

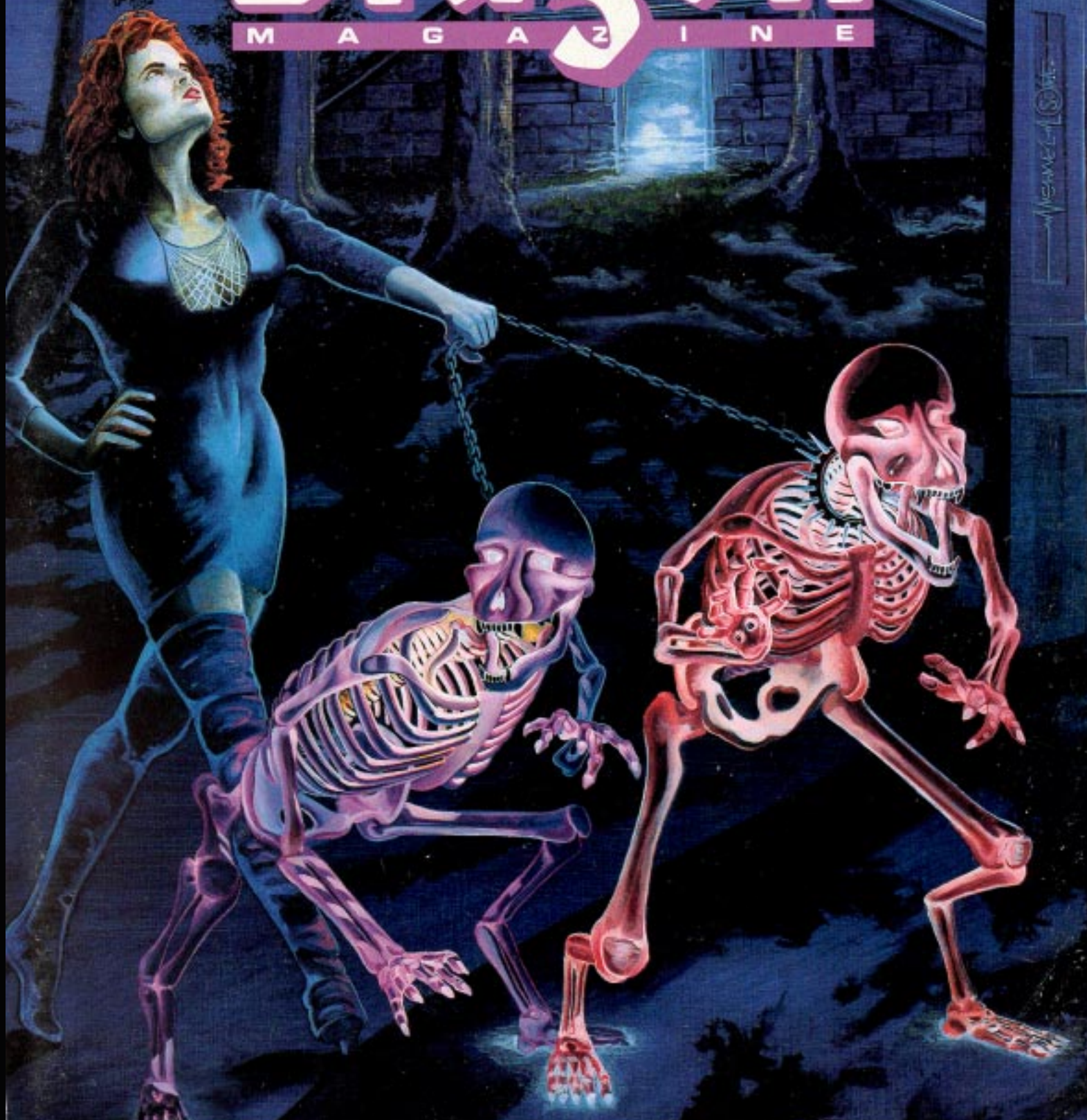
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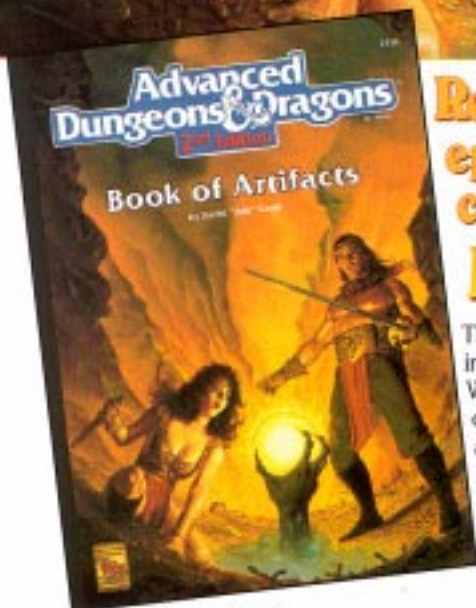
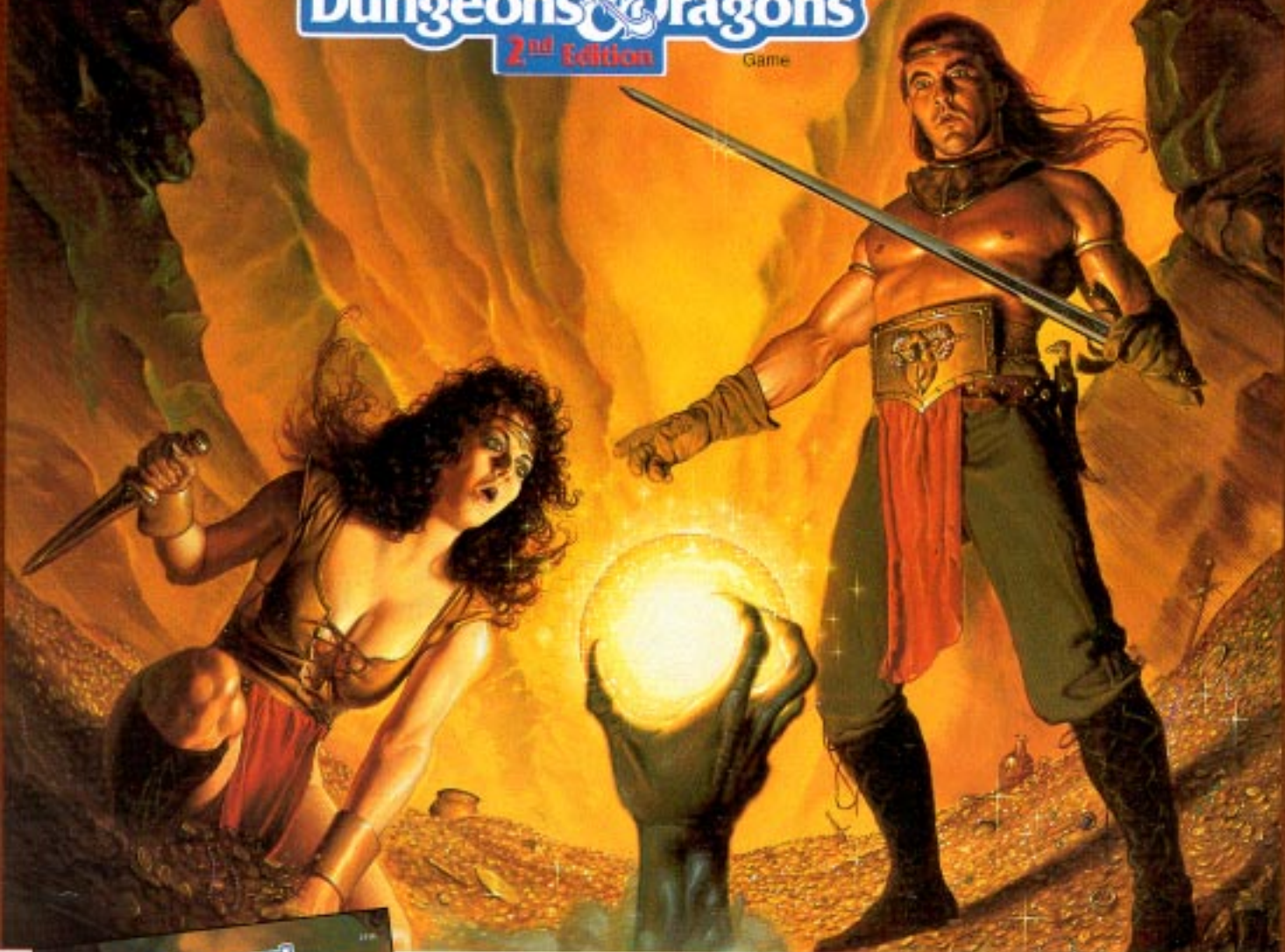
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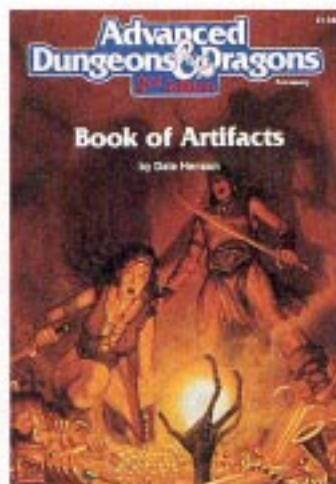
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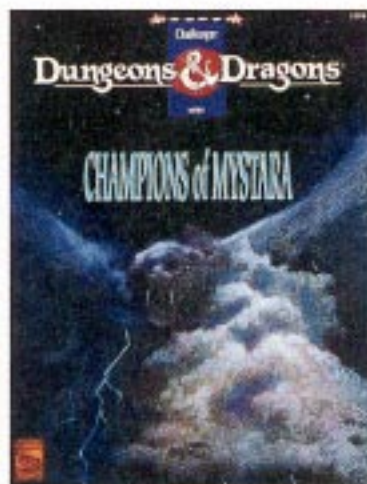
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COVER

Nothing refreshes the spirit like an evening walk with your . . . um, undead lycanthropes. Our cover artist for this issue, Michael Scott, offers this peaceful October vignette.

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LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

Where do I write?

Dear Dragon,

I recently read the expert review of the TOY WARS* game, by Paul Arden Lidberg, in DRAGON issue #193. I was wondering how I could order a copy. I've been to several gaming stores, and they all said that they don't sell small company games. Thanks for any help, and keep up the good work.

Marc Laliberté
Ormstown, Quebec

Dear Dragon,

I read issue #193 with a great deal of enjoyment. I am especially interested in Lester Smith's game reviews. However, Mr. Smith never included an address for Crunchy Frog Enterprises, which makes his positive review of the DUEL* game somewhat frustrating ("I know it's good, but you can't get it"). Could you publish that address in some later issue?

Alan Harrison
No address

Lester Smith, the game's reviewer, reports that the address for Paul Lidberg's company is: Crunchy Frog Enterprises, 889 Mowri Avenue #105, Fremont CA 94536, U.S.A. You can write there for details on how to order products.

And again...

Dear Dragon,

I read Lester Smith's reviews of the BLOOD-BATH* and BLOODCHANT* games in issue #193, but my local book and hobby stores do not have these games. I would like to know if you could please send me the address of T. C. International. Thanks for your time.

Dave P. Besaw
Defiance OH

Lester replies that the address is: TCI, 1340 Beech Wood NE, Grand Rapids MI 49505, U.S.A.

An accredited DM?

Dear Dragon,

Recently, on a national computer network, I met someone who claimed to be a TSR-accredited DM. I was wondering how I might become one as well.

James Philpot
Norfolk VA

I spoke with Jean Rabe, the head of TSR's RPGA™ Network, and we think that it's possible the person you "met" on-line was an RPGA Network judge or game master for some role-playing event. TSR has no school-like program to churn out official TSR Dungeon Masters, but some people have the responsibility of running Network events at various conventions. I'd have the person pin down what sort of accreditation is being discussed here.

Bonded weapons

Dear Dragon,

On page 96 of issue #194, a bonded wood weapon is explained. Could such a weapon kill vampires? Also, could a true-neutral character handle a bonded positive-energy weapon without sustaining any damage?

Sterling Murdock
West Jordnay UT

A bonded wood weapon could kill a vampire only if used as a wooden stake, as per the usual method given for killing a vampire (make sure your bonded wood weapon is not a mace or hammer!). And no, a true-neutral character should not be able to use a bonded positive-energy or negative-energy weapon, either would harm the user using its special powers as given in the article.

The books we use

Dear Dragon,

I have a serious question for your artists: What do they use for reference material? I want to get a reference book of arms and armor, and maybe a book on costumes of different periods (medieval, Renaissance, you know). I've seen a few good books but they are \$40 and all out of print.

Could you just take a bit of space here to list some titles of the most useful books or other references that the artists use? It would help me out a lot. Thanks!

L. B. Render
Baltimore MD

TSR's artists use a great many references, but one set of books appears to stand out: the Osprey Military guides (Men-At-Arms and Elite series). These large paperbacks are in print and feature detailed photographs, diagrams, sketches, and paintings showing military figures from all ages of recorded history, from the Pharaohs to Operation Desert Storm. Many books focus on the European medieval period, on which much fantasy material is based. One artist recommended getting a catalog from Dover Books through a local bookstore, as Dover offers many sorts of useful books showing costumes and weapons from the Dark and Middle Ages. Other specific references appear in the AD&D® accessory DMGR3 Arms and Equipment Guide, on page 3.

Finding fiction

Dear Dragon,

Why is it that the magazine prints so few fiction stories?

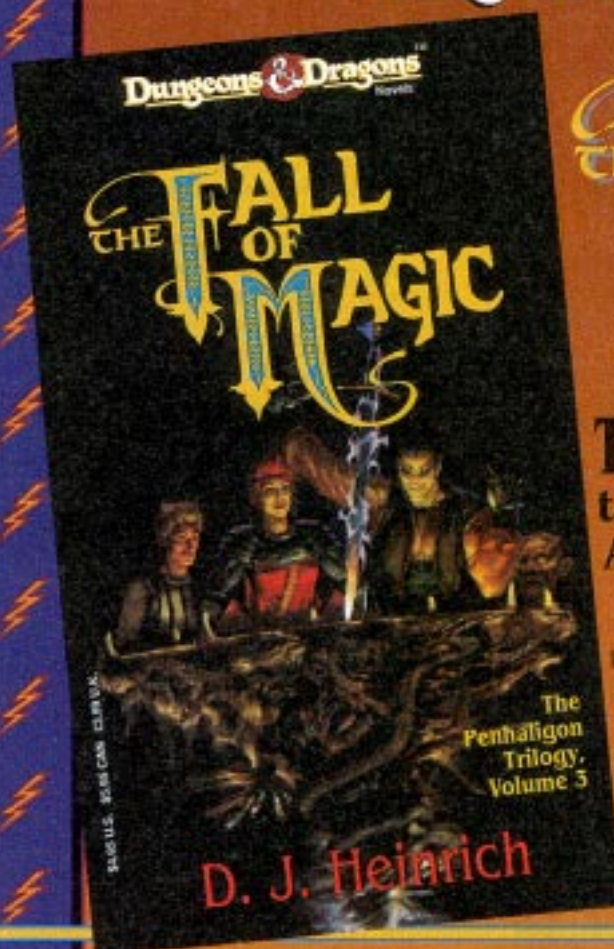
Peter K. Heyck
Ottawa, Ontario

We like to run one story a month, when we get a good one and have the space to print it. Right now, we have enough fiction to run one story an issue until next June; there have been times, however, when we had no good fiction to run. If we print it, we'll make sure it's not only good, it's the best we can find. We hope you enjoy it. If so, write and let us know!

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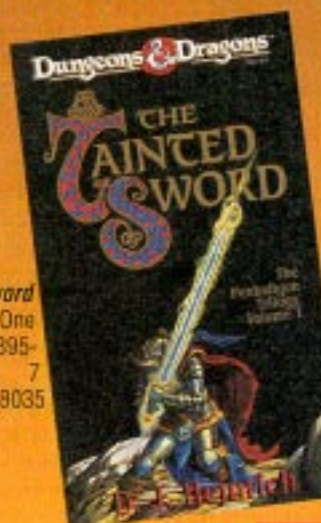
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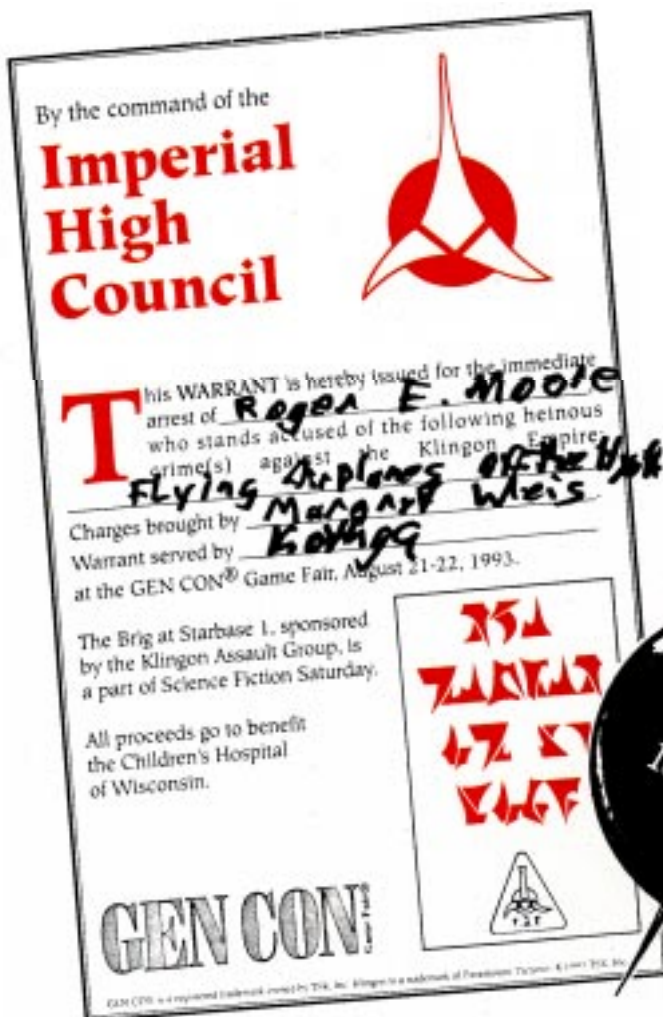
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EDITORIAL

I
was
a
fugitive
from
a
Klingon
chain
gang



Yes, as you can tell from the title, it's time again for the annual GEN CON® game fair editorial. The glory, the wonder, the magnificence of the 1993 convention was rivaled in my mind only by the first three times I saw the movie *Jurassic Park*, the greatest American film since *Citizen Kane*¹. But more about that later.

The following is a compilation of my 1993 GEN CON game fair experiences, culled from the smudged page of notes I took while incarcerated in Cell #1 of the Klingon Imperial Detention Facility, in the east wing of MECCA's main hall. This sounds like I am making this all up, but I am not.

We'll start with the con preparations.

This year's game fair, among its billions

and billions of other events and features, invited George Takei to come as one of its most special guests. George Takei, of course, is better known to Earth's tele-addicted population as Mr. Sulu of the "Star Trek" TV show and movies. The very thought that we would be able to get *the* Mr. Sulu to come to Milwaukee sent the hearts of every closet Trekkie at TSR and elsewhere into tachycardia. Interestingly, those who reacted most intensely to the news of Mr. Takei's arrival were women—married women included.² Mr. Takei's arrival was part of "Science Fiction Saturday" (a wild day of SF fun featuring Bjo Trimble, Gene DeWeese, and others), organized entirely by the incredible Sue Weinlein, about whom more later.

Tuesday, August 17th, was spent hastily stuffing boxes of posters and supplies (and my adopted son/mannequin, Bud) into my

Geo Storm, while at the same time trying to manage the production of three magazines at once. Failing miserably at the latter, I left work at the end of the day for the pre-convention warm-up party at Margaret Weis's barn-house. I was able to get Bud out of the car and upstairs to the main party itself just minutes before those fun-loving gamers from Minneapolis and Canada set Margaret's deck on fire.

By way of explanation, I have to say that it was sort of a "guy thing." The deck caught fire around some candle-dish Margaret was burning to keep the bugs away, and all the guys on the deck stood around and watched it until Margaret came out and had a fit and asked someone to put the fire out. "Oh, okay," the guys said, and put the fire out. Margaret went back in the house and came downstairs to the den, where a bunch of other guys and I were watching *Henry V* on TV. It was the scene where the king is giving his "Crispin's Day" speech before the battle of Agincourt. "They set my deck on fire!" Margaret cried hysterically. "Just a minute," we said, still watching King Henry rally his troops. "It was on fire and burning!" Margaret cried. "We'll be up in a bit," we said, still watching TV. You get the idea.

When I finally went back upstairs, Bud was hanging over the deck balcony, probably as a result of smoke inhalation. I recovered him and we set out for home to await the coming of Wednesday, set-up day, the Day Before. Thus we missed the test-firing of Gary Pack's fireball wand from Margaret's deck, the very same deck that was burned up a little bit earlier that evening. I understand that the aftereffects were quite remarkable.

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-Pagan Publishing company slogan

The editorials I've written about the GEN CON game fair since 1987 generally feature the same themes, among them the ever-increasing size of the convention itself. This year was no exception. I arrived at MECCA Wednesday morning to discover that the exhibition hall had *doubled* in size from 1992, with booths spilling over into the east wing that was formerly used for gaming. I recall that six years ago, we could fit the art show, a cafeteria, a stage, the TSR booth, and all the other exhibitors into the main hall, with room left over. Now the convention

takes up two entire city blocks in multi-story buildings, and it's *still growing*.

Set-up for Fortress TSR, the giant three-story castle in which our products were demonstrated and sold, was done in sweltering heat with no air movement (turning off the air conditioning saves money, I hear). Everything was filthy and dirty. Fellow slave/coworker Julia Martin stopped at one point to look at her hands and shirt and make the day's most astute observation: "Oh, look, we've made mud."

I noted that FASA Corporation had decided to build its own Parthenon to rival TSR's efforts, and booth gigantism was evident elsewhere, too. Among the more remarkable exhibits this year were the hearse, obelisk, and casket at the White Wolf booth (the casket had to be removed), the MPG-Net and GENie Parthenons (the latter with ThrustMaster air-war video pods), and a life-size Alien (as in Sigourney Weaver) in a sci-fi museum, Alien Archives. I also noted a 10'-long, 25-mm starship layout at TSR's BUCK ROGERS® booth; a selection of battle axes and two-handed swords on sale at the Museum Replicas booth (no sharp edges, thank heavens); and a premier copy of the KILL EVERYTHING* solo board game from Crunchy Frog Enterprises.

I later saw the computer-game area, which had several massive computer simulations including two virtual-reality games and a huge, eight-player, real-time BATTLETECH* link-up that put all previous efforts to shame. The hilarious and exciting BATTLETECH videos were great, too (Cheech Marin as a Martian death-race pilot?).

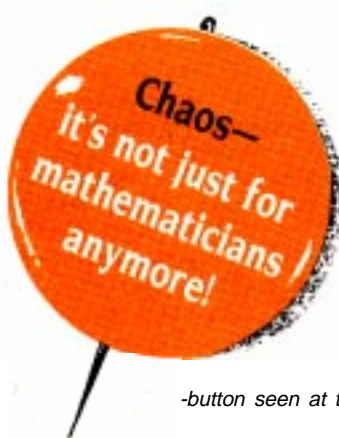
Meeting friends is the best part of the convention. I had a nice chat with Julie Guthrie, miniatures sculptor, though the joy of the occasion was dampened a bit by the news that she was still recovering from being knocked off the road by a taxi while bicycling. I also had a nice chat with Steve Jackson, game designer, though the joy of the occasion was dampened a bit by the news that the Steve Jackson Games booth had a foot-massager unit, and TSR's booth didn't.

The high point of the day was certainly when my fiancée, Gail, rescued me from the cavernous sweatshop of MECCA and took me out for a Thai food lunch. It was marvelous, and the memory of it was not dimmed a few minutes after she dropped me back at MECCA, when she called in a panic and told me she'd locked her car keys in her car five blocks away while the engine was running. Would I run out there through heavy traffic and open her car with my keys, please?³

Now we come to Margaret (the "Approachable"⁴) Weis's second party, held in the Marc Plaza hotel Wednesday night. This is the party where by tradition many things occur of a nature that I cannot discuss in this magazine without risk of legal action and the collapse of the gaming industry. After a prolonged discussion at the door about the

appropriate number of secret knocks I had to give to identify myself, I was allowed in and was immediately made part of a heated round-table discussion of whose fault it was that a one-foot-square section of Margaret's deck was allowed to burn out of control for almost 15 seconds while a bunch of guys stood around and watched it. It was obvious to all that it was Margaret's fault, since she was the one in whose car a bottle of vodka exploded while no one else was around but her, but we humored her for a time because she is Margaret, after all.

After one too many Mountain Dew's (thanks, Buffy), I left for home, thus missing by scant minutes a series of jointly sponsored Canadian-Minnesotan-Ohioan paramilitary exercises about which the less said, the better.⁵ The survivors seemed to have enjoyed themselves, anyway, which was good since the next day was the Day of Doom.



-button seen at the con

Thursday dawned a little overcast but pleasant. I arrived at the convention with a request from Gail to call her at some point so we could work out dinner and visiting arrangements, but things were already a little hectic. Almost every booth had a VCR ad tape running (TSR had two), last-minute rearrangements of product were being made, and the convention's Porn Patrol was making the rounds, asking dealers to please cover up the superabundance of uncovered feminine mammaries that appeared on the artwork in many booths. We knew that any convention with Mr. Sulu appearing was going to be a big one; early projections put attendance at the con in excess of 16,000.

There was time, of course, for Margaret Weis and her mob to come by the booth and wave hello to me. I smiled and waved back, at which point Margaret yelled "ATTACK!" and everyone threw paper airplanes at me and fled. I supposed it had something to do with my earlier visit to the booth where Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman were to sign books; seeing that the booth lacked color, I decorated it with a leftover BUCK ROGERS poster and a note for visitors to ask Margaret about her next GREYHAWK® novel.⁶

On the good side, DRAGON® Magazine

staffers Dale Donovan and Larry Smith arrived at the booth bearing a box full of the stick-on, 2¾" -diameter holograms that will be appearing on the cover of DRAGON issue #200. These we kept in the booth and passed out to special people from other game companies or who were our friends or who did something nice for us. (If you didn't get one—well, maybe we missed you.)

At 10:08 A.M., the doors opened and the gamers poured in. Someone gave me a bag of M&Ms, having remembered my whining in earlier GEN CON editorials about a lack of the same; the giver won two free holograms. Someone came by wearing a *Jurassic Park* T-shirt who said he'd seen the film three times and thought it was a masterpiece of world cinema, certainly greater than *The Birth of a Nation*⁷; he got a free hologram, too. Bob Salvatore, author of drow tales, dropped by to show off a T-shirt he was giving Ed Greenwood, on which Ed's wizard-sage Elminster is about to be stepped on by a giant foot; he got a hologram, too.

Among the hundreds who flooded the "exhibitionists' hall" were the usual assortment of scantily clad barbarians and barbarianettes, braving the chilling cold of the now-operational air conditioning in their leather/fur bikini bottoms and (in the barbarianettes' case) tiny breastcup tops. The more interesting costumes included some remarkable Renaissance-style gowns and a couple of bards who played music for the masses as they wandered the endless corridors of MECCA (the bagpiper, however, was very unappreciated—can't imagine why).

I must also mention the "Arena" in the miniatures' gaming hall west of the exhibition hall, which I toured briefly. Picture, if you will, a gaming table *fifty feet long by twenty feet wide*. Take a moment to pace it out in your back yard. I'd never seen the like of it—it was awesome.

That evening, your DUNGEON® Adventures and DRAGON Magazine editors hosted a panel on what we were looking for from authors, and one prospective writer gave me a three-pound bag of M&Ms. I was pleased and gave him a hologram, though I was starting to think I'd made a tactical error in complaining about not having enough M&Ms.

After a full day of hard work, I drove home. I was vaguely aware that I'd completely failed to call Gail, but I knew that somehow she'd understand. She is that kind of person.

The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once.

-Buckaroo Banzai T-shirt slogan

I arrived at MECCA Friday morning with one sentence burned into my brain with a plasma gun: NEVER FORGET TO CALL GAIL. Fortunately, my first stop was the RPGA™ Network breakfast, so I was able to console myself with a plate full of excellent scrambled eggs, toast, muffins, and so

forth.⁸ I spoke with a Desert Storm veteran about the joys of playing AD&D® games in Iraq under wartime conditions, and Loren Wiseman of GDW reminisced about the time he and a camera crew filmed a lady in her shower at 2 A.M. as part of a game advertisement (right—anything you say, Loren). The RPGA Network gave me a nice clock/award plaque, though without batteries, and we all went back to the exhibition hall, where the guy in charge of the Capcom video-game display gave me two bags of M&Ms. (I gave him some holograms.)

Friday was pretty much a repeat of Thursday, though with more visitors. Lots of old friends dropped by the Periodicals booth in Fortress TSR: Tia and Larry Ake dropped in from North Carolina (hi!), Caroline and Warren Spector from Texas (hi!), Lisa Smedman from Canada (hi!), and a couple named James and Cindy from somewhere else to give me another three-pound bag of M&Ms, for which they received some holograms even though I knew my diet was doomed.

Patricia Nead Elrod, “vampire author” for TSR and other companies, signed a book for me, returning a favor I’d done for her years earlier by being her very first editor (I published a module of hers in DUNGEON issue #1: “Assault on Eddystone Point”). More bards passed through the castle, I called Gail three times but got no answer, and Chris Adams (artist for the “Yamara” strip) dropped by to let me know he hadn’t been paid for the last three strips; I was forced to bribe him with some holograms and a full bag of M&Ms. Then someone named Kimberly came by with another bag of M&Ms for me, and I began to sweat. When the convention was over, I was going to look like a planet,

So many pedestrians, so little time.
—sticker on the side of
a gamer’s motorized wheelchair

Friday afternoon continued to be busy. Two guys from Chaosium (the CALL OF CTHULHU* game company) tried to mind-control me with a humming electronic eyeball, but the confusion of the convention had already fried my brain. Rick Swan, game reviewer from Iowa’s largest undersea city, Des Moines, came by, as did Roger Raupp, first art director for this magazine (both got holograms). Many past and current (and probably future) authors dropped in, such as Scott Bennie, Steve Kurtz, Spike Y. Jones, Peter Aberg, and Gregory Detwiler. Jim Atkiss of TSR paraded around in his Strahd vampire costume, which fit him rather well. (Perhaps in a related event, many people were heard howling like wolves through the exhibition hall.) Margaret (the “Very Friendly”) Weis showed off her new golden chain-mail blouse; I finally got Gail on the phone but couldn’t hear a word she said over the con noise; and everyone prepared for the

evening’s top-secret Game Designers’ Party in the Hyatt.

I was able to visit the art show briefly after a little friendly arm-twisting and finger-breaking by Liz and Gary Williams, who ran the show. The art was wonderful. It was marvelous. It was worth over a million dollars. I was impressed, even if I’d seen a few of the pieces before on module covers; artwork always looks better in real life, up close, particularly when it has dinosaurs in it, as a few pieces did.⁹

I visited a few booths on the way out, including a stop at Mike and Lisa Pondsmiths place at R. Talsorian Games, and I spent a moment or two at Margaret and Tracy’s booth, where they were giving away free copies of Margaret’s latest novel to a piddling crowd of about 675,000 rabid fans.

“Anything here worth reading?” I asked casually, thumbing through a book. “It gets awfully dull in the TSR booth.”

“It wouldn’t be so dull there if you printed a magazine worth reading!” Margaret sneered, as her lackeys hooted and scratched at their fleas.

“At least I didn’t have pictures of my rear end appear in two consecutive DRAGON Magazine issues!” I said good-naturedly as I waved farewell and returned to the booth.¹⁰ I do so love meeting people.

The hall closed at 6 P.M., and I went home to get Gail for the party.

I want cheap food, lots of it, right now!
—T-shirt seen at the con

The top-secret Game Designers’ Party was the best. It was loud, jammed with people, and had truckloads of food and drinks. I’d write more about it, but I don’t recall much because it was so hard to hear anything over the noise unless someone was shouting at you. Still, it was great. Jim Ward was a hit in his choir-boy outfit, and I got to hear all about Sue Weinlein’s Bogus Journey.¹¹ (Hi to everyone I saw there, especially artist Liz Danforth and Mike Stackpole, whose guest editorial in issue #171 still draws praise from gamers.) Gail and I left early, close to midnight, after I pried her out of the bar away from the British friends she’d discovered (from TSR Ltd. in Cambridge). We went home exhausted—just in time for Saturday.

The Horrors ravaged my kaer, and all I salvaged was this lousy shirt.
—T-shirt seen at the con

Before the doors opened Saturday, I wandered the exhibition hall to get a last view of things before the traditional Saturday gamer *tsunami* swept in. I went by Pagan Publishing to see their stuffed-toy Cthulhu dolls, by the FASA Parthenon to see the gigantic BATTLETECH playing table and 3’-tall ‘Mech models, and by the three or four booths selling giant variant

chess games (Superchess, King’s Chess, etc.). I was wowed at the Capcom booth by the incredible graphics on their new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® video games, and I was glad that those games had not come out years earlier when the D&D® game was young, or none of us would have gotten anything at all done.

The most heartwarming sight at the convention was the fur-clad live barbarian baby in his stroller, drinking from his bottle, while his fur-clad barbarianette mother sorted product at a nearby booth. I also liked the title for the Weis & Hickman-sponsored Killer Breakfast: “Bring Me the Head of Wesley Crusher!”

But the absolute best things at the entire convention, better even than the virtual-reality games that were played nonstop upstairs until they threatened to drain power from all southern Wisconsin, were Horizon’s painted vinyl models of the *Tyrannosaurus rex* and *Velociraptor* from the greatest movie in the history of the galaxy, *Jurassic Park*.¹² They were just GORGEOUS. I would have sold my office staff for just the ‘raptor. Perhaps I could make a deal on Dale and Wolf.

At 10, the gamers filled the hall. I ate only M&Ms for breakfast, being too nervous to get a regular meal, which led to my being rather faint-headed and goofy as the day went on. Long-time friends Karen and Vince Streif came by, game designer Kim Eastland came by, Bud got to appear in a movie, my picture was taken for a travel magazine, and rumors of crazed Trekkie hordes rampaging through MECCA in search of Mr. Takei made the rounds. My son John appeared, and he and I got to test-drive the Capcom video games (we killed the dragon! we killed the dragon!). And I finally got to see part of the DRAGON STRIKE™ video playing continuously in the TSR castle, enjoying one part in particular—maybe you can find it on your version.¹³

It was a wonderful day. I was having a great time.

Then Margaret Weis and the Klingons appeared.



—button seen at the con

At first I thought it was sort of amusing and even appropriate to see Margaret Weis and her cohorts in the company of a

Continued on page 14

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**You can run—
but you'll only die tired**

Artwork by Phil Longmeyer



Pin Back Their Ears!

Lycanthrope heroes?
Sure—but here's how to keep them under control

by James B. Couch

Artwork by Tony DiTerlizzi

In the D&D® and AD&D® games, lycanthropes can be injured or killed in melee only by fire, spells, or silver or magical weapons. The AD&D 1st Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* (pages 22-23) allowed lycanthrope player characters, but with restrictions concerning role-playing, experience acquisition, uncontrolled shape-changing, alignment shifts, permanent loss of paladinhood, and armor-caused injuries during shape-changing. The AD&D 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 131) skips the above but places a severe restriction by having a lycanthrope PC be controlled by the DM while in were-form, committing terrible acts during that time.

In the D&D game, the opposite evolution occurred. At first, a lycanthrope PC became a DM-controlled NPC while in were-form. With the advent of the D&D supplement PC4 *Night Howlers*, a player could control his PC in lycanthrope form as well as in normal shape once he gained enough levels. Numerous restrictions were imposed on lycanthropes, though they also

gained many new and potent powers.

Using a controlled-change werebeast PC in either the D&D or AD&D game could be considered unfair when it is used with other characters, especially if taking part in a published adventure. However, a creative DM can make life just as interesting (and dangerous) for a lycanthrope PC as for other characters—and it can be done without a lot of work.

Beyond silver and magic

In the movie *The Howling*, werewolves could be injured by normal weapons, but never fatally. One was shot a dozen times at point-blank range in mid-transformation, causing him to go unconscious and return to human form. Later in the film, the same lycanthrope turned up alive, even surviving a bottle of acid being splashed in his face. A second werewolf, in beast form, had his right forearm severed by an intended victim wielding a normal hatchet. The second example parallels the old story of a traveler who is attacked in the forest at night by a wolf. He fights off the beast by severing one of its paws, which he keeps. When he reaches his destination, he tells his story and illustrates it by pulling out the paw, which has become a human hand.

In this option, a werebeast in beast form can be hurt by normal weapons and animals, but never killed. It regenerates such wounds and all severed limbs (unless magically caused) at the rate of 3 hp per round (severed limbs cannot be reattached but are considered regrown when all damage has been healed). In human form, it also heals normal-weapon damage rapidly, at the rate of 1d8 hp per day. If reduced to zero hit points by normal weapons in either form, a lycanthrope goes into a coma that, to all appearances, passes for death. After the lycanthrope regenerates one-third of its total hit points, it comes out of the coma and can continue as if nothing happened. It is this "rising from the dead" that causes some people to believe that werewolves killed by someone

(other than with silver or magic) come back as vampires. However, unlike a troll, a lycanthrope is instantly killed if decapitated in either form; it cannot regenerate such damage and remains dead unless resurrected.

This rules change will replace the gradual, level-based diminishing of damage taken from normal-weapon attacks given in *Night Howlers*. The AD&D 1st Edition rules for lycanthropes (or close variations) are assumed to be used for AD&D 2nd Edition games. PC lycanthropes working under this rule do not have much of an advantage over other characters, since they are equally vulnerable to being swarmed by kobolds or stirges for example. Certain lycanthropes (notably werebears) can no longer charge into groups of opponents, killing them all without a scratch. The key phrase here is "without a scratch."

The death-coma can come in handy if the rest of the group is captured and the PC lycanthrope is left for dead. It can be left alone to regenerate and, when strong enough, can rescue its friends, providing an unexpected surprise for their enemy. This also makes it easier for DMs, since they don't need to outfit their orcs or goblins with extra +1 weapons (providing the beginnings of a Monty Haul campaign) just to deal with one member of the group. If the orc chieftain already has a magical weapon (rolled naturally), by all means let him use it—but the rest of the tribe will do fine without them.

Thus, dungeon crawling is still dangerous, especially if one of the party is trying to hide his lycanthropy yet has to explain why his wounds are healing so fast or why a severed finger has grown back without the aid of magic.

Monsters

In *Night Howlers*, certain high-hit-dice monsters such as dragons and giants (as well as siege engines) are able to overcome a lycanthrope's normal-weapon resistance



Artwork by John Stanko

by the amount of damage they do in one shot (DM's Guide, page 11). This power was given to many monsters in the AD&D 1st Edition *DMG* (page 75); anything with 4 + 1 HD or more can hurt any were-creature. Making use of these rules helps enormously in dealing out damage to were-PCs. Granted, not even the toughest werebear can withstand the breath of an ancient dragon or a storm giant's *lightning* bolt, but big guns such as these need not be trotted out very often.

Example #1: Boris, an AD&D-game wereboar (in human form), and two adventuring companions approach an old castle. The only guard is a huge armored ogre. Try as they might, the group cannot defeat the ogre, and they end up being soundly thrashed. Enraged, Boris assumes his boar form (he has enough control to change in the daylight) and attacks the ogre. Grabbing a 10'-long iron-shod oak club, the ogre knocks Boris for a line drive of 30'. Smarting, Boris gets his bearings and charges, only to be grand-slammed again. After three more tries with the same result, the ogre finally misses and Boris tackles him. Though he gores the ogre to death, Boris is still badly hurt, not only from the ogre's club but from grappling with the monster. The ogre broke one of Boris' legs and crushed several ribs in a final-gasp bear hug.

Example #2: Melvor, a D&D-game wizard, teleports himself to an isolated cave in the forest, where he has set up a camp to stay while he prowls during the full moon in weretiger form. Unfortunately for Melvor, a small herd of woolly mammoths with young has moved into the woods. Melvor assumes tiger form, stalks into the forest, and gains the attention of the mammoths by passing too close for their comfort. The bull mammoth and a couple of the mothers attack Melvor, who for several minutes finds out what it's like to be a soccer ball. Though he inflicts a few injuries (mostly scratches) to some of the mammoths, Melvor is eventually pulped and left for dead. Melvor doesn't die but is in very great pain and horribly wounded. He must be very careful and lucky to get back to his camp without getting jumped by another monster that was attracted by the sounds of the battle.

In these two cases, the lycanthropes have been wounded by creatures using muscle (albeit great amounts) and nothing more. The reasoning is, if an ogre using an ordinary weapon can hurt a creature such as an elemental where others need at least a +1 weapon, surely it can also hurt a lycanthrope. The damage inflicted would be equal to an unarmed humanoid's Strength bonus or full normal damage if done by a large, normal animal or giant-type animal.

In the above examples, Boris takes 6 hp damage per grappling hit by the 18/00-Strength ogre, as well as full damage from the ogre's normal weapon (assuming the normal-damage modified rule mentioned

earlier is used). Melvor takes normal tusk and stomping damage from the woolly mammoths. In these cases, the lycanthropes can regenerate only at normal rates, due to the severity and intensity of the damage (being stepped on by a mammoth or beaten by an ogre is far worse than a sword cut from a goblin). Lycanthropes will learn the hard way to be careful what and how they attack (engaging Mr. Troll in a pro-wrestler-style slap fight isn't such a good idea after all).

Giants are a danger all their own. To the larger ones, the bites and scratches of a lycanthrope are about as effective as those of a small animal to a grown adult man. A werewolf or weretiger, if not careful, could be caught by a couple of young giants, "convinced" to come with them, and taken home as a stray puppy or kitty. Once the sun rises, unless the lycanthrope can control the change, he's now a lone, naked, and weaponless human surrounded by the giants' other pets. Hill, stone, frost, and mountain giants are the ones to watch out for in this situation. Other giants will either ignore lycanthropes in animal form or try to kill them on the spot.

A great many animals can hurt lycanthropes. Pythons can restrain, constrict, and crush them; scorpions and rattlesnakes can poison them; giant fish can swallow them whole; giant squids can pull them underwater and drown them; and rocs and dinosaurs can do whatever they want with them.

Monsters with special magical attacks are especially bad. Obvious ones are petrifiers (medusae, cockatrices, and gorgons), swallowers (behirs and purple worms), and the slimes, puddings, and oozes. Lycanthropes can, of course, hurt each other normally; this includes jackalweres and wolfweres. Extraplanar creatures, especially elementals, can harm and kill lycanthropes with their physical attacks, as can golems. Spells and psionics unleashed by beholders, mind flayers, lichs, and psionists are to be feared (more on this below). Such monsters as dragons hardly need be mentioned.

Magical and psionics

Lycanthropes are just as vulnerable to spells and psionics as other creatures. A few spells are especially tailored to deal with lycanthropes, and DM discretion should decide what AD&D-game psionic powers may be used most effectively on lycanthropes.

In some campaigns, druids and priests of nature deities may have the ability to turn or control lycanthropes (including PCs) as if the lycanthropes were undead of equivalent hit dice—e.g., a wererat is equal to a shadow, a werewolf is equal to a wight, etc. Another power of these priests could be the ability to remove the "gift" of lycanthropy (aside from the usual *cure disease* spell) from those unworthy of having it. This power would even affect lycan-

thropes born with their lycanthropy, such as "wild" werewolves. Against this power and the turning or controlling, PCs could be granted a save vs. spells at +2 to resist,

Poison and paralysis

Lycanthropes are as vulnerable to poison and drugs as other creatures are, regardless of their strength and vitality. Optionally, the DM can rule that they cannot be killed by any natural or artificial poison, but can still be severely harmed or crippled by it. A lycanthrope could go blind instead of dying from scorpion venom, or could develop nervous shakes and gain a worsened armor class. Such damage, if not permanent, should last long enough to give the lycanthrope pause when it next sees a poisonous animal.

Wolfsbane, if recognized for its properties, could be cultivated and used by any large community of humans, demihumans, humanoids, and the like. Who needs silver if each spear has a wolfsbane garland around the head, or if wolfsbane juice can be rubbed on weapons? This will make attacks against organized folk less frequent, if lycanthrope PCs are prone to it.

Paralyzing attacks such as those of a carrion crawler or a gelatinous cube work as normal if the saving throw is failed. Hallucinogens, from drugs or spores, are equally effective but might have altered and unpredictable effects on lycanthropes. The DM should be creative.

Undead

The bane of all that live, including lycanthropes, are the undead. This goes beyond the movie-fostered animosity between werewolves and vampires (which will be expanded upon later).

Except for their monster versions, skeletons and zombies are unable to harm lycanthropes unless they are armed with silver or magical weapons. Monster skeletons, monster zombies, and ju-ju zombies can harm lycanthropes in both forms due to their power.

The paralyzing touch of ghouls and lichs affects lycanthropes in beast form. The stench of ghouls would be especially effective, as the beasts' enhanced sense of smell would make them more vulnerable, with a -2 penalty on their saving throws (this would also work for stench attacks by other creatures such as troglodytes and giant skunks).

Energy draining and disease-causing attacks of other undead have normal effects. Any lycanthrope killed by an undead's energy drain becomes an undead werebeast much like the vampire panther in the RAVENLOFT® supplement *Darklords*. If a PC werebeast becomes an undead, it's best if the result were moderated by the DM alone.

The fear/aging powers of the ghost have full effect on lycanthropes, especially if the latter are in animal form, which would make them especially skittish in the presence of these powerful undead. Lycan-

thropes get a +2 bonus on their saves against the ghost's possession (or any other possession attack), because the possessor must overcome both the human and animal personas of the lycanthrope.

A vampire can be the worst foe of werewolves, werabats, and wererats. With its power to control the natural forms of these animals, an exceptionally powerful vampire can take control of one werewolf, wererat, or wererat in place of two wolves, 10 bats, or 10 rats. Though he cannot summon them, on nights of the full moon a vampire could exert his will over the dominant animal nature of a lycanthrope (including a PC), who would have a -4 penalty on its saving throw vs. spells. This control works on the lycanthrope only while it's in beast form and is a variation of the vampire's *charm* power (in this case, disregard the lycanthropes' immunity to *charm* spells in the *Werewolves' Manual of Night Howlers*, page 8). An AD&D-game lycanthrope can be *charmed* as normal, but cannot be commanded to assume a different form.

If an involuntary change to wereform occurs, a lycanthrope breaks free of a vampire's control and is at +2 on its save if the vampire tries to re-charm it, since it can subconsciously remember the vampire's control of its other form and naturally rebel. As a result, a lycanthrope will flee from a vampire if at all possible (at-

tacking the vampire would destroy the lycanthrope, thanks to energy-draining attacks). It should be noted that only a "main" vampire (i.e., one not under the control of its creator) can attempt to control a lycanthrope.

One particularly hideous D&D scenario can be brought about if a vampire gains control of a PC or NPC lycanthrope, especially a werewolf, on the night of the full moon. The vampire can then have the beast summon the types of animals it naturally controls at the appropriate number for its level as shown in the *Werewolves' Manual of Night Howlers*. If it is high enough to call other lycanthropes, they obey the first lycanthrope, who obeys the vampire. Such a chain of command can cause the building of a small and short-lived but devastating army.

For example, Hans, a 7th-level fighter/6-HD werewolf, changes under the full moon. An hour later, while romping through the forest, Hans is ambushed by Countess Morla and one of her vampire servants. Countess Morla takes control of Hans the wolf and has him summon 1d8 wolves, getting five. He then tries to summon 1d8 werewolves, getting an answer from one werewolf and three worgs. Obeying Hans in turn, the second werewolf summons 1d8 wolves, getting seven. To this are added the Countess's six worgs, plus the 12 wolves her servant controls.

Such an army will stay intact until dawn when the Countess and her servant must return to their coffins and the werewolves resume human form.

With a pyramiding of power such as this, visions of packs of wolves and hordes of bats and rats led by the respective lycanthropes under the control of one or more vampires, all sweeping down on helpless villages, dance through the minds of DMs. Fighting off such a horde to get to the main vampire(s) would be quite a challenge for PCs, especially if one or more of their friends are the lycanthropes caught under the vampire's control.

Of course, a vampire's naturally chaotic nature will keep such an organized effort from becoming commonplace. Only the oldest, most powerful, and most intelligent vampires will try such a thing, mostly as a punishment to villages that have defied the vampire's will or as a means of attacking a small temple to defile it so that the vampire can loot it at leisure. Such an intelligent vampire will most likely be a spellcaster on top of everything else, to add to the danger. This would be a good adventure to lure in PC lycanthropes.

These expansions and new dangers for lycanthropes, plus any others a DM can come up with, are sure to make PC lycanthropes play a little more carefully when they decide to become party animals. **Ω**

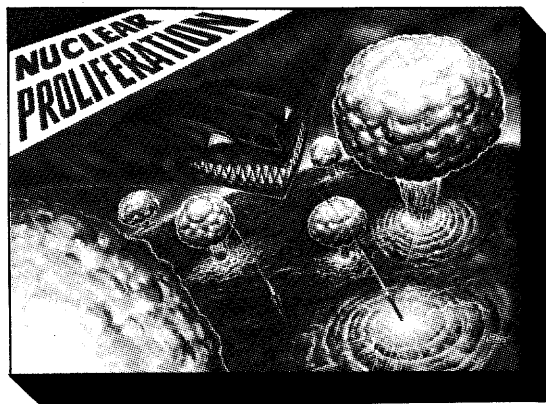
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Editorial

Continued from page 8

squad of brutish Klingon thugs. Then the head Klingon read out an arrest warrant for me, charging me with flying a paper airplane off the balcony of the Hyatt several years ago.¹⁴ They produced plastic handcuffs and demanded I leave the booth. I stared at them as if they were crazy (which, of course, they were).

"Get serious," I said. "I'm not leaving to go anywhere." The Klingons nodded, fully expecting that reply, and immediately left. I laughed, but Margaret looked quite pleased. I discovered why when the Klingons appeared in the booth with me, having entered Fortress TSR through its undefended rear doors. They handcuffed me and dragged me away and threw me in Cell Block #1 of the Klingon Imperial Detention Facility, where I was able to complete part of this editorial while awaiting my sentence to be completed.

The Klingons were part of the Klingon Armada International, which does a "jail and bail" thing to support different charities. Margaret and her friends had paid for me to be imprisoned (without trial or legal representation) to benefit the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, which was a comforting thought up to the point where my own son, John, paid to have my sentence extended. This caused enormous hilarity for a crowd of about a hundred busybodies with names like Buffy the Death Knight Slayer, Bob the Firestarter, and Margaret ("Always a Joy") Weis.

After suffering unspeakable torment, I was able to bribe a guard for \$20 to have Margaret thrown into my cell and have me set free, whereupon I paid another \$15 (all the money I had left) for the Klingons to torture her. This the Klingons did with relish, singing several stanzas of their Klingon Marching Song until Margaret screamed in agony. It was lovely.¹⁵

I got back at the booth just in time for someone named Jacques to give me another bag of M&Ms. I knew I was going to die. Karen and Vince then found me again and took me out to get a couple of burritos, which saved me from eating more M&Ms (I owe you).

Later that evening I went to an SF seminar. On the way there, I saw George Takei, walking in the other direction. He looked happy, confident, and completely at ease. I heard later that he was one of the best special guests we'd ever had, and he was loved by everyone. And the closet Trekkies did get to take him out for lunch that day. You could tell because their faces glowed for hours afterward. Sue Weinlein, you're the greatest.

I can't say much about the SF seminar except that we all agreed that it was fun screw up the lives of ignorant player characters. Then I went home and stood in a shower for a half hour, trying to get the ache out of my legs and feet. One more day to go, just one more day. . . .

My notes on Sunday are very sparse. Sea gulls flew over the city at dawn across a bright, sunlit sky. I felt a little sad that the convention would soon be over, and I went to the magazine booth with a sigh and a melancholy smile on my face.

Then the Klingons arrested me for a second time.

After the usual abuse and my eventual release, I wandered the hall to get my last impressions. I discovered that someone was selling cheesy little lead miniatures for the MACHO WOMEN WITH GUNS* game, and former DRAGON Magazine staffer and computer whiz Joe Nowak dropped by to show us what happens when you accidentally stick your hand in an experimental airplane's propeller (the reattachment surgery seems to have been a success, for which all of us—especially Joe—are very grateful).


We didn't catch the two zero-level thieves who sneaked in the back of Fortress TSR (we'll be waiting for you next time, however) or the guy passing out the phony \$100 bills (ditto there, too), but we all did get runny noses from the air conditioning. When the convention hall shut down at 4 P.M., everyone cheered and clapped for half a minute. Then we tore down the booths, packed up the product, and got ready to go home. Even Bud looked worn out. He's crashed on my office floor as I write this.

It was the best GEN CON game fair there ever was. I hear that they're planning an even better one next year. I don't see how they can do that, unless they bring the Klingons back and certain people I know are unavoidably detained and tortured throughout the convention. Or maybe they'll bring in some live raptors or a T. rex, or even both. Or maybe—hmm. I'll talk to the convention organizers and see what can be done.

Congratulations to the entire GEN CON game fair staff for the work they put into making sure we had fun. And thanks to George Takei and, of course, the now-hoarse Sue.

See you there in '94—

—but please don't bring more M&Ms. Just bring yourselves and have a ball.



The inevitable footnotes

1. Perhaps *Jurassic Park* was even greater, since *Citizen Kane* did not feature a tyrannosaur squashing a land rover. It sure worked for me.

2. "We're going to take him out to lunch," they would say, "and we'll keep him away from all the Trekkies and talk about normal things." Then they would moan and close their eyes as if they were praying.

3. I did. She's done it before.

4. According to the description of her in the 1993 GEN CON game fair brochure.

5. Except perhaps in court.

6. This is completely untrue, but nothing will drive Margaret crazier more quickly, unless you say something about Missouri being on the wrong side in the Civil War. Do not do this if you want to remain her friend and avoid costly medical treatments.

7. Which did not, of course, feature a tyrannosaur eating a lawyer.

8. It was the best food at the convention, unless you brought your own from home. You are warned.

9. But not enough for my tastes.

10. Hint: Get DRAGON issues #132 and 133 and look at the 1988 GEN CON brochures. It will take a few minutes, but it's worth it.

11. She was leaving to pick up George Takei at the airport when she suddenly misplaced her car in the Hyatt parking lot. She was picked up in a near-hysterical state by Barbara Young, who helped her find her car and thus save the Federation. George Takei's plane was late, anyway, so it didn't matter.

12. *Gone With the Wind* had Atlanta burning and that was nice, but did it have a single battle between a raptor and a T. rex? I rest my case.

13. It's the brief scene near the film's start where our publisher, Jim Ward, gets his face slapped at the king's party.

14. You've heard this story about a million times already, so I won't repeat the details—except to say again that I didn't do it!

15. Tracy Hickman, wearing his dress Starfleet uniform, was later jailed and tortured, too, by being spanked. It was a moment to remember forever. The Klingons raised just over \$2,000 as a result of their imposition of martial law on the convention.

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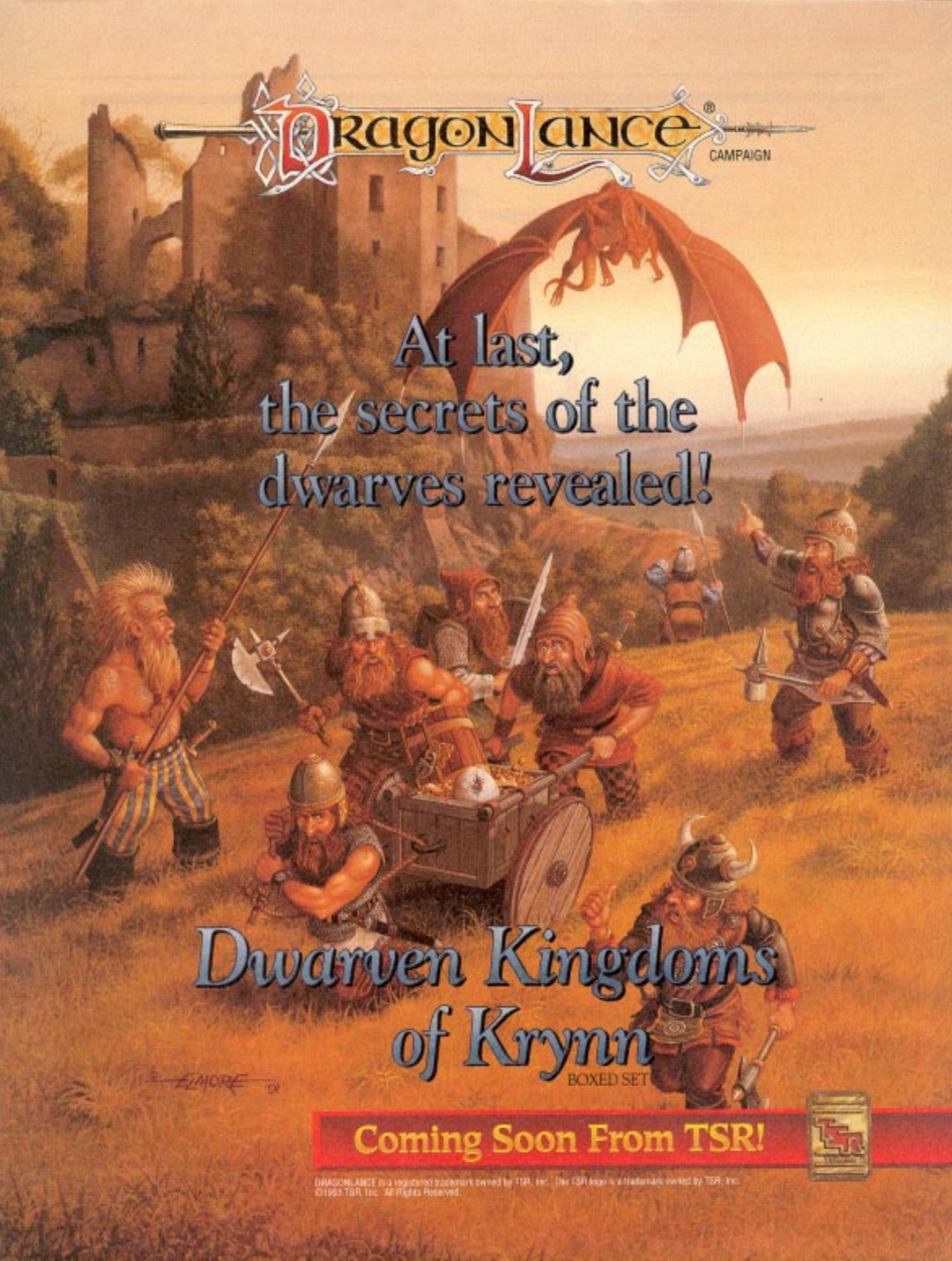
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The False Undead

They're not undead, but they're not un-dangerous

by Jonathan Richards

Artwork by Robert Klasnich

One of the important abilities of the priest class in the AD&D® game is that of turning away undead monsters. As a priest increases in level, so too does the power of his turning, so that the lesser forms of undead creatures can actually be destroyed by the strength of the priest's faith. Given the importance of this ability, what would happen if a priest met an undead being he couldn't turn at all, regardless of his level?

What follows are two creatures and a potion effect that might be classified as "false undead"—that is, the monsters and the person using the potion *look* undead and may act like undead, but all the turning in the world will have no effect upon them.

Skeletal potion

The first of the "false undead" is not a creature, but rather a potion that allows its imbiber to appear to be an animated skeleton. The potion was first created by Phomboulicos the Mender as an aid for proper bone-setting. The potion, once swallowed, causes all parts of the drinker's body to become invisible, with the exception of the skeleton. This allows any bone breaks to be clearly seen, and it aids the bone-setter tremendously, as he can see when the bones are in place so that they

will heal properly.

Of course, another possible use for the potion—one which was unforeseen by naive Phomboulicos—is that it allows the imbiber to impersonate an undead skeleton. Unlike various types of magical *invisibility* such as those bestowed by the spell or the ring, the skeletal potion's effects are not negated by attacks made by the imbiber. Once the potion is consumed, its effects persist until the potion wears off in 1d4 +4 turns. Clothing and armor worn are not affected by the potion and remain visible, as do any items carried.

Several points are worth mentioning. One, the potion-drinker, unlike a true (undead) skeleton, is fully able to talk while under the effects of the potion. Two, the imbiber's invisible skin, fat, and muscle prevent the skeleton from actually contacting the things it touches. A careful observer will note that the skeleton's feet hover slightly off the ground, the pelvis never touches a cushion on which the skeleton sits, objects seem to float slightly over a skeletal hand holding them, etc. Finally, dust, paint, and other particulate or liquid materials will also reveal the presence of the invisible flesh. Those wishing to pass themselves off as undead would do well to keep these points in mind.

XP Value: 200



| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Any land |
| FREQUENCY: | Very rare |
| ORGANIZATION: | Solitary or small groups |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Any (usually nocturnal) |
| DIET: | Carnivore |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Average (8-10) |
| TREASURE: | Q × 10 in lair, residual on host |
| ALIGNMENT: | Chaotic evil |
| NO. APPEARING: | 1-8 |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 4 (host: 8) |
| MOVEMENT: | 9 (12 on host) |
| HIT DICE: | 1+4 (host: 2) |
| THACO: | 19 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 1 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | 1-4 (or by weapon type) |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Surprise, poison, control host |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Immune to sticky substances, disguise |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | S (1' tall) |
| MORALE: | Steady 111-121 |
| XP VALUE: | 420 |

A skullrider is a spiderlike creature whose eight segmented legs grow out of a body the size and shape of a human skull. Its shiny exoskeleton is the approximate color and texture of human bone, supporting the illusion. Vicious mandibles are hidden inside the "jawbone" of the skull; these mandibles are retractable, as are the creature's eight short legs. The bony exoskeleton prevents body heat from emanating, thus making the skullrider "invisible" to infravision. A skullrider with mandibles and legs retracted is thus 90% indistinguishable from a regular human skull.

Due to its spidery nature, a skullrider can climb sheer surfaces and move at normal speed through webs (magical and otherwise), although it cannot create webs of its own. It is immune to all sticky substances, magical or mundane, such as web spells or glue. When encountered in this form, the normal statistics above are used.

However, 75% of all skullrider encounters are with "mounted" skullriders. In this case, the statistics in parentheses are used. A skullrider has the ability to control a newly dead human, demihuman, or humanoid body ("host") with which it has bonded. The bonding process is as follows: A skullrider uses its mandibles and sharp, hollow tongue to pierce into a corpse's skull and devour selected parts of the brain. This permits the skullrider to mentally link with the corpse's nervous system, and this in turn allows the skullrider to animate the corpse at will, even when not in contact with the body. Only one host can be animated by a single skullrider at any one time. The bonding process takes two full rounds and must be started within one hour of the death of the host body.

Although a skullrider can move its animated host from any distance up to 60' (provided it maintains a line of sight), it is most common for the creature to consume the head of its host body and sit atop the severed neck with legs retracted underneath them. This gives the mounted skullrider the appearance of a skull-headed zombie. A skullriders can control only a newly dead humanoid body; in no case can it animate a skeleton (which has no brains to ingest or central nervous system to link with) or true undead of any kind. A skullrider host is truly dead, animated by the skullriders' magical mental link instead of a link to the Negative Material plane common to undead creatures; therefore the host cannot be turned by priests or paladins.

A host body separated from its controlling skullrider remains animated only so long as the skullrider is paying full attention to that control, taking no actions other than moving at MV 6. Combat, full movement, unconsciousness, and so forth breaks the link, causing the corpse to fall. A dispel magic spell cast on the skullrider or host (against sixth-level spell-use) or any form of anti-magic field or spell will also break the link. Once a link has been magically broken between host and skullrider, it cannot be reestablished.

As a side note, any corpse whose head has been consumed by a skullrider cannot be restored to life by any means short of a *wish* spell. The corpse can, however, be *animated* into a zombie or (later) a skeleton.

Combat: Mounted skullriders usually attack with a weapon, if their host body has one. Any magical bonuses inherent in the weapons apply, but skullrider host bodies do not get any bonuses to hit or to damage based on their Strength or Dexterity scores, whatever they might have been. Skullriders are considered proficient in all melee weapons that can be wielded with one hand. Those weapons requiring two hands may be used at a nonproficiency penalty of -2 to hit. Missile weapons can-



not be used, as skullriders lack the coordination and finesse to properly employ them (but a mounted skullrider armed with a crossbow could swing it like a club). Skullriders can have their host bodies attack with weapons while they are not riding them, but suffer a penalty of -2 on attacks and damage due to problems of perspective and vantage points.

A mounted skullrider in combat takes no damage until its host has been destroyed (use the armor-class, movement, and hit-dice statistics above). At this point, the host body collapses (assumedly so badly damaged it cannot stand or fight) and the skullrider either scuttles away (if opposition is strong) or moves in close to bite.

Skullriders can bite in combat for 1-4 hp damage, and anyone bitten must save vs. poison or lose an additional 2d4 hp. Mounted skullriders can leap off their mounts onto opponents in order to bite with a surprise bonus of +2 to hit (the host body promptly collapses in a heap). This bonus applies only when the opponent is unaware of the skullrider's ability to do so.

Habitat/Society: Skullriders are primarily scavengers, preferring to attain their mounts from fresh battlefields rather than attack a healthy individual, but do not hesitate to do the latter if it appears that there's a good chance of success.

Skullrider host bodies continue to decay, but due to an enzyme secreted into the body at the time of bonding, the process is slowed down. Generally, a skullrider can use a corpse for about a month before its central nervous system deteriorates to the point where the body can no longer be animated. At this point, the body is used as a food source by the skullriders. Finally, the corpse is injected with 10-60 eggs and abandoned. In two to three weeks, the eggs will hatch into new skullriders, which spend most of their first six months feeding and growing. At the end of the six-month period of growth, the skullriders will have attained full size and acquired the ability to animate mounts.

Ecology: Skullriders have no concept of treasure, but understand the advantages of hand-held weapons. They enjoy gemstones for their color and brilliance. The lair of a group of skullriders will often include the human skulls of their previous mounts. These are used primarily for camouflage purposes, so that the skullriders blend in with their surroundings if someone or something enters their lair. In this case, the skullrider can jump out and attack, with a +2 bonus for surprise.

Skullriders, as mentioned earlier, are generally scavengers that sometimes take live prey. Their rarity makes them of little consequence except to those who fall victim to them.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Any underground |
| FREQUENCY: | Rare |
| ORGANIZATION: | Solitary |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Any |
| DIET: | Carnivorous |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Low (5-7) |
| TREASURE: | Nil |
| ALIGNMENT: | Neutral |
| NO. APPEARING: | 1 (5%: 2 or more) |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 7 |
| MOVEMENT: | 1 (12 on skeleton, 6 otherwise) |
| HIT DICE: | 2 |
| THACO: | 19 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 1 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | By weapon type |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Paralysis, dissolving |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Disguise, immune to electricity, resistant to cold |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | M (4' diameter) |
| MORALE: | Steady (11-12) |
| XP VALUE: | 975 |

A goop ghoul is an amoeba-like creature similar to a black pudding or gray ooze. It is a translucent blob capable of only limited movement itself. However, when a goop ghoul flows over a skeleton (a normal one, not the undead type), it can attach itself to the bones like muscles and ligaments, and thus use the skeleton as a means of transportation. In this way the goop ghoul gains a movement rate of 12. A goop ghoul is usually encountered mounted on a skeleton, thus being 80% likely to be mistaken for an undead skeleton or deteriorated zombie (the stretched-out goop ghoul being seen as rotted tissue).

Combat: A goop ghoul attached to a skeleton is able to use simple hand-held weapons but cannot employ shields or metallic armor. In addition, the touch of a goop ghoul causes paralysis for 4-16 rounds unless a successful save vs. paralysis is made. Once a victim is paralyzed, the goop ghoul flows over him in one round, and its acidic secretions eat away flesh at the rate of 1d8 hp per round. This damage occurs only when a victim is totally engulfed, as the acid is rather weak in small quantities. For this reason, the goop ghoul cannot employ its acid as an attack in melee. If a victim regains movement before being dissolved, he may throw off the goop ghoul and flee, being immune to goop-ghoul paralysis for one full day.

As the flesh is eaten away from the goop ghoul's victim, the creature increases in size from its feast. By the time the skeleton has been picked clean, the goop ghoul will have doubled its size and be ready to split into two normal-sized goop ghouls, a process that takes only one round. Whichever of the two is closest to the freshly stripped skeleton will generally claim it for movement purposes. It takes one round for a goop ghoul to attach itself to a skeleton in such a way as to be able to manipulate it.

A goop ghoul is immune to electrical attacks. Cold-based attacks do only half damage, but a goop ghoul is very susceptible to fire and great heat (taking double damage), and shuns them. A goop ghoul engaged in dissolving the flesh off a paralyzed victim can be removed by applying flame. Similarly, a heal or cure *disease* spell also makes a goop ghoul withdraw from a victim, though such spells cause no harm to the monster.

It must be emphasized that as a goop ghoul is not undead, it cannot be turned by priests. However, it is possible for a goop ghoul to latch onto an undead, animated skeleton. In this case, the goop ghoul has no control over the skeleton's movement and is more or less just along for the ride. It would be possible for a priest to turn the undead skeleton, but the goop ghoul



would be free to "abandon skeleton" and seek out a new source of transportation (probably the priest). Also, a goop ghoul is not confined to human or even humanoid skeletons; any two- or four-legged skeleton can be used, subject to size constraints of about 3' to 9', beyond which the goop ghoul is either too bunched up for fluid movement or stretched too thin. In any case, the movement rate when using any sort of skeleton remains 12.

On rare occasions, a goop ghoul can attach itself to sturdy rodlike objects that allow movement of the sort it is used to. Thus, several large sticks might be used as a "skeleton" of sorts, good enough for half-normal movement. Weapons might thus be held together by the goop ghoul, so that a party might encounter a pile of swords stumping its way toward them. These attempts are rare, as a goop ghoul prefers the use of skeletons above all else.

Any being slain and dissolved by a goop ghoul cannot be raised from the dead without the use of a *wish* spell, though the skeleton is fit for use with an *animate dead* spell.

Habitat/Society: Goop ghouls are found exclusively underground; they dislike sunlight as it slowly dries out their skins. They are solitary creatures, having no real social systems. If more than one are encountered at a time, more than likely it is because a large goop ghoul has just divided into two (or more, depending on the size of the victim—an ogre can provide enough flesh for a goop ghoul to split into three).

Ecology: Goop ghouls have no concept of money and so keep no treasure. They cannot dissolve metal, and metallic armor is too heavy for them to move around in. For this reason, they prefer to attack victims who aren't wearing metallic armor. Many valuables are often left behind when a goop ghoul acquires a new skeleton, as all the goop ghoul is interested in is the skeleton itself and maybe a hand weapon.

Goop ghouls are rare enough to be of little consequence unless a large number of them are present. They are fairly predatory but can go for days without eating, and they are also satisfied with scavenging.

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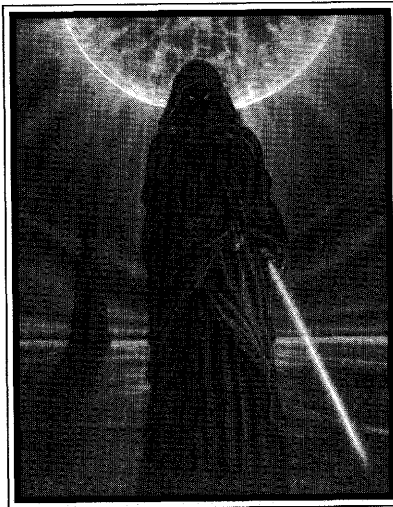
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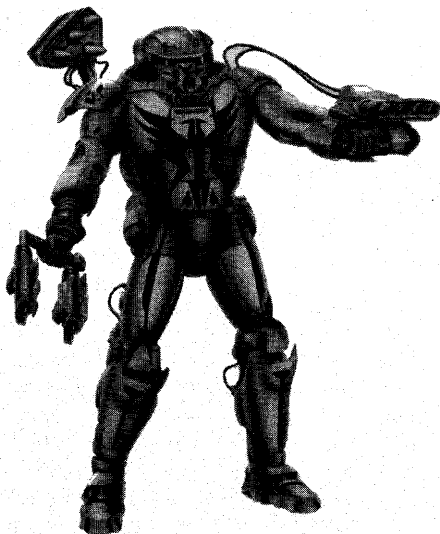
Zin-Shee: A matriarchal feline race
with psionic powers and cat-like
responses.



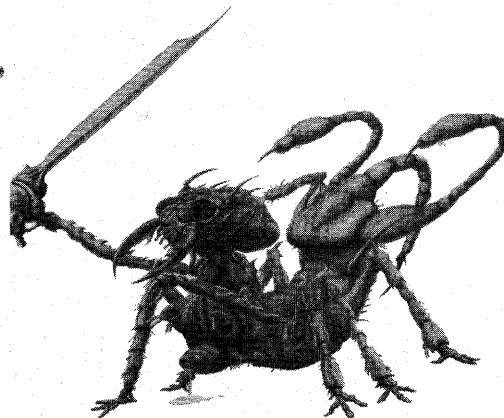
Shanask: Mysterious cloaked
entities who radiate fear at all
times, and wield the Sorce (an
advanced form of sorcery).



Calemora: A low tech race, masters of
the martial arts, and wielders of
psychosomatics (the ability to adjust
one's bone, muscle, and cell structure).



Anthropos: Advanced humans and
masters of technology who use
powered armor and energy weapons.



Kryll: Aliens which uses biotechnol-
ogy (living hardware). Their armor,
weapons, and equipment are all
alive.



Draca: Harsh, brutal, and cybernetically
enhanced to destroy their enemies.

Beyond the Grave

The legends and lore of the wight, wraith, and mummy

by Tom Moldvay

Artwork by Tom Baxa

Tom Moldvay has done three previous articles on the world of the undead: "Out of the Shadows," in DRAGON® issue #162; "The Ungrateful Dead," in DRAGON issue #138; and "Hearts of Darkness," in DRAGON issue #126. We welcome him back to our pages with a new installment of his menagerie of horror.

Wight is a general Germanic word meaning "being" or "creature." Over the years, it increasingly came to be applied to either good or bad spirits, until it came to have a supernatural connotation.

In late Saxon, "unsele wiht" means "uncanny creature." In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer uses the word for dangerous spirits in the phrase, "I crouche thee from elves and from wightes," in "The Miller's Tale." English minister Robert Kirk, in *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies* (1691), talks of seeing the fairies crowding in from all quarters "like furious hardie wights."

Wight is not a word objected to by the elves, for in the fairy rhyme given by Robert Chambers in *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*:

But gin ye ca' me seelie wicht,
I'll be your freend baith day and nicht.

A "seelie wicht" would be a good wight, a member of the Seelie Court that rules the good fairies. An elf would make objection to being called an "unseelie wicht," an "evil wight" who pays homage to the Unseelie Court of the evil fairies.

Like most things supernatural, wights, in

the course of time, ceased to be viewed as having any good and were seen as strictly evil. Wights became wicked beings that came out of the darkness. As such it was easy to make wights undead creatures. J. R. R. Tolkien used a similar jump of the imagination for the "barrow wight" Frodo runs into in *The Lord of the Rings*.

In TSR's D&D® and AD&D® games, wraiths are essentially more powerful wights. The derivations of the two words are similar. Wight comes from the Anglo-Saxon "wiht"; wraith comes from the lowland Scots (i.e., English-speaking) "warth," which can ultimately be traced back to the Old Norse "vorthr," from "vartha": to ward or guard. Both words are part of the larger British category of folklore. Tolkien recognized the affinity between the words when he used "ring-wraiths" for the horrid beings that ceaselessly hunt for the One Ring.

The word "mummy" is borrowed from the French "mumie," which in turn is derived from the Arab "mumiya," which denotes an embalmed body. The word entered the language as a result of Napoleon's 1798 campaign to Egypt, which created a European—indeed, worldwide—craze for the ancient Egyptians. The undead mummies in AD&D games owe much to the legends surrounding Egyptologists, and even more to certain "B" movies.

While wights, wraiths, and mummies have different derivations, they share one thing in common: the primitive belief that the body somehow lives on inside the tomb. This belief is most clearly seen in early Egyptian burial beliefs.



It started in Egypt...

In ancient Egyptian belief, there were two main spiritual forms of the deceased, called respectively the *ka* and the *ba*. The *ka* was supposed to dwell in the tomb—more precisely, in the mummified body—and it was the form in which the dead received their funerary offerings.

It seems that the *ka* represented the life-force of an individual. It was created at the time of his birth, remained with him throughout his life, and subsequently lived in the tomb after death. The dead were sometimes referred to as “those who have gone to their *kas*,” and the tomb chapel could be called, “the house of the *ka*.” Ordinary people had only a single *ka* but gods and pharaohs had several.

The importance of preserving the corpse can be seen through the *ka* belief. The more intact the corpse, the better the home for the *ka* spirit. The great pyramids and other tomb structures of ancient Egypt served primarily not as monuments but as houses in which the *ka* spent their afterlife. The richer and more important an individual, the better he wanted his death-home to be, and pharaohs were the most important individuals of all.

Thus it was believed that the dead lived on in the tomb. This belief may have originated in earlier burials, which took place in the desert away from the Nile. The desert dried the corpses and helped preserve them. At the same time, the liquefaction that accompanies corruption would be drained off into the sands. A sandstorm could easily uncover earlier graves, exposing the contents. The Egyptians would chance upon a body that had been buried for centuries and find it better preserved than a corpse left out near the Nile for several days. It is not surprising that a belief arose that the dead lived on in their tombs.

Once such a belief became established, one obvious result was the desire to build the best possible resting place for a beloved family member. Burial chambers grew more and more elaborate. For a time, huge pyramids were built to house pharaohs, who were the sons of the sun god. Such an extensive building effort could not be maintained for long. Later tombs became less grandiose than the pyramids. Still, such tombs, cut into solid rock in the Valley of the Kings, were elaborate affairs.

Pharaohs and nobles could afford elaborate tombs. Others had to settle for simpler graves. Yet every effort was made to ensure the well-being of the dead in their afterlife.

The articles used by the living were included in their death goods. Clothing, tools, weapons, cosmetics, even games were entombed with the dead. Complete meals were laid out to be buried with the corpse for future use. Funerary rites, conducted by priests, insured a continuing supply of the things that made living pleasant.

Each tomb, sarcophagus, or coffin had a

stylized door outline carved into it by which the deceased could leave to pick up offerings, then reenter the tomb. The *ka* could literally walk through stone or wood once the appropriate magic had been performed. Such an action was possible because the deceased was now a spirit and the door was a magical spirit door, not a real one.

At first, grave goods were literal. Baskets of food, whole chariots, favored horses, household slaves, and the like were entombed with rich pharaohs. Such gifts were, of course, expensive. It was impossible to include them in every burial without begging the nation.

Magic came to the rescue. The same grave goods could be included in miniature, or merely painted on the wall. Hence tombs might contain a set of miniature servants or soldiers, miniature boats and chariots, even miniature food baskets. Likewise, the scenes painted on the walls were not for decoration or art, but to magically supply the dead person with goods and services in the afterlife. Thus there would be painted scenes showing the preparation of every stage of food from planting or hunting to the final cooking and serving.

A particular style evolved that concerned itself more with the essence of things than with a naturalistic presentation. A profile included a whole enlarged eye to show how important sight was. A pharaoh was drawn larger than nobles who were, in turn, larger than servants, thus continuing in death the distinctions made in life.

The final stage in the logical progression of the magic was to merely write the items on the tomb wall, or on papyrus lists that could be entombed with the dead. Egyptian writing, which had evolved from pictographs, was itself viewed as magical. To chisel a name, paint it, or merely write it down was not simply to name a person or thing, but to conjure it magically into the presence of the tomb for all time.

Naturally, steps were taken to discourage tomb robbery. Such robbery deprived the dead of goods for all eternity. Some traps were incorporated into the tomb, but the Egyptians relied more on curses, written on the tomb wall. Again, such writing was considered magical, and the effects of the spell would last as long as the markings survived.

No matter how well the Egyptians mummified their dead, bodies could decay. To counter this effect, the priests evoked more magic. Life-size statues were included in the tombs. The *ka* could use these statues as alternative homes. Detailed paintings of the individual and special face masks served the same purpose, as extra homes for the *ka*. As a last resort, the individual's name was carved on rock or otherwise written repeatedly. If there was no place else to go, a *ka* could inhabit the carved or written name.

Thus, the worst curse an Egyptian could

think of was to destroy the statues of a person and to remove his name from every reference. Such an individual would be cursed to wander eternally in spirit form, never to be at rest or enjoy the afterlife.

The second spiritual manifestation of an individual, the *ba*, was usually represented as a human-headed bird. This spirit was thus able to fly from the corpse. It left the body at the time of death and was free to travel. In early beliefs, it rode with the sun god during the day and had to return to dwell with the *ka* at night. In later beliefs, the *ba* journeyed to the otherworldly domain of Osiris to be judged and (presumably) enjoy an afterlife.

Monster notes

The monster format used throughout this article, while essentially the same as that of the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, does differ slightly. These changes are used:

1. “TREASURE” lists both a percentage (the old “% IN LAIR” value) and a treasure-type letter. For example, “50% A” means there is a 50% chance the monster (if randomly selected) will be in its lair, and it has treasure type A.

2. The subcategory of “Ecology” has been left out since such a category is essentially meaningless when applied to the undead, who contribute nothing to living ecologies.

Ka

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Desert, rivers, subterranean

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary or small bands

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night

DIET: Spirit food

INTELLIGENCE: Average to Genius (8-18)

TREASURE: 50% A

ALIGNMENT: Lawful neutral

NO. APPEARING: 1 or 2-12

ARMOR CLASS: 1

MOVEMENT: 9

HIT DICE: 9 + 6

THAC0: 11

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d10

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Fear, spellwriting, curse, statue animation

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Weapon resistances, spell immunities and resistances, spirit doors

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: M (5'-7')

MORALE: Fearless (20)

XP VALUE: 14,000

A *ka* is a kind of super-mummy. Once, the *ka* was a noble, king, or pharaoh. After death, the mummified body continued to live on in the tomb as an undead monster. A *ka* is not necessarily evil. It attacks only when its tomb offerings are threatened or when under the control of a cleric. A *ka* looks like a normal mummy—i.e., as a

bandage-wrapped corpse.

Combat: Like a normal mummy, a ka possesses supernatural strength that lets its blows do more than normal damage. Instead of a rotting disease, however, a successful hit by a ka imparts a curse upon the victim. DMs may make up their own curses or may use the following table (roll 1d20; all curses last until removed):

1-3: **Ill luck.** All future rolls for the cursed individual are -1 on a roll of 1, -2 on a roll of 2, or -3 on a roll of 3.

4-7: **Withering touch.** An arm or leg withers and becomes useless. (4 = right arm, 5 = left arm, 6 = right leg, 7 = left leg; loss of a leg reduces movement by 3).

8-11: **Mutation.** A body part becomes mutated to some other form (8 = a leg, 9 = torso, 10 = an arm, 11 = head).

12-14: **Alteration.** An attribute chosen at random is lowered by -1.

15-18: **Death wish.** Extra damage is received in subsequent attacks. (15 = +1, 16 = +2, 17 = +3, 18 = double damage).

19-20: **Cursed item.** One magical item,

chosen at random, loses its benefits on a 19 (as per *cancellation*). On a 20, the item actually becomes cursed (use the closest appropriate cursed item from the Treasure Tables; hence a *sword* +3 would become a *cursed sword* -2).

As with mummies, the mere sight of a ka may cause *fear* and *revulsion* in any creature. A save vs. spells must succeed or the victim will be *paralyzed* with fright for 1-6 melee rounds. There are no bonuses to the die roll.

A ka can be harmed only by magical weapons, which do only half normal damage. *Sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold, poison, paralysis, polymorph, and electricity do not harm it. It suffers only half damage from fire or holy water. A *raise dead* spell turns a ka into a normal human (of 10th-level fighting ability) unless the ka saves vs. spells.

A ka has a limited magical ability. A word written by it has the force of a *command* spell. It takes a full round to inscribe such a word. Characters need not see the written word for the spell to take effect.

The ka is able to fragment its spirit.

These spirit fragments can inhabit special magical stone statues within the ka's tomb. Treat these statues as stone golems. A ka can inhabit 1-4 statues at a time. If the ka's mummified body is destroyed, its will lives on in the statues. Inside a statue, however, a ka no longer possesses its *curse* or *magical writing* powers, and it may be affected by forms of attacks to which the mummified body is immune. Note that the ka has no power to activate any other statue but those in its tomb.

A ka may also walk through special spirit doors carved into stone or wood or painted on a wall when the body was buried. A ka could walk through a spirit door carved into rock, attack the party, then retreat back inside its tomb.

A cleric has the same chance to turn a ka as he does a vampire.

Habitat/Society: A ka was once a living ruler. It still retains some friendliness toward character races, especially members of its own race and nation. Thus a human ka has an affinity for humans, a dwarven ka for dwarves, etc. This affinity is even stronger if, in the DM's opinion, the ka and character share the same cultural background.

If no attempt is made to steal its tomb treasures, a ka may be placated by showing it reverence and giving it additional grave goods. Such goods may vary from simple food to elaborate treasures. At the DMs discretion, a ka that has become placated may be asked questions that require simple yes-or-no answers. The greater the offerings, the greater the knowledge such a ka may impart.

Wealthy individuals are usually buried alone. A ka is, hence, generally encountered as a solitary creature. Sometimes, however, many graves are crowded into one tomb to discourage robbers. In this case, the tomb is shared by a related group of kas.

Grettir and the ghost of Glam

In *Grettissaga*, a tale from Iceland, another kind of undead corpse walks the earth. Grettir, known as the Strong, was a man during Viking times who came to be outlawed for killing too many men in a blood feud. He spent most of his life as an outlaw until he was finally slain. His exploits, while historically based, contain a strong element of supernatural legend. Grettir's story was retold by succeeding generations and finally written down during medieval times:

There was a man in Iceland, named Thorhall Grimsson, who had difficulty keeping shepherds. Some were injured and others could not finish their work, for some evil being stalked the pastures. So Thorhall hired Glam, a big strong man. Glam feared nothing, but he was often disliked for his strong temper.

Glam commenced his work as a shepherd. He had a loud, hoarse voice. He



abstained from mass, had no religion, and was stubborn and surly. Everyone hated him-but he lost no sheep.

The time passed 'til the eve of Yuletide. Glam was warned that, out of reverence, it was not proper to eat on the day before Yule. He demanded food anyway. When he had eaten, Glam went out.

It was very dark. There was driving snow, the wind was howling, and it became worse as the day wore on. In the evening, Glam did not return. Only after the violent storm passed could people search for him.

On the track above the valley, the searchers found Glam. The stones and earth were torn up all about from a violent struggle. Glam was dead; his body was black and swollen to the size of an ox. The people believed that the evil spirit that had been slaying sheep had also slain Glam. Glam was too heavy to drag to the church, so he was rolled into a nearby gully and covered with a cairn of stones.

It was not long before men became aware that Glam was uneasy in his grave. Many men were attacked. Some were severely injured; others were struck senseless and lost their wits. At night, the walking corpse would try to break into houses. Soon Thorhall's cowherd was slain by the ghost. The panic was great; the district was in a grievous condition.

A foreigner named Thorgaut then came to Thorhallsstad as a shepherd. He did not fear Glam's ghost, and he laughed at the stories. One day Thorgaut went out to the sheep and did not return. The men found his body on top of Glam's cairn. Thorgaut's neck was broken, as was every bone in his body.

Glam became worse than ever. People fled the district. Thorhall's steading was almost deserted. Livestock left behind was killed by the restless spirit.

Grettir the Strong then rode to Thorhallsstad, where he was welcomed, Grettir said he wished to spend the night in Thorhall's stead if the *bondi* permitted. Thorhall said he would indeed be thankful to Grettir for staying there.

When about a third part of the night had passed, Grettir heard a loud noise. Something was around the house, riding above the hall and kicking the wood with its heels. This went on for some time when the sound came down toward the door. The door opened and Grettir saw Glam, bloated and black, with an enormous ugly head like a goblin.

Grettir sprang under the ghost's arms, seized it around the waist, and squeezed Glam's back with all his might. Glam managed to wrench free. The monster sought to flee, but Grettir prevented flight. A fight raged up and down the hall, benches flew, and everything was scattered. Glam, with a desperate effort, forced Grettir to the porch.

Grettir changed tactics and loosed his hold on the monster. Glam was not prepared for that; he reeled backward and

tumbled hind-foremost out of the door, tearing away the lintel with his shoulder and shattering the roof.

The monster turned its eyes at Grettir and stared. The sight of Glam in the moonlight made Grettir's heart sink. Grettir could tell that Glam possessed more malignant power than any creature the hero had ever faced.

Then Glam spoke: "You shall possess only half the strength and firmness of heart that were decreed to you because of this night's battle. Henceforward there shall fall upon you exile; your deeds will turn evil and your guardian spirit shall forsake you. You shall be outlawed, and your lot shall be to dwell ever alone."

The faintness that had come over Grettir left him. He drew his sword and cut off Glam's head. Then he and Thorhall set to work and burned Glam to cold cinders, bound the ashes in a skin, and buried them far from the haunts of man or beast. Yet, in the years to come, Grettir found that the curse of Glam would, indeed, unfold.

Angreden

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any, especially sub-arctic and subterranean

FREQUENCY: Rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary or small bands

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night

DIET: Nil

INTELLIGENCE: Average

TREASURE: 20% B

ALIGNMENT: Any evil

NO. APPEARING: 1 or 2-16

ARMOR CLASS: 5

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT DICE: 4 +4

THAC0: 14

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d6 + 2

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Enfeeblement, fear

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immunity to some spells

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: M (5'-7')

MORALE: Fearless (20)

XP VALUE: 1,400



An angreden, based on Middle-English form, would mean "the state or condition of anger" or "filled with anger." An angreden is the walking corpse of an individual who died under a curse, or who was so filled with hatred and anger in life that he refused to lie still in his grave. An angreden has a blackened, bloated body with a huge, oversized head.

Combat: An angreden is considered to have 18 Strength, so it gets a +1 to attack and +2 to damage in combat, which has already calculated into its statistics. Its touch acts like an *enfeeblement* spell. Victims of a successful hit must make a save vs. spells or temporarily lose 25% of their Strength scores (fractions rounded down). The gaze of an angreden acts as a *fear* spell. An angreden's attacks are unsophisticated, being physical attacks with a club or hand-held rock.

An angreden is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold, poison, paralyzation, and death magic. A *raise dead* spell destroys it. A cleric has the same chance to turn an angreden as he does a wight.

Habitat/Society: An angreden has trouble getting along with everyone, even after death. It is often solitary but may sometimes band with others for protection. Such bands are a snarling, quarrelsome lot.

An angreden may be lawful, neutral, or chaotic, but will always be evil. It exists only to vent its insensate rage at the world. It delights in harm for its own sake and, when not killing, will try to smash everything in sight.

Note: Strictly as a plot suggestion, DMs may wish to give an angreden the power to *curse* before being destroyed. Such a *curse* acts as a prophetic utterance, unless it is lifted with a *remove curse* spell. For example, an angreden might tell a character: "Horses will die under you" and that character would be unable to ride a horse until the curse was lifted. If an angreden is given a curse, the XP Value becomes 2,000 instead of 1,400.

The breaking of the burial mound

Gests pattr Bardarsonar (The Saga of Gest Bardson) is more of a fantasy told around a warm fire than a tale based in history. In it, the hero Gest breaks into a barrow mound and confronts the undead king Raknar:

At that time (A.D. 995-1000), King Olaf Tryggvason was ruler of Norway. On Christmas Eve, the king was sitting on his high-seat and the whole court was present, each man in his own seat.

When the men had been drinking for some time, a man walked into the hall. He was tall and evil-looking, with dark skin, flashing eyes, a black beard, and a broad nose. This man wore a helm on his head, a

shirt of ring mail, and a sword at his belt; he had a gold necklace round his neck and a thick gold ring on his arm. He walked up to the king's high seat. People were greatly amazed at this sight. No man greeted the stranger.

This man stood before the king for a while, then said: "I came here thinking that I would at least be offered some hospitality by such great and noble men. I'm going to be more open-handed than that, for I shall offer possession of these fine things I am wearing now to the man who dares come and fetch them from me."

Thereupon, the man went away, and an unpleasant smell spread through the hall. Many men fell unconscious and half-dead. All the watchdogs died, except for the king's dog, *Vigi*, and Gest's dog, *Snati*.

The king said, "Who do you think he can be, Gest, this man who came in here?"

Gest replied, "I've not seen him before, but I've been told by my kinsmen that there was once a king, called Raknar, and I think that I recognize him from their accounts. But that king was buried in Helluland at Raknarsloda."

Then King Olaf Tryggvason said, "This is my request to you, Gest: that you should fetch those fine treasures."

Gest made ready for his journey. The king gave him 40 iron shoes, all lined with down. He found a Christian priest to go with Gest, a man named Jostein. The priest was highly esteemed by the king, yet Gest had little liking for the man, for Gest still followed the old faith of his ancestors.

The king said, "The priest will give you the finest proof of courage at a time that matters most to you."

"Then he might as well come," said Gest.

The king gave Gest a one-edged sword and said it would bite if there was need. And the king gave Gest a candle and said it would light up of its own accord if it was held up in the air. "For it will be black in Raknar's mound," said King Olaf. "But don't stay there any longer once the candle is burned out—you must take heed of this."

Gest and his men sailed north along the coast all the way past Halogoland and Finnmark as far as Hafnsbota. Then they turned west and sailed until they reached the uninhabited parts of Greenland. By then winter was coming on, so they spent the winter there.

In spring they left there, each man carrying his own provisions. At first they went along the coast, going west-southwest; then they went across country. At first there were glaciers, then great fields of lava. Then they put on the iron shoes that the king had given them. But there were 40 shoes and 21 men, including Gest. No iron shoes had been provided for the priest. Without them the man's feet would be burned open when walking over the lava.

"So now come here, priest," said Gest, "and sit yourself on my pack."

The priest did so. Then Gest walked

ahead and walked most sturdily. They went on for three days, then the lava-field came to an end and they came to the sea. A large island lay off-shore there. A long, thin reef ran out to the island; this was dry at ebb-tide. When the men went out to the island, they saw a huge burial mound.

Gest set his men to work breaking away into the mound by day. By evening they had broken an opening into the mound, but by next morning it had grown together as before. They broke it open again the second day, but by morning it was closed again.

After a third digging, the priest kept watch over the hole. He sat there all night, and he had holy water and a crucifix with him. When time wore on toward midnight, he saw Raknar. Raknar bade the priest come with him, and he would reward the priest with fine gifts.

The priest answered nothing and sat quietly as before. Many extraordinary creatures appeared to him. Some tried to scare the priest, others tried to trick him. Jostein took no notice, no matter what wonders he saw or however savagely these fiends behaved. Toward sunrise, all these wonders vanished away.

The men lowered Gest into the mound. It was a 50-fathom drop to the floor of the mound. Gest had the one-edged sword, the king's gift, belted around his waist. He carried the candle in his hand, and it lit itself as soon as he reached the bottom.

Gest could now see all around the mound. He saw the ship *Slodi* and 500 men in her. Gest then climbed up on the ship and saw that all the men had been on the point of rising to their feet when the candlelight fell on them; none of them could now move. Still, their eyes blinked and their nostrils flared. Gest drew his sword and cut off all their heads, and the blade bit as if it were cutting water.

Then Gest went in search of Raknar. He found an opening going deeper into the ground, and there he saw Raknar sitting on a chair. The undead king was horribly evil to look at. A foul stench was there, and it was cold, too. A chest full of money stood open under Raknar's feet; he had a necklace around his neck, and a thick gold ring on his arm. He wore a coat of mail and had a helm on his head and a sword in his hand.

Gest went up to Raknar and greeted him respectfully, as a king should be greeted, and Raknar bowed his head in answer.

Gest said, "It is true that you are famous. I've come a long way to visit you in your home. You will surely let me have a good reward for my errand, and give me those fine treasures you have. I shall spread the tale of your magnificence far and wide."

Raknar bent his head toward Gest, with the helm on it. Gest took the helm, then stripped Raknar of his coat of mail. Raknar made it all easy for Gest. Gest then took all Raknar's treasures away from him, except the sword. When Gest took hold of this, Raknar sprang to his feet and threw him-

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self at Gest. By then the candle, the king's gift, had burned right out.

Then Raknar turned into such a troll that Gest was quite overpowered by him. Gest thought he could see his death for certain. The dead men from the ship also rose to their feet. Gest called upon Bard, his father, who had great power against every type of troll. Bard came, but he accomplished nothing. The dead men kept Bard away from his son.

Then Gest made a vow to Him who had created heaven and earth, that he would accept the Christian faith King Olaf preached if he escaped alive out of the burial mound. Gest also earnestly invoked King Olaf, that the king might aid him. Thereupon Gest saw King Olaf come into the mound with a great light. All the dead men sat back down when bathed in that light. At this sight, Raknar was so troubled that all his strength ebbed out of him. Gest pressed so hard that Raknar fell over backward. Then Gest cut off Raknar's head with the sword the king had given him. The whole task now ended, King Olaf vanished from the mound.

Back atop the mound, while these won-

ders were happening, the men became so upset and frightened that they all ran mad, except for the priest. He never let go of the rope and hauled Gest out of the mound, along with all the treasure. Then the two of them went to where the men struggled with each other. The priest sprinkled holy water over them, and they recovered their wits at once.

As the men made ready to leave, the ground began to shake. The sea rose all along the reef in such crashing breakers the island was nearly flooded. The men could no longer find the reef, so Gest sent his dog Snati out to find it. But the dog could not stand against Raknar's magic and drowned. Gest thought this the greatest loss he had suffered.

Then Jostein the priest went forward, crucifix in hand, sprinkling water upon the waves. The sea divided itself so the men could cross dry-shod to the mainland.

Gest brought all the fine treasures to the king and told King Olaf all that had happened. Gest was then baptized, as he had vowed to do in Raknar's mound.

The following night after Gest had been baptized, he dreamed his father Bard

came to him and said, "You did wrong when you abandoned your faith, which all your forefathers had held. Because of this, you shall lose both your eyes."

Then Bard touched his son's eyes, causing such a severe pain that both eyes burst. At this, Gest died, still wearing his baptismal garments. King Olaf thought this the greatest loss.

King-wight

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any, usually subterranean

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary, but may have followers

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night

DIET: Carnivore (living beings)

INTELLIGENCE: Exceptional (15)

TREASURE: 50% A

ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: -1

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT DICE: 12 +23 (77 hp)

THAC0: 4

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2 by weapon type or 1 by touch

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d8 + 5

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Energy drain, wight control, spellcasting, earthquake, magical items

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immunity to some weapons and spells

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: M (6' - 7')

MORALE: Fearless (20)

XP VALUE: 30,000

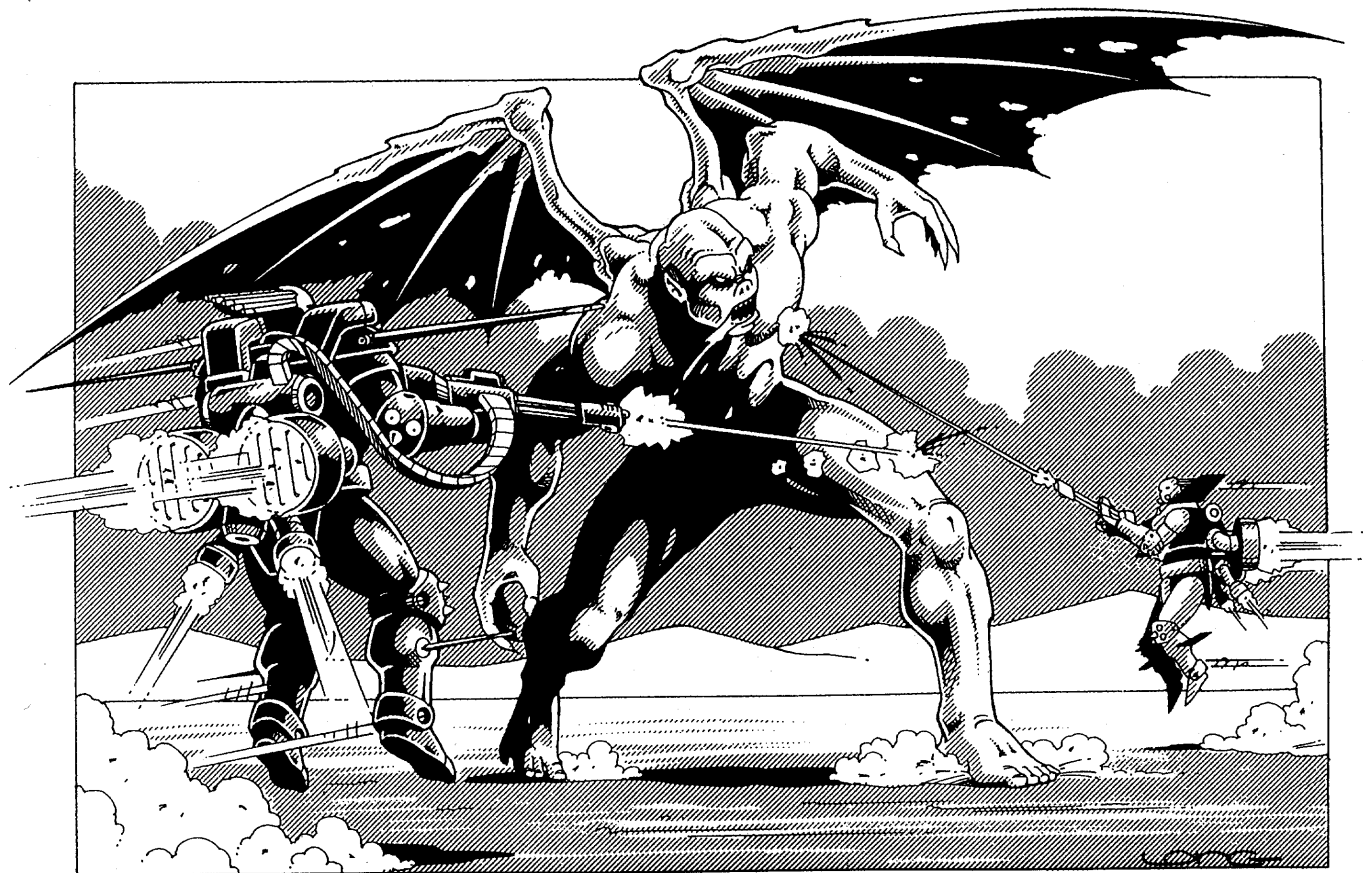
A king-wight was once a powerful evil king. When he died, he became undead, continuing to rule the ranks of the walking dead. His death is often voluntary, a self-sacrifice made to gain a prolonged existence.

A king-wight looks like a well-preserved corpse. At nighttime, in artificial light, it can even be mistaken for a living being. It wears its favorite armor and carries its favorite weapons, and is often decorated with expensive jewelry. While a king-wight can appear almost alive, the stench of the grave follows it and gives it away.

Combat: A king-wight fights much the same after death as it did in life. It wears **chain mail +3** and wields a **sword +2** (any type possible). A king-wight was an exceptional human and continues to have excellent attributes even in death. Its attribute statistics are: S 18/50, D 17, C 16, I 15, W 13, Ch 15 (to undead only). These scores and the magical items are already calculated into the king-wight's statistics.

When it becomes undead, a king-wight gains many special abilities. A successful attack can drain two life levels from a victim, as per a vampire. Any victim completely drained of life points by the king-wight becomes a full-strength wight under





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the control of the king-wight.

A king-wight also has the ability to cast *spectral force* and confusion spells, one spell per round, without limit. It can *teleport* once per day, but only to or from its barrow home. When the king-wight is destroyed, the action causes an earthquake (as per the clerical spell, at the 14th-level of effect), centered on the king-wight's body, in 4-16 rounds. Since a king-wight is often encountered in its underground barrow, such an earthquake can be especially deadly.

A king-wight is so powerful that any individual of a level lower than the king-wight must make a saving throw vs. spells or flee in panic from *fear*. The following spells or attack forms have no effect on a king-wight: charm, sleep, enfeeblement, *polymorph*, cold, electricity, insanity, and death magic. A *raise dead* spell turns the king-wight into a normal 12th-level fighter unless a saving throw vs. spells is made.

A cleric attempting to turn a king-wight

should use the "special" column. A king-wight can be harmed only by magical weapons.

Habitat/Society: A king-wight retains its court, even after death. It is often surrounded by its faithful warriors, who were turned into wights by the king-wight and remain under their master's control. A king-wight encountered in its barrow usually controls 4-32 normal wights.

A king-wight delights in tricking the living. It often travels to someone's abode to flaunt its treasure and tempt heroes into searching out its lair. A king-wight may appear gracious and hospitable at times, but such appearances are illusory. In reality, the king-wight hates to give up any part of its hoarded treasure and tempts heroes only as a ploy to trap them in its underground barrow, to either slay the heroes by the sword or turn them into wight slaves.

Wraith-king

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any, often subterranean

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary, may have following

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night

DIET: Carnivore (living beings)

INTELLIGENCE: Genius (17)

TREASURE: 50% H

ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: -5

MOVEMENT: 12/36 if riding

HIT DICE: 15 +27 (95 hp)

THACO: -1

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2/1 by weapon type, or 1 by touch

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1ds + 10

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Energy-drain gaze, wraith control, spellcasting, magical items

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immunity to some spells and weapons

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 20%

SIZE: M (6'- 7')

MORALE: Champion (15-16)

XP VALUE: 32,000

Wraith-kings were once powerful individuals who so feared death that they made unholy bargains with an evil god. Each individual believed he was gaining immortality, but was instead turned into an undead monster. The body of a wraith-king has faded away completely. Inside the form of its armor, one can see only two hateful red burning eyes.

Combat: A wraith-king fights much as it did in life. It wears *plate armor* +3 and wields a *sword* +4 (any type). It is considered to have exceptional attribute statistics (S 18/00, D 18, C 17, I 17, W 15, Ch 17 (to undead only)). These magical items and attribute scores are already calculated into the wraith-king's statistics.

A wraith-king can drain life levels by gaze alone at the rate of one level per round for any one victim within clear view in a 30' range (the victim must save vs. death ray each round to avoid this effect). Any victim completely drained of life levels becomes a full-strength wraith under the control of the wraith-king.

A wraith-king can cast either a *permanent illusion* or *programmed illusion* once per round, without limit. It can also cast a *mass charm* spell once per day. All spells are cast at the 15th level of ability. A wraith-king is so powerful that any individual of a level lower than the wraith-king must make a saving throw vs. spells or flee in panic from *fear*.

The following spells or attack forms have no effect on a wraith-king: *charm*, *sleep*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, cold, electricity, insanity, and death magic. A wraith-king can be harmed only by magical weapons with at least a +2 bonus, and even these weapons do only half damage.



A wraith-king is even more powerful than a lich. A cleric of level 9-13 has a chance to turn a wraith-king on a roll of 19 or better. A cleric of level 14 + has a chance to turn a wraith-king on a roll of 16 or better. Because a wraith-king's undead power comes directly from a god, a raise dead spell will not affect a wraith-king.

Habitat/Society: A wraith-king lives in an eternal state of anger and hatred. Having been tricked by an evil god, the wraith-king hates the living and seeks, whenever possible, to convert them to undead to increase the wraith-king's following. Even when not guarding its hoarded treasure, a wraith-king seeks out the living to punish them for the anguish it feels. It especially delights in using illusions to trick and tempt the living.

A wraith-king is, however, cautious. It considers itself immortal and, hateful as its undead state is, it nonetheless cherishes its unlife. It will flee if an attack appears to be going against it.

When encountered in its tomb/lair, a wraith-king has control of 4-24 wraiths. When not encountered in its tomb, a wraith-king is likely to be riding a nightmare (see the *Monstrous Compendium*).

Note: Because wraith-kings are so powerful and so rare, it is suggested that a DM use them sparingly. A wraith-king became undead as the act of an evil god, so a good or neutral god often aids a cleric confronting a wraith-king. Such aid may take the form of a special magical item that protects the cleric or the entire party from some of the wraith-king's malign powers. An entire campaign, including visions, communion with a beneficent god or goddess, and the search for an appropriate undead-destroying magical item, can be built around a quest to destroy a single wraith-king.

Vartha

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any
 FREQUENCY: Very rare
 ORGANIZATION: Solitary
 ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
 DIET: Nil
 INTELLIGENCE: High (13)
 TREASURE: Varies
 ALIGNMENT: Any
 NO. APPEARING: 1 or 2-12
 ARMOR CLASS: 0
 MOVEMENT: 12
 HIT DICE: 9 +18 (63 hp)
 THACO: 7
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2, by weapon type
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d4 + 5
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Spellcasting, magical items
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immunity to some spells
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
 SIZE: M (5'-7')
 MORALE: Fearless (20)
 XP VALUE: 18,000

Vartha means "guardian spirit." It is one of the few undead that are not necessarily malign. A vartha is a guardian spirit in many senses. It can be a spirit conjured or cursed to protect a specific area or treasure. It can also be a spirit that appears to aid a character in times of need. Lastly, it can be a spirit sent to hunt down wrongdoers. A vartha does not share the generally gruesome appearance of the undead. It looks like a newly dead corpse, after the body has been treated by a mortician.

Combat: A vartha has high attribute scores (S 18/75, D 16, C 16, I 13, W 17, Ch 15). It wears *partial plate armor* +2 (AC 2) and wields a *morning star* +2. The magical items and attribute scores have been calculated into the vartha's statistics.

While it is undead, a vartha should otherwise be treated as a fighter-cleric with the following clerical spells, each of which can be cast at the rate of one spell per round, once each per day: *bless*, *command*, *detect evil*, *light*, *remove fear*; *sanctuary*; *augury*, *detect charm*, *hold person*, *know alignment*, *silence 15' radius*; *animate dead*, *dispel magic*, *locate object*, *remove curse*; *detect lie*,

tongues; *commune*.

A vartha can be of any alignment. One of evil alignment may have the reverse of appropriate spells (e.g., *curse* instead of *bless*).

A vartha is not affected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold, electricity, poison, or death magic. A *raise dead* spell returns it to life as a 9th-level fighter/9th-level cleric. If the vartha serves anyone involuntarily, it need not make a save vs. spells against the *raise dead* spell, and the spell automatically works. The chance for a cleric to turn a vartha is the same as the chance to turn a spectre.

Habitat/Society: Vartha vary in motivation. A vartha guarding its own treasure may have voluntarily become undead through greed. A vartha forced to guard a treasure not its own may be under a curse or commanded by a more powerful being. A vartha sent by the DM to help a character may be that character's guardian spirit, perhaps an ancestor. A vartha hunting down a wrongdoer may have been a marshal in life, continuing its mission after

Continued on page 39



The Rifts® Megaverse®

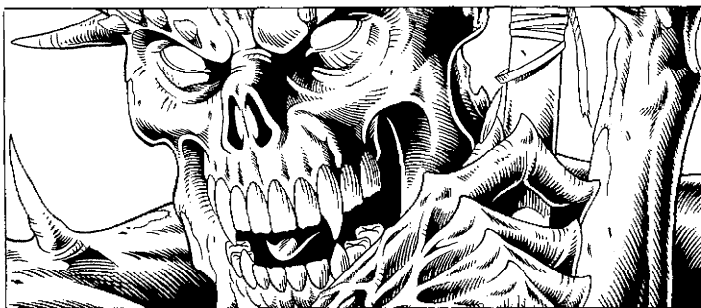
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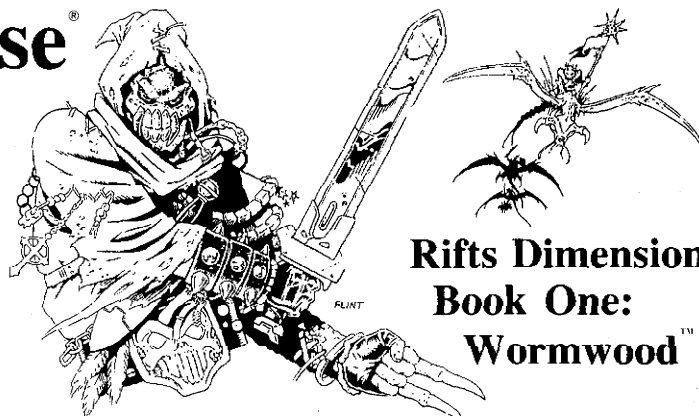
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THE MARVEL[®]-PHILE

by James Lowder

Monsters on the loose—again!

In their heyday, giant monsters dominated eight titles published by Atlas comics—the company that would mutate into the Marvel house of super heroes we know today. Beginning in late 1958, *Xom*, *Monstrosos*, *Fin Fang Foom*, *Gorgilla*, *Gorgolla*, and all their gargantuan pals rumbled through the pages of *Amazing Adventures*, *Amazing Adult Fantasy*, *Journey into Mystery*, *Strange Tales*, *Tales of Suspense*, *Tales to Astonish*, and *World of Fantasy*. Rendered with skill and excitement by Jack Kirby, these behemoths spent their brief lives spreading gleeful chaos and shouting threats that usually ended with multiple exclamation points.

The publication of *Fantastic Four* #1 in August, 1961 signaled the beginning of the end for the Marvel monster corps. After that momentous event, super heroes began to usurp the comic-book spotlight from the behemoths. But that isn't to say the monsters disappeared from the MARVEL UNIVERSE™ quietly or even quickly. The real center of attention on the cover of *FF* #1 is the Mole Man's gargantuan minion, not the fledgling super-team. And in the course of that same first issue, the *FF* journey to Monster Isle to battle the Mole Man and his monster horde. Over the next few years, the *Fantastic Four* would be pitted against foes that would most certainly be at home in a monster comic: Giganto, the whalelike beast the Sub-Mariner commands against the surface world; the Mad Thinker's weird, faceless android (who looks a lot like the aliens from "A Martian Walks Among Us"), the huge "Monster from Mars" statue animated by the Miracle Man; and even the shape-shifting Skrulls, who share powers with the Kirby-creature from the story "What was X, the Thing that Lived?"

The Marvel monsters made their presence felt in other early super-hero titles as well: Don Blake is fleeing Gorr and the Stone Men of Saturn when he discovers the hammer of Thor in *Journey into Mystery* #83. The Hulk and the Thing resemble other beasts from the pre-hero monster comics. Even the names of some

early villains—Giganto and Dormammu, for example—sound a lot like those of the creatures that rampaged through the old Atlas titles. So if you scoff at the idea of introducing such monsters as Goom, Diablo, and Sporr into your MARVEL SUPERHEROES™ (MSH) game campaign, keep their origins and their influence in mind. If one of these battling behemoths was

good enough to steal the cover of *FF* #1 from Reed Richards and crew, they're good enough to toss around tanks—and heroes—in your campaign, too.

Groot update

In the previous "creature-feature" installment of the MARVEL®-Phile (*DRAGON*® issue #186), I noted that Groot was defeat-



Color by Steve Sullivan

ed in the early 1960s by scientist Leslie Evans. That wasn't the last time the tree tyrant from Planet X threatened Earth, though. Groot—or, more precisely, an exact replica of the power-mad alien—battled the Hulk in 1976. Xemnu the Living Titan recreated Groot and five other long-forgotten monsters, then sent them one by one to destroy the green gladiator. Unsurprisingly, the Hulk made short work of the Groot-replica, ultimately battering the monster to splinters. In this battle, Groot used his plant-control ability to ensnare the Hulk, and his body armor shielded him for a time from the hero's blows. Groot also exhibited a power he did not utilize in his first appearance: the ability to fire thorns from his hands. Since Xemnu claimed to have recreated Groot without modifications, this power should be added to the tree tyrant's already impressive list:

Projectile missile: Groot can fire volleys of wooden darts from either hand. The 3-inch-long darts—known as Groot's Invincible Thorns—have Excellent (20) accuracy, a range of one area, and do Excellent (20) Shooting damage. Groot can launch Invincible Thorns from only one hand at a time. He may fire four volleys of missiles in any 24-hour period.

GROGG™

The Nightmare Creature from the Black Pit

| | |
|------------|--|
| F AM (50) | Health: 240 |
| A IN (40) | |
| S AM (50) | Karma: 8 |
| E UN (100) | |
| R FB (2) | Resources: None |
| I PR (4) | |
| P FB (2) | Popularity: 0 (-10 in eastern Europe) |

POWERS:

Body armor: Grogg's thick, leathery skin provides protection of Remarkable (30) power versus physical and Force attacks.

Combat tail: The Nightmare Creature's spiky tail isn't useful for climbing, but may be used in combat for Monstrous (75) damage. It also serves as a rudder during flight.

Horns: The four largest horns atop Grogg's head are considered Edged Attack weapons, with a Material Strength Rank of Excellent (20). They do Remarkable (30) damage.

Fire generation: Grogg can breathe jets of flame from his nostrils. This flame does Monstrous (75) Energy damage against flammable targets, and Good (10) damage against nonflammable targets.

Flight: Grogg's wings allow him to fly at Unearthly (100) speeds in atmospheric conditions, but only at Typical (6) speeds through space.

Life support: The Nightmare Creature has this power at Shift Z (500). He can survive in hostile environments indefinitely without food, air, or water.

Hibernation: If Grogg is completely immobilized (buried under a collapsed skyscraper or frozen by some sort of high-tech device, for example), he goes into suspended animation. He will remain in this state, immune to the effects of aging, until an opportunity for escape arises (i.e., a bomb uncovers his resting place or someone turns off the device holding him motionless).

TALENTS: Gregg seems to comprehend most human languages, though only at a very basic level. However, he has never expressed himself in anything other than grunts and roars.

CONTACTS: None.

HISTORY: In April, 1961, the leaders of a small dictatorship in central Europe stayed freedom-fighter Michael Kozlov's execution when they realized he was also a talented physicist. Kozlov was then put under the watchful eye of Colonel Karl Vorcutsky and sent off to a secret nuclear test sight in Asia. There, it was hoped, Kozlov would aid the dictator's troops in conducting underground bomb tests. While the soldiers were setting up the bomb site, a group of locals came to plead with Vorcutsky. They claimed that any explosion would awaken Grogg, a beast that slept below the ground near their village. Vorcutsky dismissed the claims as superstition and, surprisingly, Kozlov agreed with him. This sudden callousness quieted the colonel's suspicions about the physicist's loyalty. Vorcutsky's trust would soon prove misplaced.

The explosion did uncover Grogg, the Nightmare Creature from the Black Pit, and the huge beast immediately turned his attention to flattening the locals' village. A tribal chief braved the monster's wrath to explain that the soldiers had disturbed Grogg's slumber, not the farmers he was stomping into dust. Vorcutsky and his men tried to flee in a jet, but Grogg took to the air in pursuit and forced them to crash-land in the mountains. Trapped in a cave by the seemingly tireless gargantua, the few remaining soldiers quickly grew desperate. Vorcutsky ordered Kozlov out of the cave, hoping that this sacrifice would appease the Nightmare Creature. But when Grogg attacked, Kozlov blinded him with a cleverly created smoke screen and escaped.

Dr. Kozlov was rescued from the mountain by a passing American plane, but few believed his fantastic story when he tried to tell it. From the start Kozlov had known

the stories about Gregg were true. ago, he'd learned that the Great Wall of China had been built to repel dragon creatures such as Grogg. The villagers' tale told him that just such a dragon was in hibernation near the test site. In encouraging Vorcutsky to proceed with the tomb test, Kozlov had hoped to unleash the monster so that it could spread terror behind the Iron Curtain. He succeeded, but little did he suspect that he would again cross paths with the Nightmare Creature from the Black Pit. Some time after his arrival in the United States, Kozlov was sent on a reconnaissance mission back to his home country. The physicist-turned-spy soon joined forces with Ivan Grotzky, a tyranny-hating farmer, and the two traveled north to learn the purpose of a secret army base. They encountered Grogg near the base, but what they uncovered at the secret installation was even more frightening—the military had constructed a huge rocket, which they intended to launch to Mars. On the red planet, the soldiers would construct a base and threaten the free nations of the world with nuclear missiles if they did not accede to their government's demands. Again Kozlov turned the dictatorship's scientific striving against them. As Ivan created a diversion, Kozlov lured Grogg into the rocket and launched it to Mars. Kozlov knew that he could not stop the government's plans to send an army to Mars, but with a vengeance-craving Nightmare Creature awaiting the soldiers on the red planet, they would find building any base rather difficult.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Grogg is not the brightest of beasts and is motivated almost purely by a lust for vengeance. He will attack the most obvious cause for his discomfort at any given moment—which often means whomever or whatever is closest. Though no one has spotted him since the early 1960s, Grogg is probably still loitering on Mars, looking for someone to stomp. He could easily be turned against the United States if someone bothered to visit Mars and convince the Nightmare Creature from the Black Pit that he was duped by an American spy.

TABOO™

The Thing from the Murky Swamp

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| F IN (40) | Health: 290 |
| A MN (75) | |
| S UN (100) | Karma: 46 |
| E MN (75) | |
| R GD (10) | Resources: None |
| I TY (6) | |
| P RM (30) | Popularity: 0 |

POWERS:

Life support: Taboo has this power at Shift Z (500). He can survive in hostile environments indefinitely without requiring food, air, or water.

Flight: Taboo can travel through space at Shift X (150) speeds. In atmospheric conditions, he travels at Monstrous (75) speeds.

Telepathy: Taboo communicates through the use of his telepathic ability, which has the rank of Excellent (20) in sending thoughts, but only Good (10) in reading the surface thoughts of those he communicates with.

Plasticity: Taboo's mudlike body gives him the following powers at Unearthly (100) intensity:

—Body armor that provides Unearthly (100) protection against physical and Force attacks.

—Taboo can also hide in swampy or muddy areas with Unearthly (100) ability. Characters must make an Intuition FEAT roll versus this rank to detect Taboo.

Mud-slinging: Taboo can throw blobs of his own mudlike body with Amazing (50) accuracy, up to two areas. The mud acts as a Grappling attack of Monstrous (75) strength. The mud hardens to rocklike consistency within five seconds (Material Strength Rank of Incredible (40)). Taboo has also been known to simply slap the mud on a target during a brawl rather than throw it.

Immortality: Taboo cannot be killed. If his Endurance reaches Shift 0, additional damage will simply blow his malleable body into a number of smaller parts (one part for each point of damage that gets past his body armor). These separate pieces of ooze have Reason and Intuition of Feeble (2); an Endurance of Good (10); and Fighting skill of Typical (6). They retain Taboo's original Agility, Strength, and Psyche. The separate parts will move as quickly as possible to reform Taboo.

TALENTS: Taboo has enough acting talent to convince some people that his intentions are peaceful. He also possesses a good understanding of many human languages, including English and Portuguese, through his telepathy.

CONTACTS: Subsequent to Taboo's first encounter with Lewis Conrad, the monster had high-level contacts in the United Nations and the world's science community. These contacts became adversaries as soon as Taboo revealed his intentions regarding the Earth. Taboo has no friendly contacts on his home world, where they consider him deranged and dangerous. A Taboo-replica is a former ally of Xemnu the Living Titan.

HISTORY: Lewis Conrad was an explorer and best-selling author of true-life adventure books. In the Amazon country of Brazil, he uncovered rumors of a "forbidden swamp," the domain of a "swamp demon" named Taboo. Conrad was skeptical, but went to investigate anyway. To the explorer's surprise, Taboo proved to be real, though he seemed to be anything but a demon. Through his telepathic powers, Taboo revealed that he was an alien whose spacecraft had crashed into the Brazilian swamp, napped by Earth's atmosphere,

he remained a prisoner of the Murky Swamp. Conrad, convinced of Taboo's sincerity, offered to muster the world to aid the stranded alien. The explorer journeyed to New York, where he addressed the United Nations. The world's scientific community quickly banded together and created a device that would aid Taboo in returning home. But when the Thing from the Murky Swamp was given the device, he revealed his true nature. Taboo's spaceship hadn't crash-landed. In fact, he didn't need a spaceship to travel the universe at





all. He was on Earth to gather information about the world's scientific prowess. Now that he had the perfect example of Earth's technological might, he flew off, threatening to return at the head of a conquering army. Fortunately for the peoples of the Earth, the world leaders were not as gullible as Lewis Conrad. When Taboo got beyond Earth's atmosphere, the scientists detonated an H-bomb they had secreted inside the device. Taboo was blown into thousands of muddy blobs and scattered over the western hemisphere, but he did not die. Over the next few days, the separate, sentient pieces of the Thing from the Murky Swamp headed for New York City, specifically Central Park. There, Taboo was reborn. Resistance seemed futile. Taboo wrecked Manhattan and was on his way to stomping out all opposition in the city when a gigantic spacecraft appeared over New York. The Thing from the Murky Swamp welcomed the newcomers, fellow creatures from his planet, but they soon proved to be his enemies, not his allies. The spacefarers explained that they'd been searching for Taboo for ages, that he was ill and needed treatment for some undisclosed-though obviously mental-infirmity. Fortunately for Manhat-

tan, the gentle spacefarers repaired all damage done by Taboo before leaving with the renegade in their custody. In 1976, Xemnu the Living Titan recreated Taboo and five other long-forgotten monsters, then sent them one by one to battle the Hulk. The Taboo-replica fought the Hulk to a standstill, until the hero punched a hole in a riverbed, thus creating a powerful whirlpool that sucked the muck-creature into the earth.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Taboo is a dangerous adversary, not only because of his incredible powers, but because of his diseased mind. He is prone to scheming and will use human agents as frequently as possible to further his plans to conquer Earth. Despite his craftiness, though, Taboo is rather easy to fool (as the scientists did in secreting an H-bomb in the device). While the original Taboo was taken from Earth by his fellow spacefarers, the Taboo-replica remains. The Hulk defeated the ersatz Thing from the Murky Swamp, but the whirlpool the hero created could hardly have destroyed a creature that survived at the heart of an H-bomb explosion. If Xemnu regroups his "monster squad" any time in the future, Taboo will likely be the first monster he revives.

THE GLOP™

The Monster Without a Scary Appellation

| | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| F RM (30) | Health: 340 |
| A GD (10) | |
| S Sh Y (200) | Karma: 70 |
| E UN (100) | |
| R IN (40) | Resources: FE (2) |
| I EX (20) | |
| P GD (10) | Popularity: 0 |

POWERS:

Life support: In stone statue form, the Glop has this power at Shift Z (500). As a statue, the Glop is immobile, but is completely aware of his surroundings and can survive indefinitely without food, air, or water. Once he has been covered with his oozing, paintlike skin, he is subject to hunger and thirst.

Body armor: The Glop's weird, paintlike skin acts as body armor. This armor provides Incredible (40) protection against physical, Force, and Energy attacks. Understandably, the paintlike armor provides no protection from turpentine-based attacks.

TALENTS: As a scout observing humankind for possible conquest, the Glop has gained an understanding of his surroundings. Because the Glop was stationed in a remote Transylvanian keep, this knowledge is limited to what he has overheard about life in the village below the castle during his centuries-long watch. The Glop also has an understanding of a number of human languages, including English, Hungarian, and Romanian.

CONTACTS: The Glop is a scout from an alien race and supposedly has the support of that advanced civilization. However, since he does not possess the means to contact his home planet, his resources rate only at Feeble. If his allies ever return to Earth, the Glop's resources will immediately rise to the rank of Unearthly (100).

HISTORY: When a painter of apartments and furniture was approached by a strange old man to paint a statue, he balked. When the painter discovered that the statue was located in a Transylvanian castle, a great deal of money had to pass hands before he accepted the job. Still, the deal was made, and the painter traveled to the remote keep. The statue he painted—or rather covered in an oozing, paintlike substance—was huge and grotesque. But the painter followed the orders he'd been given, despite the monstrous appearance of the statue. He was trying to carry out his final command—leave the castle before midnight—when a tremor shook the castle and he was trapped beneath a fallen beam. And as the castle clock struck twelve, the hapless painter learned why the old man had wanted him to leave quickly after finishing the job: the statue came to life!

Fortunately, the painter managed to elude the Glop. But his escape also allowed the monster to turn his sights on the village below the keep. Starving after his long hibernation, the creature stormed



Continued on page 39



CHRIS HARVEY GAMES



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SAGE advice

by Skip Williams

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

This month the sage's mailbag held questions about proficiencies and various divinely inspired powers.

How many slots does a proficiency cost when it is chosen from a group not normally allowed to a character's class? Page 54 of the PH says the cost is one extra slot, but page 101 of the *Complete Priest's Handbook* says the cost is double. So, if a fighter wanted to take the healing proficiency how many slots would he pay? How many slots would he pay to read and write one language? How many would he pay to read and write two languages?

The text in the PH is correct, a character pays one extra slot to choose an "out-of-group" proficiency. The text in the *Complete Priest's Handbook* is erroneous.

So, the fighter in your example pays three slots for healing, and two slots to read and write a language. Note that *speaking* a language costs any character one slot. (Except specialty priests of De-neir, in some cases; read on.)

How much damage does a *call lightning* spell inflict? The $2d8 + 1d8$ per caster level seems a bit high, and must be a mistake. Isn't it really $2d8 + 1d8$ per two caster levels? How long is the bolt of lightning created by this spell? Can the bolt hit a fly ing creature?

No mistake, *call lightning* inflicts $2d8$ points of damage plus $1d8$ points damage per caster level. A 5th-level druid would inflict $7d8$ points of damage. Note that the target can save vs. spell and reduce damage by half. Note also that *call lightning* can generate more than one bolt of lightning—one every turn so long as the spell's duration and the storm or other atmospheric disturbance that makes the spell possible lasts. When a bolt is generated, it flashes straight down from some point in the sky to the surface below, land or sea. The lightning fries everything within 10 feet of the stroke. The DM is free to decide how high up the point of origin is. If the bolts are being generated from a djinni's or air elemental's whirlwind, the bolt's should begin no higher than the whirlwind (40-80 feet in the case of an elemental, up to 70 feet in the case of a djinni); if the bolts are generated from a storm, I'd suggest a point of origin anywhere from 1,100 to 1,800 feet high ($1,000 + 1d8 \times 100$). Note that the bolt stops when it strikes the surface.

Page 103 of the PH says that undead turning is not disrupted if the character using the power is attacked. Does this apply to other granted powers as well?

Generally, a granted power, such as undead turning or the druids *shape change* and other granted powers cannot be disrupted. Treat them like innate abilities—they require some mental effort, but have no casting time, and have only token verbal and somatic components. If this blows the play-balance in the game, however, the DM should feel free to treat some granted powers just like spells that the character gets automatically without praying or special effort. Basically, the more like a spell a granted power is, the more justification the DM has for ruling that it can be disrupted. If a power can be disrupted, it should work in play just like a spell, with a casting time, a full-fledged

verbal component, and maybe even a somatic and material component. The *flame strike* ability granted to priests of the DRAGONLANCE® setting deity Paladine might fall into this category.

The rules say that a spell is disrupted and lost if the caster loses initiative and suffers damage or misses a saving throw. What happens when the caster makes her save, but still takes damage, from a *fireball* for example? What happens if a spell-caster is struck by an attack that inflicts damage for several rounds, such as Melf's *acid arrow*?

Damage from any source absolutely disrupts a spell, even if the spell-caster makes her save vs. the attack. If the caster is suffering continuing damage from Melf's *acid arrow*, flaming oil, or a wound from a *sword of wounding*, I suggest that you use the normal initiative rules to decide at what point in the round the character actually suffers the damage. Make no modifier to the initiative roll for the continuing damage. Modify the caster's roll according to the spells casting time, and any other standard initiative modifiers that apply. Note that some initiative bonuses, such as being *hasted*, set to receive a charge, or being on high ground don't apply; in this case, the initiative roll reflects the caster's ability to concentrate during the spell's entire casting time, it does not reflect the caster's ability to beat an opponent to the punch. If the caster loses this initiative roll, the spell is disrupted and lost.

The FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures book says specialty priests of De-neir can speak any languages that Denier can speak without taking any reading/writing proficiencies. First, how many languages does this power actually let the priest speak? Second, what does reading and writing have to do with speaking a language?

Specialty priests of Deneir can speak any language spoken by natives of Toril and the crystal sphere that immediately surrounds it, provided that the caster actually can make the sounds. If the language depends on subsonics or ultrasonics (such as whale languages), the priest is out of luck. Likewise, a priest of Deneir cannot speak the draconian tongues of Krynn, the Common tongue of Oerth, or any other language that originated outside Toril's crystal sphere. The reference to the reading/writing proficiency is an error. However, the priest does not have to spend a nonweapon proficiency to learn a Toril language. The character does have to spend slots to read and write a language. Note that this ability does not necessarily mean that the character has any special gift for teaching languages to others-if a party wants to learn how to speak blink dog so they can cheerfully bark to each other and keep eavesdroppers ignorant the DM should feel free to put his foot down. Likewise, it is not be unreasonable to assume that the priest does not have free access to all those languages-the knowledge might not manifest itself until the priest actually meets a creature who uses a different language: "Oh, look at that couatl sitting on that step pyramid! Don't worry guys, I just remembered I speak Maztican!" Note also that this an example of the kind of granted power that cannot be disrupted.

Pantheon of the month

These are unofficial suggestions for using the optional spheres of priest spells from the *Tome of Magic* with the deities in *Legends & Lore*. I'll work through one pantheon a month until they're all done. Here's the list for the Aztec pantheon:

Ometeotl: As the embodiment of the universe, Ometeotl grants his priests major access to spells from any sphere, including the eight listed in the *ToM*.

Huitzilopochtli: *Major:* War; *Minor:* Time, Travelers.

Quetzalcoatl: *Major:* Thought; *Minor:* Time, Travelers.

Mictlantecuhtli/Mictanchihuatl: *Major:* Time; *Minor:* Thought, Wards.

Tezcatlipoca: *Major:* Chaos, Time; *Minor:* War.

Tlaloc: *Major:* Time; *Minor:* Law.

Chalchihuitlicue: *Major:* Time; *Minor:* Wards.

Tlazteotk: *Major:* Chaos; *Minor:* Time.

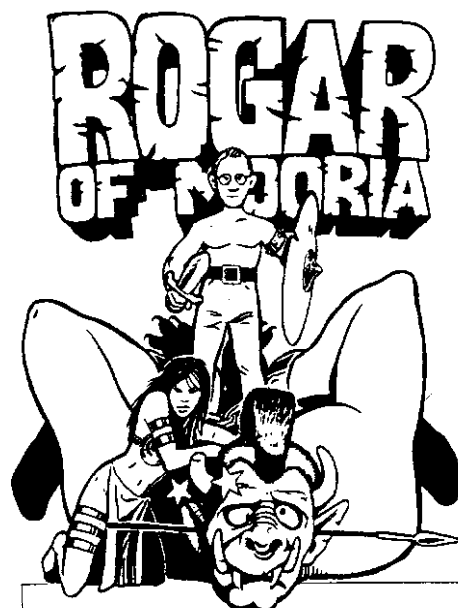
Xochipilli: *Major:* Chaos; *Minor:* Travelers.

Xochiquetzal: *Major:* Time; *Minor:* Chaos.

Metzli: *Major:* Time; *Minor:* Wards.

Centeotl: *Major:* Time; *Minor:* Chaos.

Ixtlilton: *Major:* Time; *Minor:* Wards.



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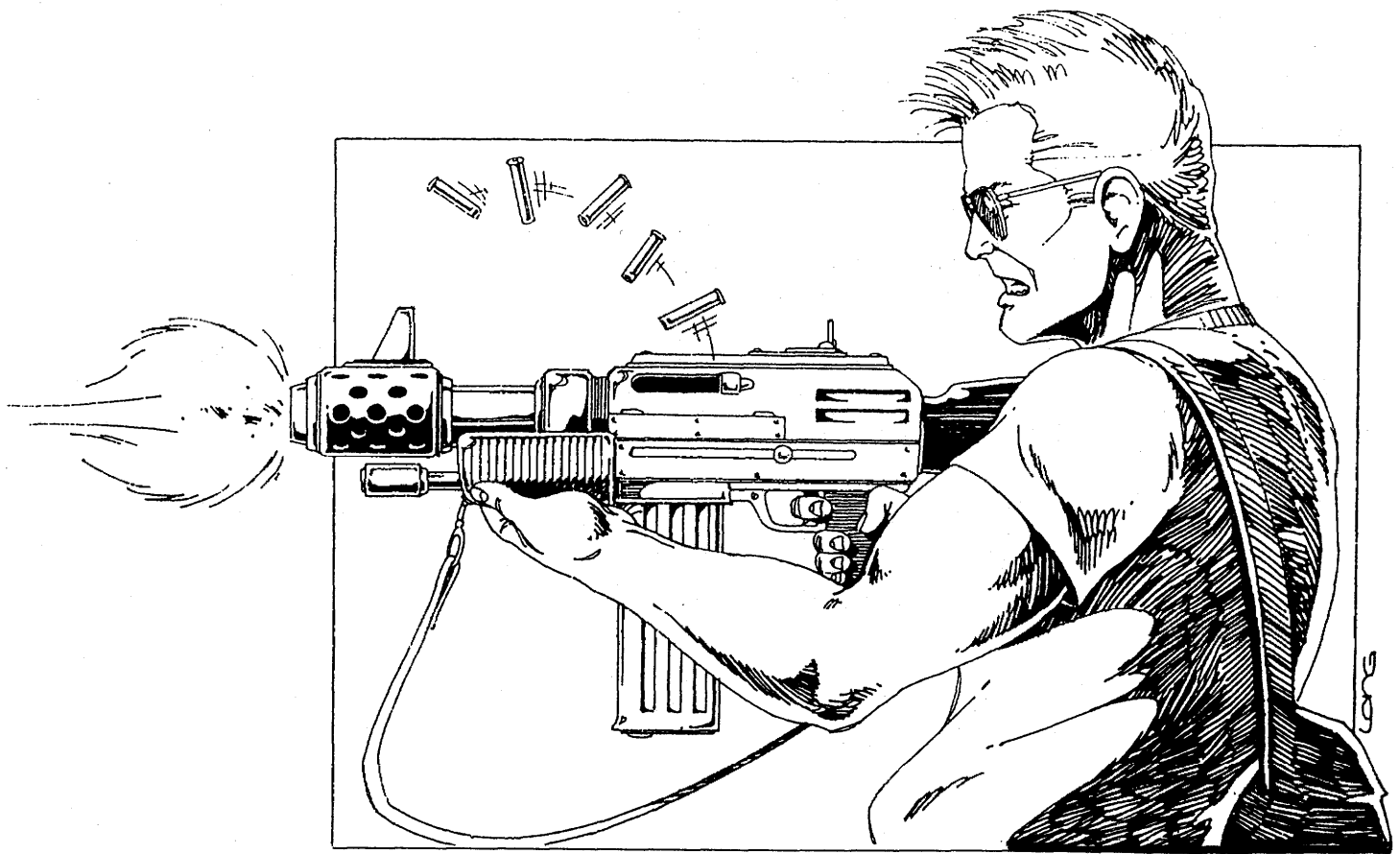
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The MARVEL®-Phile

Continued from page 34

down from the mountain in search of food. While the Glop rampaged through the town, the painter encountered the old man at the castle and demanded an explanation. The old guy admitted that he was a scientist. He discovered the statue and the paints in the castle, along with a parchment that revealed their unearthly origin and the method for reviving the alien beast. The scientist hoped to uncover the Glop's motives before the monster's "comrades" arrived to wake him themselves.

The Glop returned to the keep at that moment, trapping the two humans inside. In a fit of *braggadocio*, the alien boasted that he was an advance scout from a warlike race, sent to Earth to spy on the inhabitants. In time, his fellows would arrive and revive him. Much to his chagrin, though, the humans had already done that and now his mission was ruined. As the Glop prepared to ground the meddling mortals into bone dust, the painter hit upon a desperate plan. He hurled a large can of turpentine at the Glop, which washed away the alien's oozing skin and returned him to his statuelike state once more. There wasn't time for congratulations, though. The villagers, enraged by the monster's attack (and toting torches and pitchforks, as outlined in the *Complete Transylvanian Peasants' Handbook*), stormed the castle and blew it up. The Glop and the unusual paints were buried beneath the shattered keep.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: The Glop is short on subtlety, but long on rage. He will wade into a fight with little provocation, attempting to crush whatever obstacles the despised mortals set in his path. He is prone to throwing large objects, and Judges working him into a scenario should be familiar with the rules for Blunt Throwing attacks detailed in the *MSH Advanced Set's* Players' Book.

Since the castle's destruction in the early 1960s, no one has bothered to sift through the ruins to confirm the Glop's demise. Because the body was never seen, it would be safe to assume he survived somehow and is ready to be unleashed upon the hapless denizens of the MARVEL UNIVERSE once more. Moreover, the Glop's comrades have yet to make their appearance on Earth, so a scenario centering on their arrival would be a natural; explaining why these higher beings left an immobile scout/observer in an isolated Transylvanian castle is optional.

Rewriting history

In his search for foes worthy of battling the Hulk, Xemnu the Living Titan uncovered a conspiracy. The American government, Xemnu claimed, was covering up the multitudinous invasions that plagued the world in the late 1950s and early 1960s, blotting out the names of Diablo, Groot, and the Blip from the history books. I don't know about that, but scholars of the Marvel age of monsters should note that some of the towering titans have undergone subtle changes since their first appearances. For example, in his original outing, the Glop was known as the Glob. And the living alien statue on Easter Island was known as Thor, not Thorg. Apart from the trademark reasons, I suppose the name changes make some continuity sense too. "What's that?" says Spider-Man. "There's a battle in Central Park between Thor and Magneto? Or is that Thor and Magneto? And which Magneto is it, anyway—the guy with the bucket on his head or the old monster?"

The most interesting of these updates has resulted in the birth of a new hero, a guy who is still popping up in comics regularly: Doctor Druid. The origin of this occult master, printed in *Weird Wonder Tales* #19, is actually a slightly redrawn origin story for an old character named Dr. Droom! Then, two issues of *WWT* later, Dr. Druid tells a tale in which he discovers Gorgilla, the Monster of Midnight Mountain, but that, too, is a retouched story (with Dr. Droom's, er, Druids head replacing that of the tale's true hero, a blond scientist named Scotty). Hmmm.

Maybe Xemnu was right after all. Could Goom and his dreaded son Googam be working through the government to blot out the memories of their monstrous rivals? What about the Living Colossus and Fin Fang Foom? Why have they escaped this revision of history with reputations intact? I'd say it's time for you to mobilize all truth-loving heroes in your campaign so they can restore the real history of the MARVEL UNIVERSE—or at least slug it out with a giant slime beast or two.

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Beyond the Grave

Continued from page 29

death. Vartha do share one personality trait: They are all highly motivated, even driven, whatever their purpose.

Summoning/controlling undead

The summoning and controlling of certain types of very powerful undead, particularly mummies, is a common theme in literature and movies. The DM may wish to allow evil (and some neutral) clerics to summon some kinds of special undead from afar, then control them. The power would require a special ceremony and would depend on the availability of the proper kind of undead. Finally, the cleric would have to maintain concentration to control the undead similar to a mage controlling an elemental.

It is suggested that the cleric gain the power only when his 1d20 roll to turn the appropriate kind of undead becomes less than 10. Some appropriate kinds of undead, and the clerical level at which they could be summoned and controlled, would be: skleros* (8), angreden (5), callicantzari* * (5), skotos* * (6), mummy (8), lesser colossus* * (8), vrykolakas* * * (8), vartha (9), ch'ing shih* * * (9), and ka (14).

* See "Out of the Shadows," in *DRAGON* issue #162.

* * See "The Ungrateful Dead" in *DRAGON* issue #138.

* * * See "Hearts of Darkness" in *DRAGON* issue #126.

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Meet Mr. Josh Wellmeat—
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The supernatural worlds of horror created by H.P. Lovecraft again come to life (or unlife) in Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU* game. Players take the roles of human Investigators in the 1880s, 1920s, or present day. As they look into strange events and analyze unusual objects, they uncover evidence of monstrous plots to enslave or destroy humanity. Alien gods of insanity and darkness wish to take control of the Earth, and only the Investigators can delay their coming — though the Investigators risk madness and doom at every turn.

Deep in the heart of the Keeper's favorite old city dwells Mr. Josh Wellmeat — or someone who claims to be him. The truth of the matter is stranger than any Investigator would ever imagine.

Millions of years ago, during the Permian age, Mr. Wellmeat was Ssvalpynos Skenanss, a typical Serpent Man, more sorcerous and ambitious than most, but nothing too exceptional for that primordial epoch. With the rise of the early mammal precursors, Ssvalpynos Skenanss foresaw the extinction of his own species, and he made preparations for his own survival, seeking out magicks of concealment, longevity, and protection.

During the Triassic, Ssvalpynos imitated the forms of the rulers of that age, the feared Great Race of Yith. He mastered their science and hid away some of their technology in time capsules. When the Great Race was wiped out, he lived on in a barbaric world thrilled with raging dinosaurs. To survive, he used the biological knowledge of the Great Race to perma-





Josh Wellmeat (Ssvalpynos Skenanss)

CALL OF CTHULHU* Game Statistics

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------|---------|--------|
| STR 88 | CON 56 | SIZ 132 | INT 22 |
| POW 32 | DEX 6 | Move 10 | HP 94 |
| APP 10 (homunculus) | | | |

Weapon: Bite attack 95%, damage 13d6; tongue attack 95%, damage 1d6, plus wraps around and grasps prey. Wellmeat cannot leave his house to deliver a bite attack unless he rises up, completely demolishing the house and leaving it a pile of rubble around his haunches. However, he can flick forth his tongue to attack foes up to 15 meters away from the house, so long as he or one of his homunculi can see the target. Anyone hit by Wellmeat's tongue is automatically grasped and pulled into the house to be attacked by the monster's Bite on the following round. Only a successful STR vs. STR roll against the tongue's STR of 22 will break the target free.

The tongue has 32 hit points of its own, but no armor, and can be attacked before it grabs someone. However, it flickers so fast that the chances of scoring a hit on it are halved. If it is reduced to zero hit points before it makes its attack, it is crippled; Wellmeat then withdraws it and will not use it anymore.

Armor: Wellmeat himself has 13 points of armored scales. Through occult means, he has made himself and his tongue completely immune to fire and heat damage. If sorely pressed, he may detonate the gasoline tanks he has stored in the basement of the house and issue forth, covered with towering flames to roast all those who torment him. If he does this, everyone within 6 meters of him while the fire burns takes 1d6 heat damage each round. Everyone within 3 meters of him takes 3d6 damage from the flames. This might make a good spectacular ending to a scenario involving Wellmeat.

Spells: Through his epochs of study, Wellmeat knows all the basic Mythos spells. In addition, he knows the following magicks from the Lesser Grimoire, found in the back of the fifth edition of the CALL OF CTHULHU game (pages 148-158): Bless Blade, Conjure Glass of Mortlan, Create Mist of Releh, Deflect Harm, Dominate, Fist of Yog-Sothoth, Flesh Ward, Mesmerize, Wither Limb, and Wellmeat's version of Consume Likeness.

Skills: Wellmeat knows all CALL OF CTHULHU knowledge-oriented skills (such as Occult, Zoology, Linguist, etc.) at 100. He knows all skills requiring a physical form at 25 (Wellmeat has huge, clumsy claws); the homunculi can use all the physical skills as well as Wellmeat himself.

Sanity Loss: 0/1d6 +2 Sanity points to see Wellmeat's full form (0/1d4 to see a small part of him in his home).

nently change his own body, growing to immense size and strength. Soon, only the largest dinosaurs could threaten him, but his magical powers rendered him safe from even these.

From his readings among the Great Race, Ssvalpynos knew that eventually humanity would develop a complex civilization. In time, he took up residence among these detestable descendants of the apes and became known as Josh Wellmeat. Now that the humans have finally developed electrical technology, he can use their power sources to operate the devices contained within his time capsules.

Unfortunately, all of his capsules have been unearthed and carried off by inquisitive humans. The capsules were protected by the technology of the Great Race, so the "thieves," being mere humans, could not open the stolen capsules, but neither could Wellmeat easily recover his lost property.

Wellmeat grew to colossal size during the age of the dinosaurs, and he retains this immensity. He has grown too large to leave his house, which has been built specially around him to conceal his form from human eyes. To assist him, he has combined magical and biological lore to create artificial life—homunculi.

The homunculi

Wellmeat has grown a number of humanoid creatures in vats. These beings, homunculi, are "built" on skeletons which Wellmeat imports from India, giving them human form. They have shiny pink plastic-like skin and smooth faces, lacking noses, external ears, and hair. Their eyes are lidless and round, they have only holes for ears, and their mouths are lipless, but they do have excellent vocal cords.

Homunculi have no minds of their own and are animated by Wellmeat himself, acting as extensions of his psyche. He uses them as his hands and eyes to interact with the outside world. He can also cast his spells through the homunculi.

To give the homunculi the semblance of humanity, Wellmeat uses a variation on the spell of Consume Likeness. He devours the flesh of a person whom he wishes to imitate, just as in the normal spell, but the person can be of any size, not just within 3 SIZ points of himself (more details follow). Wellmeat does not himself transform into the form of his victim. Instead, he projects the image of his victim over one of his homunculi. So long as that homunculus lives, it has the appearance of the selected victim. When the homunculus dies, Wellmeat loses the power to create that particular person's illusion ever again.

The homunculi's statistics are all 10, except for INT and POW (which are Wellmeat's), so they are easily killed. They live forever unless killed. They have simplified digestive tracts and can eat only mushy, easily digested food, such as prepared baby food. If questioned about this diet, the homunculi will claim to have an

*The goblin
was almost on him;
Gary could see the saliva
dripping over its thick
bottom lip from between its
pointy yellow teeth.*

*Gary braced the spear's butt end
against the tree. The goblin foolishly
barrelled in, its own spear leading. Gary's shield
deflected the goblin's spear up high and to the side.
Then the monster was up against him, its breath hot and
smelly in his face, its bulbous, vein-streaked eyes boring into
his....*

—Excerpted from *The Woods Out Back*

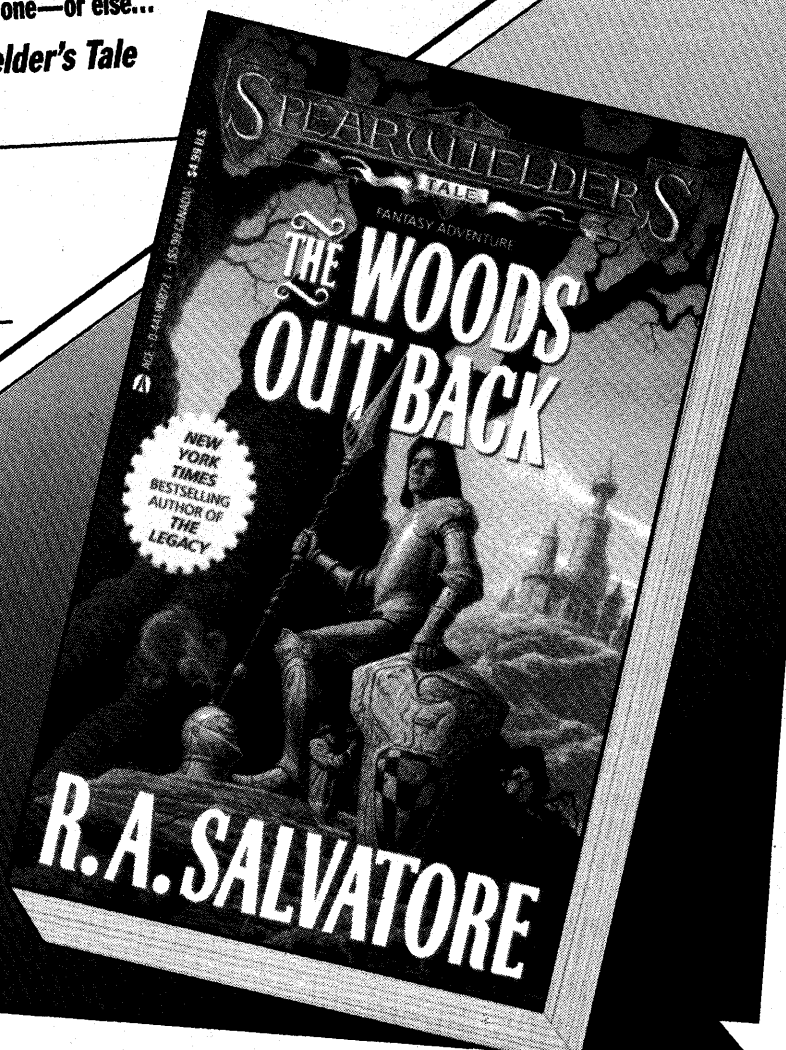
One day after work, Gary Leger walks into his favorite spot, the woods beyond his house—and enters a wondrous land of elves, dwarves, fairies, and witches. The realm desperately needs a champion to stand against a powerful sorceress... someone to wear the armor of a legendary king and brave a dragon's fire to reforge an ancient spear. Gary's no hero, but this quest is going to make him learn to act like one—or else...

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ulcer.

Unfortunately for Wellmeat, when one of his homunculi is killed, its human illusion fades within an hour. So far, he has always managed to regain or destroy the corpse of a dead homunculi before suspicions were aroused. He does not dare send a homunculus too far away from home, where its body would be inaccessible to his other homunculi were it to die.

For his Consume Likeness spell, Wellmeat has his homunculi search for adult male humans who will not be missed (e.g., vagrants, illegal immigrants, and petty criminals). Once these unfortunates are led to his home, he then devours them in order to gain the ability to project their likenesses onto his homunculi. He does not publicly use a free-roving homunculus based on a particular victim until at least a century has passed, so nobody living will recognize the shape and he can safely claim it as his own.

At the moment, he has four century-old "spares" available, plus three more that have not aged a century yet and must be kept indoors (they were created 70, 45, and 6 years ago, respectively). This gives him seven total homunculi which stay inside his house, along with one that travels freely, currently professing to be Mr. Josh Wellmeat and tending to the monster's business and social interactions.

When Wellmeat fears that the never-

aging form of a homunculus is getting too obvious, he looses a second homunculus and has it take up existence as an independent personality under a different name. After a few months, he has his first homunculus sell all his property at market prices to the second homunculus. Then the first homunculus pretends to move out of town (actually, Svalpynos eats it), and the second homunculus takes over as the new persona for the monster.

The hollow house

Wellmeat's house is simply a hollow shell, containing his own true, grossly swollen form, along with his seven spare homunculi, which groom and clean the monstrous shape. There is also a vat containing a human skeleton, which Wellmeat will use to create a new homunculus if the need arises. Finally, in the basement of the house are some large covered vats of gasoline connected to an ignition system—a recent addition.

If an intruder enters Wellmeat's house and opens one of the inner doors, he is confronted by a pulsating mass of scaly flesh, possibly punctuated by a claw, an eye, or other organ. Wellmeat himself cannot be seen in full unless he destroys his house by leaving it. When fully manifested, Wellmeat is exceedingly hideous. He is basically an undulating lump of tissue, like an armored pudding. At one

end of the lump is a hemispheric structure containing eyes, nostrils, and a slaving mouth filled with fangs each .7 meters long. An immense tongue, even longer than the bulbous body, flickers out from the mouth and waves menacingly at the astonished passersby. Titanic claws protrude from the horror's form, but there are no true legs or even feet—Wellmeat moves by rocking his body from side to side, flopping along in a crippled-looking, almost pathetic manner. Still, the monster's vast size enables it to proceed by this means fairly quickly.

Perhaps the worst part of the horror is not the whole, but the details: the intelligent, sensitive eyes; the burnished scales, polished and tended with loving care by the homunculi over the decades; the sparks of alien energy leaping from the creature's body as it prepares a deadly spell. Even more dreadful, if he blows up his house (see "Armor" in the game statistics box), the monster is likely to be encased in a sheath of flames, burning but not consumed.

Personality and goals

Wellmeat's main reason for interacting with any party of Investigators is to regain his lost time capsules. He should first appear to a party of Investigators as a friend. Obviously, he'll never let them come inside his house, but he is happy to meet them in fancy restaurants for meals (for which he foots the bill, being comfortably wealthy).

Wellmeat tells the Investigators that he is seeking certain ancient archeological discoveries (in reality the time capsules). He wishes to acquire them because of their occult significance. If their nature is evil, he naturally wishes to have them destroyed or rendered harmless. If they are beneficial, he wants to use them, and offers to share their lore with the Investigators. However, when any capsule is recovered, he claims in every case to have learned that it was malign and had to be destroyed—he never actually shares any information with the Investigators.

Wellmeat pays the Investigators handsomely for their assistance in recovering each "archeological discovery" (the exact number of time capsules being searched for is left for the Keeper to decide). Each capsule has occult defenses, and Wellmeat warns the Investigators that they are dangerous. Wellmeat has performed magical rituals to find the current location of each of the capsules, but has only been able to localize the capsules in a very general way (e.g., "somewhere in Baltimore" or "the Isle of Man"). The capsules were long ago enchanted to adopt shapes that would disguise their natures; such shape-changing has become rather chaotic over the eons, however, and they could look like anything from the size of a car down to a clothes chest.

Wellmeat offers to pay the Investigators' reasonable expenses on the search. He

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may even give them some magical assistance (casting Conjure Glass of Mortlan for them, or giving them a Blessed Blade), revealing himself to be an "amateur magician" as well as a occult archaeologist. With any luck, soon the investigating party shall look upon Wellmeat as an ally and patron.

Ssvalpynos's skill in running his human persona is flawless, and Josh Wellmeat should be played exactly as what he appears to be. Though Ssvalpynos finds humans rather abhorrent and couldn't care less about their fate, he is quite willing to work with them to recover his capsules and sometimes thinks humans are fascinating-if only a little bit. He's seen better and more interesting races rise and fall in his hundreds of millions of years of life.

Keeper's notes

Wellmeat is best used as an occasional source of adventure, not a campaign in himself. Periodically, he contacts the Investigators and sends them forth on straightforward search-and-recovery expeditions.

Of course, eventually the Investigators should get suspicious of Wellmeat. Perhaps they wonder why all the artifacts they recover turn out to be "bad," or they find

an old photo of a man who looks exactly like Josh Wellmeat (a picture of a minor thief who vanished a century ago after escaping police custody). By that time, Wellmeat should have the use of the contents of several time capsules, and so will be more difficult to defeat.


The exact contents of the time capsules are up to the Keeper. You should design them such that, when recovered from Wellmeat, they come in handy in solving whatever grand campaign the players are currently involved with. Or you could make the capsules' artifacts weird alien devices that humans cannot use without a great deal of study. The artifacts could lead to new adventures, especially if they are dangerous. Perhaps one is weakening the space-time continuum and gating monsters through in its vicinity. The Investigators would need to find some way of rendering the artifact inoperative—an outcome Josh Wellmeat might not like.

Both the innate capsule defenses and the contents are left up to the Keeper, as best suits his campaign. The defenses should be such as to make it reasonable that the folks trying to open the capsule could not do so without great effort and risk.

Three sample adventures

Time Capsule One: Wellmeat knows that the capsule looks like a six-foot blackened iron meteorite, and that it's on the Isle of Man. Here a tiny sect of Druids are trying to figure out how to master its secrets with the help of a patron Dark Young.

Time Capsule Two: Wellmeat says that this capsule, which looks like an Egyptian sarcophagus, is in Baltimore, Maryland. Here, a would-be devil-worshiper rules his roost of 12 would-be witches. They hope to open the capsule by invoking dark powers, after which they'll get real magic.

Time Capsule Three: This capsule looks like a petrified log, and is somewhere in Trieste (in fact, it's in a natural history museum). The museum's curator is a Deep One hybrid, who is in contact with his brothers in the Adriatic. They hope to use the capsule's powers, once they get it open, to sink Trieste beneath the waves. 

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Role-playing Reviews

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Unsettling settings for fantasy campaigns

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Let's see if you can picture what I'm doing right now:

I'm sitting in a room. I'm writing this column. Music is playing.

Kind of fuzzy, isn't it? From this skimpy description, I could be lounging in a hotel, lying on my back in prison cell, or strapped into a space capsule. And forget trying to figure out the time of day, the ambiance of the room, or anything about me personally. There isn't enough to go on.

Let's try it again:

I'm sitting at an antique oaken desk in an office in the basement of my house, tapping out this column on a Macintosh computer. It's 5:25 A.M. I'm wearing a maroon bathrobe with a hole in the seat. Cow Nose, a tubby calico cat, is snoozing on my lap. On the wall to my right hangs a framed cover from Mad magazine. On the floor in front of the desk, two stereo speakers the size of file cabinets are blasting David Bowie so loud that if a hand grenade exploded outside in the hall, I wouldn't hear it.

Now that's better. I'll bet you've got a good idea of what it looks like here, and it only took a few sentences and a handful of images. You don't need me to tell you the color of the computer, the age of the cat, or the title of the album. With a few concrete details to get you oriented, you can visualize the rest of the scene yourself.

That, in a nutshell, is pretty much what I expect from a campaign sourcebook. I want just enough detail to give me a clear picture of where I am and what's going on. Instead of rambling, frilly elaboration, I want brief physical descriptions that reveal information about the people who live there. From the description of my office, you might conclude that I'm a slovenly insomniac who's going deaf-and you'd be right.

I want sourcebooks that are easy to use. I want heartless editors who demand that designers organize their material and avoid irrelevant digressions. After all, these are essentially reference books, and I shouldn't have to struggle through long chapters of unbroken text to find the name of the king of the mushroom men.

In fantasy sourcebooks—such as those we're considering this month—I want sensible and complete explanations of how magic interacts with the world and affects everyday life. If pudding berries grow on crystal trees, I want to know how to harvest them and what they taste like. If magic can turn lead to gold, I want to know why all wizards aren't rich.

Finally, I want adventures. Not premises, not outlines, but completely developed, ready-to-play adventures that take full advantage of the campaign material elsewhere in the book. If the designer spent three chapters discussing the difficulties of ferrying pudding berries to the mushroom men, I want an adventure with ferry

boats, pudding berries, and mushroom men. If the book details an arctic setting, I want to see some ice and snow, and I want the player characters—or at least the dumb ones—to risk freezing to death.

Too much to ask? Let's crank up the music, dump the cat on the floor, and find out.

From the Ashes

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The WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting, the original campaign setting of AD&D® game godfather E. Gary Gygax, has always reminded me of a crazy quilt, where odd-shaped scraps of material are randomly sewn together and everybody hopes for the best. How else to explain a setting that encompasses everything from the somber A1-4 *Scourge of the Slave Lords* adventure to the King Kong-inspired WG6 *Isle of the Ape* to the cornball humor of WG7 *Castle Greyhawk*? It makes for an interesting mess, but it's a mess nonetheless.

For me, the most credible attempt at smoothing out the rough spots came with *The City of Greyhawk* (reviewed in DRAGON® issue #156). Wisely concentrating on a small section of the world, the set offered a host of intriguing personalities, adventure ideas galore, and best of all, a coherent background. GREYHAWK® Wars (reviewed in DRAGON issue #188) took another step in the right direction by shaking things up with a much-needed dose of epic conflict.

Drawing on these earlier works, veteran designer Carl Sargent has continued the overhaul with the ambitious *From the Ashes*. By combining heroic tradition with elements of dark fantasy, he's come up with a GREYHAWK campaign that is both familiar and refreshingly unexpected. Nearly as nasty as the DARK SUN® setting, the new, grimmer GREYHAWK world is made to order for players who found the original version too flabby to be much fun.

Presentation: The lavish package includes a trio of poster-sized maps, a thick packet of reference cards (most of them containing encounters and short adventures, in a format similar to that of the *City of Greyhawk* set), and a pair of booklets containing close to 130,000 words. That's a lot of material to digest, but thankfully, the quality of the writing

makes it go down easy. Sargent not only has a vivid imagination, but a strong command of the English language, a rare combination in an industry where publishers tend to value typing speed more than muscular prose. Despite the occasional creaky sentence (e.g.: "Added to the phalanx of forces poised to strike came a new force: the hitherto unremarked humanoid rabble of the Pomarj"), it's a pleasure to read.

Thoughtful sidebars and helpful summaries enhance the set's reference value. An alphabetical directory of the Nations of Flanaess reveals at a glance the races, populations, and other key data for more than 50 countries. A listing of adventure locations tells where all previously published GREYHAWK scenarios occurred; *Scourge of the Slavelords*, for instance, took place in Highport and Drachensgrabs, while *Isle of the Ape* was set in a demi-plane accessed via Castle Tenser. Still, despite the tight editing and logical organization, it's not always easy to find specific entries; a subject index or an expanded table of contents would've helped.

To its detriment, the set emphasizes text over graphics, with few appealing visuals other than the color maps. Most of the illustrations depict generic fantasy scenes and have nothing much to do with the text they accompany. Those wanting maps of local neighborhoods or floor plans of important buildings will have to draw their own. The rune and glyph display, lifted virtually verbatim from the original WORLD OF GREYHAWK boxed set, does little more than fill up a page.

The poster maps, on the other hand, are terrific, rendered in rich hues and clear notations. Thanks to the grid coordinates printed along the borders, it's easy to find desired locations—the city of Zeif lies in hex L6-101, the Veng River meets the Crystal River at G4-78. The grid system is nearly as user-friendly as individually numbered hexes and makes for less clutter. I hope more designers take advantage of it.

Setting: Book One, *Atlas of the Flanaess*, presents a broad overview of the eastern portion of Oerik, Oerth's major continent and the primary locale for GREYHAWK campaigns. Things get off to a sluggish start with a lengthy historical summary, tracing 10 centuries of events from the early assaults of the Oeridian tribes through the aftermath of the great Greyhawk Wars. It's necessary, I suppose, to provide context and bring newcomers up to date. But it's also complicated and turgid, sort of like a lecture from a professor who left his sense of humor in his other suit.

The cyclopedia entries, which follow the history lesson and take up the bulk of the text, pick up the pace a bit. Nevertheless, the casual reader may feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information. For

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instance, the "Wild Regions" section details 30 different forests and 10 distinct species of trees. We're given examples of nine different greetings and told the proper way to address archclerics, barons, and viscounts. Nearly 30 pages are devoted to reviewing the history and culture of dozens of countries. While much of this is interesting—I know better now than to greet strangers with "I spit on the Old One"—Sargent doesn't have the space he needs to do justice to an entire world. When you only have a few paragraphs to spend on a country, it's tough to give more than a superficial overview.

In Book Two, the *Campaign Book*, Sargent shifts into high gear as he narrows his focus on the areas in and around the Free City of Greyhawk. It's a virtuoso performance, with a flawless mix of exposition, atmosphere, and detail. Sargent sets the stage in the opening pages by painting a bleak picture of a struggling populace. As a consequence of the great war, much of the Old City was incinerated. Destitute property owners who can't afford to pay for restoration watch helplessly as their neighborhoods are overrun with beggars and street urchins. In the River Quarter, authorities fish out body after body with daggers in their backs. Refugees crowd the poorer districts, trade continues to decline, and Iuz, the fiendish ruler of a vast territory in the north central Flanaess, remains a constant threat. Uncertainty prevails, and player characters will find plenty to keep them on their toes.

Sargent displays his gift for evocative images in his directory of creepy locations. Check out a few of these names: the Choking City, the Walking Stone of Eyes, and—my favorite—the Doomgrinder, a rock windmill whose rotating sails count off the years to the next cataclysm. The Echo Crypt assaults trespassers with the sounds of their own voices. Dementia victims can be cured by drinking from the Lake of Ebon, providing they make peace with the albino worms lurking below the surface. Courageous explorers may also inspect the rock-sculpting derro of the Honeycombed Halls of the Diirinken, or commune with swanmays and werebears in the Gnarlley Forest.

Fantasy: The fantasy elements stick pretty close to AD&D conventions, bad news for old-timers who've had their fill of sinister monsters, enchanted dungeons, and meddlesome deities. But Sargent's limber imagination enlivens even the weariest clichés. Along the Selintan River, for instance, officials post crystal beacons charged with *continual light* spells to flash coded warnings to travelers. A tar pit in the lizard-man settlement of Mistmarsh produces a golden muck that transforms ordinary lumber into seaworthy wood for boats. The Corusks glacier contains clusters of tiny ice shards with miniature yeti and microscopic winter wolves trapped inside. Sargent has loaded the books with nifty details like these, making a trip through the text as fun as an

Easter egg hunt.

Adventures: Sargent offers an abundance of scenario hooks in a variety of formats and themes, though it's a mixed bag. The "Tales of the Year of Peace" section lists about a dozen adventure springboards based on various Flanaess rumors, but with only a few paragraphs per entry, there's not much to work with. Nor are the two adventure outlines in the *Campaign Book* particularly satisfying. The first, "Into the Mistmarsh," involves a garden-variety hunt for escaped thieves. The second, "The Sin Eater," relies too heavily on die-rolls for my taste, and climaxes with a battle that may prove to be too deadly for all but the strongest or luckiest PCs. The reference-card adventures, however, benefit from thoughtful development and clever staging. "Brainstorm," the best of a dud-free collection, features a gloopy, goo-strewn dungeon that proves to be a headache in more ways than one.

Evaluation: A few years ago, I was convinced that the GREYHAWK setting had reached a creative dead end. Now I'm not so sure. Carl Sargent has done a remarkable job of reshaping the rickety, make-it-up-as-you-go-along campaign of old into an intelligible whole. Flaws aside—the so-so visuals, sluggish Book One, and hit-or-miss adventures—*From the Ashes* stands as the definitive GREYHAWK refer-

ence and the most enjoyable GREYHAWK product to date.

GURPS Fantasy* II: Adventures in the Mad Lands

GURPS* game supplement ***

128-page softcover book, one 15" x 20" map sheet

Steve Jackson Games

\$17

Design: Robin D. Laws

Editing: Steve Jackson

Illustrations: John Hartwell

Map: Laura Eisenhour

Cover: Rob Prior


Leave it to Steve Jackson Games, the folks who brought you *GURPS Bunnies and Burrows**, to defy expectations with this quirky campaign world. *Adventures in the Mad Lands* hints at dark fantasy, with the requisite gloomy atmosphere and life-threatening locales. But with a cast of characters that includes Zewa Zab the Gopher God, it elicits at many chuckles as goose bumps. Mad Lands? They're mad all right, but that's "mad" as in "goofy."

Presentation: The book follows the familiar GURPS format: 128 pages of meticulously edited text, augmented by dozens of informative sidebars. The better-than-usual graphics include simple but serviceable diagrams and maps. Illustrations in GURPS products tend to be

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THE FAIRY GLORY OF A ONCE LOST AGE,
BRINGING FORTH THE TEMPEST OF THE DRAGON'S RAGE.

ESIDE THE MUSTY COLORED WALLS OF STONE,
THERE THE KNIGHT UPON HIS STEED SAT ALONE.
BENEATH THE FAIRY JOET ARMOR OF OIL,
BEAT A HEART THAT HAD BEEN LOST AGE.
THE GOLDEN HEART OF A LONG LOST AGE,
STANDING TO FACE THE GREAT DRAGON'S RAGE.
WITH A BROWN LANCE AND A SHIELD THAT'S BENT,
A VENGEFUL CRY AND THE STILLNESS IS BENT.

OVING NOW WITH A MYTHOLOGICAL BEAT,
THE GREAT DRAGON ROSE UP ONTO HIS FEET.
GREAT THUNDER WAS HEARD AS HIS FEET HIT THE GROUND!
HE OPENED HIS MOUTH AND SPIT LIGHTNING AROUND!
HE OPENED HIS MOUTH AND SPIT LIGHTNING AROUND!

ON THROUGH THE COVER
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AND THEN FOR A MOMENT
AS CATCH THE OTHER W

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SHOWING FORTH LIGHT
THE BATTLE RAISED OF
THE KNIGHT PREPARED
THE RINGING OF SWORDS
AS AROUND THE DRAGON

HE BATTLE RAGE ROSE
GREAT MUSCLES TENSE
THE DRAGON'S TAIL C
A POUNCE AND FAINT
THE SHOUT OF STEEL
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THE BATTLE'S RAGE

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OUT OF THE DUST
ESIDE THE MUSTY COLORED WALLS OF STONE.
THERE THE KNIGHT UPON HIS STEED SAT ALONE.
IN THE BROWN CLOUDS OF A RAINY DAY,
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perfunctory at best, dismal at worst, but here they're surprisingly effective. Two drawings of a tribal longhouse nicely compliment the blueprint in the same chapter. A portrait of the Dakip En, a race of intelligent seals, conveys whimsy and menace at the same time. My favorite illustration depicts a barn-sized rodent bursting through the ground, flinging aside a group of natives like so many ants; a color version would've made a striking cover, better than the slasher film out-take that was used instead.

Newcomer Robin Laws looks to be a promising talent. His writing is solid throughout, though he's a bit too fond of unpronounceable gobbledygook ("Oxlcyxowsyjs, the young princess of one jyzuehyynkzd tribe . . ."). Thoughtful touches include a glossary of Mad Lander terms and a thorough index.

The full-color map, bound into the back of the book and perforated for quick disposal, is the package's most disappointing feature. With few details—aside from the title, the map contains exactly 10 words—it has little value as a play aid. With its bland colors and graphics, it has little value as a poster. In fact, it has little value, period, which makes me wonder why they bothered in the first place. These things don't come cheap.

Setting: The Mad Lands consist of huge igneous rock clusters in the middle of

nowhere, covered with dense boreal forest. As Laws points out, it's a tough place to live, but not tough enough to discourage the 25,000 tribesmen who've turned it into a primitive but comfortable sanctuary.

Mad Lander society is strictly low-tech—spears, loin cloths, and beads—but so peaceful and humane that it makes the Boy Scouts look like a terrorist organization. Private property is unknown; everybody owns everything. Greed is as alien as atomic energy. Both sexes are equally valued, and advanced age "is perhaps the most admired trait in Mad Lander society!" A Mad Lander's idea of a wild party consists of listening to grandpa tell stories about the good old days. Laws explores the minutia of daily life in compelling detail, right down to the preferred fishing outfit (deer-leather armor wrapped in waxed birch bark) and the typical communal meal (bear paw soup and potato pancakes).

It's all very nice, and perhaps too good to be true. Mad Lander society could've used a little more conflict and a little less civility; after all, most fantasy role-players are looking for adventure, not a place to raise their kids. That said, Laws has done an admirable job of building a culture from the ground up, using crisp descriptions and a minimum of padding.

Fantasy: The setting may be ordinary, but the creatures and deities who call it home are outrageously original. Bax Powu

Kag, the Moose God, looks like Bullwinkle with stubby legs and a goatee; he torments tribesmen by inducing despair and self-pity. The deity Dopod Absep, resembling a gawky 12'-tall boy, melts human flesh with the touch of his hand. The aforementioned Gopher God spends most of his time digging haunted tunnels. Victims of the gods who are denied proper funeral services may be resurrected as undead spawn. These grisly offspring include the Boneless, sheets of skin that search from prey by flapping through the air; the Headless, humanoid torsos with faces in their chests; and the Footless, human legs with eyeballs just below their knees. It's cartoon horror at its most surreal. H. P. Lovecraft crossed with *Ren and Stimpy*.

Adventures: The scenario outlines feature interesting set-ups and surprising guest stars. Too bad there are only six of them, none with more than a skeleton of a plot. The longest, involving a peculiar hunter know as "The Adoptee," barely fills a page. The best, "Fish Food," challenges the PCs with an undead fisherman but can't fulfill its potential in a skimpy five paragraphs. Because of the Mad Lands' complicated background and unusual NPCs, it's tough to design a campaign. I wish Laws would've shown us how.

Evaluation: I suspect that Laws wants us to be intrigued by the contrast between the utopian tribesmen and the chaotic deities. But I was never intrigued as much as I was amused, perhaps because it's hard to get worked up over a deity resembling a giant moose. The nuts and bolts of the relationship between the deities and the tribesmen remain unclear; as that's the crux of the book, it's a significant flaw. Despite the tantalizing possibilities, Laws hedges his bets and never cuts loose. I'd liked to have seen something *really* mad, like a village of Footless, or a gang war between the Gopher God and Mr. Moose. *Adventures in the Mad Lands* boasts an exquisite premise, but it could use a bolder vision.

Eidolon: City in the Sky ROLEMASTER* game supplement

160-page softcover book, two 16" x 21" double-sided map sheets

Iron Crown Enterprises \$18

Design: Terry Kevin Amthor

Editing: Coleman Charlton and Jessica Ney

Illustrations: Storn Cook

City design and maps: Ellisa Martin, Terry Amthor, and Will Hyde

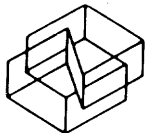
Cover: Marco Aidalá

I was never much of a fan of the ROLEMASTER game—too convoluted, too many tables. But I'm second to no one in my admiration of *Shadow World*, the spin-off campaign setting. *Shadow World* has it all: offbeat geography (a network of small continents separated by vast seas), imaginative concepts (evildoers draw strength

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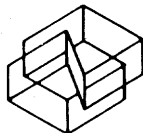
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from the mysterious Unlife energy) and outlandish inhabitants (horse vipers, firephantoms, and an apelike race called the Gark). Since the *Shadow World* set includes conversion notes for a number of game systems, role-players of all persuasions owe it to themselves to investigate this exceptional product. However, if you're not in the market for a whole new world—admittedly, it takes a lot of work to sift through the voluminous material—I recommend instead *Eidolon: City in the Sky*, a self-contained sourcebook that focuses on a single area.

Presentation: Production-wise, Iron Crown has come a long way since its early ROLEMASTER efforts, which often looked like they were cobbled together by remedial art students. *Eidolon* sports a clean layout and sharp graphics, marred only by the occasional dull illustration (do we really need a half-page picture of a bar-keep handing over a beer?). The attractive color maps pinpoint close to 300 buildings, each keyed to a text section that lists the relevant services, prices, and proprietors. Handy tables summarize the events of the previous century, while a comprehensive appendix includes price charts, an elven pronunciation guide, and even a sampling of the Eidolon typeface (which Iron Crown will provide on floppy disk for Macintosh owners). The lengthy index makes it easy to locate the statistics for an airbarg or the address of a good silversmith.

Setting: The book focuses on two distinct locales: the cosmopolitan Sel-kai City, sort of a medieval New York, and Eidolon, an elite community that floats above Sel-kai like an airborne Beverly Hills. The sprawling Sel-kai exists as a maze of small islands linked by hundreds of platforms. Canals function as streets, and commuters must make do with skiffs and barges. Raw sewage is dumped directly into the rivers, canals must be regularly dredged for silt, and citizens have to depend on rain for drinking water.

The class system, a hallmark of Sel-kai society, assigns citizens into rigid social orders. The nobility, consisting mostly of merchant dynasties, have cornered the market in wealth, education, and political power. The working class—sailors, laborers, and domestic servants—subsist in near poverty. The government, headed by Prince Rylec and his advisors, ensures the stability of the status quo.

Prince Rylec is one of the 5,000 high-status residents of Eidolon, which hovers about a half-mile over the eastern coast of Sel-kai. The Prince's marble palace rises from a forest in the center of the city, surrounded by rings of residential towers, pricey boutiques, and landing docks for visiting airbarges. The social, economic, and physical contrasts between Sel-kai and Eidolon couldn't be more stark, and it's these differences that make the setting so appealing.

Unfortunately, the people living in the cities aren't nearly as interesting as the

cities themselves. Though the population consists of aquatic elves, winged humanoids, and other appealing races, only a handful of individuals are described. And the sparse descriptions don't provide nearly enough information to bring them to life. For instance, the entry for Andara Letharen, a key member of Eidolon consulate, includes just three sentences about her personality and background. The other entries aren't much better.

Fantasy: With its emphasis on culture and politics, the book doesn't have much room for magic. It's used mainly as window dressing—an enchanted metal called *shaalk* can be used to make exotic lock picks, and *balloonpod* plants help to elevate airbarges. Players wanting more wizards, deities, and monsters will have to consult the original *Shadow World* set, or else cart them in from some other game system.

Adventures: The eight adventure outlines are adequately plotted and staged, but they're far too pedestrian for a setting this grand. "A Little Knowledge" requires the PCs to rob a merchant's villa, with the only significant complication being a run-in with the security guards. "Slave Trade" is a routine rescue of a captured friend. Where's the drama? Where's the spectacle? We ought to be dealing civil wars and political upheavals, not trifling puzzles like these.

Evaluation: Aside from the physical setting, there's nothing dramatically new here. But even the most familiar ideas are intelligently executed. And the shortcomings—the underwhelming NPC roster, the halfhearted adventures—could easily be addressed in a sequel (Iron Crown, are you listening?). Vividly imagined and beautifully rendered, *Eidolon: City in the Sky* remains the crown jewel of the *Shadow World* series.

Short and sweet

OGRE MINIATURES* game, by Steve Jackson with Mike Naylor and David Graham. Steve Jackson Games, \$15. You've played the board game, the computer simulation, and the expansion sets. Now try the miniatures rules. The OGRE game's durable concept—a gargantuan super-tank vs. a swarm of high-tech small fry on a futuristic battlefield—works as well on a tabletop as a hex map. Because of the quick set-up and small number of units, it's a snap to learn and an ideal introduction to miniature gaming. The streamlined system, punch-out play aids, and gorgeous color photos make this a deluxe package in every sense. So, what's next —OGRE: *The Movie*?

Golden Voyages, by David "Zeb" Cook. TSR Inc., \$18. Can't get your AD&D AL-QADIM™ campaign off the ground? Check

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out this dazzler of an adventure, a seamless blend of role-playing, problem solving, and swashbuckling action. Loosely based on the legends of Sinbad, Golden Voyages casts the PCs adrift on the Crowded Sea, then sends them on memorable side-trips to the Strait of Sorrow and the Steaming Isles. The inventive format allows the Dungeon Master to shuffle the encounters without affecting the plot. He can also tailor the rewards to fit the players' personalities; successful Story-Tellers may be given a *Book of Lore* (which grants the equivalent of a *legend lore* spell once per week), while Power Gamers might earn a *Blade of Mastery* (an ethereal weapon that boosts ability scores). This is first-rate.

Investigator Sheets and *Dire Documents*. Chaosium, Inc., \$9 each. In the CALL OF CTHULHU* 5th Edition game, a line near the character records reads: "permission granted to photocopy for personal use." I guess the set of blank *Investigator Sheets* must be intended for Investigators too insane to use a photocopier. *Dire Documents*—an assortment of Lovecraftian letterheads, report forms, and diplomas—is indispensable for Keepers who like to make their own clues or bewilder their friends. I plan to use the Arkham Sanatorium stationery the next time my alumni association hits me up for a contribution. One question: Since I doubt that

Chaosium is losing money on these, couldn't it have found it in its heart to include an envelope or folder to hold the loose pages?

Airwaves, by Rembert N. Parker; *House Call*, by Dustin Browder; *Unauthorized Broadcast*, by Robin D. Laws. Atlas Games, \$5 each. Occasionally, good things *do* come in small packages, evidenced by these 16-page gems for the offbeat OVER THE EDGE* game. Each "adventure resource" (Atlas-speak for "role-playing module") boasts writing and art that any major publisher would envy. *Airwaves*, the best of the bunch, presents an engaging mystery based on the alien infiltration of a TV station. *Unauthorized Broadcast* features a drug that grants its users disruptive mental powers. *House Call* describes a pocket universe stocked with sentient fungi and Nazi shoe salesmen. The "flexible structure"—more Atlas-speak-means that it's up to the referee to develop the story lines and flesh out the characters. But considering the raw material, ambitious do-it-yourselfers should have a field day. (For information, write to: Atlas Games, P.O. Box 406, Northfield MN 55057.)

BLACK DEATH* game, by Greg Porter. Blacksburg Tactical Research Center, \$10. Tired of role-playing wizards and super heroes? How about playing a disease! In

this bizarre board game, players become real-life illnesses like measles and dysentery, or make up their own (I was Swanpox). After determining ratings for Virulence and Mortality, the PDs (player diseases) run rampant across a map of 14th-century Europe, infecting as many cities as possible. Event cards such as Famine and Mutation make conditions more favorable for pestilence, while the Good Weather card restrains epidemics by reducing the flea population (boo!). With its dubious premise and a mere three pages of rules, the BLACK DEATH game walks a fine line between being simple and simpleminded. But for the first few plays anyway, the fun is, er, contagious. (For information, write to: Blacksburg Tactical Research Center, 1925 Airy Circle, Richmond VA 23233.)

Rick Swan has designed and edited more than 40 role-playing products, and he has written game reviews for nearly a decade. You can contact him at: 2620 30th Street, Des Moines IA 50310. A self-addressed stamped envelope increases the chance of a response. Ω

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Gaming with Zelda

*He praised the thing he understood;
'Twere well if every critic would.*

Henry Austin Dobson

I am a frequent attendee at game conventions. At these, I am frequently button-holed by some wild-eyed person, a devotee of some less-common computer. He is naturally angered at the lack of support offered his machine by feckless software companies and pompously accuses such companies of feloniously plotting to deprive his machine of software. Since his computer is manifestly the finest in the land, only malign cunning can possibly explain such behavior on the part of game designers and programmers.

Usually their righteous wrath is mustered on behalf of the Amiga, but the Atari ST, Commodore 64, and even the late, unlamented IBM PC Jr. each have their supporters, all vaguely angry about the neglect of their systems and jealous of the undeserved fabulous support that IBM and its clones receive from software companies.

I always give the same reply to these pathetically loyal supporters of an obscure system. "Software companies have no loyalties." If they could sell games for the IBM PC Jr., they'd design and distribute those games. The reason that practically all computer games today are designed for the IBM is because IBM software hugely outsells other types. It's just as hard to develop a game for the Amiga as it is for the IBM, and the Amiga game sales are less than a tenth those for the IBM—so why do Amiga games? Some companies still do "ports" of their IBM games for other systems (adapting the software to another machine while leaving the gameplay as unchanged as possible). The fact is, most software companies are unhappy about the change in the market to IBM dominance. Several years ago, when there were several viable systems all competing, game sales were higher for software companies. Now, with only IBM, sales are actually tighter.

Six years ago, the Commodore 64, the Amiga, and the Atari ST were all popular. The Commodore 64 was a great games machine, was remarkably inexpensive, and had thousands of games available. The Amiga and Atari ST had much better sound and graphics than the IBM of the time. Today, these computers are rare, and few, if any, games are produced for them. The Atari ST and Commodore are basically dead, while the Amiga is moribund, just waiting for someone to put pennies over its eyes. The Amiga games that still make it into the stores are mostly ports or from Europe, where the machine hangs on by a thread. What happened?

The Commodore's strengths lay in its

Eye of the Monitor

©1993 by Sandy Petersen



Legend of Zelda (Nintendo)

low price and its vast array of games. The Commodore did not die a natural death, but was murdered by the advent of

the Nintendo cartridge system. Nintendo was even cheaper than the Commodore, was much easier to operate (Commodore had a infamous user-unfriendly interface), and Nintendo boasted an impressive range, of games, rivaling Commodore's. In essence, the Commodore 64 was competing against Nintendo in the same ecological and economic niche. The changeover was dramatic. Six years ago, something like 70% of the computer games sold in the U.S. were for the Commodore. A year and a half later, the Commodore machine and

Computer games' ratings

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

its games vanished from the marketplace. Nintendo sales were in the millions.

The Amiga and Atari ST were harder to slay. For both machines, the primary audience was college-age youth. The computers were comparatively easy to program for (especially the ST), and soon there was a plethora of arcade games for both machines. With the advent of Nintendo, the market for computer arcade games nearly dried up, and the Amiga & Atari ST markets suffered a blow. This alone was not enough to knock out these machines as contenders though. Both machines had a great deal of potential (as much as the IBM, really). However, when software designers noticed that game sales for Amiga and Atari ST were low, this created a vicious circle. The designers' reluctance to do new software for minor machines made those same machines even less viable, until finally they vanished.

Today, IBMs and Macs are about the only computers for which games are being designed. The Mac is far less important than the IBM, and few major software companies do original Mac games. The game machines—originally just Nintendo, now itself largely replaced by Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo—dominate the market. With the success of Windows, there has been a brief renaissance for the IBM, but the many Windows games being produced are largely very simple, meant for businessmen to play in brief idle moments in the workplace.

"Real" computer games are still popular, and the best ones are still superior to the best games for Sega or Super Nintendo, though perhaps not for long. Certainly the bulk of game companies still doing computer games are also doing cartridges for the Sega or Super Nintendo systems. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Now that the game machines have been around for several years, the audience for them is getting older. Once, the cartridge machines were almost entirely raw arcade games. Now role-playing games, graphic adventures (such as *Maniac Mansion*), and strategy games (such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) are prevalent, and these often aim at an older audience. I confidently expect this trend to continue, with ever better and more advanced cartridge games. And better games mean more fun for us all.

Reviews

LEGEND OF ZELDA: A Link to the Past *****

Super NES, Nintendo

Executive producer: Hiroshi Yamauchi

Producer: Shigeru Miyamoto

Director: Takashi Tezuka

Main programmer: Yasunari Soejima

Sound composer: Koji Kondo

"You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough."

William Blake



Legend of Zelda (Nintendo)

Legend of Zelda is an immense game for the Super Nintendo system. The team that assembled it included eight programmers and four artists. It is related to the earlier games *Zelda* and *Link* for the Nintendo system. (These earlier games are reviewed below.) *Legend of Zelda* was one of the first games available for the Super Nintendo, and is clearly intended to be a showpiece for the machine. As such, it is probably the best role-playing game now available for any cartridge machine.

Legend of Zelda's graphics and sound capabilities compare favorably with other Super Nintendo games. There was clearly a great deal of effort spent on the soundtrack. The game is a mixture of fighting monsters and solving puzzles. Some of the monsters are puzzles themselves, about which you must figure out the special trick before you can beat them.

The best way to learn *Legend of Zelda* is to load up the game and start play. The game is very careful to teach you how to play without getting yourself into trouble. Initially, you are devoid of combat abilities, but there are no enemies to face. All you do is wander around the countryside, talking to guards, until you find the secret way inside the castle. If you can't figure out what to do, talk to the guards long enough, and they'll give you enough clues to figure it out. Once you're inside the castle, your uncle gives you a sword and explains how to use it before you enter combat.

Everything in the game is from a top-down viewpoint. You can enter houses, caves, and dungeons, or seek your fortune out-of-doors, all with the same perspective. The monsters vary widely in appear-

ance and special powers. Some shoot arrows, some throw bombs, some are electrically charged and can't be killed with your sword. There are guards that walk a beat, turning their heads back and forth. Once they spot you, they charge, emitting a rattling noise.

To win *Legend of Zelda*, you must conquer a series of 11 dungeons in order. Don't bother to map—hidden within each dungeon is a map to it. Once you find that map, you can always locate yourself in the maze of rooms and passages. At the end of each dungeon is a being termed the Dungeon Master. This Master is always a huge monster of some sort which is especially difficult to defeat. Often, you must use a special tool or weapon you obtained earlier in, the dungeon. The Master is also the only place that you can really be stymied in *Legend of Zelda*. If you encounter a Master you just can't beat, you're stuck. I found it next-to-impossible to defeat the gigantic worm at the end of the third castle, and finally had to co-opt my 10-year-old son to help me (he, of course, beat it with relative ease).

Your hit points are represented by little red hearts. When a monster hurts you, one or more of your hearts go black. When you are healed, they turn red again. You increase in power by finding more of these hearts. Each time you defeat a dungeon, you earn a new heart. In addition, there are hearts and pieces of hearts left scattered around the countryside in well-hidden locations. It is possible to get a maximum of 20 hearts. I was able to get only 19. Unlike most role-playing games, killing monsters doesn't increase your level at all, though you can gain money and useful items by doing so.



Legend of Zelda (Nintendo)

There are lots of little secrets hidden around the world, and every time you uncover one of them, you feel a thrill. Once you are powerful enough to wander the countryside without fear of the wandering monsters, you can spend many enjoyable minutes seeking out rock surfaces with cracks in them (usually a sign of a secret entrance).

The combat is not particularly arcade-like, except for the fights against the huge Dungeon Masters, and I found that cunning was more important than response time in beating off the hordes of monsters that infest the world. There are a fair number of magic powers you can get as you advance in power, ranging from the ability to freeze your enemies solid to the power to turn them into helpless bags of protoplasm.

It is easy to save your games in *Legend of Zelda*. You can hold up to three saved games on the cartridge at a time. These games are saved by a battery back-up, so the game will go bad in five years or so. Still, I definitely prefer a battery back-up to the password system used on other cartridge games.

There are plenty of other role-playing games available for Super Nintendo. *Legend of Zelda* was designed to be top-of-the-line, and it is indeed impressive. If you want to start a Super Nintendo library, I strongly recommend *Legend of Zelda*.

Game tips

1. There's a mushroom just inside the forest. Find it, then take it to the witch at the magic shop.

2. The best way to complete the maze just past the quarrelling brothers is to go through it until you get to the sign, then

jump over the fence just below you. This will enable you to get to the end in less than 15 seconds and earn your reward.

3. When you get the bug net, net a fairy as soon as you can and put him in a bottle. If you are killed, the fairy heals seven hearts-worth of your wounds, and you get to restart the battle right where you left off. This can mean the difference between winning or losing when fighting one of the Masters.

4. The third bottle is under one of the bridges. Jump into the river once you get your flippers, and swim under each bridge till you find the right one.

5. The fourth bottle is in a chest in the ruined smithy in the Dark World. You'll have to drag it to the nondescript man in the Light Worlds desert to open it.

6. As soon as you get the flippers, swim to the island in Hyrule Lake and start throwing your money into the shrine there. You'll be glad you did.

ZELDA
NES, Nintendo

Zelda is the first true role-playing game for the original Nintendo system, and is the ancestor of the Super Nintendo *Legend of Zelda* described above. *Zelda* was one of the early games for Nintendo, and at one time had a breakfast cereal named after it. Given the limitations of the 8-bit Nintendo system, *Zelda* is a tremendous game.

The graphics and sound of this early game are, of course, inferior to the Super Nintendo version, but are quite good for its time. Just as with the later game, this version is a carefully planned mix of combat and puzzles.

To play *Zelda*, you should browse through the manual briefly, then charge in. The first few times you face enemies, you can expect to get hammered, but you'll soon learn how to fight them off.

The game offers a top-down view of your activities, as you wander through the world and fight the hideous monsters. If you are uninjured, you can fire energy bolts from your sword, and this is an important tactic. Shops at which you can purchase useful or necessary items are scattered throughout the land, sometimes at hidden locations that you can only get to by detonating bombs at just the right spot. Unfortunately, there are a few too many shops, and it can be quite frustrating to spot a likely place, knock through the wall, feel the thrill of discovering a new, secret place, and enter cautiously just to find another shop selling the same things available at other places.

As in the later game, the world abounds with secrets. In fact, almost every single screen has at least one secret entrance.

There are eight dungeons to beat in order to win. Once you have conquered the entire game, it starts over again with a completely new set of dungeons and locations, so the game has an enormous amount of play value. In the second set of dungeons, the monsters are much tougher. If you don't want to beat the whole game before seeing the new set of dungeons, just start a new game and name your character Zelda. The game will start out with the second set.

The save-game feature is accessible and based on a battery back-up. The only quirk of the system is that you cannot save a game until you are dead, so if you are suddenly called away, you can't just drop the game—you need to find some monster to kill you so the game will let you save. If you're quite powerful, it can take as long as a minute to get killed by the monsters, which is a bit inconvenient if you must answer the phone or the front door.

LINK
NES, Nintendo

Link (also known as *Zelda II*) is the sequel to Nintendo's *Zelda*, and was clearly intended to be a more advanced game. As sometimes happens with sequels, it is, alas, inferior to its predecessor, though still lots of fun.

The graphics and sound are perfectly reasonable, and the game follows the *Zelda* tradition of fighting, enigmas, and secrets. A would-be *Link* warrior can get into action right away, without worrying about reading the manual.

Link is much more like a traditional computer role-playing game than either its predecessor *Zelda* or even the Super Nintendo *Legend of Zelda*, which follows it. It is clear that the designers at Nintendo realized their errors in *Link*, and strove to correct them with the Super Nintendo

In *Link*, you start out wandering around the countryside with a map-like view. Wandering monsters appear in groups of three, and zoom apparently randomly around the board until they come into contact with you, at which point you switch to a side view of combat and must make your way across the screen to the exit, while fighting monsters on the way. Several towns are on the map, and entering the towns is a good idea at all times. The people in the town are full of useful information. There is one person in each town who can heal your wounds, one who can restore your magic power, and one who can teach you a new magic spell, once you perform the task set you. Two of the towns also have old soldiers, who teach you combat tricks.

Also around the world are several dungeons and cave complexes that you must penetrate. Each time you kill a monster, you get a certain number of experience points, ranging from one to over 100. Every sixth time you kill a monster, you get a special treat—either a potion to restore your magic points, or a little bag of 50 or more experience points.

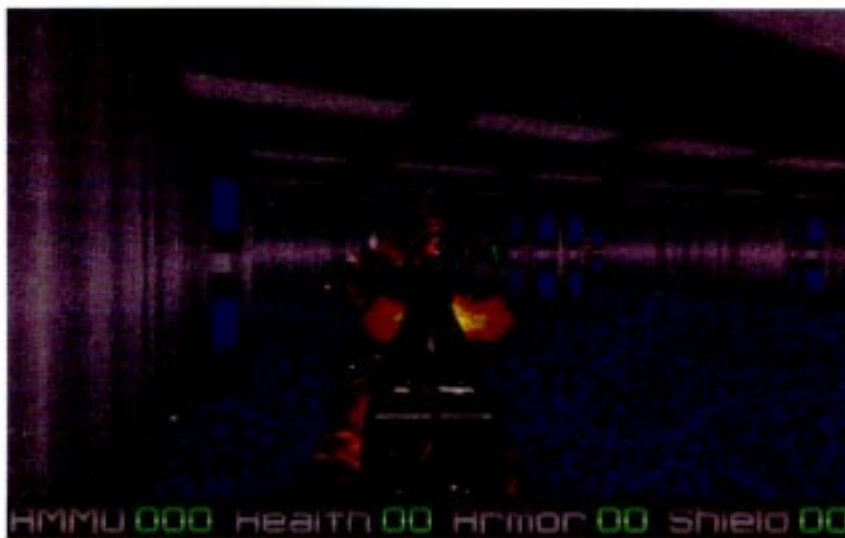
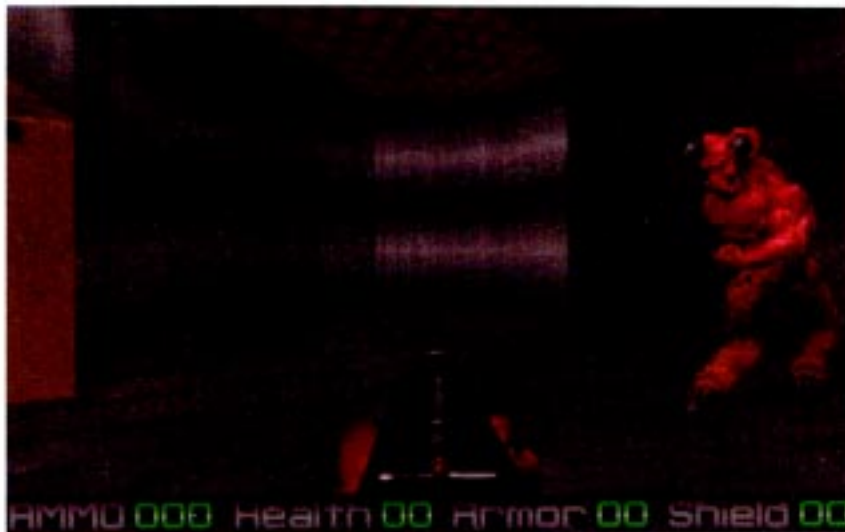
Link's save-game feature is similar to that of Nintendo *Zelda* (see above), but is a little easier to use, because it is easier to kill yourself in *Link*.

DOOM (Preview)
IBM PC, Id Software
Creative director: Tom Hall
Programming: John Carmack, John Romero
Art: Adrian Carmack, Kevin Cloud

Doom has not yet been released, but is due this fall. *Doom* is a shareware product based on a similar game engine to that used in *Wolfenstein 3-D* (reviewed in DRAGON® issue #197). I recently had a sneak peak at *Doom*, and it was pretty spectacular.

Doom takes place on a high-tech lunar base invaded by demons. The graphics are impressive, and included tidbits such as victims dangling from hooks, huge, grinding pistons that you can climb over and through, and frothing lakes of radioactive ooze. Floors and walls rise and fall to reveal doors, passages, and deadly traps. Seemingly safe floors lower you into deadly slime. A good soundtrack lends an aura of unease to the darkened corridors you pass through, and horrendous monsters wait around every bend. Light intensity varies quite remarkably, and the lights can strobe, flicker, or pulse.

You have a variety of weapons to use, and unlike *Wolfenstein*, the weapons do not just differ in firepower—different weapons do different things. In the final game, you should find yourself often switching between the shotgun, rifle, chainsaw, and missile launcher. The missile launcher seems to do the most damage, but the missiles for it are not easy to come by. The shotgun animation is



Doom (ID Software)

stupendous—after each shot, you raise the gun up and to one side and pump the receiver. Enough to make even the weeni-est computer-game reviewer feel like a real man. The punching animation looks good, too! That's quite unusual. Every other fist attack I've seen in a game has always looked sickly and ineffectual.

The monsters are pretty neat, and most of them are techno-demons of some type or another. The weakest are possessed humans armed with guns. My favorite are pink, humpbacked horrors that extend their necks to bite off your head.

Doom can handle multiple players—two by modem or up to four if played over a network. Each player can go his own way, and even lie in wait for his rivals, shooting them ruthlessly. The game does not require such double-dealing, of course, there's enough monsters and dangers to encourage cooperative action—but sometimes a broad back is just too tempting a target to pass up.

Doom looks like it is going to be a tour-de-force for Id Software. Certainly for those of us who enjoy horror role-playing, this will probably be an essential purchase. Of course, a complete report will have to await the game's publication.



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DARK CONSPIRACY

Enter the darkness of the Darkwyrn
in GDW's DARK CONSPIRACY* game

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The Darkwyrn: DARK CONSPIRACY* Game Statistics

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Strength: 13 | Education: 2 | Move: 1/5/10/20 |
| Constitution: 25 | Charisma: 0 | Skill/Dam. * *: 14/3D10 |
| Agility: 4 | Empathy: 9 | Hits: 75/150 |
| Intelligence: 7 | Initiative: 4 | # Appear: 1 |

Special: Besides numerous unidentified Empathy powers, the Darkwyrn possesses two new skills—Energy Drain and Chaos Lightning—described in the text.

** This skill rating is based on the D20 system. Halve for use with a D10. The damage rating is for melee combat only.

GDW's DARK CONSPIRACY* game is set on an Earth of the very near future—an Earth where chaos reigns. Near-toal economic and political collapse have destroyed the superpowers and allowed the megacorporations to fill the vacuum of power.

Society's woes are not the only problem facing the world, they are but a symptom. An ancient evil, thought to exist only in humanity's deepest, darkest nightmares, has been unleashed. This unspeakable malevolence thrives on humanity's suffering. Parts of the world have fallen completely under the sway of this dark power, and are called *Demongrounds*.

Players take the roles of the exceptional men and women who know of the evil and fight to stop this global menace of unprecedented evil and stop the spread of the *Demongrounds*. An alien, malignant intelligence, imprisoned for millennia, is loose on Earth. It's up to your characters to uncover and destroy the menace.

Dragons appear in tales and legends from nearly every corner of the globe. Quite often, these mythological creatures

have symbolized royalty and power, such as on the prows of Norse ships, among the royal ensigns of England's Pendragon line, and on the Imperial Chinese flag. But in southeastern Europe and the Middle East, where the term *drakön* originated (meaning "serpent"), dragons have much more commonly represented evil. One marked example is the dark Egyptian god Apophis, a great, serpent-like being devoted to the forces of chaos and death.

The mythology

In Egyptian mythology, Apophis had many variant names, including Apepi, Rerek, and a host of others. This dark god commonly took the form of a great lizard or serpent. Each night, when the sun god Ra journeyed through the dark underworld, Apophis lay in ambush, hoping to defeat Ra and swallow the sun. Ancient Egyptians prayed that the dark god would not succeed, lest the sun fail to rise, leaving the world to languish forever in darkness. They believed that their prayers aided the sun god in his nightly struggle with the evil Apophis.

The reality

Of course, as modern minion hunters have learned since the onslaught of the darkling invasion of our planet, fables all too often contain a marked dose of truth. The legend of Apophis is certainly no exception. Among the *cognoscenti*, the mythology surrounding Apophis has lately come to be connected with an incredibly powerful creature christened the Darkwyrn by those who have encountered it and lived to tell the tale. How many of the creatures exist remains to be discovered, but given the scarcity of sightings and the awesome power evidenced, those minion hunters who are aware of the reports suggest (and hope) that there is only one—though that one could conceivably be a Dark Lord in its own right.

Survivors of Darkwyrn sightings describe the being as an enormous lizardlike creature, the size of a delivery truck, with a heavy body, short legs, leathery wings (incapable of lifting the beast in Earth's gravity), and five, long, wormlike heads. According to their tales, the creature is always accompanied by a horrendous stench and an aura of deep, cold darkness. It is very rarely encountered above ground, and then only in the deep of night. Generally, it has been encountered in subterranean passages such as subway or sewer tunnels.

The being's aura of dark and cold is a result of one of two primary powers possessed by the Darkwyrn. The creature leeches energy from its environment in much the same way that the Pale does (page 226 of the DARK CONSPIRACY* rule book). It leeches heat from living beings. But whereas the Pale must establish physi-

cal contact in order to initiate an Empathic link, the Darkwyrms automatically draws in the energy empathically from living and nonliving objects, at a range of up-to several hundred meters. Because the creature drains energy at range, the very air in its vicinity grows dim, progressively more so the closer an observer is to the being.

The other primary power of the Darkwyrms is the ability to release this stolen energy from its heads in strikes of lightninglike force. Some observers suggest the term "chaos lightning" for this power, because when a target is hit by this force, the blasted spots crackle with miniature lightnings and grow in size, disintegrating the entire target within minutes. According to reports, the only way to halt this process of disintegration is to flee the Darkwyrms' vicinity. Once outside the being's Empathic range, the spread and the damage stop.

This is not to say that the Darkwyrms has no other Empathic powers. If it is a Dark Lord, as some suggest, then it is likely to have a full repertoire of Empathic abilities at its disposal. Dimension Walk would most likely be one of them, given that the being has appeared on Earth. Of course, it is possible that the Darkwyrms has servants or worshippers to open a portal instead. Some minion hunters speculate that the being is native to a protodimension of lower gravity than Earth's, where its wings would allow flight, and that it is uncomfortable here for extended periods of time. Others suggest that the Darkwyrms can manifest itself on Earth for only relatively short durations (perhaps a couple of days at a time, at most) before running out of energy. Either theory would explain why the creature is so seldom encountered. Further, some believe that the being dislikes direct sunlight, that this energy is too intense and its source too distant for the Darkwyrms' comfort. Keep in mind, however, that this is all only conjecture.

Energy Drain

Through use of this skill, the Darkwyrms is able to leech energy out of its environment. The being has such practice with this skill that it automatically drains energy from inanimate objects within roughly a 300-meter radius of itself. Within this area, light steadily dims, items grow continually colder, electrical systems begin to lose power, the energy in batteries drains away, etc. The closer an object is to the Darkwyrms, the more pronounced the effect. Within 75 meters, vision is so obscured that attacks are made at one level of difficulty greater than normal, and electrical systems operate at about half efficiency. Within 20 meters, the vision penalty for attacks is two levels greater than normal, and electrical systems go completely dead.

The Darkwyrms can drain energy from living creatures nearly as easily. No skill roll is made to do so, but a Power Level is generated as if the Darkwyrms had rolled a normal success, rather than an outstand-

ing one, and ignoring for the moment the Willpower of target creatures. For each Power Point the Darkwyrms achieves, the radius of effect is five meters. (This assumes you are using the D20 system; under the original D10 system, it is 10 meters per Power Point.) For targets with a Willpower skill rating, subtract five meters per point of skill. (Again, make this 10 meters per point if using the D10 system.) Within this radius, creatures suffer a life force drain equal to 1D6 points of damage each five seconds. For PCs, apply this to the chest hit location. Besides the normal combat effects of such "wounding," victims suffer a penalty to all skill attempts. This penalty is equal to the Initiative penalty listed for the wound. (Halve the penalty if using the D10 system, rounding up.)

What this all means is that as a group of adventurers approach a Darkwyrms (usually without realizing it), they will begin to feel a chill to the air, and experience a dimness to their sight. (It is actually the air that is growing dim, but to the adventurers, it will seem a visual effect, as if from eye strain.) As they proceed, much of their equipment will begin failing: Flashlights will dim, communications gear will grow faint, electric watches will run slow, lasers will go dead as their power packs drain, etc. Soon, characters with little or no Willpower skill will begin to feel a vitality drain. Higher Willpower characters will feel the effects a bit later, as they grow ever closer to the Darkwyrms. If they do not leave the area, eventually everyone will be drained to death.

Chaos Lightning

This power creates lightning-like streaks of energy that flash from the Darkwyrms' heads. The lightning not only causes damage upon contact, but also begins a progressive disintegration of its target. The Darkwyrms can release one of these blasts each five seconds, as long as it retains all of its heads. For each head seriously or critically damaged, the being loses one chaos-lightning attack.

Short range for chaos lightning attacks is 20 meters, and the being's skill rating for these attacks is 16 (half that for the D10 system). Initial damage from a strike is 3D6. Each five seconds thereafter, the location struck takes another 1D6 of damage from progressive disintegration, as long as the target remains within the Darkwyrms' life-draining range. (Note that the damage and disintegration also apply to clothing, equipment, etc., at the target hit location.)

Hooks

Enemy of my enemy: A group of Nukid sorcerers are bent on venting their anger toward normal human society in your PCs' metropolis. Over the course of several weeks, they open portals to various protodimensions, freeing the denizens there to wreak havoc in the city. In defeat-

ing those otherworldly creatures, the PCs learn of the Nukids behind the plot. But upon confronting them, the PCs find that instead of fighting, the sorcerers are completely terrified of their latest summoning and beg the PCs for help to banish it. That summoning is, of course, the Darkwyrms. If the PCs succeed in banishing it, not only will they save the city much destruction, they will also have forged an alliance with the Nukids, which could prove quite helpful in the future.

When the forest comes walking: A rural demonground near whatever metropolis your PCs currently occupy has been expanding recently, but in one direction only—toward the city. If the PCs research the history of the area, they learn that the demonground was centered on a cave complex. When they go to investigate, they must first work their way through miles of surface demonground (an adventure in its own right). Upon entering the caves, they discover, to their horror, that the surface growth is actually a secondary effect of new tunneling which has nearly reached the city. Within those tunnels, the boundaries between Earth's dimension and the protodimensions is extremely thin. Hideous slug-behemoths are doing the tunneling, but they are merely mindless servants of a greater being—the Darkwyrms. That evil being found its way to Earth within the original caverns and now seeks to enter the metropolis to begin a reign of destruction. To resolve this adventure, the PCs will have to learn the Darkwyrms' aversion to sunlight, then open the new caverns to the sun, likely requiring the aid of a military demolitions team and an incredible amount of high explosives.

Notes

DARK CONSPIRACY referees should keep in mind that this creature is extremely tough. It is not intended as a foe your PCs can likely destroy. Rather, it is something to throw a scare into them. Use it sparingly, but ruthlessly.

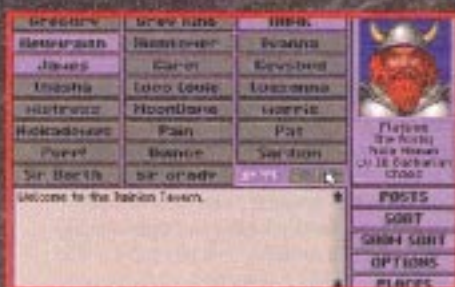
Besides the two main abilities above, you should allow the Darkwyrms to use whatever other Empathic powers seem fitting at the time your PCs encounter it. It will not likely use communication powers, however, other than in an attempt to dominate and immobilize targets so as to more easily destroy them.

The PCs' only obvious hope when encountering a Darkwyrms is to flee from it, at least at first. Later, you may wish to let them discover its aversion to sunlight. If they manage to expose it to direct, strong, sunlight, the being will be banished back to its native protodimension, which is a victory of sorts.

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CAMPAIGN JOURNAL:

Scimitars against the Dark

by Wolfgang Baur

Artwork by Karl Waller

*Listen and grow wise, my children, that
you may avoid the darkness that has
claimed my sight. Though the sun shines
bright on the sands of Zakhara, the earth
beneath hungers for blood, and the night
hides mad genies, howling for vengeance.
We have no Fate but the Fate we are
given; may your Fate not be a dark one.*
Ali ben Ali, blind prophet

There are many flavors of Arabian adventures, and the AD&D® AL-QADIM™ *Land of Fate* boxed set presents one of the best: the swashbuckling world of Hollywood B-movies and Ray Harryhausen special effects, of *The Thief of Baghdad* and *Sindbad the Sailor*. These adventures under the Zakharan sun are dashing quests against cutthroat sea raiders, slapstick comedies of errors, foolhardy missions undertaken for the sake of romance, and bold attacks on assassins' strongholds.

But there is a darker side to the dunes and oceans of Arabian lore. In fantasy literature, this dark side is described in the *Tales from the Flat Earth* by Tanith Lee, in Clark Ashton Smith's land of lurking nightmares, and in the world of H.P. Lovecraft's mad Arab Abd al-Azrad, the author of the *Kitab Al Azif* (the *Ne-cronomicon*). This alternative Arabian setting is called Dark Arabia. Dark Arabia is derived from the *Land of Fate* setting, distilled to its nightmare core.

This article provides an overview of Dark Arabia, with suggestions for plots and story lines, monsters, settings, PC types, special powers and disabilities, and DM hints.

A shadow over Zakhara

Dark Arabia is a setting of tyrannical caliphs, man-eating ghouls, and mad genies. There are whispering terrors in the dark, and treks deep into the bowels of the earth. It allows the DM to maximize the effect of all the techniques of terror provided by the RAVENLOFT® setting in the more open and cosmopolitan Middle East.

Why use such a setting at all? Simply put, dark cults and heartless tyrants are

fun opponents, and the struggle against encroaching shadow gives the campaign a clear focus. The villains are ruthless, lurking just out of sight, stronger or smarter than the PCs, but the glory to be had is that much greater because of it. Dark Arabia offers the PCs a chance to make a difference in the world, to foil the plots of forces far more sinister than merely human opponents.

This doesn't mean that the PCs' every waking moment is filled with fear and terror. The techniques and ideas presented here are most effective if used sparingly. The contrast between the players' safe beginning expectations and the truth they discover through play can be used to great dramatic effect, as can the contrast between the safety of the cities and the lurking nightmares that wait just outside civilization. Once the PCs have become comfortable with their home grounds, these areas can (many adventures later) be attacked or threatened by the consequences of the PCs' actions, which again emphasizes the contrast between their secure homelands and the dangerous fringes. But first they must figure out just what a mess they are in.

Lost knowledge

When beginning a Dark Arabian campaign, you could let the PCs know the grim nature of the setting right away. The immediate payoff is that it inspires fear and loathing among the players. Unfortunately, it also spoils some of the surprise, so I recommend setting things up for an ordinary AL-QADIM campaign and going from there. Let them read the descriptions of Zakhara from the *Land of Fate* boxed set, and assume their characters view the

world as presented in that set.

If the heroes are ignorant of the dark nature of the outside world in the course of their adventures, you can build a campaign to a climax of discovery, placing clues here and there, setting up encounters with minions of the greater evil forces, until finally the PCs confront the dark sect of your choice directly.

The heroes can stumble across volumes of foul knowledge— forbidden by the Law of the Loregiver. The results can be the same as described for a *book of vile darkness* or a *libram of ineffable damnation* (DMG, pages 161 and 173), or they can be histories of the geomancers and evil sha'irs of the past, or lorebooks describing how the decadent empires of Nog and Kadar fell when they tampered with forces from deep within the earth. The adventurers may learn about the forbidden gods and black clouds of vengeance that destroyed the ancient civilization of the giants.

Knowledge is power, but this knowledge has its price. Corrupting knowledge includes both spells like the *lifestealing* spell and powers better left alone, like the All-Knowing Eye of Yasmin Sira (see the *Book of Artifacts* for details). Moral dilemmas, such as whether to use evil knowledge and items to fight evil, can make heroic PCs squirm, and they provide tough decisions and consequences for even well-armed and determined adventurers.

If the PCs take to forbidden lore too readily, they may pay a price for their tampering. A sha'ir's gen might become intractable and stop bringing spells if he knows his master serves a madman who seeks to release more evils on the world. A priest's god might stop granting high-level spells. A rogue might find himself losing Wisdom and slowly going as



Al-Qadim

mad as a sungazer A dark powers check could also chill the PC's desire for the powers of darkness if the PCs call on dark forces too often (see the RAVENLOFT boxed set, page 17).

When the heroes discover the corruption that lies at the edges of the world, they will meet creatures who serve that corruption and tempt the PCs with evil. creatures of evil will offer great riches, power, knowledge, and magic in exchange for the PCs' allegiance.

Obviously, those heroes who fall from the path of the Loregiver will soon be destroyed by their own foul schemes and practices. If they are ensnared by evil, they could show the corruption within themselves physically, slowly changing form until they are gibbering mouthers or Eastern vampires.

To become a gibbering mouter, a PC mage's Wisdom must first drop below three as he learns more and more corrupting knowledge (see the sungazer mage kit below). Then, if the PC fails a saving throw against death magic, the irreversible transformation to gibbering mouter is completed within 3-30 days.

For priests or faris, falling from the path of Enlightenment turns them slowly into Eastern vampires. To become a vampire NPC, the PC must first learn forbidden lore. With each new bit of unholy writing that passes beneath his eyes, the PC must make a dark powers check. If he fails, a living idol, forgotten god, or elemental lord becomes the PC's patron. This patron oversees the transformation of his servant to a vampire form, granting first gifts and then curses that match vampiric powers. The complete transformation take 1-6 months of game time. Once a PC becomes a monster, he is removed from play and becomes an NPC.

Eventually other adventurers will seek out and destroy the abominations that such PCs become, whether their forms are still human or not. Other curses that forbidden knowledge might bring on the scholar are described in the RAVENLOFT *Forbidden Lore* boxed set and the article "Curses are Divine" from DRAGON® issue #167.

Holding back the dark

Of course, PC roles should match the new Dark Arabian tone. A warrior may become an unwitting servant of darkness because he is infected with lycanthropy, for example. A werehyena, werelion, or lesser seawolf might not even know of his condition, and the DM would only need to occasionally tell the player that his PC had a disturbing dream about cracking bones, hunting game, or swimming in the depths of a moonlit sea. The curse itself might not be revealed until some dramatically appropriate moment, such as at the climax of a story line when the PC lycanthrope is under the pressure of a vital battle and shifts into his animal form.

Sha'irs and, to a lesser extent, other mages will command genies and are more

likely to be genies' antagonists than their allies. Their gen and jann serve reluctantly and sometimes with open hostility. The wizards may go in search of the Seal of Al-Jafar, the Genie-Binder and the first sha'ir (see the *Book of Artifacts*).

Priests are more important than ever in Dark Arabia, since they can turn back some of the horrors. Though the Arabian priest kits will work, the priest-defender kit described next is specifically designed to search for and smite the foulest possible opponents.

New kits

Priest-defender

This non-heirarchical priest knows something about the dark forces of the ancient past and means to destroy them. He may have learned about them as part of a heirarchical order, then left on his own to combat these great evils, or he may have been a mystic of some kind who stumbled upon the knowledge by accident. Though he begins with little knowledge, he is always certain of his faith and his god's help. Unlike a paladin, a priest-defender depends on spells to win the day, not sheer strength of arms.

Weapon proficiencies: Bonus: none
Recommended: mace, staff.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Bonus: Ancient History, Reading/Writing; Recommended: Ancient Languages, Dark Lore (new proficiency, see later), Debate, Genie Lore, Religion, Spellcraft.

Equipment: Priest-defenders are usually equipped as warriors. Their armor and clothing is commonly embroidered, painted or inlaid with sacred verses, holy writings, and religious symbols.

Distinctive appearance: Priest-defenders care little for their appearance but maintain their tools devotedly.

Special benefits: This kit is aligned with the mamluks of the Vigilant (described later). After reaching 9th level, a priest-defender gains two 3rd-level mamluks and 10 1st-level faris as guards and helpers. If these followers die, the Vigilant may send others if the priest-defender seems to have done all he could to prevent the mamluks' deaths.

Like rangers, priest-defenders gain bonuses against a single type of foe, generally the campaign's chief villain. Against this opponent, the priest-defender's spells all operate at maximum effectiveness. The foe could be anything from sahuagin to yak-men to efreet to the Brotherhood of True Flame.

Magical abilities: Priest-defenders gain spells from the following spheres as priests:

Major access: All, Charm, Combat, Guardian, Healing, Protection, Wards (from the *Tome of Magic*); **Minor access:** Divination, Elemental, Necromantic, Sun.

Forbidden: All others, except spells that overlap one or more spheres.

Turning Undead: A priest-defender can turn undead as a standard cleric of the

same level, and also can turn genies. A priest-defender turns genies as undead of equivalent hit dice. To keep this ability, the priest must not associate with genies and must uphold two or more vows determined by the DM (perhaps fasting twice each week, chastity, silence, poverty, celibacy, preaching to the un-Enlightened and the impious each day, or wandering Zskhara, never settling down). If there is a sha'ir in the PC party, the resulting tension can make for some very interesting role-playing—or it can lead to trouble all around. The priest and the sha'ir may engage in a party power struggle, resulting in bad feelings among the players. To avoid this, before these two characters meet, any party with both a priest-defender and a sha'ir PC should be required to explain why these two will tolerate each other and go adventuring together.

Special hindrances: The priest-defender is driven to exterminate evil, and cannot rest from his labors and vigilance.

The priest-defender may never build a temple or stronghold, though the most charismatic may attract an entourage of hundreds of followers. After 9th level, the henchmen and followers of a priest-defender require no pay, as they serve out of faith and love.

Wealth options: Priest-defenders must spend all available funds on seeking out and destroying agents of darkness.

Races: Members of any race may be priest-defenders, though dwarves and humans seem especially drawn to this profession.

Dark Lore

1 slot, Intelligence -3

The Dark Lore proficiency gives the PC a wide-ranging knowledge of the nature of the dark powers of the deserts, peaks, and oceans, and the charms and rituals that can hold them at bay. A priest with this proficiency gains minor access to the Protection sphere of spells, even if he is otherwise not entitled to it, and gains major access to it if he already has minor access. Other characters gain knowledge of which spells and magical items can fend off which monsters.

With a successful proficiently check, the character knows how to bribe, avert, or ward off a particular type of supernatural creature. He knows the weaknesses and abilities of most supernatural, evil monsters (not including the genies). He also knows their customs, their likes and dislikes, and their enemies, improving the PC's bribery, haggling, and reaction rolls by +2.

With powerful creatures of darkness (more HD than the PC has levels), the DM should roll the skill check. The skill still provides the nature of their weakness, if any—but on a failed check the supposed knowledge is completely false, and perhaps even makes the creature stronger.

This proficiency does not provide any

detailed knowledge of genies; the Genie Lore proficiency provides that.

Sungazer

This mage derives his power from the dark forces of the ancient past, which gives him the means to destroy them. Unfortunately, the price for this specialization in long-forgotten summoning, protection, and warding spells is that the sungazer slowly goes insane.

Weapon proficiencies: Bonus: none; Recommended: jambiya, staff.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Bonus: Ancient History, Dark Lore; Recommended: Reading/Writing, Genie Lore, Spellcraft.

Equipment: The sungazer needs spell books like most other wizards.

Distinctive appearance: Sungazers wear the dark robes of a qadi, and their beards run long like an imam's. As they grow progressively wilder and closer to insanity, their eyes become tinged with red or yellow.

Special benefits: The sungazer can communicate with all supernatural creatures as if by a *comprehend languages* spell. Once per day, he can sense the presence of evil. This functions much like a paladin's ability to *detect evil* but does not require concentration. The first time the sungazer comes in contact with sufficiently powerful evil (with more HD than the sungazer has levels), a cold chill runs up his spine. If he encounters such creatures more than once a day, there is no warning the second time.

Magical abilities: All sungazer protection spells (such as *armor*, *protection from evil*, *abjure*) reduce damage suffered from attacks by creatures of darkness by -1 per six levels of ability.

Special hindrances: The sungazer mage is both drawn to dark knowledge and repelled by it; part of him is tainted with corruption though he still resists it. A sungazer suffers a -2 penalty to saving throws against all magical effects cast by evil supernatural creatures.

For each warding a sungazer learns, he must make a saving throw versus death magic (Wisdom adjustments apply). If he fails, he loses a point of Wisdom, and when his wisdom falls below 3, he loses his sanity and falls under DM control.

Wealth options: Sungazers are rarely interested in wealth except as a means to an end, namely more knowledge.

Races: Only goblins and humans can be sungazers (see the *City of Delights* boxed set for details on goblin mages).

Other kits

Other possible Dark Arabian kits include paladins who take the faris kit (normally not allowed in Zakhara) and rogues who become tomb robbers. The tomb robber kit allows the same abilities as the burglar kit, applied to trapped mausoleums and underground tombs.

Though paladins are normally not native

to Zakhara, in Dark Arabia they are allowed as members of the faris kit because the Dark Arabian faris act as defenders of mankind as well as defenders of the faith. Existing faris may gain paladin powers if they are pure-hearted, lawful good, and willing to undertake a difficult quest to gain this status (perhaps to recover the bones of a saint or a scrap of the robe of the Loregiver).

Paladins and other faris are allied with a new order of mamluks dedicated to the extermination of evil creatures beyond the Enlightened lands. Called "abd-Haris," or the Vigilant, this mamluk society is based in the frontier regions of Zakhara, including the Free Cities, the Ruined Kingdoms, and the Crowded Sea. The Vigilant cover up the existence of the forces of darkness, to protect the innocent from things that would only terrify them. They also hide the darkness to keep evil knowledge away from those who might seek to learn more.

A new tomb-robber kit for rogues gives them an edge with the ancient traps, wardings, and writings of pre-human history. These tomb-robbers have a working knowledge of the mechanics and society of the ancients, as opposed to the arcane knowledge of the mad mage kit or the protective bonuses of the priest-defender and faris.

Swords forged of light

The heroes may find ancient talismans, holy writings, or shrines that grant them knowledge and power over the servants of evil. These items may be standard ones, like an *amulet of proof against detection and location* or a *gem of true seeing*, semistandard ones like a *fez of nondetection* or completely new warding talismans. New items could include items from the *Tome of Magic*, items from one of the AL-QADIM sourceboxes, items grounded in Arabian folklore, or items of the DM's creation. A few suggestions include a scimitar that warns the owner of danger, a flying mechanomagical mount called the Flying Horse of King Sabur, or a helm that allows the wearer to speak the languages of animals.

Many of these items were made before the time of man, by giants, genies, or other elder powers. As a result, the lore that bards and mystics know can be invaluable in determining the powers, curses, and command words of such items.

Giving each PC a minor magical item to start will give them an extra edge-and can give you hooks for future plot threads. For instance, a *dagger +1* can begin showing signs of empathy, then telepathy, and finally a full-blown knowledge of a special foe such as sea monsters, efreet, ghuls, or sha'irs.

United against the unknown

The PCs will need more than just powerful magical items to win out over cannibal lamia, deranged marid, and corrupted mages. Allies like asuras, lammasu, ser-

pent lords, or wise nagas may be critical sources of information in the hostile Dark Arabian setting. The PCs should have to work to gain an ally, and work to protect him, otherwise they may not appreciate an ally's help. They even may be required to undertake missions and chores for the ally in exchange for his knowledge and protection. If the NPC is obviously more powerful than the PCs and willing to share his learning, he can become an oasis of calm and sanity the PCs can return to again and again. To help preserve that sense of safety, it is best if the NPC lives either far from civilization or in a forgotten or magically hidden corner within it. For instance, an alcove in a shrine to Hajama may have a secret warding that keeps out everyone except the god's faithful followers—including the lammasu who watches over the mosque and guides his priests.

Spirit powers

Given the dire threats they will face, consider giving player characters a few entirely new talents and abilities. If you have access to the *Complete Psionics Handbook*, allowing mid- or high-level PCs to gain "wild talents" is an excellent way to reward good play. If their ally is a shedu or lammasu, these new powers can be explained as rare mental disciplines known only to a few special mages. If some less magical creature is their mentor, the powers could be the benefits that Fate bestows on those who live a pure, brave, and generous life. For characters who have already dabbled in forbidden knowledge, some of these skills may be granted to them from their increased learning. However, PC psionics should not be allowed and these power's should not be referred to as psionic powers, because psionics do not have any place within the Arabian milieu. Call them spirit powers, and roll once on the following table or assign one appropriate power to each player character.

Spirit powers table

1d100 Power

Clairsentience

| | |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| 01-03 | Danger Sense |
| 04-06 | 'Spirit Sense (including genies) |
| 07 | Aura Sight |
| 08 | Object Reading |
| 09 | Sensitivity to Psychic Impressions |

Psychokinetic

| | |
|-------|----------------|
| 10-12 | Animate Shadow |
| 13-15 | Control Flames |
| 16-18 | Control Light |
| 19-21 | Control Sound |
| 22-24 | Control Wind |
| 25-27 | Levitation |
| 28 | Project Force |

Psychometabolic

| | |
|-------|--------------|
| 29-31 | Aging |
| 32-34 | Body Control |
| 35-37 | Catfall |

| | |
|-------|--------------------|
| 38-40 | Enhanced Strength |
| 41-43 | Immovability |
| 44-46 | Lend Health |
| 47-49 | Mind Over Body |
| 50 | Animal Affinity |
| 51 | Energy Containment |
| 52 | Shadow-form |

Telepathic

| | |
|-------|---------------|
| 53-55 | Attraction |
| 56-58 | Aversion |
| 59-61 | Awe |
| 62-64 | Send Thoughts |
| 65-67 | Truthhear |
| 68 | Fate Link |

Psychoportive

| | |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| 69-71 | Dimensional Door |
| 72-74 | Dream Travel |
| 75 | Banishment |
| 76 | Summon Planar Creature |
| 77-78 | Choose any Clairsentience |
| 79-80 | Choose any Psychokinetic |
| 81-82 | Choose any Psychometabolic |
| 83-84 | Choose any Telepathic |
| 85-86 | Choose any Psychoportive |
| 87-90 | Roll twice |
| 91-92 | Roll three times |
| 93-97 | Choose any one spirit power |
| 98-99 | Choose any two powers |
| 00 | Choose any three powers |

Things that lurk and slink

Many monsters fit the flavor of the Dark Arabian setting, including many from the *Monstrous Compendium* appendixes. A selection of the most appropriate creatures are listed in the sidebar. As the list shows, the creatures for this campaign are more powerful than usual.

Many friendly or at least harmless monsters can be modified to match a dark tone. For instance, in Dark Arabia, genies are rarely benign. As masters of the elements, all Dark Arabian genies except the jann worship the Elemental Princes of Evil and act accordingly. Djinn and jann are neutral or hostile rather than potential allies, and marid are terrifying horrors of the ocean, exacting tribute and delighting in destroying fleets. The efreet empire extends into human lands, where it gathers servants and tribute; to further increase their reach, they could be allied with the Brotherhood of True Flame, who are also secretly worshipers of Kossuth, the god of elemental fire.

Not only the genies are changed in Dark Arabia, human societies are also different. They are less tolerant and less open, though many races still mingle and all realize that they must race threats to their homeland together. But each seeks its own primacy over others, and none of them pay more than lip service to the Grand Caliph.

The mamluk societies have their own agenda, including taking power from the caliphs and substituting their own bureaucratic rule. Their lust for power is much larger and more overt than the timid plot-

ting of the Qudrans. As a result, open war exists between the cities, and the Grand Caliph is not only sterile, but an ineffectual ruler as well. The Pantheon is one of the few areas presenting a united front against the forces that threaten mankind. The other is the Northern Cities, half of which are in the hands of the mamluks.

The holy slayers are deeply affected by the changes of Dark Arabia. Though they may pretend adherence to the Law of the Loregiver, in fact most assassin societies serve darker forces like the Forgotten Gods (especially Raggara, Lotha, and Migal), the Gods of the Crowded Sea, the Wild Gods, or the Cold Gods of the Elements. The true powers behind the holy slayers could be quite a surprise—for example, the burnt drow elves behind Lotha, the crocodile-headed servants of Raggara, or the maelephants who make up the inner circle of the Lost One.

The holy slayers are especially dangerous because they always present themselves as something else, denying their true beliefs under their doctrine of *taqiyya*, which allows them to lie in the service of the faith. If their lies fail to deceive, those who learn the truth about the holy slayers' worship of forbidden gods are ruthlessly hunted down and exterminated.

Going underground

At first glance, underground adventures don't seem to fit the sunny worldview of the Zakharan campaign. Seafaring, desert treks as caravan guards, city mysteries, and intrigue in the court of the sultan are more likely alternatives for swashbuckling.

Although Zakhara may not have any lost dwarven kingdoms for underground explorations, there are many other options. The ruined kingdoms of Nog and Kadar are ripe territories for ancient tombs and still more ancient curses, where geomancers once ruled and some live on in dark tombs, hoping to rule again. "The Mud Sorcerer's Tomb" by Michael Shel in DUNGEON® Adventures issue #37 is easily adapted to this setting, simply by substituting geomancers for mud sorcerers and adding Arabian trappings, such as skeletons wearing turbans, fluid writing and images of camels engraved on the walls instead of glyphs and runes, and a silat replacing the annis.

Combining seagoing with the oppressive atmosphere of underground, seafarers could find the Underdark city of the aboleth or the lair of the Great Kraken, a lord of the sahuagin. Taking even a short trip by sea might require a sacrifice of gold or animals thrown overboard at certain points of the voyage.

Underground adventures need not all be combat-oriented, either. The rom could have an entire undiscovered civilization based in Qom, their home city deep underground. The secrets they hold from ancient times and their tomes of forgotten knowledge could be invaluable to adventurers closely pursued by forces of the

outer darkness. Getting permission to look at them or stealing them from the rom could be very difficult: What motivates an undead giant to be helpful?

The Underdark kingdoms of the yak-men beneath the World Pillar mountains are a rich site for high-level adventures. The connections to the Underdark, cities of enslaved humans and demihumans, and the enormous, oddly barren temples to the Forgotten Gods make the area deadly and give it a cold, bizarre atmosphere. The subtle skin-shifting powers of the yak-men make PCs nervous, since they will never know if one of the slaves they have rescued isn't really a yikaria under the skin. To increase the threat, yak-men should all be granted psionic abilities as wild talents, and their leaders should have 150 PSPs, two sciences, and five devotions. Yikarian priests should have access to the spheres of Thought and Warding from the *Tome of Magic*.

The Pit of the Ghuls is another good place for mid- to high-level adventures. The salt lakes, the mines, and the boneyards of the ghul cities are all eerie adventuring grounds. The City of the Ghul Lord could be a continual source of new opponents—reaching and exploring it can be the goal of an entire campaign.

And, of course, the mazelworks of the dao and the entire length of the Great Dismal Delve are ripe territory for powerful adventurers to explore, though the dangers are equally great. The dao are renowned for their riches, though their wealth is well-guarded. The Great Dismal Delve is home to dozens of creatures rarely seen elsewhere and the dao use of mercenaries, psionic allies, and secret police makes them ideal opponents. The Delve and the efreet's City of Brass are both excellent sites for high-level adventuring; both are further detailed in the *Secrets of the Lamp* sourcebox.

Sample plots & perils

Let's use some of the ideas presented above to construct a sample campaign, the "Venture Against the Great Kraken." The PCs choose to play a party of seafarers from the Free Cities: two corsairs, a sea mage, a faris of Hakiya, and a hakima.

In the beginning, their adventures are dangerous, but only mildly ominous. They fight off sahuagin attacks by night, slaving mamluks by day, and learn that a sha'ir's tower in the sea of Chaos has recently disappeared. Every time they pass through the Strait of Dawal, the captain throws a calf overboard. On special trips, he also lets a chest of coins splash into the sea.

In time, they begin to see clues come together: the eight-fingered hand "tattoo" that mars the scales of the sahuagin they slay—and, later, a rogue sea mage. By defeating a particularly large band of sahuagin, the PCs win the trust of a reef giant who becomes their mentor. The giant asks the PCs to investigate the slav-ers, who have been more active than usual

Creatures of Dark Arabia

The following list of typical monsters is not complete, but it is representative of the type of creatures appropriate in an AL-QADIM horror campaign. The abbreviations demote the creature's original source: AM = Assassin Mountain, AQ= MC13 ALQADIM™ appendix, CoD = *City of Delights*, DL = MC4 DRAGONLANCE® appendix, DS = DARK SUN* appendix, FF = MC14 FIEND FOLIO® appendix, FR1 = MC3 FORGOTTEN REALMS® appendix #1, FR2 = MC11 FORGOTTEN REALMS appendix #2, GH = MC5 GREYHAWK® appendix, GV = *Golden Voyages*, LoF = *Land of Fate* box, MM = *Monstrous Manual*, OP = MC8 Outer Planes appendix, Psi = *Complete Psionics Handbook*, RL = MC10 RAVENLOFT appendix, RK = *Ruined Kingdoms*, SJ1 = SPELLJAMMER® appendix #1, SJ2 = SPELLJAMMER appendix #2, SotL = *Secrets of the Lamp*.

Aboleth MM
Al-mi'raj FF
Ammut AQ
Ascallion FR1
Azer SotL

Baatezu (any) OP
Baku Psi
Bebilith OP
Bird maiden (swanmay) MM
Bullywug MM

Cloaker MM
Clockwork horror SJ1
Copper automaton AQ
Crabman MM
Crimson death mist MM
Crocodile, giant MM
Crypt servant CoD

Dao, Zakharan LoF
Dragonfly, giant (insect) MM
Dragonne MM
Dune stalker FF
Dwarf, zakhar DL

Elementals, lesser/greater DS
Eyewing MM

Fire falcon FF
Firenewt FR1
Fireshadow DL
Fractice SJ1

Gawwar samakat CoD
Gelatinous cube MM
Genie, tasked, deceiver AM
Ghost mount AQ
Ghoul lord RL
Ghul, great AQ
Giant, mountain MM
Gibbering moulder AM
Golem, bone MM
Golem, ash/sand DS
Golem, lightning FR2
Grippli MM
Grue (any) SotL

Hook horror MM
Hound, yeth GH

Iguana, giant GH
Invisible stalker MM
Intellect devourer MM
Iron cobra FF

Kenku MM
Kraken, Zakharan (New)
Kuo-toa MM

Living idol AQ
Lamia MM
Loxo FR2
Lycanthrope, werelion AQ
Lycanthrope, weretiger MM

Maelephant OP
Manscorpion MM
Manticore MM
Mara FR2
Mummy, greater MM

Necrophidius MM
Nightmare MM
Ogre, giant LoF
Pasari-niml CoD
Phoenix MM

Rakshasa MM
Rhaumbusun FR1
Rom AQ

Sahuagin MM
Salamander MM
Sandman AM
Sartani GV
Segarran RK
Shadow fiend RL
Shadow, slow GH
Singing tree CoD
Skeleton, giant MM
Skulk GH
Slaad (any) OP
Slithering tracker MM
Slug, giant MM
Son of Kyuss FF
Su-monster MM

Tabaxi MM
Take MM
Tandar'ri (any) OP
Tasloi MM
Tatalla CoD
Thought eater MM
Troll, desert MM

Wemic MM
Whale (Leviathan) MM
Wind walker AM
Wraith, sword GH

Xixchil SJ2

Yak-man LoF
Yuan-ti MM
Yuan-ti, histachii MM
Yugoloth MM

Zaratan MM
Zombie, sea MM

lately. The campaign against the slavers could go on for some time, and the heroes could be chartered by the pirates of Hama, finding the slavers' hidden anchorages and, at last, their base.

The slavers, in fact, are operating under the flag of a new pirate captain, a captain who has a hidden base of operations near Hama. The captain, oddly enough, also bears a black tattoo of the eight-fingered hand.

The slavers are sully the pirates' name by no longer selling just to Qudra; their largest slaves (ogres, humans, and perhaps even giants) go elsewhere. The slavers themselves do not know where their cargoes go, for evil jinn carry off the slaves they leave for their new customer on a desert island. If the PCs go, they will be carried off as well. If they stay around too long, prying into Things Better Left Alone, they are attacked by a holy slayer of Hakiya.

Someone beyond the pirates is organizing to destroy the corsairs of Hama, City of Chaos, someone who has power over the slavers, the sahuagin, and even the assassins. But who?

The PCs would be wise to investigate further before stepping onto the deserted island; chances are, they'll forge ahead. At the other end of a wild jinn ride is the deep-water atoll of a Zakharan kraken (described later), served by sahuagin priests and other slimy underlings. It plots and schemes far beneath the waves, hoping to rule the entire coast and stop all trade between Zakhara and the ajami. Though it rarely comes to the surface, the kraken can be summoned by three notes from an ancient gong. If the PCs fight the kraken's servants, either they or the servants may ring the gong, at which point wise PCs will run to fight another day.

Now the PCs must find out what weapons can destroy their unmasked enemy, from a tribe of primitive jungle elves or from the ruins of a lost city in Kadar destroyed by the kraken centuries ago. They may also find that they have other problems. Their old corsair friends may abandon them as unlucky, a newly-formed fellowship of sea mages may try to forcibly induct the PC mage into their ranks, and an attempt may be made on the life of their reef giant ally, requiring a rescue.

Once they know what they will need, the PCs must gather those tools. A harpoon tempered by efreet fire in the City of Brass and quenched in the sea water of the Citadel of Ten Thousand Pearls is prophesied to kill the kraken, a wand that protects the wielder from harm must be stolen from the kuo-toan monitors and assassins who guard it as a sacred treasure, and the wisdom of a distant marid who knows the secrets of the ocean depths and can summon another, even more horrible creature to devour the kraken and then return to the outer edges of the ocean. What price would a marid demand of mortals? That is a question left for you to answer.

Zakharan kraken

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Any marine |
| FREQUENCY: | Very rare |
| ORGANIZATION: | Solitary |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | A n y |
| DIET: | Carnivore |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Genius (18) |
| TREASURE: | G, R, S (see text) |
| ALIGNMENT: | Any evil |
| NO. APPEARING: | |
| ARMOR CLASS: | -4/0/5 |
| MOVEMENT: | Sw 3, Jet 21 |
| HIT DICE: | 25 |
| THACO: | 5 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 9 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | 2-16 (×2), 2-12 (×6) and 5-30 |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Spells, constrict, ink |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Spells, jet |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Standard |
| SIZE: | G (60' long, 100' tentacles) |
| MORALE: | Fearless (19-20) |
| XP VALUE: | 25,000 |

Zakharan Kraken are an albino race of air- and water-breathing squid-like creatures that dwell in the dark depths of the ocean. Once, they were smaller and lived in shallow coastal waters, where human worshippers served them and brought them sacrifices. Some upheaval in nature or possibly a battle with forces of good made the surviving monsters retreat to the depths. Although their number dwindled to a mere handful, the survivors grew huge and powerful. Kraken now seek to kill good creatures and to devour all life smaller than they. Kraken are aggressive hunters, able to battle even large sperm whales and win.

Combat: A kraken's tentacles are Armor Class 5. The body is protected by a thick and durable shell and has an armor class of 0. The head is AC -4, and attackers attempting to strike it suffer a +2 initiative penalty that round (to get past the tentacles). Tentacle damage is painful to a kraken but not fatal, as it can regenerate lost tentacles in a matter of weeks. Swimming forward it moves at a slow rate of 3, but jetting backward it travels at a rate of 21.

A kraken attacks with two barb-covered tentacles, six other tentacles, and a huge beak. A kraken uses at least two of its 10 tentacles to anchor and stabilize itself in combat. The barbed tentacles rake and draw prey to the beaked mouth. If the others hit, they wrap and constrict the prey, causing 2-12 points of damage on the second and each subsequent round. To escape, the tentacle must be severed (16 points of damage from a sharp weapon in a single blow). Each tentacle hit impairs the victim: roll 1d4. A character who is constricted may have one arm (1 = left or 2 = right), no arms (3), or both arms (4) pinned.

If three or more of its tentacles are severed, the creature will immediately retreat. Its 80' × 80' × 120' ink cloud is poisonous for 2-5 rounds, until diluted by the sea water. Creatures exposed to the sepia ink suffer 1-6 points of damage per round (no saving throw). Meanwhile, the kraken jets backward to its lair.

Kraken can create *airy water* in a sphere 130' across or a hemisphere 260' across for one day. They can use the following powers at will: *faerie fire* for 8 hours, *control temperature* in a 400' radius for one day, *control winds* once per day, *weather summoning* once per day, and *animal (fish) summoning* III three times per day.

Kraken often attack ships to drag them down. Larger than the largest squid, a kraken can drag vessels up to 60' long under the waves. Larger ships are dragged to a halt in five rounds. If a kraken can grasp the ship with six or more tentacles for three



consecutive rounds during an attack, the vessel suffers damage as if it had been rammed. It then takes on water, and within 2-8 rounds the ship will have lost enough buoyancy so that the kraken can easily drag it under.

Habitat/Society: Kraken are solitary creatures except during mating season, which coincides with the monsoons. At this time the kraken gather in the deepest trenches of the ocean, where they leave their eggs to hatch.

Some kraken maintain air-filled cavern complexes where they keep and breed human slaves to serve and feed them. The kraken stock these undersea dungeons by using wind and weather to bring vessels to the area. Such lairs have treasure type A in addition to the treasure indicated above.

Ambitious kraken make pacts with sahuagin or ixitxachitl, agreeing not to destroy them in exchange for their servitude and tribute. These kraken use their servants to strike against shipping and coastal cities.

Ecology: Zakharan kraken prey on whales, giant squid and octopi, and occasionally young zaratan. They especially hate the aboleth, whom they consider unnatural upstarts. They have no natural enemies, though some legends say that rocs will eat young kraken basking near the surface of the ocean, and the marid hunt them for sport.

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~ J.R.R. Tolkien

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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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COSCON '93, Oct. 8-10 PA

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Beaver Falls, Penn. Guest of honor is Jean Rabe. Activities include gaming, dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, and game demos. Registration \$20. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003; or call: (412) 283-1159.

QUAD CON '93, Oct. 8-10 IA

This convention will be held at the Palmer Alumni Auditorium in Davenport, Iowa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, and a silent auction. Registration: \$9/weekend or \$4/day preregistered; \$12/weekend or \$6/day at the door. Game fees are \$2-3 per game. Send a long SASE with extra postage to: Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Av., Moline IL 61265; or call: (309) 762-5577. No collect calls, please.

RALLY 'ROUND THE FLAG '93 Oct. 8-10 OH

This convention will be held at the Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio. Events include miniatures, war, board, and role-playing games. Other activities include game and miniatures dealers. Write to: HMGsNT, P.O. Box 14272, Columbus OH 43214; or call: (614) 267-1957.

ARTYCON V, Oct. 9-11 OK

This convention will be held at the Caisson Recreation Center at Fort Sill, Okla. Events include role-playing, board, and all types of miniatures games. Registration: \$5/day at the door. Write to: The Game Shack, 2114 Ft. Sill Blvd., Lawton OK 73507; or call: (405) 353-5006.

NUKE-CON III, Oct. 9-10 NE

This convention will be held at St. Bernard's school in Omaha, Nebr. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$8/weekend or \$5/day. Write to: NUKE-CON, P.O. Box 1561, Omaha NE 68005; or call: (402) 733-5937.

INCON '93, Oct. 15-17 WA

This convention will be held at Cavanaugh's on Fourth in Spokane, Wash. Guests include Spider and Jeanne Robinson, Betty Bigelow, and Nick Pollotta. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show and auction, dealers, movies, panels, and demos. Registration: \$25 at the door. Daily rates will be available at the door. Write to: INCON '93, P.O. Box 1026, Spokane WA 99201-1026; or call: (509) 922-9932.

NECRONOMICON '93, Oct. 15-17 FL

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Airport in Tampa, Fla. Guests include Lois McMaster Bujold and Peter David. Activities

include panels, an art show, gaming, a masquerade, videos, a charity auction, and dealers. Registration: \$20. Write to: NECRONOMICON, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569.

RUDICON 9, Oct. 15-17 NY

This convention will be held at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, N.Y. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include art and costume contests, anime, guests, and dealers. Registration: \$5 for students; \$6 for non-students preregistered; \$8 and \$10 respectively at the door. Send an SASE to: RUDICON 9, c/o Student Directorate, 1 Lomb Memorial Dr., Rochester NY 14623.

TOTALLY TUBULAR CON '93 Oct. 15-17 CA

This convention will be held at the Jolly Roger Inn in Anaheim, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Write to: TOTALLY TUBULAR CON, P.O. Box 18791, Anaheim Hills CA 92817-8791.

ADVENTURERS' INN VII, Oct. 16-17 CA

This convention will be held at the Stockton Growers' Hall in Stockton, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a costume contest, dealers, and catered food. Registration: \$25. Write to: ADVENTURERS' INN, P.O. Box 1654, Ceres CA 95307.

P.E.W. KHAN-U II, Oct. 16-17 PA

This convention will be held at the Embers in Carlisle, Penn. Events include only political, economic, and historical board and war games. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

TACTICON '93, Oct. 16-17 CT

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Norwalk, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, war, and miniatures games. Other activities include movies and dealers. Write to: Jim Wiley, Gaming Guild, 100 Hoyt St., #2C, Stamford CT 06905; or call: (203)969-2396.

ORKTOBERFEST '93, Oct. 23 IN

This convention will be held at the Greenwood Park mall in Greenwood, Ind. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a figure-painting contest, demos, and seminars. Registration: \$5. Write to: ORKTOBERFEST, c/o The Game Preserve, 1251 N. U.S. 31, Greenwood IN 46142; or call: (317) 881-4263.

FALL CON '93, Oct. 29-31 NE

This convention will be held at the Reunion Building in Lincoln, Nebr. Guest of honor is Tom Prusa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a costume contest and anime. Registration: Free. Write to: Spellbound, c/o Nate Watt, 905 N. 16th St., Lincoln NE 68521; or call: (402)476-8602.

U-CON '93, Oct. 29-31 MI

This convention will be held at the University of Michigan campus in AM Arbor, Mich. Our guest of honor is Keith Herber. Activities include gaming, seminars, a special Halloween horror tournament, and a costume contest. Registration: \$9 preregistered; \$12 at the door. Write to: U-CON, P.O. Box 4491, AM Arbor MI 48106-4491.

- ✧ indicates an Australian convention.
- ✨ indicates a Canadian convention.
- ✪ indicates a European convention.

UMF-CON XIII, Oct. 29-31 ME

This convention will be held at the University of Maine in Farmington, Maine. Events include role-playing and miniatures games. Registration: \$8/weekend preregistered or \$12/weekend at the door. Single-day rates are available. Write to: Table Gaming Club, 5 South St., UMF, Farmington ME 04938.

WARP IV, Oct. 29-31 OK

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Skyline Fast hotel in Tulsa, Okla. Guests include Tom and Mary Wallbank, Ron Dee, and Dell Harris. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show, dealers, an art and games auction, and panels. Registration: \$15 at the door. Write to: W.A.R.P. IV, Room 215-A OMU, 900 Asp Ave., Norman OK 73019; or call Carol at: (918) 582-3930.

WARZONE WEST '93, Oct. 29-31 FL

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Ashley Plaza in Tampa, Fla. Events include gaming, dealers, a flea market, and an auction. Registration: \$17/weekend or \$7/day at the door. Write to: WARZONE WEST, c/o Wolf Entertainment, P.O. Box 1256, Deland FL 32721-1256; or call: (904) 822-9653.

GAMES FAIR '93, Nov. 3-5

This convention will be held at the Olympic Stadium in Athens, Greece. Events include role-playing, board, historical miniatures, and war games. Write to: Kaissa, 8 Kalidromiou St., Athens 11472, GREECE; or call Milos at: (01) 88-13-990.

WIZARDS' GATHERING IV, Nov. 5-7 MA

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Fall River, Mass. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include contests, raffles, and open gaming. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$9/day before Oct. 23; \$18/weekend or \$10/day at the door. Write to: SMAGS, P.O. Box 6295, Fall River MA 02724; or call: (508) 673-7589.

LAGACON 16, Nov. 6 PA

This convention will be held at the Eagles' Club in Lebanon, Penn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. GMs are welcome. Registration: \$5 preregistered; \$7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706.

LEX TREK I, Nov. 6 KY

This SF/F/comics convention will be held at the Heritage Hall in Lexington, Ky. Guests include Mark Lenard. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, guests, a costume contest, and door prizes. Registration: \$10. Write to: Amazing Fantazies Prod., Michael Mackey, 2082 Fairmont Ct. #1, Lexington KY 40502.

ROCK CON XXI, Nov. 6-7 IL

This convention will be held at Rockford Lutheran High School in Rockford, Ill. Guests include Jim Ward and Tom Wham. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction, dealers, door prizes, and a miniatures-painting

competition. Registration: \$5. Write to: ROCK-CON Registration, 14225 Hansberry Rd., Rockton IL 61072.

RUCON III, Nov. 6 PA

This convention will be held at Lock Haven's University's Parsons Union Building in Lock Haven, Penn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include contests, discussions, and dealers. Registration: \$10 at the door. Send an SASE to: Role-playing Underground, Parsons Union Bldg., LHM, Lock Haven PA 17745.

SAINT'S CON '93, Nov. 6-7 MN

This convention will be held at the Atwood Center Ballroom on the campus of St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a games swap and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$2. Write to: SAINTS CON, c/o Joe Becker, 1404 12th St. S.E., St. Cloud MN 56304.

CONSTELLATION XII, Nov. 12-14 AL

This convention will be held at the Huntsville Hilton in Huntsville, Ala. Guests include Jim Baen, Julius Schwartz, and David O. Miller. Activities include dealers and an art auction. Registration: \$25. Write to: CONSTELLATION XII, P.O. Box 4857, Huntsville AL 35815-4857.

DEFCON VI, Nov. 12-14 NJ

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn at Raritan Center in Edison, N.J. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction.

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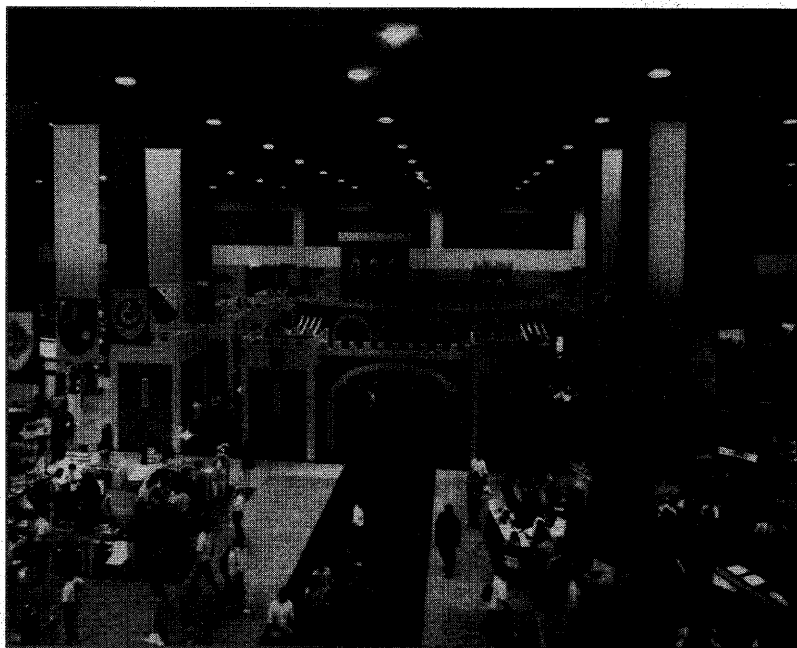
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This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Airport in Greensboro, N.C. Events include role-playing, board, war, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and Clay-o-rama. Registration: \$15 before Nov. 1. Write to: SF3, c/o HEXACON, Box 4, EUC, UNC-G, Greensboro NC 27412; or call: (919) 334-3159.

SAN DIEGO GAME CON X, Nov. 12-14 CA

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson-Harborview in San Diego, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$15 before Oct. 31. Write to: SDGC, 4409 Mission Ave., #J208, Oceanside CA 92057; or call: (619) 599-9619.

SCI-CON 15, Nov. 12-14 VA

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. Guests include Timothy Zahn and Darrell K. Sweet. Events include panels, videos, a costume contest, an art show, and gaming. Registration: \$25 at the door. Send an SASE to: SCI-CON 15, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

LOST IN KENTUCKY CON '93 Nov. 13-14 KY

This convention will be held at the Murray State University Curris Center in Murray, Ky. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include movies, a game auction, plus art and miniatures contests. Registration: \$8/weekend or \$4/day preregistered; \$10/weekend or \$5/day at the door. Write to: Murray St. Univ. Gaming Assoc., 322 N. 7th St., Murray KY 42071-2027; or call (502) 753-2126.

PENTAGON IX, Nov. 13-14 IN

This convention will be held at the Grand Wayne Center in Ft. Wayne, Ind. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, contests, a flea market, and door prizes. Registration: \$10 preregistered. Write to: Steve & Linda Smith, 836 Himes, Huntington IN 46750; or call: (219) 356-4209.

CONTRARY '93, Nov. 19-21 MA

This convention will be held at the Ramada hotel in West Springfield, Mass. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include guests, demos, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$17 before Nov. 10; \$20 at the door. Write to: CONTRARY '93, 626 N. Main St., East Longmeadow MA 01028; or call: (413) 731-7237.

RECON IV, Nov. 19-21 CO

This convention will be held at the Radisson Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a painting contest, and a games raffle. Registration: \$13/weekend preregistered; \$15/weekend at the door, or \$7/day. Write to: Mark Surber, 6614 Provincial Dr., Fountain CO 80817; or call: (719) 392-3920.

SHAUNCON VII, Nov. 19-21 MO

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's in Kansas City, Mo. Guests include Tom Dowd. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a painted-miniatures contest, and

seminars. Dealers are welcome. Write to: Role-players Guild of Kansas City, c/o SHAUNCON, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City MO 64116; or call: (816) 455-5020.

SOONERCON 9, Nov. 19-21 OK

This convention will be held at both the Central Plaza and Trade Winds hotels in Oklahoma City, Okla. Guests include Steven Brust and Tim Hildebrandt. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, videos, a masquerade, and a dance. Write to: SOONERCON, P.O. Box 1701, Bethany OK 73008-0701.

DRAGON'S DREAM GAME FAIR Nov. 20 MI

This convention will be held at the Elks Club in St. Joseph, Mich. Guests include Michelle Shirey Crean. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$8 preregistered; \$10 at the door, plus \$2/game. Send an SASE to: James Wilber, 69393 Oak St., Oak. Park, Benton Harbor MI 49022.

ELLIS CON V, Nov. 20 CT

This convention will be held in the cafeteria of H. H. Ellis Tech School in Danielson, Conn. Event's include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include movies and prizes. Registration: \$5. Call: (203) 774-8511, ext. 115.

GOBBLECON 2, Nov. 20 PA

This convention will be held at the Easton Inn in Easton, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a raffle, a painted-miniatures contest, and door prizes. Registration: \$8 before Nov. 12; \$10 at the door; plus game tickets. Send an SASE to: Michael Griffith, 118 S. Broadway, Wind Gap PA 18091; or call: (215) 863-5178.

SAGA 2, Nov. 20-21 LA

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's in Metairie, La. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and a dance. Write to: Lucas Cuccia, 5928 W. Metairie Ave., Metairie LA 70003; or call: (504) 833-6359. No collect calls, please.

KETTERING GAME CON IX, Nov. 27-28 OH

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include computer games and a games auction. Registration: \$2/day. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429; or call: (513) 298-3224.

HISTORICAL MILITARY OPEN, Dec. 4-5 NC

This convention will be held at Pope AFB, N.C. Events include board and miniatures games. Registration: \$1 for military and DOD personnel and their dependents; \$2 for others. Write to: HISTORICAL MILITARY OPEN, 101 Dundee Lane, Spring Lake NC 28390; or call Steve at: (919) 497-3596.

WARPD CON IV, Dec. 4 NJ

This convention will be held at Drew University in Madison, N.J. Guests include Jeff Zitomer, John Siminoff, and Dave Frank. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest, an auction, anime, a raffle, and door prizes. Registration: \$3. Write to: Mike Kogan, P.O. Box 802 cm#HOL309, Madison NJ 07940; or call: (201) 408-4499.

EVECON 11, Dec. 31-Jan. 2, 1994 VA

This convention will be held at the Double-Tree Inn in Crystal City, Va. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, dancing, music, workshops, and open gaming. Registration: \$25 until Dec. 11; \$30 at the door. Write to: EVECON 11, 1607 Thomas Rd., Ft. Washington MD 20744; or call Bruce at: (301) 292-5231.

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

FORUM

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

I am writing in response to Laurence Davison's letter in issue #187. After DMing for six years, I have started many campaigns and worked many player histories into their party, campaign, and game world. I feel that when a character is created, the GM and player must "flesh out" the character's background, history, and motivation to have a successful character, which helps the player role-play and enrich the game and one's campaign world.

Before the first die is cast, the DM must determine the tone and style of the campaign. Usually this determines the players, too, as you will have a hard time getting a group of die-hard elven mage fanatics to play dwarven berserkers. Try to generate a common theme in each character (searching for gold, same religious belief, all citizens of the same nation, etc.) to link the characters into an adventuring party. If I wish to have the PCs crawling in dark dungeons and solving riddles, I have to help the players create characters who would risk life and limb versus who-knows-what. What incentive is there for those characters? Is one a priest who is searching for an ancient manuscript for his order, and another a crafty thief just wishing to loot an underground temple? Both of these characters have reasons for entering the dungeon, but not the same reasons.

Using Laurence's examples of characters, the game master should have enough material to generate a factor common to all members of an adventuring party. For instance, say the GM wishes to run a campaign in which the PCs want to gain riches; you now have to link each character to this common thread. Say the elven priest is charged by his superiors to wander the land, uphold virtuous ideals, and gain riches for the church. The dwarf could be a fighter/thief

who loves the sight of gold within his pockets, yet is secretly driven by jealousy of his brother's success. The Dunedain is a mage who is the son of a count who had his lands stolen (the count was murdered by assassins hired by a rival noble who is now duke); the mage wishes to generate enough money to sway the king to reinstate his noble claim, then hire an army to topple his father's enemy. The half-orc fighter (abandoned by his human mother) led a pauper's existence, driven solely by his desire to prove that he can succeed. His dream of succeeding is improved when he encounters the Dunedain mage; if he succeeds, our half-orc could find his social status elevated. The corsair (which I presume is a character class and not a race) was a pirate framed by a rival and suddenly forced to walk the plank. He barely made it to shore and is determined to get even. He isn't strong enough to challenge his rival or rich enough to start his own pirate ship, yet he happened to find a scroll tube with several treasure maps. If he could only find some fellow adventurers. . . .

All it takes to create a balanced party and campaign is interested people and a fertile imagination. In the end, characters shouldn't be treated as faceless sheets of paper with various numbers scribbled upon them. One must strive to make the characters more interesting than their lead figures.

No name or address given

I am writing in response to the recent barrage of letters concerning the role of the fighter and its subclasses in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. Mr. Satran (issue #188) was dead on in his assessment of the ranger subclass, which has been gutted by the new rules. I concede that the class had become too powerful, but the changes in 2nd Edition threw the baby out with the bath water. To solve this problem, one of three things needs to happen:

1. Give the class more combat punch with weapon specialization;
2. Give the class solid magical or special abilities to compensate for its relatively poor protection and combat ability (reinstating many of the ranger's original abilities would work); or
3. Make the ranger's XP progression equal to a fighters.

Any one of these options, pursued intelligently, should solve the problem without creating a

new one.

What I can't understand, however, are all of the people who wrote in lately about the weakness of the fighter class. Weapon specialization, with its increased attacks and damage, is a killer ability-literally! Imagine two warriors, one a 7th-level fighter with long-sword specialization and the other a paladin of equal level. Both carry shields and use long swords, and neither has any magic. Aside from 17 scores on their Charismas, neither has any exceptional abilities. They face a man-sized opponent with AC 5, and all rolls are averaged.

Ten melee rounds later, our paladin friend has dished out (15 attacks @ THAC0 9 = 8 hits X 4.5 points =) 36 points of damage. Not bad. His specialized fighter counterpart, however, has done (20 attacks @ THAC0 8 = 12 hits X 6.5 points =) 78 points of damage! Do the math yourself if you don't believe it, but make no mistake: Weapon specialization is a major advantage—

—with one notable exception. Bow specialization is, without doubt, the biggest rip-off in the AD&D game. Three proficiency slots, and for what? No extra attacks, no extra damage. Just +2 to hit when facing an opponent within 30', plus Strength bonuses to damage and automatic initiative if you have an arrow cocked and drawn.

Big deal. If an opponent is within 30' of your archer, you have one shot before that bow is useless. The "first shot" rule is nice, but not that great. The archer just can't walk around all day with a drawn bow, and the ability is really only useful against spellcasters. As for Strength bonuses, let's get real: A character with exceptional Strength will specialize in melee weapons, not the bow. The extra attacks and continuous (as opposed to one-shot) usefulness of melee-weapon specialization is just too great an advantage. The fact that melee specialization also costs less just adds insult to injury.

If DMs want bow specialists in their campaigns, some modifications are needed. Lower the cost of specialization to two slots, increase point-blank range to 60', and have shots/round increase to 3/1 at 7th level and 4/1 at 13th. Melee weapon specialization is still slightly superior, but at least you'll give your archers a fighting chance.

Joe Katzman
81 Gideon Court
Willowdale, Ontario, CANADA

I think that it is very sad how naive the general public is concerning the field of role-playing games. I am in the eighth grade at a junior high school. In our health class, we had a police officer come in and talk to the class about drugs and alcohol. The last time he came, the topic of conversation in the class somehow became the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. He said, and I quote him, that "the object of the Dungeons and Dragons game is to die." He also said that it is Satanic and evil, and when played over long periods of time it can cause people to go insane.

Well, I have been playing the game for four years now, and I'm still mentally healthy. If the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS or ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games do anything at all to one's mind, they simply enhance creativity, problem-solving skills, imagination, and teamwork. My schoolwork has improved in some areas as well since I've been playing the game, because making modules and adventures for the game improves my grammatical skills. I wish there were some way that we could show people who have grave misinterpretations of the game what it's really all about.

Jeremy Pataky
Post Falls ID

I am an avid player of the AD&D game and have loved it since I started playing about five years ago. It is usually the first thing I mention as one of my hobbies (second only to drawing), which usually receives "cool" as a response. Only once has my hobby received a negative response, and that was when I suggested using the AD&D game as a cooperative tool at a church youth-group meeting. Needless to say, the response was "Oh, *that* game?" I thought the pastor was a very open-minded individual; however, he immediately shunned the game because "It pulls creatures and beings from old mythologies and involves magic!" My response was "Yeah?" I really didn't think much about it anymore, so I kept my hobby to myself and my friends.

Then, only a few months ago, I was at the church youth-group meeting watching a video on Satanism that graphically explained some of the most disgusting things I've ever heard. It explained ceremonial rites that made my stomach turn and are far too disgusting to be printed in your magazine. One part of the video consisted of an "occult specialist" explaining how the cover of one issue of DRAGON Magazine was "obviously Satanic." I was shocked! Shortly afterward, I was heckled by people at the youth group with stupid remarks like, "Hey, Chris, do you have *that* one?" followed by laughter from anyone close enough to hear.

Another part of the video (supposedly comic relief with the lesson) consisted of two demons in Hell talking about what they did with their "possesseees" that weekend. The first one did drugs, which everyone knows is a major problem, while the second "did three hours of Dungeons and Dragons with Jimmy as we listened to heavy metal" There was extra emphasis on the D&D® game part rather than on the music or drugs! That really annoyed me.

The one thing I really don't understand is why some churches are out to get a harmless game when there are real problems like drugs and AIDS in the world.

An angry yet supportive gamer,
Chris Scofield
No address given

I read with interest "Forum" letters about evil PCs in issue #186, and I want to tell you a little story.

I once designed a campaign for a group of humanoid—orcs, goblins, hobgoblins and kobolds. They were evil, they were ugly, and they were stupid. To top it off, I gave the clerics holy items that needed warm blood at least once a day in order to function.

When the group members weren't trying to eat their equipment, they tried to steal it from one another. If not for the orders of what they considered to be a supernatural being, they would not have done anything useful.

It took two sessions to finish the task of bombing the temple of some duergar, and at the end all but two PCs perished in the explosion. Of the two, one decided that it was time for a sacrifice, and killed the other. He then set off into the sunset, walking east (well, it wasn't my fault he failed his intelligence check and lost his way).

Why am I telling you this? Well, it's simple: The characters really couldn't work together, were concerned only with themselves (apart from one who really intended to follow orders, but then again he was lawful), and even attacked each other and they were dead at the end of one adventure—but we had a lot of fun! It was one of the funniest games we've ever had.

The point is, the AD&D game is about role-playing, about overcoming enemies and solving

problems, but most of all it's about having fun with a group of people. And that's the only thing that really matters. If you think evil PCs can contribute to the fun, go ahead and have some.

Skip Williams in "Sage Advice" (issue #181) and Michael Thomas and Chris Roberts (in issue #186's "Forum") have some valid points, but the letters still include some misconceptions, I believe. As I see it, TSR is not neglecting evil characters, contrary to what Mr. Williams and Mr. Thomas say. In fact, TSR recently introduced two new classes that are inherently evil: the defilers and the templars of the DARK SUN® world. These classes are very detailed and more powerful than similar good-aligned classes, and the defiler class even allows a character to become one of the most powerful creatures in the world—the dragon. For me, that's good support for evil characters.

As for Mr. Howery (in issue #186), I believe he is well off the mark. Why playing evil PCs should be less challenging than playing good ones is beyond me. Quite the opposite is true. First of all, where role-playing is concerned, playing an evil character correctly is more difficult than playing a good one. As for the good guys being the underdogs, this is far from the truth. Most of the people in most places are not evil (Ravenloft might be an exception). In fact, most good parties overcome all evils the DM throws in their path, so if anything evil creatures are the underdogs. The PCs could easily be outlaws, escaping from the forces of law, or thieves attempting to steal from the house of a powerful good wizard. The only limitations are in the DM's mind.

Eyal Teler
Jerusalem, ISRAEL

I am writing as an experienced gamer and DM. I must admit that I am one of those who set realism very high in their games. Therefore, although the AD&D game has always been my favorite, there are a few things about the rules that I am not happy about. One of these lies in the magic system.

When you read various fantasy books and novels, including the DRAGONLANCE® books, you always read about how the famous mages have to be wary of which spells they cast, since the spells may use up a lot of the mage's energy and ultimately leave them weak and unprotected. But there is no equivalent rule for this in the AD&D game.

I have therefore devised my own set of rules for this, which I always use in my own games. It is true that these rules make the already tough lives of wizards even tougher, but then again, these rules are optional. They do not seriously overbalance the game and may indeed set limits on characters the DM feels have grown too powerful.

In my system, every time a wizard casts a spell, he loses a number of Constitution and Strength points equal to the level of the spell cast times two. For example, say that a mage casts a *fireball* spell on a group of orcs. *Fireball* is a third-level spell, so the wizard loses six points each of Constitution and Strength.

However, this loss is not permanent. The mage regains the lost points in a number of rounds equal to the level of the spell cast times 20, minus the level of the mage casting it. If this sounds complicated, here is an example: A 5th-level wizard casting the third-level *fireball* spell mentioned before would regain his lost points in 55 rounds, or five turns and five rounds (3 X 20 = 60, 60-5 = 55 rounds).

Should any of the wizard's ability scores ever reach zero due to this kind of energy loss (for

example, if a mage casts several spells one after the other, reducing his ability scores accordingly), he must immediately make a system-shock roll. Failure means he loses 1d20 hp and is struck unconscious for 1d6 + 3 hours (unless the hit-point loss kills him). If he succeeds, the character is still struck unconscious but only for 1d4 hours and without any hit-point loss.

This makes it very dangerous for wizards to cast high-level spells, since they will never know if these spells might kill them, or at least strike them unconscious. But it also makes for a more realistic and exciting game.

Karim Pedersen
Jernbanegade 39
DK-6200 Aabenraa
DENMARK

I enjoyed Roger Moore's editorial in issue #189. It brings up a good point: Good DMs are usually good borrowers. The adventure mentioned in the article borrowed ideas from Poe and Hodgson. I did similar things in my previous campaigns. My brief but memorable SPELLJAMMER® campaign sent the PCs up against a tribe of the trophy-hunting monsters from the *Predator* movies. They also explored a lost dwarven mine on an asteroid and ran into a nest of the monsters from *Aliens*. My WORLD OF GREYHAWK® campaign sent the PCs into a lot of places borrowed from novels: the enclosed city and its feuding tribes from the Conan story "Red Nails"; the intelligent dinosaur world of Harry Harrison's novel, *West of Eden*; a Rome-like city with a climactic chariot race; and the hill of the Black Seers from the Conan story, "People of the Black Circle."

I've also used the frozen temple from *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*, and a trip up a tropical river to the land of an insane warlord, a la *Apocalypse Now*. They've been to the New World and fought Iroquois (from *The Last of the Mohicans*) and lived on the prairie among the Sioux (like in old westerns). They've been to King Solomon's Mines, the besieged fort in Zulu, and the frozen alien city from Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of Madness." I imagine most DMs have borrowed ideas in a similar manner from a variety of books and movies. Even if the players recognize the source, the DM can alter the plot enough to keep surprising them.

David Howery
Mountain Home ID

I believe that Dorian Loeffler in issue #187's "Forum" oversimplifies the differences between styles of role-playing. Certainly we have all come across the players who use the rules to their best advantage, even bending the rules if they get the chance. This does not make those players poor role-players. On the other hand, ignoring the rules does not necessarily make for good role-playing, either.

The way Dorian explains his views, I would certainly say that I am a conservative player, both as a DM and a player. There must be certain limits on what characters can achieve; otherwise, there will be no end of superpowerful characters.

It is my experience that the rules lawyers who exploit every little loophole for the benefit of their characters will do exactly the same if you make the rules secondary to the story. However, instead of quoting chapter and verse, they will claim good role-playing as the reason for their characters to do the impossible. At least if you are playing by the rules, whether they be the official rules or house rules, the rules-lawyer type of player can be limited.

Of course, the style of game is always up to

the wishes of the group. The final say on rules interpretation should be up to the DM.

Now, I'll address the letter by Laurence Davison in the same issue. His concern is with party background, especially if the characters are from different regions. To me, that is one of the most enjoyable challenges to being a DM. I normally run a campaign set in the Known World of the D&D game, and I have run parties with an Ethengar, a Rockhome dwarf, a Shadow elf, a Alphantian elf, a Thyatian fighter, and a Darokin fighter. I have always been able to come up with reasonable explanations for the characters to come together. Characters wander their world for many reasons: trade and commerce, exploration, wanderlust, exile, spying, and so on.

Please note that you can provide a character with two backgrounds. One is the character's real background, with his real motives, known only to the DM and the player. The other background is the cover story that he tells the other characters.

Of course, the other thing Laurence can do is put the onus on the players to provide the background for their characters. It may actually make the players care for the characters more if they have put a little more work into them. As in most things, the DM should reserve the right to veto something that is not compatible with the campaign. As a little bribe to make the players work at their backgrounds when setting up a character, offer experience point bonuses or something similar. This award can be judged on depth of character and compatibility with the campaign. This may make the elf fanatic

think again about playing a dwarf. Also see Michael A. Lavoie's letter in the same issue, as he makes some very valid points.

Lastly, I would like to comment on the letter by Nicholas Abruzzo, again in the same issue. I can see both sides of the argument [on how paladins should act], and in a way both are right.

Again, this is where good backgrounds for the characters would help. A paladin would know from his background if his church expected him to slay evil creatures outright, or if it expected evil beings to be converted if possible.

Some churches/societies would find Nicholas's paladin's actions lawful and good. After all, assassins and evil priests are enemies of good and law. The action of the paladin is then just in making sure these persons can no longer threaten society. It could be argued that by his words the paladin absolved the souls of the evil creatures in the act of slaying them. In other societies/churches, the paladin may be expected to try to convert the enemy first, fighting only to defend himself, his companions, and the defenseless.

I think the question of alignment play depends on the type of society your party is adventuring in, or the background of the character involved.

Certainly, I feel the paladin class has suffered because it is viewed as being insufferably holier-than-thou. That, to a certain extent, is what they should aspire to be; however, they are only human, with human emotions and urges. The path to sainthood is a difficult one. Read the stories of the saints—they all erred at some point. Paladins will err and must atone for their

mistakes. The paladin can be a very complex, interesting character to play, provided the paladin has a frame of reference, goals to aspire to, and a well-considered background.

Roger Smith
Nettleham Park, Lincoln, U.K.

I would like to answer two letters from issue #187: Dorian Leoffler's and Laurence Davison's

First, Dorian Leoffler asked for input on conservative vs. liberal gaming. I am a very liberal gamer. I prefer the role-playing aspect of gaming, without a large amount of rules. I believe that characters have no knowledge of "game rules," but do know the "facts of life," as Dorian put it. They know that to use a long sword when fighting a more powerful monster is much more sensible than using a dagger. But choosing a weapon for a character just because it does a great deal of damage is not agreeable to me. Weapons, and any other equipment, should be chosen to fit a certain style, not to give an advantage. Characters who have memorized the rules tend to view role-playing as a game of juggling numbers around in order to "win." These type of players tend not to think of their characters as people, but as lists of numbers. I have been DMing for six years, and I try not to allow my players too great a knowledge of the rules. I have found that doing this encourages role-playing. When players' minds are not so statistically oriented during a game, they tend to use their imaginations more. As a DM, I believe that it is my duty to take the burden of rules memorizing off my players; this makes the game a lot more enjoyable for all because there is more role-playing and a lot less "statistical manipulation." It is more work for me, but it is worth the effort.

In many games I have played in or run myself, a lot of players play only paladins or barbarians, simply because of the statistical advantage of those classes. Even with the so-called limitations, both classes are pretty much invincible, especially at higher levels. I believe a character should be created around a personality or idea, not a statistic. Strict interpretation and memorizing of the rules takes away from the gaming experience.

Now I would like to address Laurence Davison's problem of racial mixing. In my current game world, I have decided on a predominantly human society. I have all players make human characters, except for an occasional elf or dwarf fanatic. To encourage players not to create demihuman characters just on a whim, I have messed around with interracial relations to the brink of war. Racial tension is so high that any elf character will have to disguise himself to avoid being attacked at every corner. This not only weeds out those players who are not really interested in playing demihumans, it creates some interesting role-playing situations for those who love to play demihumans. Often demihuman players must also hide their identity from other players!

Finally, I would like to thank you for your time and say that you guys are doing a great job with this magazine—keep up the good work!

Chris Morris
Salt Lake City UT
Ω

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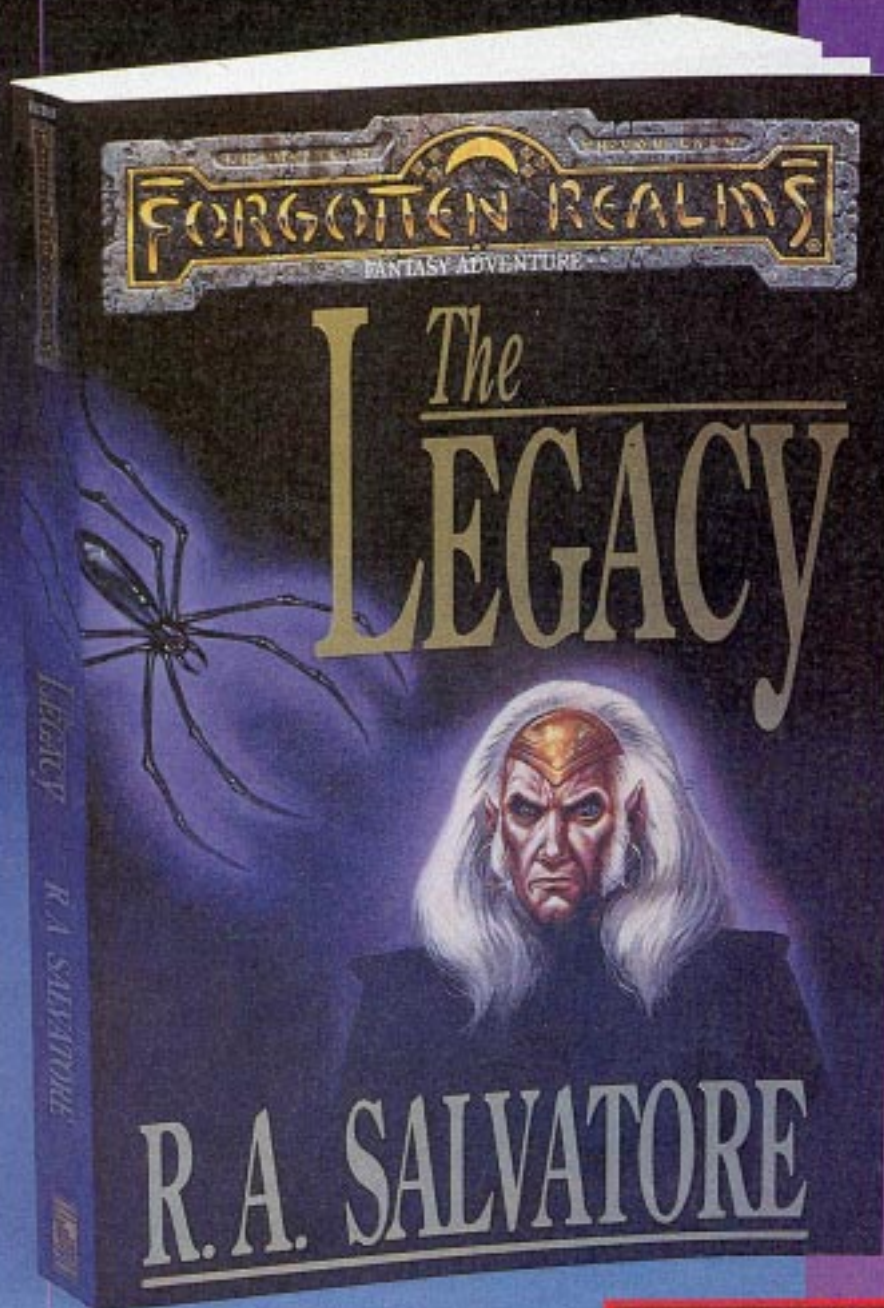
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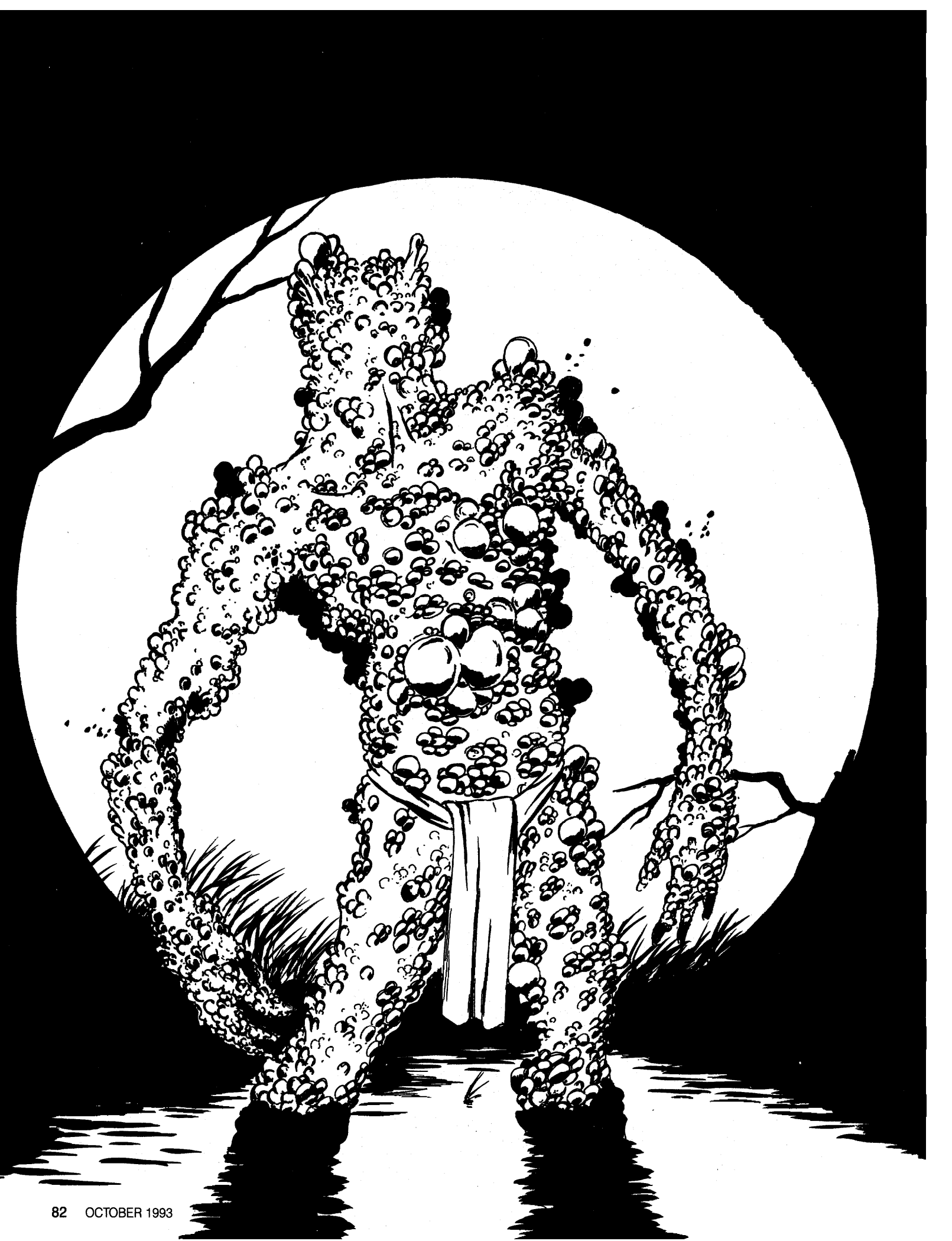
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Soul-&Swords Spirit-Slayers

Other uses for honor points in *Oriental Adventures*

by Spike Y. Jones

Artwork by Jim Holloway

In the Oriental setting of the AD&D® game, as described in the AD&D 1st Edition volume *Oriental Adventures* (OA), a player whose character is particularly honorable can gain bonus points to spend as extra hit points, or points added to the ability scores on his next player character when the first dies. While this is a good incentive for PCs to act with honor, it is a bit impersonal and transient, as the new character need never have any connection to or knowledge of his anonymous benefactor. If one wants a more lasting memorial for a deceased PC than a few extra Dexterity points, here are a few other ways to use honor points.

Items of quality

Craftsmen in the Orient are very much the same as craftsmen everywhere else; the largest portion of what they manufacture are simple, utilitarian wares that serve their purpose (whether that be a cup that holds water or an arrow that pierces armor) at a reasonable cost. At a higher cost, one can have the item made of fancier materials, with decorations and extra touches that add nothing to the functioning of the item but make it more showy and valuable.

However, in Kara-Tur, a craftsman can also make *items of quality*. These are not necessarily fancier than normal items, nor are they magical, but in some way they are better than the usual. Cups of quality fit comfortably in the hand and have a pleasing but not *ostentatious* appearance referred to as *wabi* (and give characters a +1 on their Tea Ceremony rolls because of their harmonious design). A sword of quality would be perfectly balanced, exceedingly sharp, and beautiful in its simplicity (and would be +1 on attack rolls only). Such items are usually easily recognized by people raised in Oriental cultures and command a high price, up to 10 times the normal cost of that sort of item, if the creator is willing to part with them. Be-

cause he demonstrates the skill of the craftsman, a character creating an item of quality receives a +1 honor-point award.

The normal method of creating items of quality is to make a modified success roll of 25 or greater on 1d20 when using a craftsman nonweapon proficiency. This is understandably difficult to do as the PC must have at least five additional proficiencies in a skill to get the bonuses on his success roll needed to roll a 25. Some GMs allow a bonus of +1 to die rolls for those who are devout worshippers of crafts-related gods (such as Chih-Nii, the Chinese goddess of weavers, or Ama-Tsu-Mara and Raiden, the Japanese patrons of blacksmiths and fletchers, respectively), but even this is not much help.

But as the creator of an item of quality gains honor as a result of his success, his honor and reputation are at stake when he makes any item. This being the case, the craftsman can choose to risk more honor than usual on the creation of a specific item in order to improve his chance of creating an item of quality. To do this, the player must simply announce in advance how much honor his character is going to invest in a particular attempt. For every two points of honor risked, the character receives a +1 bonus to his success roll, with no limits except that the modified chance for success can't go below 3 on 1d20. If he succeeds, he has created an item of quality and gains +1 honor. If he fails in his attempt, he loses all of the honor points he risked on the attempt (and if he risked more than five points, his family honor drops by one point!).

One important difference between items of quality that result from lucky die rolls and those created by the investment of a craftsman's honor is that the second type of item gains some of the personality of the craftsman through the process. A katana of quality will not have intelligence like some magical swords, but it will re-

flect some of the beliefs of its creator. If the weapon, and by association the craftsman, is treated shamefully (e.g., if it is not kept polished and sharp), or if it is used to perform dishonorable acts (such as murdering a family member), the honor invested in the weapon will depart, turning it into a normal item or causing it to break, depending on the severity of the dishonor.

Honor can also be invested (at the same "2 honor = +1 to success roll" ratio and with the same risks) in the success rolls for other nonweapon proficiencies that are used to produce products that can reflect honor back on the creator, such as calligraphy, poetry, noh, flower arranging, or the tea ceremony. If one manages to create a poem or flower arrangement of quality (roll of 25 or more), the same +1 honor point is awarded, and the poem, noh performance, or other product will become the source of appreciative gossip, a thing to be remembered for some time.

Kinjogami: area-spirits

Although all cultures have a certain reverence for their dead (performing elaborate funerary rites for them, remembering their lives to future generations in stories told and retold over the years, and passing laws against the desecration of cemeteries), in Kara-Tur things are different. The living of Kara-Tur revere their dead, building shrines in memory of them and regularly making offerings of food or other goods to these "divine spirits."

Again, unlike other cultures, the dead of Kara-Tur do not always leave the living in order to dwell in some far-off afterlife, and not all of those that remain do so in the form of life-hating undead. Instead, some of the dear undeparted, called *kami*, watch over their families and descendants (or other deserving individuals), trying to protect them from harm and help them whenever possible. Some *kami* do this by serving as minor members of the Celestial Bureaucracy, but others remain with their

families, performing their duties in close proximity to the shrines built in their memory. These last are referred to as *kinjogami*, or area-spirits.

As an extension of the life of a person, the kami retains some measure of the living person's personality, demonstrated in the way it manifests itself. The kami of a sohei who had dedicated his life to protecting a temple could continue to do the same thing after death, manifesting as a swarm of wasps to attack those attempting to invade his temple. A peaceful, contemplative monks kami might instead take up residence in a rock garden, enforcing an aura of calm in the area. And the kami of shukenja are most often encountered in roadside shrines where they protect all honorable travelers on the road.

On the other hand, a kinjogami doesn't have to reflect the dominant aspect of a character's personality. The spirit of a dead samurai is as likely to be found enforcing an aura of calm on a favorite tea house, or even ensuring that a particular patch of wildflowers prospers if these were among the samurai's interests in life or were things the PC *wished* he could have devoted time to. (It must be remembered that *bushido* requires a samurai to be adept in the arts of peace and beauty as well as those of war.)

In order for a character to become a kinjogami upon death, the player must state that this is the character's desire, and the player must then determine what the manifestation of the PC's kami will be. It is best that a PC discuss this intention with other characters before the character's demise so that the dead PC's allies can build an appropriate shrine for the PC when it becomes necessary. If this precaution is not taken, the usual first task of a newly formed kami is to communicate its desires to family, friends or retainers. This is often done through the medium of a *speak with dead* spell, although sometimes a strong kami will manifest itself as a spectrelike spirit that attempts to communicate its desires to the living.

While ordinary craftsmen involved in the construction of a shrine for a stranded kami receive no special benefit, a character who is instrumental in the construction of such a shrine, or in transporting that kami to its shrine, receives an honor award of +2 points for his efforts. Usually the location and form of the kinjogami should be such that the player's next PC will be likely to come across it, or it should take some role in the lives of the other PCs in the campaign.

Once the kami's "residence" is established, it will exhibit itself in whatever way the player desires, continuing in that pattern for as long as the proper reverence is paid to it or until something occurs to disrupt its routine. If a kinjogami's descendants stop visiting its shrine or refuse to leave offerings, it will withdraw or withhold its magic powers from the area in order to chastise its ungrateful

relatives. If this doesn't make them change their behavior, it will abandon them permanently. How insistent the kami will be about getting offerings, and what the offerings will have to consist of, depends on the personality of the character; the kinjogami of a monk is likely to be more lenient than that of a yakuza whose fierce loyalty to its clan would be mixed up with its greed. In general, even the greediest of kinjogami will demand monthly or weekly sacrifices, while the most forgiving could allow a year to go by without sacrifice before they would withhold their favors.

Kinjogami that aren't linked to specific families (such as that of a shukenja found in a roadside "quiet place") will accept obeisance from anyone who cares to offer it. Many people in Kara-Tur (especially believers in the Eight Million Gods in Koza-kura) make a point of leaving a few grains of rice or other token offering at any shrine they pass as a matter of principle. For these spirits, a decade could pass between sacrifices and they would still bestow their blessings on an area.

The powers that a kinjogami possesses depend on the number of honor bonus points (OA, page 36; these are the points usually transferred to a subsequent PC), or *kami points*, the character has earned to spend on his shrine. The average PC will have two or three points to spend, but some may have as many as 10 points available to them.

If the kinjogami is going to duplicate the effects of a spell around itself, each kami point buys one level's worth of spells. Thus, if only one point is spent, the kinjogami could manifest the first-level shukenja spell *bless* in its vicinity; if four are invested, the shrine could be surrounded by the fourth-level *protection from evil*, *10' radius* spell or by the combination of a first-level *calm* spell and a third-level *prayer* spell. A kinjogami radiates its spell effects permanently, but it can employ only spells that have a measured duration when cast by living spell-users. Thus, a kinjogami could not manifest a *detect harmony* or *fire shuriken* spell, as both of these effects are of instantaneous duration. Similarly, it can use only spells with an area of effect measured linearly, so that *spider climb* (which measures its area of effect in numbers of affected creatures) would not be suitable for a kinjogami. The kinjogami's effective level of use with a spell-like effect is equivalent to the minimum level of a wu jen or shukenja necessary to employ the spell (e.g., 1st level in the case of *purify food and drink*), even if the kami was a high-level spell-caster when alive. If twice the normal number of kami points are invested in a spell, it is treated as if cast by a spell-user of twice the minimum level, and so on.

If the player decides that his PC's kinjogami will have effects that don't duplicate existing spells, the GM should either look for an analogous spell to use for determining costs (e.g., a variation on the first-level

drowsy insects spell to cover the sohei who returns as a cloud of angry wasps if his temple is invaded), or should simply allow the special effect at a minimal cost (e.g., a book that miraculously records events in a village as a continuation of the uncompleted task assumed by a PC monk) as an interesting background detail for his campaign.

The nature of the kinjogami in its current manifestation determines what spells can or cannot detect it. While a yakuza could have been evil in life, if its kami performs or fosters good acts (such as protecting the innocent in its care) it will radiate "good" to the appropriate detection spells. A *detect harmony* spell will produce a more comprehensive (though enigmatic) answer, such as "there is evil here attempting to overcome itself." A *detect magic* spell cannot be used to sense a kinjogami, as their powers are not a result of magic per se, while a *detect life* spell will produce the paradoxical result: "there is life here, but not now."

Bukigami: weapon-spirits

For some AD&D game PCs, the bond between a character and his weapon is stronger than that between the PC and his family, home city, or fellow adventurers. When such a bond exists between an Oriental campaign PC and his weapon, the bond can even be stronger than death, for such a character can spend his kami points on the creation of a *bukigami*, a weapon containing a "weapon-spirit"

In many ways a bukigami is similar to a kinjogami: They are created in essentially the same way, the number of kami points invested in the weapon determines what sorts of powers it displays, and if misused the bukigami is as likely to balk as the kinjogami. While offerings must be made to a bukigami in order to maintain its good humor, only the most evil of characters would require that the offerings take the form of blood sacrifices; usually, keeping the weapon properly polished and sharp will suffice. Persons who were greedy in life might leave behind them bukigami with a desire to be decorated or stored in a jeweled scabbard, but again this is not the norm. All bukigami (except those infused with the spirit of a truly selfless person) desire to be the weapon of preference of their owner. Again, only the most selfish would withhold their powers as a result of occasional use of other weapons, especially if use of the bukigami would have been inappropriate or threatening to either weapon or owner.

When a player declares he'll invest his PC's kami points in a spirit-weapon, he can also state at that time that his next character will be of the same family as the previous one, entitling him to use his relative's sword. This takes place *before* the new character is rolled up, and the new character is not entitled to any birthright rolls; the only birthright he'll be entitled to is this single heirloom.

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The weapon chosen for the bukigami must be one that was actually used by the dead PC; in most cases, this will be his preferred weapon. The bukigami of a kensai can only be his weapon of specialization, while that of a samurai can only be his katana or daikyu, as the honor of both these classes of warrior is symbolized by their skill with these weapons as well as by the characters' deeds. Similarly, the weapon must be in good condition, as a rusted and broken sword inspires little respect in the man who wielded it in life.

A bukigami is more expensive in terms of kami than a kinjogami. If a PC has only one kami point to invest in the item, it will have no special abilities at all; it will merely be declared a family heirloom and will register as such to a *know history* spell. Any further kami points can be invested in order to give combat bonuses to the weapon. Every additional kami point spent can raise the weapon by *either* +1 attack or +1 to damage, so that a +2/+2 bukigami naginata would cost an investment of five kami points overall. If the effects of the weapon are more specialized, such as working only against a specific enemy clan or against any one type of monster, the cost of buying "pluses" is halved (reducing the cost of that same +2/+2 bukigami naginata to three kami points if the attack and damage bonuses work only against kappas, for example).

Certain magic spells—those with measured areas of effect and durations (see kinjogami above)—can also be possessed by a bukigami, but the cost for these spells

is once again twice the cost in kami compared to kinjogami. In addition, these special powers can only be added to a weapon that already has had one kami point invested in it to make it an heirloom. Thus, even to create a simple bukigami wakizashi that surrounds itself with the effects of a *calm* spell would cost three kami points.

The high cost in kami to create bukigami makes particularly powerful magical weapons of this sort rare. While magical weapons made by normal means are often more powerful, bukigami are more common, both because of their ease of creation and the personal value placed on them by their owners. As a bukigami contains some of the spirit of an ancestor of the character, the penalty for losing such a weapon is worse than for losing a normal birthright. Instead of the usual penalty of -5 honor points, losing a bukigami costs a character -10 honor points (-15 for a samurai, -20 if the weapon had pluses). Thus, most characters will be loath to trade even a bukigami without pluses in combat for a more powerful "mundane" magical weapon.

Because bukigami gain their special powers as a result of the still-living spirits of ancestors stored within them, as opposed to having a nonliving spell cast on the items, these weapons are not treated as magical by barbarian cultures, and a barbarian character faces no restrictions against their use. In the so-called "Northern Wastes" area of Kara-Tur (north of Chuokei province in the Shou Lung

Empire), bukigami are revered to the point that a barbarian from these regions would prefer to use a spirit-charged weapon (even one from another family that denies the barbarian its combat bonuses) instead of a more powerful magical one, even if he is of high enough level to avoid magic restrictions.

Although a bukigami can be picked up and used by any other character in a party, any magical bonuses it possesses can be enjoyed only by a wielder who shares the same family or goals as the weapon's previous owner. It is almost impossible for an adventurer to find a spirit-weapon belonging to his own clan in a dungeon hoard unless it was the subject of a specific quest, but there is a chance that someone will find a bukigami of another clan (identifiable as such by a *know history* spell). Returning such an item to its clan gains the character a +1 honor point award (+2 for kensai and samurai characters), plus any reward the clan is willing to give (typically up to the cash value of the weapon).

Akugami: evil spirits

Certain types of characters (e.g., dishonored ninja (nukenin), yakuza cast out by their clans, evil characters of other professions, or those who die with zero honor points) do not always have the option of bestowing honor points on heirlooms to be passed on to their descendants or areas to protect for them. Instead, their kami points are spent by becoming *akugami* (evil spirits), with the type of spirit dependent on the nature of the person and his deeds in life.

Examples of spirits formed in this way include kuei (the spirits of those who died unburied, by unavenged violence, or with quests unfulfilled), hkum yeng nat (an evil parody of a kinjogami; often the form taken by outcast yakuza), lu nat (another evil version of a kinjogami; one form taken by nukenin), and gaki and menedi (which come in a variety of forms depending on the crimes of the character). For details about individual types of akugami, see the AD&D 1st Edition OA, or the AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, Kara-Tur Appendix.

One form of akugami that is particularly concerned with honor and kami points is the *kamigoroshi*, or spirit-slayer, the accursed soul of a traitor to his family, ancestors, or emperor. This fearsome monster is detailed here in *Monstrous Compendium* format.

Further reading

An article in DRAGON® issue #151 ("Earn Those Heirlooms!" by Jay Ouzts) has some interesting ideas that can be applied to the use of kami-items. Another one in DRAGON issue #180 ("Not Another Magical Sword!?" by Charles Rodgers) supplies more ideas that can be used with bukigami or other kami-items. Ω

Table 1: Uses for Honor Points

| Character class | Preferred uses (in order) |
|-----------------|--|
| Barbarian | Inheritance points, kinjogami, bukigami (especially for barbarians from the Northern Wastes) |
| Bushi | Bukigami, kinjogami |
| Kensai | Bukigami |
| Monk | Kinjogami |
| Ninja | Bukigami, kinjogami |
| Nukenin | Akugami |
| Samurai | Bukigami, kinjogami |
| Shukenja | Kinjogami |
| Sohei | Kinjogami |
| Wu Jen | Items of quality (during their lifetime), bukigami |
| Yakuza | Kinjogami, akugami (if outcast) |

Table 2: Honor Awards

| Activity | Honor points awarded |
|---|-------------------------|
| Failing attempt to make item of quality | Loss of invested points |
| Helping to establish a kinjogami | +2 |
| Losing a bukigami | -10 |
| Losing a bukigami (samurai) | -15 |
| Losing a bukigami with "pluses" (samurai) | -20 |
| Making an item of quality | +1 |
| Returning a lost bukigami to another clan | +1 |
| Returning a lost bukigami (kensai or samurai) | +2 |

Kamigoroshi (Lesser Spirit)

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Any inhabited lands (Kara-Tur) |
| FREQUENCY: | Very rare |
| ORGANIZATION: | Solitary |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Any |
| DIET: | See text |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Very (11) |
| TREASURE TYPE: | Nil |
| ALIGNMENT: | Neutral evil |
| NO. APPEARING: | |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 4 |
| MOVE: | 6 to 18 (see text) |
| HIT DICE: | See text |
| THACO: | See text |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 2 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | 0 |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Drain honor/kami points |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | See text |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | T (1' or less) to G (25' or more) |
| MORALE: | Unsteady (6) |
| XP VALUE: | See text |

The kamigoroshi (from *kami*, "spirit," and *korosu*, "to kill") is a lesser spirit that is as strange as it is frightening. Details about its lifestyle aren't known by the average person; the only trait that is common knowledge is that it devours kami in all of its varied forms.

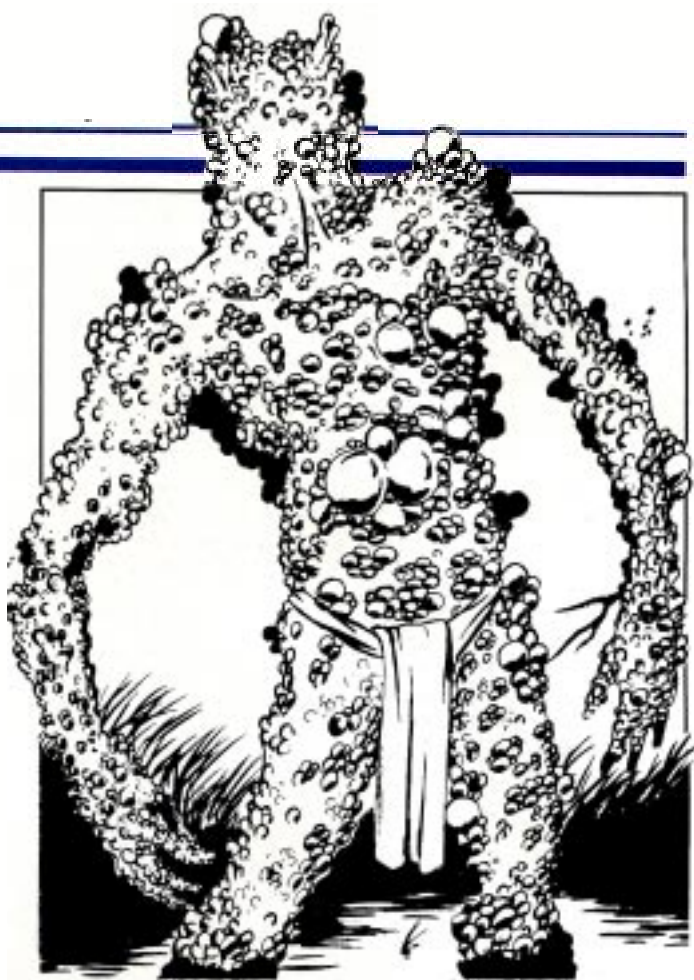
In its natural state, the kamigoroshi appears almost comical, as a very thin, hairless, ruby-red skinned man less than a foot tall. Unfortunately, it is rare to see a kamigoroshi like this; usually it is much taller, more muscular, and very threatening in appearance. Its exact size depends on its hit dice (see later).

While still ruby-red in this larger form, the skin of the kamigoroshi is grossly different, appearing to be constantly in motion. "Bubbles" rise from the depths to its surface as if it were at a boil. Each of the bubbles bursts with a tiny scream, as if the voice of a soul in torment. These bubbles are the various spirits the monster has devoured, and they constantly boil upward to make their tormented cries and be absorbed again, except when the kamigoroshi concentrates on silencing them (so that it can silently hunt for more). When relaxing or concentrating on something else, such as combat, the kamigoroshi releases this control, and the kami set up their horrible chorus. The activity of the bubbles is determined by the number of kami this monster has eaten, so that no bubbles are seen when it is in its smallest size (having devoured no kami).

The voice of the kamigoroshi itself varies with its size, from a mouselike squeak when small to a booming roar when gigantic. No matter what the sound, it belittles and disparages its opponents in combat, hoping to make them perform a dishonorable act. The honor points lost to a character fighting this creature are instantly devoured by the kamigoroshi (see "Combat").

Combat: In combat, the kamigoroshi strikes with its two long clawed hands. Even if it hits, no physical damage is done to the victim; in fact, the victim may think the monster missed, no matter what the result. If the kamigoroshi successfully hits, however, it will withdraw its hand and messily (but quickly) eat something that it drew from the victim's body: 1-6 of the character's personal earned honor points.

The kamigoroshi begins existence with only 1 HD and 10 hp, but to these it adds the honor and kami points it eats. For every 10 honor points or 1 kami point eaten, add 10 hp and 1 HD more to its total. In addition, each kami point or 10 honor points adds another foot to its height, so that a kamigoroshi with 52 hp above its starting total would be 6' tall; after gaining 8 hp more, it will



be 7' tall. For every additional foot it gains in height, the monster also gains an addition of 1 to its movement rate, to a maximum of 18. When a kamigoroshi is wounded in combat, it loses hit dice, movement, and stature at the same rate as it was injured: 1 HD, MV 1, and 1' for every 10 hp cumulative damage done.

For slaying a kamigoroshi, characters earn experience as if they had killed a creature with 1 HD more than half the maximum hit dice of the kamigoroshi; e.g., a kamigoroshi that reached 10 HD at its strongest would earn its slayers the same experience as for killing a normal 6-HD creature, while killing a 20-HD kamigoroshi would result in the same experience as killing an 11-HD monster (see the *DMG*, page 47).

Magic spells that affect other lesser spirits have normal effects on a kamigoroshi. While a restore spirit spell cannot be cast on the monster, if one is cast on a weapon, shrine, or person from which a kamigoroshi has drained honor or kami, those drained points are immediately returned to their rightful place if the kamigoroshi fails a saving throw vs. spells. The monster can be hit by normal or magical weapons, but weapons imbued with kami suffer a horrible fate when used on a kamigoroshi.

If a character carries items with more kami-energy in them than the character has (remembering that 1 kami point equals 10 honor points), a kamigoroshi will attempt to drain the items instead of the character. The creature attempts to grab a non-weapon item (rolling its attacks against the character's armor class, ignoring all armor except shields). If the attack is successful, the monster drains 1-6 kami points from the item unless a saving throw vs. disintegration (*DMG*, page 39) is made. Against a weapon things are simpler, as the kamigoroshi merely lets itself be hit by the weapon (taking normal damage from the attack) in order to have a chance of draining the weapon's kami (as above).

A kamigoroshi usually attacks the strongest source of honor or kami in its vicinity first. A character without honor or kami is of course immune to all attacks from a kamigoroshi, which would normally mean that it would have no interest in the character. If an honorless person attacks a kamigoroshi, it flees for its life, not even thinking to grab a normal weapon to use in its defense.

Kamigoroshi (lesser Spirit)

DRAGON® issue #198

If a character with honor performs actions that reduce his honor while fighting a kamigoroshi (e.g., a samurai flees the fight, or a kensai is forced to use a ninja-preferred weapon), these lost honor points are instantly added to the monster's hit point total. Thus, when fighting this spirit-slayer, it is more important than ever that characters act according to the strictures of their personal codes of honor.

Habitat/Society: Kamigoroshi are always found singly. If two were to meet, they would immediately attack each other, attempting to devour the kami each had previously stored. They would fight until one was killed and the other possessed the full strength of the two.

Kamigoroshi are wandering spirits, constantly on the lookout for new sources of "food." While the Celestial Emperor might have occasion to send one to chastise a village whose inhabitants failed to do their duty to their ancestors' kami, most kamigoroshi start as the spirits of persons who died after committing treasonous acts (acts that cost the character 30 points of personal honor and his relatives 6 points or more of family honor).

Ecology: Kamigoroshi survive by eating the kami of honor, in any form they can find it. The most common form of this is the personal honor of the humans and other intelligent creatures of Kara-Tur, but they prefer that found in various "solid" forms, such as bukigami or kinjogami, because the honor in these items and places is 10 times as concentrated as that in living bodies.

Although it doesn't happen often, kamigoroshi have been known to attack the good doc cu'o'c, or the various evil gaki and other similar spirits, as the latter's hit points are equivalent to honor points and are treated as such for the purposes of the kamigoroshi.

Existence as part of the kamigoroshi is difficult for the various kami it devours; if kept trapped long enough, the kami dwindle and disappear-in effect "dying." The kami of a kamigoroshi "die" at a rate of one kami point per week; when one of its kami "dies," the kamigoroshi loses the hit points, levels, and stature it gained from that spirit. Thus, the kamigoroshi must steal 10 honor points or one kami point of nourishment each week, just to stay the same. However, no matter how starved it is, a kamigoroshi cannot die of starvation, as it has 1 HD of its own to sustain it through "dry" periods. Ω

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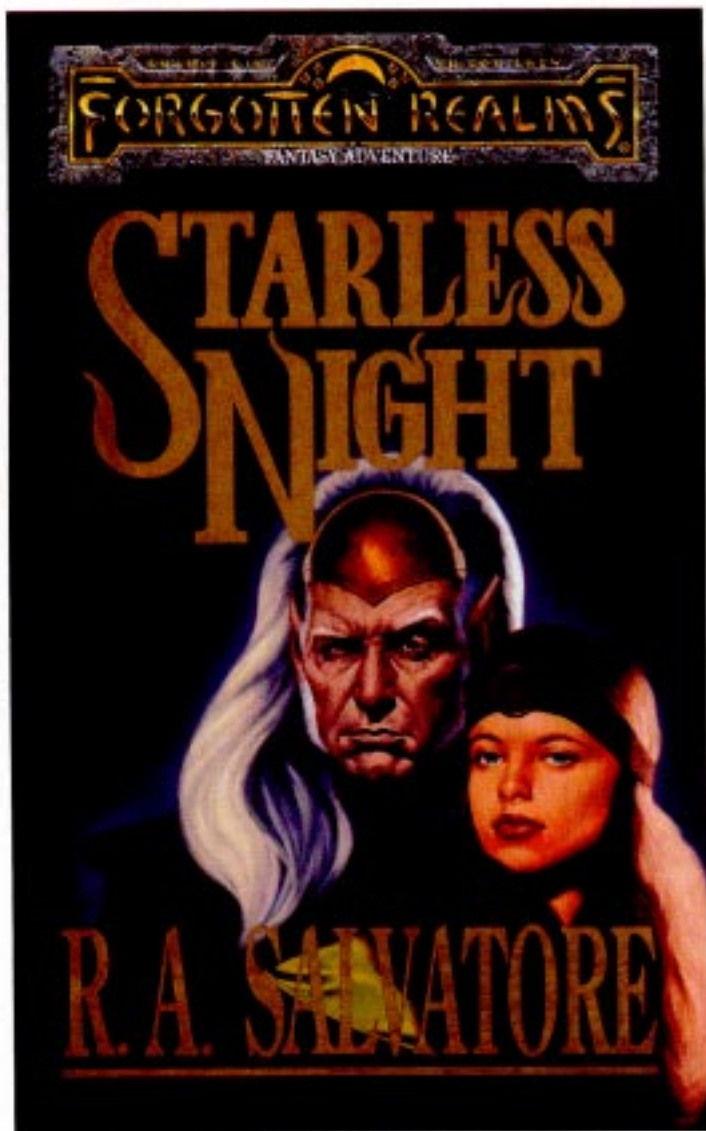
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NOVEL

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The making of a hardcover novel



by Marlys Heeszal and Rob King

Hardcover novels are more than paperbacks with a little extra cardboard. A hardcover tells a different sort of story in a different sort of format to a different sort of audience. The word enduring seems to sum up all aspects of the hardcover. Its characters and events and authors and materials are selected because they have the stuff that last; or, at least the publishers hope so.

To be sure, TSR, Inc., is no pioneer in the hardcover market — the *Textus Alexan-*

dricus (the earliest surviving edition of the Bible) was hardbound a good fifteen centuries before R. A. Salvatore's *The Legacy*. In the SF/fantasy genre, hardcovers go back the Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the works of Jules Verne. Even so, it was with trepidation as well as excitement that we ventured into that market, heretofore unknown to us. We were led by Mr. Salvatore, fearless author that he is, who crept first into the dark chamber of clothbound publishing and showed us that the coast

was clear.

Well, not exactly clear. Not just any book would have succeeded the way *The Legacy* did. It did so because of many factors: Drizzt, Salvatore, the story, and the format, to name the most important of these. When the Book department slated two hardcovers for 1993, we selected main characters, authors, stories, and formats that would endure.

So here they are, *Starless Night* and *I, Strahd*, discussed in terms of their main

characters, authors, stories, and formats, with some closing comments about what may lie on the hardcover horizon. Editor Marlys Heeszel, who has worked on Drizzt material since *Sojourn*, will discuss Salvatore's next hardcover. Rob King, editor of *I, Strahd* and author of two RAVENLOFT™ novels, *Heart of Midnight* and *Carnival of Fear* comments on Elrod's hardcover.

R. A. Salvatore, Drizzt, and Starless Night

My first run-in with Drizzt Do'Urden was in 1990. I was a then-fledgling employee of the TSR Book department whose assignment was to proofread the novel *Sojourn* by R. A. Salvatore. *Sojourn* was the sixth FORGOTTEN REALMS® novel written by Salvatore and the third to feature the dark elf as its main character. It was several months after that before I first encountered Strahd Von Zarovich, but I didn't really come to know him well until the publication of his memoirs, *I, Strahd*.

Both Drizzt and Strahd project images that are larger-than-life, making them good subjects for hardcover novels. Both are dark figures with deeply passionate natures, but while the vampire lord embraces, even relishes, his dark side, the dark elf longs only to leave that part of his life and nature behind him. In the novel *Sojourn*, Drizzt left the Underdark and Menzoberranzan behind him, seeking a life in the light. In *The Legacy*, he and his dwarven and human friends were placed in danger by vengeance-seeking drow relatives. Drizzt had sworn never to kill another drow, but found that vow hard to live with when it placed his friends in danger.

A loner by necessity as much as by nature, the dark-elf ranger searches for a place where he can belong, only to realize that unless he can resolve his own ambivalent feelings about his homeland and the drow who inhabit it, he never will.

It is an interesting twist that while Drizzt began his life in the dark and seeks to embrace the light, both metaphorically and physically, Strahd von Zarovich did exactly the opposite. From a much-lauded military career to the depravity of a blood-seeking hunter of the night, Strahd's journey takes him deeper into the earth, makes of him a creature who can exist only in the dark Drizzt seeks to escape.

And yet both are compelling characters, whose stories are the stuff of best-selling novels. Salvatore, who at the end of 1993 will have published a total of ten paperbacks and two hardcovers with TSR (yes, *twelve* books!) is no stranger to best-sellers. When we introduced *The Legacy* at the 1992 GEN CON® Game Fair, we couldn't stock the shelf fast enough to satisfy the eager buyers. This year we're sure to have a repeat performance, as Salvatore's fans are both loyal and legion.

In *Starless Night*, Drizzt leaves the relative comforts of Mithrill Hall to return to

Menzoberranzan, city of drow, thinking that only by sacrificing the happiness he has found can he save his friends from a fate worse than mere death. Unknown to him, a very stubborn human woman, Catti-brie, and his great, mystical panther, Guenhwyvar, are hot on his trail, determined to aid him in his quest. He has been away for thirty years, a short time in the long life of an elf, and little has changed. Lloth the Spider Queen still rules, and the first matron mother still desires to make Drizzt into an unwilling sacrifice. A peculiar alliance with a long-standing enemy and aid from a most unusual source balance the odds somewhat in favor of the renegade drow, but leave Drizzt wondering once again, "What price freedom?"

This is a question that has no easy answer, for Drizzt or for those who have come to love him, a question that may (or may not) be answered in Salvatore's 1994 hardcover *Siege of Darkness*. From the clothbound covers and the lovingly detailed maps on the faceplates to the story inside, the books are designed to provide many hours of reading enjoyment. A good book is a friend, something to be cherished. Equally so are the characters inside, especially when they are as honorable as the dark elf, Drizzt Do'Urden.

P. N. Elrod, Strahd, and I, Strahd

Though the fictional Strahd may have been around and sucking blood for nearly four hundred years, the historical Strahd is only celebrating his tenth birthday (or is that deathday?). The character sprang from the prolific pens of Tracy and Laura Hickman back in 1983 (during Reagan's first term, not that DRAGON® Magazine confirms or denies any connection). The AD&D® 1st Edition game module titled *Ravenloft* provided one page on "Who Strahd is and how to play him." From that single, seminal appearance, a whole realm of terror got its start.

Seven years later, in 1990, the now-proven genius of Bruce Nesmith and Andria Hayday turned to the task of fleshing out the undead lord and the lands around him into the new RAVENLOFT® campaign setting. They took a monstrous but moderately powered vampire and made him a sort of demigod of evil. What began as a page on "Who Strahd is" became a whole product line with over 1500 pages in paperbacks and easily 1000 pages in game material.

But Strahd had and still has more in him than that. Whether he is portrayed as the original vampire or as the evil demigod, Strahd's tragic fall somehow strikes a chord in readers. He, like Drizzt, is a dark figure and an outcast, though Strahd has chosen the opposite path from his dark-elf counterpart.

Just as there have been hundreds of renditions of Dracula, each with its own merits, there have been hundreds and thousands of Strahd, when all the RAVENLOFT campaigns are counted. It

was time to provide a synthesis. That's what *I, Strahd* set out to do. Now we can add 320 hardcover pages to the annals above.

Clearly, the memoirs of a quatracentarian vampire and demigod need to be written by a fairly sharp author. One who knows about vampires *and* about writing. That's how P. N. Elrod was chosen.

When Elrod set pen to paper on *I, Strahd*, the first six books of her Vampire Files had already hit the shelves, as well as "The Wind Breathes Cold," a short story in *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (edited by Martin Greenberg). Since finishing *I, Strahd*, Elrod has gone on to write the first two books in a new vampire series, *The Adventures of Jonathan Barrett*, and a short story in *Vampire Detectives* from Pulphouse.

These credentials and Elrod's writing left no doubt as to who we would choose to synthesize the long and varied history of Strahd into a single narrative. As editor of the project, I was not only pleasantly surprised by the quality of the first draft Elrod submitted, but even quietly ecstatic. (Skillful and tidy authors make editors' jobs easy.)

Part of the reason the writing went so well was that Elrod really enjoyed the character of Strahd. Her appreciation was shared by her husband Mark. When asked about her plans for their 1993 GEN CON Game Fair appearance, Elrod said, "Mark will be donning a tux and cape and the von Zarovich ruby and stalking around as Guess-Who. . . I'm making up a long, floaty black dress so I can be his 'companion.' It should be a hoot, though the ruby might have a curse on it: in my first attempt I used some bakable clay to make the pendant part, and it caught fire in the toaster oven and stunk up the joint something awful."

In my humble opinion, Elrod's expertise and enthusiasm have made an exceptional book. The reviewers agree. Margaret L. Carter, reviewer for *The Vampire's Crypt*, a fan magazine that has seen many entries in the genre, and about *I, Strahd*, she writes, "As an exciting supernatural adventure animated by Elrod's well-known vampiric expertise, this novel is highly recommended."

Perhaps even more than the *character* of Strahd, his tragic tale of loss is really what compels folks to read on. Tragic suffering is the flesh and blood of Gothic horror, just as the flesh and blood of splatter horror is . . . flesh and blood. Strahd would not be Strahd were it not for Tatyana, his lost love. Strahd would have made no pact with darkness were it not for his overwhelming desire to steal Tatyana from the wedding bower of his brother, Sergei. Indeed, the concept of each domain being a private hell for a given darklord got its inspiration from Strahd's curse—always to grasp after the flitting ghost of Tatyana, but never lay hold of her.

When the idea for *I, Strahd* first got passed down to me as editor, I thought we'd better steer clear of the Tatyana story. After all, the tale had been already deftly told by Tracy and Laura Hickman in the first adventure, Bruce Nesmith and Andria Hayday in the RAVENLOFT boxed set, and Christie Golden in *Vampire of the Mists*. But try as Elrod and I might, Strahd would not talk about much else. We started thinking the man's obsessed with this woman. Of course, then it struck us that he was.

So we changed tactics. Rather than avoiding the Tatyana story, we chose to retell it from a fresh perspective, much as the Dracula story has been told time and again. This was a more dangerous tack, and one I knew I would not have been up to. But Elrod delivered. The decade-old tale of Tatyana, unlike its undead protagonist, lives anew in *I, Strahd*.

In addition to the obvious format of a hardcover (i.e., more cardboard), *I, Strahd* boasts some nifty extras. The nine chapters in the book each contain a black and white plate with an illustration rendered by Stephen Fabian. Fabian's atmospheric and chilling depictions of the Dark Domains have become a hallmark of the RAVENLOFT line in books and games, providing the subtly terrifying backdrop to all that occurs there. The chapter openers each contain the now-famous Fabian

portrait of Strahd, and the front folio displays David C. Sutherland III's incomparable map of Castle Ravenloft. These features, added to the handy dust jacket that protects the hard binding, make the book's physical durability match the durability of the characters and the story.

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How about a non-Drizzt hardcover FORGOTTEN REALMS book? Good question. We'll answer that with another question: does the Realms have any characters, authors, or stories who deserve the format? The answer is, of course! We plead the fifth on any further comment, though you may be sniffing the faint fragrance of pipe smoke.

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Nin bared sharp teeth, clutching something in a grimy fist. Her dark eyes glared defiance from under matted black hair. "You can't have it!" could take it from her, Du thought, but it would mean a fight, and she bit like a rat. Not worth it. Besides, it was probably nothing, just some piece of glittery junk like she was always finding.

They were feral, sister and brother, warrens-bred. The fangs had taken the rest of their near kin, but they were still free, and fiercely proud of it.

"Don't want it!" he shrugged, turning away. "Just some junk. If you don't want to show me . . ."

That would get her, he knew.

Nin straightened slowly under his show of indifference, still holding tight to her new treasure, snarling her determination to keep what she had. But when he showed no inclination to attack, her defiance faded.

"It's a sign." And when he still showed no interest, "It's silver."

He spun around suddenly, and she bared her teeth again. "It's not! Where would you find silver?"

"It is!"

He shook his head. "Show me, then."

Slowly, ready to snatch it back, she opened her dirty hand. In the dim green glow of the phosphorescent tunnel walls, he saw a cross smaller than the last two joints of her little finger, made of some light metal.

"That's not silver! "

"It is!" She shut her fist again, backing away from him warily.

"How would you know?"

"I do. Anyway, it's a cross-sign. And it's mine."

He scowled jealously. It was indeed the cross-shape that the fangs were supposed to hate and fear. And it *might* be silver. A cross made of silver . . .

"I found it in the middens, with some bones," she added.

He shook his head angrily. Impossible to believe she could have found such a thing, even with her constant scratching and scavenging in the middens. He spat a contempt he was far from feeling.

Du took out his frustration on the rats, spearing two big ones in quick succession. He skinned and skewered them with the vague notion that she might be hungry and willing to trade her new find for food, but she backed out into another tunnel, more than competent to hunt for herself, as he well knew.

When he saw her next, she had the cross hanging around her neck on a cord braided from her own long black hair, and before long he came to accept that it was hers.

With her new find to protect her, Nin grew bolder, venturing more and more often into the middens, where the most wonderful things could sometimes be found, even after the scavenging activities of countless generations—fangs and 'munes both. No one knew where the treasure of the middens had come from. The notion that they hadn't always been there never occurred to the denizens of the warrens, just as there was no beginning or

The Dark Warrens

by Lois Tilton

Illustrations by Bob Klasnich

end to the tunnels themselves, no beyond. If their remote ancestors had once dwelled outside, on the world's surface, they had no notion of it.

But the middens were hazardous, a favorite hunting-place of the fangs. The 'munes hunted the rats for food. The fangs hunted the 'munes for blood. The fangs lived in glorious glowing caverns—or so Nin and Du believed, never having seen them. The only real hope of survival for their kind lay in being quick and alert, although the fangs feared the cross-sign (it was rumored) and, even more, silver (which neither of them had ever seen).

Nin crept quietly into the midden, alight with the joy of discovery, stroking the silver cross around her neck with one finger. It was in such a place as this that she had found her best treasure. This time she might find—oh, anything!

There was no stink, which she was glad of. When someone died or the fangs got them, people would drag the remains into some midden and lay them out with the vague notion that they belonged now among their own kind. But the bones here were all old. Even the phosphorescent light glowing from the walls was dim purple. Whoever had last searched here had done so generations before Nin was born.

Tumbled skulls grinned up at her with rat teeth, like her own white teeth. She didn't see or expect to see skulls with long sharp fangs—the fangs didn't die. It was why there were so many of them.

Rat bones mingled with the larger ones. Rat teeth had gnawed on many of them. Nin knew that sometimes rats would pick up some bit of shiny stuff and carry it away to their dens. She spent a great deal of time searching for such dens, but she had found the silver cross around the neck-bones of a small skeleton, still almost intact. She remembered being told once, when she was smaller, "You have careful eyes." It was true. Her eyes were wide and black and could make out shapes clearly even in this old, fading light. There were low, dark corners in the midden. Who could tell what might have been overlooked by the previous scavengers?

Wedge part-way into a crack, she found a small copper disk, and in a corner a small bead, pierced through its center. Around the next corner it was even darker; there might be even more treasures.

Nin shrieked as cold, dry claws encircled her bare ankle, but at the same time she kicked hard and broke the grip. She ran for the entrance to the midden, knowing she was doomed, expecting at any moment to feel the claws seizing her from behind, the sharp long teeth sink into her throat.

She paused three corridors away, gasping breath into her burning lungs. No pursuit. No one coming after her.

She forced herself to hold her breath and listen. No sound of running footsteps. Nothing but the pounding of her heartbeat, which she vainly tried to still.

Nin clutched the silver cross around her neck, wondering if somehow it had protected her. Now, this was an intriguing notion! She stood still, listening, for some time. Then, with intense caution, she made her way back into the midden. Carefully, at as great a distance as possible, she rounded the narrow corner again.

The fang's mad, reddened eyes met her dark ones. It hissed at her weakly, and its hands clawed at the ground, as if it could pull itself toward her by its fingertips. It was lying on its stomach and didn't seem able to move.

Still holding her cross, she took another step closer. No, it couldn't move. Something was holding it. Curious, she moved even closer. It twisted frantically, clutching at her, but Nin was careful to keep out of the grasp of the reaching claws.

At last she saw what was holding it down: a wooden stake driven through its body into the tunnel floor.

She stared at the fang in fascination, wondering how long it had been here like this. That someone could survive such treatment . . . But of course it was a fang; it couldn't die. She hadn't considered up to now that this might be a disadvantage in certain circumstances.

The fang had abated its struggles. *His* struggles, Nin observed. He lay there staring at her, as if willing her to come closer. She shook her head slightly.

The silver had grown slick and warm in her hand. Suddenly she thought, here was an opportunity to test it, to see if the fangs really feared silver—if it was in fact silver. With difficulty, for the cord she had braided was short, she slipped it over her head.

Holding it in front of him, just out of his reach, she whispered, "Do you know what this is? It's *silver!*"

He flinched slightly and pulled back his grasping hands. Nin was elated. He feared it! He did!

She stood back for a moment. The stake that impaled him severely restricted his range of movement. If she just avoided those hands . . .

His shirt was pulled up at his hips. She stared at it. Such fine stuff, nothing like the crudely sewn ratskin shift she was wearing. She pulled the cloth back, exposing white skin, even whiter than her own. He writhed, hissing with the strain, twisting his body to try to reach her. A groan, a supreme effort, and his claws raked her calf.

Nin set her teeth and pressed the silver cross against the back of his hand.

The fang screamed, jerking his hand away!

Exulting, Nin touched the silver to him again, pressing it against the skin of his lower back. Again the scream, as he thrashed against the hold of the stake, trying to tear himself free. She pulled the silver away, stared at the mark it had left, lividly dark like a burn.

"Silver!" she breathed in awe.

"Don't." The voice was a raw gasp.

Nin was intrigued. The fang had actually spoken to her! She moved to where she could inspect him more closely. One broken-nailed hand snatched at her, but she held out the silver. "Stop that. Or I'll do it again."

He hissed, but the reaching hand pulled back, clenched tight. There was a burn mark in the shape of a cross on the back of it.

Sitting back on her heels, out of his reach, Nin examined her captive. She had never seen one of his kind before, except at a distance. He had fangs, of course, long and sharp, giving his face an expression of predatory ferocity. A kind of dark thick froth was on his mouth. His eyes were lurid and tormented. A sort of spasm seemed to go through him, and he clutched convulsively at her again.

"No," she warned, holding out the silver.

His jaws seemed to work, and more of the froth appeared on his lips.

"How did you get like this?" she asked him. "Did 'munes do it to you?"

He shook his head. "Not . . . your kind. Mine."

Nin shifted slightly closer to him, swinging the silver on its cord. "What for?"

"I stole . . . cattle."

Nin frowned. "Cattle?"

"You . . . your kind . . . wild cattle." He started to reach for her again, but recalled himself, moaning. His head thrashed back and forth. Then, with a convulsive movement, he bit down into his own forearm.

Nin leaned back on her heels to watch this, considering. The other fangs must have staked him here like this as punishment, obviously to starve him slowly, since the wooden spike through his body hadn't killed him. She wondered how long he had been there, how long it would take.

The fang lunged desperately after her as she got to her feet.

When she came back, she was carrying a large dead rat. "You want it?" she asked, holding the carcass out by its naked tail.

He snatched, but of course she had held it out of his reach. "No. First, tell me what you mean about cattle."

There was more foam on his lips, but he shook his head and made an obvious effort to talk, all the while staring at Nin and the dangling rat.

"We keep . . . cattle. For food."

"For their blood?"

"Blood. Yes."

Nin thought about this. She supposed he meant 'munes, captive 'munes. She had always felt little but scorn for them, being free herself. "But, then, don't they die?"

"No. Not . . . usually."

But his control had slipped again, and he grabbed for her. Nin took a step backward and tossed him the rat, watching with fascinated intensity as he plunged his fangs into the furry body, sucking hard to drain out the blood. The process wasn't appetizing to watch, and even the fang had to stop a few times to spit out fur, gagging. Nin supposed he didn't care for the taste of rat blood.

She considered again what she had learned. So they called her kind "wild cattle." But when the fangs hunted them, when they caught someone, the 'munes invariably were killed.

The fang had finally discarded the drained carcass of the rat. He lay slumped on the tunnel floor in seeming exhaustion.

But Nin was still curious. "Why did you steal, then? If you had cattle?"

He raised his head. "I didn't have cattle! Not my own. And I was hungry."

Nin thought about that. "Why didn't you?"

"You don't know anything!" the fang said with weary scorn. "Go away."

She figured he'd get hungry again, eventually. She just had to wait. When she finally came back to the midden, she was carrying another dead rat.

He'd been feeding on himself again, that was obvious.

Both bare forearms were pocked with dark scabs. The froth on his mouth had dried to a crust. Nin had meant to hold out the rat until he told her more, but she thought maybe that she'd waited too long. She tossed the carcass to him, watched while he savaged it, almost tearing it apart in an effort to extract the last drop of blood.

She waited until he lay panting and retching on the tunnel floor.

"You want another one?"

He snarled and lunged at her, jarring the stake and wrenching a cry of pain.

She shook her head, settling back on her heels, prepared to wait if necessary. "Tell me, first."

He moaned. "Tell you what?"

"Why your . . ." She hesitated. "Why your cattle don't die when you drink their blood."

His jaw worked, and she thought he was going to bite himself again, but he shook his head. "We don't need . . . all that much. When we're not hungry. The cattle live. The more we have . . ."

"But when you come hunting us in the warrens—"

"That's different. That's sport. It's . . . better. The kill."

Nin nodded. "But if you were so hungry, why didn't you hunt? Why steal someone else's?"

"I never hunted alone. Never knew these warrens. I never meant . . . to kill the cattle I stole. It was only once. But I was hungrier than I'd thought—"

"Then you didn't know they'd do this to you."

He laughed painfully. "No! I knew . . . there would be punishment . . . but not this!"

She frowned. There was clearly much about the fangs she didn't know. "Why didn't you have any cattle of your own, then?"

He lifted his head to look directly at her. "I *was* cattle, like you, before I changed. The old ones don't like to share!"

"Like me? What do you mean? I'm 'mune!"

He shook his head vehemently. "You know nothing! You live here with the rats, and you know nothing! No one knows if they're immune! No one knows! Until you change—or die."

Until this moment, the natural order of Nin's world had been simple and immutable: There were fangs, who didn't die; and there were 'munes, who did. The fangs preyed on the 'munes for their blood. This notion of changing was new to her. "You mean, I could . . ."

"Yes!" There was a desperately eager tone in his voice now, and his hands reached out for her. "All it takes is one bite! The factor is passed on in the blood. Only one bite, and you'd change. You know these warrens! Think how you could hunt!"

She shifted slightly backward. She knew quite well what he wanted. "You'd drain my blood like that rat's."

"It doesn't matter. If you change, dying doesn't matter. Think of it! Never to die!"

She did think of it. "And what if I don't change? Then I'd just be dead. Most of your cattle die, don't they? Most of them are 'munes!" She clutched the silver around her neck reassuringly. She could admit she was intrigued by the strange world of the fangs, but that didn't mean she wanted to be one.

He clutched at her again when she stood to leave. The

hunger in his eyes was raw and naked.

"I'll bring you another rat. Then you can tell me more."

"At least—"

"What?"

"At least, not dead!"

That, she figured she could manage.

Du's sister had always been secretive, crawling around in the middens, hunting her tawdry little pieces of junk. The cross-sign couldn't really be silver, he'd convinced himself of that. Might as well let her have it.

But just lately she'd been more furtive than ever. Hiding something. Keeping things from him.

He couldn't let her get away with it. And besides, this time she might really have found something. Something worth taking from her.

He stalked her through the warrens, finding it not as easy as he'd thought it would be. She was scrawnier than he was and could slip through places that thwarted him. Time and again, she lost him.

But this time she was intent on rat-hunting. He couldn't quite figure out what she was doing. She had two good-sized ones already, more than she could eat. Still, she cached them and kept on hunting.

She finally got one that still wriggled and squealed when she held it up. Seemingly satisfied, she set off in a purposeful trot. Du followed after, barely managing to keep her in sight.

After a while he was in territory unfamiliar to him. This wasn't in itself a particular concern; no one knew all the branches of the warrens. But they were getting rather too

close to the territory of the fangs for his complete comfort. He'd always known his sister's insatiable, reckless curiosity was likely to get her killed sooner or later. This was just further proof.

Suddenly she seemed to disappear. Despite himself, Du found panic starting to seize him. Where was she? Where had she gone? But then he heard the sudden squealing of the rat, which led him to the low, narrow entrance to a midden. He slid inside, blinking in the old, dim light. There was his sister, and in front of her on the ground, the form of—

The words burst out of him: "That's a fang!"

It was prone on the tunnel floor, clutching the carcass of a rat. Its lurid red eyes glared at him, and it hissed. Du couldn't quite understand what was keeping it from springing on his sister and rending her throat, draining her blood.

Nin spun around and snarled at him, rat teeth bared as viciously as the fang's. "Keep away from him! He's mine!"

Du blinked in angry consternation. This was beyond anything he had ever seen, even from Nin. But then he saw the stake that pinned the fang to the tunnel floor, and he grew more bold. "Get back and I'll kill it. Whoever did this must have missed its heart."

He started to search the midden for a weapon, but she placed herself firmly in front of the fang. "Go away! I told you, he's mine!"

"That's a fang! It'll kill you!"

"He won't. He can't move. Besides," her head lifted smugly, her hand went around the cross she always wore at her neck, "my cross is silver. Fangs can't touch me. It



burns them. Look at his hand."

Du stared. It was impossible that she had captured this fang and staked him here, all with the power of the silver cross. But he had to believe what he saw: the mark on the back of the fang's hand (still clutching the rat), the stake through his back.

His eyes narrowed. Nin stood in front of him defiantly. But this wasn't the matter of a worthless trinket, something he could let her keep, now that he knew it was valuable. The silver was obviously real. Its power was real. He had to have it.

"Give it here."

She backed away, snarling, clutching it. "It's mine."

"Give it here." She would bite. She always did. But he knew that game all too well, and he backhanded her across the jaw before she could try it, knocking her head back.

Bleeding, she hit the tunnel wall, but she came back at him, claws extended, determined to defend what was hers. He hit her again, harder. While she was reeling, he grabbed the cross around her neck, but the braided hair wouldn't break; it was as tough as she was. He twisted it but bellowed in enraged pain as she sunk her teeth into his hand, kicking at his shins and knees, clawing his face. With his free hand, he struck her again on the face, jarring her teeth loose, and twisting the cord as hard as he could, he snapped it.

Nin howled. Lunging after him, she tackled him from behind, tripping him before he could escape from the midden. Du went down to his knees, flinging out his hands to break his fall, still clutching the silver cross.

And clawed hands seized him.

With an ultimate, desperate effort, the trapped fang's claws closed around his prey. Froth sprayed from his mouth and he was screaming as he pulled Du closer.

They both were screaming, and Nin, too. Du fought, flailing out with the silver, striking the fang on his exposed face and arms, but he couldn't break the predator's grip.

Long sharp teeth plunged into the flesh of one of his forearms. Du shrieked with terror, thrashing, kicking. Then, with renewed strength, the fang dragged his victim even closer, until finally he could sink his teeth into the exposed veins of Du's throat, silencing him.

Aching, half-blinded by pain, Nin watched her brother's blood sucked from his body. It took a surprisingly short time, hardly longer than it had taken the fang to drain a rat.

"He's dead," she said finally, crawling a little closer.

"Yes," the fang gasped. The crazed look was slowly fading from his eyes.

"Will he change?" she asked after a while.

The fang prodded the body. "No. I don't think so. No."

Nin nodded, slightly disappointed. So Du had been a 'mune, after all. It might have been . . . interesting, though, to see him change.

Then her hand went to her throat and she scowled, remembering. Her silver cross.

The fang laughed at her shortly. "I have it."

"It's mine."

"Not anymore."

"You can't hold it. The silver burns."

He laughed again, so bitterly. "Do you think I can't

stand it? After this?"

She gnawed on her lower lip, glaring at him impotently. "Give it back."

"Get me out of this."

"What? Me? How?"

"Pull it out. Pull the stake out."

Her eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"I'm not hungry now," he tried to assure her. "I won't touch you."

She glanced at the body of her brother and supposed this might be so. "Give me the silver and I'll try."

"No."

Nin considered the situation. She didn't like it. She thought of trying to kill the fang and take the silver that way, but if he'd survived the stake all this time, he'd probably survive anything she could manage to do to him. And she did suppose this was his only likely chance to get free. The stake hurt him, she knew that much. "I'll try," she finally, reluctantly agreed.

She approached him very cautiously, from behind where his hands couldn't reach her, but he did seem in control of himself and didn't try to grab at her. The stake had been driven through the right side of his chest, through the rib cage. There was a dried pool of blood and other dark matter underneath him. She wondered how long the stake was. It protruded up from his back at least the length of her forearm.

She planted her feet, grabbed hold of the bloodstained wood, and pulled. It didn't move. She frowned and pulled harder, with all the strength of her legs and back, straining with the effort. When it still didn't shift, she tried rocking it back and forth to loosen it, ignoring the pained intake of breath from the fang. This had been his idea; he couldn't complain.

"I can't," she gasped at last. "I can't move it."

He cursed, something muffled and incomprehensible. "You'll have to saw it off, then." When she said nothing, "If you want this back." His hand opened to show the silver and a blistered palm.

"What's a saw?"

"It's a length of metal or something hard, with teeth." He sketched an explanation on the ground, in spilled blood.

"I don't know." She thought of the middens she knew, the caches of treasure. Her people didn't carry possessions with them, always on the run. "I might be able to find something, I'm not sure."

"Come back when you do." Another choking laugh. "I'll be waiting here."

She found it, finally. It took a while, but no one was better than Nin at finding things. The thin strip of metal, half again as long as her palm, was notched on one side the way he'd showed it.

When she got back to the midden, she hesitated, not liking the look in his eyes, the desperate way he demanded, "Do you have it? Do you have the saw?"

She stepped closer, saw his hands twitch. He licked a speck of froth from his lip, then clenched his jaw.

She backed away. "I'll go catch a rat."

"No! Curse your blood, curse your spawn. Do it now!"

She shook her head. He might think he had the self-

restraint, but she didn't trust him. In a short while, she came back with a stunned rat, tossed it at him, and stood at the entrance to the midden until he'd finished with it.

Finally she approached. Du's body lay rigid and stiff limbed next to the fang, and she pulled it away to the other side of the tunnel, arranging it as straight as she could. At least the rats hadn't been at it yet.

"It was mine," she hissed angrily. He shouldn't have tried to take it away from her.

The fang cursed her sullenly, but she felt more secure now when she came into his reach. Carefully, she knelt and began to saw.

It wasn't easy. The saw was small and thin, the wood was hard. It took a while for her to catch on to the way it worked, and before that, she managed to snap the blade and had to carry on with only the larger half, stopping frequently to rest cramped, blistered fingers.

The fang was impatient. He twisted, hurting himself, trying to catch sight of her progress. "What are you doing? Why is it taking so long?"

"Just keep still. This isn't easy, you know."

The blade rasped through the wood, the tiny grains of sawdust spilled onto his torn, bloodstained shirt. The cut slowly lengthened. She might have done it more quickly, but Nin had a reason for the way she worked.

At last the wood wavered, with only a thin strip left uncut. Nin grasped it at the top and pulled backwards, and it parted with a snap.

The fang inhaled sharply.

"All right, give me the silver," Nin demanded.

He ignored her, started to push his body up from the

ground, against the pull of the remaining stake.

Suddenly he stopped, trembling, feeling the sharp point of the wood pressed firmly against the left side of his back, the acute angle at which Nin had painstakingly sawn the stake. "I said, give me the silver now. Your heart is on this side, isn't it?"

He hissed in frustration, but his hand opened and the silver cross dropped to the ground.

"No." The sharp wood pressed down even harder. "Throw it. To the entrance."

He hesitated, then did it. The silver slid across the tunnel floor.

Nin stared down at her weapon. She wondered if she had the strength to do it, to drive it through into his heart.

Then she skipped quickly away, out of his reach, still holding the wood. As she stooped quickly to pick up her silver (hers!) she saw him straining to push himself up off the stub of the stake.

She didn't wait to see if he made it.

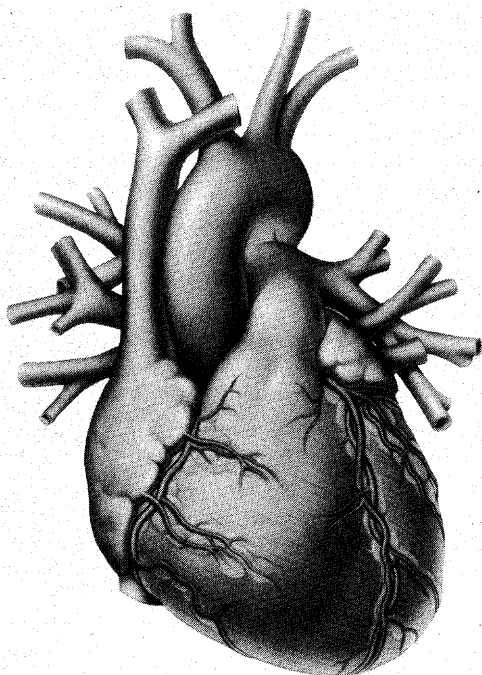
Sometime later, Nin came back to the midden. The sawn-off stub protruded from the ground. She felt a certain relief. She hadn't been sure what she would have done if he'd still been pinned there.

She paused to glance over at Du. He wasn't doing so well by this time. Rats had been at him, and he was starting to stink. Well, it was his own fault.

Then she stooped to pick up what she'd come back for, the two halves of the saw blade. As worn, bent, and broken as they were, they might come in useful again some time. You could never tell.

Ω

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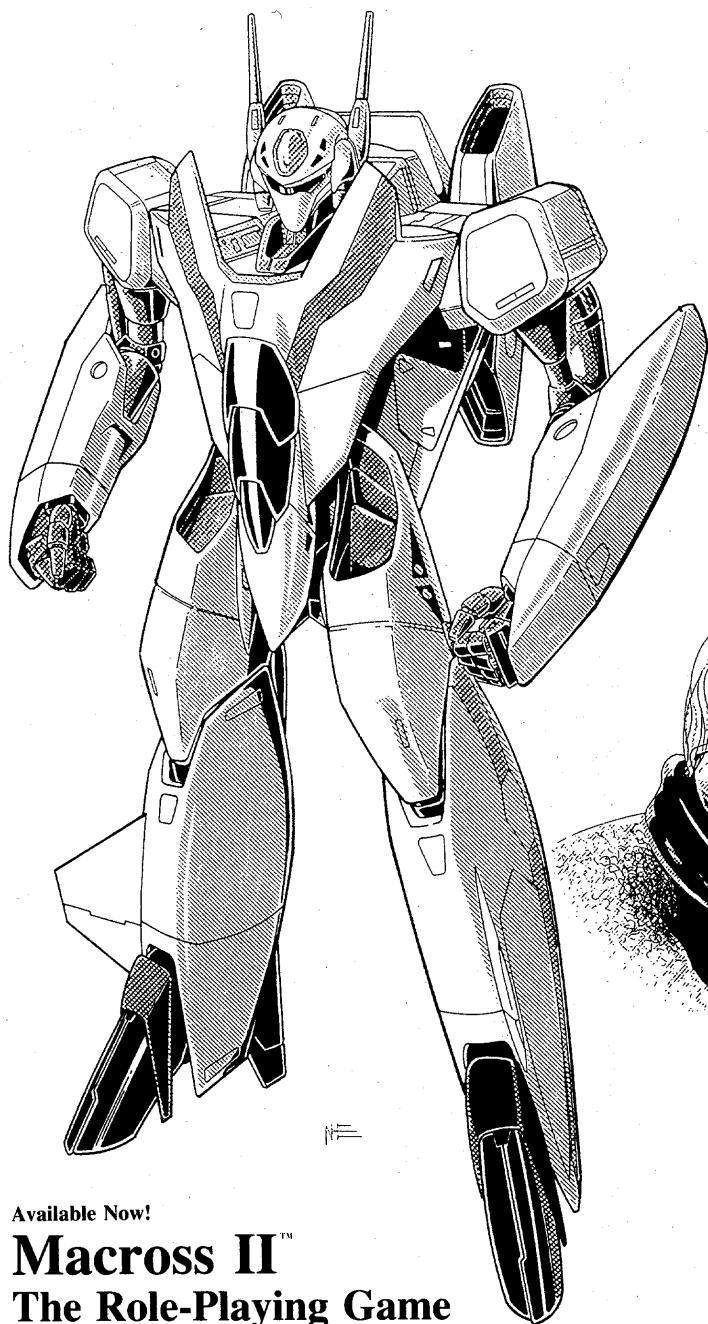
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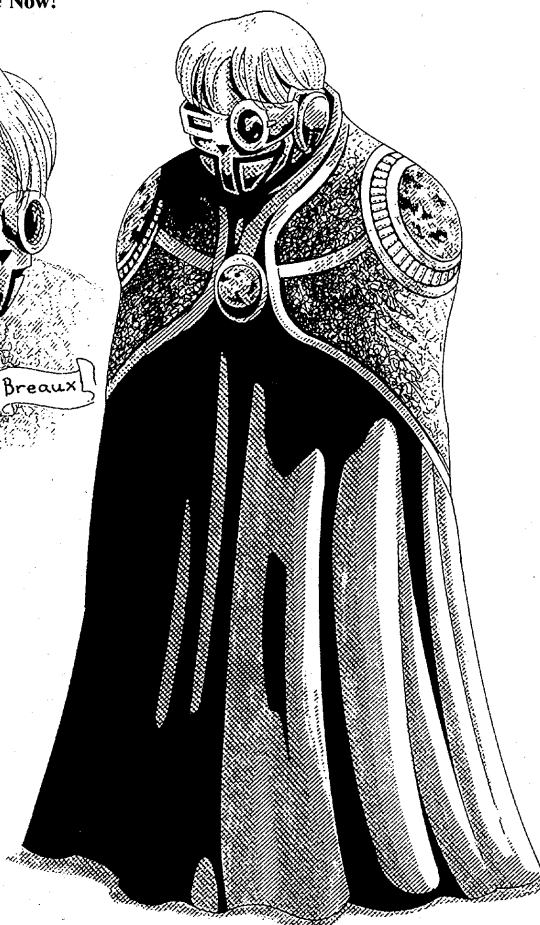
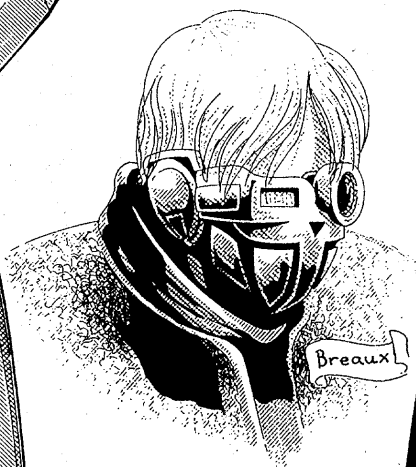
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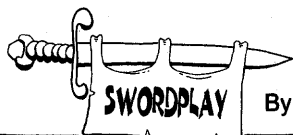
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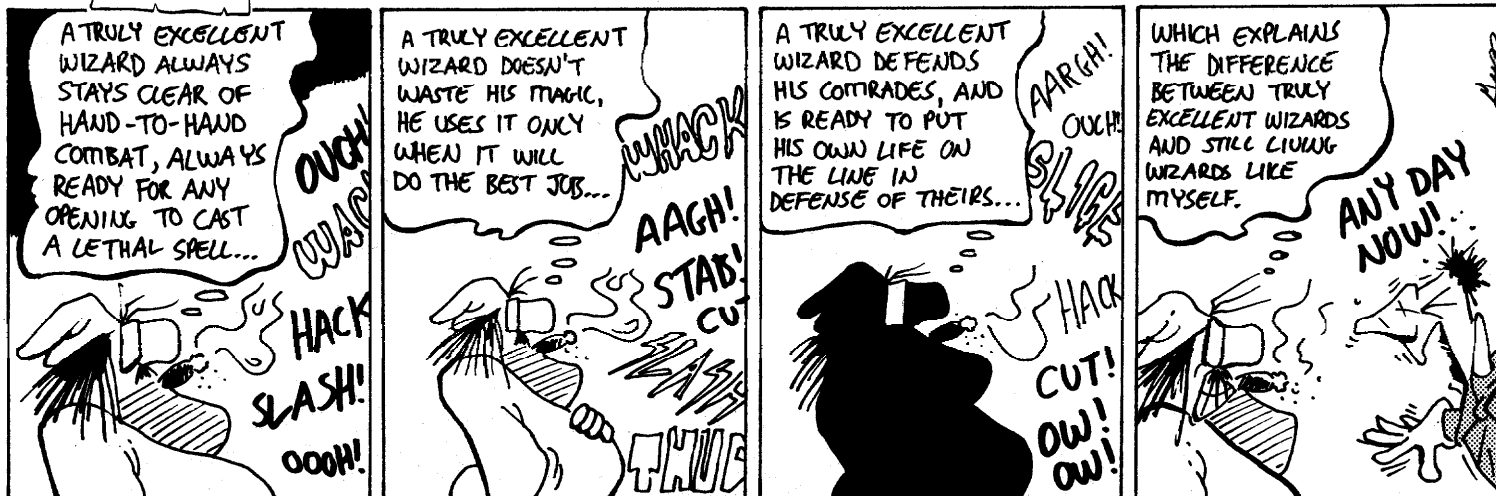
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By Matthew Guss



Yamoupa

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WHAT IF HE ACCIDENTALLY TURNED TO GAS AND GOT LOST?!

CAN I ASK YOU A PERSONAL QUESTION?

SHOOT.

WHY ARE YOU VISIBLE IN THE MIRROR?

I USUALLY AM. MIRRORS ONLY REFLECT MY IMAGE WHEN I'VE BEEN EATING GARLIC.

DRESSING ROOM

APPLIANCES

YOU HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH GARLIC?

SOME OF US HAVE A PROBLEM WITH GARLIC. I MYSELF CAN'T STAND HORSE RADISH. EACH OF US IS UNIQUE. IT'S A VAMPIRE THING.

SO, IN THEORY, A VAMPIRE MIGHT BE IMMUNE TO, SAY, RUNNING WATER -

LIKE ME.

MALE RESTRAINTS

HOW ABOUT WOODEN STAKES?

HA-HA! NOT THIS VAMP! YOU SHOULD SEE THE LOOKS ON THOSE CLERICS' FACES...

..... SUNLIGHT.



AND MISS MY WEEKENDS AT THE BEACH? YOU MUST BE KIDDING!

SURELY SOMETHING OTHER THAN CONDIMENTS CAN GET UNDER YOUR SKIN.



OH, SOME THINGS - HERE HE IS! OH LOOK, ISN'T HE HANDSOME?

A LITTLE TIGHT ON HIM, ISN'T IT?

HE'LL SHRINK INTO THEM, ONCE HIS ORGANS ATROPHY.

LATER -

LET ME SEE, HERE'S MY GREEDY DROW SLAVE TRADER FEA...



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SOB! AND IT WAS FUN!!



I'M BACKSLIDING INTO EVIL, AND NOBODY CARES!! OH, POOR FEA. YOU WERE BORN TO BE A GAME SHOW HOSTESS, NOT A SPY OR AN ADVENTURER.



NOW TELL ME WHO BOUGHT JOE BEFORE I RIP YOUR THROAT OUT.

I DON'T KNOW!! HE PAID IN CASH!!

WAIT. SOME OF THESE COINS HAVE A VERY FAMILIAR DEVICE UPON THEM...

WITHERS! THIS TIME I AM IMPRESSED! OGREK HAD A FAILSAFE MANEUVER ALL READY, AND WE NEVER EVEN SUSPECTED! PLEASE GIVE HIM MY FONDEST THANKS!



I'LL DO THAT, JOE.

NOW, AS OGREK'S LATEST THRALL, YOU'LL BE CHAINED TO THE OARS FOR A WEEK.

ARE YOU RIGHT OR LEFT-HANDED?

OH DEAR.



By Doug Slack

DRACULA LOCKS HIS KEYS IN HIS COFFIN



By Mathew Guss

"Off hand, Wendy, I'd say you sewed on the wrong shadow."



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By F. Gunter

"3 more minutes and you would've been a newt!"



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"You know better than to play with wooden stakes."

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ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 43







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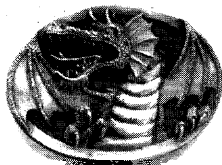
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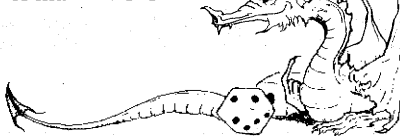
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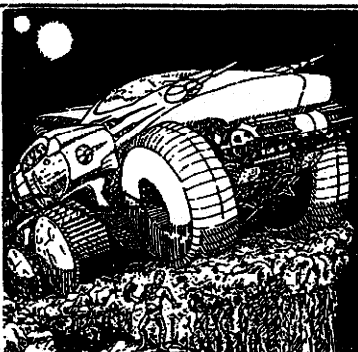
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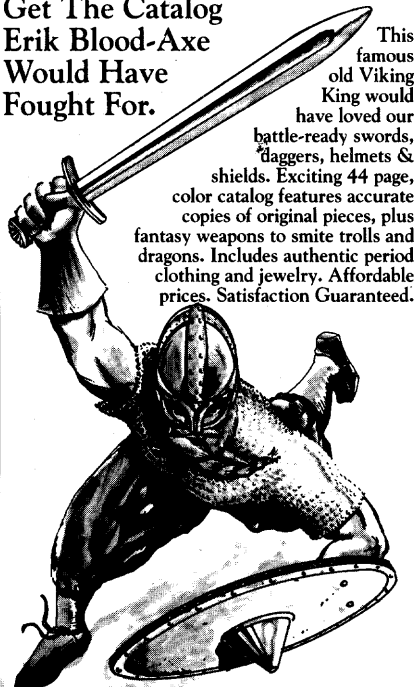
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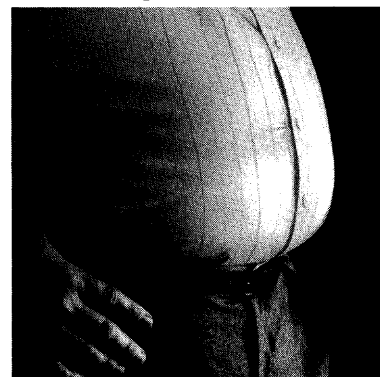
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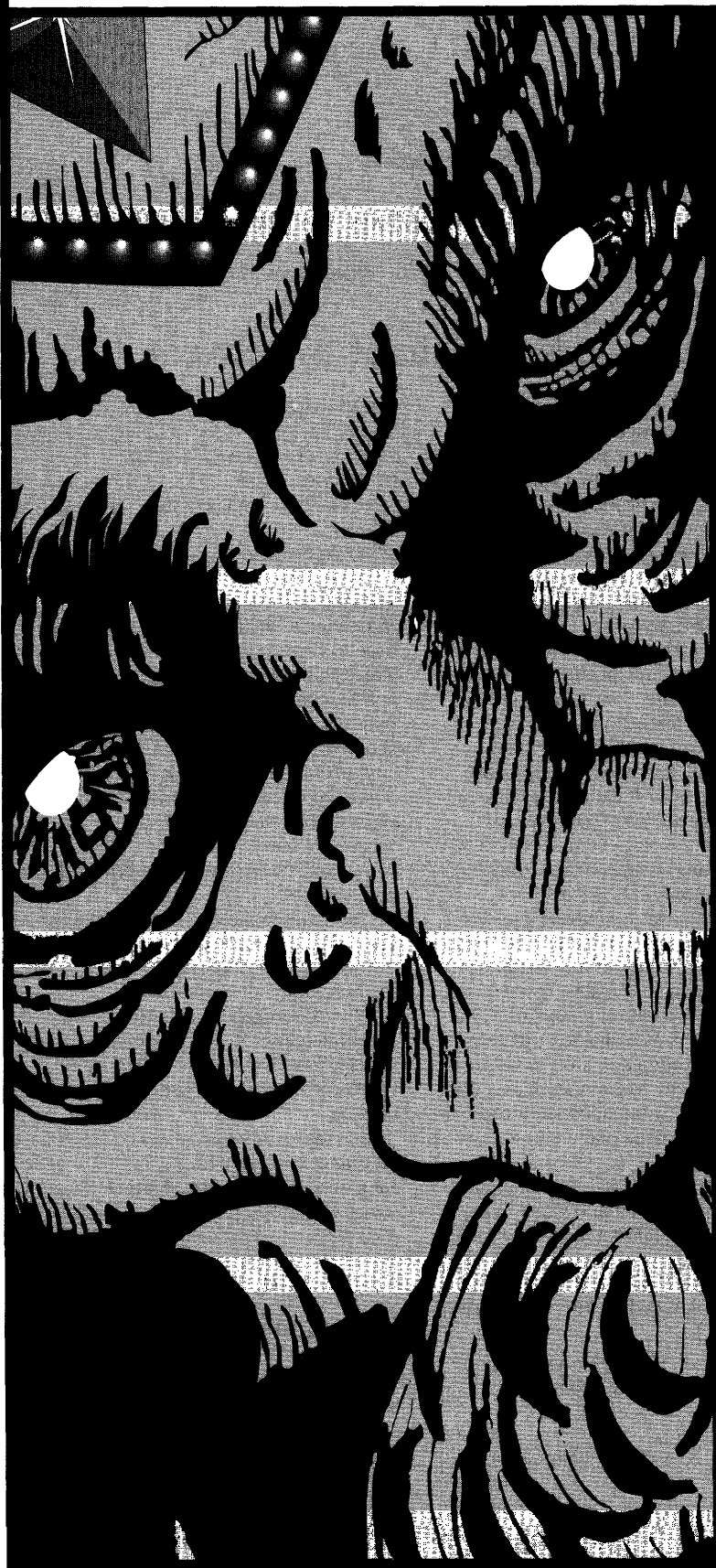
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Through the LOOKING Glass

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Nightmare on Miniatures Street

the ballot box. Use your rights and vote.

We must work harder to recruit new players into the hobby. I polled 25 shops in different parts of the country, and most reported slightly lower miniatures sales. Most sales were in filler figures or character packs. Only one store reported an increase in sales. Sales of army-size numbers of figures are down significantly, so it will be harder for people to find opponents for their games. It will also be easier for companies to drop specific figures due to a decrease in sales. This has a spiraling effect to further discourage purchases.

You can encourage new hobbyists by running colorful, balanced scenarios or campaigns with your local hobby store or clubs. Local directories of gamers also help enormously as they enable people to look at figures and games before they buy, ensuring that opponents are available.

We present here an update on a previously shown castle model (DRAGON® issue #197). Old Guard Hobbies now has doors and portcullises for its castles, made of a pewter-based alloy. Our sample had flash on the portcullis, but it cleaned up easily with a small file. Strip and stud detail is good. The door was without flash and the wood detail on both the door and drop bar was clear. These pieces really add to the castle's appearance.

I want to thank Sam White for the paint job on Dead Man's Chest and Chris Osburn for painting Death Takes a Ride. Our miniatures this month focus on horror—both ancient and modern. Do you fight them or join them? You can decide after seeing the figures.

Miniatures' product ratings

| | |
|-------|---------------|
| * | Poor |
| ** | Below average |
| *** | Average |
| **** | Above average |
| ***** | Excellent |

Reviews

Black Dragon Pewter

2700 Range Road
North Bellmore NY 11710

9717 Nightmare

**** ½

This piece could easily serve as a diorama, display, or simple monster. It is made of pewter and stands 80 mm from top of base to the top feathers of the left wing. The circular base is 30 mm in diameter and just over 18 mm tall with a 5 mm flat pedestal. A rocky cairn framed by a cattle skull with ruby eyes and a 15-mm cobra supports the main figure. A grass-obscured, weathered tombstone sits to the right with a winged skull. Detracting from this on the review model is a slightly off-set, poorly cleaned up mold line on the pedestal.

The figure is molded along the same lines as RAFM's Dream Warrior set. A tattered robe hides an undead body showing only bony, twisted arms and a skinless skull with straggly hair. A thick, serrated sword is poised to strike downward; its jeweled hilt flashes. The figure has thick, feathered wings with good detail and veining.

This figure actually scales out to almost 15 mm but fits in well with the RAFM figures that we reviewed last Halloween (issue #186). You have here a great grave guardian, or a horror to drop on adventurers while they're tearing up a crypt. This is a reasonably priced piece at \$20.

9762 Nightly Rider

**** ½

This piece is tailor-made for gaming in 25mm or 28-mm scale. The diorama consists of a one-piece sculpture of a dragon rising into the air from its treasure trove with a wraith as its rider.

The base is a rough stone representation of a cave floor. Spread over the surface are piles of coins, a sheathed sword, an urn, a couple of stones, and a human skull



Nightmare (Black Dragon Pewter)

By the time you read this, the battle for lead will be over. Officials from the New York State Health Department have ruled that historical and fantasy lead figures are toys rather than collectibles, and thus fall under a much more stringent set of health guidelines. This came in spite of the exemption granted to our industry by the Federal government in recent bills, and in spite of extensive evidence our side presented. We have ample grounds to fight this ruling, but the war chest is empty. Even now, you are paying for the legal battles in the form of higher prices for miniatures. For those of you in states with laws of this type, it is time to modify your government's behavior through the use of

on a bed of chain mail. No detracting mold marks are on the treasure.

The dragon is relatively small, 128 mm long with a wing span of 110 mm. The wings appear leathery, with only minor pitting that looks like past wounds. The dragon looks to be a cross between a black dragon and a wyvern, with a birdlike beak and barbed tail. The skin is scaly, with hair at the joints. The belly is protected by plates, and the neck is protected by a sharp sawtooth ridge that becomes more rounded farther back. The tail is long and wrapped around the stone wall it leaps from. The back legs are tucked up, and the front claws grip a crystal ball. Ruby eyes grace a snarling face.

A faceless wraith with a wind-blown cowl and robe sits astride the dragon. Robe detail is excellent, and only overly vigorous finishing and flash on the dragon's tail (which is easily removed) mar the miniature.

This is a well-done miniature that is almost in the price range of the average gamer. At \$25, this fully assembled dragon is not out of line, especially if you can use it for gaming.

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 E. McMillan
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1030 Dead Man's Chest

This nine-piece, nonlead kit has a base 62 mm across and molded to represent the floor of a treasure room. On the floor, as a challenge to veteran painters, is a variety of weapons, shields, books, instruments, scrolls, girdles, plates, jewels, and coins. A small chest and the frame for a chest are molded to the base. A large chest full of goodies is supposed to fit into a space on the floor, but it doesn't unless you rest it on the pile.

A female fighter holds a piece of treasure, peering at it. Facial features are good, with shoulder-length hair covered by a decorated helmet that resembles a bicyclist's. Her Jazeraint-type armor is split in front to show cleavage. She wears leg protectors known as *blemi-grevieres*, knee-high boots, and a skirt and girdle with a bag and knife hanging from the belt. A long sword is at the ready in her right hand.

The first male fighter wears bracers and rests his axe against the ground. On his back is a kite shield with a two-handed sword between his back and the shield. The upper part of his body is also clad in Jazeraint-type metal armor cinched at the waist by a belt with a plain buckle. His shoulders have plate protection; a knife rests on the right side of his belt. Soft boots protect the feet, and trousers cover his legs. His face is a classic barbarian's; he wears long hair and a proper mustache.

Alas, no one sees the trick being played on the last fighter. Not even his studded

leather over chain mail protects him from his fate. With wide eyes and clutching hands, as he fights to escape the arm that has just shot up from the treasure he was examining. A muscular hand grips his mouth and throat, jerking him from his feet. There is no room for him to use the sword clenched in his right hand.

This set really deserves a five-star rating for detail, but it loses a full star in the quality-control department. The mold lines around the pillar are terrible, and you need a lot of patience and a Dremel tool to fix the ends. The base had a large amount of flash around the sides that was not easy to clean, and none of the figures fit in the holes provided for them.

If you like challenges and don't mind the work, I do recommend this set. The wealth of detail and overall appearance make it all worthwhile. This diorama is worth its \$13.95 price tag, even with the work needed.

RAFM Company, Inc.

20 Parkhill Rd. East
Cambridge, Ontario
CANADA N1R 1P2

3715 Giant Tomb Worm w/ Victim

**** ½

This minidiorama shows the occupational hazards of grave digging or grave robbing. The kit consists of four pieces scaled for 25 mm and presently made of lead (this set is scheduled for changeover). The base is roughly L-shaped, 60 mm long by 40 mm wide, and molded to represent a graveyard. The upper part of the stand has a marker and slabs with a slightly rocky shape. One end has a number of vines and weeds as well as a huge crater in the center. It also has a slot that is the holder for a tombstone, complete with skull embossing and ridged edges forming a rough cross. The stone fits loosely, so you need putty handy after gluing.

Into this stage steps a poor little peasant hunchback. He is 23 mm tall, has a monkish fringe of hair around a bald spot, and a wide-eyed, open-mouthed look somewhere between disbelief and pure fear. Even the gaps in his teeth show. His knees are spread, and his boots are set. He is ready to attack with his shovel. A plus is that this figure has no mold lines or flash.

The star of the show is a worm erupting from the crater. This piece rests in the hole of an extended hollow core that should be trimmed. The 65 mm of worm showing is crowned by a mouth surrounded by long, sharp teeth set in thick jaw flaps. The body is wrinkled and pitted, with tongue-like protuberances and spikes. A half-consumed human skeleton protrudes from its skin.

You need to fill around the base of the worm with putty; if you rough up the filling, it improves the look. If the price doesn't go up after the changeover, it should be \$5.50 per pack and worth it.



Nightly Rider (Black Dragon Pewter)

Dead Man's Chest (Thunderbolt Mountain)





Giant Tomb Worm With Victim (RAFM Company)



Ghouls (RAFM Company)

2931 Ghouls

The ghouls in Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU* game could be demons in other games. This five-piece set shows a group of ghouls robbing an old wooden burial vault. The figures are scaled for the slightly larger playing scale at 28½ mm high each. The base is molded to represent a grassy area that tapers upwards to bent and broken sides. An old, square tombstone complete with an urn fits into an open spot at the top of the grave. The grave is 26 mm long and 10 mm wide.

Ghoul #1 steps out of the broken remains of the vault carrying a human skull. The base is rectangular and fits in the grave; it has parts of a human skeleton, rocks, and twigs. The figure is vaguely humanoid with a sharp ridged spine, muscular arms, and a monkey-shaped head with pointed ears. The feet are bare, and the toes elongated. Ragged pants are held up only by a frayed rope. The long teeth in the lipless mouth look like they

are going to tear into the skull.

Ghoul #2 has cloven hoofs and is nude. Its skin shows signs of rot as it peels in places and is covered by many pits and holes. Areas of the stomach and legs are covered by long hair, and its face is more doglike than human, with teeth bared in a silent growl and ears tucked back. Its arms are long and his knuckles scrape the ground.

Ghoul #3 wears a Confederate army officer's uniform. The clothes are rotted and tattered, and hang in strips in places. Its toes have lengthened and grown claws as it stands among the bones molded into its base. Long, sharp teeth protrude from a face drawn into ridges where bones poke through or lie close underneath. The eyes glare balefully as it clutches a book to its chest. The name on the grave says Lee—and you'll be hard pressed to believe this isn't the general.

This set needs to have a lot of minor flash cleaned and mold lines lightly trimmed, but otherwise had no problem.

This set could lead to some interesting plot twists in TSR's BOOT HILL® game or a more modern game setting. It is a multi-purpose set and worth its \$5.50 proposed new price.

Heartbreaker

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#131 Undead Kings

If you have a skeleton army from Games Workshop, this set is almost a must. The set is labeled as Undead Kings but looks better as a command unit for 28 mm undead. The set contains three figures, square plastic slot bases for each figure, and an axe, sword, and shield. These figures are made of a tin-base alloy instead of lead.

Figure #1 is the least armored of all the troops. Rotten clothes cover a frame that is literally bones. A tattered cloak falls from its shoulders; its feet have no covering at all. Ribs poke out from wraps as it extends a bony hand forward with finger pointing. Its mouth is open, and a couple of teeth are missing as it orders its army on. With the scythe it holds in its right hand, this figure would make a perfect reaver commander.

Figure #2 wears rusting chain mail with overlapping jointed plate over it. Its boots have rotted to the point that bony toes are visible. A rotting surcoat hangs from the rear, while skull clasps and tattered strands hang in front. Its left hand grips a wide-bladed knife or short sword, and its right grips an ornate totem capped by a large humanoid skull with its tongue pulled out and wrapped around the pole. The totem would make a great standard pole.

Figure #3 could easily be made into a lich king with little effort. Its wide-topped boots are in better shape than the standard bearer's, but not by very much. Bony legs are just visible under the scant chain and Maximillian plate that extends from shoulder to mid thigh. A slightly tattered surcoat is in front, and in the back is a hole-filled cape. The figure's left hand is balled in a fist; its right clutches a sword that is ready to strike. A fleshed face opens in a scream of anger as long hair strands fall back. Even the narrow crown slips a bit low.

I highly recommend these figures, which will be part of the command group for my three skeleton armies. At \$5.95, a pack you may even want to buy more than one.



Undead Kings (Heartbreaker)

#135 Undead Champions * * * ½

This set should be the icing for an undead king's cake. The figures are scaled to 28 mm size and made of a non-lead alloy. The set contains three figures, their non-slot square bases, and an extra set of

weapons.

Figure #1 is my new reaver commander. This skeleton wears a chest plate over chain mail and leg guards. The forearms and feet are bare. A ruined cape gently blows in a foul breeze, and a surcoat

appears in front. The figure squats, partially supporting itself on the ornately bladed scythe it carries in its right hand. Its skull is bare and appears to be laughing.

Figure #2 appears to be an assassin or the remains of a priest. A long robe with a number of small holes falls to the floor, while a cowl covers most of its grinning skull. Vacant eye holes stare at the skull-capped staff it holds in its left hand. The right hand grips a simple serrated sword by the hilt. Bands cross the chest, allowing only glimpses of ribs; feet peek out beneath the robe's hem. This would make a good scout.

Figure #3 makes a good captain in the legion of undead. Its pose is almost comical, as its chest, arms and legs are clearly exposed. Torn chain mail falls from the body. A two-handed sword is clutched tightly as the guard and pommel skulls grin.

This set of figures had more little things wrong with it than the Undead Kings set. There was more flash, the mold lines were slightly harder to clean, and the figures just weren't quite as useful. Even though these guys are grunts, the set is still worth \$5.95 per pack.



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Undead Champions (Heartbreaker)



Death Takes a Ride (Ral Partha)

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20-601 Death Takes A Ride *****

This is the second release in the British Stirling Pewter Line. These high-quality kits are display pieces rather than playing pieces. This 13-piece kit is of interest to anyone who is a motorcyclist, especially for anyone who owns a Harley. The finished product consists of a skeletal rider and its hog.

The rider is 75 mm tall and dressed in

rotted biking clothes. A pair of torn and tattered jeans cover bony legs and frame skeletal feet. The parts are molded with seams, and the torn areas are molded so that frayed edges can be added to the torn cuffs and long rents. A belt with the words "Born to ride" circles the waist, and a biker's buckle joins the two ends. The belt supports a knife holder with evident stitching and a long chain connected to a trucker's wallet in the right rear pocket.

An almost disintegrated T-shirt exposes bony ribs and a spinal cord, and bony arms extend from the remains of sleeves. Over this is a denim jacket in an advanced state of decay. Extended button holes are on the right side; the left side has two display buttons. The jacket is well done

and even includes the remains of an embroidered eagle on the rear. A bandanna goes across the neck. The otherwise bare head is surrounded by another folded bandanna. Two paste gems go in the eyes, and the add-on right arm clutches the throttle and brake. Bone detail is very good except in the palm of the right hand. Separations are clear and distinct between different teeth and joints, and even the fused head plates are visible. Detail is excellent, and it wouldn't be hard to add more.

The figure is molded into an at-ease position, resting on its motorcycle. The bike is 115 mm long from the front tire to the flare of the rear fender. It appears to be roughly modeled on the 1991 Harley Davidson. The bike comes in eight pieces, including the paste gems for the skull eyes on the gas tank. The front wheel comes complete with brake assembly and fender. Front forks have shock absorbers. The rear shocks are complete with molded springs. Handlebars have the brake handles molded onto the handle grips, so careful trimming is needed to separate the parts. The seat is leather textured, complete with diamond-cut pattern and inlaid buttons. Detracting from it is a mold line that runs up the center; it is difficult to remove from the depressions. The back drive sprocket lacks drive-train detail. The engine is well done, but both our review copy and a shop figure had a small crack under the battery box. Actual engine detail is good and well defined on both sides, but more could have been molded on. On the good side, the bike is big enough that you can add all the detail you want in the way of wires, etc., or painting "Harley Davidson" on it.

One really striking detail is the death's head on the front of the gas tank and the embossed flames. This tank has individual teeth molded on it and holes in the right places. Even the filler cap is correct!

There was some flash on this model, and the mold lines are visible. With a minimal amount of work, this piece is well worth its \$20 price tag.

69-202 Tremere Vampires M&F

*** 1/2

The VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE* game, from White Wolf Game Studio, now has a line of miniatures available through Ral Partha. The Tremere clan vampire set has a male and a female made of Ralidium pewter, scaled out at 28 mm rather than 2.5 mm. Both figures are on thick, nontextured bases, and both figures are dressed formally, simple but elegant.

The male wears a pair of dress shoes formal slacks, and a single-breasted suit jacket with wide lapels. Under the suit he has a shirt and tie. The left hand is clenched in a fist; the right holds a walking stick. His hair is of a fashionable short cut parted to the right and brushed over. His face is sculpted as if looking slightly to the left; it has a strong chin, well-defined

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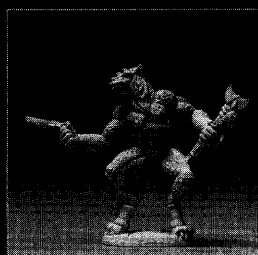
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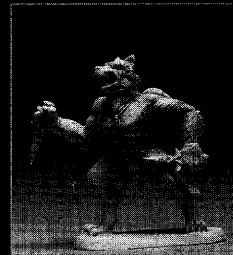
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Tremere Vampires (Ral Partha)



Greater Wolfwolves (Ral Partha)

eyes, and a furrowed brow with eye brows. A mold line goes up both sides, and flash is under the right arm and at the crotch.

The lady is dressed in a long, close-fitting formal gown with almost no back, a low neckline, and a slit left side. She steps forward on high heels. Her left hand is partially closed; her right clutches a rose. Flash is under both arms, and mold lines needed cleaning. The face is clear of flash, with good features and long hair.

The simplicity of these figures make them a must-have. Their clothes allow you to use them for any game from the 1960s to the futuristic, such as FASA's SHADOW-RUN* game. No fangs are visible, so you can use them for contacts or civilians. The price of \$4.25 is much lower than their usefulness would suggest.

11-100 Greater Wolfwolves *****

This set for TSR's AD&D® RAVENLOFT® setting concentrates on the wolves. Wolfwolves are supposed to be somewhat bigger than werewolves and a lot more callous in their actions. This set contains a male, a female, and two wolves in various stages of transformation. The set we have for review is lead, although conversion to Ralidium should be complete by the time this article reaches you. The set is scaled for 25 mm.

The female is dressed in a pleated long dress, slit at the left side and secured by a band. The left leg is exposed to the waist, and she is barefoot. Her chest is covered by a pleated shirt that shows cleavage. The head is cocked to the right, and the face looks like she is pouting. Hair is curly, and the facial detail is very good. The only strikes against the figure are a light mold line on the arms, and arms that look almost square.

The wolfwolves in mid-change is 38 mm tall and stands on a rocky base. The figure is slightly hunched and has a special belt

a flowered buckle; a bracelet with the outline the buckle is on the left arm. The sex is nonspecific. Most of the joints are somewhat angular. Slab muscles are covered with tight curly hair on the chest, stomach, and arms; the rest of the body is covered in fur. Hands are clawed and curled back. The head is wolfish.

The wolf form is huge, measuring 22 mm high at the shoulders and 45 mm from rump to muzzle. The jaws are slightly open, the ears are laid back on the head, and the tail is stretched behind. These features and the leg positions tend to imply a chase is in progress over the barren-ground base. The bad points of this figure are the mold lines on both rear legs. When you remove these lines, even with a file, you remove hair detail.

The male is dressed in flashy clothes. High boots are capped in fur, and creased pants are tucked into the boots. A wide decorated belt supports a hand-fitted knife on the left side; a simple buckle holds it together. His upper torso is covered by a wide-lapeled jacket joined at the belt and a shirt underneath. A bare left hand holds a wolf staff, and the right is covered by a fur-lined cape that stretches from neck to floor. The face is stern and slightly gaunt; it looks almost exactly like Wolverine from Marvel Comics. He stands on an oval base molded to resemble cobblestone.

This is an excellent set that has great player-character or GM use. The male could be Wolverine in civilian clothes in a super-hero game. The set is worth its \$6.75 price tag, even with the minor trimming needed.

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MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scout's uniform away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

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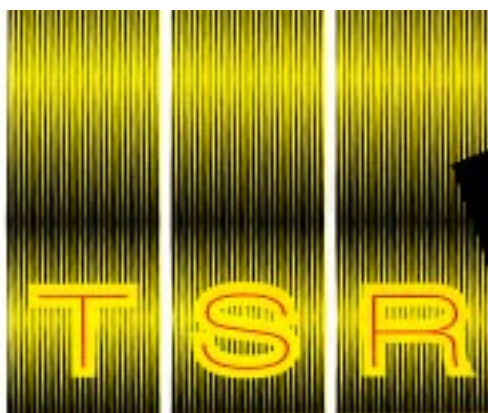
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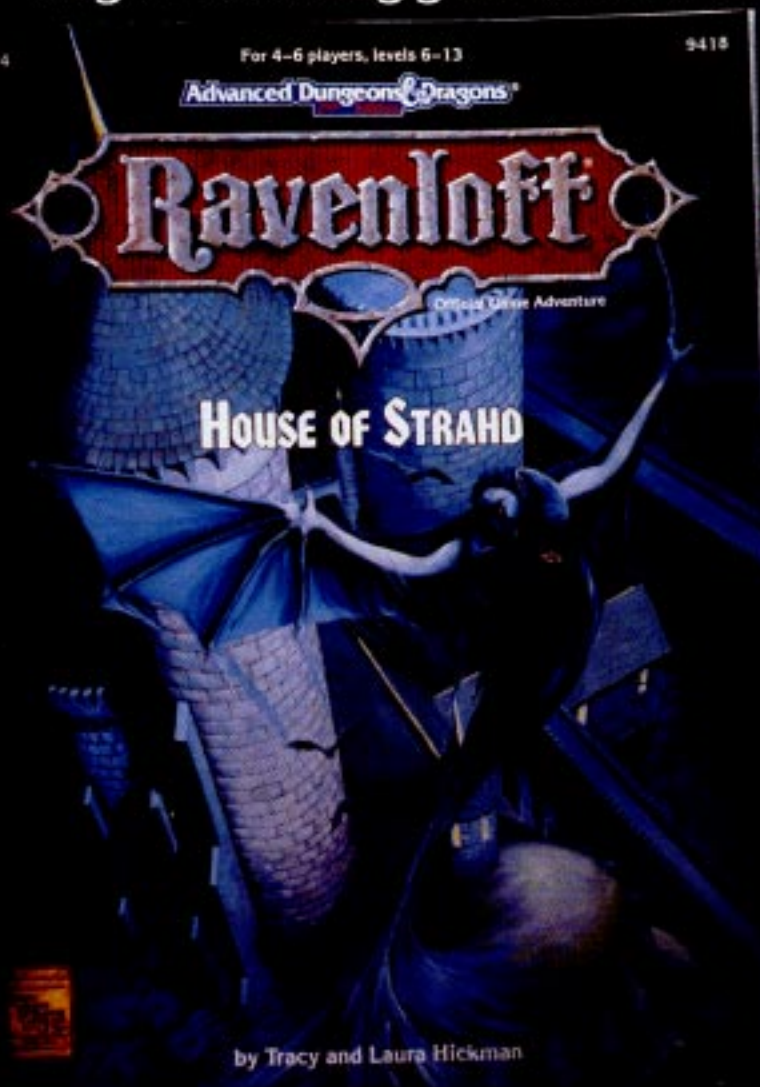
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