The emir scowled. "We are still a wealthy people, insignificant fool."

"You are right, as ever, lofty one. Under your guidance, we need none of the wealth I can bring us."

"Yet," the emir quickly amended, "any wealth we refuse might fall into the hands of less deserving lands: Main, Qatabab, Hadramawt . . . Speak on."

Imbu stood and walked to and fro as he continued. "You have complimented my master's coffee. Would not all the world want it, as they once wanted our frankincense?" He picked up his own tiny cup of coffee and swirled it about, peering into its ebon depths. "I see in my mind's eye a black, rich liquid, in unimaginable quantity. How the wealth of Saba would grow if it supplied such a new treasure to all the known world!"

Two sets of eyes shone as he spoke. One pair was the emir's, filled with greed. One was Ahmunkar's, filled with sudden rage.

Imbu leaned close to his employer's ear and whispered, "Do not be concerned. I swear on my name and honor that this fat fool will never gain control of your coffee. May the god Almaqah strike me dead if I lie, and make hateful my memory." This was a potent oath, and Ahmunkar sat back, still curious but no longer so alarmed.

"To continue," Imbu said, "instead of merely being draped in wealth, you could be immersed in it . . . a fate that can be yours just for the asking."

The emir thought it over and could find no trickery in Imbu's words. "Then I demand it!"

Imbu spread his hands in a gesture of helplessness. "I am Ahmunkar's slave, great one. Much as I long to serve you, I must await his order."

The emir nodded agreeably, and turned to the merchant. "Ahmunkar, would you set this in motion? Or must I have you executed in your own establishment?"

The merchant's face clearly showed his sickly sorrow. Yet he was trapped by the emir's words. "Do as he says," he ordered.

"You agree," said Imbu, "that such overwhelming wealth is a good thing, and to your liking?"

Ahmunkar scowled blackly. "Of course! Get on with it!"

Imbu breathed a deep sigh as he felt the invisible collar of slavery break from about his neck. He drew close to Julnar, who eyed him suspiciously, and he clasped the djinn flask in his hands. "So be it," he said. "Djinni, in the name of King Solomon, I command you: Cover Ma'rib in wealth, and let mighty Ahmunkar be the sole wellspring of that wealth, and let it be the wealth of item four million and one!"

The emir, the merchant and all assembled waited a long moment for something to happen. Then a pool of black-

ness spread out in all directions from beneath Ahmunkar, and swiftly reached from wall to wall in the confines of the dining chamber. Servants shrieked and courtiers shrank away from it, and within moments the foul-smelling fluid reached to Imbu's shins and to the bottoms of the couches.

Ahmunkar looked in horror all about him, then at Imbu. "Cretin! What have you done? This is not coffee!"

Imbu gave him a cool look. "I told you I was not offering coffee. I would not betray you, beloved master."

The emir tried to stand upon the divan to get away from the pooling blackness, but it collapsed under his weight and he fell into the slick, clinging stuff. He thrashed around as it rapidly rose, but each time he tried to stand, his feet slipped out from under him. His words, when he could bring his head up above the rising pool, were threats: "I . . . will . . . have . . . each . . . of . . . you . . . tortured . . . unto . . . death!" His very words doomed him, for those few servants who were truly loyal to him backed fearfully away through the waist-high pool and watched him drown.

Ahmunkar, made of harder stuff, kept his feet. His complexion was nearly as red as the rising flood was black, and his anger was all directed toward Imbu. "Foul one, you must take me to safety—and then I will deal with your disobedience! "

Imbu took on an injured expression. "If you insist, master . . ." The flask, on its chain, lay against his chest and was now trailing into the black oil. Imbu raised it above the liquid. "Djinni, in Solomon's name, I demand you take Ahmunkar to the north walls of Ma'rib—and so that he not be inconvenienced, take me, and his most beautiful servant, and his most costly treasures with him!"

In a trice a windstorm began—the only windstorm ever to assail the interior of Ahmunkar's Sumptuous Refectory. It ripped the curtains from the walls and sent them whirling in all directions.

Imbu felt himself turned and lifted from the black muck, and then could see no more as he began to spin with greater and greater speed. Moments later his feet were set once again on a hard surface, and though dizziness nearly overwhelmed him, he stood safely on the walls of Ma'rib with Julnar and Ahmunkar beside him. Both looked as unsettled as he felt. Beside Ahmunkar, in a heap, were many of his prized jewels.

As Ahmunkar seemed to wish to cling to the wall and gulp for a while, Imbu turned to look across the city. The setting sun cast red light and long shadows across Ma'rib. Everywhere, black oil was rising, and citizens of every age and profession were streaming out into the green lands outside the city walls. There was much haste but little panic in their flight, for the oil had not risen as high everywhere as it had in Ahmunkar's presence.

Then more oil began to issue in impossibly heavy streams from beneath Ahmunkar's feet. No matter where he stood, oil poured from him. He began to move along the wall, and his movements became more and more frantic as he sought to escape the stuff. "Imbu, you will suffer mightily for this—but for now, cease this horrid flow!"

"I will set all right, noble master," said Imbu. "Come." Swiftly, he led Ahmunkar farther along the wall until they stood above a deep garden now completely submerged in

oil. "Look there." When Ahmunkar bent for a look, Imbu gave him the lightest of shoves, precipitating him into the black pool below.

The merchant made a gooey, unpleasant noise when he hit. A moment later, slick and black from pate to feet, he rose to the oil's surface and paddled frantically, trying to keep his head above the black surface.

"Fiend!" he screamed. "Traitor! Villain! Oh, why does the djinni not save me from this dire fate?"

Imbu smiled down upon him. "You have declared that it is a good thing to be inundated in such wealth. It can scarcely then be a 'dire fate,' but would you care to be saved anyway?"

"Yes!"

"Tell me then, honored Ahmunkar," Imbu asked politely, "is it always better to be alive than dead?"

"You speak nonsense! Help me forth at once!" But Imbu simply waited as Ahmunkar floundered beneath the oil. Rising to gasp once more, Ahmunkar said, "Yes, it is always better! "

"So anything that keeps you from drowning in this poisonous murk is a good thing?"

Ahmunkar flailed to stay afloat. "Yes, yes, it is so!" he shrieked.

Imbu stood tall, held the djinn flask, and shouted to the blackened sky. "In the name of the master of all spirits, King Solomon the Wise, son of David! I, Imbu, wish to be swept away at once to the City of Brass, there to serve the djinni of the flask for a thousand sleepless years!"

Ahmunkar frowned, then gasped. His eyes became white circles in the oil pool of his face. "A curse upon—" he began to shout. Imbu never learned with certainty the nature of the curse, for in that instant the djinni swept away—not Imbu but Ahmunkar, the beneficiary of all his good wishes. With a hideous sucking sound, the oil rushed to fill the space vacated by the fat merchant.

Imbu noted with satisfaction that the flask had gone with Ahmunkar. "And I wish him all the benefit he may derive from it, where he now is," he told Julnar.

"Imbu shows a generous breadth of spirit," she said, smiling, and bent to retrieve the treasures of Ahmunkar that had accompanied them.

In the confusion that gripped the city of Ma'rib, it took Imbu little time to acquire two hardy camels. Shortly he and Julnar were bound for the city of Baraqish to the northwest. Behind them, with Ahmunkar gone, the black flood slowly retreated from the streets of Ma'rib, and citizens returned to hopelessly befouled homes and shops.

Imbu drew up beside Julnar as they rode. "I wish," he said, "that you would adore me as I do you."

"With the djinni gone," she answered primly, "you must learn to be more reasonable with your wishes."

"Now that you are free, where do you desire to go?"

She thought a long moment. "Yathrib, I should think, for a 'time. It is closer to my homeland. A great city built on trade, so they say."

"Then I wish you to accompany me to Yathrib! In Solomon's name!"

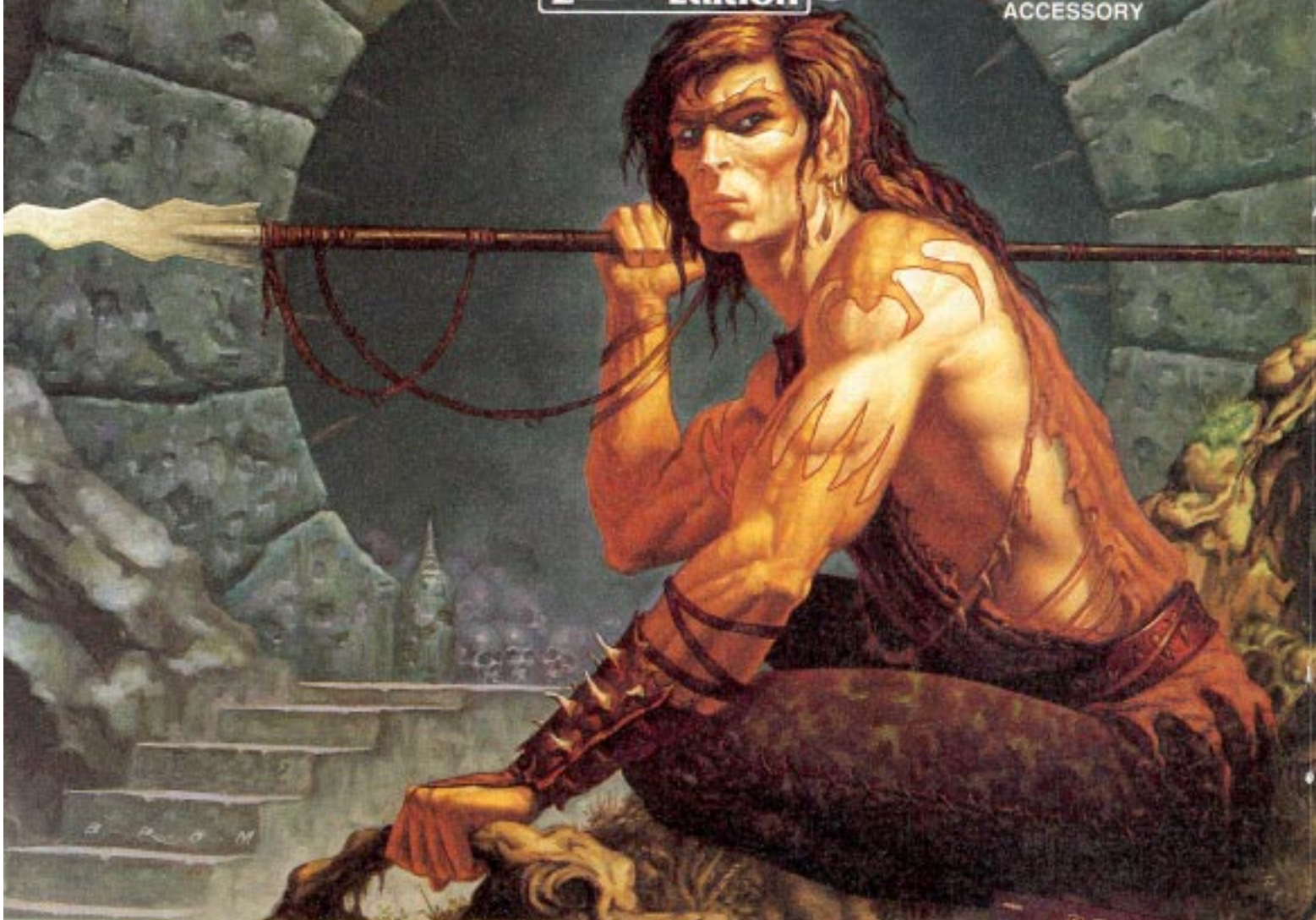
She laughed. "Clever Imbu is learning." And she spurred her camel to greater speed.

Ω

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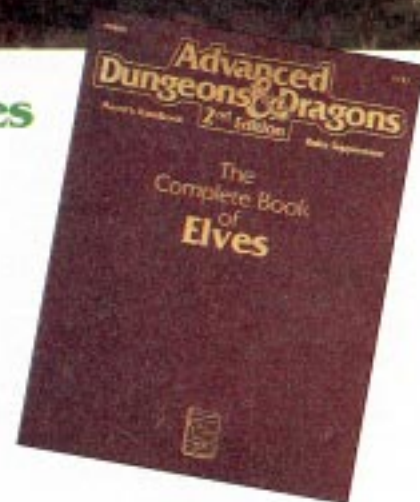
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THE ROLE OF Computers

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*The Dagger of
Amon Ra (Sierra)*

Search New York for a stolen Egyptian dagger

KnightLine

We have found the definitive book on *Ultima*, Origin's fantastic FRPG series for PC/MS-DOS computer gamers. *Ultima, The Avatar Adventures* by Ruse1 DeMaria and Caroline Spector is published by PRIMA Books and offers just about every hint, tip, graphic, map, and detail about *Ultima IV*, *V*, and *VI*. There are brief sections on *Ultima VII: The Black Gate* and *Ultima Underworld*. If you want exacting details at your fingertips, written in an entertaining manner, this is the book for you.

Nintendo has signed American Laser Games to produce new, realtime live-action interactive games for the Super NES and its soon-to-be-released CD-ROM accessory. Games covered in this agreement include *Mad Dog McCree*, *Who Shot Johnny Rock?*, *Space Pirates*, and *Gallagher's Gallery*.

H.E.L.P.

Dale Ketcherside, who answers some *Ultima V* questions in the next section, also asks the following, "I have found the Shard of Falsehood in Dungeon Deceit, and I have found the Shard of Hatred in Dungeon Hythloth. Where is the Shard of Cowardice to be found? Also, in Bordermarch, Sir Simon mentioned the crown, scepter, amulet, and jewels of Lord British.

Computer games' ratings

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

He told me the power of the scepter and the crown. His wife told me about the amulet. Are the jewels real, or are they just window dressing? Or did I misread what he said? Thanks for any help anyone can offer."

Chris Milligan of Hong Kong has answered Aidan Doyle's query regarding *Rise of the Dragon* in our column in DRAGON issue #178. Chris writes, "Go to the alley in the warehouse district and climb through the gap. You'll find an old man who will read the parchment for you. He also will give you some very handy items. To get into Deng Hwang's, go to Hollywood Reservoir when you see units being deployed there (make sure you're wearing a bulletproof vest and your gun is loaded!). When you get there, shoot everyone, grab the rifle, and enter the hovercar.

Go to Deng Hwang's in the hovercar. You'll land on the roof and you can now enter the building via the lift (elevator)."

In DRAGON issue #183, Fred Wisdom needed some help with *Ultima V*. Dale Ketcherside of Whittier, Ark., writes, "To leave the first room of the first level of Dungeon Shame, you must shoot the brick that is located just to the right of the left-most corner. This will change the room. Now, shoot the brick just to the right of the new corner. This opens a hall that is blocked by a brick. Shoot it and you'll be able to walk out of the room. To reach the place of darkness, you have to destroy all three of the Shadowlords. You also must have the amulet, scepter, and crown of Lord British. Enter the Underworld by way of Dungeon Shame. To the east there's an area that is sealed off by mountains. You need to cast 'In Por' to jump past them. The place of darkness is to the east and south of you. The amulet will help you find the way through the darkness to Dungeon Doom. The word to open Dungeon Doom is told to you by the co-dex. The meaning of the world 'Al Kazam' is told to you by Glinke in Paws."

Also responding to Fred's question is Michael Edwards of Roanoke, Va. His suggestion is just a bit different—he recommends pushing on the walls instead of shooting at bricks. "When you push on certain parts of the wall, the room gets larger, and when you push on the new walls, the room gets bigger, and so on, until an exit appears. This is always a good tactic if you get stuck anywhere in the dungeon." He also adds that in order to cross the water to the rocky island on the other side of the mountains to reach Dungeon Doom, use your magic carpet. Also, "Use the Amulet before entering the dark area or you will be lost. Once you enter the dungeon, be warned. You can't get out!"

We also wish to thank the following adventurers who responded to H.E.L.P. queries after answers have already been printed: Robert Chang, Brecksville OH, regarding *Bard's Tale I*, *Ultima VI*, and *Beyond Zork*; Michael W. Daniels of Tulsa OK, regarding *Ultima V* and *Secret of the Silver Blades*.

Reviews

The Dagger of Amon Ra

Laura Bow, the heroine in Sierra's *The Colonel's Bequest*, has returned in this intriguing mystery set in New York in the 1920s. This time, however, the Dagger of Amon Ra has been stolen. Those who wanted this Egyptian treasure committed murder to obtain it! As a cub reporter for the *New York Daily Register News Tribune*, Laura is going to find herself embroiled in a mystery that will require plenty of detective work on your part. From being locked inside the Lydecker Museum at night with numerous murder



The Dagger of Amon Ra (Sierra)

suspects, to figuring out how to avoid rats, snakes, and furnace flames, Laura must keep her wits about her—and you must study each clue carefully to solve the murder.

You must have at least 573K of free memory to run *The Dagger of Amon Ra* (DOAR) program. Also, there is no automatic detection of a GameBlaster card and you must manually input that you have this card when you enable hardware. The graphics, when viewed with a VGA card, are superbly crafted, and the background music sets the scenes well. The plot draws you into the adventure and the animation is highly effective. You can't go wrong with this murder mystery if you enjoy solving difficult crimes.

The introduction to this game includes an opening-scene murder that's exactly like watching a TV show. That's how well Sierra has designed their graphics engine. After this scene, the deceased is dumped into a sea chest, and the case is in your (Laura's) hands to solve. We did note a couple of areas where we thought the design team could have given more consideration. Laura can obtain free rides around New York in a cab, as long as she shows her press pass. This was obviously a less-than-realistic way to address how to get Laura to certain locations. (We have rarely known cabbies to give free rides to anyone!)

A scene continuity problem occurs whenever you enter the speakeasy screen—it is always nighttime, even if the prior scene was in full daylight. However, this slight problem does not destroy the atmosphere of the game. Other nice details, such as music increasing automatically in volume when you enter the room it is emanating from, add that touch of realism missing in other graphic adventures.

The copy protection is manual based and consists of identifying the correct

Egyptian god from the on-screen description. This is quite simple to accomplish, but we hope you never lose the player's manual. The game's icon-command interface allows you to select an action by clicking your mouse's right button until the icon appears. The question mark is used for queries, the eye for looking, and so on. By moving your cursor into the upper portion of the screen, each command is identified by its icon, and you also can save and restore games.

We thoroughly enjoyed DOAR and recommend you purchase it if you enjoy mysteries. It is not as action-packed as other games you might buy—but here the prime requisite is thinking. With a strong sense of the period and superb graphics, this game will make you wonder where the time went when you look at your watch.

This graphic adventure from Sierra requires a 80286 or faster CPU, 640K RAM, VGA or EGA graphics board, and hard disk. It supports ThunderBoard, Pro Audio Spectrum, AdLib, SoundBlaster, Roland, or Sound Source sound boards.

Global Conquest

If you enjoyed games like *Empire*, you'll enjoy *Global Conquest* (GC). Strategy and management of your resources (both military and economic) determine the outcome. The object of the game is to discover your territories and then conquer the world. There are always four opponents, any of whom may be controlled by the computer, yourself, or friends. The game also can be played via modem.

No two games are alike—the world always changes and are composed of oceans, plains, forests, swamps, or mountains. Then add your units to this environment: infantry, armor, subs, airplanes, battleships, and aircraft carriers. You also start out with, and can manufacture, a spy



The Dagger of Amon Ra (Sierra)

unit that cannot only steal secrets but can see with wide-ranging eyes. Your Comcen is your most powerful piece—however, if you lose your Comcen, you're out of the game. Your cities, or "burbs" as they are referred to, create your units and must then financially support them. Depending upon the size of your burb, bucks are dumped into the treasury each turn. Resources you possess or exploit earn another two bucks each. Run out of bucks, and units within that burb are suddenly unsupported.

There are three difficulty levels, and the game also comes with an icon editor so you can create your own identifiable icon in the icon corner. Event cards (if you wish) are presented every five turns to aid or hinder game play, controlling such things as rising oceans, tax revolts, and so on. Control is via your I/O device and consists of combinations of right and left clicks. You can instantly see the world with one click and then view at closer detail any area in question. Attacking an enemy burb is the most fun. Begin with the initial city bombardment, then individual burb-unit attacks with your air force, followed by an all-out armor attack to overwhelm the remaining, weakened enemy forces! Points are earned as you gain military and economic successes.

GC has many fine features and is definitely a well-planned strategy game. The user manual is extremely well-written and quite humorous as well. Unfortunately, we ran into an unexpected problem. During the display of event cards on our 90th turn of play, we accidentally depressed our mouse button while the cursor was resting on the Execute command. The game froze, the system locked up, and we lost all our moves from our last save because we had to reboot and start from an earlier point in the game. No, we didn't like that at all. Add the game's inability to save a game and immediately return to the play of that game, and you have an inconvenience. Certainly, it's nothing insurmountable, but it does require you to go through the opening game menus just to get back to your saved game. GC is quite an interesting and intriguing conquer-the-world game with many more features than *Empire*. It would be worth MicroPlay's time to consider converting this offering to other computer systems.

This MicroPlay strategy game requires PC/MS-DOS, 640K, DOS 3.0, and EGA, but does not support MCGA graphics. It supports joy stick and mouse, and AdLib and IBM sound boards.

Gods

This is one of the best action games we've seen from Konami for PC gamers. Not only are the graphics superb, but the action is top notch. You'll not find one dull moment in *Gods*, and you'll find yourself not only fighting some of the meanest beasts around, but also trying to solve some awesome puzzles as well. After all, you wouldn't expect a challenge from the gods to be easy, would you?

You'll be retrieving power crystals, trying to figure out a series of lever pulls, and locating hidden keys and secret doorways. Take care though, for not every secret passage leads to an exciting treasure. It could as easily end up in a nightmarish encounter. Thanks to The Shop, you can upgrade your weaponry. Best of all, the game adjusts its skill level to yours while you play. You might find you can even trick some of the beasts into helping you with your quest. We highly recommend *Gods* to any gamer who thoroughly enjoys action-arcade games.

This Konami game requires PC/MS-DOS, DOS 2.1 or greater, a 12MHz or faster CPU, joy stick optional. It supports AdLib, Roland, and SoundBlaster sound boards.

Mission: Thunderbolt

After the world is nearly obliterated by a variety of nuclear and environmental disasters in 2000 A.D., it becomes easy pickings for an invasion from another galaxy. With most of humanity wiped out in the ensuing conflict, survivors band together to fight back. Your object is to find an anti-matter device the government was working on that has fallen into alien hands. Unless you retrieve it, the weapon will be used on humanity, ensuring the race's annihilation. It rests within an underground research lab.

The game map first appears to have been created using *World Builder*. However, the numerous clickable commands that appear below the main window, the running inventory list, and the status windows make it work. The game's designer also allows you as much time as you would like to make each move. Real-time game play in *Mission: Thunderbolt* (MT) would have meant a call to the local insane asylum for admittance.

The first level is a breeze, once you learn how to manage your attacks and find a couple of items to assist you with your armor class. Then, it's off through various mazes, trying to find stuff to open doors and learning which pill does what. If you save your game, you're penalized in your total score. We recommend saving your game once at start of play. Then, save before you take each risky action (like taking a pill without knowing its effects).

This way, once you know note the outcome, you can restart your game from its saved position with only your first save penalty, and continue the game.

Once you get down to succeeding levels, things get tough, with mutant creatures and various traps. Keep plenty of notes as to who does what! These elements, as well as the game world itself, change whenever you start a new game.

One aspect we don't like is the copy protection employed by the game. It's the old "enter the name of the icon" into an on-screen window. This time, the icons come on a single, thin sheet of pink paper, with the icons printed in light blue. This is done to prevent duplication on a copying machine. Not only is the blue ink extremely difficult to read, but lose your sheet and you can't play anymore. You are tossed out of the game and you have to start over again.

MT is an exciting game that provides some interesting puzzles and challenges to gamers. Although no new ground is broken graphically, MT provides many hours of adventure. We recommend it as long as you keep your copy-protection sheet in a safe place.

This Casady & Greene science-fiction adventure game requires Macintosh, 2MB of RAM, 7.2MB of hard disk space, Macintosh System Software v. 6.0.3 or later, and supports color and black and white.

Pacific Islands

If you want to experience platoon-style tank combat, *Pacific Islands* (PI) is a great game. Although the various screens for each tank can become confusing in the heat of battle, and the tutorials printing is sometimes hard to comprehend, PI is a good, fast-paced game. You'll need to spend some time learning which icon commands what action, and which screen is showing you what information. Although not provided, a reference guide would help immeasurably.

The included tutorial will give you a hands-on feel for the game, although you should commit at least 40 minutes to learning how everything functions. Fail to complete your training scenario in time, and you'd best run through it again to improve your ability to control your tanks and complete the mini-missions for each of the four tanks. You also may have to switch between Chapters Eight and 14 to determine what the screens are telling you—not a very convenient action in the middle of battle.

Pay attention to an annoying, crackling sound during play. It's an artillery barrage, not merely the sound of your tank moving about. You'll have to learn what each sound means, otherwise you'll think your tanks are falling apart. The key to success in PI is learning how to use your map information to route your tanks, but also to fire upon the enemy with the correct type of ammunition. Once you get the hang of moving your tanks and controlling

them in a 3-D view, you're in for some exciting times as you proceed through the missions.

This Empire Software tank simulation requires PC/MS-DOS, 550K RAM, and supports VGA/EGA, CGA, AdLib, and Roland PC Sound compatible boards.

Prophecy of the Shadow

The land is slowly dying. It's your mission to find out what's wrong. Your master was murdered and now you're being blamed for his death. The king hates magic, and you have powers that could condemn you. Unfortunately, this plot is not very original, and the same holds true for game play in this single-player game.

After completing a very limited character creation system that consists of asking you three questions about your pastimes, you are flung into the *Prophecy*. Only three statistics are pertinent in this game: Health, Magic, and Agility. Health reflects your stamina, life, and strength. Magic is the amount of power you possess to conjure spells. Agility is the ability to dodge an enemy's blows. The action is seen from an overhead perspective. Icons to the left of the screen allow your character to drop, use, or give items, attack or talk to others, and enter buildings. Combat is quite boring, with text describing the amount of damage being done to the combatants. Talking is merely selecting from a menu of words and watching the person's response.

This game reminded us of the classic *Questron* games. Unlike these classics, however, the only perk to this game was the fully-costumed "personalities" you see when talking to them—even though many with different names and in different locations are duplicates of personalities you've seen earlier! Role-playing games like *Questron* were great for their time, but now with higher standards in the industry, the public wants more in a game. If you're looking for a simple introduction to FRPGs, *Prophecy* is a good game to start with. Their highly touted new interface certainly won't leave their competition in a sweat. SSI publishes far better FRPGs and your money is better spent on one of their other products.

This Strategic Simulations Inc., FRPG requires PC/MS-DOS, 16 MHz or better CPU recommended, 640K RAM, VGA graphics, and a hard disk, and supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro sound boards plus Roland or AdLib music cards.

Siege

If you don't mind graphics-screen refresh slower than molasses (even on our 80386-based machine), or an initially confusing array of interface icons, *Siege* is a highly engrossing simulation that has you either attacking or defending one of four castles in Western Gurtex. You fight controlling either the hordes of darkness (orcs, trolls, domugs, tekhirs, and the like) or the warriors of good (humans, dwarves,



Prophecy of the Shadow (SSI)

and elves). Elite troops, berserkers, sergeants, and engineers all combine effectively if you manage your campaign in much the same way as a good football or baseball coach. You must learn to use your different forces effectively to bring the other side to their knees.

With three zoom views, high-resolution castles, various assault and defense machines (such as ballistae, burning oil, battering rams, mobile bridges, siege towers, assault ladders, and catapults), you'll find yourself defending or attacking castles for hours. You even have magicians to hurl spells at your enemy. You determine not only where your troops will attack, but where they will launch attacks and establish defensive positions. You've got 24 different scenarios, including a tutorial scenario that is a must to learn how to play this great game. You can even use the game's editor to make your own scenarios, or modify the included. Despite the slow algorithmic computations, *Siege* is a fine addition to your PC/MS-DOS game library. Mindcraft has their own bulletin board that can be reached at (310) 320-5196. They are also present on CompuServe (type "GO GAMPUB") or on GEnie (type "M805:1" and select "Category 14").

This Mindcraft castle-combat war game requires PC/MS-DOS, 12 MHz or better CPU, VGA graphics, 640K RAM, a hard disk and a mouse. It supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, and Roland sound cards.

Warrior of Rome II

With the success of *Warrior of Rome* behind them, Bignet has done it again with *Warrior Of Rome II* (WORII). You are now Julius Caesar, commanding the armies of Rome as you try to suppress rebellions in Asia.

This game's perspective is a three-quarters overhead view of the action. The game is played in real-time, though movement speed can be adjusted according to the level of difficulty. There are 15 increasingly difficult stages. Players can play either a single stage or through the whole campaign of 15 stages. The two-player mode gives a split-screen view that provides a whole new challenge.

A prize feature of the game is the ease of using menus, which can be moved, resized, and scrolled after you open them, much like the now-familiar Macintosh desktop. On the main map, forces bear your own red flags or the blue flags of the armies in revolt. Open the fighters' screen to reveal the unit, its strength, current action, and (if inside a structure), the type of building the unit occupies. Individual units can be examined to find out more detailed information. Skills include combat, indirect attacks, mobility, seafaring, and working. The ability to work increases the speed with which one can build and destroy structures.

Many different commands can be given. The first, Form a unit, creates a fighting force from the fortress you select. If there are not enough villagers around the fortress to create the unit, you are notified. Moving a unit is as simple as clicking on the command, selecting the unit, and then selecting its destination.

The different building commands require the right amount and type of terrain, and are quite beneficial. Fortresses are the only places where units can be formed and recover from battle, and as the village around the castle grows, the taxes and labor force to maintain the fortress also expand. A coliseum trains units, thus increasing their strength. Fi-

4 GREAT READS



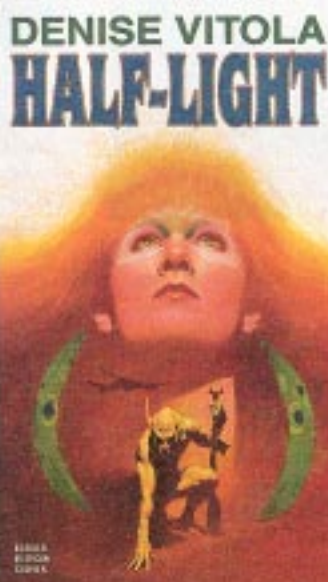
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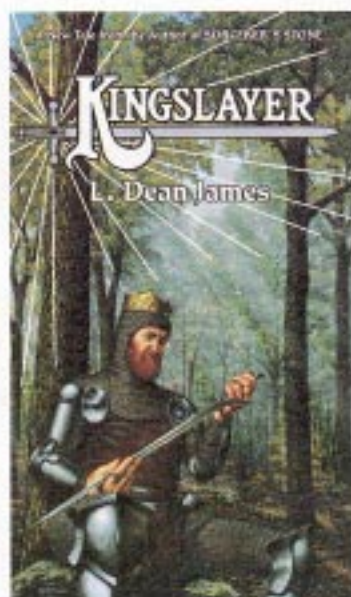


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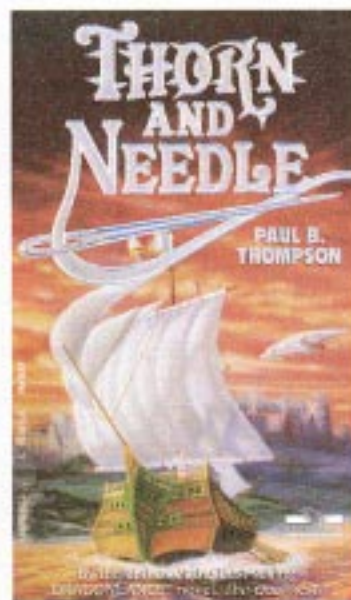


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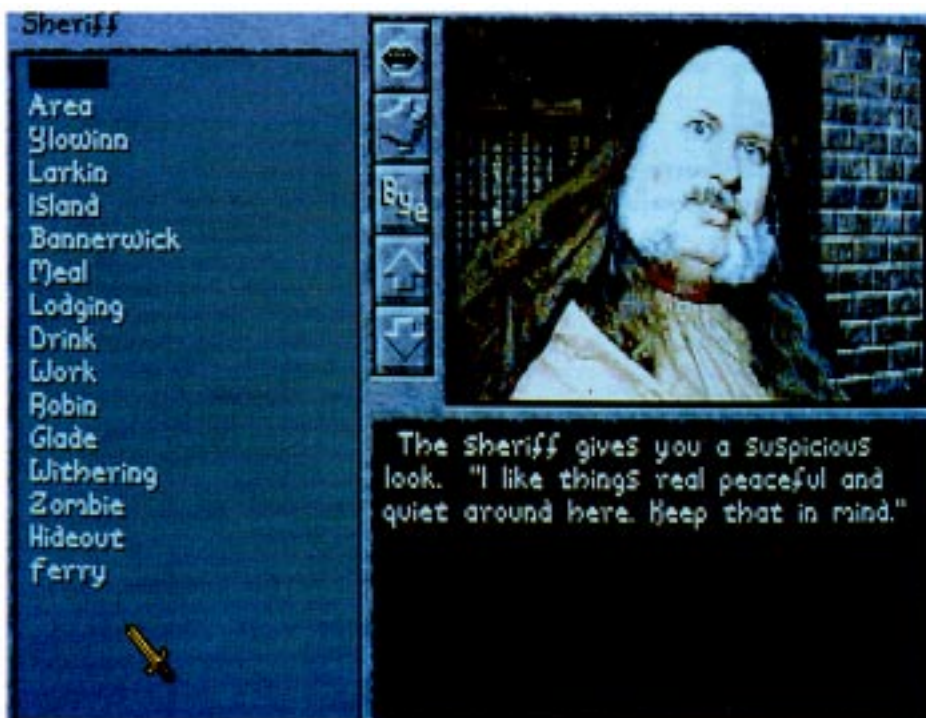
By Paul B. Thompson

Two travelers journey to the "perfect" city of Myesti, the creation of a strange new god. What hidden agenda brings them?

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Prophecy of the Shadow (SSI)

nally, shipyards allow ships to sail the seas. As time passes, the ships become larger and more powerful. Two other useful commands are the Disband unit and Demolish building.

WORII is a fun game. The 3-D effects enhance play and, while strategy can get quite complicated, the rules are easy to follow. The graphics and sound are enjoyable, and the menus are some of the best that we've seen in a video game. The use of battery back-up is another big plus for the game. One problem we did have was that sometimes it's hard to see the units' strengths and other information clearly, which was somewhat distracting. Overall, if you enjoy war games, this should become an addition to your Sega Genesis collection.

Clue Corner

The Dagger of Amon Ra (Sierra, PC/MS-DOS version)

1. It is customary for people to hide keys under things that are flat. For example, door keys can be found under door mats. Perhaps a desk-drawer key can be found under something flat on the desk.

2. When you're in the city room at the newspaper, check out the bulletin board near the gent's room. It says something about dressing appropriately when covering formal events. In order to meet this criteria, you're going to need to take a ride in a trashy cab and sift through the debris, locate a ticket for some clothes, and ignore the comments of a flapper in the women's restroom to change.

3. If you can't seem to get the good sergeant to talk about the case, consider what the copper is telling you, and use a coupon you've found to obtain something his stomach will enjoy. To find that cou-

pon, you wait until a sleeping man leaves.

4. Using the exclamation cursor, talk to the boys outside the laundry. They might even discuss a hobby. If the hobby fits what you might have found in a wastepaper basket, perhaps you can exchange valuable items.

5. Sometimes glass can hear through solid objects.

6. You don't always have to take a cab to get somewhere. However, it is the prudent person that looks both ways before crossing any street. Click your right mouse button until the eye icon appears on-screen, then click your left button at both the left and right side edges of your monitor. The information you obtain will let you know if you can cross safely.

7. Speakeasies are known for their booze and their dancing. The password to get into one has something to do with the latter. If you can't figure it out, maybe the hungry policeman will tell you.

8. Steve at the 12th Street Docks knows quite a lot.

9. Intercom systems that broadcast static can't be much good, can they?

10. Recall those good old movies when trying to find a place to spy upon the Countess.

11. The safe combination might be found in a phone list.

12. The corpse in the Egyptian room needs a thorough searching—perhaps there's something worth "borrowing" in the breast pocket that will leave an impression.

The Lessers

Secret of Monkey Island II (LucasArts Games)

1. For the first piece of the map, win the spitting contest and give the plaque to the



Prophecy of the Shadow (SSI)

antique shop dealer. Use the money to charter Captain Kate's ship. To find the Mad Monkey, check out "World's Worst Shipwrecks" from the Phatt library (under "Disasters" in the card catalog). Then, give the figurehead to the shopkeeper.

2. For the next piece of the map, get the crypt key from Stan on Booty Island and open the crypt on Scabb after reading "Famous Pirate Quotations," obtained from Governor Phatt. Get some ashes and have the voodoo lady make the Ash-Z-Life for you and use it on the ashes.


3. For the third piece of the map, use Captain Kate's leaflet on the wanted poster on Phatt Island. After jailing her, pick up her envelope and take out the near-grog. Next, use Jojo the monkey from the Scabb bar on the pump on Phatt above the waterfall. Head through the hole and switch the near-grog with the real grog. After this, hang the mirror from the antique shop in the mirror frame and use the spyglass from the Booty Island tree house on the statue. The light points to the correct brick to push.

4. Pick up the fourth piece from above the governor's mantel. Use the fishing pole from the Phatt Island fisherman to get it off the cliff. Use the oar from the governor's room with the holes in the Big 'Bee to climb.

5. To get to LeChuck's room in his hideout, look at your parent's instructions on the spit-encrusted paper, then at the ugly bone things.

6. In the final sequence of the game, you must make a voodoo doll of LeChuck to win the game. Look at the voodoo shopping list if you forget how to do it. For the "Thread" ingredient, use the coin return on the grog machine, and then try to pick up LeChuck (when he next appears). For the "Body" ingredient, give LeChuck Stan's hankie.

Yi-Zhon Liu
Palo Alto CA

That's all for this month. If you have any questions, comments, or hints, please mail them to Clue Corner, c/o The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376. Or, you can send us electronic mail to following information services: America On-line: AFC Lesser, GENie: HLESSER, or CompuServe: 75300,525. Until next month, game on! 

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The Game Wizards



Join the *Warriors of the Eternal Sun™*

by James M. Ward

Standing atop the castle walls, you stare wearily down at the howling goblin hordes below. Smoke from a thousand goblin torches burns your lungs. Weeks of fighting have seen hundreds of warriors die in battle throughout the duke's lands. Deafening thunder drowns out the screams of goblins and men alike.

Suddenly, the scene shifts as a bright light flashes and magic is woven about you. Finding yourself and the castle in a strange, high-walled valley, you see that the goblins are gone—but new dangers await. The survival of your people depends on how quickly you can assemble a party of heroes to venture beyond the castle's walls and solve the mysteries of this valley.

Thus begins the adventure for the Sega GENESIS system's DUNGEONS & DRAGONS™ *Warriors of the Eternal Sun™* game cartridge!

Introduction

There are two firsts we are proud of about this game. This is the first time TSR has worked with the Sega corporation to produce a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game product, and this is also the first electronic HOLLOW WORLD™ product.

From my perspective as a fan of D&D® and AD&D® games, there has been a clear need for a cartridge game that would allow the players to have on-screen D&D-game fun in their favorite gaming format. When the opportunity came to get the Sega corporation behind a D&D game project, TSR jumped at the chance. The best elements of the role-playing game can all be found in this computer game.

Playing the game

How do you play this game? The first thing you do is create your characters. You can choose from clerics, fighters, mages, thieves, dwarves, elves, and halflings. Although it's always a good idea to use a balanced party of fighters and spell-casters, it's also fun to try the adventures with groups composed only of clerics or elves just to see how far you can get. The spell-casting characters all have access to first- through third-level spells.

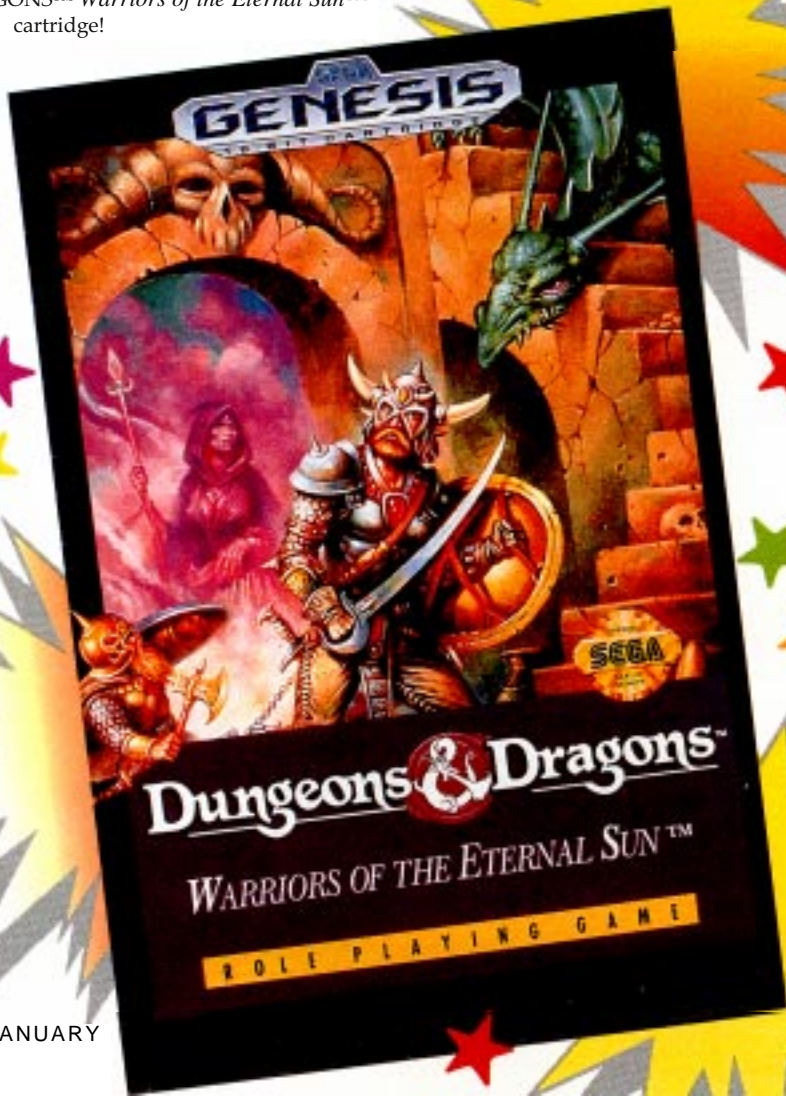
Once your characters are ready, they can explore Duke Barrik's castle complex. There are plenty of nonplayer characters to talk to, and there is a lot of information to pick up. Your characters can browse through the armor shop, the weapons shop, and the magic shop. Characters also can check to see if any caravans are leaving the castle soon. Traveling with a caravan is much safer than having your characters travel on their own. Players of SSI's gold-box computer games will recognize the ability to Camp, in order to rest and regain spells.

Your characters also will experience the wilderness. Forests, hills, impassable cliff faces, rivers, and dangerous monster encounters all make this a series of great challenges for all lovers of the D&D game.

Combat is fully detailed in the 48-page instruction manual that accompanies the game, including special wilderness combat options, and notes on the game's bestiary. If that wasn't enough, there are underground caverns and dungeons filled with hundreds of encounters and tough monsters. The game's perspective changes for the characters when they enter the underground. This is truly where the best work of the designers is displayed. Time and time again, I found myself returning to these underground caverns to face the many monsters there.

Conclusion

For the players of the pen-and-paper D&D game, the challenge of trying to make your characters grow provides one of the best thrills of the game. This is also true of the Sega game. There are more than enough adventures to keep you busy for hours and hours of video-game fun. ☐





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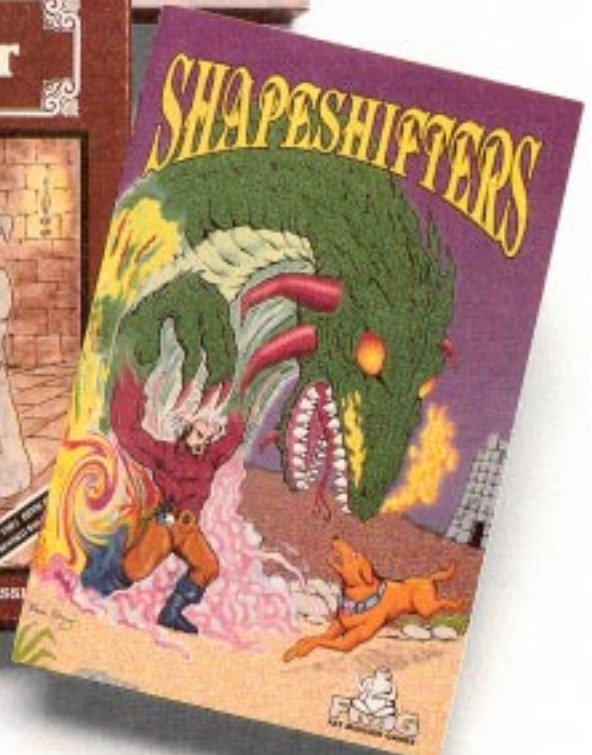
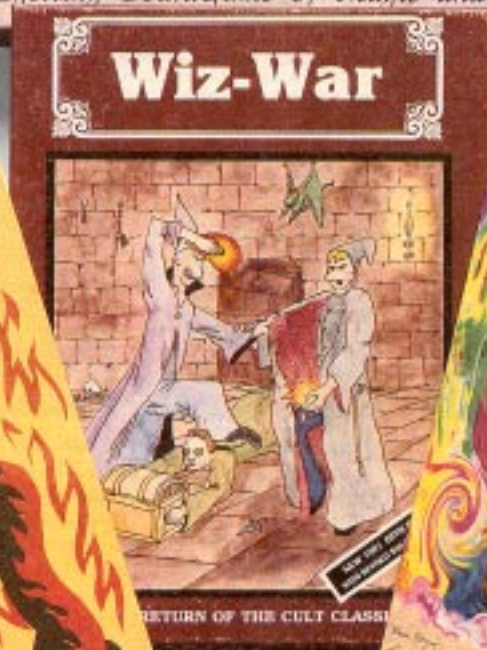
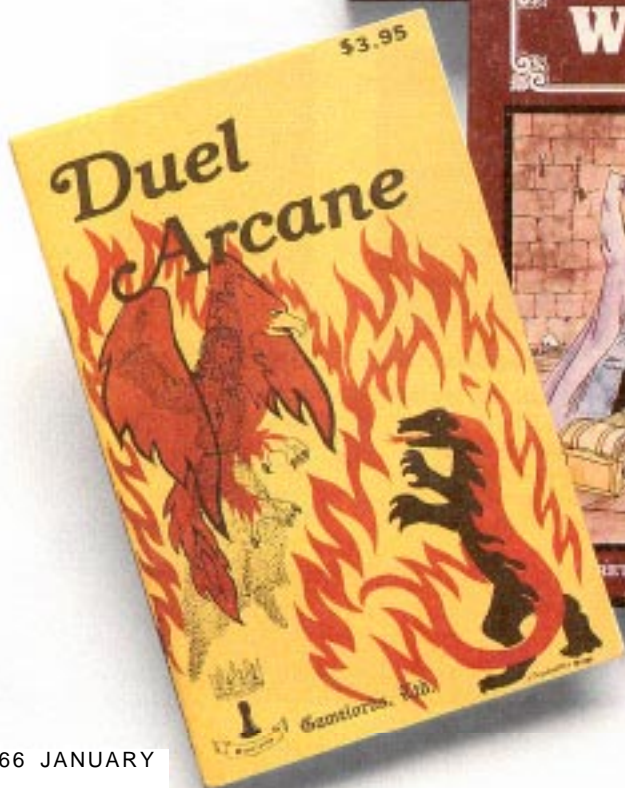
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Role-playing reviews



When wily wizards wrestle wildly

For many gamers, myself included, the strongest appeal of any fantasy game is in its use of magic. In a fantasy role-playing game, for instance, the first thing we look at is the magic system and how it interacts with the other game mechanics. We also thrive on board games that allow us to play spell-casters in a fantasy world. In this month's installment concerning small-press publications and overlooked products, I've chosen to discuss four games in which wizards battle among themselves for supremacy.

To the best of my knowledge, exactly two games have been published devoted to combat between shape-changing magicians. The latest—printed in 1991—is entitled, appropriately, the SHAPESHIFTERS* game. The other—released in 1980—is titled more cryptically: the DUEL ARCANES* game. (If anyone knows of others I'm unaware of, please tell me and where I might find copies.) While a number of role-playing games touch upon the subject of shapeshifting, providing spells to do so or special powers of some sort, only the DUEL ARCANES and SHAPESHIFTERS games devote themselves specifically to the subject and treat in depth the rapid changes of advantage in contests between mages who are able to quickly assume many different shapes (as in the battle between Merlin and Mim in Disney's *The Sword in the Stone* film). These two games each approach the subject in quite different ways, as revealed in the comparative evaluations that follow. The other two games—one a fast and funny duel over treasure chests, and the other a more serious struggle over the outcome of a single great spell—are discussed individually.

DUEL ARCANES* game

28-page rule book with four pull-out character sheets
Gamelords, Ltd. \$3.95
Design: John Shannonhouse
Cover & interior art: Janet Trautvetter

In comparing the SHAPESHIFTERS and DUEL ARCANES games, it makes sense (for reasons that will become evident a bit later) to discuss the older game first.

Components: Like most games its age, the DUEL ARCANES game is much less glitzy than is common today. Its cover is simple yellow cardstock printed in two colors, red and black. Its pages are printed in small type, apparently dot matrix, with underlining or all caps the only options for headings and stress. The artwork is relatively scanty, amateurish by today's standards though imaginative. In all, it is a modest package.

Character design: Players design characters to use in this game in much the

same way as for a role-playing game. First, values for five primary attributes (Talent, Reflexes, Perception, Stamina, and Resistance) are generated by random dice rolls. From those attributes, another seven characteristics are calculated: Hits to Unconsciousness, Hits to Kill, Fatigue Points, Initiative Roll Base, Accuracy Base, Parry Base, and Damage Dice Base. Together, all 12 characteristics define a mage's abilities in human form.

Next comes the determination of the character's potential animal forms. First, a totem form is determined by random rolls (with particularly lucky rolls allowing for multiple totems). A mage can assume a totem form in half the time it takes to change to other forms, and a totem form can be assumed when the mage has statistics below the minimum normally allowed for the shape (allowing a mage to acquire the shape's special abilities without paying as much of a fatigue cost to do so, though the mage becomes a "wimpier" form of the creature). After determining a totem, a mage then determines how many other animal forms can be learned, and what the limitations are. (Less powerful forms require less Talent to learn than do more powerful ones.) Animal forms are rated in terms of Initiative, Strike Accuracy, Parry, Damage (that they cause), and Resistance (to damage they receive), with many having a minimum or maximum base for one or more of these attributes. Additionally, each form has one or more special abilities (e.g., Fly, Poison, Quills, Web, etc.) and a Chase Speed listed.

A mage learns an individual form at a particular level for each attribute, which is then recorded on the character sheet. To assume a particular form, the mage must spend fatigue points to raise all normal human attributes to the values listed on the sheet. To maintain that form, the mage must continue to pay half that number of points each turn. (Note that if one or more of a mage's human attributes exceed the maximum for the animal form, those attributes decrease to the form's maximums when the mage assumes that shape; a very dextrous mage who takes on the shape of a turtle, for instance, will sacrifice much dexterity.) Finally, the actual attribute values are translated either into target numbers or die codes (six-siders), with fractional dice being possible. For example, a statistic value of 12 translates to 2d6, while a 22 translates to 3d6 +4/7d6. For purposes of this review, it isn't necessary to explain how the fractional die works; there is a simple chart on each character sheet that makes it obvious. What is important is that every time a 6 is rolled, that die is rolled again and the result is added on, making the range of results theoretically infinite.

Game play: Combat in the DUEL AR-

CANES game is typically played out in the players' imaginations. (A map and counters or figures can be used, as in most role-playing games, but movement is abstracted in terms of relative position and speed rather than precise measurements of distances covered.) After declaring their actions and any targets, players each roll for initiative using the number of dice identified for whatever animal form their mages are using at the time. Thus, a mage who assumes a quick-moving form such as a leopard tends to achieve a much higher initiative roll than one who takes a slow-moving form such as a giant lobster. What's more, for every 10 points of difference between the initiative of the combatants, the higher roller gains an extra action for the round.

Next, mages take their actions in order of initiative (multiple actions are divided among three subphases). Attacks must exceed on 3d6 their Strike Accuracy rating plus their target's Dodge rating. Exceptionally high rolls add dice to an attack's damage rating, as well as yielding the attacker one or more experience points. If an attack succeeds, dice are rolled for damage—again, a number of dice appropriate to the attacker's form. After the target's armor rating is subtracted from the damage rolled, the rest is applied to the target. Not surprisingly, once targets have taken damage equal to their Hits to Unconsciousness rating, they pass out; if they take damage equal to their Hits to Kill rating, they die. Some special attack forms have other effects, such as entangling a target in webs, turning the target to stone (unless a Resistance saving throw is passed), and the like.

On the other hand, not every action need be spent in an attack. A mage may have elected to change shape (requiring two actions, unless going to totem form), rest (to remove fatigue), run away (based on the present form's Chase Speed), or hide (making a Perception roll to find a suitable hidey-hole). Note that a mage in the midst of changing form or resting is much more vulnerable to attacks than normally.

After combat, victorious mages can stash their vanquished opponents in a pocket of limbo, to be used as "batteries." That is, a victorious mage can use a captive as a source of points for fatigue expenditure or can assume the captive's nontotem animal forms. However, once a captive has been used in this way for one combat, that mage is released from limbo and returns to Earth.

Between combats, mages can spend any experience points they have accrued from exceptional attack rolls, thus improving their basic five attributes. This, of course, means recalculating their resulting statistics and animal forms. At such times,

magicians can revise their entire line-up of forms, replacing old ones with new ones if they like.

Evaluation: Let me begin by listing this game's problems.

First, there are some rough spots in the design. For one example, on its own, a lucky roll for a totem form can make the difference between a moderately dangerous mage and a complete killer. For another, while the combination of attacker's Strike Accuracy and opponent's Dodge rating work pretty well for combats involving characters with average statistics, characters with Strike Accuracy or Dodge ratings nearer the extremes begin to throw the system out of kilter.

Second, this combat game leaves important questions unanswered, such as "At what point does a mage who changes from a land-bound form to a flying form actually enter the air?" Without the answer to that question, it is impossible to decide whether or not another mage can attack before the flight-capable mage leaves the ground.

Finally, the character-creation system is fairly cumbersome. The fact that each time a mage gains experience that individuals' entire line-up of animal forms can be completely changed only emphasizes this cumbersomeness, making even the most devoted players quail at the prospect of character improvement.

In reality, however, these are relatively minor quibbles. The variances in Strike Accuracy and Dodge can be countered by careful design of animal forms, for example. Because of the strong role-playing aspects of the game, questions such as the one concerning changes to flying forms are more forgivable, and they can be dealt with as seems to make the best story. As for the complaint about the cumbersome nature of character design, it is made up for by the fact that actual combat plays very quickly and flexibly.

But the best thing about the DUEL ARCANE game is that the characters are such *individuals*. Statistical variance begins to set them apart, and the various animal forms available make them truly unique. Not only will different mages know different animal forms, but the same form will differ in particulars from mage to mage. Also, the animal descriptions build a pretty strong image of the appealingly magical world in which these mages live. The DUEL ARCANE game virtually begs to be role-played. (In fact, when my gaming group first discovered this system, we went into great detail concerning the wheres and whys of our combats; before long, we had extrapolated weapons for nonmage personas and were playing a full-fledged role-playing campaign based on the system.)

The upshot of the matter is this: If the idea of shape-changing combat sounds appealing to you, and if you can find a copy of this game (not only is it out of print, but the company that produced it

no longer exists), by all means buy it.

SHAPESHIFTERS* game

Bagged game: 16-page rule book (digest-sized), 17" X 22" map, 11" X 17" flow chart sheet, 3½" X 4½" counter sheet
Fat Messiah Games \$8.00

Design & development: Michael Wasson and Neal Sofge

Cover art & counters: Marc Siry

Interior art: Brian Griffin

Map: Kenneth Levine

Transforming Flowchart: Neal Sofge and Marc Siry

While the DUEL ARCANE game takes a role-playing approach to the subject of shape-changing, the SHAPESHIFTERS game definitely takes a much more clinical war-gaming approach. The contrast between the two is quite interesting.

Components: The SHAPESHIFTERS game's package looks similar to the DUEL ARCANE game. Both packages are 5½" X 8½" booklets (the SHAPESHIFTERS game does have maps and a counter sheet enclosed inside). Both covers show two mages confronting each other, the left-hand one in each case with arms raised and in the process of changing shape, the right-hand one on all fours in animal form (though the SHAPESHIFTERS game's cover is more polished and colorful). But the contrast between actual game components makes the differences between the two games' approaches immediately evident. While the single component used in a DUEL ARCANE contest is a character sheet, dueling mages in SHAPESHIFTERS game battles are represented by counters on a map, their abilities and current forms represented by further counters on a flow sheet, and (very significantly) their attack results adjudicated by the roll of a die on a combat-results table.

The heart of this game is the Transforming Flowchart, a glossy, black-and-white sheet that folds out to 11" X 17". There are 54 different physical forms represented on it (illustrated in silhouette), collected together into groups, with lines connecting the various forms and representing the process of assuming a particular shape. For example, to change from human to rhino form, a mage passes through the ogre space, then the bison space, and finally reaches the rhino space on the flow chart. To then change from rhino to giant scorpion, the mage must leave the land mammal group and enter the insect group: The process would be from rhino back to bison, then to ogre, then to human, then to rat—which serves as the land mammal "node"—next to the bug node, then to giant spider form, and finally to giant scorpion form. Birds form another cluster, and plants—including treemen—another. Dinosaur shapes are possible around the lizard node, as are fishmen and piranha around the fish node, these two groups being directly linked by

the sea serpent form. The griffin, hydra, and dragon are each stand-alone nodes of their own. Note that not every shape "passed through" is actually assumed—as when a mage changes from human to rhino, for instance. Rather, numbers along the connecting lines dictate how much magical energy (if any) must be spent along the way, and the final shape itself has a cost that must be paid each turn. Mages with lots of magical energy can move quite a distance along the flow chart in one turn; those with lesser power might need several turns to gradually arrive at the same point. Indeed, there are some forms that mages simply cannot afford to assume once they get to the appropriate space, or that they are able to retain for only a very limited period of time before exhausting their energies.

Each shape on the flow chart is identified by name, size, maintenance cost, movement rating (including land, air, or water), attack rating, defense rating, reflex (an initiative modifier), and special ability (if any). Special abilities include such things as Hide, Track, Poison, Web, Fire, Charge, Fast, Ink, and Hands (this last allowing the casting of a limited number of spells included in the game).

Also on this sheet are an initiative track, a hit-points track, and a magical "battery level" track. Contestants have several counters each to represent their own characters, one for the shape flow chart and one for each of the tracks. As a result, all players can see what their opponents' options are for the next turn.

The map sheet folds out to 17" X 22" and is printed attractively in blue and green, with various shades and patterns representing different types of terrain, and with a half-inch hex grid to govern movement. As nice as the map looks, it seems odd to have so few counters on it during play (basically two to four, depending upon the number of players).

The game's counter sheet is easily the least impressive component. It is a very thin sheet of cardstock, printed in black and white, with 63 half-inch counters that must be cut apart by hand. The extreme thinness of the stock makes handling the counters difficult during play, especially when any have to be picked up rather than slid (such as when a web counter must be placed or removed). To identify individual sets for the game's possible four players, one set is printed black on white, another white on black, another black on gray, and the fourth black on a gray circle. While they are printed crisply with respectable artwork, they are very easy to overlook on the black and white Transforming Flowchart, with its gray background art.

The SHAPESHIFTERS rule book contains clearly worded text, carefully organized and printed on high-quality paper, with lots of attractive line art to break it up. The last page contains a collection of charts and tables needed for play.

Power levels are listed on this page for five different grades of mage, from the lowly acolyte to the powerful warlock. Each grade generates a different amount of magical energy per turn, has a different maximum-storage potential, is allowed a different maximum movement along the Transforming Flowchart (dictated by a Wisdom rating), and has a different number of hit points. For example, acolytes have a Charge of 2, a Battery of 5, a Wisdom of 2, and 4 hit points. Warlocks, by contrast, have a Charge of 9, Battery of 30, Wisdom of 5, and 18 hit points. In between are (in order of increasing ability) magician, thaumaturge, and sorcerer.

Movement costs are also summarized on this page, as are details of combat eligibility based on comparative movement mode (diving creatures in water, for example, may only attack swimming or diving creatures). The combat-results table is here as well, as are a "Pounce" table, detailing modifiers needed to find a hiding opponent, and a table of spells and their costs to cast.

A note on pronouns: Forgive me for a momentary digression, but I feel compelled to respond to rule 0.0, the "On Pronouns" statement in the game. That statement asserts that "[w]riters must choose between the linguistically awkward formula 'he or she' and the morally awkward choice of one pronoun over the other. We hope that our female players will not feel excluded by our use of the male pronoun." The fact of the matter is, the first sentence of that statement is simply false. There are many grammatically correct ways to handle pronouns in text without resorting to either a generic "he" or the construction "he or she." A perusal of this very review reveals that I use neither of those constructions, yet I talk of individual characters on more than one occasion. I'm not arguing with the authors' decision to use a generic "he," but I strongly disagree with their characterizing it as the only reasonable choice of merely two options.

Game play: In discussing the various components, I have revealed most of the significant rules in the game. One rule remains to be mentioned, however: the sequence of play. Each turn begins with all players simultaneously and secretly making a shape decision for that turn. Then initiative is determined. Finally, in initiative order, each wizard moves and attacks, with targets of attacks gaining an immediate counterattack.

Evaluation: That said, let me summarize my impressions from playing the game. The SHAPESHIFTERS game is a nicely polished set of game mechanics. It can be a bit overwhelming at first, in the range of shape options available to players each turn, but the sample scenarios are set up to start players out as acolytes, with fewer options to worry about, then increase their powers as they gain experience. The shapes themselves are quite

satisfying, and the Transforming Flowchart is fascinating. The magic spells are a nice touch, allowing mages to do such things as conjure blades from thin air, cast lightning, heal damage, and fly.

And the game's price strikes me as modest as well.

My greatest complaint, however, is that the SHAPESHIFTERS game feels like a war game, and I find that jars with the fanciful subject of shape-changing. Further, there is no individuality of characters in the game. Each acolyte, for instance, is the same as every other acolyte, with exactly the same resources and options available. Nor is there much opportunity for campaign play. Characters do not gain experience, and once you've played through the scenarios a half-dozen times, you'll have fairly well exhausted the possibilities.

As a war game, the SHAPESHIFTERS game is very well executed, and I suspect that many people will find it perfectly to their liking. But for such a magical subject, I prefer something less cut-and-dried.

If you wish to obtain a copy of the game, but find that your local game store cannot order it for you, contact: Fat Messiah Games, PO. Box 341136, Los Angeles CA 90066.

CASTLE OF MAGIC* game

Boxed game: eight-page rule book, 24-page book of tracking sheets, 20" X 20" mounted mapboard, 64 playing cards, 16 wizard cards, various other cardstock and plastic pieces, adhesive labels, two six-sided dice

RiddleMaster Games

Price n/a

Design: Not credited

Cover: Not credited

In this unusual board game, players take the roles of mages who have come to Castle Bondi to recover three items of power—each item yielding sovereignty over a different country—and to wrestle over the casting of a great ritual spell. At the beginning of the game, each mage is cloaked in mystery; as the game progresses, individuals gain opportunities to learn secrets about the others, so that deadly enemies and potential allies may come to light. The game ends when the ritual spell is finally cast, and the *manner* in which it is cast (one of eight possible configurations) determines the fate of a monster bound within the castle. It is possible that the monster may be banished, that one of the three items may control it, that the monster may devour the holder of a particular item, or that the monster may even devour everyone present. The exact situation at game's end, including the condition of one's friends and enemies, yields varying victory points for each of the players. Note that it is entirely possible for multiple players to win, though there is nearly always one individual who wins by the greatest margin.

Components: I'm sorry to say that,

visually speaking, the game is fairly bland. While the box cover sports a well-executed painting of a pair of mages clashing with colored lightning—a male with a book, and a female with a staff—the background is a gray stonework pattern that, while it makes the red title and black supplementary texts legible, is simply underwhelming. By the same token, the interior components are respectable but not really exciting. On the one hand, the game board is very nicely mounted on cardstock; on the other, its graphics consist of little more than simple boxes with flat colors and block print, all against a flat gray background. The rule book and book of packing Sheets are printed in plain type on cheap paper, with a few diagrams but no art. The Wizard cards, each of which holds on its face a single player's game identity, history, and victory conditions, are identified on the back side by the word "Wizard" and a line drawing of a castle, but even with this they look plain. The Move cards have the word "Move" on the back in white type on a red field, and simple text on the face. The pawns are one step above the plainest type available. The Secret cards have a sentence or two of plain text on their faces with a series of numbers on their backs, each card decorated with a gray crystal ball. The Ritual Result Squares are plain blue plastic with a circular recess in one side; the Country Squares are the same, but green. The Talk Chips are poker chips. The Item of Power markers are folded cardstock standing in green plastic holders. The colored disks are transparent plastic. The sheet of stickers is simply text on white circles, and the dice are basic white.

Don't get me wrong. Everything here is well made in terms of quality and durability, but it is all rather uninspiring. The plastic components, for example, are exactly the sort of thing that anyone could buy at a school supply store.

Game play: As unimpressive as it is to look at, the CASTLE OF MAGIC game is a lot of fun to play. As a matter of fact, when I first saw this game on display at the 1991 GEN CON® game fair, I walked right past it. Later, a demonstration was being held, and the people involved were having such fun that I stopped to take a closer look, eventually picking up a copy for myself.

First-time players of the game are likely to feel lost for a few turns, but the mechanics are simple enough that any confusion won't last for very long. Basically, players move their pawns around the board, trying to gain spell points so that they can learn which Item of Power controls which country, control the Item of their choice, learn which Ritual result is most advantageous, and control the three Ritual elements: bell, book, and candle. Some spaces allow players to acquire Move Cards that can serve in place of dice rolls, if a particular number becomes important at a certain point in time. Other

spaces allow them to learn a secret about one of the other mages, and still others give them combat bonuses. The central section of the board contains a pair of spaces that can drive the countdown of the Ritual Spell toward completion.

The board consists of three concentric "rings" of board spaces (they're actually square): an outer Castle Wall surrounding The Keep, which itself surrounds the Wizards Tower. Inside the Wizard's Tower "ring" is a track for marking the progress of the Ritual Spell. Between the Castle Wall and The Keep are tracks for the three elements of the Ritual Spell (the bell, book, and candle), spaces to hold the three Items of Power until individual players take control of them, spaces for the country markers (placed face down, to determine which Item of Power rules which country), and spaces for the eight Ritual result markers (again face down, to secretly determine which set of parameters—bell ringing or silent, book open or closed, candle lit or unlit—creates which Ritual result).

The Tracking sheets serve as a place for individual players to keep track of how many points they've gained in each of the spells, what their own Combat rating is, how many points of control they've gained over each of the Items of Power, what Ritual Spell configurations they have discovered, and what secrets they have garnered about the other players.

Castle of Magic is definitely a game of diplomacy. As you learn about the other mages, you have to use that information to your advantage. You may find out, let's say for example, that player X is a Wolf Mage, a deadly enemy of your sect, the Dragon Masters. (Note that player X will not know that you know this, and player X might not know either that the two of you are of enemy sects.) Let's say too that your victory conditions will give you points to prevent a Wolf Mage from ruling any of the countries. But you have also learned (during a "time out" to talk, which is what the players have Talk Chips for) that player X wants the bell to be ringing in the Ritual Spell, a factor that you also desire. So you might make a deal with player X to work together to make sure the bell is ringing, even as you strive to prevent player X from gaining control of any of the Items of Power.

Play continues until the Ritual Spell comes to fruition in one of two ways. It may be that the countdown has been pushed to zero. Alternatively, it may be that each of the three components of the spell has been pushed to either of the very ends of its track, thereby becoming "locked" into position. Once one of these conditions has been met, the game ends and players calculate their individual victory points. First, the result of the Ritual Spell is revealed, and players gain or lose points based upon conditions such as who controls the Monster, whether the Monster has been banished, or whether

someone has been devoured by the Monster. Next, points are gained or lost according to who rules which countries (who controls each of the Items of Power at game's end). The high total wins, along with everyone who has more than half that amount of points.

Interestingly, it is possible for the Monster to devour everyone and then go on a general rampage across the countryside, in which case no one wins—unless, that is, one of the players is the Monster (an option in advanced play).

Evaluation: Beginning play in the CASTLE OF MAGIC game can seem a bit slow because none of the players has much ability in any spells as yet. On the other hand, players who have a basic strategy in mind (that should be most everyone after their very first time playing) will take their turns quickly during this stage, thereby moving the game along. Once players begin to accumulate spell points, secrets, and some control over the Items of Power, play becomes intensely interesting, like a well-woven plot. Each character card contains a paragraph of personal history, which adds a pleasant element of role-playing to the game.

The CASTLE OF MAGIC game is not quite like anything I've ever played before, and I find it highly entertaining. I hope it sells well enough to finance a second edition with a flashier appearance, or at least that it receives enough word-of-mouth recommendations to become a cult classic. In terms of play, the game certainly deserves to succeed.

Although the game has been out for a little over a year and even has one expansion set available (which, unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to review), it is not yet being carried by any distributors that I know of, which means that it will be difficult for most game stores to acquire. Interested readers can write for information to: RiddleMaster Games, 103 N. Hwy. 101 #252A, Encinitas CA 92024.

WIZ-WAR* game, fifth edition

Boxed game: eight-page rule book (digest sized), four board sections, two counter sheets, 124 cards, one four-sided die
Chessex (copyright Jolly Games) \$15
Design: Tom Jolly
Art: Not credited

Very few games are cooperative in nature, requiring all of the players to work together against the game itself. Most games are competitive, a great many of them being relatively straightforward power struggles in which players win or lose primarily by how well they marshal their forces, often with a slight seasoning of randomness added by means of die rolls. Many other competitive types are games of discovery; here, the luck of the draw plays the major part, but the enjoyment is in the process of watching the game unfold. Then there are those designs

that my friends and I have come to call "weasel" games.

Weasel games are intensively competitive free-for-alls typically involving lots of secrecy and hidden agendas. They are often won suddenly by surprise plays and usually depend equally upon luck, clever play, and individual players' personalities (that is, it is often as important in such a game to be able to convince the other players that you are no threat as it is to draw the right resources and to know how to use them).

The WIZ-WAR game is, unabashedly, just such a game. In it, players take the roles of wizards trying to steal at least two treasure chests from among their opponents, while simultaneously trying to protect a pair of their own. The arena on which they battle is a tiny one, consisting of a number of adjacent dungeon-type board sections, one maze section for each player; each section is five spaces wide and deep. The outer edges of this composite board do not serve as limits; rather, a wizard who exits off the left edge of the whole immediately reenters on the right edge, one who exits the top edge immediately reenters the bottom, etc. Walls, doors, and open doorways on each section serve to limit line-of-sight and restrict movement somewhat. To do battle, the wizards use cards that allow them to cast spells. No explanation is offered as to why the wizards are battling. Given the wildness of the magic they are able to use, the definite other-worldly artificiality of their arena, and the strange but straightforward "capture two chests" victory conditions, all that matters is that the test proves which among them is the best.

Components: The WIZ-WAR game comes in a roughly 6" X 8" box with a silly cartoon-style picture on the front of three wizards scuffling in a dungeon room. The rule book is smoothly and engagingly written, printed on (interestingly enough) a pleasantly brown, linen-textured paper; the cards are printed on a similar type of cardstock. The board sections are printed in brown ink with a varnished coating for durability, and the walls and doors on it are drawn in the same cartoonish style as used for the cover illustration. Even the die-cut counters are largely brown in tone, with the exceptions being somewhat muted tones of blue, orange, green, or off-white. Even the die is of a muted color. The visual effect of all this is pleasant, lending the game an air of being well-planned yet somehow amateurish, as befitting its status as a "cult classic" (as it is identified on the box front).

Game play: The play of the WIZ WAR game is fast and furious at turns, slower and more mechanical at others, with lots of unexpected twists. The resulting feeling is much like that of a roller-coaster ride. Some sessions are over in as little as half an hour, but most last an hour or slightly longer.

Players each have one counter repre-

senting a wizard and two representing treasure chests. The wizard counter begins the game on a space marked "Home" in the center of that wizard's board, and the two chests begin in spaces diagonally adjacent to "Home," though intervening walls usually separate them all. Each player begins the game with seven cards from the deck.

In their turns, wizards each have a chance to move, cast spells, and pick up items. The maximum distance moved is three spaces, plus (optionally) the number on one card played; movement halts automatically, and the wizard's turn ends, when that wizard picks up an item. Otherwise, a wizard may intersperse movement and spell-casting freely, with the sole proviso that only one attack spell can be cast in a turn. Besides enhancing movement, number cards can extend the duration of timed spells or increase the effect of spells that do damage. (Wizards and doors begin the game with 15 hit points each; walls have 20.) Wizards can also punch for one point of damage, allowing them to physically break through walls (if somehow magically entombed in a cul-de-sac, for example) or doors (which are locked and can only otherwise be opened by play of a card), or to damage another wizard in the same space (if you're desperate and have no attack spells).

Of course, the real "magic" of the game is in the card play, especially the spell cards. With these cards, wizards can conjure thundering walls of water, toss lightning and fireballs, teleport themselves or opponents, deflect spells, redeflect spells, absorb spells for later use, steal spells, telekinetically drag objects toward them, peer (and cast spells) through solid stone, create walls (or illusory walls, or thorn bushes, or blocks of solid stone) to block other wizards' paths, make themselves so ugly that opponents run away in fear, turn opponents to stone, strike opponents blind, and even rotate entire board sections or pick them up and move them into new configurations. Once a spell is cast, the card is discarded, so each wizard's capabilities change constantly as play goes on. There are also a limited number of magic stones that give more permanent abilities, though they count as a card in a player's hand, thus decreasing the number of spells and number cards that can be held.

Remember, the point of the game is to capture two treasure chests from your opponents while protecting your own. Specifically, wizards must travel to an opponent's board section, pick up treasure chests, and carry them (one at a time) back to be dropped on their own "Home" spaces. The first wizard to have two such treasures at "Home" wins. Unfortunately, while you are out collecting a second treasure, another wizard may come along and steal the first one on your "Home" space, thereby forcing you to collect yet another to replace it. A wizard whose own

two treasures end up on other players' "Home" spaces is automatically out of the game. Of course, a wizard can win by simply killing all opponents, thereby becoming free to collect two treasures at leisure.

Evaluation: I have only two complaints concerning the WIZ WAR game. The first is that the cards are unvarnished, making them less resistant to wear. In particular, they tend to collect stains and fingerprints unless care is taken to avoid this (don't eat potato chips while playing the game!). Such marks can make individual cards identifiable from the back, ruining something of the game's secrecy. The second complaint (somewhat related to the first) is that the game strikes me as just a bit pricey, considering its components.

In terms of balance, the WIZ WAR game demonstrates both a commendable initial design and years of play. For example, because players each draw new cards at the end of their turn, it is possible to build a very powerful hand, then suddenly use it all at once to great effect. But this is limited by the facts that: 1) a player may only draw a maximum of two cards per turn; 2) opponents tend to gang up on anyone who shows a chance of a quick win; and 3) none of the cards is a "game breaker" in itself—all are counterbalanced by many other cards. Nor is this a game that can be won by a single strategy. Rather, success is a combination of luck at drawing cards, cleverness at recognizing the best moments to play them, and effectiveness at conning other players into picking on one another and leaving you alone.

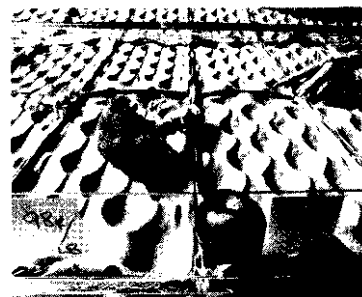
If you hate highly competitive games that glory in the power of the individual over all contenders, you are well advised to stay away from this game. But if you like fast-paced, cutthroat, back-stabbing, fang-snapping "weasel" games (at least on occasion), and if you can find other such people to play as well, then the WIZ WAR game comes highly recommended from this reviewer.

The WIZ WAR game is distributed by Chessex and can, therefore, be ordered by your local hobby shop (along with at least one expansion kit).

Formerly with Game Designers' Workshop, Lester Smith has just joined TSR, Inc. as a game designer and editor. He has worked on projects for various other game companies in the past. He makes something of a hobby of collecting new, small-press products, particularly quirky role-playing games, which explains the focus of his periodic review articles in this magazine. Ω

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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.

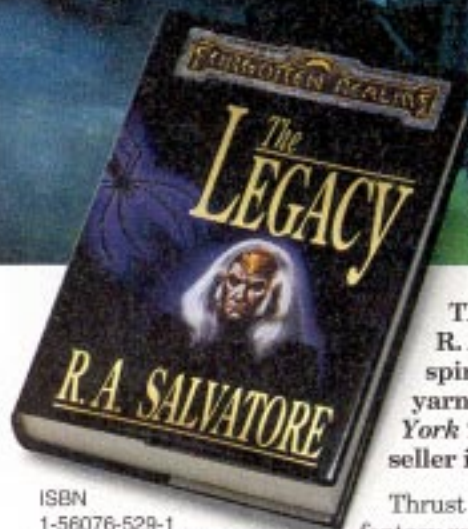


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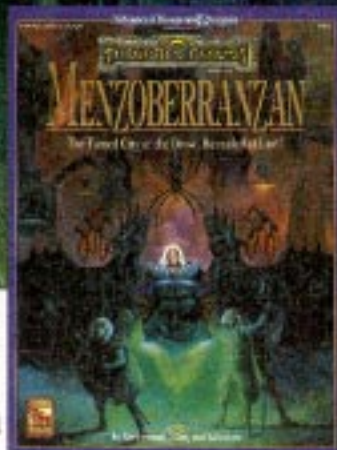
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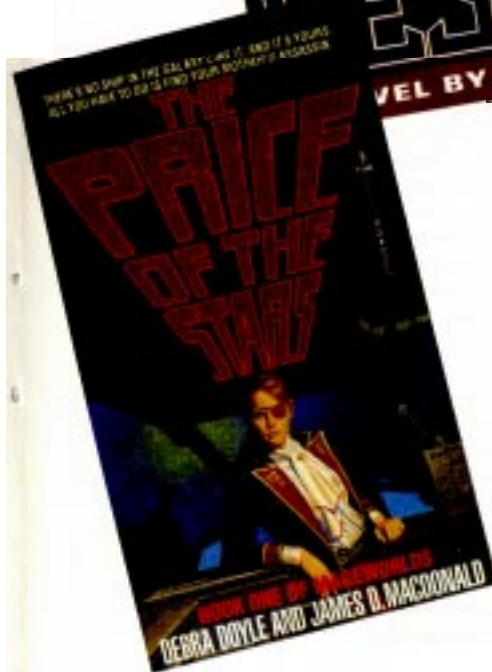
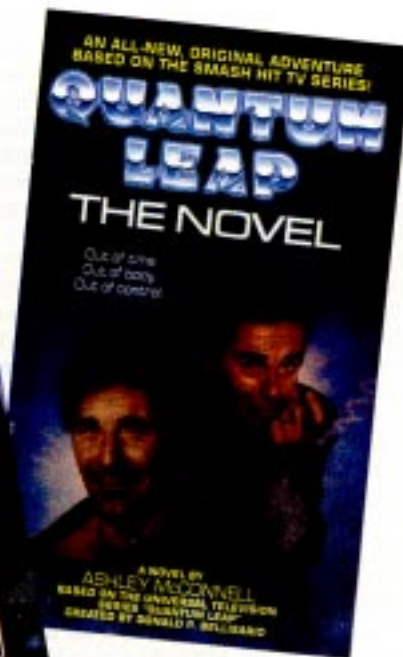
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Of spirit rings,
mage's blood, and the price of stars

THE SPIRIT RING

Lois McMaster Bujold

Baen 0-671-72142-9 \$17.00

There's a lot of valuable material in *The Spirit Ring* from a gamer's point of view; a vivid Italian Renaissance setting, a variety of well-developed magic, and a plausibly pragmatic approach to political intrigue. The only thing that's missing is a sense of structure; Lois McMaster Bujold can't seem to decide whose story is at the heart of what's otherwise a well-crafted novel.

Initially, the protagonist seems to be Fiametta Beneforte, daughter of master craftsman and wizard, Prospero Beneforte. Fiametta has inherited some mea-

sure of magical ability from her father, but Prospero is reluctant to train her in its use despite her intense curiosity. When Prospero is killed during a palace coup, Fiametta must seek allies before the would-be Duke Ferrante can enslave the alchemist's spirit and secure his hold on the reins of power.

At that point, though, the focus shifts to Thur Ochs, an unpolished young man whose brother is another of Ferrante's victims. It is Thur who infiltrates Ferrante's household under the guidance of the scholar-mage Abbot Monreale, and Thur who retains the status of viewpoint character for most of the rest of the book.

Yet Fiametta remains a significant presence, assisting with Monreale's magical counterstrokes and emerging as a romantic interest for Thur.

Bujold's problem is that she introduces too many parallel plot threads and fails to weave them together smoothly. Neither Fiametta nor Thur can carry the tale alone, yet they are only rarely together—which makes the romance hard to accept. Thur's adventures take time away from Fiametta's and Monreale's struggles with the ethics of spirit-magic, and the magical episodes steal space from Ferrante's political machinations. No one story element emerges as dominant, and the subplots compete for attention rather than reinforcing each other.

That's frustrating, because Bujold's treatment of magic is thoughtful and distinctive, especially where it deals with magic-use by the clergy. The spirit ring, too, is a cleverly double-edged idea, and the political and tactical strategies of Monreale and Ferrante are intelligently set out.

The uniform excellence of the detail work, though, doesn't save the book as a whole. While *The Spirit Ring* has much in it that gamers will appreciate, the story isn't good enough to justify buying it in hardcover. All but the most affluent and impatient readers will be better off waiting for the paperback.

MAGE'S BLOOD & OLD BONES

Elizabeth Danforth & Michael A. Stackpole, eds.
Flying Buffalo, Inc. 0-940244-66-7
\$7.95

TALES OF TALISLANTA

Stephan Michael Sechi, ed.
Wizards of the Coast 1-880992-027
\$5.00

As Michael Stackpole points out in the afterword to *Mage's Blood & Old Bones*, gaming fiction is becoming commonplace. Game universes that don't have novels or anthologies attached to them are more unusual than those that do. The trick lies in making a particular anthology distinctive; not only do the individual stories need to be well told, but the whole should convey a sense of the game universe. Stackpole and Elizabeth Danforth do that job very well in their collection of fiction from the world of the TUNNELS & TROLLS* (T&T) game; Stephan Sechi is less successful in his book of TALISLANTA* game-derived stories.

In part, one can't help but be impressed by the T&T book's crisp, attractive packaging. The large-format design shows the cover art well, and the interior pages are printed on a smooth, bright white paper that sets off the interior illustrations to definite advantage.

But *Mage's Blood & Old Bones* isn't just pretty. It's also brisk, amusing reading that succeeds admirably in capturing the free-wheeling, rowdy flavor of T&T adventuring. Only in the T&T game would you

meet the cheerfully dim but dangerous ogres of Mark O'Green's "Compatriot Games" or the assortment of fast-talking rascals populating Bear Peters' "Where There's a Wizard There's A Way" and Ken St. Andre's two-part tale of a pair of thieves trying not to become breakfast food for an assortment of enemies. Most of the contributors are veteran designers or enthusiasts for the T&T universe, which goes a long way toward keeping the stories within the spirit of the game world.

The anthology's other bonuses are a perceptive if rather general introduction by novelist Dennis McKiernan, and an afterword by Stackpole that provides extensive, valuable background notes on the history of the T&T game universe in general and the anthology in particular. The essays lend context to the collection, and Stackpole's afterword is especially welcome as a friendly introduction to the business side of the gaming industry.

Tales of Talislanta is a harder volume to like. As rack-sized paperbacks go, it's slender and visually nondescript. The print is small and crowded, P.D. Breeding-Black's interior illustrations are clean but undistinguished, and the map in the front is decidedly cramped.

There are nine stories in the book, but only six contributors—editor Sechi tells three tales himself, and two more come from Deborah Millitello, whose fiction has appeared often in DRAGON® Magazine's pages. M. C. Summer's work has also appeared in DRAGON issues, and veteran fantasists Ru Emerson and Lawrence Watt-Evans are also represented.

Most of the stories are good sword-and-sorcery material, though two of them—Sechi's opening piece and a tale by newcomer Simon Shapiro—are light on plot, and Sechi's prose has a tendency to get overly ornate for no discernible reason. Millitello's "Survival," by contrast, is a well-executed atmospheric piece, Emerson's "Of Women and Honor" takes a slave-merchant's son on a cleverly-plotted adventure, and Sechi's "Rogues" is the obligatory second-story caper, which succeeds despite its flowery narration.

Though the stories are entertaining enough, one does not emerge from the collection with any kind of overall grasp of the Talislanta game world. Part of the problem may be scope; the tales diverge widely in time as well as in geographic location, and only the first story touches on a major turning point in the world's history. Otherwise, the contributions tend to be narrowly character-driven, which makes for better reading than world-building. *Tales of Talislanta* is an interesting collector's item (it was apparently distributed only to game dealers, not to booksellers), but it's of minimal value as a gaming accessory.

Gamers who can't find these books locally may contact Wizards of the Coast, Inc. at P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057-0707 for the *Tales of Talislanta* collection;

Flying Buffalo Inc. can be reached at P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale AZ 85252-1467 for the T&T anthology.

THE PRICE OF THE STARS

Debra Doyle and James D. Macdonald

Tor 0-812-51704-0 \$4.50

This review breaks one of my unwritten rules for this column. Ordinarily, after having covered *Knight's Wyrd* in DRAGON issue #187, I'd relegate discussion of further Doyle-and-Macdonald novels to the "Recurring roles" section. But *The Price of the Stars* merits an exception. This first volume in a space-opera trilogy moves with the speed and recklessness of a state-of-the-art roller coaster on overdrive—by rights, it should probably come with airsickness pills.

Our heroine is starpilot Beka Rosselin-Metadi, whose parents are the political leader and the military commander of an interstellar republic that's just emerged—more or less intact, if not victorious—from a war with the mysterious Mageworlds. As the book opens, though, Beka's mother has been assassinated, and her father is recruiting her to search out the conspirators behind the murder.

Beka promptly engineers her own death, adopts the guise of unsavory mercenary Tarnekep Portree, and picks up a variety of willing and co-opted companions to aid in the hunt. Even so, there are an astonishing number of firefights, interplanetary chases, undercover operatives, and lesser villains to be dealt with before the clues unfold far enough to yield definite answers—and the news that capturing their target will require infiltrating (and escaping from) the single best-defended security installation in the galaxy.

If this conjures up images of *Star Wars* on steroids, it should. Doyle and Macdonald pull no punches and leave no witnesses. There are interesting reptilian aliens, Adepts with exotic psionic powers, an interstellar smugglers' league, a secret asteroid base, a benefactor with a mysterious past, enough small arms and fast starships to blow the special-effects budgets of any six SF-action movies you care to name, and—perhaps most startling—a cast of characters who are genuinely likeable and sympathetic. Despite the furious pace and the nearly constant pyrotechnics, the authors manage to give their heroes a sense of dimension, and there's a dusting of wry, sometimes black humor that counterbalances the violence.

Doyle and Macdonald have built a big universe in this book, and though it's the first of a trilogy, it's also complete in itself; the cliffhangers are all in the middle of the novel, not at the end. It's been hard to find good starfaring swashbucklers lately, but *The Price of the Stars* is just that. Players of space-battle RPGs should consider this one a must-buy—and so should anyone else with an eye for a lively action-adventure yarn.

OUT OF NIPPON

Nigel Findley

West End 0-87431-345-7 \$4.95

The good news is that this novel-length adventure set in the TORG* role-playing universe works a good deal better than West Ends earlier series of short-story collections highlighting specific segments of the game world. The bad news is that, while Nigel Findley's tale of corporate and tropical jungles is crisply and competently told, it's still more reminiscent of pulp stereotypes than of a sophisticated modern thriller.

The Nagara Corporation is a good example. Nowadays, the giant, domineering super-corporation is a stock villain, and Findley's Nagara is no different from a SHADOWRUN* game megacorp or the nemesis in a would-be cyberpunk novel. So, it's neither surprising nor terribly interesting when we learn that Nagara is working on a mysterious genetic research project. And when American scientist and Nagara employee Nikki Carlson begins to guess that something odd is going on, it's no surprise that she's targeted for an assassination attempt and later sent off to a remote and dangerous test site.

The shift to the jungles of Orrorsh—game-speak for Indonesia—trades the pseudo-cyberpunk plot for a pseudo-B-movie plot. One menace is a weretiger whose trademark is its deadly cunning;

the other is a giant tentacled monster capable of pulling a helicopter out of the sky. Fortunately, there's a standard-issue Victorian scientific expedition on hand to come to Nikki's rescue at strategic moments.

Finally, the climax arrives. Findley provides enough foreshadowing so that the revelation he springs is no great surprise, but he does manage to make Nikki's ultimate confrontation memorable and distinctive. If the rest of the novel showed this much color and invention, *Out of Nippon* would merit a solid recommendation.

That's simply not the case, however. The prose and plot are straightforward enough, but there's simply no energy in the book. The story feels as if it was written on autopilot, and readers will find it entirely too easy to read it that way as well.

BEST DESTINY

Diane Carey

Pocket 0-671-79587-2 \$20.00

Star Trek novels have been arriving in waves in recent months, one barely on the stands before another arrives to bump it off the bestseller lists. But just when you'd think every possible plot had been wrung out of Captain James T. Kirks career, Diane Carey's new adventure pulls a brand new idea out of its hat, and delivers

what may be the single best character study in the series' literary canon.

The book is a loose sequel to Carey's earlier *Final Frontier* and like that book, most of its events occur long before Jim Kirk assumes command of the starship Enterprise. Instead, the captain is Robert April, and Jim is a brash, smart-aleck sixteen-year-old dragged into space by his father in an effort to derail him from a career in juvenile delinquency. But what begins as a routine shuttle jaunt turns dangerous when space pirates attempt to steal the shuttlecraft out from under the Federation's nose, and the resulting crisis proves to be just the right catalyst to turn rebellious "Jimmy" into the beginnings of a capable Starfleet officer.

The concept of James Kirk as a less than respectable teenager is startling at first, but Carey lays a credible foundation for the interpretation. Jimmy's prickly, defensive character is quickly and convincingly established, then plausibly developed over the course of the novel until he and his father must work together to avoid certain destruction at the pirates' hands. *Best Destiny* doesn't fit the neat, clean mold of most *Star Trek* adventures; this is a gritty, often hand-to-hand battle of a book that is nonetheless unfailingly true to the vision behind the series. And as if that wasn't enough, Carey has one final rabbit in her bag of tricks. There's a clever plot twist

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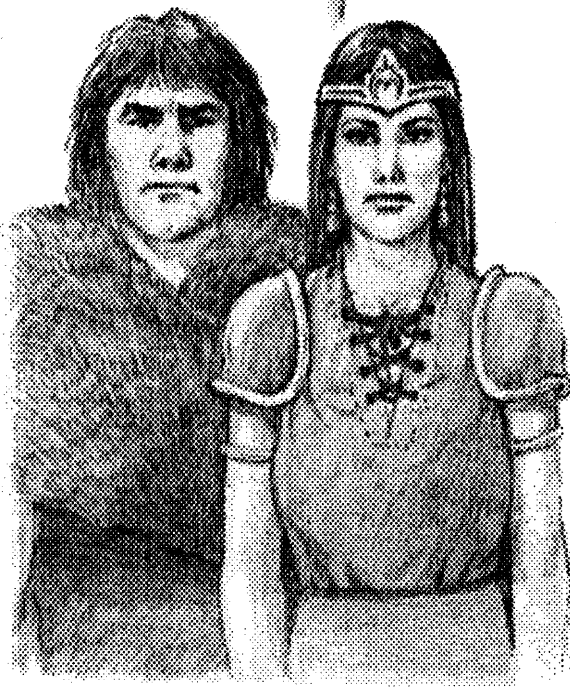
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behind what looks like a throwaway framing story, and an ending that takes the novel from early *Star Trek* history to the twilight of Kirk's career, reinforcing the primary plot line to excellent effect.

Best Destiny is one of the few *Star Trek* novels that's deserved its upgrade to hard-cover format; Carey's character-driven story is a well-crafted tale by any measure. By series-universe standards, it's little short of phenomenal.

QUANTUM LEAP: The Novel

Ashley McConnell

Ace 0-441-69322-9 \$4.99

Although I enjoy most TV science-fiction shows, I've been at best a sporadic viewer of NBC's *Quantum Leap*. So I was a bit surprised to realize, after reading this first in a series of books about Dr. Sam Beckett's exploits, that *Quantum Leap* is the television equivalent of a very unusual role-playing campaign.

Sam, of course, is the player character, catapulted back and forth through time to land in a different life in each new adventure. But rather than having a single, unchanging set of game attributes, his physical—and sometimes mental—abilities change from leap to leap to match those of the person whose role he assumes. In Ashley McConnell's novel, for instance, he's Bob Watkins, a slightly handicapped amusement-park worker whose unpolished intellect masks flashes of uncanny foresight.

Neither Sam nor his audience knows who's in charge of the game, but for all practical purposes, the holographic AI and the sentient supercomputer Ziggy are Sam's direct line to the game master. It's Ziggy who calculates just what change Sam must effect to set history back on its proper course, and AI who acts both as Ziggy's electronic link to Sam and Sam's interface with Ziggy. Sam's job this time seems simple enough: he's to prevent a fatal accident fated to occur when the park's new roller coaster opens. Ziggy, however, is having problems of its own, and so Sam must discover on his own just what went wrong and how he can stop it from going wrong again.

McConnell does very well at portraying the peculiar mix of advantages and limitations that go with Sam's quantum-leaped persona. In particular, she's good at not taking unfair advantage of the Swiss-cheese holes in Sam's formerly photographic memory; what could be used as a convenient plot device is instead sensitively portrayed as an intensely frustrating nuisance. The thoughtful characterizations extend to the supporting players as well, especially park owner Aline Schaeber, who stands to lose her family business if the roller coaster isn't a spectacular financial success.

The mystery of the coaster accident is executed only slightly less smoothly; the occasional "villain's mind at work" glimpses are a bit jarring in what's other-

wise a fairly low-key tale, and tend to distract the reader's attention from the problems facing Aline and "Bob." But the overall structure is sound and effectively paced, and the story is an effective balance between a whodunit and a human-interest yarn.

The book's attraction for gamers, though, lies in watching the *Quantum Leap* premise described in enough detail to make its role-playing possibilities clear. McConnell succeeds both in telling a good story and building a plausible role-playing universe. Designing a game system around Sam Beckett's world would pose unique challenges, but it's a project too intriguing to ignore; if I were series creator Don Bellisario, I'd be looking around for someone to license the gaming rights.

Recurring roles

Tom Deitz's *Dreambuilder* (AvoNova, \$4.99), second in the "Cardalba" trilogy, concerns a rural Georgian family with strange mental powers. Look for one of the strangest romantic triangles you're likely to find in modern fantasy, for Deitz's usual intensely realized characters, and for magic that's both intimate and epic at once.

There's one more newly arrived second volume of a trilogy in the stack this month, but *King Javan's Year* (Del Rey, \$20) suffers from a bad case of predictability and much too little emphasis on the intricacies of Deryni magic that are Katherine Kurtz's remaining strength. There's little doubt of what will happen in this book, so the major interest is in how it happens, but Kurtz fails to create the strong sense of atmosphere that usually permeates her Deryni tales. The writing feels rushed, and the focus on young King Javan severely undercuts the importance of the Deryni to the novel.

Shadow Dance (Ace, \$4.99) is the third in Anne Logston's series about a cheerfully clever thief, and apart from a spectacularly inappropriate cover painting, it's a pleasure from first to last. There are lost races, a mysterious temple, a deadly epidemic, and hints of romance, but not even a direct confrontation with a god can put Shadow off her stride for long. Logston has more than proven herself as one of fantasy's most purely entertaining new writers, and watching for each new book from her desk is a definite pleasure.

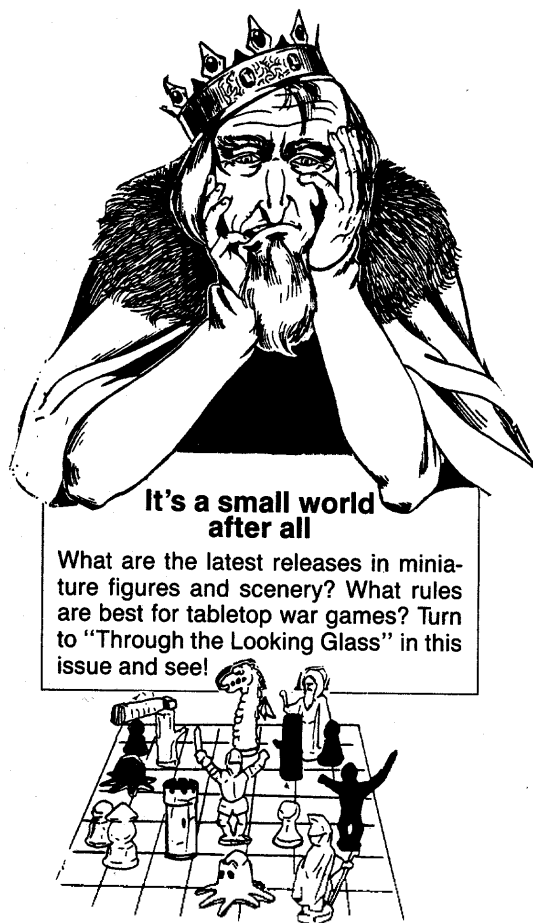
Meanwhile, this is also the month for fantasy writers to turn to science fiction, Laurell K. Hamilton is the first, with a *Star Trek: The Next Generation* adventure that finds Lt. Worf and Counselor Troi forced to conduct a tricky diplomatic mission when Captain Picard is accused of murdering one of the ambassadors. *Nightshade* (Pocket, \$5.50) has some shaky moments, and spends rather too little time with Picard, but Hamilton's aliens are inventively designed and the mystery is neatly crafted.

The other genre switch comes from Mercedes Lackey and Ellen Guon, who

join forces again to present *Freedom Flight* (Baen, \$4.99), a novel set in the computer-game universe of Origin Systems' *Wing Commander* space-combat simulator. This isn't the duo's best endeavor—there are really too many characters and too much plot here for the size of the book, though familiarity with the game isn't required to follow the story. Still, what we get is readable, briskly paced, and authoritative (Guon is a former Origin staffer who has also contributed to the electronic side of the *Wing Commander* universe).

Lackey's most recent solo work, meanwhile, is *Winds of Change* (DAW, \$20), continuing the adventures of Elspeth, Darkwind, and their allies as magic forcefully reasserts its role in Valdemar's affairs. Most of the action remains centered far to the south of Elspeth's kingdom, where Darkwind and his fellow Tayledras Adepts struggle to bring a variety of corrupted magic under benign control, and arch-villain Mornelithe Falconsbane continues to be a strong presence. There are some very good individual scenes here, and the climax neatly points the plot back toward Valdemar and a dramatic wrap-up in the next volume. Ω

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Something magical for the compleat savage

Spell-casters who choose one of the "savage" kits from *The Complete Wizard's Handbook* or *Complete Priest's Handbook*—kits such as the Anagakok, Savage Wizard, Savage Priest, or Barbarian Priest—would feel strange using most magical items. Carefully crafted wands, rings, scrolls, and miscellaneous magical devices are out of place in the type of magic used by Stone Age tribes. There should be a few items in the treasure lists that look and act like the product of less-civilized spell-casters. I submit these few items as examples.

Headdress of peaceful contact

This elaborate headdress, made of feathers, teeth, beadwork, and leather, gives the savage priest who wears it several benefits when speaking to intelligent sylvan creatures. Faerie races (e.g., brownies, pixies, sylphs), unicorns, centaurs, and dryads, will automatically be friendly to the wearer, as though they were animals under an *animal friendship* spell. The wearer will be able to converse in the creatures' language and will not be subjected to the creatures' voluntary or involuntary harmful effects. Thus, the wearer would not have to make a saving throw if he sees a nymph, nor would a dryad try to charm him. Up to 2 HD of beings per level of the wearer are so affected; others will be initially disinclined to harm the wearer, though they won't be under the headdress's effect.

Should the wearer ever try to abuse the power of the headdress, its power will be destroyed, and the wearer cursed so that any sylvan creature who sees him will have a hostile reaction.

XP Value: 750

Spirit skull

This item, of limited value to travelers and none to dwellers in civilization, is quite valuable to tribal mages and witch doctors. A spirit skull must be hung up in a tent or tree for one week prior to its use. After that, the skull has taught itself about its new environment and established a range of 1,000' diameter. It then provides the following benefits:

1. The skull may be consulted as a sage whose field of study is the surrounding region. For instance, if hung in a jungle village, the skull will have fields of study in jungle fauna and flora found within its range, the history of any ruins or cities within its range, and the geographic layout within its range. It can tell the owner where to find a certain medical plant or spell component, what the weather will be like, and where a lost ring might be found. The sage function may be consulted three times a day: once at dawn, once at noon, and once at dusk.

2. The skull serves as a warning system. During the week of conditioning, the skull makes note of all intelligent creatures residing in the area, plus all unintelligent creatures with more than 3 HD. There-

after, any new such creature that enters the skull's range causes the skull to keen. This sound is audible only to the savage mage and is not loud enough to awaken him from a sound sleep. Should such a creature come within 100' of the village, the skull wails. This sound will awaken the savage mage.

3. The skull may be used to cast any *detect* spell upon a being or device brought before it. The skull may cast *detect magic*, *detect evil*, *detect charm*, *detect lie*, *detect scrying*, and *detect poison*, once each per day, on command.

To the uninitiated, the spirit skull is simply a skull of a large animal, painted with strange symbols and bedecked with tufts of hair, leather, and teeth. It shows strong evocation magic if magic is detected for. A savage mage will recognize it for what it is at once, on sight.

XP Value: 1,200

Ointment of mage-smelling

The secret formula for this herbal lotion has never been committed to writing, being passed on orally from master to initiate for generations. When rubbed on the nose of a mage, it bestows the ability to detect the exact number of spells held within another spell-caster's mind. A mage from a nonsavage kit must practice five times with the ointment before being able to use it properly. Only a savage mage, because of his years of experience in the use of the ointment, is able to use it to its

BAZAAR of the Bizarre

by James R. Collier

Artwork by Steve Schwartz

full potential.

The user senses the magical force stored when a mage has memorized a spell. It doesn't detect devices, spells stored because of a *ring of wizardry* or *spell storing*, items like a book of *infinite spells*, or the innate spell-like abilities of monsters. It also cannot distinguish between types of spells, although a savage mage can determine the number of spell levels the "smelled-out" character has, within a range of 2d4. For instance, a civilized wizard with one fourth-level spell, two third-level, three second-level, and four first-level spells—a total of 20 spell levels—will be sniffed out by a savage mage as having 15 + 2d4 levels (20 being the center point of the 2d4 range, reached by adding 15 to 5, the mean of a 2d4 roll). If the sniffed-out character is a wild mage, the savage mage must guess spell levels within a range of 2d6 instead (note that wild mages, like all specialist wizards, have extra spells per level). A minimum of one spell level will always be detected.

The ointment detects only current spells stored. A 12th-level mage who has cast all but three 1st-level spells will show up as a weak spell-caster.

Ointment of mage-smelling is found in small gourds. If tasted, it acts as a mild poison (save at + 4 or be nauseated and unable to attack or defend for one round). A savage mage recognizes it at once if allowed to sniff the substance. Enough will be found (if in a treasure hoard) for

5 + 1d20 applications. Each application lasts for six turns. It takes one full turn to detect a mage using this method, and the user must get within 5' of the mage to smell anything.

XP Value: 250

Drums of menace

These magical instruments are a pair of large drums, weighing 30 lbs. each. A pair of finely carved drumsticks are usually found (90% chance) with the drums, if it is part of a treasure hoard. A savage wizard may play the drums with the sticks or his bare hands; all other classes must use the sticks.

When played, a quiet but distinct beat fills the air for 1,000' in all directions. All intelligent creatures friendly to the savage player are immune to the effect of the drums. All others are afflicted with *suspicion*. As long as the drums are played, affected listeners become paranoid. All encounters, even with potential allies, are considered hostile. Morale checks receive a - 6 modifier. Movement slows to one-third normal, as the listeners tiptoe along, stopping frequently to listen for ambushes and check for traps. Illusions are more likely to be believed (- 2 on disbelief rolls). Despite the victims' vigilance, however, attackers friendly to the drum player always have surprise and always gain the initiative in melee.

Beating the drums is strenuous. After one hour of beating, a character must

make a Constitution check on 1d20 to see if the drumming can be continued. If passed, a further check must be made every turn with a cumulative modifier of - 1 per roll. Once the drumming stops, the drums cannot produce the menacing effect for 24 hours.

XP Value: 7,000

Powder of images

This strange substance, which looks like multicolored sand, is useful in discovering the causes of illness, accidents, and evil happenings. When a pinch is thrown into a fire built for this purpose, the resulting cloud of smoke forms an image. If there is no evil cause (just plain bad luck), the image is of the savage mage. If the evil events have been caused by a monster or NPC, an image of the monster or NPC appears. The image will be clear, although in the case of monsters that all appear to look alike, the PCs will have to work out for themselves which individual cast the spell. If the evil event was caused by a deed of one of the villagers, the scene will be depicted in the smoke. Evil brought about by a device or artifact without an evil character controlling it will produce an image of the device alone.

If three pinches of powder are cast into the fire, a trail of smoke will wind its way from the flames toward the cause of the evil. The smoke will stretch 100' in its search. For every additional pinch, another 100' is added. Once the source has

been reached, the smoke will curl around the person or object. The smoke cannot be dispelled, blown away, or affected by any means. It has no other effect.

The powder can be used to track down the cause of an individual's problems, but due to the rarity of the substance this is done for VIPs alone. In this case, the fire must be built in an enclosed space, such as

a hut, and need not be large. Otherwise, the fire must be built in the center of the village and must be a large bonfire.

This powder is found in small beaded bags made from the tanned skins of monsters. Usually a single pouch will contain $6 + 1d8$ pinches.

XP Value: 400

Rattle of exorcism

This item is useless except in the hands of a tribal priest. It is an elaborately painted gourd containing exotic materials that make the rattling. The device displays abjuration magic if tested for. When used in a ceremonial dance of purification, the rattle can be used to cast a special *dispel magic* spell effective only against any spell of the enchantment/charm school, from either a priest or wizard. It will also dispel the necromantic spell *magic jar*. The ceremonial dance must last one hour plus 10 minutes for every level of the spell's caster. If a pair of rattles can be obtained, the time will be reduced by half.

XP Value: 600

Mask of stealth

This carved wooden mask is employed by savage priests when they are trying to free their fellows from captivity. When activated, the mask gives the wearer 70% success in lock-picking abilities. In addition, anyone seeing the wearer must make a saving throw vs. spells or else will feel that the priest belongs in the area somehow, thus not bothering him or raising an alarm.

The mask will not benefit anyone accompanying the priest. If the priest attempts to use the mask for thievery, the mask will *curse* him. The mask itself will disappear, and the priest will be transformed into a 1st-level thief.

XP Value: 2,000

Ω



Adventure, ho!

Want to curl up with a good book and set your mind free? See "The Role of Books" in this issue for reviews of the best in recent fantasy and science-fiction novels.

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Completing the

Add fops and brigands to your

by Jon Winter

Artwork by Scott Rosema

The *Complete Bard's Handbook* dramatically expanded the horizons of the bard class, describing many new kits, proficiencies, magical items, spells, rules for nonhuman demi-bards and more. This article adds further to the bard's repertoire of possibilities.

Each Dungeon Master should read through this article and decide if either of the kits below are appropriate for her campaign. The format of each kit is identical to that found in the *Complete Bards Handbook*.

Note: All kit ability requirements are in addition to the standard requirements for bards—Dexterity 12, Intelligence 13, and Charisma 15.

* Indicates a proficiency from the *Complete Thief's Handbook* (pages 16-21).

** Indicates a proficiency from the *Complete Bards Handbook* (pages 64-66).

Dandy

Specialty: Any artform needed to flirt shamelessly with young, attractive, and rich members of the opposite sex; especially poetry, music (instruments or song), and dance. Practical jokes and tricks are also high on the list of the dandy's favorite pastimes.

Qualifications: No additional ability requirements. Dandies tend to be innocent (but not necessarily naive), and are therefore best suited to being of a good or neutral alignment. Dandies may be human, half-elf, or halflings.

Introduction: "What-ho Officer! Cool night to be out, isn't it. My name? Oh, I'm Kelar Bladesemmer You probably know my father, Taeros. Yes? Oh, jolly good!

"I suppose you'd like to know why I was just climbing out of that window. No, no, good heavens, I'm not a thief or anything shocking like that. There's a perfectly simple explanation. You see, my aunt, well, she's only really a half-aunt but that doesn't matter, anyway, my aunt says I



Complete Bard

campaign's bardic repertoire

mustn't go out after sundown while my parents are away—in Baldur's Gate, you know. Of course, she's not usually such a frightful old dragon, but I suppose she's just cross that I broke her vase. It was an ugly old thing, really, but she's so sentimental about her china, although I probably shouldn't have dropped it, it's just that I was surprised, you see, when she yelled at me last night. . .

"Anyway, she locked me in my room and said I couldn't go to the party. I ask you, it's just not on, is it? She said I'd been to too many parties this week. Since when was three too many? So I had to climb out of the window and down the roses. I won't do that again in a hurry—I've torn my darned chemise, pardon my language. So if you'd just excuse me, officer, I'll just be along to the party. Must dash. I'll be seeing you around then, officer."

Description: Every medieval city has its powerful or noble families that hold great sway over the guilds or even the rulers. Children of such families learn the skills of reading and writing, politics and diplomacy, ancient languages, and heraldry. Many are destined to enter the nobility, and others will become prominent council members or guild leaders. However, there are always the disappointments . . .

The dandy is one of these. The dandy is likely to be a younger child; one who does not appreciate the nuances of the ancient languages, or is bored stiff by politics. Whatever the reason, the dandy rebels against the dull, over-serious life of his parents, becoming a fun-loving, childish prankster. Only tolerated by parents, the dandy lives life to the full, continually landing in all kinds of trouble as practical jokes and innocent schemes (usually concerning attractive members of the opposite sex) backfire.

Dandies dress in fancy, brightly colored clothing (usually made of expensive silks). The typical dandy can often be found



hanging around sophisticated wine bars in rich areas of cities (taverns are far too crude and rough) and is very rarely seen "doing a proper day's work." Dandies hate getting their hands dirty! They are often frowned upon for their arrogance and laziness, for some dandies treat the lower classes like second-rate citizens. Even so, it is hard to dislike a dandy, for the eternal optimism and wisecracking remarks are endearing, if perhaps a little annoying.

Dandies remain blissfully ignorant of the real world around them, living inside the protected shell of nobility. They have little concept of poverty or real danger, for these are things to which they have never been exposed. Magic is treated as an amusing toy, fun to dabble in and good for playing tricks, but not taken seriously enough to be studied in great depth. Similarly, music and acting are enjoyed and performed by dandies, but not with such zeal as with other bards. Dandies love to show off by playing more and more outrageous jokes on friends and acquaintances.

Note: Characters with this kit will have views on life similar to warrior and thief swashbucklers, although the dandy bard is even more foppish than the swashbuckler. The dandy spends less time stealing and fighting, and more time just having fun (although if this can be accomplished by stealing and fighting, then so be it!)

Role: Fulfilling absolutely no useful role in society whatsoever, some dandies show contempt for the lowly working classes, as "anyone who works for a living must be common." Most dandies must therefore have very rich—and tolerant—parents, or have otherwise acquired a vast amount of wealth to fritter away.

Even a dandy will eventually become bored of the city life, for its thrills seem stale compared with those bragged of by adventurers. For this reason, many dandies eventually decide to leave the comfort of their homes and venture outside the city walls (many for the first time) to experience the ultimate thrill of adventure.

This kit works best in city-oriented campaigns, although an interesting role-playing theme could be the dandy's discovery of possible exploitation of peasants by the nobility (and subsequent feelings of guilt), if he spends much time among country folk. A different campaign might revolve around the adventures experienced by a group of young, rich, decadent city nobles. Classes chosen could include warrior and thief swashbucklers, a dandy bard, a young priest struggling to keep his religious vows, etc.

Secondary skills: Gambler may be chosen, but dandies usually have none.

Weapon proficiencies: Trained in the weapons of the aristocracy from a young age, dandies must choose their initial weapons from: bows (short or cross, but not long), polearms, short sword, dagger, stiletto, main-gauche, rapier, and sabre. Other weapons may be learned later if the dandy has access to training.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Bonus:* Dancing, Etiquette, Singing. *Recommended:* Acting**, Artistic ability, Fast-talking*, Gaming, Heraldry, Languages (ancient or modern), Local history, Musical instrument, Poetry**, Riding (land-based), Tumbling.

Equipment: Dandies, unused to heavy exertion, only can wear leather, padded, or studded leather (under their fancy, voluminous clothes), and do not know how to use shields properly. To ensure they only wear finest quality garments, dandies must spend at least twice the price on all clothes listed in the *PHB* and the *Arms and Equipment Guide*, and must always pay more for equipment and armor (about 25-50% more).

Special benefits: *Weapon of choice:* Young nobles are trained to use certain weapons from about the age of seven for self-defense, pleasure, and exercise. Favored weapons for this training (the "aristocratic" weapons from the Renaissance years) are the stiletto, main-gauche, rapier, and sabre. Because they undergo intense and continuous training in these weapons (whether they like it or not), dandies may specialize in just one of these. They gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls and a +1 bonus on damage rolls.

Bottomless coffers: The noble families of large cities are all incredibly rich compared with the "common folk." In theory, dandies should be able to live in luxury without working, provided for by their parents. They start play with 5d6 X 10 gp from their family's ample coffers.

Furthermore, the DM may allow the dandy to "borrow" money from his parents to fund his extravagant lifestyle occasionally, albeit at levels that are not high enough to unbalance the campaign. Many noble families are none too pleased by the foppish behavior of their children, and dandies could be disinherited, or lose their financial aid, by their kin if they overly abuse their privileges.

Wit and charm: Dandies are naturally outgoing, friendly figures. This causes others, especially members of the opposite sex, to be drawn to them. Their natural charm, wit, and innocence will enhance the reactions of those who already feel positive toward the dandy, increasing them by one place if the dandy makes a successful Charisma check with a +2 bonus. However, on a roll of 20 or more, the dandy has offended someone—maybe as the butt of a joke—whose reaction is shifted two places worse. Those who are already feeling negative toward the dandy begin to view him as a useless, idle layabout. This is especially true in the case of downtrodden, hard-working peasants, who resent the dandy's patronizingly superior tone of voice. Optionally, the DM could have players tell a joke when using this skill, and assign an additional +3 bonus or -3 penalty if the joke is good or bad, appropriate or unsuitable.

Dandy's luck: The wild and unlikely schemes hatched by dandies seem to have

an uncanny knack of working. When everything seems to be terrible, the dandy is usually able to concoct a plan that could work . . . perhaps . . . a bit. The DM must adjudicate this skill on a case-by-case basis.

Special hindrances:

Dandy's luck: The dandy's luck is wildly unpredictable, and can bring negative effects as well as positive. This usually occurs when everything seems to be running smoothly, and can throw a real wrench in the works. Again, this must be used creatively by the DM to add color and intrigue to campaigns—rules cannot be given to cover every possibility.

Note: For two excellent examples of dandy characters, please refer to Danilo Thann in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels *Elfshadow* by Elaine Cunningham (although he's a wizard, his personality is perfect), and to Giogi Wyvernspur in *The Wyvern's Spur* by Kate Novak and Jeff Grubb.

Outlaw

Specialty: Thievery, musical instruments, storytelling, and song.

Qualifications: To survive in the cut-throat criminal underworld, outlaw bards must be physically fitter than other bards; they must therefore have a minimum Strength and Dexterity of 12 and 14 respectively. Outlaws are criminals, and therefore are not suited to lawful alignments. Humans, elves, half-elves, and gnomes may be outlaws. Halflings may become outlaws, but are able to advance to twelfth level only. As with all halflings, they cannot cast magical spells, but do get special resistance to spells they "know" (see the CBH page 53 for rules on halflings resisting magic).

Introduction: "Well met. I am Melen-drian, although more know me as The Red Cape. I operate in Suzail, Cormyr. Some call me a thief, but I prefer to think of myself as a redistributor of wealth, and corrector of social unfairness. I also get a tremendous thrill when I pull off a major haul! I relieve the wealthy of their valuables, and donate much of my income to charities and churches. Although many realize where this portion of their income is coming from, they do not worry themselves over how it is obtained. Why should some suffer in poverty when others have so much, and do nothing useful for it? That is why I steal."

"In this respect, I think of myself as doing good for the community, but unfortunately, others do not share my view. I blame those rogues who keep all their earnings for themselves—pirates and bandits especially. They abuse their talents for greed, and give me a bad name. I can do nothing to prevent them, however, for they outnumber me fifty to one."

"Anyway, I can't stop here. That fellow across the street is looking at me suspiciously. I've got another job to pull before dawn, and I'm in no mood to be followed tonight. Fare you well."



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The best covers and interior paints from Rifts and its supplements have been collected in a beautiful 1993 calendar. The paper and production quality is the best we could find. The reproduction of the paintings are even better than the actual covers (and no titles to cover the artwork).

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Keith Parkinson cover, interior art by Gustovich, Long, and Ewell. 120 pages — \$11.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

Palladium has moved!

Palladium Books has moved into a new, bigger warehouse and offices, and we finally have lots of space for all those products we've been planning. Write to us at our new location, and request a catalog with the latest information (please include 75 cents).

Description: The outlaw bard (also called the brigand bard) is more inclined toward thieving than other bard characters. While most bards enjoy performance and artistry for their own sakes, outlaw bards need to feel the rush of excitement when burgling houses, and to "perform" for themselves. Some outlaws will even go so far as to leave cryptic clues as to their identity, playing a cat-and-mouse game with the law. Such games gain the outlaw infamy, but also place him at great risk—but risk and thrills are the things most desired by outlaws.

The outlaw bards make full use of all their skills to "earn" money, while avoiding the law at the same time. They have more highly developed thieving skills than other bards, for they practice and use the dexterous arts more often, and the morsels of magical knowledge that they pick up can mean the difference between a successful heist and capture. These abilities, plus their support from the commoners (who have the most to gain from the generous exploits of some outlaws), can often give these bards an edge over their thief counterparts.

Role: Outlaws are sometimes burglars who work with thieves' guilds for personal profit, or occasionally, are members in wilderness-based bandit gangs. Many more, however, are freelance thieves; they show loyalty to no one but themselves.

Good-aligned outlaws are most likely to be from this group; like Melendrian in the example above, they "rob the rich to give to the poor," whereas the evil outlaws rob the rich and poor alike, and keep all the money for themselves!

Outlaws are usually tolerated by thieves' guilds, even those that generally dislike bards, although they tend to treat outlaw bards as "second-rate." Most powerful guilds are anxious to make a successful outlaw bard join their ranks, just to receive a cut of the profits. Outlaws, with the bards wanderlust, rarely feel comfortable in something as rigid and inflexible as a thieves' guild, and the powerful guilds dislike the outlaw's love of unnecessary risks and thrills.

Secondary skills: Gambler, or other appropriate to the character's background.

Weapon proficiencies: Outlaws may use any weapon.

Nonweapon proficiencies: **Bonus:** Disguise, Fast-talking*, Information gathering*, Recommended: Appraising, Begging*, Forgery, Jumping, Local history, Looting*, Observation*, Rope use, Set snares, Tightrope walking, Trailing*.

Equipment: Many outlaws carry a set of thief's picks, and other gear usually only possessed by thieves. Because their activities require agility and fast movements, outlaws dislike wearing bulky armor, as do thieves. Studded leather armor is the

heaviest an outlaw may wear.

Special benefits:

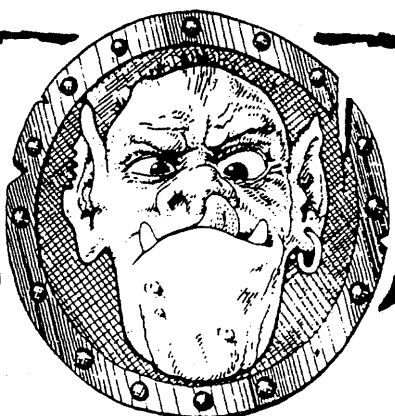
Roguish repertoire: Outlaw bards rely more heavily upon their thieving talents to earn a living than typical bards. It is therefore in their best interest to concentrate as much as possible on learning new thief skills. When first created, the outlaw must choose which one of the thief skills that bards do not normally possess (from "Open locks," "Find/remove traps," "Hide in shadows" or "Move silently") he will choose as a bonus (it begins with 10 points assigned to it). Once picked, this skill cannot be changed.

Increased practice: Outlaws get much more of an opportunity to practice their rogue talents than ordinary bards, and therefore advance more quickly in expertise. At first level, the outlaw receives 35 points (instead of 20) to distribute between his thief skills, and gains an extra 20 (instead of 15) every time he advances a level. All other rules regarding advancement apply normally.

Underworld contacts: Being more criminally aware than other bards, the outlaw is an expert at finding contacts among local thieves. Given an hour in a seedy tavern, and four or five gold pieces for drinks and bribes, an outlaw can find a contact—typically a thief of levels 1-4. This contact can lead the bard to other rogues, take him to the local thieves' guild, exchange information about possible "jobs," or even buy stolen goods to fence at a later date.


Entertaining: Using a combination of singing, instrument playing, storytelling, and bawdy jokes, the outlaw can entertain and influence the reactions of others. This ability functions as the *Influence reactions* of the true bard (CBH page 16).

Special hindrances: Outlaw bards may only keep as much treasure and equipment as they can carry. 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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1992 WINTER FANTASY™ Convention Jan. 8-10 WI

This gaming convention, sponsored by the RPGA™ Network, will be held at the MECCA Convention Center in Milwaukee, Wis. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with a benefit tournament for the Milwaukee Zoo. Registration: \$16 (\$10 for Network members). Write to: WINTER FANTASY™ Convention, RPGA™ Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

WINTER GENESIS VI, Jan. 16-17 CA

This convention will be held at the Hacienda Convention Center in Fresno, Calif. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with anime, a miniatures contest, and a swap meet. Registration: \$20. Dealers and judges are welcome. Write to: PAL Publishing, 5415 E. Washington, Fresno CA 93727; or call: (209) 456-1668. Make checks payable to PAL Publishing.

CONSTITUTION '93, Jan. 29-31 VA

This convention will be held at the Quality hotel in Arlington, Va. Guests include Jay Tummelson. Activities include RPGA™ Network events and role-playing games. Registration: \$10/preregistered or \$15/at the door. Write to: CONSTITUTION, 1737 Seaton St. NW, Washington DC 20009; or call James at: (202) 986-7904.

GAMICON GAMMA, Jan. 29-31 IA

This convention will be held at the Wesley Foundation in Iowa City, Iowa. Guests include Erick Wujcik. Activities include role-playing and miniatures games with RPGA™ Network events. Registration: \$15. Write to: Legends, 2054 8th St., Coralville IA 52241; or call: (319) 339-8701.

PANDEMONIUM 10, Jan. 30-31 *

This convention will be held at the Ryerson Hub Cafeteria in Toronto, Ontario. Activities include over 100 events, two auctions, dealers, and RPGA™ Network games. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Write to: PANDEMONIUM, c/o 17b Wales Ave., Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M5T 1J2; or call: (416) 597-1934.

CYBERCON IV, Feb. 5-7 c o

This convention will be held at the Lory Student Center on the Colorado State University campus in Fort Collins, Colo. Guests include Bruce Sterling. Activities include role-playing games, a costume contest, two video rooms, and open gaming. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend before Jan. 30; \$5/day or \$7/weekend thereafter. Write to: Bill Keyes, Box 412 LSC, Colorado State University, Fort Collins CO 80523; or call: (303) 493-3652.

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '93, Feb. 5-7 IL

This convention will be held at the Univ. of Southern Illinois Student Center in Carbondale, Ill. Events include role-playing and miniatures

games, with a game auction, a miniatures contest, and guest speakers Lawrence Simms and Lester W. Smith. Registration: \$12 preregistered, and \$15 at the door. Send an SASE to: Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, 3rd Floor Student Center, Carbondale IL 62901-4425; or call Joel at: (618) 529-4630.

VISIONCON '93, Feb. 5-7 MO

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn North in Springfield, Mo. Activities include RPGA™ Network events, war games, miniatures-painting contests, an art show, a dealers' room, and a costume contest. Registration: \$10 until Jan. 15; \$15 at the door. Send an SASE to: VISIONCON '93, 1375 S. National, Springfield MO 65804; or call: (417) 863-1155 Monday through Saturday 3-8 P.M.

WARCON '93, Feb. 5-7 TX

This convention will be held at the Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University in College Station, Tex. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with a dealers' room, anime, 24-hour open gaming, and a games auction. Registration: \$12 preregistered, \$15 at the door. Write to: MSC NOVA, Box J-I, Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M, College Station TX 77844.

DUNDRACON XVII, Feb. 12-15 CA

This convention will be held at the San Ramon Marriott in San Ramon, Calif. Events include over 120 game events, seminars, a dealers' room, a painting contest, computer gaming, and a flea market. Registration: \$25 until Feb. 1; \$30/weekend or \$15/day at the door. Write to: DUNDRACON, 1125 Nielson St., Albany CA 94706.

GENGHIS CON XIV, Feb. 12-14 c o

This convention will be held at the Marriott Southeast in Denver, Colo. Activities include gaming, 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.

ORCCON 16, Feb. 12-15 CA

This convention will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt. Events include all types of family, strategy, board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming, with flea markets, an auction, a dealers' area, seminars, demos, and special guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (213) 326-9440.

SHEVACON '93, Feb. 19-21 VA

This convention will be held at the Ingleside Red Carpet Inn in Staunton, Va. Events include roles-playing, miniatures, and historical games, with parties, videos, filking, workshops, panels, a costume contest, a dance, an art show, and an auction. The guest of honor is Allen Wold. Registration: \$22 until Jan. 31, \$25 thereafter; children: \$10. Write to: Susan Shifflett, 15 E. Johnson St., Staunton VA 24401; or call: (703) 885-5530.

HURRICON '93, Feb. 26-28 FL

This convention will be held at the Okaloosa Island Holiday Inn in Fort Walton Beach, Fla. Guests include George Alec Effinger, Margaret Weis, Douglas Niles, David Dorman, and Larry Elmore. Activities include game tournaments, an art show, video rooms, lectures, panels, filking,

- ♦ indicates an Australian convention.
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open gaming, an auction, a dance, a concert, a USAF Space Command demo, and a "Winterfest" for *Beauty and the Beast* TV fans. Registration: \$25 until Jan. 31; \$30 at the door. Write to: Bards Tales Bookshop, 109D Race Track Rd., Ft. Walton Beach FL 32547; or call: (904) 862-7323.

JAXCON '93, Feb. 26-28 FL

This convention will be held at the Radisson Inn at the Jacksonville International Airport in Jacksonville, Fla. Events include all types of games, a miniatures-painting contest, a flea market, a dealers' area, a snack bar, and door prizes. Registration: \$12/weekend until Jan. 12; \$18/weekend thereafter. Single-day rates vary. Write to: JAXCON, PO. Box 4423, Jacksonville FL 32201; or call: (904) 778-1730.

NOT-A-CON V, Feb. 26-28 SC

This convention will be held at Daniel Hall on the campus of Clemson University in Clemson, S.C. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with miniatures contests and open gaming. Registration: \$3 preregistered; \$5 at the door. Write to: Larry Fountain, 807 College Av., Apt. 11, Clemson SC 29631; or call (803) 654-8902.

TOTAL CONFUSION VII, Feb. 26-28 MA

This convention will be held at the Best Western Plaza hotel in Marlborough, Mass. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with RPGA™ Network events, a miniatures-painting contest, and a costume competition. Registration: \$23/weekend or \$9/day preregistered; \$10/day at the door. Club rates are available. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, PO. Box 1463, Worcester MA 01607; or

call: (508) 987-1530.

B-CON '93, Feb. 27-28 IL

This convention will be held at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with game demos, prizes, dealers, miniatures, speakers, and artists. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend preregistered; \$5/day or \$7/weekend at the door. Write to: B-CON Registration, c/o The Medieval College Soc., Bradley Univ., 425 Sisson Hall, Peoria IL 61625.

CON OF THE NORTH '93, Feb. 27-28 MN

This convention will be held at the Landmark Center in St. Paul, Minn. Events include fantasy, war, miniatures, and adventure games, with an RPGA™ Network tournament. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$10/day. Write to: CON OF THE NORTH, PO. Box 18096, Minneapolis MN 55418.

CONTENTION '93, Feb. 27 MD

This convention will be held at Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold, Md. The special guest is author Robert Frezza. Activities include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. GMs are welcome. Registration: \$8 at the door, events fees average \$2 per event. Write to: CONTENTION '93, c/o John Appel, 456 Old Quarterfield Rd. Apt. D-5, Glen Burnie MD 21061.

MINIATURES-PAINTING CONTEST & GAME DAY '93, Feb. 27 IN

This convention will be held at Metalcraft Miniatures and More in Elwood, Ind. Activities include role-playing and war games. There is no entry fee. Fifteen categories of miniatures will

be judged; get the list before entering. Write to: Metalcraft Miniatures and More, 926 N. 9th St., Elwood IN 46036.

CALCON 8, March 19-21 *

This convention will be held at the Marlborough Inn in Calgary, Alberta. Events include role-playing, war, miniatures, and board games, with a comic-book convention, computer gaming, an auction, and dealers. Registration: \$10 until March 1; \$15 at the door. Visitor and day passes are available. Write to: CALCON 8, Box 22206, 401-9 Av. SW, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T2P 4J6; or call Paul at: (403) 281-1574.

VILLECON '93, March 19-21 MO

This convention will be held at the Northwest Missouri State Univ. Conference Center in Maryville, Mo. Events include many RPGA™ Network role-playing events, plus board games, dealers, and contests. Registration: \$7 preregistered; \$10 at the door. Write to: Brad Monger, 517½ W. 7th St., Maryville MO 64448; or call: (816) 582-8174.

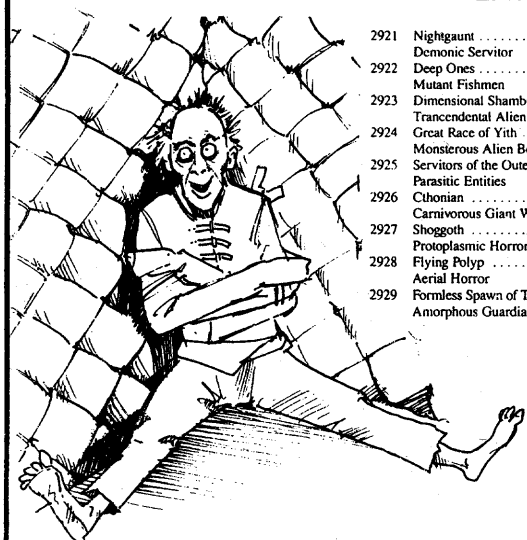
SIMCON XV, March 25-28 NY

This convention will be held at the University of Rochester's River campus in Rochester, N.Y. Events include board, miniatures, and computer games, with a movie room, a dealers' room, and a miniatures-painting contest. Write to: SIMCON, CPU #277146, Univ. of Rochester, Rochester NY 14627-7146; or call: (716) 275-6186.

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CONNCON '93, March 26-28

CT

This convention will be held at the Danbury Hilton & Towers in Danbury, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, and war games, with RPGA™ Network-sanctioned events. Jean Rabe is the guest of honor. Other activities include miniatures, board and war games, a banquet, and dealers. Judges are welcome. Write for preregistration fee information to: CONNCON, P.O. Box 444, Sherman CT 06784-0444.

ONEONTACON '93, March 26-28

NY

This convention will be held at the Hunt Union, on the SUNY College campus in Oneonta, N.Y. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with a dealers' area. Registration costs vary, but students receive a minimum \$1 discount. Preregistration is advised. Write to: Gamers' Guild, c/o Student Activities, State University College, Oneonta NY 13820.

KNIGHT MARCH I, March 27-28

*

This convention will be held at the Pine Ridge Room of the Northumberland Mall in Cobourg, Ontario. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, plus many RPGA™ Network-sanctioned events, miniatures and art competitions, workshops, a silent auction, and speakers including Ed Greenwood and Lawrence Simms. Registration: \$8/day or \$12/weekend (Canadian).

Write to: KNIGHT MARCH, 12 King St. E., Cobourg, Ontario, CANADA K9A 1K7; or call: (416) 372-4245, (705) 741-6079, or (613) 234-9437.

Important: To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that your notice was received. You might also send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please avoid sending convention notices by fax, as this method has not proved to be reliable.



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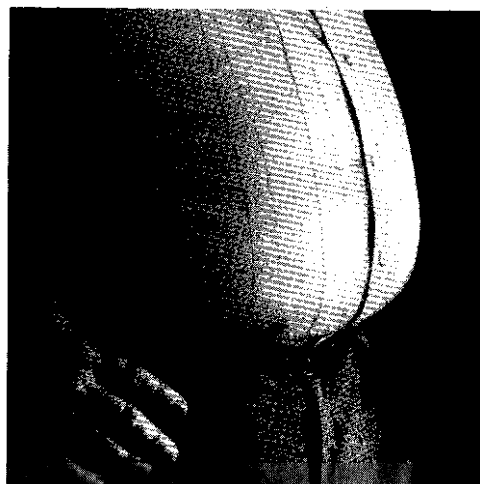
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FORUM

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I thought I would never say this: My AD&D® campaign has died. I started playing the AD&D 1st Edition game back in 1985, and I was a steady player until about three months ago. Lately I realized that I no longer enjoyed the game. The preparation of an adventure for my players became tedious and bothersome, more an irritating exercise than a hobby. All the adventures seemed repetitive, including many prepared ones. I had a terrible thought one day: A bunch of guys can only get together and impersonate gnomes or whatever running around in creature-filled mazes for so long before it becomes old news. Many would say it was the fault of the DM for not keeping the campaign fresh. In my case, I tried everything: the SPELLJAMMER®, RAVENLOFT®, and FORGOTTEN REALMS® settings; my own setting; psionics; character-class kits; etc. I spent a great deal of money and time in the process. My game was still dead.

I am not putting down the AD&D game, although I realize it sounds that way. I enjoyed the game for seven or so years, and I met several new friends in the process. Nor am I putting down role-playing games. I have purchased a new game that has literally captured the imagination of myself and my players: the CHILL® rules from Mayfair Games, Inc. I am utterly fascinated by the conflict between SAVE (Societas Argenti Viae Eternitatis, a.k.a. The Eternal Society of the Silver Way) and the dreaded Unknown. Before playing this game, I put my AD&D campaign to rest, once and for all. Thankfully, TSR has produced an excellent end-all, be-all adventure that could be used to finish the epic story of a handful of heroes: *Vecna Lives!* After you witness a battle between Iuz the Old and Vecna, and you save the world as we know it from total evil, what is there left to do for an encore?

I speak well of the AD&D game. I believe it is a positive thing, and I will remember it as one of the happy activities from my younger years. I still plan to renew my subscription to DRAGON Magazine. The artwork is fabulous, and many of the articles can be used for games other than

the AD&D system. ("Really Good Bad Guys," from #184, and "Secrets of the Masters Revealed," from #177, come immediately to mind.)

Steven Roemer
Calgary, Alberta

As the DM of a long-standing FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign, I am faced with a dilemma that leaves me bemused and in search of a solution. Perhaps your magazine or one of your readers will be able to find me that solution.

The party of PCs in my adventure contains two adept and inventive wizards of 7th level, both able to cast fourth-level spells and, more specifically, both in possession of the fourth-level spell *stoneskin*.

Herein lies the bugbear of my campaign. During each (and every!) rest period in game time, the mages insist upon casting that spell on every member of the party, thus giving each member of the group immediate and indefinite protection from 4-7 physical attacks. This bricks up a number of interesting and potentially exciting plot avenues that my campaign could take. Surprise attacks by marauding brigands are now cynically giggled at. Drow warriors with poisoned crossbow bolts, hoping to capture PCs and take them to the underground cities they call home (and the next section of the adventure!), are now loudly mocked with the confidence of an indestructible super hero. The single, final, most powerful undead guardian warrior in the dungeon (the one every DM is really proud of) is now shattered into a shower of bony shards before it even gets an opportunity to smell the party's breath!

These are three sad examples out of many. Despairing, I put the following argument to the PCs: A mage's most valuable protective spell is *stoneskin*. A mage simply would not cast it on anyone and everyone. Otherwise, what advantage would wizards have?

The group's answer: "Why not? We're not stupid, and we want the best possible chance of completing the adventure and staying alive. Besides, there's no rule against it!"

I just can't keep sending hordes of bandits at them before any major encounter takes place in order to wear out the offending spells. Likewise, there is a believable limit to the number of times you can plant a *dispel magic* zone directly in front of a "final confrontation chamber."

Opinions, comments, solutions, please.

Robert J. Letts
Walsall, West Midlands, U.K.

I feel I must reply to Clarissa Fowler ("Forum," DRAGON issue #183). I am the first to admit that women gamers are in a minority, but creating a separate directory and gaming magazine is hardly likely to encourage male gamers to treat us as equals.

I regularly DM at national conventions in Britain, and I was amused as well as perturbed by a comment from a male gamer, overheard by my husband at the European GEN CON® game fair last year: "Oh, no—I've got the woman DM. How should I play?" If women gamers are seen as needing their own magazine and support from other women, it will only reinforce the opinions of players like that. My aim is to be accepted as a good player and good DM on my merits *regardless* of my sex. My feeling is that most male players and DMs agree with me. (Incidentally, my husband's advice to the player was to play well!)

I also cannot see why male perceptions of women characters and NPCs are of any relevance. I have played male and female characters. At the moment, our gaming group has three new players (two female!), all playing characters of the opposite sex. Having more female characters and NPCs is not going to encourage more women to play. Surely the problem is that many women are unaware of the game's existence. This is probably due to the fantasy book market being aimed at male readers. Most young gamers become interested in gaming after enjoying fantasy books. This is the rationale behind the DRAGONLANCE® and FORGOTTEN REALMS® books, none of which are likely to appeal to females. Would it help if there were more women fantasy authors as well? In my opinion, yes it would.

For me, the joy of role-playing lies in enjoying the company of other people who have a common interest, and an active imagination. Sex, age, race, creed, etc. are immaterial. As a Regional Director for the RPGA™ Network in Europe, one of my priorities is to find ways of getting more women interested in role-playing because they usually play very well. I also want to promote role-playing as a family activity that Mom, Dad, and children can play. The majority of gamers will always be male students, but I hope we can reduce that from 90% to about 70% of all gamers.

I do not want to be listed in a separate directory. I do not want a separate magazine/newsletter. I do not believe many of the female players I know want such things. (If I'm wrong, I know they will write and say so.) I would like to see more women playing, because I believe they can play well and improve the whole game for men as well. Maybe in Europe we are lucky, as most men accept women players without any problem. Women DMs are also more common—I am no longer a minority of one at conventions.

So, good luck, Clarissa—but consider the wider effects of what you are trying to do.

Sally A. Haynes
Selly Oak, Birmingham, U.K.

As a female AD&D game player and DM, I feel it is time that someone raised the issue of the artwork on TSR products. I find it impossible to pick up almost any TSR game supplement, rule-book, magazine, etc. without being regaled with the usual parade of semi-naked women, clad (if the term is appropriate) in the regulation chain-mail bikini or variant and usually very little else. I can cite numerous examples from the DRAGONLANCE saga's women, all of whom are remarkably well-endowed. I also find in the latest issue of DRAGON Magazine (issue #182) that you plan to add insult to injury by introducing a quasi-"girlie" calendar. The illustration chosen to promote this product is a case in point.

I am driven to wonder why any woman would wish to expose herself to the rigors of medieval combat in this way. Are we meant to conclude that acres of cleavage are a better defense against the male adversary than functional armor? Will we soon see a new category for "vital statistics" on the adventure sheets of female characters? I am not so naive as to suppose that these illustrations are employed in the interests of realism alone.

Before I am accused of prudishness or trying to spoil peoples' fun, let me explain that I am not proposing to become the Mary Whitehouse of gaming. Nor am I some "uptight feminist" prone to paroxysms of rage over uncovered female beauty, and I accept that fantasy role-playing is generally a male-oriented province.

However, I do think that the exploitation of male fantasies to increase profits can only be detrimental to the reputation of role-playing as a serious hobby. It is hardly surprising that there is a lack of female gamers, or that the playing of AD&D games draws criticism from narrow-minded sectors of society, when the kind of art that you choose to represent your products is inevitably going to increase their skepticism.

Come on, TSR. If you really want to be taken seriously, as you claim, stop trivializing both the women in your campaigns and the campaigns themselves, and try to clothe your female characters a little more adequately. If you are fearful of losing sales, remember that concealment is often more exciting than blatant display—but, after all, it is not that sort of fantasy you are supposed to be catering to.

Amaryllis Roy
Derby, U.K.

Is it just me or is there a serious imbalance in the amount of treasure laying about in most of TSR's (sorry, guys) published adventures? For example, check out HHQ1 *Fighter's Challenge*, a new AD&D module that's designed for one character (preferably a fighter, level 2-4). The adventure yields no less than three different pairs of magical boots to the tenacious treasure-seeker! Oddly, the resourceful adventurer could also find *two* identical long swords useful against lycanthropes and shape-changers (a fairly rare item according to the treasure tables in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), and many other magical treasures are conveniently placed to aid the questing warrior overcome specific obstacles and opponents that are later encountered.

This is an acceptable plot device if used sparingly and with justification (the *potion of undead control* is on the corpse of the last adventurer who *knew* of the lurking undead menace in the ruins, or the wizard *loans* the character a particular, rare item that the mage knows will be needed to complete the geas, etc.). However, in this adventure, nearly every challenge has an accompanying item that renders the adventure almost anticlimactic. ("Now

that we've slaughtered or routed the jermine, how are we gonna' get in their little tiny lair to gain all their swell treasure?" "Don't worry, Don—I just found a *potion of diminution!*") Sure, I know the challenge is to fight the remaining bane midges and their rodent allies in diminutive form, but the whole episode is too contrived. Why not make the players have to *think* about a way to get at the treasure—or, better yet, just leave the little shattered guys to their own devices and forget about their paltry hoard? The players probably won't, though, because they *just might* find a piece of magic that could prove vital to the success of their mission.

Then there's the sheer volume of magic and monetary booty waiting to be won. Any single character that completes this module—even after rewarding any accompanying NPCs as henchmen, and even after accepting the mere 10% of the town's recovered *gold* (that is, all the town lays claim to and asks the PC to recover)—will have a magical and monetary treasure hoard that would make Monty Haul blush! And this from the same folk who discourage such rampant wealth distribution in other sources such as the *DMG*.

It is my personal rule of thumb that a character not accumulate more than one permanent magical item per level of experience. This can be augmented by the occasional limited-charge item and the more-common perishable item (e.g., a *potion*, *scroll*, etc.). This would yield maybe 1-3 items, total, for a 1st-level character about to advance to 2nd level and about 12-16 for a 10th-level PC. Even this might be too generous for, at this rate, the average 2nd-level character would probably have more magical items than the player running him has pairs of shoes, and no one would claim that shoes are a rarity in our society! However, this seems to me a fairly balanced way to keep the level of magic under control so that the DM can create exciting adventures that encourage more reliance on the PCs' personal abilities rather than PCs as walking gods thanks to their huge arsenals of magical items.

At least one TSR source gives even more stringent guidelines when it comes to distributing magical items to characters. The *Monstrous Compendium* (Volume 11, in the "Adventurers" subsection under the heading "Men," gives any NPC a mere 5% chance per level to possess an item requisite to his class. Thus a 10th-level fighter has only a 50% chance to own a magical sword. Huh? How many 10th-level warrior PCs have you ever heard of that possessed only one magical sword, maybe none?

Any NPCs using this latter system will clearly be, item for item, no match for a group of "reasonably balanced characters" outlined above. To correct this, I have given the NPC adventurers from the *Monstrous Compendium* a +5% bonus to their chance to have requisite magical items. This bonus is applied only to the "Adventurer" subsection and does not accrue to any of the other subsections that say "See Adventurer table"—soldiers, for example. Furthermore, any chance over 100% is the stated chance to have an *additional* item of that type. Thus, 15th-level warrior automatically has one magical sword, for example, and a 50% chance to own another magical sword. This weapon may be wielded as a secondary weapon for those warriors able to fight with two weapons; it may be a backup weapon kept with the fighter's other gear in case his current one is lost, stolen, or (gods forbid) broken. Or the extra sword may be back at the keep, locked up in the lord's armory. The point is, this fighter looks

much more like the warriors we typically see as PCs, and thus is a more worthy opponent for our hero.

Perhaps TSR's intention for magic frequency was best illustrated in this simple table as it originally stands. Perhaps our PCs should also have only a 5% chance (roughly) of gaining a requisite item per level. But magic this rare might leave many players cold, so I believe upgrading the NPCs' matrix to be a more equitable solution.

Back to *Fighter's Challenge*. Any 4th-level character that completes this module, or even its main goal, will gain much more magic than seems reasonable. If the scenario's small town and its environs are typical of the rest of the realm, there could easily exist specialty shops that sell magic curios and weapons openly in the larger towns and cities. Magical items would be so plentiful, in fact, there could be *many* such shops—a practice the *DMG* specifically discourages. Of course, the standard response is that the DM can eliminate any magic that he wants, out of hand. In my opinion, he shouldn't have to. The system itself should provide a consistent standard of magical frequency that promotes equity between monsters, PCs, and NPCs. The operative words here are *consistent* and *equity*. If such a standard existed, even a simple one as outlined above, designers could design products that were much easier for the DM to customize in a likewise consistent manner.

These criticisms refer to *Fighter's Challenge* as an example only; my intent is not to single out the author or any one module. Rather, this module is indicative of an inherent design trend in most of TSR's products that dates back to the AD&D 1st Edition game and that, alas, the AD&D 2nd Edition game failed to correct although the intent is clearly there. Any response would be appreciated.

Malcolm Wolter
Houston TX

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SAGE advice

by Skip Williams

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This month, the sage answers your questions about one of TSR, Inc.'s newer products, the *Dragon Kings* rules supplement for the DARK SUN™ campaign setting, plus one bonus question on world-specific vs. generic adventures.

In the *Dragon Kings* hardbound for the DARK SUN setting, it is said that dual-classed clerics cannot become elementals. Does this mean that cleric/psionicists or any other class combined with a cleric/psionicist cannot become an elemental? Do the same rules apply to preservers and defilers metamorphosing?

I looked very carefully through *Dragon Kings* looking for whatever passage you're asking about. I'm not sure I found it, and neither is Tim Brown, *Dragon Kings* author. Do yourself a favor and include a page number whenever you ask for a rules clarification. It's the only way I can be sure I'm clarifying the rule you're actually asking about.

I assume you're referring to the text on page 56, which says a character elemental must be a human cleric/psionicist, level 20/20 (see the Prerequisites section). The character must commit to becoming an elemental immediately upon reaching 20th level as a cleric (2,700,000 xp), and cannot have any other classes. If the character quits the cleric class to follow a class other than psionicist, or takes up the psionicist class before reaching 20th level as a cleric, he cannot become an elemental. This is the intent behind the line: "No multi- or dual-classed cleric can opt to become an elemental." on page 56. (The cleric must be single classed and 20th level, then he can

opt to become an advanced being by declaring his intention and switching to the psionicist class.) Note that a character cannot return to his old class once he switches (see *PH*, page 45). No multi-classed character of any type can become an elemental.

Character dragons and avangions have similar requirements, except that they have to be defiler/psionicists or preserver/psionicists, respectively.

In DRAGON® issue #177, "Sage Advice" said that details on how the Dragon of Tyr stores magical energy would be included in *Dragon Kings*, but I can't seem to find it anywhere. You also said that details on how the Dragon's defiler magic affects animals would be included in the book, but I can't find that either.

When I was writing the column for issue #177, there were plans to describe the Dragon's ability to store magic, but that changed and the details remain unrevealed. It is even possible that the Dragon has no such power at all—it could be just a myth that has sprung up to help explain the Dragon's massive power.

Check out rules on defiling psionic enchantments on page 44; this is how the Dragon's spells kill people and animals. Tim Brown also has hinted that the Dragon might have a special life-sucking spell or psionic ability that simply produces defiling damage over wide areas. The details of this spell—if it exists at all—are unrevealed.

Do character dragons and avangions take damage from defiling psionic enchantments? Is there any defense from these attacks?

According to the rules on page 44, every living creature—except the caster—within 30 yards of a defiling psionic enchantment takes the listed damage. Dragons and avangions are powerful, but they are alive and are subject to this kind of defiling damage.

Since psionic enchantments have a magical component, there are all sorts of ways to get protection from this effect, and two such ways follow. A *scarab of protection* grants the wearer a saving throw, and the

wearer takes no damage if the save succeeds (see *DMG*, page 179). An *anti-magic* shell hedges out the effect, though it also shuts down all other magical items and effects within the spell's radius.

The statistics for character dragons in *Dragon Kings*, pages 37-39, don't match the summary information at the back of the book, nor does it match the description in the DARK SUN boxed set. Specifically, the summary information does not mention the psionic abilities listed on page 39—which give a 30th-level dragon 20 sciences and 35 devotions. Meanwhile, the boxed set gives the Dragon of Tyr a psionicist level of 20 (or 25, depending on which section you read), the ability to cast spells and use psionics simultaneously, and regeneration at 10 hp a round. Also, the hit-dice listings are widely different in all three places, and the burrowing movement rate of 6 listed in the boxed set is not mentioned in either section of *Dragon Kings*. Finally, the footnote on the jumping movement rating in the supplement reads: "now has a 'jumping' movement rate of 5 (should be 6)". What does this mean? Is the jumping rate 5 or 6?

The mismatch within the *Dragon Kings* book is an editorial error. The text on dragons got changed in one section of the book, but not in the other—this kind of thing happens more often than anyone would like. Here are my unofficial suggestions for resolving the contradictions:

Use the psionic powers listed on page 39; this gives the Dragon of Tyr six disciplines, 20 sciences, 35 devotions, and five defense modes. Use the powers listed in the boxed set (see the "Monsters of Athas" section in the *Wanderer's Journal*). Pick the additional 10 sciences and 11 devotions yourself, and assume that the powers listed in the *Wanderer's Journal* are the ones the Dragon uses the most. Note that the five defense modes listed in the *Wanderer's Journal* under the Telepathy discipline do not count toward the Dragon's total number of powers (see the *Complete Psionics Handbook*, page 14).

Use the hit-dice listings from the supplement at the back of *Dragon Kings*. This matches the table on page 37 at every level except 21, where the dragon should get +20d4, not +10d4. Note that the Dragon of Tyr has nearly maximum hit points for a 30th-level dragon (250 out of a possible 254, assuming no Constitution bonuses).

The burrowing movement rate seems to have been dropped by mistake; I'd add it at 27th level.

The parenthetical note about increasing the jumping movement rate to 6 probably was an editor's note that accidentally found its way into the book. Since most movement rates in the AD&D® game are evenly divisible by three, somebody proba-

bly wanted the listing changed. I don't see any reason not to leave the jump rating at 5, which is how it is listed in the *Wanderer's Journal*, but go ahead and increase it to 6 if it makes you happy.

The Dragon of Tyr's regeneration power and ability to use spells and psionics simultaneously are unique to it—it's a special beast, even as fully matured Athasian dragons go. The exact reasons this dragon is so special are unrevealed, but they might be uncovered in an upcoming DARK SUN game product or novel.

The statistics for character avangions in *Dragon Kings*, pages 42-44, don't match the summary information at the back of the book. Are the various effects of the avangion's aura cumulative or do the various powers replace each other? If they replace each other, can an advancing avangion opt to forego a higher-level effect to keep a lower-level one? Do avangions have psionics?

Except for the hit-dice column, the summary section is correct. The hit dice column should read: 21st-level 20d4 + 10; 22nd-level 25d4 + 10; 23rd-level 29d4 + 10; 24th-level 32d4 + 10; 25th-level 35d4 + 10; 26th-level 39d4 + 10; 27th-level 44d4 + 10; 28th-level 50d4 + 10; 29th-level 58d4 + 10; 30th-level 68d4 + 10. Avangions gain new movement rates, and other powers as

shown in the summary, not as described in the text on pages 42-44.

Avangions are preserver/psionics. They retain the psionic powers they had as 20th-level psionics and gain one additional science and one additional devotion at each level, just as dragons do.

Each new property of an avangion's aura is cumulative, as described on page 44.

Can avangions and dragons hurt each other with physical attacks? Or does their immunity to weapons—considerable immunity in the case of avangions—prevent this? Can a dragon's breath weapons hurt an avangion?

Although avangions and dragons are characters, their status as advanced beings allows them to use table 48 on page 69 of the DMG. Any dragon or avangion counts as a +4 weapon simply by virtue of its hit dice. Avangions of 28th level and above are immune to a dragon's physical attacks, since the equivalent of a +4 weapon is the limit for creatures. However, a dragon's breath weapon inflicts both fire and abrasion damage; avangions of any level are not immune to either attack form and can be affected.

Can dragons use the various forms of dragons' special attacks as listed in the *Monstrous Compendiums* such as

snatches, plummets, and wing buffets? Do dragons and avangions use special spells that have no material components the way *Monstrous Compendium* dragons do? This would seem essential for high-level avangions, who have no appendages.

The DM, of course, has the final say, but I suggest that any dragon that can fly be allowed to make snatches and plummets. Just apply the MC formulas to the *Dragon Kings* claw and bite ratings. Use the tail—attack ratings from *Dragon Kings*. I'm inclined to think that Athasian dragons are not built in quite the same way as dragons are on other worlds, and I suggest that you disallow wing buffets. Likewise, I don't think Athasian dragons should kick.

Dragons and avangions use the same rules for spell-casting as other characters do, including casting times, and various components. It is unclear exactly how they accomplish this, especially in the case of high-level avangions. Note that while an advanced being can't launch spells any more quickly than any other spell-caster can, the DM should assume that they always have some way to complete any other requirements. Avangions, for example, can be assumed to flutter their wingtips to complete somatic components. Both dragons and avangions can be assumed to have some way to get at material components if that optional rule is in

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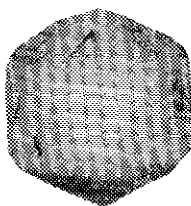
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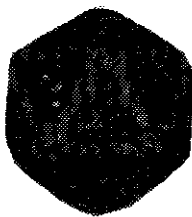
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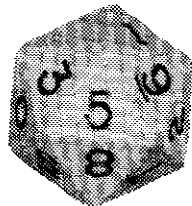


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effect. Material components might be manipulated psionically, plucked from a pocket dimension, regurgitated from the gut, or whatever. Advanced beings are powerful enough to bend the rules a little bit when necessary.

The descriptions of two of the new psionic powers in *Dragon Kings* seem a little odd to me. The Teleport Object power on page 142 is listed as a Psychokinetic devotion, but shouldn't it be Psychoportive since it has Teleport as a prerequisite? Also, Return Flight on page 146 is listed as a Psychometabolic devotion, but wouldn't it be better as a Psychokinetic devotion?

Although it is not common for a power to have a prerequisite from another discipline, there are several precedents in the Metapsionic discipline. Teleport Object was placed in the Psychokinetic discipline because it involves manipulating objects; Psychoportation involves personal movement by the power's user. If that doesn't satisfy you, change the Teleport Object prerequisite to Telekinesis.

You have a better case with the Return Flight devotion. Since the user is manipulating an object, it sure seems to belong in the Psychokinetic discipline. I suspect it was placed within Psychometabolism to maintain game balance and because the

user isn't just hurling objects around (as in the Ballistic Attack power); instead, he "programs" a missile to return to him if it misses. As such, it augments the user's ability in using missiles rather than granting the user a wholly new ability.

In *DRAGON* issue 178, you said gladiators use the paladin/ranger advancement table, but page 14 of *Dragon Kings* says gladiators reach 20th level when they earn 3,000,000 xp, and that's what fighters need for 20th level.

Gladiators *do* use the paladin/ranger table. The figure in *Dragon Kings* should be 3,600,000. This is official and came straight from Tim Brown, *Dragon Kings* author and director of product research and development at TSR, Inc.

What do you do with an Athasian wizard's or cleric's wild talent if he opts to become an advanced being and quits his original class to become a psionist? Does he keep the power? What happens to the character's PSPs?

The easiest way to handle this is to let the character keep the wild talent and PSPs in a separate pool. "Sage Advice" discussed the details in *DRAGON* issue #184.

Page 36 of the *DARK SUN* boxed

set's *Rules Book* says Athasian bards don't learn wizard spells, but the Ranis Inika character on page eight of the *Dune Trader* source-book does have spells. I don't get it.

You are the victim of a gross error. Ranis Inika has no spell list, but she can manufacture any of the poisons shown on the table on page 36 of the *DARK SUN* Rules Book and has the following thief abilities: PP 65; OL 55; FT 65; MS 70; HS 70; DN 45; CW 90; RL 20.

Why does TSR, Inc. spend so much time and energy producing so darn many game worlds? There must be at least 10 of them if you count the softcover books. Why don't you concentrate on something for those of us who play on our own game worlds—like a good old-fashioned adventure or two?

With something like 3,000,000 + AD&D game players out there, variety is a must. That's why TSR, Inc. cranks out so many game worlds. One or two of them might be allowed to retire gracefully, but each of them has a cadre of dedicated fans who scream very loudly when their favorite world gets ignored. (Here's good news for readers who fall into this category: TSR, Inc. soon will start a "Classics" line that will feature a product for each world once a year.)

Actually, there have been plenty of pure adventures published in the last two years. Here's some examples right off the top of my file cabinet: *Wizard's Challenge* (TSR product #9359), *Haunted Halls of Eveningstar* (#9354), *Treasures of Greyhawk* (#9360), and *Rary the Traitor* (#9386). *Wizard's Challenge* has the virtue of being generic—the set-up does not depend on any particular AD&D game setting, but it is designed for one-on-one or small-group play. The other products are designed for normal groups, but are set on particular worlds. This shouldn't be an impediment to DMs who have developed their own worlds, however. Any commercial scenario can be dovetailed into a homespun campaign. The premises behind some of these scenarios might not fit your particular campaign, but not every generic adventure will either. You shouldn't ignore a packaged adventure just because you're not interested in the world logo on the front cover. Smart game shoppers read the back-cover copy, or ask another gamer or a store employee about what's inside before deciding what to buy. Ω



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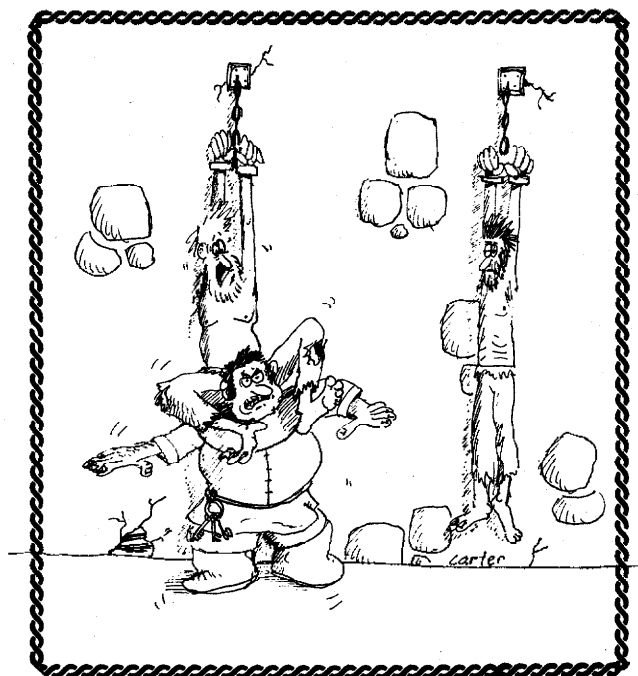
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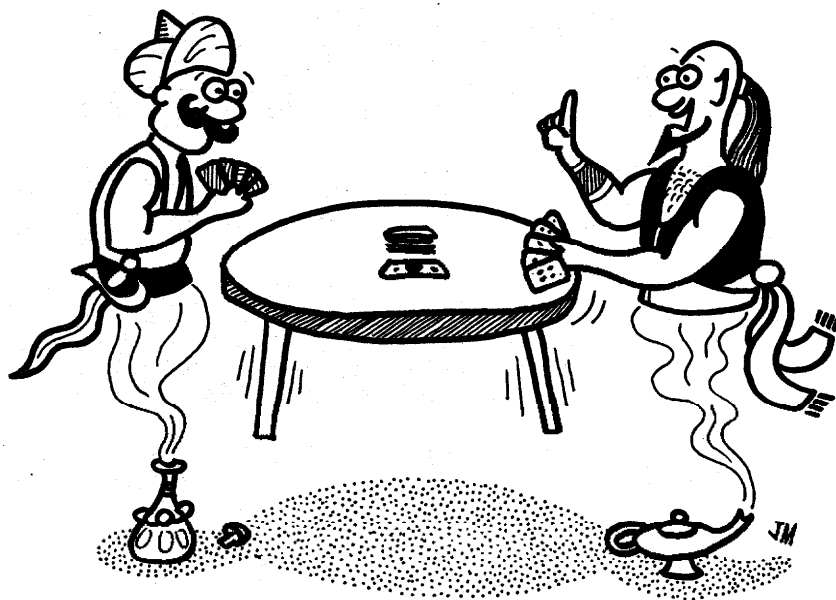
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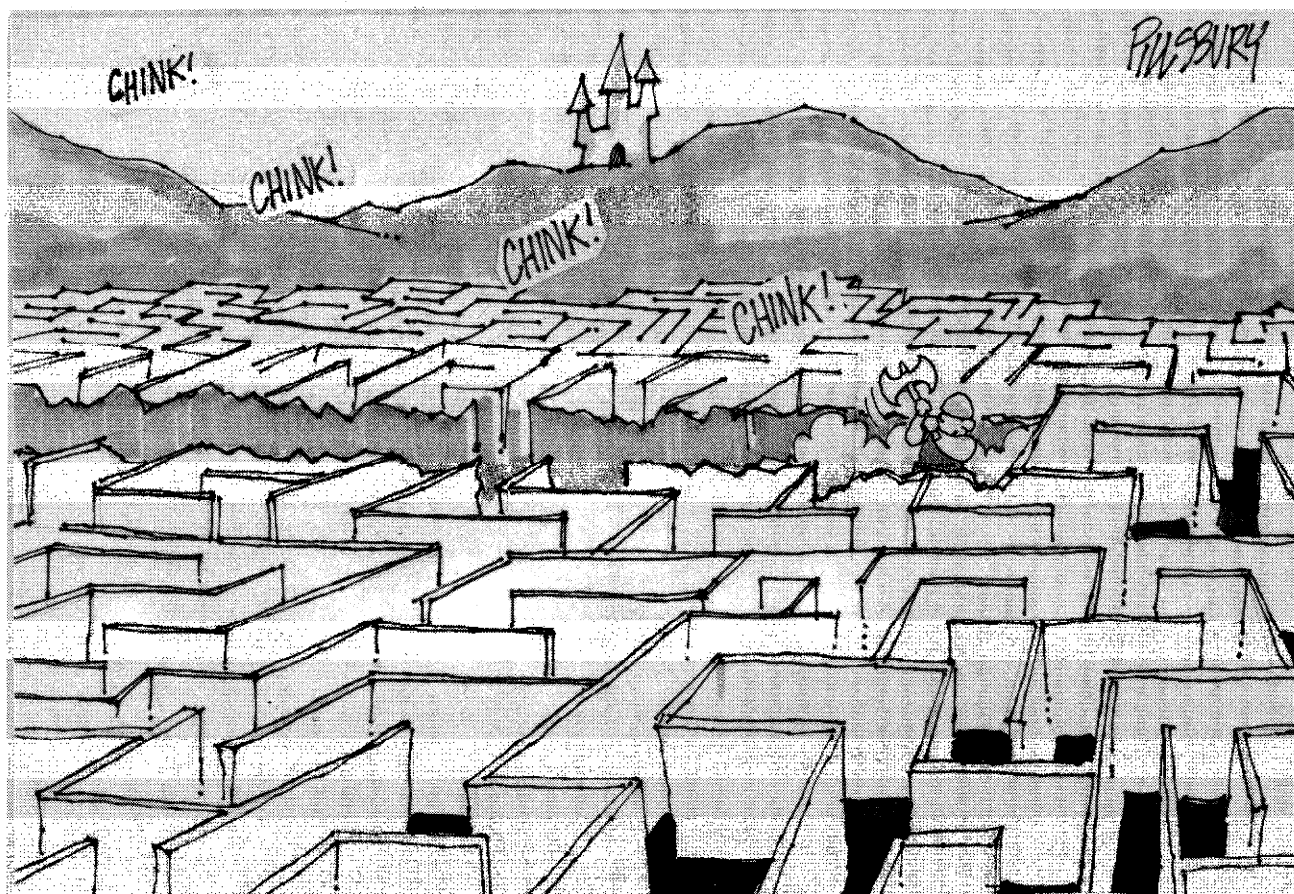


"I've got him! I've got him!
Now what?"

By James G. Martin, Jr.



"Djinn!"



Joseph T. Pillsbury



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30-LOVE. POK



REQUIRE HER FOR WHAT. TORTURE, WEAPONS TESTING, YOU KNOW.

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WRITING & COLORING

Stephen D. Sullivan

PENCILS

Paul Abrams

FINISHES

John Hebert

LETTERING

Paul Hook

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ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 34





Shadow Knight

Merlin's Supplement for Amber Diceless Role-Playing

1. What is *Amber*?

A completely new diceless role-playing system, based on the epic *Chronicles of Amber* books by Roger Zelazny.

It's also 256 pages of crystal-clear instructions designed & written by Erick Wujcik, creator of Palladium Books' *TMNT & Other Strangeness*® and *Ninjas & Superspies*™.

2. How do I create player characters without dice?

Each player starts with 100 points to build their character, first using their points to bid against the other players in an *Attribute Auction* run by the Game Master.

Beyond that characters are built with epic Powers, Allies, Artifacts & Creatures. For as little as one point, a player can "buy" a *Shadow* and design their own complete universe.

Finally, each player determines their character's luck. *Good Stuff* costs points, and means that the Game Master will arrange for good things to happen to the character. Players short on points can get more by trading for *Bad Stuff*, which means misfortune.

3. How can Combat work without dice?

Simple. Combat is resolved by comparing Attributes. Since Attributes are secret, the player's choices are critical. Do you press for an all-out attack? Bide your time and act defensively? Or try to "cheat" with a dirty trick?

4. What do the critics say?

"...the intensity of the *Amber* game indicates Wujcik is on to something. When success in every action depends on the role and not the roll, players develop a sense of both control and urgency, along with creativity that borders on mania."

Allen Varney

Dragon® Magazine #182

"While I would not recommend *Amber* to novices, it is a must buy for experienced gamemasters and players looking for new challenges."

Steve Crow

White Wolf Magazine #31

"If you want to see what roleplaying might someday become, read *Amber*."

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designer of *Vampire*™

"As a sourcebook, *Amber* is brilliant. Everything you could ever want to know about *Amber* and its inhabitants is in there. I would recommend *Amber* to Zelazny fans on that merit alone..." Robert Hatch

White Wolf Magazine

"...the game would be less with dice. The open format of the game would be ruined with complicated calculations and tables of numbers."

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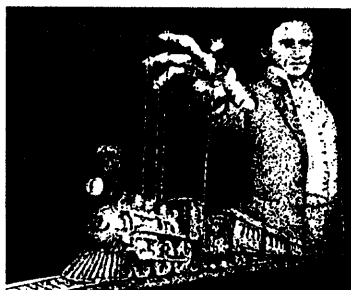
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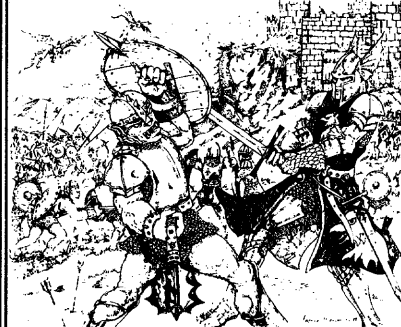
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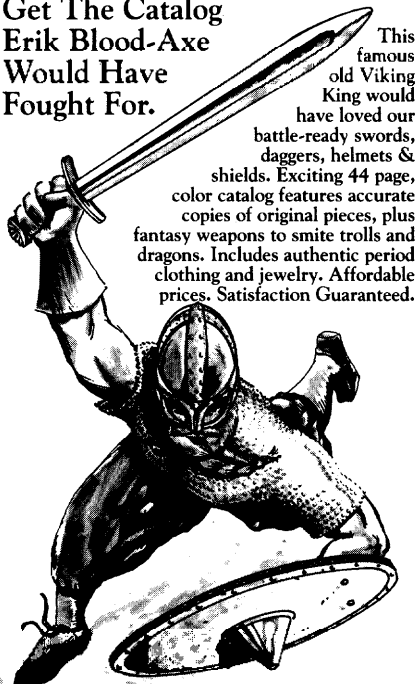
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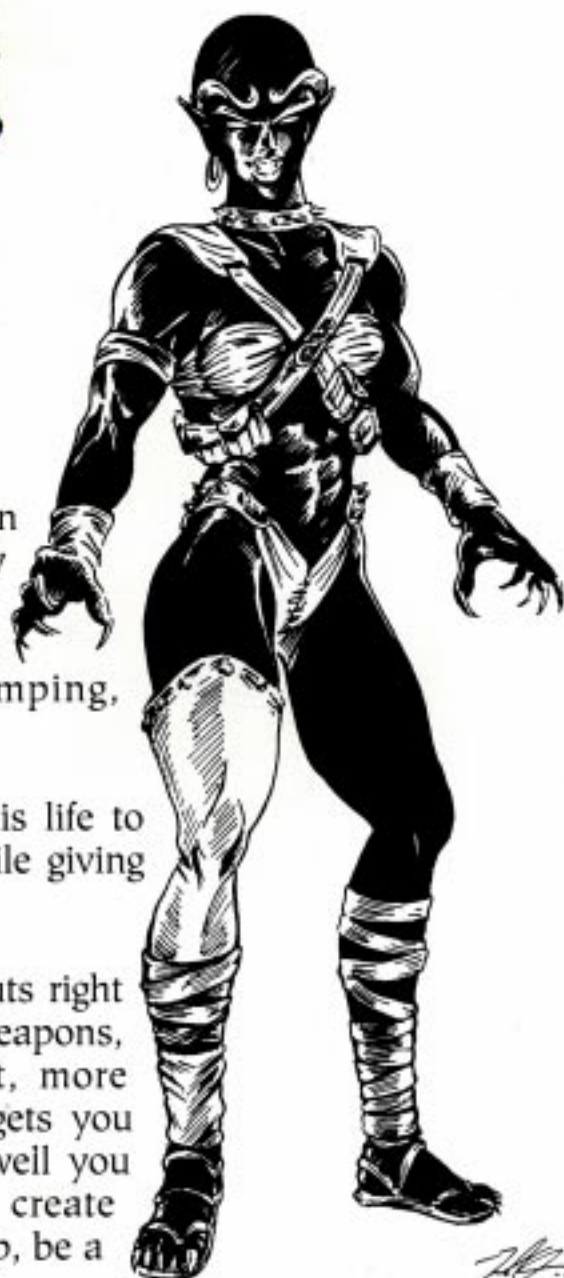
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Through the LOOKING Glass

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Taking a look at new rules sets

Reviews

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 E. McMillan
Cincinnati OH 45206-1991

1020 Battling Bronze Dragon * * * * ½

The Battling Bronze Dragon is an 11-piece, 25-mm scale lead kit. The figure measures over 250 mm from nose to tail claw and has a wingspan of 125 mm. The body is covered by scales that resemble small overlapping circular shields with flattened edges. Both wings have spiny leading edges that form the basis for the leathery supports. This dragon is in an attack position.

Flash on the tail and the wing spines were easily cleaned with a hobby knife. Mold lines and marks on a number of surfaces were camouflaged or easy to remove and do not detract from the miniature. Arm- and wing-joint surfaces are smooth but are slightly undersized, so they require some filling and bracing during assembly. Most joint lines blend in well when reasonable care is taken.

The biggest problem with this miniature is its stance. The figure is not quite balanced when fully assembled, and could fall easily. I recommend bending the left-foot joint and gluing the right foot flat. We bent the tail, and it broke, so use care. This model is impressive and would make a good addition to any collection. Its price is not bad at \$26.95, and the figure is highly recommended.

Ral Partha Enterprises

5938 Carthage Ct.
Cincinnati OH 45212-1197

Minifigs

1/5 Graham Rd.
Southampton, England, SO2 OAX

10-463 T'Char: Dragon of Flame and Fury * * * * ½

This lead kit consists of 12 parts that assemble into a dragon scaled for 25 mm figures. The figure measures over 300 mm long and over 80 mm high. The base is a two-piece casting formed in a "U" shape, whose surface resembles a rocky crag with an abundance of stones randomly spread as if by a rockslide. Please remember to check the holes before assembly as it can be difficult to line up the dragon's legs so they fit in the base.

The dragon is covered by rows of irregular scales except for the stomach and chest; these areas are covered by overlapping V-shaped center split plates. The wings are heavily veined and supported by thin bones. The wings taper to an edge even though they are thick. The usual spinal ridges have been replaced by hair that appears to be waving in a breeze—the hair begins behind the head and ends halfway along the tail. The paws and feet have only three claws instead of four.

There were several small problems with this model that required time and patience. There were mold marks and flash on many of the sockets and joints. Careful filing and cleaning was required on the back hairs, upper head, tail, and paws. Gap filler is needed as some of the joints didn't mesh (quick-drying adhesive is highly recommended). The tail did not go together quite right, and we decided our tail fit and looked better in its present location.

This is a very good miniature but will require some work to reach its potential. Muscle detail is excellent, and it is a striking miniature when finished. This is not a



Battling Bronze Dragon
(Thunderbolt Mountain)

I want to thank Chris Osburn for painting the knights for Milton Bradley's BATTLEMASTERS* game, Eric Petersen for painting the T'Char figure from Ral Partha and Dwarf Signal Corps from Lance and Laser, Tina Druce-Hoffman for painting the bronze dragon from Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures, and Fred Hicks Jr. for painting the Milton Bradley footsoldiers.

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

novice-level kit, but it is still recommended at \$20.

Lance and Laser Inc.

P.O. Box 14491
Columbus OH 43214

022 Dwarf Signal Corps

This three-piece lead set is scaled in 25 mm and comes equipped with signal flags. The main component is a telescope mounted on a wood-grained stand fitted with small wheels. The telescope is set with a focusing eyepiece. The miniature has molded fittings where the real ones would be and is accurate except for the mold lines through the front and rear of the model. The observer is an unarmored dwarf who is hunched slightly while squinting to look into the telescope.

The signal man has his flags set in a signal. The flags have a diagonal line engraved to assist in painting. There is a mold line on the middle of the figure, but it is easily removed.

I highly recommend this set and plan on getting more of them. This is a very good buy at \$3.95 per set.

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0120 WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLES boxed set

Several years ago, in a review of Games Workshop's Siege Book, I said I liked the book but not the WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLES system itself. Now Games Workshop has completely redone the original game, and the new boxed game contains everything you need to play:

- Nine six-sided dice and artillery and scatter dice. The artillery die is used to determine whether you hit after you guess the range. If you don't roll a hit, the arrows on the scatter die tell you what direction you are off while the artillery die tells you the distance and whether you misfire. Misfiring can damage your weapon.

- A special issue of WHITE DWARF* Magazine that is actually a catalog. There are some good paint jobs on the figures, and it is a chance to see if you have missed any products.

- A painting guide that contains more ads and some painting tips. The tips are good, but remember you don't have to use Citadel materials. The guide also emphasizes cleaning plastic models and letting the miniature dry before moving on to the next step, which I mention here in case you decide not to read the book.

- A sample battle sheet that runs through a short battle as an introduction to the rules and allows you to see examples of the rules. It also emphasizes start-

ing with the rules book and using this to help clarify the game system. These battles use single figures or very small numbers of units but give a good feel for the rules.

- A series of sheets with colored punch-outs. These give you the ability to build a small tower, house, and sheds. They also give you stand-up illustrations of different weapons that may be purchased for the system. Bases are included for these colorful stand-ups. The set also contains a variety of battle templates for use in finalizing damage, and two abbreviated turn-sheet cards for game use. The last item is a template for making movement trays for large numbers of figures. These trays allow you to pick up and move large groups of single figures without fuss.

- A set of 12 different spell cards that detail the limits of spells and magical items in the basic set. The fronts of the cards have the color wheels for the schools, and the backs look like scrolls.

- The Battle For Mauthrond Pass. This 15-page scenario book starts out with what you need and moves through a brief history and actions that set the stage for the battle. This history is vivid, with heroes and individuals mentioned. The book then details complete armies, most of which are included with the set or could be picked out of figures at home. A turn sequence, victory conditions, and points are all printed on a sheet that can be cut out or photocopied. Colored layouts of the battlefield are shown, and ways of making scenery are discussed. It also gives a list of tactical tips to help the players do well.

- Armies List. This 18-page compendium of units for each of the different races will allow you to set up for battles. This book details the components of each army, profiles and movements of those components, their allies, and war machines with



T Char (Ral Partha Enterprises)

a little magic thrown in for spice. This book allows quick fighting with different figure types and several monsters.

- Miniatures. There are 104 plastic figures in the set. These figures are scaled for the larger Games Workshop scale and include individual slotted bases. There are



Dwarf Signal Corps (Lance and Laser)



BATTELMASTERS figures (Milton Bradley)

20 elf archers, 20 elf spearmen, 32 goblin go spearmen, and 32 goblin archers. The elf spearmen are high elves wearing long voluminous robes with scale mail over them, from shoulders to feet. They wear pointed shoes and broad belts with overlapping disks and jeweled buckles. Plates rise from these belts to protect their chests. Their heads are covered by high helmets that are slightly pointed on top and flared at the bottom, with nose guards and cheek protectors. The shields are molded separately and are of large kite design. The elf archers are the same height (35 mm) as the spearmen, but are from a different clan. They also wear long robes, but their chain mail comes only to their hips. Quivers hang on their right hips and are embossed with a bird's wings. Flowery unarmored sleeves end in bracers at the wrists. Fingers and hands are bare, and their left hands clutch large bows. They have no chest plates, and their helmets' insignia looks like a sword with a diamond or jewel in the hilt. There is little flash on either style of figure, but you'll need to take care in removing them from the sprue.

The goblins are not nearly as formidable in appearance as the elves. The spearmen wear tunics belted at the waist with a wide belt and fur-topped boots with overlapping protectors. Their right hands hold spears with tasseled heads and their left hands could hold the separately molded round shields. There are several different designs on the shield faces, and the backs look like grained wood. The goblins have no helmets and have big grins on their faces. The archers measures 23 mm to the top of their tall pointed caps while the spearmen are 18 mm high. The archers are wearing tunics belted at the waist, low boots, and have bare arms and legs. Quivers hang from their left sides, and they are posed as if they just released arrows. There is no flash on these pieces, but take care removing them from their sprue. The

elves and goblins are very good for plastic figures.

- **Bestiary.** This 96-page booklet with color cover and inside facing sheets acts as a combination atlas and race guide. A two-page map that shows details of the Old World and gives an overview on most of the rest of the world. A brief history of each race is followed by a discussion of racial subtypes. Each race has a full set of statistics and some deviants so that differences may be incorporated. A monster section gives a description of intruding beasts, statistics, and special information so you can influence a battle or run skirmish conflicts. There is even a section on Chaos warriors. This book alone is worth about 20% of the price.

- **Last, but not least,** is the rules book that holds the set together. This book is 95 pages long and includes a full-color center that shows available troops and a guide for painting skeletons. The painting method used is only good with Citadel products, so it will not be useful to those gamers who don't own those products. The rules contain a brief explanation of the WARHAMMER game and a contents list. There is a section on building assembly. The next section contains a terrain generator for fantasy battles and guidelines for placement. Sequences and probable victory points are also discussed. The next section gives statistics and characteristics and explains each concept through examples or charts. This includes unit definition, turns, movement, and combat. Combat is dice based, with morale and maneuvering almost as important as unit type. Unit weaponry is based on majority of weapons held by the figures. Even mixed groups fit under this rule. Psychology and morale rules help fight the suicide tactics used by many gamers. A variety of different allowable movements which make the game much more realistic. Unfortunately, gunpowder rears its ugly head, but it is not the disaster it could be. Magic is present but is extremely limited

until the magic supplement comes out. This means you will have to buy the supplement to get the most out of that aspect of the game.

Aerial combat, siege weapons, and monsters all have a place in the rules book. Musicians and generals play a part in keeping up morale, so there is a good reason to purchase those figures now. Small unit and skirmish rules, buildings, and daemons finish the book.

The game states that there are exceptions to the rules and that every game may have subjects not covered by the rules. It encourages you to work together to reach a compromise, and thus gives its players a high compliment.

The box set is well worth the money it costs. I am hard pressed to find any serious flaws, although there may be some lurking in the big battle rules. The system will take time to learn and play, and my highest compliment is that I'm going to have to get another set. This is a full box and a great value at \$55.

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MB4210 BATTLEMASTERS *****

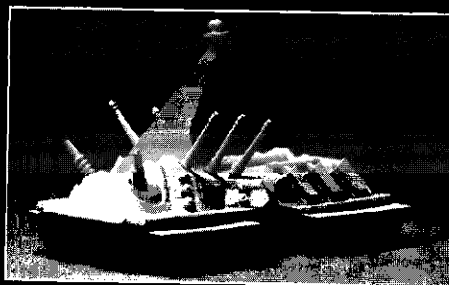
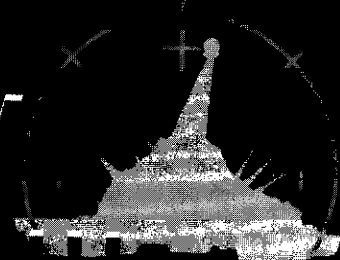
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The box bottom lists the extensive contents of the box: 103 unpainted plastic figures, a portable combat board, cards, dice, tokens and unit bases. The map is 4½' X 5' and is about the same thickness as a vinyl tablecloth. The board has pre-printed terrain features—rivers, woods, plowed fields, and roads—all overprinted

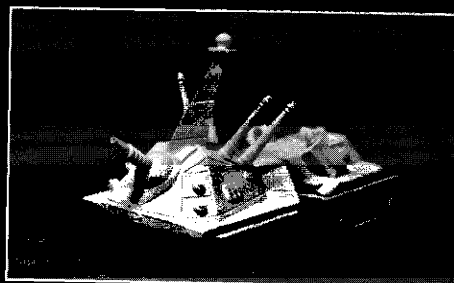
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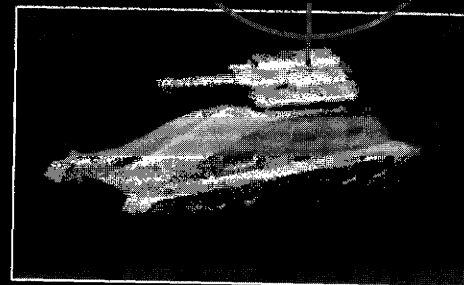
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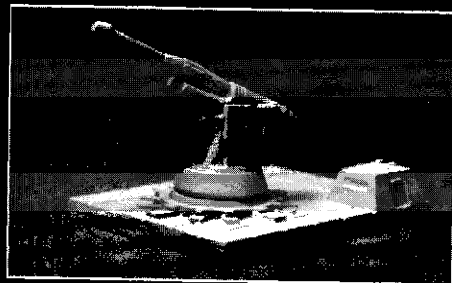
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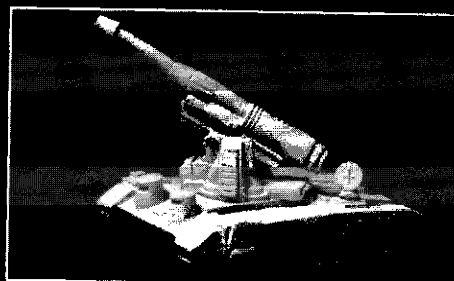
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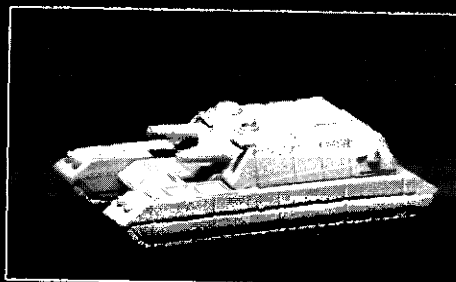
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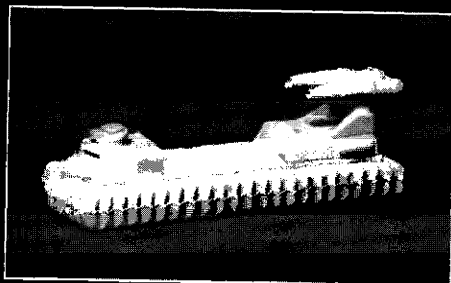
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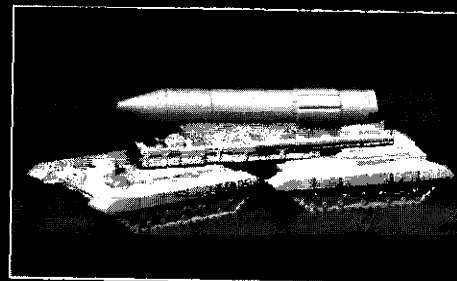
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with 145-mm hexes made to hold the unit bases and facilitate movement. Tiles allow you to place obstacles or fords in the rivers. Also included is a five-piece tower that goes together well. The tower can be detailed by using filler along each corner and the bottom section of the roof, and cutting open the windows. Use basic model primer after cleaning all the plastic parts, as the hard plastic holds the paint well. The tiles, cards, and markers are colorful and well printed.

The mechanics are simple. Movement is determined drawing cards. When the card of a unit is drawn, that unit may move and fight. It is possible for a side to be attacked several times without a move, but it may defend. Strategy includes trying to cover objectives with single units, as you never know when the units will move. Movement is unimpeded by any preprinted terrain, and only the hedge tiles may be used strategically. Mounted units have cards that allow them more than one hex movement, but they are few and far between.

Combat is straightforward: The only modifiers in combat are the ditch and the three-story tower. Attacks are made using multi-strike dice according to the attack value on the bases. Skulls designate hits for the attacker, and shields for the defender designate cancelled hits. When the unit absorbs its maximum hits, it is removed from the playing field. The winner is the last player with units remaining on the field.

The game also contains over 100 very usable 25 mm hard-plastic figures split into two armies. The army of Chaos has an ogre champion. He stands 58 mm to the spike at the top of his helmet and comes in two halves. He is armed with a giant mace, is bare from the waist up and has a shield on his belly. The figure does have a separation line running up both sides that will need filling after gluing.

Next up are the six wolfriders. The wolves each come in two halves with the head entirely on one half. Fur detail is shallow on the bodies and heads, but the legs are relatively smooth. A mold line runs up the back, but can be filled. Furred saddles for the one-piece goblin are molded on. The goblins are wearing leather and chain mail armor, and are armed with a spear and shield. There is flash around the body and shield but it cleans easily. The wolves stand 25 mm high and 40 mm, long while the goblins are only 20 mm tall.

There are ten 18½-mm-high goblin ground troops who are armed with swords and shields. They are one-piece castings with evil grins and wide pointed ears, dressed in chain with long coats and belts. Their heads are bald, and a thin layer of flash surrounds several of the bodies, but this was easily removed.

The orcs are dressed like mongrels. The wear chain-mail surcoats and are armed with large swords and round shields. They are in a wide stance and have some flash

on the legs, shoulders, and shields that came off with a knife.

The 10 Chaos archers have mohawk haircuts, boots, and loincloths. They hold bows in their left hands, and their right hands are back as if firing. Their only other clothing is shoulder plates and shields strapped to their chests. There was little flash on this group.

The 10 beastmen are typical of Games Workshop, kind of pointy-eared minotaurs complete with a ridged spine, long hair, and horns. They wield large axes and carry round shields, while small shields protect their stomachs. Short swords hang from their belts.

The 10 Chaos footknights are in plate mail with chain underneath. Their helmets are horned in a squared pattern with skulls embedded on the tops. Long capes fall to the ground from armored shoulders, and they are armed with poleaxes and large kite shields.

The heavy knights on both sides ride identical horses which measure 44 mm long, and 38 mm tall. The horses come in two parts that fit together well and will need only minimal filling. The animals have metal barding with rivets clearly molded, plates protecting the head and back, spikes in the forehead plate. They have simple saddles with blankets and wide belly straps. The knights are held on the horses by pegs that fit into holes in the saddles. The Chaos troops wear their hair long spilling through the skulls on the tops of their helmets. They carry ornate lances in their right hands and arrowhead shields in their left hands. There was little flash present.

The lord knights wear winged helms and medallions of office on their chests. Long capes stretch to their horses' backs while their right hands hold simple lances and their left hands hold shields. All their horses have hair over their hooves.

The nine imperial knights ride cloth-barded horses that otherwise match closely the descriptions of the heavier barded horses. The knights wear simple plate secured by rivets. Simple lances are secured to the pivots on their right sides with kite shields on their left arms. Slight trimming is all that is needed to prepare these figures.

The imperial army has fewer types of troops. The "big gun" on this side is the mighty cannon. The gun carriage resembles wood that is banded and plated. The wheels have a molded metal hub and metal plates for holding the wheel shape. The barrel is straight and has several bas-relief features including a dragon. The solid barrel has a hollow spot at the bottom that is very evident. Green putty and a sharp knife took care of both problems. One crew is wearing breastplates with an embossed sign and is lighting the cannon with a burning brand. The other is dressed more simply and carries a swab and water. The infantry consists of 15

men-at-arms wearing light plate over chain and armed with poleaxes and shields. They are wearing turbans around their helmets and have fairly detailed faces. Gauntlets, plumes, and face protectors finish these figures. The 10 bowmen and five crossbowmen are identically dressed in breastplates, tights, and boots. All are wearing cloth-wrapped helmets with plumes. The archers wear jackets over their padding but the crossbowmen have no jackets.

This set is a must. Not only is it extremely playable, but it has a number of pieces that are nice to have. The units in this game are made 'in groups three or five and can be mounted to a large, slotted movement base. These bases have a back panel for unit identification and are made so the figures can face different directions. When not using this game as manufactured, you can form the units into 10-man groups, freeing the extra stands to mount other figures that use slotted bases. YOU can place figures in marching columns or fighting lines, although you may have to cut the sides slightly. With the addition of velcro to the bases and box, these also will make great carriers. With work, the tower can become a very passable border post. There are also a number of different press-on stickers for shields and flags that extra adhesive for guaranteed adhesion.

This set is highly recommended for everyone. The price varies, starting at \$28.95. This set has been released to the "mass market" and the large chain stores often get a much higher discount than single stores because they buy by the thousands. You have to decide where to get the game, but remember that without your local hobby shop our hobby might not exist. The best recommendation I can give is that I plan to get another set for myself.

I wish to add something that applies to all rules sets with templates, counters, etc. I firmly suggest that you photocopy and keep the originals, and laminate the copies you'll use. You may lose parts, and wear and tear will always take its toll. As long as you have the originals, you can recopy the components. This will ensure many years of enjoyable gaming.

You can contact me at Friend's Hobby, 1411 Washington St., Waukegan IL 60085 or call M, W, Th, F 2-10P.M. or S&S 10A.M.-5P.M. at (708) 336-0790.

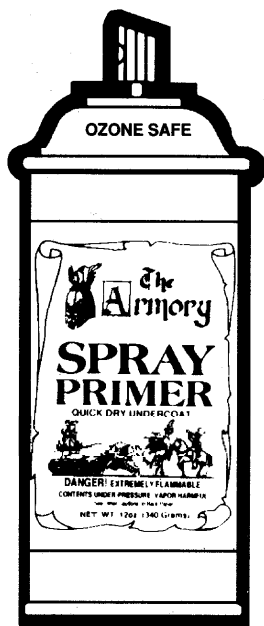
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Rhino's Armor, Tiger's Claws

Continued from page 39

Talwar: This was a heavy, broad-bladed, curved sword sometimes forged from solid steel. Some talwars had considerably lighter blades, and these function exactly like scimitars in AD&D games. Both styles of talwar are among the most common swords encountered in Indian adventures. The talwar was often used as a sacrificial weapon.

Zaghnal: The zaghnal is a one-handed pick, usually fashioned entirely of steel, with a broad, sharp, beaklike piercing head. Even though it was only about 1½'-2' long, it was also heavy and had great punching power. Give it a + 1 attack bonus vs. chain mail, which it was designed to penetrate. Many zaghnal were decorated with brass, silver, or other precious metals and had beautifully etched heads and hafts, sometimes adorned with images of animals or monsters.

Many weapons popular in typical AD&D campaigns were used in India, but some have been slightly modified, and all will be crafted and embellished so as to have a wholly distinctive appearance. After each available weapon, names for similar weapons that conform to the same

characteristics are listed in parentheses.

In addition to fine native steel, bamboo was a primary material used in Indian weapons. Bows, arrow and quarrel shafts, and the hafts of javelins, spears, maces, and other weapons were often made of bamboo.

Arquebus (bandukh torador):

Matchlock weapons may be allowed in Indian adventures if the DM allows. They would be used for hunting or adventuring more than for warfare, for which the bow predominated.

Battle axe (tungi): A great variety of axes both double and single-headed, with heads in all possible shapes, were used throughout the subcontinent. They ranged from the dual-purpose weapon/tools of primitive tribesmen to the ornate weapons of aristocrats.

Bow: Long or short, composite or self, bows were available throughout India, although perhaps not all in the same areas. Long and short bows were often of bamboo, while composite bows were lacquered with a wood core, horn on the belly side, and sinew on the back. Bows were also sometimes made of steel in the shape of an Indian composite bow.

Club: All forms of clubs, sticks, curved sticks, and canes can be found used as weapons in an Indian adventure, all

roughly conforming to the characteristics of a normal club. Certain of them, such as the curved sticks, may be associated with a martial-arts form.

Crossbow: Bows were the most common missile weapon available in India, and it is up to the DM whether or not crossbows will be available.

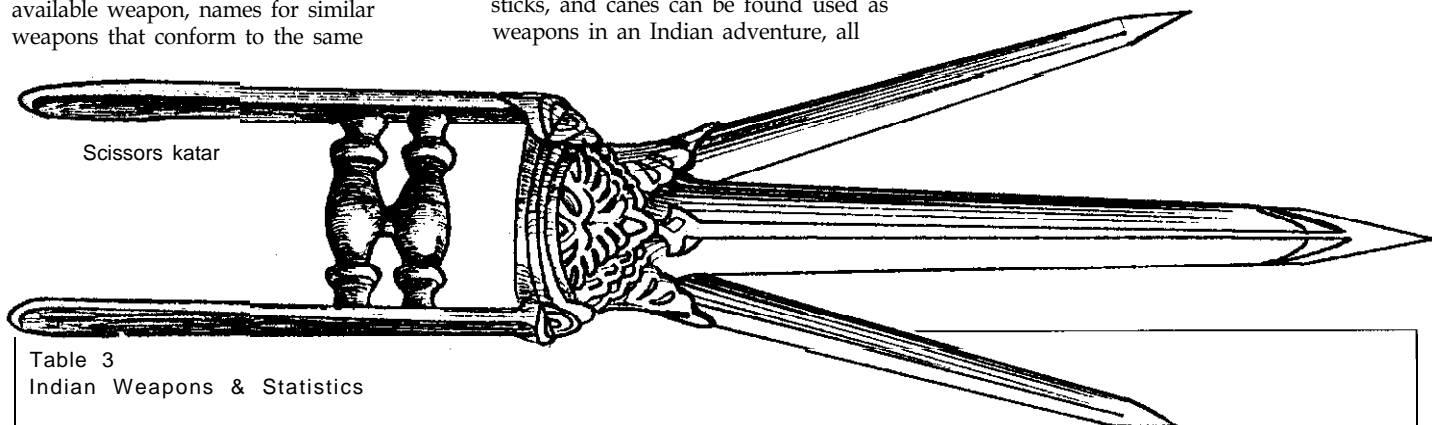
Dagger (bich'wa, khanjar, khanjarli, pih-kaetta): Many different types of daggers, in a multitude of exotic shapes, can be found in Indian adventures. Although of strange appearances or construction, most of them nonetheless function like normal daggers. However, peoples of certain regions, cults, or martial-arts disciplines may favor one type of dagger over another.

Dart: Indian darts were often of steel and could even be found in royal arsenals.

Hand axe (bhuj): Many varieties of hand axes could be found. In rustic areas, most of these doubled as tools.

Javelin: Bamboo-hafted, steel-headed javelins were used for both hunting and warfare.

Knife: The sort of variety found in daggers also applies to knives. In addition, many sorts of elaborate parrying knives were used. DMs can allow such



Scissors katar

Table 3
Indian Weapons & Statistics

Item	cost	Weight (lb.)	Size	Type	Speed factor	Damage S-M L
Arrow, mail piercer*	1 gp/20		S	P	-	1-6 1-6
Bagh nakh	2 gp	1	S	S	1	1-4 1-3
Buckler, spiked	3 gp	3	M	P	4	1-3 1-2
Chakram	1 gp	½	S	S	2	1-4 1-3
Gada	1 gp	6	M	B	6	1-8 1-4
Hora	1 gp	½	S	B	1	1-3 1-3
Katar	5 gp	1	S	P/S	2	2-5 1-4
Khandar						
One-handed	25 gp	10	M	S	5	1-8 1-8
Two-handed	25 gp	10	M	S	7	1-10 1-10
Kora	11 gp	4	M	S	4	2-7 2-7
Kukri	3 gp	2	S	S	3	2-5 2-5
Madu	6 gp	5	M	P	4	1-4 1-3
Pata***	30 gp	6	M	P/S	6	1-8 1-12
Peshkabz*	3 gp	1	S	P	2	1-4 1-3
Talwar	15 gp	5	M	S	6	2-8 2-8
Zaghnal*	14 gp	5	S	P	5	2-5 2-7

* This weapon gains a + 1 bonus to attack chain-mail-clad targets, in addition to any other modifiers.

** These items weigh little individually. Ten of them weigh one pound.

*** This weapon inflicts double damage when used from the back of a charging mount.

implements to be used either for an attack or to defend against a single frontal attack. If the parrying option is chosen (*Player's Handbook*, page 100), parrying knives give an additional +1 bonus to armor class. Parrying knives cost at least 4 gp.

Lance, light: Light lances were used in India, mostly in the western and central regions. One notable type made use of a hollow steel haft and had an armor-piercing steel head.

Mace: Maces usually had flanged steel heads, and some had guarded and spurred hilts similar to that of the khandar (q.v.). A footman's mace fitted with such a hilt costs 16 gp, and if it is used two-handed, it gains +1 to damage.

Morning star: Morning stars were popular, being high-damage weapons. Indian weapons of this type have large heads and profound spikes, doing either bludgeoning or piercing damage, whichever is most beneficial to the user. Some reflect a high level of craftsmanship, being entirely of steel or having hollow steel heads. Indian morning stars are considered to be of higher quality than ones in a Western-style campaign, and the former are more expensive, too, costing 20 gp.

Pick: All-steel fighting picks were popular in India and its environs, in both one-handed styles, such as the zaghnal (q.v.), and the more typical two-handed varieties. Piercing weapons tend to be most effective against armor in any case (as per Table 52, page 90, *Player's Handbook*).

Many picks were designed especially for

penetrating chain mail. In games, such picks are entirely of steel, have reinforced heads, and are +1 to attack chain-mail-clad opponents. They cost 16 gp, weigh 10 lbs., have speed factor 8, and are only half as likely to break as standard picks. Because they are of higher quality than normal, many will be embellished, and 90% of magical picks in an Indian-style milieu will be of this type.

Staff (lathi): Staff-fighting was a common fighting form in India, and various types of modified staves can be found, almost always of cane or bamboo, and sometimes weighted.

Spear (vita): Naturally, many types of spears were used. One spear, the vita, was equipped with a 5'-long tether, allowing it to be hurled at an extreme close range, usually by a horseman, and then reclaimed.

Swords: Perhaps more so than any other weapon type, a great variety of swords can be found in the Indian milieu. Almost any type or variation is possible within the exotic plethora that existed. Many of these had specific names but are much like existing sword types (see below). Some, however, have no unique names, despite their singular appearances.

Bastard (ram dao): Some large swords had hollow iron tubes for hilts, or alternating sections of tubes and hollow iron balls. Generally, swords were not any bigger than the bastard type, and the khandar (q.v.) was probably the most formidable that would be normally encountered.

Broad: Heavy, one-handed hacking

swords are the most common general type of sword found after the talwar (q.v.) type in an Indian adventure.

Long: Thrusting swords with more emphasis placed on the tip than the edge are the least frequently encountered type of sword in Indian campaigns.

Scimitar (shamshir): Curved swords of this general type are commonly found in the Indian milieu.

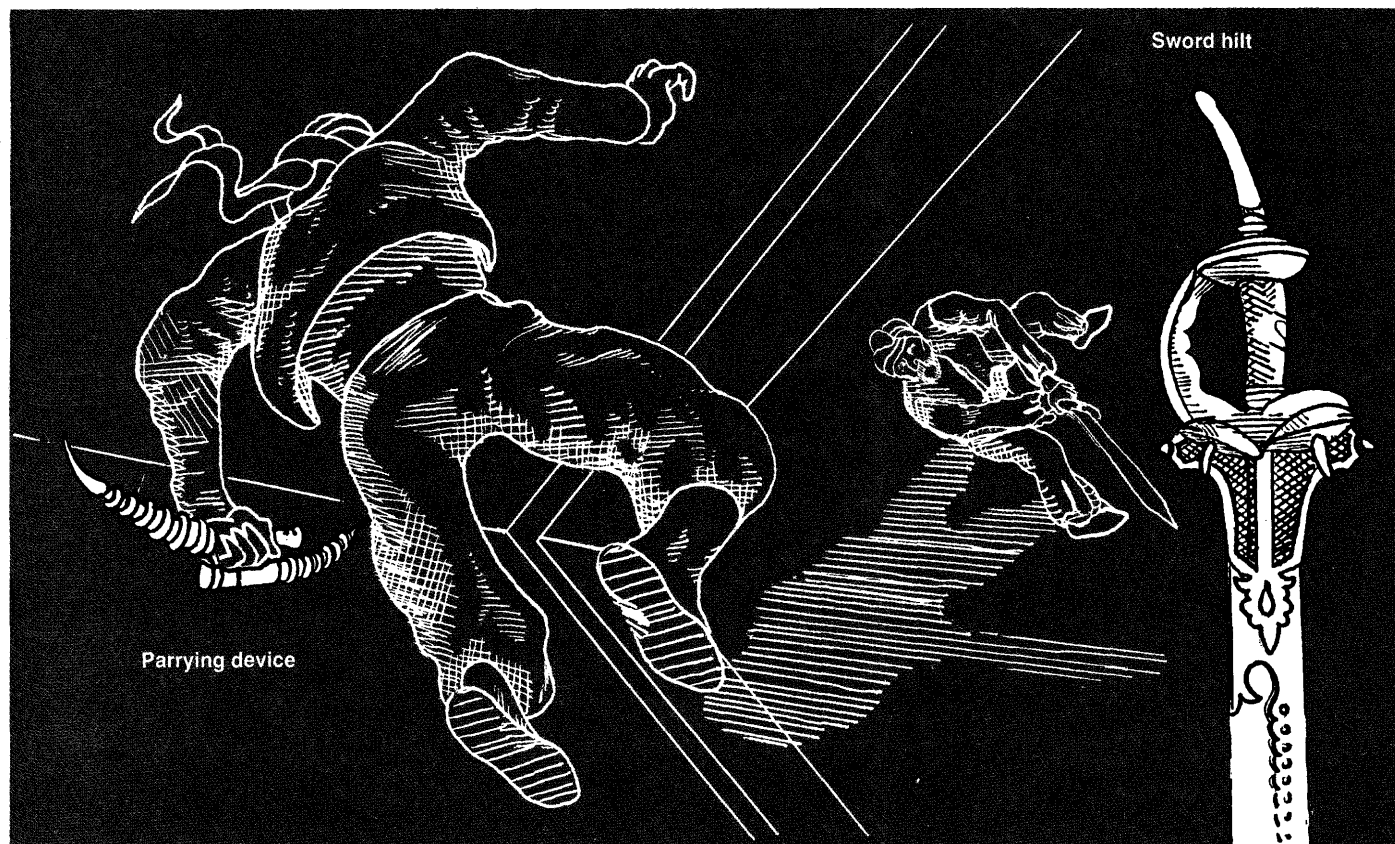
Short (choora, adya katti, zafar takieh): As with axes, short swords carried by rustics or tribesmen will usually also function as tools.

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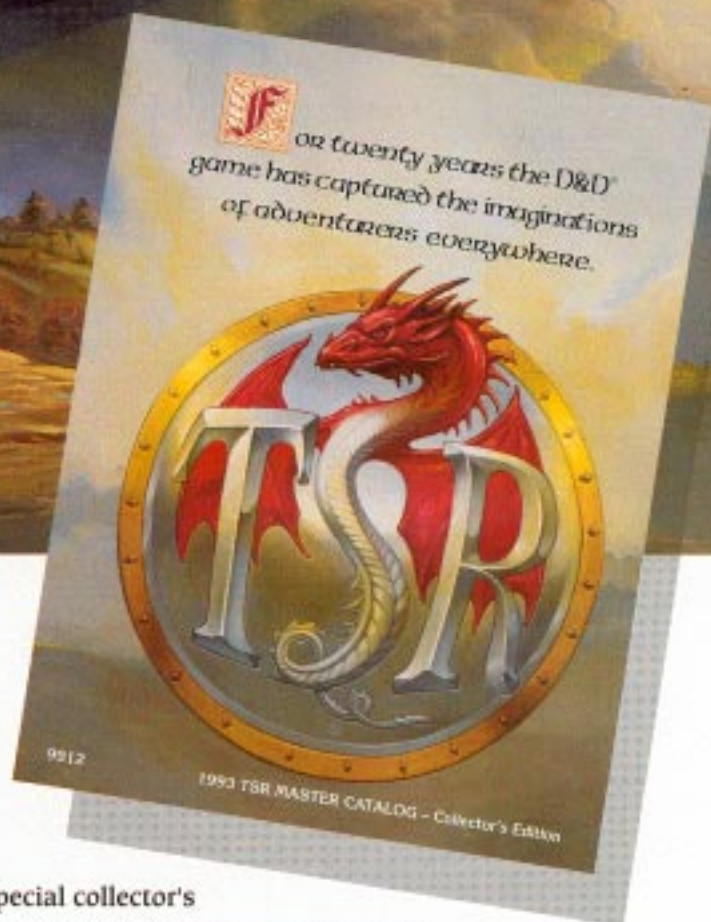
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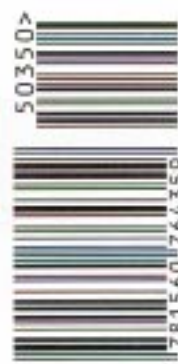


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