

#243

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# Knights & Paladins



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Volume XXII, No. 6  
January 1998

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## The Door Committee

AFTER A YEAR OF UPHEAVAL, I'm finally finding the time to play the AD&D® game again. For the first time in well over a decade—not counting tournament play and online games—most of the players were people I didn't already know well. I had no idea how it would turn out. The one thing I'd forgotten about was doors.

Virtually everyone who replied to my message that I'd be starting up a new game mentioned that it had been years since he'd last played. One guy wrote that he hadn't rolled the dice in fifteen years. Three or four of them had never played 2nd Edition. That was OK, I replied, pointing out that the differences weren't profound. Besides, while we'd be using the 2nd Edition rules, we wouldn't add any optional rules, except for a half page of my house rules (mostly simple variations on existing optional rules).

After about an hour, all eight players showed up, and we were ready to go. To start more quickly, and because some of the players felt a little rusty, we used the pregenerated characters from the original modules. We spent only about fifteen minutes messing around with the character sheets, adding proficiencies, changing spells, and like that. Then we went straight to the game—and the first door.

They did all the right things. Well, they did some of the right things. It took them quite a while to walk into the first hallway, after a long debate about how conspicuous a torch would be outside the stronghold of the slavers. Once they actually confronted the room, things moved more quickly.

"Let the thief listen for noise," said somebody who wasn't playing the thief. Eventually, the halfling thief did. Unfortunately, he didn't also check for traps. Fortunately, as a halfling, he was too short to be hit by the one he triggered. After that close call, most of the rest of the evening consisted of

debates on the relative merits of somebody else opening the door.

Luckily, one of the players had a big, stupid fighter—and he wasn't afraid to use him. While the rest of the PCs argued at the third door, "Ogre" crashed through it . . . right into the first melee, of course. The fight was soon over, but they were more concerned about doors than ever. It took them much longer to open the door out of the room than it did for them to enter.

Afterward, they took an hour and a half to cross a pit. I was glad there wasn't a door at the other end.

Next, they figured out a trick and made short work of a dangerous monster. But then came another door.

Twenty minutes. Then another ten after they heard some slavers walking past on the other side.

Corridors weren't quite as daunting as doors, but deciding which way to turn at an intersection became a controversy. Another fifteen minutes.

Two scary doors (briefly opened and quickly shut) and forty minutes later, they found stairs leading down. Deciding to take the stairs took only ten minutes. Stairs must be inherently less controversial than doors, though there was some concern that there might be more doors down there.

Fortunately, the first things the PCs discovered downstairs were hostile monsters, and we enjoyed the pleasant diversion of mindless combat for almost half an hour. We had another hour before we had to go home, and at last it looked as if they might accomplish something that night.

And then they found a trap door in the ceiling.



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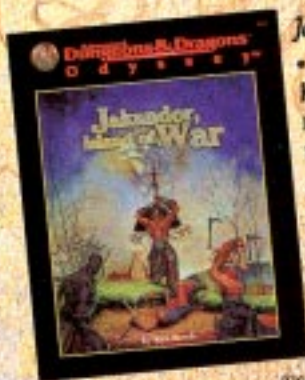
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*I WANTED TO WRITE THE EDITORIAL for this issue, but Dave insisted on illuminating our readership with yet another sly gaming anecdote. He has me at a disadvantage (12 editorials of DRAGON® Magazine compared to six editorials of DUNGEON Adventures), and he likes to keep it that way. In retaliation, I'm taking charge of the "D-mail" column this month. I'm petitioning you, the readers,*

*to send us more letters to fill this column. Feel free to tell us what you think about the articles in this issue, tell us what a great job we're doing, or you can write to Dave and ask him to give me an editorial. Whatever works for you.*

*Our "D-Mail" column is slim this month. Worse, we're scrambling to find letters for the next issue! It's all Dave's fault, of course. He crammed so many*

*terrific letters into the past several issues to compensate for the six months we were away. Naturally, we expected the letters to keep on coming. We were shocked to find our inventory depleted! I suppose the fault is partly mine. I knew things would shape up the instant I was hired as Associate Editor. Obviously, the readership has decided we're doing everything right. Nevertheless, we enjoy hearing about how great we are—and how perfect the magazine is.*

*We rely on regular feedback from our readers, and we value your letters far more than any questionnaire or demographic survey. Let us know what articles you find the most useful for your home campaign. We're also interested in knowing what articles are less useful to you. And, if you can't think of anything else to write about, just tell Dave how many more issues we'd sell if Chris wrote the editorial.*

## Hogging the Spotlight

Dear DRAGON® Magazine,

One of the greatest highlights of reading dragon magazine is Joseph Pillsbury's comics (my personal favorite is "food fight"), but let me get to the purpose: WE WANT MORE! WE WANT MORE!

Undoubtedly, DRAGON Magazine is something meant to be fun yet useful, and you did a good job of it with issue #238. I didn't have much use for "Mommy Dearest," but "The Return of the Wizards Three" had some pretty useful spells.

The only problem with issue #238 is that, when you glance through it, you see that Ed Greenwood (as much as I like him!) is hogging the spotlight.

**Charles Moffat**  
Formosa, Ontario

*We're always excited to receive top-notch articles written by new authors. On the other hand, Ed Greenwood is one of our most requested regular contributors. His "Wyrms of the North" articles are among the most popular pieces ever to grace the pages of DRAGON Magazine.*

*As an experiment, we took away all of Ed's pens and pencils, and that didn't even slow him down. We even took away his keyboard. Now he sends us stuff written on magical scrolls. We don't know how Ed came across these things, but we suspect Elminster may have something to do with it . . .*





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## Whiners and Wisenheimers

Dear **DRAGON® Magazine**,

Not wanting to sound like a whiner or wisenheimer, but what are you guys thinking there at **DRAGON Magazine**? Now, I have a hard enough time as it is convincing my buddies that **DRAGON Magazine** has really turned itself around. I stopped reading your magazine back in the '80s when I felt you were filling it with worthless articles. Then, almost four years ago, I picked it up, and I thought you guys had done a 180-degree change—and then you came up with the new format, and it was great! I was really impressed and just had to convert my friends! Unfortunately, they always responded with comments like, "What, a Chia-golem? Please!" Or, "An article on the Mother NPC? You can't be serious!" I always tried to defend you with the answer that those were meant to be funny articles, add a little humor! Now, unfortunately, you guys have let me down! I just read Issue 239 and noticed your article on the "Ecology of the Stirge." I might not have access to my personal reference library right now (I am presently deployed to the

jungles of Panama), but I know for a fact that you already published an article on the "Ecology of the Stirge" back when **DRAGON Magazine** was in its first hundred issues. I understand that this was a different article, written by a different person, written years after the first article, but come on guys! Can't you come up with anything more original and useful? Not only was that creature covered before, but a **STIRGE!** What's next? The Ecology of the Osquip? Oops, sorry about that!

Anyway, please crack that whip a few more times and ensure that your editing staff screens articles to guarantee **DRAGON Magazine** presents only the freshest, most informative features available! After all, I need your assistance if I'm going to convert these heathens, and I promise to try working on their sense of humor (or hiding the April edition when it's released)!

**Ronan Paxton**  
1 LT, USAF  
PSC 1 Box 4147  
APO AA 34001

*I bet you can't wait for **The Ecology of the Flumph**, huh? On the one hand, it doesn't hurt to rediscover some classic monsters. I've always liked stirges, at least up until the moment my 1st-level cleric was sucked dry by one. (Cudos to Phil Athans, my DM, for executing such an insidious death.) However, rest assured, we have no intention of redoing old Ecology articles on a regular basis. There are plenty of monsters out there to discover; the stirge just swooped past us.*

## Cosmic Oversight?

Dear **DRAGON® Magazine**,

I have been an ardent fan of Chris Perkins ever since he first started contributing to **DUNGEON Adventures**. It was only a matter of time, in my opinion, before TSR hired him as its editor. Now I see he's the associate editor of **DRAGON Magazine**. I'm impressed. Not one, but two titles!

I hope Mr. Perkins brings his flair for the written word to the pages of **DRAGON Magazine**, helping other writers rise to their pinnacle of expertise as he has done. I suspect he'll do well in his capacity as editor (sorry—associate editor). I've already noticed a marked improvement in the last few issues, quite possibly the result of Chris' editing. There are no more wasted paragraphs, no misplaced words, nothing that would taint the magazine's tireless quest for perfection.

One thing dismays me, however. I was shocked to see that Mr. Perkins was never featured in the pages of **DRAGON Magazine** as prominently as in **DUNGEON Adventures**, perhaps due to some cosmic oversight on the part of the lesser editors! Mind you, I noticed his adventure featured in **DRAGON Annual #2**. (Terrific work, by the way.) At least now I know that there will be a little of Chris Perkins in every issue to come.

**John Smith**  
Renton, WA



Send your letters of comment to "D-Mail," **DRAGON® Magazine**, 1801 Lind Avenue SW., Renton, WA 98055, USA. Send email to [dmail@wizards.com](mailto:dmail@wizards.com). All material should be neatly typed or handwritten. Include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed, and let us know how much of it you'd like printed.



By Steve Lindstrom



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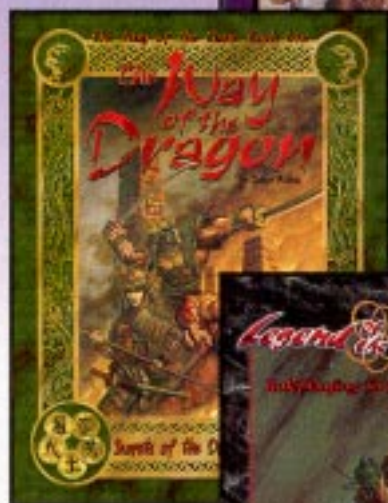
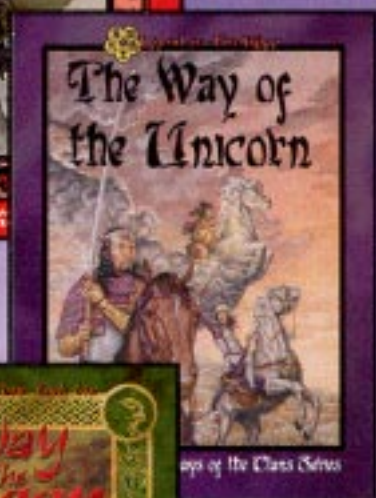
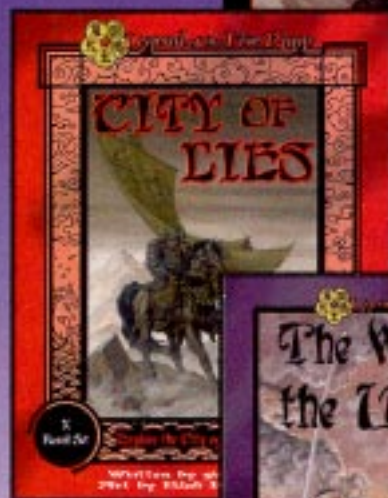
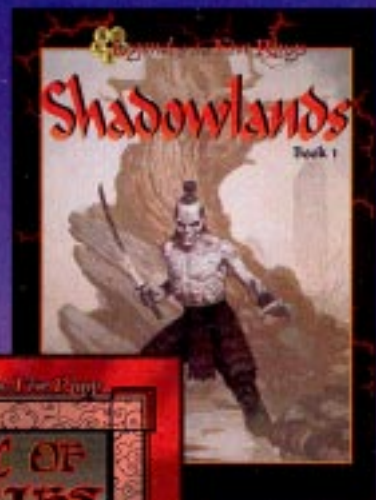
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Top three winners receive a copy of the *Wizard's Spell Compendium, Volume II*. First place winner also receives a copy of *The Soulforged*, signed by author Margaret Weis.

## ❖ Best AD&D Priest Spell

Top three winners receive a copy of the *Priest's Spell Compendium, Volume I*. First place winner also receives a copy of *The Soulforged*, signed by author Margaret Weis.

## ❖ Best SAGA Sorcery Spell

Top three winners receive a copy of *Heroes of Sorcery*. First place winner also receives a copy of *The Soulforged*, signed by author Margaret Weis.

## ❖ Best SAGA Mysticism Spell

Top three winners receive a copy of *Heroes of Hope*. First place winner also receives a copy of *The Soulforged*, signed by author Margaret Weis.



### AD&D<sup>®</sup> and SAGA<sup>®</sup> Spell Contest Rules

1. **Entry:** To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the spell to which your submission applies, and your proposed spell ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. (TSR) Dragon Magazine Spell Design Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Spells may not exceed 300 words in length. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), February 14, 1998. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's consistency with the feel of the AD&D<sup>®</sup> game or the SAGA<sup>®</sup> system, originality, appropriateness to the game, and applicability to the game system. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the entries received.

2. **Originality of Entry:** All entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry written above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

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#### AD&D<sup>®</sup> and SAGA<sup>®</sup> Spell Contest

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## Dealing With Damage

These are my personal thoughts on the issues raised by Remy Verhoeve and Paul Crowe in issue #239.

Mr. Verhoeve suggests (among other things) that Strength is inappropriate for adjusting melee THACO scores; he claims Dexterity would be more appropriate.

Not necessarily.

It must be borne in mind that the only effect of armor in the AD&D® game is to make the wearer more difficult to hit. To see why this is important, let us contrast it with a system in which armor absorbs damage rather

suffers 5 hp less damage from each strike.

Our fighter now needs only a 10 or better to hit. However, his average damage is lower:

Roll	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Damage	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
After Armor	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Thus, the average damage is  $2.625 \times 0.55 =$  about 1.44 damage per hit—only about half the previous result.

It can be seen that the net affect of giving Strength “to hit” modifiers simply increases the average damage

**... keep a careful eye on  
unscrupulous players ...  
as the tendency to pile on  
“roleplaying handicaps” for extra  
points can be abused.**

than makes the target more difficult to strike. For this example, we shall use a target clad in chain mail armor (AC 5). Our attacker will be a 1st-level fighter with 18/01 strength, attacking with a long sword. For simplicity, we will ignore specialization.

To hit AC 5, our warrior requires a 14 or better to hit; he hits 35% of the time, for an average of 7.5 hp damage each hit. Thus, every round the warrior inflicts 2.625 hp damage. In a variant system in which Strength did not add to the chance to hit but still added to damage, we will assume that all strikes are against AC 10, but that armor absorbs (10 - AC) hp damage each strike. Thus, our target now

done—exactly as would be expected. It would seem that the intent was to simulate the fact that strong characters have better armor-penetrating ability.

I would not recommend substituting Dexterity modifiers for Strength without also increasing the damage bonuses for high Strength, or perhaps changing the effects of armor completely.

Mr. Crowe had a few cautions about the PLAYER'S OPTION™ series. From the example he gave (Stelgar the Stupid), I can only assume that characters were continually “retrofitted” as new rules became available. In general, there is no problem with this—except that allowing grand mastery of a weapon for the simple

expenditure of character points is (in my opinion) foolish. *Combat and Tactics* is quite clear that the higher levels of mastery should be difficult to achieve—a reward for diligent play, and perhaps as compensation for sacrifices in other areas. I personally see no problem with allowing single-classed fighters to excel in the fashion described—by the time grand mastery can be achieved, wizards are casting multiple *fireball* spells per day.

That said, I have encountered some possible problems with the PLAYERS' OPTION series. It is necessary to keep a careful eye on unscrupulous players using the *Spells & Magic* rules to create priests or wizards, as the tendency to pile on “roleplaying handicaps” for extra points can be abused. My pet peeve is what I refer to as the “downgrading of the fighter.” This particular problem has been a recurring one with all editions of the AD&D game. In 1st edition, fighters were rarely worth playing—single-classed paladins and rangers could do everything a fighter could do, and more. When *Unearthed Arcana* came out, offering weapon specialization for the fighter, things were a little more even (although even there rangers were also permitted the option to specialize). The 2nd-edition rules removed specialization from rangers, making fighters the best at fighting (as they should be!), but then various hints in the *Complete Fighter's Handbook* suggested that perhaps the DM should allow players with paladins and rangers to specialize as well.

Now, with *Skills & Powers*, virtually any character class can purchase weapon specialization—and absolutely anyone can have expertise.

In my campaign, I don't allow weapons of choice to anyone. Only single-classed fighters can specialize (or progress to higher levels of mastery). Other character classes can gain Expertise only if they pay for specialization. For example, a multiclassed fighter spends 5 character points to acquire weapon specialization, but in fact this only enables him to purchase Expertise. In this way, single-classed fighters do not become overshadowed by their multiclass fighters, other warrior subclasses, or other classes with spare character points.

**Gary Sturgess**  
**U4/11 Cochean Avenue**  
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## Damage Redux

I have to take exception to a comment made by Remy Verhoeve in his letter printed in *DRAGON Magazine* #239. He argues that Dexterity should be the prime contributor to hitting an opponent and not Strength. He says, "How hard you hit your opponent, that's what strength is for."

I have been a martial artist for over 11 years. I am involved in stage combat and fight choreography. I have fenced and fought in the SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism) and other

training, experience, and the strength in your arm and shoulders.

Another example can be found just by looking closely at the arms of Olympic-caliber fencers. These guys and gals have forearms like Popeye! Olympic fencing is all about putting the tip of your blade exactly where you want it. The movements of the blades are both subtle and graceful, and deceptively slight. That kind of fine muscle control builds this tremendous strength in the wrist and forearm that is absolutely unreal. If any weapon-bearing technique would rely

## Sense of Wonder

Over the years, much has been written in "Forum" about the relative merits of low-level campaigns and games with powerful PCs. I'm of the "less is more" school myself, but what I'd like to suggest is that there is a better axis upon which to measure the impact of magic on a D&D® campaign than simply that of power. A DM should be concerned not only with how powerful a magical item makes a PC but also with how much the item increases or decreases the sense of adventure in the game.

I submit that even though it represents a much more powerful enchantment, a *sword +5* does not pose as much threat to a campaign as the simple third-level spell *continual light*. A DM can always balance raw power by making monsters tougher, but *continual light* is a drag because darkness is one of the DM's primary scene-setting tools; it is a fundamental part of suspense and adventure. Now, sure, the DM can come up with all sorts of clever ways to snuff out *continual light*s, but they're all going to be perceived as contrived or unfair by the players. Better just to be rid of them altogether by making *continual light* a higher level spell.

There is more to a challenging adventure than darkness, of course. I'm also against anything that allows the players to permanently duck the

## Your ability to move your bat in complex, fancy motions has very little to do with your natural dexterity.

historical and fantasy re-enactment groups. I can tell you without any hesitation or doubt that the old adage, "All other things being equal, the stronger athlete will win," is very true. The ability to hit your opponent is the ability to put your blade or weapon where his defense isn't. This is based entirely on your ability to control your weapon. Weapon control is a facet of strength. You must be strong enough to control where the weapon is going at all times.

To illustrate this point, take a heavy wooden baseball bat in one hand. A baseball bat has approximately the same weight and balance point as a scimitar, in case anyone is curious. Now get yourself plenty of room and imagine the bat is a scimitar and that you are facing off against a smelly orc. Take some swings at your imaginary orc. Imagine yourself trying to move your scimitar around his defenses to kill him, while still keeping your scimitar up to block his attacks. Do this for a while. Notice how, as your arm and shoulder gets tired, your control of the bat diminishes. The movement of the bat becomes erratic and less forceful. The speed that the bat travels becomes slower, and you can't move the bat back around in front of you as quickly. Your ability to move your bat in complex, fancy motions has very little to do with your natural dexterity. It does have a great deal to do with your

on Dexterity, this would be it—and it doesn't. Where Dexterity comes in is when you are trying to get your body out of the way or in position for an attack. Something which is admirably demonstrated in the Reaction and Armor Class adjustments for high Dexterity.

Now the point of Remy's letter, as I saw it, was that any rule in the game is optional and should be changed if it makes your game play more enjoyable and fun. This I agree with whole-

## A DM should be concerned not only with how powerful a magical item makes a PC but also with how much the item increases or decreases the sense of adventure . . .

heartedly! I have been gaming for two decades now and have changed all kinds of rules over the years in my own games. There are a lot of rules in the AD&D game that I don't agree with, but the "To-Hit Bonus" for high Strength is not one of them.

Chris Bruscas  
Baltimore, MD

problems of starving, tiring, falling from heights, running out of ammunition and not being able to carry as much as they'd like. I understand that after running a character for a number of years, the thrill goes out of counting arrows and copper pieces, but the DM still must not let a desire for convenience drive the flavor out of the



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## Questions of the Month

The AD&D game design group is starting to think about a 3rd-Edition of the game, and "Forum" is one of the first places they'll look to see your thoughts. If you've never written a letter to "Forum" before but have always wanted your opinion to count, now's your chance. Throughout the year, we'll print the questions they're asking themselves about what you think about the AD&D game. This month, we begin with two basic questions:

**1. What single rule would you most like to see changed in an AD&D 3rd-edition game?**

**2. What single rule absolutely should not change in a 3rd-edition game?**

Send your answers and explanations to "Rules Change," c/o "Forum," Dragon Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055. Be sure to include a note to let us know whether you'd like your full address printed with your letter.

setting. Players should never be permitted to forget that their characters are breathing, sweating, and exerting themselves doing heroic things.

The best magical item the PCs in my campaign ever found was a *helm of underwater action*. It allowed the party access to undersea creatures

Years later when the party secured a *flying carpet*, I hoped it would have a similar effect. Unfortunately, the party made all too efficient use of the carpet for scouting far ahead and avoiding physical impediments. It worked against the mystery I wanted to keep in the settings, and until they lost it, scenarios began to revolve, for me, around how to exploit the carpet's weaknesses and, for the players, how to maximize its advantages. It took away from the adventure.

So instead of just hearing about players' preferences for high-powered or low-powered campaigns, I'm curious to know what magic items or abilities other DMs and players think did the most to expand their adventures.

**Chris DeRosa**  
Philadelphia, PA

## Death by Nymph

I would like to make a few comments about the article, "Ecology of the Nymph" (issue #237), and on nymphs in general, if I may. Nymphs, for those who do not know, cause blindness in onlookers—and death, if the nymph is seen unclothed. More often than not, these two characteristics are treated as some sort of offensive barrage, to be used as a blitzkrieg against the nymph's enemies. To me, this seems to be very much out of character for the quiet, peace-loving nymph; I doubt that she would frequently use her beauty as a weapon.

In fact, I doubt that it would be an overly effective weapon at all. Though no onset time is mentioned with

the course of several days, the victims of the withdrawal sink into a deep, all consuming depression, realizing that they will never again see something as beautiful as the nymph. They lose their will to live and slowly waste away.

A similar principle could explain nymph-related blindness. Perhaps the problem isn't that one's eyes fail altogether. Perhaps the beauty of the nymph causes everything else to seem repulsive in comparison, and thus be unable to register on the viewer's eyes. This could be likened to someone eating far too much spicy food and soon being unable to notice the more reserved flavors of bland foods, or to someone listening to loud music to the point of becoming deaf to quieter sounds. Like nymph-induced death, this effect would not necessarily be immediate, but could still be especially dangerous for an onlooker; while unable to see anything else, he or she would still be able to see the nymph in question (or any other nymph) and could still be faced with withdrawal and death, should the nymph disrobe.

This, of course, is just one possible way of interpreting the effects of a nymph's visage, but it makes much more sense to me than any manner of instantaneous blindness or outright death from shock. Such destruction is more than just arbitrary; it's also quite ugly, and thus doesn't fit the character of the nymph.

**Eric Morton**  
Norman, OK



## Perhaps the beauty of the nymph causes everything else to seem repulsive in comparison . . .

and places, spiced up sea battles, and sparked inventive plans involving moats, bridges, boats, and aqueducts. I gave the helm a ritual associated with its use so it would not resemble a household appliance. Further, only one character could use it at a time, so the rest of the party could still be menaced with drowning and other watery inconveniences. In short, it expanded the adventure.

regard to the fatal properties of a nymph's visage, I would tend to think that such a calm creature would not be designed for wanton destruction, even in mortals not meant to look upon her. The way I see it, those who fail their death saving throws when viewing a nymph do not necessarily keel over on the spot, but instead go into withdrawal upon being removed at length from her supernatural presence. Over

The question of the Month isn't the only topic we'd like to see you discuss in "Forum." Send your opinions on roleplaying games to "Forum," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA. Send email to [dmail@wizards.com](mailto:dmail@wizards.com). All material should be neatly typed or handwritten. You must include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed (we won't print a letter sent anonymously), but we'll withhold your name if you ask us to do so, and we won't print your full address unless you request it.





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# Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

*THE SAGE ANSWERS QUESTION'S straight from the mailbox this month. Optional rules for the AD&D® game proved popular (the Sage has a few of his own to suggest). The Sage also revisits the effects of wall of force spells on divination spells.*

**Exactly who can use wearable magical items? For example, could a magic ring fit a gnome and would it alter enough in size to fit a giant. I know armor will only adjust about six inches or so, but I could swear that I read somewhere that other wearable items, such as rings, bracelets, necklaces etc. could fit any size from titan to gnome. Could you help me out.**

The *DMG* contains a table for determining what size armor is (in Appendix 3); use that table for defensive items such as bracers. Sizes are assigned by race, and elven chain mail has its own table. There is no six-inch adjustment. If the armor fits a character's race, it fits the character. Of course, if your character is unusually large or unusually small for her race, the character might have a hard time finding any kind of armor that fits.

DM can decide that on his or her own. In campaigns where magic is rare, it's best to allow considerable latitude in this matter; otherwise, the PCs won't be able to use what little magic they find. In some cases, an item will fit a large range of creatures without altering its size at all. For example, a ring that a gnome or halfling character might have to wear on her thumb might fit on an ogre's pinkie.

**When using the PLAYER'S OPTION™ combat system from the *Combat & Tactics* book, how do you decide exactly when a character attacks when he uses two weapons? Let's say a character uses two long swords (being ambidextrous and a two-weapon style specialist). The section on phases states that both long swords will hit in the average phase. If that is the case, what happens if the creature being attacked dies from damage caused by the first weapon? Is the person required to follow through with the second attack and waste it (as that was his declared action), or can he redirect his other**

## ... how do you decide exactly when a character attacks when he uses two weapons?

Some magical items do change size to fit the wearer. *Gauntlets of ogre power*, for example, grow or shrink to fit halfling- to human-sized hands. All magical boots expand or shrink to fit wearers from halfling to giant size (see the notes on categories of miscellaneous magical items in the *DMG*). Beyond these specific examples, there is no general rule for item sizes. Your

**attack on a nearby creature that phase or at a later phase that same round. My reasoning here is that both attacks occur simultaneously and therefore hit at the same time (or so close together as to be simultaneous for game purposes) and that a character can't really tell which one was the killing blow quickly enough to switch targets in one round. Another**

person in the gaming group reasons that a character wouldn't follow through with an obviously futile attack when there are more pressing concerns in a fight (that is, other foes). Any help you could give me regarding this would be immensely helpful.

Which one of you is the DM? That person is "right."

I'm inclined to favor something like your first suggestion. The character has to declare where his two attacks are going. If that results in overkill, too bad. The character could opt to delay one attack until a later phase, but he's got to do that before he sees the results of the first attack.

In cases where a character uses two weapons that don't have identical speeds, the combined attack comes on the slower of the two phases and still occurs (effectively) simultaneously. In any case, if the character wielding two weapons is threatening two or more opponents, he can direct his two attacks at two different opponents, but must decide to do so before rolling any dice to resolve the attacks.

**In the PLAYER'S OPTION combat system, does a character who is casting a spell while threatened (adjacent to an armed opponent) trigger an attack of opportunity?**

Spellcasting does not trigger an attack of opportunity.

**Can you explain exactly how to assign hit points, proficiencies, class abilities, and armor to multi-classed characters?**

A multi-classed character's abilities are subject to considerable debate, even at TSR, inc. Here are some recommendations and observations on the matter:

For hit points, roll all the PC's Hit Dice, adjust each die for Constitution, and note the total somewhere. A character's hit-point rating is the average of all the dice (the total divided by the character's number of classes). Drop all fractions, but don't discard the total (you'll use it to help determine the character's hit points as she gains levels). Each time the character gains a level, roll the appropriate hit die, adjust for Constitution, and add it to the recorded total. Recalculate the character's hit points by dividing the new total by the character's number of classes, again dropping any fractions. This method is different from the



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procedure given in Chapter 3 of the *Player's Handbook (PHB)*, and it gives multi-classed characters a few more hit points as they advance in level (because the practice of keeping a running total of all hit dice rolled allows fractional hit points to build up instead of being lost to rounding down).

Multi-classed characters gain all the abilities from their classes (except armor and weapon use—see below). A character can use only one ability at a

penalties noted on Table 29 in the *PHB*. Other types of armor negate all thief abilities except Open Locks and Detect Noise (these abilities still suffer the penalties from the "Padded or Studded Leather" column on Table 29). Note that the *Complete Thief's Handbook* extends Table 29 to cover most types of armor. (I personally don't like this rule very much. I prefer to allow multi-classed characters to wear the best available armor, except for thieves,

No, the missile explodes on contact with any solid object, and the blast always fills the available space (up to the limit of its 33,000-cubic-foot volume—see previous question).

**Is the act of touching an opponent to complete a touch-delivered spell or special attack considered an unarmed attack that gives an armed opponent an attack of opportunity?**

No. The attacker is "armed" with the spell or special ability.

## Does a *fireball* spell rebound off walls or doors . . . ?

time, however, and cannot combine abilities as part of a single action. A fighter/mage, for example, cannot make a melee attack while casting a spell, though she could use her fighter THACO when targeting spells that require attack rolls. A thief making a backstab attack must use her thief THACO to get her attack and damage bonuses (selecting just the right spot to hit puts a crimp on her overall fighting ability).

Except as noted above, a multi-classed character uses the best THACO from her classes.

A multi-classed character always uses the best available saving throw from all her classes.

To assign proficiencies to a multi-classed character, choose the highest number of initial proficiencies from among all the character's classes. Thereafter assign a new proficiency whenever the character would normally earn them for each class. (This, too, is a departure from the *PHB* method.) The character can freely choose non-weapon proficiencies from any group allowed to any one her classes. For example, a fighter/thief could choose from the General, Warrior, and Rogue groups. Weapon proficiencies work the same way, except where noted below.

Multi-classed characters generally must abide by the worst armor restrictions among their classes. Multi-classed elf and half-elf mages can wear elven chain mail if one of their other classes is normally allowed to use chain mail. Multi-classed thieves suffer penalties to their abilities if they wear armor better than leather. Elven chain mail, padded armor, and leather armor impose the

who suffer the penalties noted above if they wear heavy armor.)

Multi-classed characters generally enjoy the best weapon selection from among all their classes, except for priests, who remain bound by their priest weapon restrictions. (I don't care for this rule, either, and prefer to allow any multi-classed character to choose weapons from those available to all their classes.)

**My group is having a discussion on the use of the *fireball* spell. In the spell description and the statistics of the *fireball* spell, there are two different figures to go by: one is a 20' radius, and the other (in the description) is 33,000 cubic feet (33 10' x 10' x 10' cubes). Which one of these is the correct way to use the spell? Also, is there a difference between outdoor and indoor use of the spell?**

Both listings are correct.

A *fireball* forms a sphere with a 20' radius. If cast in a restricted area, however, the blast conforms to the shape of the space. The sphere has a volume of about 33,000 cubic feet. So, if you cast your *fireball* spell in a corridor 10 feet wide and 10 feet high, the blast extends 330 feet. If you cast your *fireball* spell outside or in a room 50 feet square, you get a sphere. The shape of the spell effect depends on how much space is available.

The spell works the same way indoors or out, though it's much more likely to become distorted indoors.

**Does a *fireball* spell rebound off walls or doors, or can the wizard "bury" part of the area of effect inside a wall?**

How does the second-level Wizard spell *choke* (from the first volume of the *Wizard's Spell Compendium*) supposed to work? From the way that the spell is worded, the target receives no saving throw to resist the spell, just against the damage for half. Is that correct? If a successful save doesn't negate the spell, what happens when it is cast on a spellcaster? That same caster could not cast any spells for the duration of the *choke* spell, right? The *choke* spell lasts one round per caster level, the target always suffers damage every round, and a spellcaster cannot cast spells in a round he takes damage. Is it possible for *choke* to inflict no damage at all? The base damage is 1d4 hp damage, so what happens if the die roll is a 1? Does that round down to no damage, possibly giving the target a chance to cast a spell?

The victim of a *choke* spell gains a saving throw, but success only reduces the damage by half. Note that you round fractions up when calculating half damage from the spell (see spell description), so the victim always takes at least one point of damage each round the spell lasts. Note that the target attempts the saving throw the moment the spell is cast, and the result applies to the entire duration of the spell.

If you're using the combat rules in the *PHB*, allow a spellcaster affected by a *choke* spell (or any other from continuing damage) a normal initiative roll each round. If he wins, he can cast a spell (he still takes damage, but managed to get a spell off before any damage took effect). If the target loses initiative, the choking disrupts spellcasting during that round.

Note that in the PLAYER'S OPTION combat system, continuing damage from a spell like *choke* doesn't take effect until the resolution phase of the



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round, after everyone has taken their actions. If you're playing by the book, such damage cannot disrupt spellcasting unless the casting takes more than a full round.

**The Combat & Tactics book says a character who has achieved grand mastery with a weapon can use the next higher damage die for the weapon. What happens when the weapon's damage rating is already 1d20, such as the no-dachi the damage vs. large opponents? does this go to 1d100 (that seems a bit much).**

The next step is 1d30. If you don't have a 30-sided die, you can use 1d10 and a control die (1d6 works best) as follows:

On a roll of 1-2, read the d10 as is.

On a roll of 3-4, add 10 to whatever comes up on the d10.

On a roll of 5-6, add 20 to whatever comes up on the d10.

Don't forget the thief's spell failure chance of 25%. If the spell fails, there is always some adverse effect on the thief—the DM should feel free to be creative.

**Back in issue 237, you wrote that a wall of force spell blocks divination spells that don't render things visible. Does this mean that a wall of force blocks spells such as locate object? What about detect magic, which makes magical auras visible?**

Actually, *locate object* falls into the same category as effects as *clairvoyance* and *clairaudience*; it bypasses the wall entirely. *Detect magic* allows the caster to detect magical auras. In many campaigns, the spell makes auras visible, but that's window dressing, not part of the spell description. A *detect magic* spell's area of effect will not extend through a *wall of force* any more than it can extend through a metal wall

## How does a thief know which spells are on a scroll?

**How does a thief know which spells are on a scroll, and how does he know which spell will be cast if he reads the scroll?**

If the thief is high enough level to use the scroll (10th level), he can study it and understand it somewhat. The study reveals which spells are on the scroll and what they do (well enough so the thief's player can refer to the spell's description). The thief could tell the party wizard or priest what's on the scroll, but these characters still must study the scroll with a read magic spell before they can use it (a description from a dilettante is not good enough for a true professional). When using the scroll, the thief is free to decide which spell to cast from it

(though the spell will reveal the wall's magical aura). On the other hand, spells such as *detect invisibility* and *true seeing* make things visible so long as they are within range and in the caster's line of sight. Technically, these two spells also have areas of effect, but a *wall of force* is transparent to them.

**When magical arrows or quarrels are found as part of a random treasure, how do you decide what types of missiles are found. For example, how often to you find flight arrows as opposed to sheaf arrows? Likewise, when a randomly generated treasure contains a magical polearm, how do you decide what kind of weapon is found?**

If you're using the weapon list from the *PHB*, here are some tables you can use:

### Arrows (d20)

- 1-12 Flight Arrows
- 13-20 Sheaf Arrows

### Axes

(A roll of 4-5 on Table 106 in the *DMG* is always a hand/throwing axe. A roll of 6 is always a battle axe.)

### Bolts (d20)

- 1-4 Hand Crossbow Bolt
- 5-12 Light Crossbow Bolt
- 13-20 Heavy Crossbow Bolt

### Flails (d20)

- 1-12 Footman's Flail
- 13-20 Horseman's Flail

### Lances (d20)

- 1-4 Light Horse Lance
- 5-12 Medium Horse Lance
- 13-20 Heavy Horse Lance

### Maces (d20)

- 1-12 Footman's Mace
- 13-20 Horseman's Mace

### Picks (d20)

- 1-12 Footman's Pick
- 13-20 Horseman's Pick

### Polearms (d100)

- 01-05 Awl Pike
- 06-10 Bardiche
- 11-20 Bec de Corbin
- 21-25 Bill-Guisarme
- 26-30 Fauchard
- 31-35 Fauchard-Fork
- 36-40 Glaive
- 41-45 Glaive-Guisarme
- 46-50 Guisarme
- 51-55 Guisarme-Volge
- 56-65 Halberd
- 66-70 Hook Fauchard
- 71-75 Lucern Hammer
- 76-80 Military Fork
- 81-85 Partisan
- 86-90 Ranseur
- 91-95 Spetum
- 96-00 Voulge

### Swords (d100)

- 01-70 Long Sword
- 71-90 Scimitar or Broad Sword\*
- 91-95 Short Sword
- 96-99 Bastard Sword
- 00 Two-handed Sword

\*DM's choice or roll randomly, 50% chance for each type.



*Skip Williams reports a new sympathy for parties beset by giant slugs after observing numerous fleshy gastropods creeping about lawns near his home in the Seattle area.*

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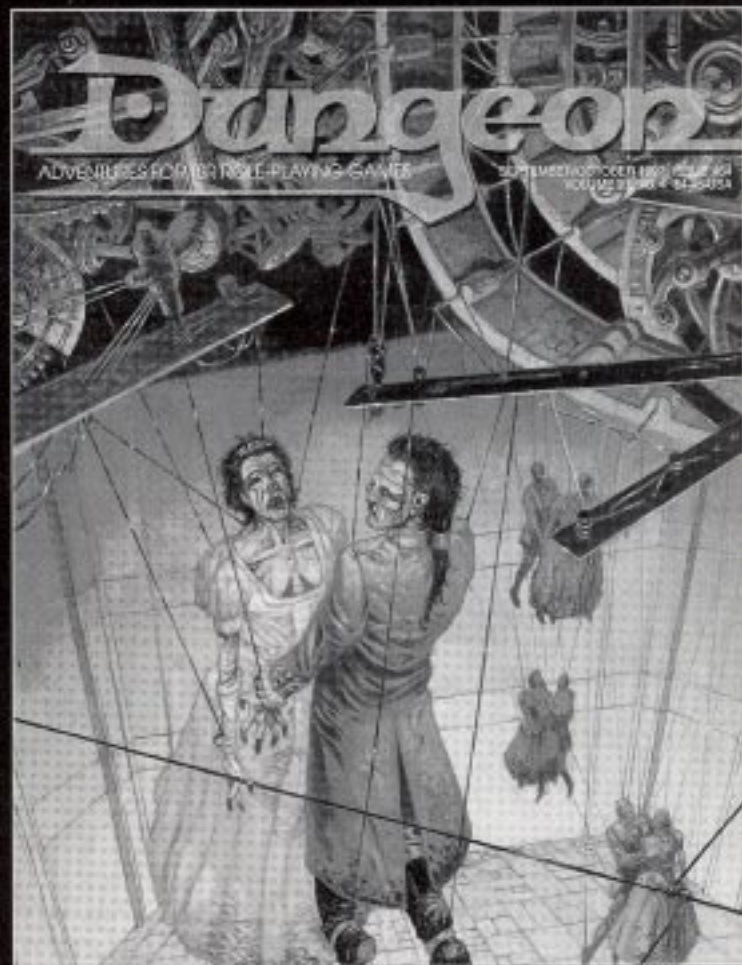


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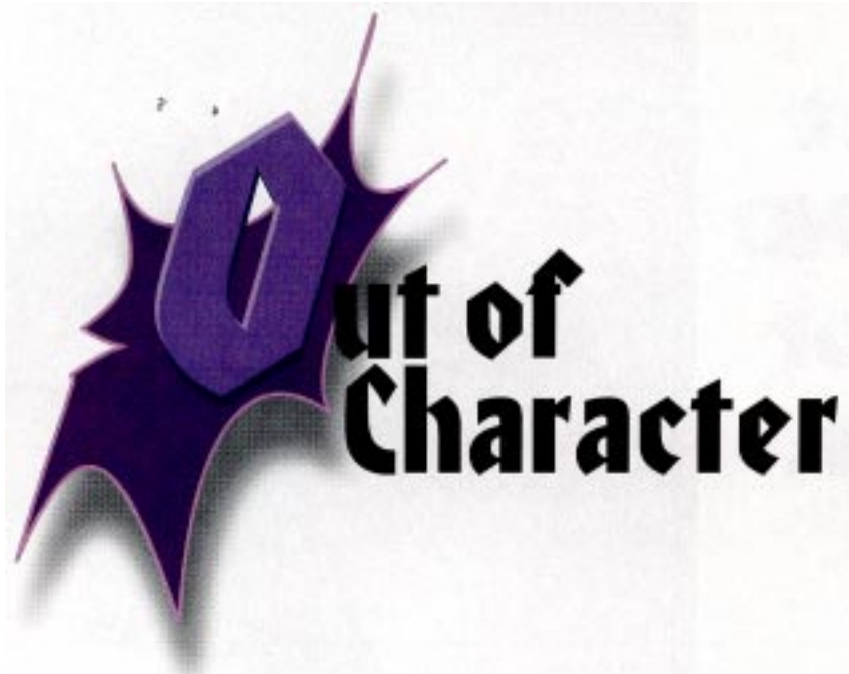
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## The PC Report Card

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by Peter Adkison

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WELCOME TO "OUT OF CHARACTER." The goal of this column is to share shortcuts, advice on dealing with difficult situations, tools of the trade, and other little tricks that Dungeon Masters can use to keep their games flowing smoothly. I'd like this column to be interactive, so write in to share your ideas on these matters.

### Controlling Experience Points

After tinkering for years with the concept of alternative methods for awarding experience points (XPs), I finally settled on one I like. I wanted a system that was simple to administer and that rewarded exceptional performance over simply tagging along. I wanted a system that rewards all forms of good play, but I didn't want a lot of charts and tables. Give me something quick and easy.

The simplest systems I've seen give everyone the same amount of XPs at the end of each adventure. There's probably something very "nice" about this, supporting teamwork and all, but this isn't very satisfactory. If one person plays brilliantly, I'd like that player to be rewarded with additional XPs. On the other hand, if another player shows up late and sacks out in the corner or spends most of the session

playing *Magic* on the side, he or she should not receive the same XPs as the player who was fully engaged throughout the session.

Another common system is to base XPs on specific criteria, like how many orcs were killed or how much treasure was collected. This puts a lot of focus on the chosen criteria but leaves out everything else. The temptation, of course, is to start designing additional XP award charts for how many XPs a character gets for picking a pocket, romancing a princess, or finding a secret door. Unfortunately it's hard to remember all these criteria, and even harder still to balance them.

The goal of simplicity drove me toward a subjective system. The obvious solution was to award XPs based on my assessment of how well each player did at the end of each session. The problem with this system is that I was worried about being fair. I've played in too many campaigns where the system for XP distribution was a complete mystery, and some players received more than others for reasons that seemed quite arbitrary. I wanted something that put me in control but that remained a visible, well understood process that would retain the respect and trust of the players.

### Noting the XP Award Criteria

At the beginning of each gaming session, I give each player a 3 × 5 index card. On this card I have them write down the name of their character and the date of the adventure (in case these cards get mixed with other cards later). I instruct them to note on the card anything interesting their character does during the session that they'd like me to consider when I calculate XPs. I suggest that they put down things like discovering traps, scouting, healing, making good suggestions during problem solving, role-playing exceptionally well, etc. This simple action has several benefits.

First of all, the players know that everything they do that's cool will get recognized; they don't have to trust that I'll remember everything.

Second, because the players are writing these things down for me, I don't have to try and remember everything for future reference (or think about spot awards); I can focus on the story and essentially "delegate" some of the work to the players.

Third, I can save these cards as a rough journal of what happened in each session.

After the adventure, I use these cards to help make an assessment of how many XPs to award each character. To do this, I come up with a range for XP awards from the adventure, since all the characters were after all on the same raid. I leave this base range unmodified only if the adventure was a truly epic challenge to the PCs.

### Establishing the Award Range

To establish the base range of the XP award, I use the Warrior XP table as a standard. Take the highest-level PC in the group and use the Warrior table to determine how many XP that character needs to the next level. So if the party had several characters ranging from 1st level to 3rd level, the base range is 4,000 XP—the number of experience points a Warrior needs to advance from 3rd level to 4th. This number becomes my base range for XP awards for the adventure.

### Modifying the Base Range

Not all adventures are epics, so the typical session deserves a lesser award. For a pretty challenging adventure with a couple of close calls, one in which the players were pretty engaged, I'll modify



the base range down by 25 percent. If the adventure was slow and either the players or I were having an off night, I'll modify the base range by 50 percent.

## Making the Grade

Once I've established and modified the base range, I give each player a percentage of this award based on a "grade" for his or her performance. Performance is a combination of both the player's and the character's success in the game. To earn an "A," the player had to stay engaged, roleplay well, and have good ideas—and the player's character had to do a great job too. On the other hand, I'd never give an "F" grade to a character who fared really badly when the player was at least trying to do a good job with the role.

An "A" grade results in the character receiving 100% of the XPs established above. For every grade below "A," I reduce the amount by 10%: 90% for a "B," 80% for a "C," etc. If you want to be more precise, call a B+ equal to an A- and use 95%, etc. This grading is subjective, but I use the cards the players filled out during the adventure to help with the evaluation, and I've found this helps me be fair.

If the character has XP bonuses or penalties (I use XP penalties rather than level limits to balance human vs. non-human character races, and I give XP penalties to PCs who have the help of henchmen and hirelings), these are applied to this final number. Also, I use the highest level character for the base only if the level disparity is slight. If for some reason a bunch of 3rd-level PCs are running around with one 10th level PC, I'd use 3rd level as a base. Finally, this base number can be adjusted upward or downward to control pacing. I've recommended 25%-50%, but this results in characters advancing quite quickly. This works for me because I don't run games as often as I'd like, and I enjoy running high level characters. If you want to make the characters advance more slowly, with that feeling of really having to work for every copper piece, then you'd probably want a standard range of 50%-75% or so.

Using this system, I can calculate XPs for a large party in about 10 minutes. I usually know off the top of my head the highest level character in the party, and I have the XP chart for warriors memorized because—as most of

## The Unpeakable Oaf

by John Kovalic



you have probably observed—the amount to advance a level simply doubles from 2,000 until it reaches 256,000, which is rounded off to 250,000. Reducing that by a quarter or half is simple, and since subtracting off 10% is easy to do in your head, you can figure individual awards without using a calculator. At the same time, however, this system offers a level of precision that is comforting to someone like me who was never comfortable saying, "Great game! Everyone advances half a level."

## ALTERNITY™ and SAGA® Awards

I basically run Alternity the same way, only instead of looking up how many XPs the highest level character needs, I look up how many achievement points the character would need. Again, the number is easy to calculate in my head—it's five plus the level of the character, so that's 15 for a 10th level character. Everything else works the same, with a bit more rounding of course.

The SAGA system simply tracks the number of quests each character has completed, with the stipulation that it has to be truly a heroic quest to count. Since the goal of the SAGA system is to focus more on heroic adventure and

less on rules, I don't use anything like this when running the SAGA system. Instead, I simply evaluate whether or not the adventure was significant enough to count as a quest, as the rules suggest. If you want to try something like the above system for SAGA then I'd suggest allowing characters to accumulate fractional quests. An "A" or "B" grade might count as a full quest point, while a "C" or "D" might count only as half.



*Peter Adkison runs a long-standing, high-level AD&D campaign set in the world of Chaldeia.*

## What Makes a Great DM?

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# DESTRIERS of the PLANES



## Magical Steeds for Knights of All Alignments

by Steve Berman

illustrated by Roger Raupp

*WHEN THE WORLD WAS RULED BY ANIMALS*, the fastest stallion that ever galloped coupled with the strongest mare in the land. The pair soon drew the notice of the Powers of the Outer Planes, for the Powers knew that the pair's foal would be greater than any other steed that had lived. Each of the Powers wanted it, hoping to breed the foal and have its descendants bound to the essence of its Plane.

The stallion remained vigilant over his pregnant mate, so ambassadors were sent, one from each of the Outer Planes, to offer a great gift and convince the sire to give up the foal at its birth.

The ambassador from Mount Celestia brought a bushel of the finest grain from bountiful fields. Elysium offered the foal's weight in gold. The Arborean had composed epic verse to celebrate the birth, while the ambassador from Mechanus displayed a masterful statue of the two horses. A visitor from Limbo lifted a wondrous elixir in a glass, as the representative of the Gray Waste sought to bribe the pair with rotten meats clutched in its claws. From the Abyss came the promise to slay all the stallion's rivals. Baator sneered at the others, calling their offerings petty and unworthy. It promised the foal great station and power. Only the ambassador from the Outlands had nothing to offer; it remained apart from the others and watched.

Now the stallion was proud, and he ignored the mare's desire to accept the offerings from the Upper Planes in return for their foal. He told all the ambassadors to return with even greater offerings that he might then decide among them.

This declaration angered the ambassadors. The evil Powers conspired to take the foal, and the good Powers worried how they might protect the animals and still earn the foal. The Powers of the Outlands saw the upcoming conflict and found it unacceptable, so they used their abilities to ensure balance by splitting the unborn foal's spirit nine ways, allotting to each Power a foal of its own and leaving the original foal to its parents. Thus, all the ambassadors were satisfied and returned to their native Plane. The arrogant stallion received nothing, and the mare was content to keep her offspring.



Thus were the equars of the nine Outer Planes created from a single Prime Plane foal. While other horse-like denizens of the Outer Planes (such as the nightmare) roam the multiverse, the equar is the steed that most often finds itself a part of the deeds of mortals. Not only a knight or paladin but also any character in your campaign might win one of these mounts as his or her own.





	Lesser Equar	Greater Equar
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very rare (rare)	Very rare (rare)
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary (herds)	Solitary (herds)
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Diurnal (good-aligned) Nocturnal (evil-aligned) Any (neutral-aligned)	Any (all alignments)
DIET:	See below	See below
INTELLIGENCE:	Very to High (11-13)	Exceptional (15-16)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT	See below	See below
NO. APPEARING	1 (3-8)	1
ARMOR CLASS	3	1
MOVEMENT:	18	24
HIT DICE:	6	9
THACO:	15	12
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-12/2-12	3-12/3-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	20%
SIZE:	L	L
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)	Fearless (20)

The equar is a horse-like species native to the Outer Planes. Nine different breeds of equar have been recorded, and from time to time they are summoned to the Prime Material Plane to act as steeds and helpers to powerful individuals. An equar's appearance and demeanor vary from type to type. Each is strongly aligned to the same ethos as its native plane. An equar can speak the Common tongue, its alignment language, and by means of the spell that summons it forth, the same racial language as the caster.

The spell to summon these creatures creates a pact between a rider (who need not be the caster) and the equar. Each promises to look after the welfare of the other. The equar agrees to aid the rider, who in turn pledges to provide the unique food the equar craves while upon the plane.

A lesser and greater equar are actually the same creature; the term designates how fully the creature exists on the Prime Material Plane. A lesser equar still has some of its essence upon its home plane, while the greater equar has been wholly conjured. Thus, any equar encountered upon its home plane is a greater equar.

Riding an equar has its dangers. Should the steed be dispelled through magic or circumstance, it immediately gallops to its home plane—with the unfortunate rider still in the saddle. Also, a rider who has proved to be the ideal of the alignment of the equar might unwittingly convince the creature that he deserves to be taken back to the equar's home plane. A *protection from evil/good* spell or equivalent effect prevents the equar from carrying the rider off-plane.

**Combat:** Equars can act as warhorses. All can be fierce in battle, attacking with their front hooves. Creatures of opposing alignment are always attacked first.

Equars have keen senses and are never surprised. They are immune to petrification, disease, and poison. Equars cannot be affected by *charm* or *beguile* spells or their variants. They are harmed only by magical weapons of +1 or greater enchantment.

An equar can gallop back to its home plane at will, but it might well take any rider with it, as mentioned above.

Each equar has an innate weakness as detailed in each individual's description. The special vulnerability may not be known by its summoner; after all, such beasts rarely mention their weaknesses to anyone, even a well-known and respected individual. Some arcane tomes that contain the spell to summon the beasts might offer a hint. The more obvious weaknesses though, such as those of the troth-spyre and charnalbalk, soon become apparent to a rider.

The spell-like abilities possessed by lesser equars operate at 9th-level ability; greater equars make use of their talents at 12th-level ability.

**Habitat/Society:** Equars tend to travel the wide open areas on their native plane. They roam in small herds of no more than ten, lead by the strongest stallion. Lawful equars mate for life. A foal is born only once every 20 years and requires six months of parental care as it learns to gallop and use its special abilities. An equar has a life span of about 100 years.

More powerful denizens of the Planes often seek out an equar to use as a steed. Not always is the creature willing to accept the rider. Often, in the case of the Lower Planes, a fiend captures and subdues an equar. Bards of many Planes tell of incidents in which a summoned equar was thus accidentally released from such service and then pursued to the Prime Material Plane by the infernal denizen.

**Ecology:** On their native plane, equars graze on the natural plant life, though the evil equars also hunt for meat. Like the horses they resemble, an equar consumes a great deal to keep up its stamina. Only on the Prime Material Plane are the creatures eating habits extreme and they require such special diets as gold or poison to maintain their magical link to their home plane.

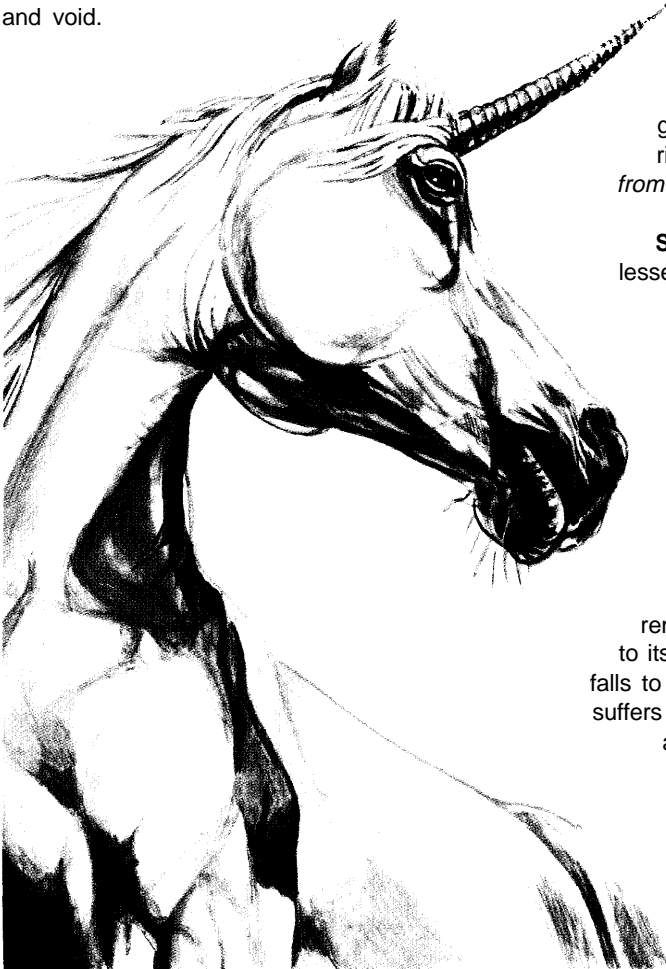


## Trothspyre

### Lawful Good

The noble trothspyre is summoned from the verdant plains of Mount Celestia. Some sages have marked the resemblance between the trothspyre and the unicorn. Indeed, when seen from a distance, the two might be confused; but a trothspyre is markedly different from a unicorn, with crystalline hooves and a twisted horn rising from its brow. Some sages have commented that the horn is actually a symbol for the word "truth" in an archaic language. Evil creatures tend to avert their eyes, if possible, from the sight of the horn.

**Diet:** The trothspyre eats only the most fine and rare of grains, which must have been *blessed* by a lawful good priest; each such meal costs at least 50 gp. The creature will starve itself rather than eat mundane grains. The trothspyre must also spend at least four hours drinking in the sunlight every day to be sated. The trothspyre goes no more than two days without such a light-drinking before it views the pact with its rider null and void.



**Special Abilities:** Instead of trampling with its hooves, a trothspyre can impale an enemy upon its sharp horn, inflicting 1-10 hp damage (2-12 for a greater trothspyre). Any form of undead and any chaotic evil creature suffers double damage from the trothspyre's horn attack.

A trothspyre can cast *know alignment* at will by touching an individual with its horn.

In addition to all common equar abilities, the trothspyre has the following spell-like powers:

**Lesser:** A trothspyre can cast *detect lie* and *protection from evil* twice per day and can seal wounds with a touch of its horn. This action heals only 1 hp of damage, but the wound stops bleeding, even if the victim has been affected by a *sword of wounding* or similar effect.

**Greater:** Trothspyres can employ a *detect lie* spell on any creature within 20 feet unless the falsehood is hidden by an *undetectable lie* spell or similar effect. A touch of the creature's horn seals wounds (as described above),

and  
once per  
day the  
creature can  
cast *cure serious wounds*. A  
greater trothspyre's  
rider gains *protection from evil* while upon the  
equar's back.

**Special Weakness:** A  
lesser trothspyre cannot  
exist on the Prime  
Material Plane after  
sundown. It slowly  
fades away,  
returning to its  
rider's location  
(as long as the  
rider remains on  
the same plane)  
at daybreak. The  
greater trothspyre  
remains on the plane,  
to its chagrin, but its AC  
falls to 5, and the creature  
suffers a -1 penalty on all  
attack rolls until the  
next daybreak.

## The Paladin's Trothspyre

Of the equars, only the lawful good trothspyre provides a suitable mount for the paladin. If the DM feels that the paladin has earned a special mount, he might allow a quest for a lesser or a greater trothspyre.

A paladin blessed with a lesser trothspyre warhorse receives a +1 bonus to Charisma while mounted atop the equar, and their combined aura is equivalent to a double-strength *protection from evil* spell. Attacks made by evil creatures against the paladin or his trothspyre suffer -4 penalties to attack rolls, and any saving throws caused by such attacks are made with +4 bonus.

In addition to the above powers, any paladin astride a greater trothspyre radiates a 30' radius aura of bravery, affording himself and his nearby allies a +4 bonus to *fear*, *hopelessness*, *antipathy*, and *phantasmal killer* spells.

The pact between paladin and trothspyre is unbreakable for as long as the paladin remains a paragon of virtue. Should the paladin fall from grace, the trothspyre remains with its rider for as long as the paladin endeavors to redeem himself. If the paladin abandons his true calling, the trothspyre returns to its home plane in disgust.

A paladin who has remained honorable and faithful to his calling can coax his trothspyre steed into foregoing its usual diet in favor of a lesser meal if fine grains are unavailable, with the understanding that the equar will dine well when the opportunity presents itself. A trothspyre can live for months in this famished state but suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls and saving throws (-2 for a greater equar) until fed well.

At any time, a paladin may heal his trothspyre's hit points at the loss of his own. Similarly, a trothspyre may sacrifice any portion of its own hit points to heal its injured rider. The two must be in direct contact for this exchange to occur, and the one bestowing the hit points can never drop below 1 hp as a result of the transfer. Neither the trothspyre nor the paladin can heal others in this fashion; the exchange is limited to rider and mount.



## Gildmane

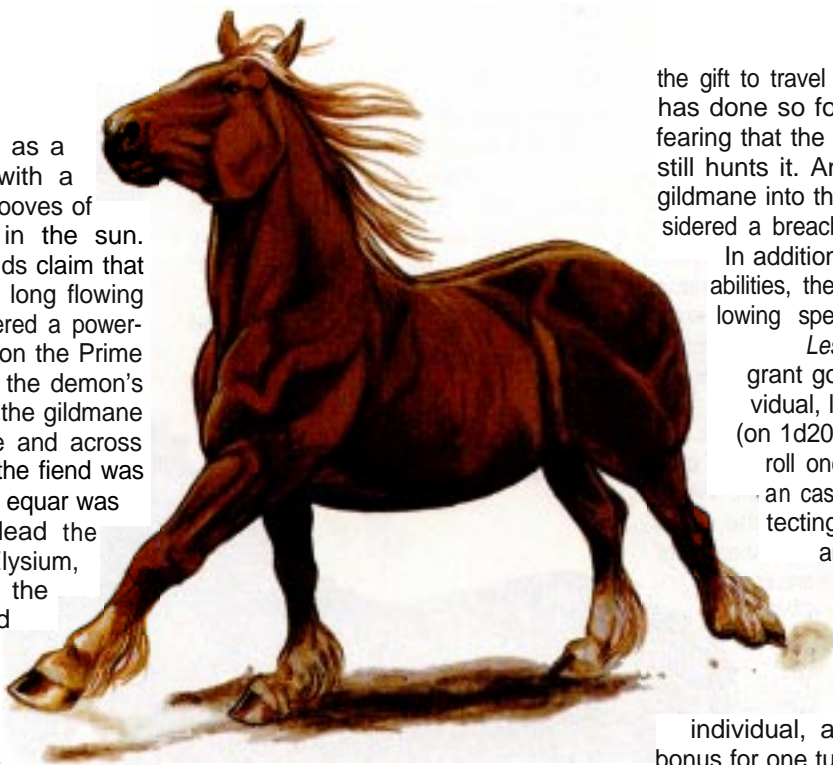
### Neutral Good

A gildmane appears as a stout chestnut horse with a shimmering mane and hooves of pure gold that shine in the sun. equar lacks a tail. Legends claim that the first gildmane had a long flowing tail, but the creature angered a powerful fiend, causing havoc on the Prime Material Plane as it fled the demon's wrath. The fiend chased the gildmane through the Astral Plane and across the spheres. In its fury, the fiend was heedless of the track the equar was taking. Thus the equar lead the fiend into the midst of Elysium, where it was slain by the denizens of that good Plane. Its final act was to grab hold of the gildmane's long tail and tear it off. The equar rode on, and ever since then the gildmane has had no tail.

**Diet:** The gildmane's peculiar diet demands worked gold (coins, jewelry, etc.), the purer the better. It consumes 200 gp value of the metal each day. Should it feast upon less for more than three days, the gildmane becomes surly and considers itself released from the pact, returning to Elysium.

**Special Abilities:** By touching a hoof to any suspect gold, the gildmane reveals the purity of the object: whether it is indeed gold or simply gold-painted iron or a lesser metal enchanted with the *fool's gold* spell. A rider who knowingly supplies false gold to the equar voids the pact.

A gildmane can surround itself with a golden glow that provides light as



per the *light* spell, and it offers a +1 on all saves for anyone within that 20' radius against any form of curse or hex. Cursed magical items within this aura stand revealed for what they are and may be abandoned by their owners without fear of return, as if the proper spells (*remove curse*, *dispel magic*, etc.) or conditions necessary to lift the curse had been cast or met. This curse-breaking aura may be summoned but once per day and lasts for no more than one hour.

At any time, a gildmane can speak with an astral traveler by gently laying a hoof upon the creature's body. Though the gildmane is said to have

the gift to travel the Astral Plane, none has done so for centuries, perhaps fearing that the fiend that stole its tail still hunts it. Any attempt to take a gildmane into the Astral Plane is considered a breach of the pact.

In addition to all common equar abilities, the gildmane has the following spell-like powers:

**Lesser:** The gildmane can grant good fortune to an individual, lending a bonus of +1 (on 1d20) or +5% on a single roll once per day. The equar can cast *glitterdust shield* (protecting both itself and rider), and *astral window*, each once per day.

**Greater:** The gildmane can grant exceedingly good fortune to an individual, allowing either a +1 bonus for one turn to all rolls or a single +3 bonus to any single attempt, once per day. The equar can cast *glitterdust*, *shield*, and *astral window* all twice per day.

**Special Weakness:** Gildmanes attract the attention of evil creatures. Any and all monsters of Low intelligence (7) or lower must make a saving throw vs. spell every day while a gildmane is within one mile. Failure means that the evil creature is drawn to attack the equar and its rider when within range.

## Favonian

### Chaotic Good

Known to travel the open fields of Arborea, favonians are unafraid of the worst weather conditions. These equars consider the downpours of major storms as nothing more troubling than a spring shower. They are pale horses, bluish-white or dappled gray.

**Diet:** A favonian's diet upon the Prime Material Plane is one of rain water and ancient sagas. Of all the equars, the favonian most enjoys the songs and antics of bards and entertainers, seeking out such company when the opportunity arises. Rain water can be collected in barrels or found in puddles after a sudden downpour. Far more difficult to find are the epic poems and songs that the equar demands be read or sung in its presence; usually such passages must be found in old libraries or copied from





the epitaphs of barrows. Failure to provide the favonian's food and drink for three consecutive days convinces the equar that the pact is broken, and it departs.

**Special Abilities:** A rider never falls off a favonian unless the equar wishes it; even at the most grueling pace or windy conditions, a favonian's rider is safe from being ousted from the saddle. Favonians also leave no tracks on any surface.

The senses of a favonian are not hampered by heavy rain, fog, or mist of mundane or magical origin. When in such weather conditions, the equar can conjure 1-3 *phantom steeds*, as per the spell. These phantasms appear identical to the favonian and may be ridden as normal horses. They also act as a mirror image spell, distracting enemies' attacks from the real favonian.

In addition to all common equar abilities, they have the following spell-like powers:

**Lesser:** Favonians can cast *alter normal winds* (described in the *Wizard's Spell Compendium [WSC]*), *gust of wind*, and *obscurement* each once a day.

**Greater:** Favonians can cast *alter normal winds*, (WSC), *cloudburst* (WSC), *gust of wind*, and *obscurement* all thrice per day. The equar can perform a flying gallop thrice per day (MC B), lasting one turn, during which the equar moves at normal movement rate through the air, as per the *fly* spell.

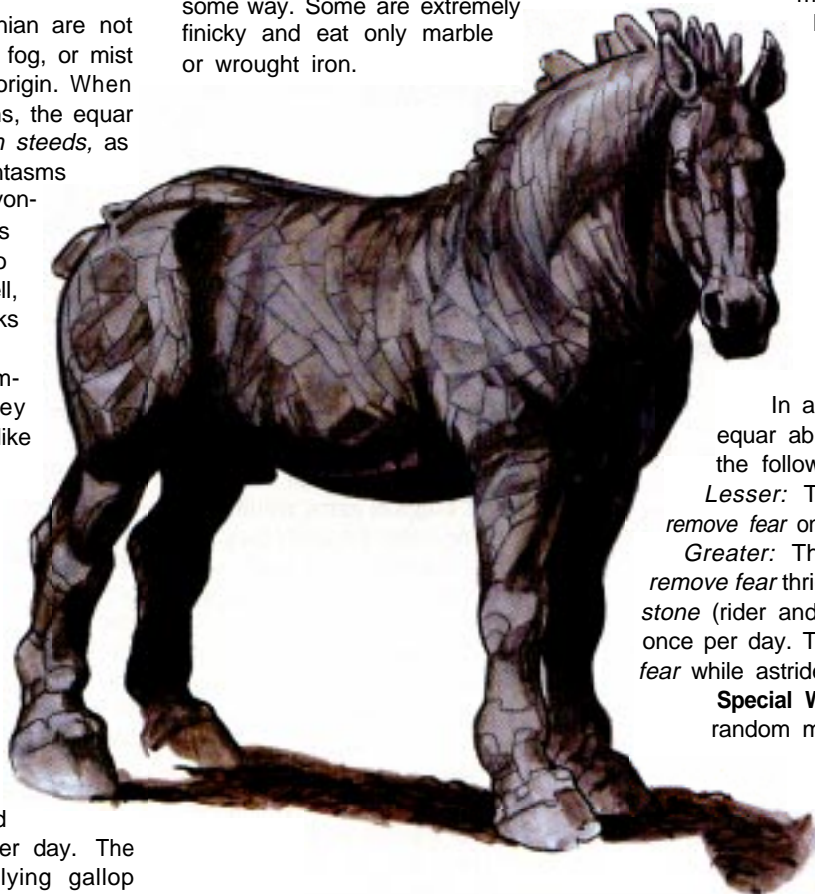
**Special Weakness:** Because of their admiration (some say even love) for bards, these equars never attack an entertainer, even one of sinister disposition. In dealing with such persons, they'd rather disperse the crowd and deprive the rogue of his or her audience—and thus his or her livelihood. A favonian will come to an entertainer's rescue, even when such action deviates from the desires of its rider. A favonian's rider who attacks a bard or other entertainer learns that the favonian considers this action a breaking of the pact. The favonian sternly admonishes the offender before departing the plane.

## Lithichthil

### Lawful Neutral

The stalwart lithichthil rides through the open areas of Mechanus. At first glance, the lithichthil appears to be a living stone statue, but its flesh simply has an odd, sculpted look to it that resembles stone.

**Diet:** A lithichthil eats only worked materials—stone, wood, metal, clay, etc.—that have been enchanted in some way. Some are extremely finicky and eat only marble or wrought iron.



**Special Abilities:** Once per day, the lithichthil can increase any one attribute of its rider by 1-4 points (but not to exceed the racial maximum). The equar must be within 100 feet of the rider and often chooses itself which characteristic to augment; for example, a lithichthil who feels that its rider could treat it with more respect might choose to augment the rider's Charisma, even

if the rider would prefer an augmented Strength or Dexterity. The effect lasts five rounds for a lesser lithichthil, one turn for a greater.

This equar can also detect enchantment at will, as per the *detect magic* spell, noting if an individual has been affected by any sort of spell from the School of Enchantment.

In addition to all common equar abilities, the lithichthil has the following spell-like powers:

**Lesser:** The equar can cast *remove fear* once per day.

**Greater:** The lithichthil can cast *remove fear* thrice a day and *meld into stone* (rider and equar both affected) once per day. The rider is immune to fear while astride the lithichthil.

**Special Weakness:** Exposure to random magic is detrimental to this equar. It suffers a -2 penalty on all saving throws against wild

## New Magical Item

### The Saddles of Ahl Mitac

The conjurer Ahl Mitac was known throughout the world not so much for his tremendous magical prowess but for his many beloved daughters. When suitors began to visit the conjurer's estate, Ahl Mitac decided to create a wondrous dowry for each child—a gift that not only would be valued for its worth but also could bring back swiftly any daughter who found her husband unkind. After many days of toil with local craftsman and countless nights spent consulting Planar charts, Ahl Mitac cast a dweomer upon several of the most finely-wrought saddles.

Legend marks their number at seven, but some bards sing that there are as many as 13 enchanted saddles. (Some sages point out that the number changes frequently, depending on the length of the song the bard wishes to sing.)

Whenever any woman sits atop a *saddle of Ahl Mitac* (even if the saddle does not rest on a mount), an equar of the same alignment is instantly summoned as her steed. A pact can then be arranged between the rider and the equar. If at the time of the summoning a normal horse had been wearing the saddle, the equar interplanarily changes places with the animal.

**XP Value:** 1,000 **GP Value:** 5,000



magic (and the greater lithichthil's magic resistance does not apply to such dweomers), and any magical item that has random effects or powers (such as a *bag of beans* or a *wand of wonder*) will not function normally within 100 feet of an lithichthil; instead, the item will permanently drain itself of all magic to induce a wild surge (see *Tome of Magic*, page 7) within 100 feet of the equar, quite possibly affecting the item's wielder along with the lithichthil, who—in addition to suffering the effects of the surge—also suffers 1-20 hp damage instantly.

## Menthric

### True Neutral

The menthric, native to The Outlands, appears as a normal horse and can have a variety of colors, from piebald to roan. But when seen out of the corner of the eye or with a *true seeing* spell or similar effect, the Menthric has the form of a plain-faced human dressed in non-descript clothing and shoulder-length hair. A perceptive person might notice that the menthric casts a human's shadow rather than a horse's. This equar is often called upon when some event upsets the balance of power in the Prime Material Plane (for instance, during times of war, famine, and plague).

**Diet:** A menthric must feed on enchanted script: magical scrolls, wizards' spell books, and the like. Unfortunately, it is still vulnerable to any protective wards placed on the writing (such as *explosive runes*, *sepia snake sigil*, and the like), activated when the equar begins to eat. A menthric requires no less than four pages of magical script per day. If the equar must go for three days without this food, the pact is broken.

**Special Abilities:** A menthric has a talent for discerning weaknesses and strengths. If able to observe a creature for a full round, the equar can deduce whether the creature has any vulnerabilities or immunities. If the creature should have more than one special weakness or defense, the menthric can discover them with further scrutiny, learning one such trait per round. For instance, atop a hillcrest, a menthric and rider spy a horrid figure stumbling along the river bank. The menthric watches and notes that the creature favors its side, a sign of weakness. By waiting another round, the equar magically perceives that the wound

was caused by fire and that flames are especially harmful to the monster. The forewarned rider readies a torch as they rush down to engage the troll.

A menthric can cast *analyze balance* and *detect magic* at will.

In addition to all common equar abilities, the menthric has the following spell-like powers:

**Lesser:**  
The menthric can cast *hold portal*, *knock*, *mending*, and *shatter* once per day.

**Greater:** The menthric can cast *hold portal*, *knock*, *mending*, and *shatter* twice per day. Once per day, the equar can summon a unique magical shield to protect both itself and rider. This effect takes the form of the opposing energy/force that the attacker is using and thus only works against spells or magical effects. The menthric (and its rider) suffers only half damage from the attack, one-quarter if a saving throw is successful. Thus, if a red dragon breathed on a protected menthric employing its magical shield ability, most of the flames would be blocked by a suddenly appearing ring of ice and frost. The equar galloping through a blade barrier would be encircled by flying bucklers. This arcane shield lasts for one turn.

**Special Weakness:** A menthric is a creature of balance, prone neither to chaotic behavior (rash decisions) or lawful deliberation. It uses its own instinctive nature as a guide. However, spells that induce such state tend to wear at the creature's ties to the Prime Material Plane. Thus any true chaotic or lawful magic—including Priest spells of the spheres Law and Chaos, and those wizard spells that either induce a disordered state such as *chaos*, *Otto's*



*irresistible dance*, *polymorph other* or *unluck*) or rigid state (such as *domination* or *hold monster*) have a 5% chance per level of the spell of driving the equar back to its home plane. This risk occurs only if the menthric fails any magic resistance and saving throw rolls. Unfortunately, the rider of a banished menthric is also sent with the equar.

## Potherrounce

### Chaotic Neutral

The potherrounce is a creature of true chaos, native to the wilds of Limbo. Though always a horse in basic form, it has no true appearance; every time one looks at a potherrounce, one sees something different. Thus, the first glance might show a zebra, while the next a draft horse with a mane of flower petals, and the next glance a dappled mare with





three tails. This effect can be quite disconcerting, and superstitious folk intensely dislike and distrust this equar and any who associate with it.

**Diet:** Being borne from the forces of chaos, the potherrounce hungers for food similar in nature. Upon the Prime Material Plane, the only meals it eats are mixed magical potions (unmixed vials are unappealing to the equar; see **Table 111** in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* for the effects of mixing potions). Since the potherrounce demands fresh concoctions, the resulting mix can be quite volatile, and explosions have sometimes resulted in the demise of the rider. Still, the potherrounce laps up the strange brew. Failure to provide a drink of at least three different potions blended together once a week convinces the equar that the pact is broken

**Special Abilities:** Because of its natural environs, the potherrounce's magic resistance is effectively doubled against wild magic and surges. Also, a potherrounce's senses are constantly *patternweaving* (see the *Tome of Magic [ToM]*). Thus the equar is unaffected by such spells as *blur*, *chaos*, *confuse languages*, *confusion*, *fool's speech*, the reverse of *tongues*, and the like.

In addition to all common equar abilities, the potherrounce has the following spell-like powers:

**Lesser:** A potherrounce can cast blink, affecting both it and rider, three times per day. The rider is continually protected as by a *chaos shield* (ToM) while mounted on the equar.

**Greater:** The potherrounce can cast *miscast magic* (ToM) once per day. The rider gains more protection from wild magic, sharing the equar's enhanced magic resistance against such dweomers. The potherrounce can urn ethereal with its rider for up to one hour each day.

Because of the shifting appearance of the potherrounce, anyone with a full day's exposure to the creature must make a saving throw vs. spell or lose 1 point of Wisdom.

Should such an attribute fall to 0 through time spent in the equar's presence, the individual goes permanently insane (until a *restoration* or *limited wish* spell is applied). Lost Wisdom is regained at the rate

of 1 point per week spent away from the potherrounce.

**Special Weakness:** Any missile weapon blessed by a lawfully aligned priest inflicts double damage to a potherrounce. The equar attempts to retreat from such attacks if at all possible, even if its rider demands otherwise. *Hold* spells and other forms of paralysis inflict 1-3 hp damage per round on the potherrounce in addition to their usual effects, as the equar cannot freely shift its appearance under such effects.

## Banecourser

### Lawful Evil

For villains, the banecourser is a grand mount. At first glance it appears to be nothing more than a fine black steed. Close inspection reveals its vile nature. Then one might see the odd streaks of rust and verdigris along its coat. When the equar opens its mouth, a serpentine tongue slips out for snake-like flicker. This equar dwells on the awful moors of Baator, but it is more than eager to appear on the Prime Material Plane and work with evil riders. Moonlight never illuminates a banecourser, and observation of this uncanny effect is one of the means to uncover the true nature of beast.

**Diet:** The banecourser must feed on deadly poisons. Many a rider has perished from accidental exposure to the venom gathered for the equar. The equar requires an average of 50 gp of such poisons per day, or else the pact is broken.

**Special Abilities:** The banecourser can *detect poison* by smell. With its





flickering tongue, the creature can actually drain poison from any creature. This venom-theft can be performed upon a beast that has poison glands or sacs, thereby robbing it of such an attack. It can even remove the venom from a poison victim's system, perhaps inadvertently saving a life in the process. To employ this special attack, the equar must first successfully strike the target. Thereafter, it draws out the poison over the course of a number of rounds equal to the Hit Dice of a venomous creature or 2-7 rounds for a poisoned individual (who might well die before the poison is all removed). Each round the banecourser spends draining the poison, the target suffers 1 hp damage from the sharp tongue's lapping.

Banecourser have 60' infravision but are irritated by daylight, suffering a -2 penalty on all rolls under such light, including the effects of a *light* spell or similarly bright illumination. This rider shares both the infravision and the sensitivity to light, unless wearing a helm, hat, or other apparatus to shield the eyes from direct light.

Interestingly, all creatures encountering the rider while he or she is in physical contact with the banecourser are affected as by a *friends* spell, with no saving throw allowed.

In addition to all common equar abilities, the banecourser has the following spell-like powers:

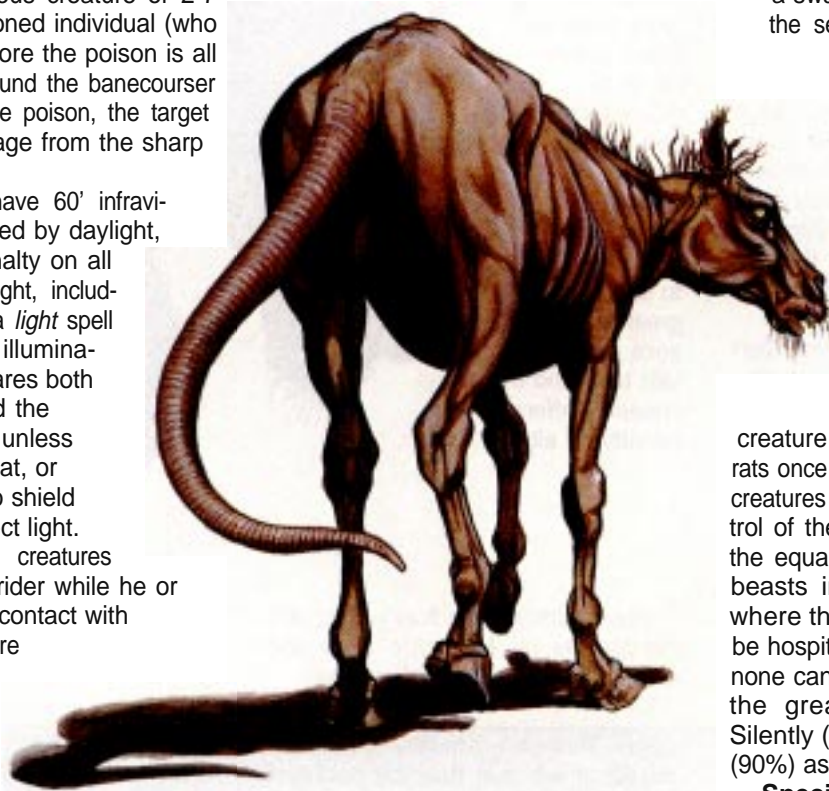
**Lesser:** The banecourser allows the rider's words to act as a *suggestion* spell once per day.

**Greater:** The equar can cast *suggestion* and *undetectable lie* upon one of the rider's statements once per day, with listeners suffering a -2 to saves to detect the lie. The rider is afforded *protection from good* while astride the banecourser.

**Special Weakness:** Banecourser were cursed long ago by the goddess of the moon, as punishment for the equars' taking part in the destruction of her high temple. Ever since, the banecourser has been unable to cross a line of silver (the metal sacred to the goddess). Though silver inflicts no harm to the equar, it irritates the

equar; if the banecourser becomes trapped by a circle of silver, it departs the plane, the pact broken.

Due to the equar's diet, a *slow poison* spell cast upon a banecourser acts as a *slow* spell, while a *neutralize poison* inflicts 4d6 hp damage. A *peripart of proof against poison*, if bound to a banecourser, forces the creature back to Baator for a period no less than one year.



## Rosinante

### Neutral Evil

Though bards praise the melodious name of this equar, truly nothing about this creature hailing from The Gray Waste is the least bit lovely. A rosinante has the appearance of sickly, hairless horse with long rat's tail. The eyes are unnaturally large and without pupils, looking like dead-white orbs. The rosinante's teeth are crooked and small.

**Diet:** This equar dines only upon rotten meat and tainted water, and it insists on being hand-fed.

**Special Abilities:** Instead of its hooves, a rosinante can attack a foe with its prehensile tail. This attack can take the form of whipping that inflicts 1-4 hp damage (2-5 for a greater rosinante), or it can grasp a single-

handed melee weapon. The lesser rosinante may wield weapons of S size, while a greater rosinante may employ M-sized weapons.

This equar can *detect good* at will through a magical sense of smell. The equar is also immune to the effects of a *stinking cloud*. They can see as well at night as they do at day.

In addition to all common equar abilities, the rosinante has the following spell-like powers:

**Lesser:** The rosinante can summon a swarm of verminous rats (as per the second-level Wizard spell *summon swarm*) up to twice a day. When necessary, the rosinante can *Move Silently* (60%) and *Hide in Shadows* (70%), even when ridden.

**Greater:** While riderless, this equar can *shapeshift* into a giant rat once per day and slip through small openings no less than one foot wide. The

creature may also summon 1-3 giant rats once per day to aid its cause. Such creatures are under the complete control of the rosinante with no need for the equar to concentrate to keep the beasts in line. Note that the area where the rats are summoned must be hospitable to such rodents, or else none can be called. When necessary, the greater rosinante can *Move Silently* (80%) and *Hide in Shadows* (90%) as a thief, even while ridden.

**Special Weakness:** Restorative magic cast upon the rosinante actually harms the creature. Thus a *cure light wounds* inflicts 1-8 hp damage, a *cure disease* inflicts a disease, and so forth. A rosinante can be healed only by eating victuals affected by *putrefy food and drink* spell, regaining 1-8 hp per helping.

## Charnalbalk

### Chaotic Evil

Straight from the Abyss, the charnalbalk appears as an emaciated coal black horse with iron hooves. Its mane is tangled and unkempt. When a foal matures, the evil powers of the Abyss forge a terrifying iron mask and bolt it on the creature's head; smoldering eyes glow from slits in the helm. The jaws of the beast stretch wide and are lined with sharp teeth and a pair of boar-like tusks.



**Diet:** The charnalbalk demands blood and warm flesh to dine upon, but such a meal must be from the same racial stock as the rider; sages suggest that this equar secretly harbors ill will toward any who dare ride it and thus chooses such as its diet. One victim slaughtered per day keeps the charnalbalk content. One such meal every three days keeps the pact of the spell, though the beast may at an inconvenient time attack a member of that race (other than the rider) to snack upon in the meantime.

**Special Abilities:** Instead of fighting with its hooves, a charnalbalk can bite an enemy with its daggerlike teeth, inflicting 2-8 hp damage (3-12 for a greater charnalbalk). If the beast scores a natural roll of "20," it succeeds in tearing loose a hunk of flesh, thereby causing further 2-8 (3-12) hp damage; whether the wound is healed through natural or magical means, the strike always leaves a nasty scar.

Charnalbalks have 120' infravision and can cause the spell-like effects *fear* and *weakness* (the reverse of strength) for one hour in any creature below 3rd level or 3 HD that meet its gaze. A successful saving throw negates this effect.

In addition to all common equar abilities, they have the following spell-like powers:

**Lesser:** The equar can cast *invisibility to undead* (affecting both itself and its rider) and *heat metal* each once per day.

**Greater:** The equar can cast *invisibility to undead* (affecting both itself and its rider) and *heat metal* each thrice per day. It can also cast *animate dead* once per day, but only corpses killed by the charnalbalk can be animated.

**Special Weakness:** A lesser charnalbalk cannot exist on the Prime Material Plane after sunrise. It slowly fades away at dawn, returning to its rider's location at dusk. The greater charnalbalk remains on the plane, to its great annoyance, but its AC falls to 5, and the creature suffers a -1 penalty on all d20 rolls.



*Steve Berman keeps busy writing articles for DRAGON Magazine while also continuing work on his fantasy novel.*

## New Spells

### Summon Lesser Equar

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 5

Range: 50 yds.

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 5

Duration: 1 day/level of caster

Area of Effect: Summons 1 equar

Saving Throw: None

This caster of this spell summons an equar from one of the Outer Planes. Before the creature agrees to assist the caster and take a rider, a pact must first be struck. The wording is not as important as the understanding (though some tomes suggest otherwise). In return for caring and feeding the equar, the beast agrees to serve the caster in a single endeavor for a period not longer than the spell's duration. A rider must also be designated, though this need not be the

caster. There are conditions in which an equar will feel that the pact has been broken. If it is improperly fed, betrayed to an opposite alignment, or attacked by the rider or caster, it will swiftly return to its home plane. The next time the conjurer attempts to summon an equar, he may well have to make amends for the spell to work.

A conjurer can call upon only an equar of the same alignment. No evil mage can ever summon one of the good equars, for instance. However, an equar will accept a rider with an alignment close to its own, but the mount might prove demanding and critical of any action it deems offensive. For example, a trothspyre might consent to bear a neutral good or lawful neutral rider, but the steed will extol the ways of virtue and ensure that its rider commits no evil.

The material component is an offering of food to the taste of the

summoned equar. Only those that have first mastered the incantations for *mount* and *monster summoning I* can learn this spell.

### Summon Greater Equar

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 7

Range: 50 yds.

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 7

Duration: 1 day/level of caster

Area of Effect: Summons 1 equar

Saving Throw: None

This spell is similar to *summon lesser equar*, and the conjurer must have knowledge of that spell before learning this one. This version creates a more powerful call to the equar. The beast is more firmly bound to the Prime Material and thus has the statistics of a greater equar. In all other ways, this spell resembles the above.



# HOLY SWORDS OF THE REALM

## Blades Both Infernal and Divine

by Lloyd Brown

illustrated by L.A. Williams

**ONE EVENT SURE TO BRING DISCORD** into an adventuring party is the discovery of a powerful magic weapon. Every character who can use it will beg, bargain, and bribe to have it. Friendships are strained and alliances broken as claims are made and arguments stated. But there is one weapon that goes quietly to the one character who, ironically, withdraws himself from the glut of sharing of magic items: the paladin's holy sword.

Here are a handful of holy swords that are known in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign. When these weapons are found, their location is marked both by those good characters who covet them or wish to help their owners, or by villains who wish to destroy the weapon and slay its owner. There are undoubtedly more holy swords that have not been identified. Some of these are in the hands of young paladins who know better than to draw unwanted attention to themselves. Most are in the hands of fighters, rangers, and rogues who underestimate the fine weapon they carry.

All holy swords have some standard abilities: in the hands of any character other than a paladin, the swords act as +2 weapons with no special abilities. Each projects a circle of power at the command of the paladin that dispels hostile magic in a 10' radius. DMs are advised to read the thorough description of this power in the *Complete Paladin's Handbook*. Other spell effects are cast at 12th level, unless the spell requires a higher level. For these powers, use the minimum level possible.

Physically, most holy swords are long swords, but broad swords, bastard swords and two-handed swords are fairly common as well. Short swords and scimitars are also found, but they are rarer. Other types of swords enchanted as holy swords are almost unknown. These swords, if their identity is known, are beautifully maintained, carefully protected, and jealously guarded, often with magical wards on their grips or sheaths.

There shouldn't be enough PC paladins in any single campaign to require a large selection of holy swords. There will, however, be NPCs who meet the party, heroes of legend and fame, and different generations of player characters. A single DM might run campaigns in different campaign worlds, with a different player having a paladin character in each world. Or a DM might suggest one of these blades to a player of a high level priest who is interested in making one of

these special magic items. Giving one of these blades to a paladin is a good act and would earn the priest prestige, respect, and a strong (and powerfully armed) ally.

Two unholy swords are also mentioned here. They are similar to holy swords in that they are +2 weapons in the hands of a character not qualified for their full use. They also project a circle of power as a holy sword. These evil weapons can be used by githyanki knights and chaotic evil fighters or fiends who meet certain requirements. These seem to involve a level or Hit Dice minimum (8th or higher), and the leadership of about 200 HD of followers. Otherwise, the use of these weapons is determined by the whim of various dark Powers—Cyric almost certainly has a say in the matter.

### True Slayer

In the hands of a paladin, this sword becomes a +4 weapon. Enemies slain by the *true slayer* cannot be the recipient of *resurrection*, *raise dead*, or *animate dead* spells, nor can they become undead. Undead monsters that are not destroyed when reduced to 0 hp (such as vampires or liches) are still able to recover as normal when wounded by the *true slayer*.

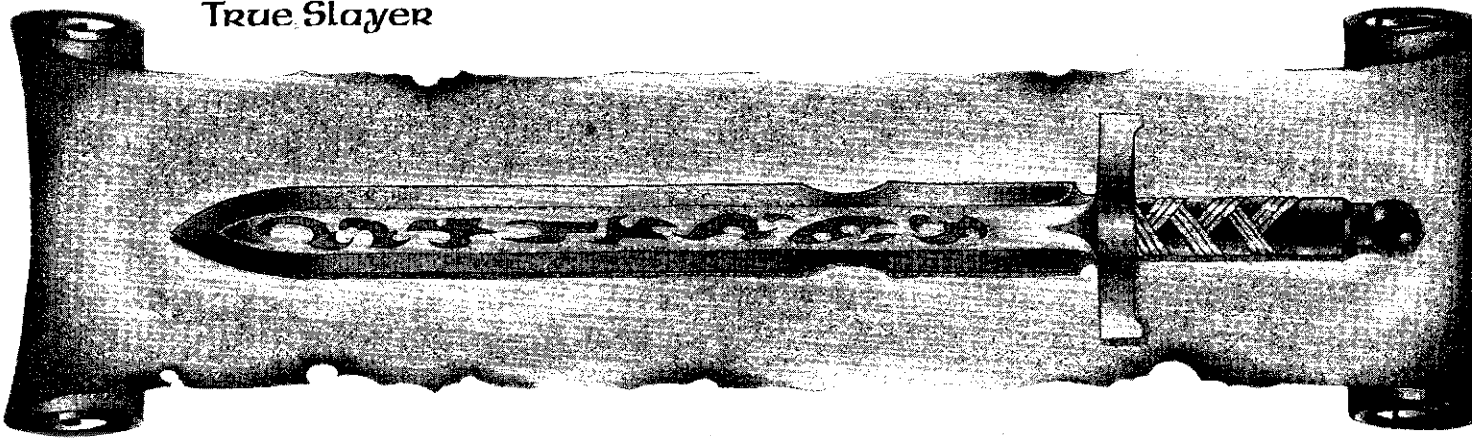
The only known *true slayer* is a long sword, golden hilted and chased. The weapon is presently claimed by Armorin Steadfast, a protector of caravans and travelers along the roads between Baldur's Gate and Daggerford. The weapon is beautiful and stainless, with exotically stylized celestial designs engraved onto its golden handle. Its flawless blade hints at some slow regeneration of mundane nicks and scars. It bears no gemstones, but its craftsmanship alone makes it valuable (5,000 gp), even if all magic were removed.

Armorin has recently fallen from paladinhood, and the sword no longer allows him to use its full range of abilities. Armorin's downfall is his selfishness, which he is trying to atone for by keeping only his warhorse and weapons and armor—and maybe a few choice pieces of jewelry, and a gem or two, just for sentimental reasons. And of course, enough gold to cover any emergencies. If he can regain his status (he is currently a 9th level fighter), the Sword Coast will be a much safer place to travel. Without help, however, Armorin is not likely to recover his paladinhood soon, as his affection for material wealth remains strong.





## True Slayer



There are at least two other swords in Faerûn that bear runes similar to Armorn's sword, but since these are not in the hands of paladins (one is owned by a wizard of Marsember in the Kingdom of Cormyr, who uses its impressive appearance to deter robbers), it is uncertain whether they have similar abilities.

**XP Value: 3,300 GP Value: 18,000**

### Soul Mate

Although it offers valuable protection, the semi-legendary *soul mate* is considered a minor holy sword. It is often a bastard sword, made of a naturally blued steel alloy, adorned with a plain steel pommel, a ray-skin grip, and short guards. It is clearly a no-nonsense, utilitarian weapon, quite unlike the *true slayer*. Invisible runes identifying its maker, enchanter, and first user have been identified along its length. A *true seeing* spell is needed to see them, and a comprehend *languages* is required to read them.

In the paladin's hands, the sword's bonus increases to +3. Attempts to turn undead by using *soul mate* as a holy symbol are made as if the paladin were two levels higher. Using the sword this way conjures spectacular effects: a chorus of perfectly blended voices sings in brief harmony, and the sword glows brightly, illuminating the undead foes with preternatural clarity. When held, the *soul mate* allows a saving throw vs. spells to resist any level-draining attempt, whether by the touch of an undead creature or by spell. The sword also confers a +4 bonus on saves vs. death magic. It is naturally favored by those who battle undead or evil necromancers.

It is rumored that Mela Istonin, a paladin of Selûne, carried a *soul mate*

with her when she accidentally entered the Demiplane of Dread. How well its abilities served her is not known, for she has yet to return. Her friends and allies in Tantras are confident that she will return someday, though they know little of the mists that swallowed her up.

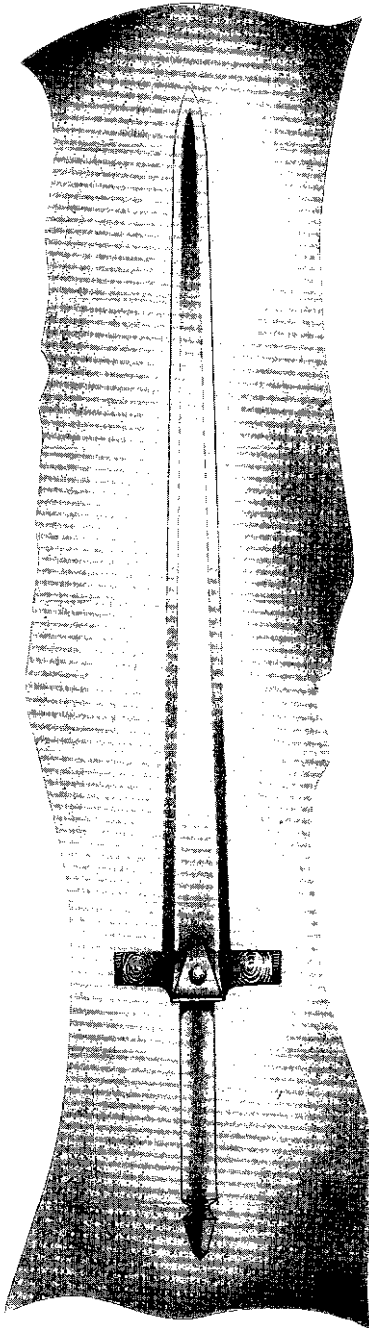
**XP Value: 2,500 GP Value: 12,000**

### Captor

*Captor* is a short sword whose pommel carries the form of two human hands, folded almost as if in prayer. Like most short swords, it is heavily weighted toward the bottom, making it a good thrusting weapon. Being symmetrical and nearly straight until its point, it also excels at cutting far better than most weapons of similar length. It is unique in that it has blunt edges and causes damage equal to a mace, with a +5 modifier for its magic.

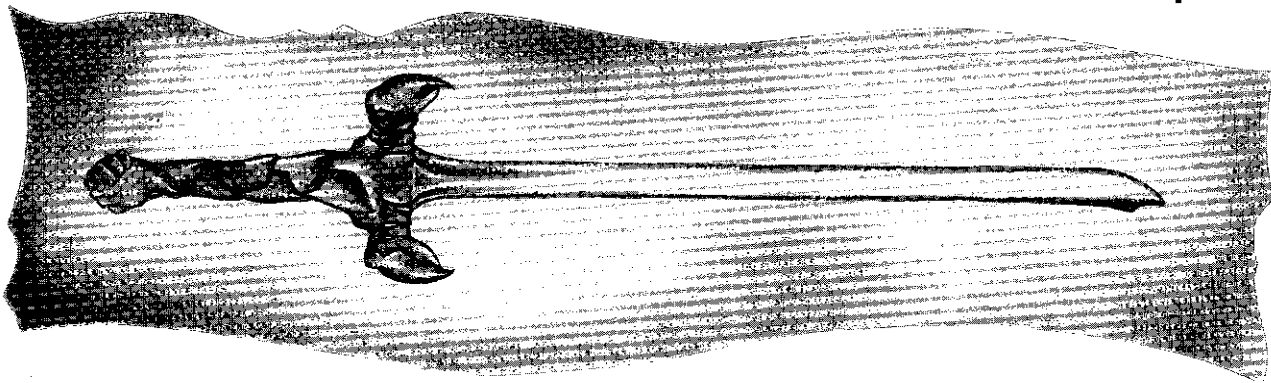
On any attack that reduces the enemy to 0 hp, the enemy is knocked unconscious (as if in unarmed combat) if a save vs. death magic is failed, or merely stays at 1 hp if the save is successful. This sword cannot kill an opponent, although other weapons can be used to finish off a helpless enemy. If used by a paladin of sufficient level to cast spells, the paladin can add spells from the sphere of Law (from the *Tome of Magic*) to those from which he is allowed to choose for as long as the blade remains in the paladin's possession.

*Captor* is a favorite "dream item" of paladins around the Realms because of its ability to bring enemies of the state to justice. Instead of being killed, the enemy can be detained until tried by a court. It also allows the paladin confidently to fight neutrals whose agendas force them to cross swords



**Soul Mate**





with the paladin. Fear of being confused or going berserk in battle due to a charm magic makes this sword a much-sought prize—a traditionally armed paladin could unwittingly maim and kill his comrades if forced to turn against them.

*Captor* has been in the Halatar family of Sembia for generations. Its current holder (one does not say "owner" of a holy sword) is Bormiss, a 12th-level paladin and landowner near the Sea of Fallen Stars. Bormiss is very careful of the sword after chasing it around Amn for nearly three years, where it was taken by a thief of unquestionable boldness. Although the sword (and Bormiss's honor) has been returned, the thief is still at large. Not one to lose his sword twice, Bormiss rarely lets *Captor* out of his sight.

**XP Value:** 4,000 **GP Value:** 20,000

### Illuminator

This long sword is a +3 holy weapon in the hands of a paladin. Its handle and wooden sheath are covered with tough black leather, possibly made from the skin of a trapper or lurker above. Instead of a mere two arms servings as guards, the handle is protected by an eight-pointed snowflake design of platinum, the only light color on this morbid weapon. The ebony blade of adamantite alloy carries a blood groove down its entire length. The fact that it is made of expensive adamantite but carries only a +3 bonus has convinced some sages that the enchantment process was only partially successful, and the sword was intended to bear more powerful magics.

On the first successful attack vs. any enemy, the sword confers a *faerie fire* effect lasting one turn. On command, the sword radiates light equivalent to

the illumination of a *continual light* spell. This radiance reveals invisible creatures and items as well and bestows infravision on its bearer, in case the light is somehow dispelled. The first sword of this type was made in the Underdark by an evil priest who changed his ways before he finished its creation. With the passion of a convert, he changed the item's purpose and enchanted a powerful weapon of good. While it bears the spider of Lolth on the blade, the sword will not cause any damage to a character or monster of lawful good alignment.

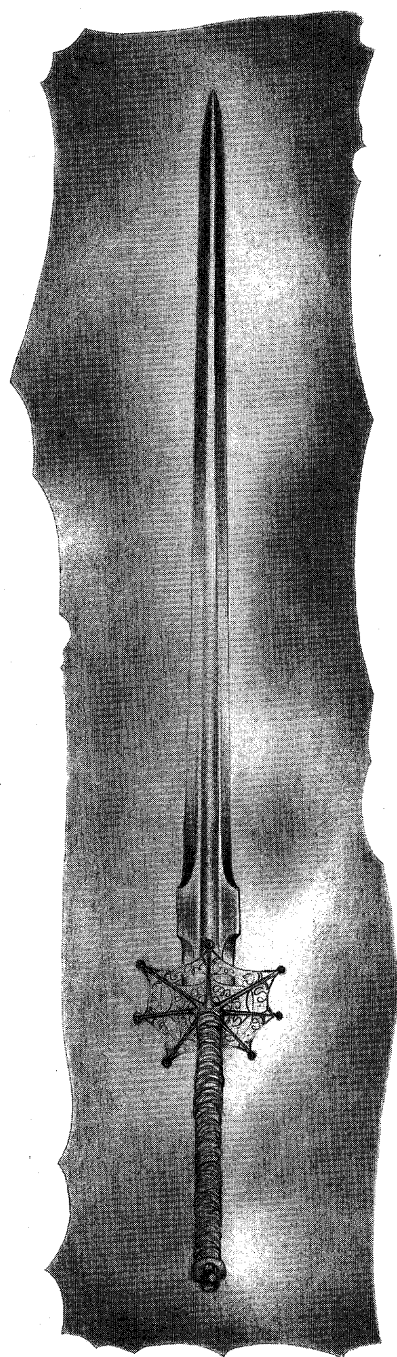
It is rumored that an unnamed paladin from distant Dambrath with a rough sense of humor and hearty laugh now holds this sword. The rumor further states that the foreigner was given the holy sword by an avatar (exactly which one depends on who is retelling the story).

**XP Value:** 2,500 **GP Value:** 12,000

### Chanter

*Chanter* was supposedly brought out of Myth Drannor by a timid sage just recently. This long sword is of elven design and bears the name "Shollindal," an elf known to have been a swordsmith before the Army of Darkness decimated the kingdom. Its rounded tip and distinctive lozenge-shaped cross section further identify it as coming from the last days before the Dusk, although the tiny pale yellow gemstones (datchas) encircling the pommel are a unique personalization.

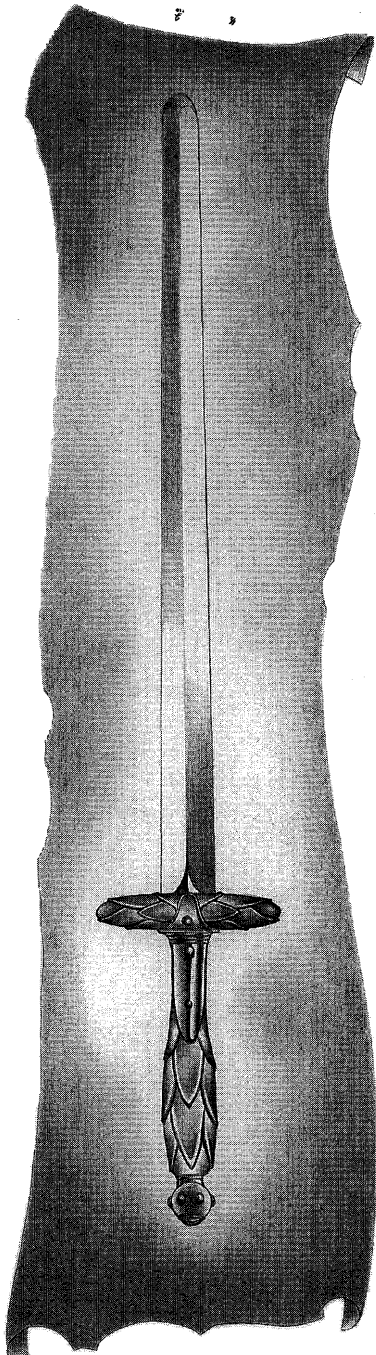
The famous singing sword combats evil gladly, encouraging others in combat with holy verses of faith, heroism, and valor. Although the verses sung are from the canon of Lathander, any creatures of good alignment within 30 feet of the sword during combat receive the benefits of



**Illuminator**



## Chanter



a chant spell. They are also resistant to magical fear, gaining a +2 bonus to such saves. The sword is susceptible to magical silence but has a 5% chance per round of "burning through" the silence effect, thereby dispelling it. Upon request, it may also sing in a peaceful situation. This singing improves the effects of faith magic gatherings by 25 percent. For instance, 100 worshipers become as effective as 125 for the faith magic spell attempted. If not used for either of these purposes, the singing can instead protect against evil within a 30-yard radius, making it a powerful weapon in a large-scale battle. It is always a +4 weapon when wielded by a paladin.

For a total of seven times, the sword will speak rather than sing. This use is limited only to a single word and has an effect identical to a dispel evil. The sword cannot be commanded to do this, but will use this ability of its own accord. Fortunately, the sword seems willing to help out its holder and never withholds the ability if this would cause the death of the paladin or a companion.

Bards often speak of this sword, as they admire its abilities. Judging by their tales, the sword's ability can complement their own, inciting allies to truly heroic feats. Whether this is fact or bluff has not been determined, since it has been a generation since the sword has appeared. Sages suspect that a singing sword may be in the Underdark in the hands of a creature with powerful mental abilities, like a mind flayer or aboleth, because the weapon is hidden from divination spells.

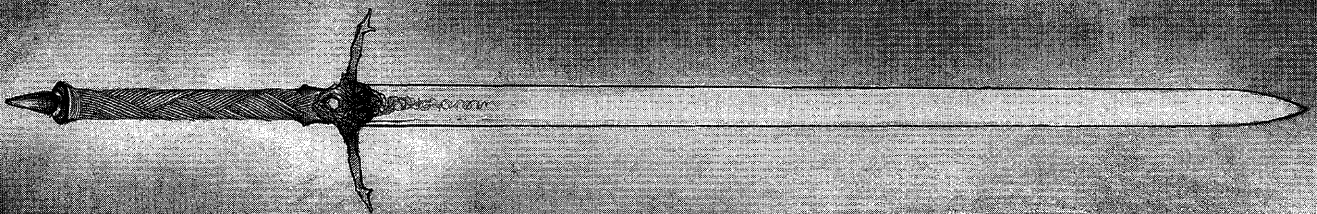
**XP Value:** 2,750 **GP Value:** 14,000

## Peacebringer

Paladins around the Realms speak in glowing terms about the qualities of the fabled *Peacebringer*. Its red steel blade (not the magical substance found on the Savage Coast of the RED STEEL™ setting) casts an eerie glow when the sword is drawn by a paladin, illuminating a 10' area. The handle of the sword is an alabaster figure of the upper body of a human female, with the outstretched arms forming the sword's guards. When sheathed, this gives the handle the appearance of a captive woman trying to escape from the scabbard.

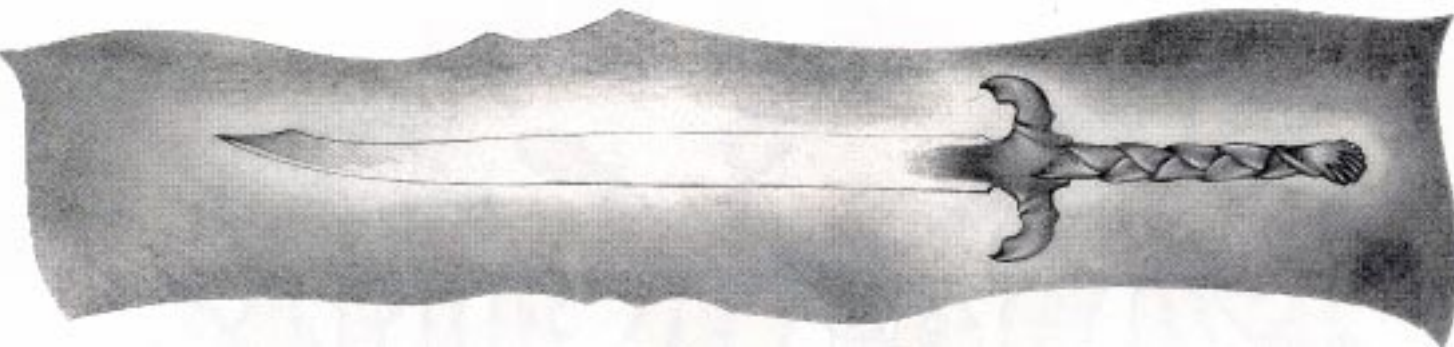
Holding the sword, a paladin can invoke a *sanctuary* and a *withdraw* spell once each per day. Once a week, the paladin can use the sword to cast a quest, but only if the paladin maintains perfect moral and ethical standards. The sword can also enhance the paladin's natural aura with a *protection from chaos* (similar to the *protection from evil* spell but effective against chaotic creatures) whenever it is drawn. *Peacemaker* is a +3 weapon in the paladin's hands.

The last time a sword with these qualities appeared was 20 years ago. It was thoroughly identified and had its properties carefully catalogued. This information was spread throughout the North by followers of Tyr for the benefit of other paladins should another like it appear. Any priest or paladin who follows Tyr is 25% likely to recognize a *Peacebringer* on handling it. The broadsword was ably wielded by veteran diplomat and sage Duke Phillip Nastassir of Sembia. Unfortunately, the blade, called Tyr's Disciple, was destroyed by a rust monster while the good duke watched helplessly, magically held by a neutral enchanter. It is curious that



**Peacebringer**





"Peacebringer" was used by a paladin of such a martial power. Others have commented that this irony is exactly the reason for the sword's destruction.

**XP Value:** 2,500 **GP Value:** 12,000

## Unholy Swords

### Raptor

*Raptor* is what paladins around the Realms call the much-feared twin to *Captor*. It is nearly identical in appearance but contrary in purpose. Only its razor-sharp blade sets it apart from its counterpart.

*Raptor* acts as a *sword of wounding* on any attack roll of a natural 20. Its deadly blade causes fits among lightly armored enemies. With each hit, there is a 10% chance of damaging cloaks, clothing, robes, or leather or lighter armor. Most magical clothing of this sort is destroyed if torn. A hit that slices clothing and does at least 8 hp damage has certainly caused enough damage to ruin the magic if the item is enchanted. Smaller or especially delicate items may be rendered useless with less damage, at the DM's option. At least one knight of Zhentil Keep has been seen using it in the last year, allying humanoids and amassing troops near the Flooded Forest. The Harpers who watch the area say that this knight may intend to take over and repopulate Ironfang Keep with his own wicked henchmen.

**XP Value:** 4,000\* **GP Value:** 20,000

\* Good aligned characters may gain this xp value by destroying these corrupt weapons. Paladins should always gain this reward.

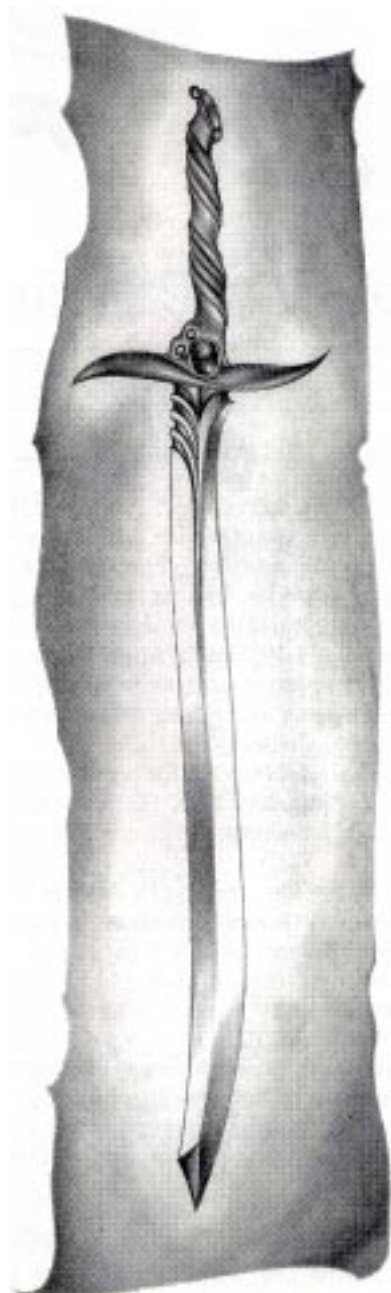
### Mist Reaver

When used by an appropriate character, this unholy sword is a +4 weapon that has great powers of illusion. When wielded in combat, the user gains the benefit of a *blur* spell with no limit to its duration. If the *blur* is somehow dispelled, the sword automatically displaces the wielder, granting benefits identical to a *cloak of displacement*. When sheathed, the sword allows the user to *change self* up to three times per day. Once per week, the sword can create a *phantasmal killer*.

Two of these sinister weapons, both two-handed, have been chronicled by sages. The two are similar in appearance, both silver-hilted and heavily ornamented with pearls. One is somewhere in the far north in the hands of Gornag, a frost giant chieftain who uses the massive blade single-handedly and with great skill (he is specialized in its use). The other turned up around a decade ago among the ruins of Solon, although it is obviously not of that culture. Its center pearl, at the point where the crossguards meet and the blade begins, is of the rare black variety and worth a king's ransom. It was unfortunately lost to a githyanki war party shortly after its discovery. Anyone brave enough to challenge the githyanki on the astral plane is free to recover it.

**XP Value:** 3,000\* **GP Value:** 15,000

*Lloyd advises single gamers to make sure they marry a fellow gamer, lest the new spouse ask that terminal question, "Who do you love more, me or that game?"*



Mist Reaver



# He's Got Personality

## or How Can You Hate a Guy with an 18 Charisma?

by David E. Brumbaugh

illustrated by John Stanko

*"LISTEN CLOSELY, MY FRIENDS," said Sir Kamagi of the Dale. "I'll show you how to survive, yea verily, even to thrive, without the use of powerful magic or brute force. All you need is a little charm, some good looks, and the knowledge of how to use them.*

*"At the end of the day, when the battle is done, who stands victorious? It's the Paladin, whose troops held their ground in spite of overwhelming odds. It's the Enchantress, whose royal minions fought gladly in her stead. It's the party who's enemy fled before a single blow was struck."*

*Meanwhile, back at the gaming table...*

*"OK, I've rolled 12, 6, 13, 15, 10 and a 16. Well, I know I'll put the 6 into Charisma. Who cares if I'm ugly?"*

In real life, people pay a lot of money to learn how to "Win Friends and Influence People." So why is it that so many players assign their lowest rolls to a character's Charisma? Perhaps because Charisma doesn't help you swing a sword or boost your hit points.

In the AD&D® game, many classes, kits and specialties have minimum Charisma requirements. The most notable of these are paladins, enchanters, and certain Rogue classes. The following pages should show how each of these character types—and others—can use their high Charisma to full advantage.

### What Exactly Is Charisma?

Maybe one reason Charisma is so often under-used is that it is so poorly understood.

The word "charisma" denotes an almost magical quality of personality. Charisma is that attribute that draws people to you. In our own world, people with charisma are said to have "animal magnetism" or a "magnetic personality."

Charisma is more than just good looks and leadership skills. It's a combination of the way you hold your head, your tone of voice, your facial expressions, your body language and more. In short, it's how impressive you are.

Characters with high Charisma are impressive for different reasons. A paladin should be well liked because he's perceived as being brave, generous, thoughtful and considerate. An enchantress may know how to "push people's buttons," knowing what to say and do to them to make them feel the way she wants them to. A bard should be admired because people like the way she sings, what her songs say, and how her music makes people feel.

### Using Charisma in the AD&D® Game

Granted, Charisma isn't a lot of good against mindless monsters like puddings and skeletons. However, if a creature thinks, it can be impressed. Most thinking beings are willing to talk before attacking, if for no other reason than to see how they can gain a greater advantage.

Using Charisma well requires roleplaying skill. If your character has a high Charisma, you might gain the initial benefit of a good reaction roll. While first impressions are important, subsequent behavior leaves a lasting impression.





Charisma and Roleplaying

A Charisma score like an alignment, is a roleplaying guide. A DM can take the numeric value of a Charisma score into account when deciding how NPCs will react. It's never good, though, to let game mechanics like ability scores dictate illogical results.

A player can help a DM decide how NPCs react by acting in accordance with her character's Charisma score. **Table 1** shows what traits a charismatic character might have, based on her alignment. While this article deals primarily with high Charisma scores, **Table 1** also takes into account the effect of low Charisma scores. ("High" means a score over 12, and "low" indicates a score under 9.) Note that these are only examples and are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive.

Behavioral traits are even more important for DMs running important NPCs. Players will react naturally to NPC behaviors. The DM should never have to say, "This guy has a 17 Charisma, so you like him." Instead, DMs should play the NPC so the PCs will logically like him. This is especially true with "long term" NPCs that PCs will need to interact with throughout the campaign.

What follow are guidelines for playing characters with high Charisma scores. You can see that two characters with high Charisma scores can have two radically different personalities. Although the following examples are broken down by class and kit, there can be much overlap between these lists for specific individuals.

General Roleplaying Guidelines for Charismatic Characters

Any player with a character who has a Charisma score of 12 or higher, not just the classes and kits that emphasize Charisma, can use some roleplaying tips. Here are some guidelines for playing characters with a high Charisma, regardless of class or kit.

- 1. People who are perceived as liking and understanding others are generally well liked. (We like people who like us.)
- 2. People like people who are perceived as having similar values to themselves. (We like people who like the same things we like.)

Table 1: Examples of Behavioral Traits Based on Alignment and Charisma

Charisma	Alignment	Neutral	Evil
High	Good		
	Chivalrous	Cooperative	Manipulative
	Generous	Friendly	Beguiling
	Tactful	Helpful	Seductive
Low	Cheerful	Entertaining	Tempting
	Gruff	Uncooperative	Craven
	Blunt	Antisocial	Unpleasant
	Alienated	Standoffish	Obnoxious

3. People who are perceived as having extraordinary skills, talents, or abilities are generally liked or admired. (Think of popular athletes, singers, and movie stars.)

Roleplaying Guidelines for Paladins

Some players hate paladins. They think of paladins as bossy, stiff, and inflexible. Yet, paladins have a minimum Charisma of 17. How can you hate a guy with an 18 Charisma? Here are some guidelines for DMs and players to help make their paladins more likable.

- 1. Lead by example, not rhetoric.
- 2. Respect all non-evil beings.
- 3. Be polite (even to enemies, sometimes).
- 4. Think of others before yourself.
- 5. In combat, think nothing of your own safety, but protect others in your party.
- 6. Don't argue with people in your party who you know don't have your standards. (See point one.)
- 7. Don't be selfish about anything. If there are three healing potions left and four party members, leave yourself out.
- 8. Give everyone else the benefit of the doubt, but be hard on yourself.
- 9. Be a loyal friend.

Roleplaying Guidelines for Enchanters and Rogues

Enchanters and rogues with swindler kits manipulate emotions and perceptions. Swashbucklers (rogues and fighters) also tend to be flatterers.

These characters are well liked because they tell people what they want to hear. An enchanter (or a rogue) can make people trust him by knowing their likes, dislikes, fears,

hopes, and dreams. Here are some guidelines for enchanters and "lovable" rogues.

- 1. Flattery will get you everywhere.
- 2. Be sincere whenever possible. It makes insincerity more believable.
- 3. People never challenge their own assumptions. Tell them what they expect to hear.
- 4. Smile a lot.
- 5. Make people believe that you care, that you "feel their pain."
- 6. Share your (supposed) secrets with people. It will make them feel trusted.
- 7. Whenever you're caught giving empty flattery or telling other lies, apologize and assure your listener that you did it with the very best of intentions (to spare feelings, for the "greater good" or something similar.)

Roleplaying Guidelines for Bards

Bards must make an impression on a great number of people at once. More than any other character, the bard lives on her reputation. Each performance and each song will be discussed long after she moves on. She is always in the public eye. A reputation for snobbery or standoffishness can be devastating. Here are some guidelines for bards.

- 1. Sing songs and poems about popular heroes, day-to-day life and other things people can relate to.
- 2. Play it "big." (Not bad advice for swashbucklers either.)
- 3. Always make time for "fans."
- 4. Accept a copper piece as gratefully as a gold piece.
- 5. Be generous with compliments about the towns, villages and people you visit.
- 6. Be as sincere as possible.



## Charisma and Game Mechanics

Game mechanics are most useful when there are two or more logical results of roleplaying actions. The rules for Charisma cover things like initial reactions, henchman loyalty, and troop morale. There are also a few Charisma-based proficiencies in the *Player's Handbook* and a few more in the optional rule supplements like the *Complete Thief's Handbook*.

Suppose a player has been trying to play his Charisma well, but the DM has some tough decisions to make. Often a simple Charisma check will do the trick. Other times, some new proficiencies may be needed. What follows are some examples of situations where new proficiencies may be useful.

The Charisma proficiencies demonstrated in each example appear in a later section.

### Impending War

*The problem was simple. The humans needed more land for crops and livestock. The elves demanded the preservation of the Old Oak Forest. The solution was just as simple: war.*

*Long after their servants had retired, Lord Frederic of Riverward and Princess Xania Silvercrest remained. Each ambassador knew the price of failure. Already, elven archers were patrolling the edges of the forest. Men were gathering pitch and torches. If something wasn't done—and quickly—if it would become a bloodbath none would soon forget.*

*Frederic was exhausted. The deadline was approaching and still there was no progress. His frustration suddenly broke into fury. His people needed land. They couldn't hide in trees and gather nuts. These skinny, little, pointy eared elves refused to see that. All they cared about was trees!*

*"Fine!" he bellowed, "We'll burn your forests to the ground, and you'll fill us with arrows. In fifteen years our children will farm in the ashes we create."*

*He stood, ready to leave the room.*

*Xania knew he was right. These humans were rapid breeders. A single Oak took centuries to grow. They could destroy an entire forest in a few days and be back in one generation to farm the cleared land.*

*She smiled and placed her hand on his arm, "Lord Riverward . . . Frederic. Please, it is because of your children that you*

*must not leave. They should not grow up as orphans. We must find a common ground. Let us examine the map once more. Perhaps we can find a place without Old Oaks for you to farm."*

The negotiation proficiency represents the ability for a character to use her Charisma to her best advantage when trying to come to an agreement. The negotiation proficiency description has more details.

In the story above, the player and DM have decided to role play the scenario. The negotiations have begun to break down. Both Frederic and Xania have failed their last two Negotiation checks. Frederic's player decides that his character is ready to give up and threatens to leave the negotiation table. Xania is an NPC being played by the DM. He decides she will try to extract a simple concession, simply to prevent the negotiations from breaking down completely. Xania demonstrates a benefit to Frederic (the welfare of his people's children) so she gains a +2 modifier. The DM asks if Frederic will return to the table. (Note that the player is *not* being forced by die rolls.) Frederic's player says: "I don't know, let's roll to see." Frederic's player rolls a 15. Frederic has a 13 Charisma so Frederic fails. Xania has a Charisma score of 14. She needs a roll of 15 (14 - 1 + 2) to succeed. The DM rolls a 15. Frederic decides to stay, but he's not happy about it.

### The Riot

*"How long, my friends, must we wait while our leaders waste one more growing season in useless negotiation? How many more seasons must our children go hungry because there is not enough land to grow food on?! I say, no more! No more elves telling where we can plant and where we can't! No more lords who take our taxes and deliver no protection! No more starving children!"*

*The crowd began to chant, rhythmically, "No More! No More! No More!" The chanting began softly, but quickly grew in volume and ferocity. ". . . No more, No MORE, NO MORE!" The crowd began moving toward the palace gates, growing in size and anger.*

Incitation is a Charisma-based proficiency that represents the ability to "work a crowd." With a successful proficiency check, a character can evoke a specifically desired emotional

response from a crowd of people. In the story above, the crowd was already Excited. The speaker spoke for two turns making two successful Incitation checks. The crowd was moved from Excited to Wild. Beware: It is much easier to get a crowd worked up than it is to get them calmed down. The incitation proficiency description has more details.

### The Seduction

*"Of course, I'm not suggesting that you betray your people. You and I, we understand that things are not simply black and white. What some may see as a betrayal, you and I see as a great service. You will save hundreds, perhaps thousands of lives. You'll be a hero. If you happen to gain wealth and power as a result . . . Well, it's no more than you deserve."*

*Theonolis swallowed. Technically, of course, what he was contemplating was treason, but—from a certain point of view—if could be considered patriotic. Yes, he was a patriot. And one life, even the life of a king, was worth far less than a thousand others. He wasn't doing it for the money not really.*

*"The King," he said, "shall be falconing tomorrow. He will leave by the West Gate when the cock first crows."*

Although the term seduction normally brings something sexual to mind, such application is only one of a wide range of possibilities for this proficiency. A more general definition of seduction would be the presentation of an irresistible temptation. Remember that in *Star Wars*, the phrase "seduced by the Dark Side of the Force" appears regularly to refer to a temptation of power.

A seduction occurs when a charismatic character tries to tempt a subject into doing something that person otherwise would not do. Additional information appears in the proficiency description.

### The Pep Talk

*It was still an hour before dawn. Sir Jordan stood before the battered troops. Too many good men were conspicuous by their absence. He knew his soldiers were tired, hungry, demoralized. He had heard talk of desertion and mutiny.*

*Jordan straightened his breast plate and drew himself to his full height. He began softly, but clearly. "Men, look around. Do you see Sergeant Roberts? No, he's dead. So are Connell, Bowker,*



and Malcom. So are twelve dozen others. I've heard you talking. Some of you want to go home."

His voice grew louder, "Well so do I! If anyone leaves now, I will not stop him. But know this: if we lose today, there will be no home to go to. Roberts, Connell, Bowker, Malcom, and the rest knew this. You're right, we should be home. So should they!

"Do you know what we're doing at dawn? We're not just storming the orc fortress. Think of your wives, sisters, daughters, and mothers. We are saving them from death!"

His voice grew quiet again. "Or worse."

Jordan gazed at his men. "I will not lie. More of us will die today. If you want to leave, go now. I will say nothing."

Not one man moved a muscle. There was no shuffling, no fidgeting. Every jaw was tight. Each man's eyes held a cold steel determination. Jordan nodded, spun about and mounted his battle mare. He raised his arm and gave the signal. The troop surged silently forward.

History and the movies are full of inspirational speeches. Think of George Patton, John Wayne, and Ronald Reagan. Not only did Reagan use his "Win this one for the Gipper!" speech to great effect in a movie, he used variations of it to rally supporters for two successful presidential campaigns.

Think of the infomercials that sell a series of motivational tapes for hundreds of dollars. Well-known athletes, politicians, movie stars, and generals pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to hear some of these speakers. Now that's one heck of a pep talk.

The embolden proficiency represents the ability to give an inspirational speech. Successful use of this proficiency at the appropriate time allows a PC temporarily to raise the base Morale of troops, followers or henchmen. See the proficiency description for details.



## The Court Room

Baron Richter Vasha paced before the Council of Peers. "Consider the facts, my lords. Our beloved king's only son, Prince Byron, has been missing for over fifteen years. Now, these 'adventurers' come to us. They have convinced our king that they rescued His Highness from slavery.

"Normally, I would never dream of questioning His Majesty's judgment. It is possible, however that in this unique case, our king's judgment might be clouded by

his sincere love for his missing son and his natural desire to see the lad once again.

"What proof do these strangers bring of this boy's identity? None! Yet they gladly accept the King's offer of land and title. What about the boy's uncanny resemblance to the missing prince? There are two wizards among these so-called heroes, one of them an illusionist. What little magic would it take to make someone resemble a boy who's been missing for fifteen years? By their own words, this boy has been with them for over two weeks, more than long enough to coach him in his alleged memories.





*"So, my lords, these people have had the motive, the method, and the opportunity to defraud us and our liege. It is our right and duty to require these people to stand trial and determine the true identity of this alleged prince."*

The characters who experienced the preceding scenario went to much trouble, pain, and agony to rescue a prince from a vampire witch coven. When they returned to the king, Baron Richter Vasha (who secretly had eyes for the throne) challenged the validity of the prince's identity before the Council of Peers. The players actually had a great deal of fun roleplaying the trial (and dealing with the underlying intrigue) against a charismatic foe. The real adventure was not in defeating the formidable vampire foe but in proving that the boy they had rescued was, in fact, the prince.

Perception can be everything in a debate. The debating proficiency is based on the theory that what you say is often not as important as how you say it. While in a debate, both style and content are important. A successful debating check indicates that a character has presented his or her point of view well. How well the content is received often depends on the audience. See the debate proficiency for more information on how to employ this skill in a roleplaying session.

## The Bluff

*Vincent stood calmly in the center of the bandits. "Put your swords down now, and I'll let you live."*

*The tall one laughed humorlessly. "There are five of us and only one of you. You most certainly cannot expect us to surrender."*

*Vincent pulled the wand from his robe. He pointed the glowing tip at the tall one. "Perhaps I will die, but I will take you first. Sim cabal saba . . ."*

*"Wait! Drop your swords, men!"*

*Later that evening, after the five bandits were locked securely in the Duke's dungeon, Vincent was drinking his bounty money at the Lucky Leprechaun.*

*"Where did you get that wand, Vince?" asked Sheila, his warrior friend and sometime adventuring companion. "We found no magic in the ogres' lair we raided last month."*

*"Wand?" Vincent looked around, no one seemed to be paying attention to them. He pulled it partially from its pocket in his robe. "My dear, this is a carved stick with foxfire on the tip."*

Bluffing is a highly specialized form of acting. Consider each word, the tone of voice, the look in the eye, the body language. All of these contribute to the success or failure of a bluff. Bluffing is a favorite tactic for adventurers in all genres. (Remember Corbomite? For those of you who don't, Kirk used this bluff twice in *Star*

*Trek*: in "The Corbomite Maneuver" and in "The Deadly Years.") Sometimes the most outrageous bluffs are the most often believed. How is the DM to decide when it works and when it doesn't? The Bluffing nonweapon proficiency can help the DM referee this tactic.

In the scenario above, Vincent is a character with a 15 Charisma. His player had to roll 15 or less on the d20 ( $15 - 2 + 2$  for the wand) to succeed. The roll was an 8, so the bandit leader was certain he was about to be fried. See the bluffing proficiency for more information.

## The Disarming Smile

*The man at the guard post was, frankly, bored. A friendly voice cut through the night air. "Chilly night isn't it?" Immediately alert, the guard's hand went instantly to his sword hilt.*

*"Take it easy, my friend." A heavy set man with a broad grin came into the torch light. "I was a guard myself when I was younger," he chuckled, "and thinner. I just need to ask you if you know where I can find a good inn. I'm a little drunk."*

*The guard relaxed. Pointing west, he said, "The Sleeping Gorgon is about three hundred paces that way." He blinked, surprised to find a knife at his throat.*

*The big man was still smiling. "Put your hands on the wall. I'm going to tie you up and take your keys. If you cooperate, you shall live."*

Friendly people can put you at ease. The Intrigue proficiency allows a character to capture a target's attention. This tactic might allow him to gain surprise or initiative.

### The Swindle

Brother Thenaias shook his head, saddened. If he'd arrived here a week earlier, this poor old woman wouldn't have bought this worthless "potion."

"Grandmother," he said, using the local term of respect for an older woman, "This is not a potion of healing. It will not cure your aches. It is a worthless bottle of colored water."

The woman shook her head. "That poor boy," she clucked.

"What poor boy?" asked Brother Thenaias.

"Little Bradley, the boy who sold me this potion," she replied, "He wanted to help so many people. He doesn't know that his potions are no good."

"He cheated you!" exclaimed the cleric.

"Oh no, he was a nice boy."

The manipulation proficiency allows a character to manipulate the feelings and reactions of others. In the example above, "Little Bradley" manipulated the old woman into believing that he, a swindler, was a nice, trustworthy boy. He manipulated her so well that, even in the face of overwhelming evidence, she denied being swindled.

The description describes how the manipulation proficiency works. In the example above, "Little Bradley" had spent a couple of days in town, being helpful, getting to know the people. He was going to try to make the people in town feel that he was a nice, trustworthy person. He had a 16 Charisma. His modifiers were: +1 for knowing them fairly well and +2 for his behavior. Each time a person showed an interest in his "potions," Bradley made a proficiency check and tried to convince them to buy it. The woman was trusting anyway. For her, he had an additional +2 bonus to his check. He needed a 20 to succeed (Although a 20 always fails, the margin is significant). He rolled a 15. His margin was 5. When the woman, with a Wisdom of 12, was confronted with the swindle, her roll of 10 was not enough to change the way she felt about him. He remained "poor Little Bradley" in her eyes.

**Table 2: Summary of New Proficiencies**

Proficiency	Slots	Ability	Modifier	Group
Bluffing	2	Cha	-2	General
Debating	1	Cha	-	General
Embolden	1	Cha	-	Warrior, Wizard
Incitation	1	Cha	-	General
Intrigue	1	Cha	-1	Wizard, Rogue
Manipulation	2	Cha	-2	Wizard, Rogue
Negotiation	1	Cha	-1	General
Seduction	2	Cha	+1	Wizard, Rogue

### New Proficiency Descriptions

If a character without a weapon smithing proficiency tried to forge a sword, he would have virtually no chance of success. However, many of these Charisma-based proficiencies should have a chance of working even if the character has no specialized training. Anybody can try to bluff. But how good is that bluff?

Any character without one of these proficiencies who attempts to perform that proficiency should be allowed to make a check with a -4 penalty. So, a character with a Charisma score of 12, without a negotiation proficiency, who attempts to negotiate, should be given a base chance of 7 ( $12 - 1 [-4] = 7$ ) on 1d20 to succeed. A skilled negotiator with the same Charisma would have a chance of 11 on d20 for success.

Following are the descriptions of the Charisma-based nonweapon proficiencies. See **Table 2** for a summary of the slots, modifiers, and which groups these proficiencies belong to. Again, these proficiencies should not be used to replace roleplaying but to aid the DM when deciding the results of an action.

### Negotiation

The negotiation nonweapon proficiency is the skill that allows a character to use his force of personality to gain concessions in a negotiation. A skilled negotiator will have a list of things he wants to obtain from the other side. Note that unlike the haggling proficiency (from the AL-QADIM® setting), these goals are not necessarily obvious or mutually exclusive. Often negotiators have many common goals.

**Table 3A: Negotiations**

In all of these entries, Negotiator A is trying to extract a concession from Negotiator B.

Negotiator A	Negotiator B	Result
Success	Success	Negotiations look promising; try again. A common goal, if it exists, is identified.
Success	Failure	B will concede.
Failure	Success	B will not concede; this issue is closed.
Failure	Failure	The issue is still open, but things don't look good. After three successive mutual failures, negotiations break down completely, and everyone gives up.

**Table 3B: Negotiation Modifiers**

Condition	A Modifier	B Modifier
A makes voluntary concession	+1	-1
B makes voluntary concession	-1	+1
A demonstrates benefit to B	+1 to +3	0
Concession would be bad for B	-3 to 0	+1 to +3



**Table 4: Incitation Results**

Current Mood	Attempt To	Modifier	Mood on Success	Mood On Failure
Calm	Excite	-1	Exited	No Change
Exited	Excite	-1	Rowdy	No Change
Exited	Calm	-2	Calm	Rowdy
Rowdy	Excite	-1	Wild	No Change
Rowdy	Calm	-3	Exited	Wild
Wild	Excite	-1	Out of Control	No Change
Wild	Calm	-4	Rowdy	No Change
Out of Control	Calm	-5	Wild	Attacks Character

Identifying these common goals is a major accomplishment for negotiators. There are two ways to use this proficiency: a short way and a long way.

The long way emphasizes roleplaying. Roleplay the negotiation until one character tries to extract a concession from the other. Each negotiator then makes a proficiency check. (If you want to use these rules and a negotiator does not have a Negotiation proficiency, have him make a Charisma check at a -5 penalty.) The DM assigns modifiers (typically -3 to +3, see **Table 3B: Negotiation Modifiers**) to the check based on what the player says and how he says it. Use **Table 3A: Negotiations** to determine the result.

The short way skips the roleplaying. Each negotiator has a list of goals. One negotiation check is made for each goal. If the goal is not in direct conflict with the opposition's, a successful check means the goal was accomplished. If a goal is in direct conflict with the opponent's goal, each negotiator makes a proficiency check. Use the **Table 3A** to determine the results. Note that the short way does not use **Table 3B**.

## Incitation

The incitation proficiency allows a character to modify the general mood of a crowd. The same proficiency used to incite a crowd to anger can also be used to try to calm a crowd. If a crowd is already in the mood to get rowdy, it could be dangerous to try to calm

them. To use the proficiency, most members of the crowd must be able to see and hear the character. For each turn spent exhorting the crowd, the character makes a proficiency check. A successful check allows the character to change to mood of the crowd by one place. A roll of 20 moves the mood in the opposite direction. Use **Table 4: Incitation Results** to determine the results. The DM should give bonuses of +1 to +3 for especially good speeches.

## Seduction

The Seduction proficiency allows a character to tempt a target with an appeal to his weakness. This weakness is often, but not always, sensual. The seducing character offers (but does not necessarily deliver) something the target desires in exchange for something the seducer wants (often to be named later.) If the target is being asked to do something he wouldn't mind doing anyway, a bonus of +1 to +3 should be applied. On the other hand, if the target is being asked to do something he would find distasteful a penalty of -1 to -3 should be applied to the roll.

Since this is not a magical compulsion, the roll should not work on unwilling PCs. Villainous NPCs with this proficiency can still cause problems for the PCs. Allies and friends could be seduced into betraying the PCs. Powerful nobles could be seduced into making the PCs life miserable.

## Embolden

The Embolden proficiency represents the ability to give an inspirational speech. Successful use of this proficiency, at the appropriate time, will allow a character to temporarily raise the base morale of troops, followers, henchmen or similar allies. To use this proficiency, the character gives a "pep talk" to raise morale. If proficiency check succeeds, the base morale of the character's allies is raised by two points. This new morale value is maintained until the first morale check is failed. When the first morale check fails, the pep talk has "worn off." Instead of fleeing or otherwise "failing," the allies' morale simply reverts to its original value. The Embolden proficiency must be used before going into the conflict. It cannot be used during combat or other morale-threatening situations.

## Debating

The debating proficiency allows a character to present his view point clearly and boldly. It is often used in a formal or semi-formal setting. The proficiency is most beneficial when other characters are presenting opposing views. If a character without the debating proficiency is opposing a character with debating proficiency, the proficient debater does not need to make a proficiency check. The proficient debater will make the better impression. The results of winning a debate are highly scenario dependent.

If two or more opposing characters have the debating proficiency, each character makes a proficiency check. The character who succeeds with the largest margin "wins." If the margins are the same, each character makes a good showing, but there is no clear "winner." If all debaters fail their check, they make a bad showing and there is no clear "winner."

## Bluffing

The bluffing nonweapon proficiency allows a character to fool his subject convincingly. When the character attempts, the DM should decide on any modifiers to the proficiency check. If the roll is successful, the target believes the bluff. If the roll fails, the target calls the character's bluff. If the character makes the roll exactly, the target is suspicious but still buys the story. If the character makes the roll by

**Table 5: Sample Bluff Modifiers**

Condition	Modifier
Target knows he's been bluffed before by character.	-1 to -5
Character has convincing props, costumes etc.	+1 to +3
Target has high Wisdom	Wisdom Saving Throw Adj.
Character can demonstrate partial truth of bluff.	+1 to +3
Player tells story especially well.	+1 to +3
Target is already suspicious.	-2

five or more, the target buys the story “hook, line and sinker.”

When trying to bluff a group, only the leader need believe the bluff. If there is not a clear leader and the bluff succeeds, check the margin by which the bluff succeeds (if the bluffer needs a 15 and rolls a 12, the margin is 3). The portion of the group that believe the bluff is  $50\% + (10\% \times \text{margin})$ . The DM can determine which individuals believe the bluff randomly or assign belief.

See **Table 4: Sample Bluff Modifiers**, for examples of situations that should alter the proficiency check. The DM can, of course, assign more.

### Intrigue

The intrigue proficiency simulates the ability to capture a target’s attention, usually with a conversation or a “look.” With a successful proficiency check, the character can direct the target’s attention for one round. If the character wishes to keep the target’s attention, each subsequent round the check is at -1 (cumulative). If the proficiency check succeeds, the character wins initiative automatically the next round. If the success margin is more than 5, the character can have automatic surprise the next round.

An Intrigued character will have to make a successful Wisdom check at a -4 penalty to have a chance to notice anything except the Intriguing character. For example, a thief’s accomplice Intrigues a watchman. The thief fails his Move Silently roll. The watchman, (an NPC with a Wisdom of 10) fails to notice because the DM rolled a 9 on a d20. If the DM had rolled a 5, the watchman would have noticed.

A character can use intrigue on only one target at a time.

Note that unlike many Charisma-based proficiencies, the intrigue proficiency can be used directly on player characters. The DM can determine that a PC is intrigued and adjust surprise, initiative, or his own narrative accordingly.

### Manipulation

The manipulation proficiency allows a character to “push someone’s buttons.” The character must spend at least a half hour getting to know the target, so he she has some idea of what the target’s likes and dislikes are. At any time after that, the character

**Table 6: Sample Modifiers to Manipulation Check**

Condition	Modifier
Character knows target very well	+1 to +5
Target is inclined to feel that way anyway	+2
Target is Charmed by character	+2
Target already has other strong feelings about subject	-3
There is strong evidence to support character’s assertions	+2
There is little evidence to support character’s assertions	-2

may try to convince the target to feel an emotion about someone, something, or some event. A successful proficiency check indicates success. The margin of success (including modifiers) should be recorded.

The target has the desired emotion until some circumstance could change it. When confronted with circumstances that could change the target’s feelings, the target makes a Wisdom check. The margin of success is the negative modifier to the Wisdom check. If the Wisdom check succeeds, the target realizes he has been manipulated and will react accordingly.

Again, the DM should not try to tell players how their character feels. However, DMs can allow villainous NPCs to manipulate the emotions of potential allies (or other NPCs) to give them bad feelings about the PCs. Imagine the PCs trying to get information about a well-loved (though evil) person in a town full of strangers who already hate the PCs.

Note that an emotionally manipulated target is not controlled. This is

not a Charm or other magic. The character will react in accordance to his personality and alignment.

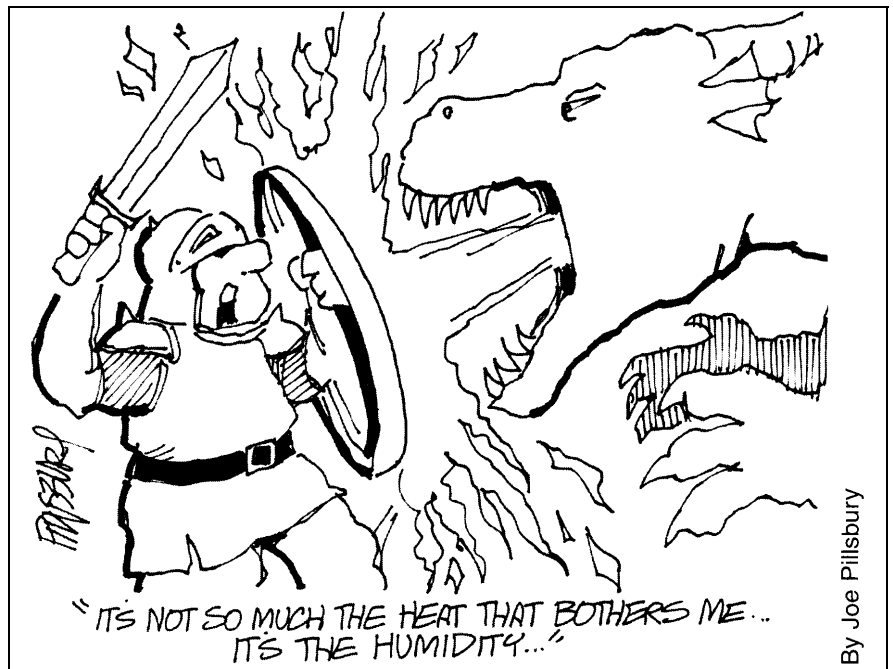
### Notes for the DM

These Charisma proficiencies are not magical effects; the DM should not dictate to players how their characters act and feel, even if NPCs have these Charisma based proficiencies.

Combat need not be the only source of excitement and conflict in the AD&D game. Charisma is an often under-used attribute that can enhance the roleplaying experience. These Charisma-based proficiencies—along with the guidance of a good DM—give PCs and NPCs an engaging alternative to killing everything that moves.



*David Brumbaugh has been a Dungeon Master for 100 years. He’s currently working as a computer games programmer in his basement in central Illinois.*





# Treasures OF THE Fifth AGE

## Magical Items for the SAGA® System

by Stephen Kenson

illustrated by John Stanko

THE WORLD OF KRYNN has been a place of powerful magic since the time the world was first born in the forge-fires of the god Reorx. All of the Ages of Krynn have held their tales of powerful magic and artifacts that have shaped the fate of the world: the Greygem of Gargath, the Hammer of Kharas, and the legendary Dragonlance.

In the Fifth Age of Krynn, the magical items of the past are more valued than ever before. With the upheaval of the Second Cataclysm and the withdrawal of the gods from Krynn, the powers of magic have changed. The arts of sorcery and mysticism have been discovered by the people of Krynn, but their powers are limited in many ways compared to the powers of the wizards of old. The ways of creating even the simple items of magic of the Fourth Age are lost, and the powers of the new magic are fleeting in many ways. Until the adepts of the Citadel of Light or the Academy of Sorcery discover a new way of creating magic that is permanent and lasting, the remnants of the Fourth Age remain the only items of permanent magic in the world of Krynn.

Jaclyn Cashell, sorceress and head librarian of the Tower of High Sorcery in Wayreth, has done much work in cataloging the names and histories of the magical items of Ansalon, and excerpts from her catalog appear in *The Last Tower*. Heroes seeking information about some of the magical items of the Fourth Age might begin their search in the records of the Last Tower.

The rarity and value of these magical items makes them appropriate rewards for a *Fifth Age*™ narrator to give to the heroes of their game. Magical items are one of the heritages of heroes since the time of Huma forging the first Dragonlance and the items of Krynn all have a history and character to them that should not be forgotten in the stories of the heroes who wield them.

This article details some magical items that can be included in a *Fifth Age* story. Some of these items are well-known from the tales of the Fourth Age while others are only now gaining prominence in the Fifth Age, as every item of magic has grown in value for its uniqueness and history.

### Items of Distinction

#### Deck of Fate

TALISTM cards make up a deck that is used for various types of games and rituals of divination in Ansalon. The deck consists of five suits (beasts, flames, waves, winds, and mountains) along with a special suit to represent the true gods. Fortune-tellers commonly used Talis cards as a means of reading a person's future, and they are still used this way, although mostly by charlatans and con-artists. Some modern Talis card readers omit the cards representing the gods from the deck, saying that they no longer influence the destiny of the people of Krynn. Others retain those cards for their symbolism or out of faith that the gods have not completely abandoned their people.

A deck of fate is a set of Talis cards that have been enchanted, making them most suitable for casting divination spells. A sorcerer who uses a deck of fate and spends at least a minute casting a divination spell gains an automatic trump bonus on the spellcasting action.

#### Shadowcloak

A shadowcloak, also known as a cloak of shadows or cloak of night, is a hooded cape woven from a soft black material that seems to absorb all light that falls upon it. The cloak feels cool and light to the touch. The wearer of a shadowcloak has the ability to see normally in the dark as if it were normal daylight. The wearer can also treat any card from his hand as a trump when attempting to remain concealed in darkness or shadows.

#### Wand of Flight

This slim hazelwood wand allows a group of people (up to 10) to fly under the guidance of the wand's wielder once each day. The subjects fly at a rate of five miles per hour and can fly for up to an hour before the effect of the wand ends.

Characters not on the ground when the wand's power fades fall.





with hide cords, beads and feathers in the style of the plainsmen. The spear has a +7 damage rating in combat and helps to improve the hunting abilities of the bearer by giving him an automatic trump bonus on any action related to hiding or stealth.

## Items of Fame

### Khas Army

Khas is a Krynn board game similar to chess with the exception that it is played on a hexagonal board. It was invented in Solamnia and is a popular pastime among the Solamnic Knights and nobility.

This magical Khas board is nearly three feet across, made from pale blue and cream colored marble, with pieces of blue and white granite. When all of the pieces are assembled on the board, in the proper positions for the start of a game, the owner can call forth one of the spirits of the board as a spectral warrior by moving that piece in the first move of a game with an easy Spirit action. The abilities of the pieces of a Khas Army are as follows:

**Eight Soldiers:** Co 6, Ph 6, In 5, Es 5, Dmg +3, Def -3, Special: None

**Two Knights:** Co 5, Ph 8, In 5, Es 5, Dmg +6, Def -6, Special: None

**Two Clerists:** Co 5, Ph 6, In 5, Es 8, Dmg +3, Def -4, Special: Mentalism

**Two Towers:** Co 5, Ph 5, In 8, Es 6, Dmg +2, Def -4, Special: Aeromancy, Cryomancy and Electromancy

**Queen:** Co 8, Ph 8, In 6, Es 9, Dmg +6, Def -6, Special: Channeling, Meditation and Mentalism

**King:** Co 8, Ph 10, In 6, Es 8, Dmg +8, Def -8, Special: Divination, Enchantment and Summoning

Each piece, once summoned, serves the owner of the board for one hour

before vanishing. The owner of the board can only call forth the spirits from the pieces on one side of the board. They appear wearing clothing and armor in the color of their side, trimmed with the opposite color. If a piece is "killed" in battle, the owner can no longer call forth that piece. If all of the owner's pieces are killed the owner loses the ability to use the Khas Army.

The weakness of a Khas Army is that, if an enemy can reach the board and move one of the opposite pieces, he may call forth the spirit of that piece in the same way as the owner. Allies of the owner cannot do this, only enemies. The spirits of the Khas board will attack their opposites above any other target.

### Mantooth

This sword, at one time wielded by Caramon Majere, is known by many other names: *Spellcleaver*, *Darkstar*, and *Magefool*. It is a broad sword with a +8 damage rating in combat, +10 against sorcerers and enchanted creatures of any kind. Additionally, the sword can cut through sorcerous barriers and block spells directed at the wielder, who may add a +8 action bonus to any attempt he makes to resist sorcery while the sword is held unsheathed.



## Items of Renown

### Copper Mantis

Sacred tokens of the god Majere, these items are made from fine copper wire intricately braided into the form of a praying mantis, its claws folded in front of it. If the owner of the copper mantis casts it upon the ground while speaking a word of command, the copper mantis becomes a living giant mantis that will attack the owner's enemies. The giant mantis has Co 8, Ph 12, In 4, Es 5, Dmg +8 and Def -4. It will fight for up to one minute each day before returning to token form. If the giant mantis is killed it immediately reverts to token form and cannot be summoned again for a full week.

### Golden Circlet

A thin band of hammered gold that is worn on the brow, a golden circlet allows a mystic to cast mentalism spells at half their normal cost in spell points, although the mystic must still achieve the normal action score for the spellcasting action. Highly prized, the circlets were originally the creation of the Silvanesti elves, but the circlets have spread across all of Ansalon and can be found in many different hands now.

### Plainspear

The creation of the plains barbarians, the plainspear appears as a normal spear with a wooden haft and a leaf-shaped metal head decorated



## Mirta's Dagger

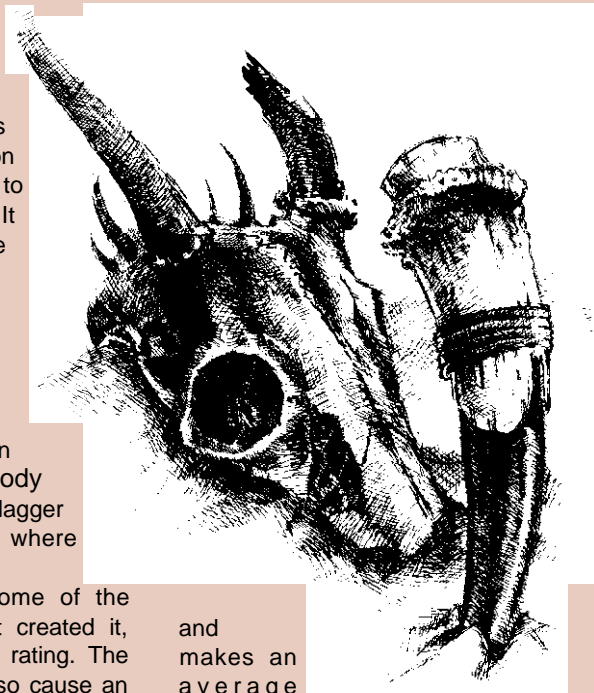
This curved dagger is made from the black talon of a green dragon bound to a handle of deer antler. It was given to the heroine Mirta by a dragon that wished to convince her that it was a god to replace those who had abandoned Krynn. Mirta eventually slew the dragon with its own talon and left both the body of the dragon and the dagger buried in the mountains where they were later found.

The dagger carries some of the power of the dragon that created it, allowing it a +10 damage rating. The sight of the dagger can also cause an effect similar to dragonawe in onlookers, requiring them to make an easy Presence action opposed by the Spirit of the wielder or else stand in awe at first sight of the dagger.

Many believe that the dagger also carries some of the Evil taint of the green dragon Jade and that it encourages wielders to perform selfish and Evil acts, but no one can be sure if that is the nature of the dagger or of those who have wielded it.

## Nightbringer

An Evil weapon that was carried by the Dragon Highlord Verminaard, Nightbringer is a hefty mace of dark wood. When striking a target the wielder speaks the word "midnight



and makes an average Spirit (Presence) action to render the target blind for the next ten minutes. Heroes resist this effect with an average Presence (Spirit) action. Anyone not of a sufficiently Evil nature (in the narrator's judgment) who picks up the mace must make a challenging Presence action to avoid being struck blind.

## Items of Glory

### Redeemer

Also known as *Wyrmbsbane*, the lesser mate of *Wyrmbslayer*, the sword of Kith-Kanan. Redeemer is a long sword with a +11 damage rating. It inflicts double damage (+22 rating) to dragons/draconians and triple damage (+33 rating) to black and sea dragons. *Wyrmbsbane* is immune to the imprisoning power of Baaz draconians and allows its wielder to locate a desired object out to artillery range up to three times per day with a successful average Reason action.

### Starjewel

A truly rare and valuable item, a starjewel is a piece of Elven jewelry, a starburst of diamonds set into silver. The jewel magically links the person who gives it and the person who receives it, creating a connection between souls. From then on, the couple each has an intuitive sense of the health and well-being of each other over any

distance, and each always knows if the other is in danger or dies.

Starjewels were rare even in the Fourth Age, and they are considered precious treasures of the Fifth. No one who knows the nature of a starjewel gives one away casually. Among the Silvanesti Elves, the gift of a starjewel is considered a great honor and a statement of eternal love.

## Wyrmbslayer

*Wyrmbslayer* is the legendary sword of the Elven King Kith-Kanan. It was given to Tanis Half-Elven by Kith-Kanan in the depths of the Sla-Mori of Pax Tharkas during the War of the Lance. *Wyrmbslayer* is a two handed sword of glory with a +15 damage rating. It inflicts +30 damage rating against dragons and draconians and is immune to the imprisoning power of Baaz draconians, just as its mate, *Wyrmbsbane*. The wielder of *Wyrmbslayer* adds a +6 action bonus to any attempt to resist dragon magic or breath.

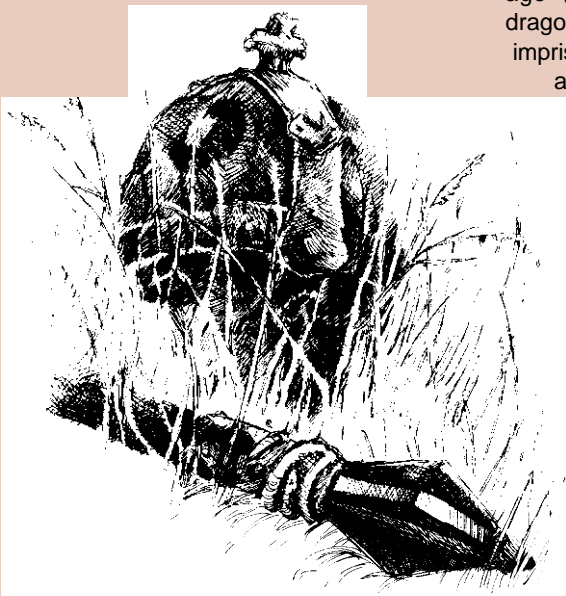
*Wyrmbslayer* always gives off a loud and menacing buzz when it is brought within 30 feet of a true dragon (but not a draconian or spawn). This sound always wakes a sleeping dragon and causes the wielder to automatically fail any attempt to sneak past a dragon.

## Items of Legend

### The Hammer of Kharas

The Hammer of Kharas is the legendary instrument used to forge the dragonlances, a dwarven artifact returned to the High Thane of Thorbardin by the Heroes of the Lance.

The hammer is a very heavy war hammer with a +13 damage rating. Upon striking undead or creatures of chaos, the wielder of the hammer can disrupt and destroy the creature with an average Spirit (Strength) action. The hammer allows the wielder to sense the presence of Evil with an average Perception (Presence) action and provides immunity to fear (including magical fear powers). Once each day the Hammer of Kharas can increase the wielder's Strength by +4 for ten minutes, provide immunity to normal missile weapons for one minute, and heal with a touch, restoring up to five lost cards in damage to a hero, or five lost Endurance points to a character.



The fame of this artifact among the dwarves of Krynn is so great that the wielder of the Hammer of Kharas gains an automatic trump bonus in any Presence action against dwarves.

## The Silver Arm of Ergoth

Used by Theros Ironfeld to forge the legendary dragonlances, the Silver Arm is a magical prosthesis used in place of the wearer's natural arm. The arm gives the wearer a Strength of 10 and allows him to use the Hammer of Kharas to forge dragonlances with a challenging Strength action and six hours work (for a lesser dragonlance) or a daunting Strength action and a full day (for a greater dragonlance), provided the wearer has access to a forge and at least some knowledge (in the narrator's opinion) of smith work. Since true dragonlances require the blessing of Paladine, they can no longer be made; however, the arm can be used to craft lesser and greater dragonlances. The arm also allows an injured wearer to recover damage very quickly: one card per minute for heroes or three points of Endurance per minute for other characters.

## Other Magical Items

In addition to the items described above and in other DRAGONLANCE®:

FIFTH AGE products, narrators can also adapt virtually any AD&D® game magical item to suit their FIFTH AGE campaign, many items described in the *ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA* tome and other AD&D books existed on Krynn during the Fourth Age, and many of these items have survived into the Fifth Age.

To adapt an AD&D game magical item, the narrator can simply double the magical bonuses of items such as weapons, armor and shields as given in the example on the FIFTH AGE reference card, converting a sword +2 to a FIFTH AGE sword of renown (+4) and a shield +3 into a shield of fame (-6). The narrator can then provide the item with some history and background appropriate to its status.

Other magical items can have their powers converted to the mechanics of the SAGA system without too much difficulty, using the items above and the examples from *The Book*

*of the Fifth Age* as examples. Narrators can use the following guidelines to help convert existing items:

- ❖ Clerical items employ the powers of mysticism and

are used with the Spirit ability, while other magical items are based on sorcery and use the Reason ability to activate them.



- ❖ Many items that provide bonuses to attributes or reaction rolls in AD&D may provide a trump bonus for the appropriate Fifth Age ability or can simply add to the ability. Items that simply add to ability should be rarer than those that provide a trump bonus.

- ❖ Items that have a limited number of uses per day continue to do so in Fifth Age, and items with a limited number of charges also retain that limitation. Since it should be very difficult, if not impossible, to recharge these items, they are used sparingly by their wielders so as not to deplete them.

- ❖ Although Fifth Age heroes and characters do not have alignments, the narrator may still restrict some magical items to characters with certain specific natures, if desired, such as a nature drawn from a card with a red or white aura only.

With a little work you can create new treasures for the heroes in your own FIFTH AGE campaign.



*Steve, a traditional comics fan, is delighted at the prospect of a MARVEL® Super Heroes Roleplaying Game driven by the SAGA system. He looks forward to playtesting the game this winter.*





# ENCHANTING WEAPONS



## Putting the “Magic” into Magical Weapons

by Mike Nystul

**ROTHGAR STOOD SLOWLY.** *It would be easy to give up now, to lie back down and let the blood flow out of him until the darkness claimed him for the last time. He had survived the Arena, but he was barely alive.*

*The statue was where it had been when the battle began. It regarded Rothgar from atop the dais with obsidian eyes. The warrior climbed the stairs slowly, wincing with every step as his weight came down on his wounded leg.*

*Something was different but he couldn't figure out what had changed until he stood before the statue and demanded the reward he was promised by the Guardian.*

*The sword.*

*It was no longer part of the statue. When he triumphed in the Arena the statue's weapon became a thing of steel.*

*This was the Blade of Bertrand. He didn't know it yet but the magic sword would do far more for him than help him overthrow the slaver lord and his henchmen. In time Rothgar would be King of Valaran, but not before the Blade tasted the blood of his true love.*

A magical weapon can be an important part of an warrior's identity, but all too often these weapons are mere “tools” that lack an identity of their own. Legend seldom mentions the “+1 sword” carried by a famous hero, but weapons like *Stormbringer* and *Excalibur* stir the imagination.

Whenever possible, the Dungeon Master should invest the time and effort required to make acquiring a magical weapon an pivotal event in the adventurers career. The following material is intended to help you make your magic weapons a more interesting part of your campaign.

### The Weapon's Origin

*For six days and six nights the paladin prayed, refusing food, water, and sleep. The temples had all been destroyed by the usurper, so he was forced to take his vigil in a graveyard, on the only consecrated ground he could find.*

*At sunrise each day he would humble himself before his god and beg for a weapon powerful enough to harm the usurper's minions. They were unholy creatures whose black scaled flesh had proven impervious to the paladin's blade.*

*On the seventh day the paladin stood at death's door, his body frail with hunger but his resolve was as strong as it had ever been.*

*The first ray of sunlight landed at the paladin's feet and was transformed by his faith in answer to his prayers. What began as an ephemeral glow had become a silver sword that was no less beautiful. It was a fitting weapon for his battle with the forces of darkness.*

Making a weapon is a lot of work, especially weapons such as swords that



require the talents of skilled craftsmen. Creating a magic weapon is even harder (and it costs him a point of Constitution). Whoever created the weapon had to have a good reason to go to all that effort and defining his motivations will tell you much about the weapon and where it came from.

Possibilities include:

### Commission

Experienced adventurers may eventually have the wealth required to convince a mage to enchant a weapon for them. The abilities conferred by these “vanity weapons” are a reflection of the adventurer who commissioned them. Finding out who the adventurer was and what he was like gives the new wielder some historical perspective and might help him access some of the weapon’s more powerful abilities.

### Badge of Office

A magical weapon can symbolize power and authority. When a wizard creates a weapon for a lord or noble house, he often finds a way to tie some or all of the enchantment to the bloodline so that it will not fall into the wrong hands. Access to these restricted abilities could be used as a test to determine lineage (when the rightful heir takes up the *Burning Blade of Kur Keep*, it will shine with a golden light).

### Masterpiece

Some wizards create because they can. The act of creation enriches them and brings them joy. These mages often care very little about what is done with their creations once they are finished. A magical weapon could be the life’s work of a wizard, the culmination of everything he has learned. Because it wasn’t created for a specific purpose, a weapon of this kind might have an eccentric assortment of special abilities, some of which are interesting only to the magician who created it.

### Secret Societies

Some groups have the ability to enchant weapons for their members. These weapons have special abilities that suit the goals and ethos of the society in question. Finding one of these items could easily enmesh the player characters in the machinations of the society.

### Special Purpose

Many of the most powerful weapons were created for a very specific purpose such as slaying a dragon or defending a shrine. These weapons have a narrow range of abilities, all of which will be most useful if the wielder pursues the intended goals. These are often the best kinds of weapons to give out, because they make the wielder more powerful only under certain circumstances, reducing their impact on game balance in general.

### The Weapon’s Location

*Devaine insisted in hauling the serpent’s corpse out of the muck. It was gruesome, exhausting work, but the bard could not be swayed, so the companions used Alama’s grapnel to drag the slimy thing onto the rocks.*

*When the creature’s midsection was exposed, Devaine used his short sword to slit it open. Gore poured over him and back into the mire. The stench was so bad that the elf girl had to cover her mouth with damp cloth.*

*It looked as though the bard had taken leave of his senses until he let out a cry of delight and emerged with a long*

*sword that glowed blue in the light of the moon. Later he would explain that he remembered a song about a hero with a magical sword who was swallowed whole by a serpent whose description matched the creature they had just slain. Bad luck for the hero—great good fortune for the teller of tales.*

Magical weapons are rare and valuable items that are highly prized by those that possess them. They are seldom left lying around. If a magical weapon is somewhere where the player characters can get their hands on it, there should be a good reason why it is there.

Two common answers to this question are “the player characters take it from the wielder after they defeat him” and “the last wielder was eaten by a monster and his equipment is in the monster’s hoard.” Both answers are plausible, but there are many other options to explore.

### Fields of the Fallen

The wielder of the weapon could have perished in a battle so large that no one ever made a full accounting of who was slain and what was lost.





Some magical weapons can hide themselves until a suitable wielder is found which would explain why grave robbers haven't run off with the goods. When the adventurers find the battlefield, a warrior could find himself drawn to a metallic glimmer that turns out to be a magical sword.

### The Test

A traditional way to find a suitable wielder for a magical weapon is to test him. Depending on who created the weapon and what its purpose is this test could be a duel, a puzzle, or even a labyrinth full of traps with the prize at the center of the maze.

### Thieves

Magical Weapons are valuable and when you have something of value thieves will come looking for you. A stolen weapon could go anywhere. A thief could sell it or trade it, or he could get himself killed before he finds a buyer, in which case it could end up just about anywhere.

### Twist of Fate

In most campaigns there are forces at work that transcend mortal understanding. These forces sometimes grant their mortal pawn an instrument that will help him fulfill his destiny. When a weapon is introduced this way, there should be omens that let the players know that they are dealing with a miraculous event (as the hero digs the blade out of the rubble a flock of red winged birds flies overhead, casting a shadow that looks like a skull). Mischievous or meddling gods may not be particular where they acquire the weapons they give their pawns and they may decide to test them before they grant that kind of favor.

### Assigning Abilities

*Lady Drake knew her opponent had a sword similar to hers, a great blade with a will of its own that gave him powers and abilities that made him virtually indestructible.*

*Drawing Nightwind, she whispered to it with her desire, asking again for the help of the creature that dwelled within it. She would pay for its aid by helping it in its quest to rid the world of free-willed elementals, but that was an acceptable arrangement. If she lived through this battle, she would do anything it wanted of her.*

*Master Krethkir drew his sword and attacked. As he fought, his blade started to tug and twist in his grip, making it difficult for him to hold onto it, let alone land a telling blow. Drake smiled and closed in for the kill.*

*He stared up at her, confusion and panic in his eyes. Coughing up blood, he tried to ask the obvious question but he couldn't speak. He wanted to know how she had done it. She was an inferior opponent who posed no real threat to him.*

*Lady Drake let him wonder for a few long moments then leaned in close, whispering to him in the sweet small voice she used when she was forced to serve in his harem.*

*"My blade talked yours out of fighting me. You should have been nicer to the little voice in the back of your head."*

When designing a magic weapon's bonuses and abilities, bear in mind that interesting is more effective than powerful.

For example, a *two-handed sword* +3 is very, very useful and will be highly prized, but the wielder won't think twice about what his sword does for him. It is relegated to the status of "tool" by virtue of its simplicity.

Consider instead a two-handed sword that can be wielded one-handed and can cause an extra 1dB hp damage three times a day. By making the player think about how and when he uses his weapon, you remind him of its significance.

### Attunement

It takes time to access the special abilities of some weapons. In its simplest form, this condition could increase the bonus of the weapon (+1 at first, +2 after a year of adventuring with the blade as the adventurer's primary weapon, +3 after five years). Attunement could also provide access to the weapon's special abilities (after a year, the wielder is granted stone giant strength). You could also link the increase to levels instead of time (+1 at first, +2 after gaining a level, +3 after a second level is gained).

### Damage Dice

Changing the damage that a weapon does has a different feel than adding a static bonus. For example, a long sword with a +1 attack bonus that does 2d4/2d6 damage with a +2 damage bonus whenever doubles are

rolled is more interesting than a +1 sword. You could give a small weapon the characteristics of a larger weapon or change the balance of damage inflicted against man-sized and greater than man-sized opponents (a long sword that does 1d12/1d8 or a two handed sword that does 3d6/1d10 would be devastating against most opponents).

### Helping Hand

Weapons with a consciousness may have skills and abilities of their own that they may use "lend" the wielder. For example, a blade that was created for a famous hero who died using it and is now inhabited by his spirit may allow the wielder to fight using the hero's THAC0.

### Initiation

Before the some or all of the enchantments on the weapon will work for a new wielder he must perform an initiation ritual or act of some kind. Simple examples include drawing your own blood with it or reciting the oath inscribed on the blade. More involved initiations may have to be researched by a bard or sage.

### Priming

A ritual must be performed or a spell must be cast before certain of the weapon's special abilities may be used. For example, consider a magical quarterstaff that has two "charges" of the ability to cure the wielder of 8 hp damage twice a day. This power can be recharged only by casting a *cure serious wounds* spell on the staff twice.

### Restrictions

Some or all of the enchantments on the weapon work only for characters of a specific race, class, or bloodline. Creating an "elf blade" or a "ranger's knife" can help you determine in advance who will use the weapon when you are trying to balance out a group. Including a weapon that isn't ideal for anyone in the group can also open up some interesting opportunities. (Sure, its +1 but it would be much more useful in the hands of the dwarf king—what do you think he would give us for it?)

### Associated Plotlines

*The rider dismounted and hailed the camp. Fellerie didn't know him, but she recognized the rose emblem on his*

breastplate. It was the same rose that was inscribed on the blade she had taken from Vigo the Black at Hangman's Hill.

"Greetings Fellerie. I am Captain Rhys. I'm glad to have found you and pray that you are as noble as the Fellerie of the stories I have heard. The blade you carry was taken from me by a villain named Vigo whose allies subdued me with dark magics. I ask for its return and for your help against a great enemy of the realm and all of the children of the light. The battle has not gone well since the blade was lost to us."

The magic weapon's story isn't over when a player character finds it. The magic weapons carried by the player characters can be the inspiration for many ongoing plotlines.

### Equal But Opposite

Weapons that were created to serve some great purpose will sometimes have an opposite created by the opposition. An enemy armed with such a weapon will often be able to feel the presence of his opposite and may even be able to track him by following the empathic bond.

### Give it Back

If the weapon was taken from someone who survived or could be resurrected he will want it back. The original wielder could also have been part of a cult, secret society or family who feels that the weapon is their rightful property. Depending on who is involved they could try to buy it back from the player character but if bribery and threats fail they will almost certainly resort to more extreme measures.

### It Isn't Working

One day the weapons special abilities stop working. There may also be some physical change as well such as different runes on the blade or a shift in the color of the gems in the guard. If they want the weapon back the PCs will have to figure out why this happened and how to "turn it back on." The deactivation could be the result of a curse or some limitation inherent to the blade. For example, once a year the blade must drink of the Red River or it must be reconsecrated on the altar at the Shrine of the Fallen Star.

### One of Many

The weapon isn't unique; in fact, it is part of a set of weapons that were created to be used by members of a group such as an order of knights. The wielders of the other blades are probably looking for the missing blade. If the blades have telepathy they may allow telepathic communication between all of the wielders, which could give you the opportunity to introduce some interesting NPCs.

### Treasure Hunt

Player characters aren't the only ones who can go looking for a magic weapon. The bad guys could view a PC with a magic sword the same way the PCs view an evil swordsman with something they want. They will be just as eager to find him, take him down and rob him of his precious possession.

### Whatever You Desire

Someone with a lot of resources wants the weapon and is willing to pay for it in whatever currency the current owner desires. A wizard, king or guildmaster invites the adventurers to his home, makes a show of his wealth and influence, then makes his pitch. If the PC really wants something he may actually be willing to give up the weapon for it. For example, a freedom fighter could be offered the services of a small army for a year which would be much more useful than the +2 to hit and damage.



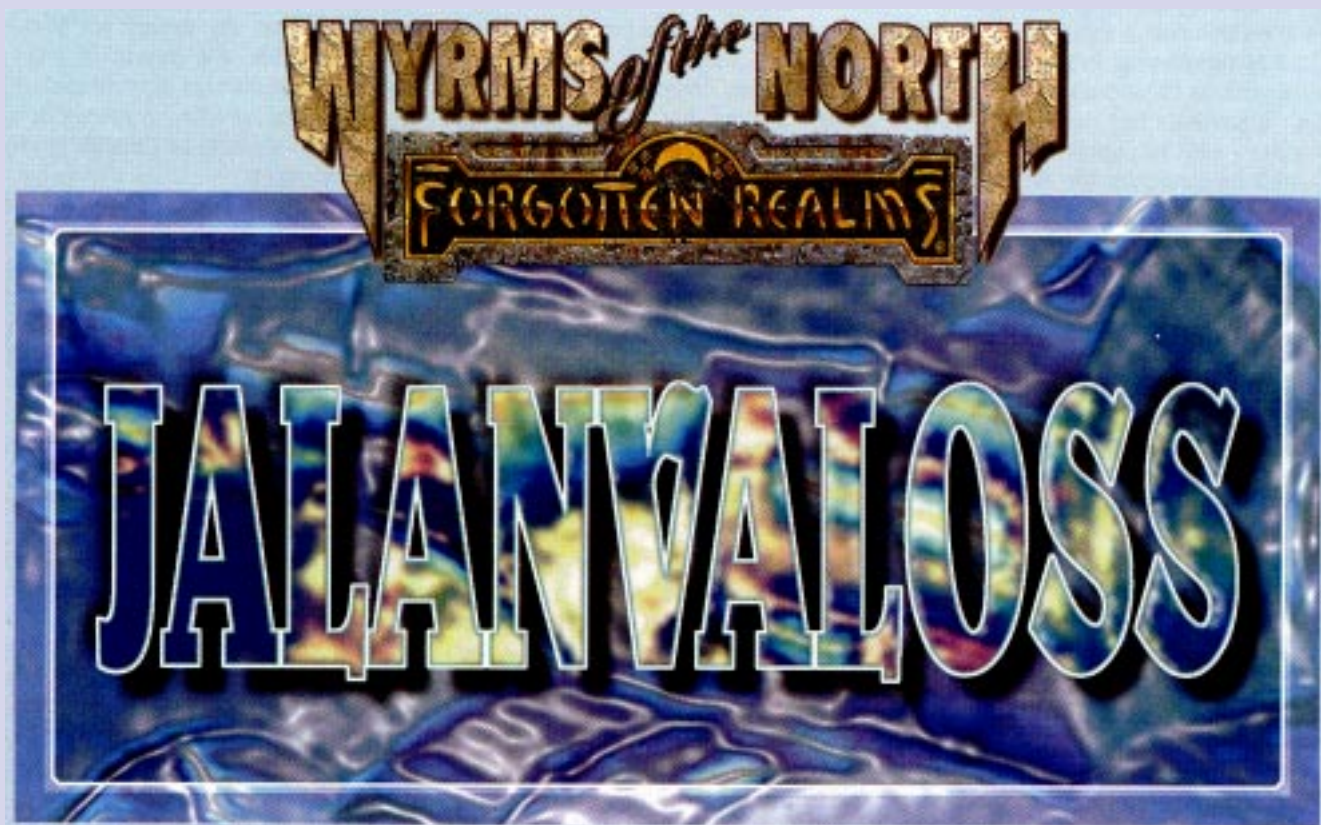
Mike Nystul is best known for creating the Whispering Vault roleplaying game.











## The Wurm of Many Spells

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by Ed Greenwood

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illustrated by Storn Cook

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WHEN IN WATERDEEP RECENTLY, Volo was smitten by a certain enigmatic, dark-eyed lady who whispered to him of rare and strange spells only she knew. It is impossible to say from the wildly boastful notes of the infamous traveler whether their brief dalliance involved any true intimacy, and how fondly (if at all) the lady in question regards Volo the Loose-Tongued now, but it is clear that the flrid-quilled Volothamp knew he was in the presence of a shapechanger whose true nature he couldn't fathom. It is also clear from his notes that he had no idea he was flirting with the steel dragon Jalanvalloss—even though he'd come to Waterdeep to find out all he could about the elusive Wurm of Many Spells.

Few folk are aware they're dealing with Jalanvalloss until later, because

she loves the bustle and intrigues of Waterdeep. As an unlicensed but very active mage, she is always on the run from the Watchful Order of Magists and Protectors, (This deception—and other similar evasions of bureaucratic money-gouging—are the only unlawfulnesses Jalanvalloss embraces. She prefers not to break laws or disrupt daily life openly, but she sees nothing wrong in hiring or manipulating others to do so.)

In her youth, this female steel dragon was a servant of the wizard Rythtalies, a reclusive, white-bearded human archmage who dwelt in a now-ruined mountaintop keep in eastern Amn, and who is now believed dead.

Rythtalies used Jalanvalloss as a steed but worked on turning her into his best "secret weapon": a being far too magically weak ever to seriously

challenge him but one who could aid him against foes by launching surprise attacks.

Rythtalies worked several mighty magics on his steed, whom he came to regard highly for her keen wits and sly sense of humor. His magical augmentations resulted in Jalanvalloss's acquiring the ability to cast spells as a 12th-level wizard when in human shape.

This power is apparently permanent, having (probably) outlived the mage himself—though some folk whisper that Rythtalies lives on in the mind of the Wurm of Many Spells, perhaps sharing her body, and that the spell expertise she exhibits when wearing the form of a tall, sleekly beautiful human female is actually that of Rythtalies himself. Other folk say that whatever the source of the



spells used by the steel dragon might be, the sentience of Rytthalties is either dead or slumbering; in the opinion of most wizards to whom the question is put, Jalanvaloss has made too many mistakes with her spellhurlings to be guided by (or to be the work of) an archmage.

Jalanvaloss is known frequently to employ *project image* spells to put a human image of herself in situations that allow her to interact with Waterdhavians (and visitors to the city—adventurers in particular) without their discovering her true nature.

Volo wrote plenty of purple-prose nonsense about his “Dark-Eyed Lady,” implying that her loving attentions surpassed all similar pleasures in his previous experience of ladies all over Faerûn, but readers have no way of knowing how truthful the famous scribe was, or how much Jalanvaloss employs magic to deceive or to overwhelm the senses of humans she meets. She is known playfully to manipulate Waterdhavians out of a sheer love of doing so and to promote a general air of mystery to distract attention from her own deeds and to set folk to doing wild and reckless things (something that seems to afford her much amusement).

First mentioned in *A Year of sorcery: Wizardly Doings In The Year of the Dark Dawn* (a widely-quoted chapbook by the sage Aldiber of Memnon), Jalanvaloss seems to have been the pet or servitor of Rytthalties since her birth. She might well have been reared by him from her hatching. Aldiber writes of her deep loyalty in 1104 D.R. (at an age when most dragons are particularly headstrong and rebellious or defiant of authority), when she braved the hostile spells of two archmages to swoop in and rescue her master from an ambush. Rytthalties seems to have disappeared sometime in 1262 D.R., though it must be emphasized that this figure is more of an estimation than any record of a specific disaster befalling the wizard.

Whatever her master's ultimate fate, Jalanvaloss acted alone from then on, soon abandoning the keep in Amn—which was often visited by greedy mages and adventurers, and well-nigh destroyed in her battles against them—for the streets of Waterdeep, the City of Splendors.

Jalanvaloss is now a mature adult steel dragon of sleek appearance,

whose scales flash with an almost iridescent blue sheen when she's about to change shape into human form. She is a keen observer of people and things around her, never forgetting the smallest details, and she seems to revel in being part of as many intrigues and deceptions as possible. She is an actress of the first rank, and an adequate mimic. Over her years of residence in Waterdeep (in a succession of assumed human shapes, all female), she has become expert in recalling the genealogies, relationships, cabals, and alliances of Waterdhavians both high and low in station.

Jalanvaloss acquired the title Wyrms of Many Spells because of an epic spell-battle she once had with Khelben “Blackstaff” Arunsun: discerning her true nature at an evening revel at the Brossfeather family villa, he casually tossed a *wyrmbane* spell her way, to drive her from the city.

Jalanvaloss responded by peppering him with a barrage of spells, shifting from human to dragon form and precipitating a panic in the process that sent citizens leaping from balconies and trampling each other in gateways and on the streets of Waterdeep.

Distracted by the need to mitigate damage to the citizenry and the surrounding buildings, Khelben responded with magics designed to contain and hamper rather than to punish or destroy. Jalanvaloss took advantage of this tactic to make her escape. Thus, when the Blackstaff finally brought down a *binding chain of fire* spell on his opponent, seeking to both harm and capture her, it fell harmlessly through a *projected image*. News of the spell-battle and the steel dragon's escape was all over the city by the following highsun, and the *Copper Tongue* (a broadsheet of news sold in the streets for a single copper coin; hence, its name) coined the name of “the Wyrms of Many Spells” for “the mysterious dragon who fought the mighty Blackstaff to a standstill.” Jalanvaloss secured her fame in the lore of the city when she defiantly reappeared several nights later, flying in dragon form over Blackstaff Tower and raking it with spells (causing no damage and vanishing before the annoyed archwizard could respond or lay any sort of tracing spell on her).

According to the sage Velsaert of Baldur's Gate, an expert on Sword Coast dragons, the Wyrms of Many Spells has “shown no signs of desiring the company of other wyrms, nor of dwelling in solitude or defending any sort of territory.”

Volo found that while Velsaert's observations might well be true, Jalanvaloss does seem to enjoy wiping out rival dragons who cross her in any way. She is known to have destroyed utterly the blue dragons Calaunthriina and Daereveroese (in Amn), and the wicked black dragon Nabalnyth, who briefly laired in the Rat Hills.

The key to Jalanvaloss could be said to be her love of, and outstanding aptitude for, scheming. She always has a few plots to spare and can respond to those who cross her by calling on many (usually unwitting) allies. If she has a main foe, it would be the Cult of the Dragon, whom she would like to destroy permanently in the vicinity of Waterdeep. She has ignored, and will continue to ignore, attempts on their—or anyone else's—part, to lure her out of the city. Khelben Arunsun she regards more as an honored opponent, to be teased and frustrated whenever doing so will afford her a means of escape from his seeking magic, and taking up his time won't endanger the security of the city.

## The Lair of Jalanvaloss

The Wyrms of Many Spells rents various upper-floor rooms all over the city, and owns several shops in Southern Ward, Trades Ward, and Dock Ward (that is, the buildings are hers, and she rents the premises to various merchants, to run their businesses in). All of these buildings are crowned with one or two floors of rental apartments, and at least two of them incorporate “secret apartments” (rooms retained by Jalanvaloss herself, which have their own entry stairs linking to cellars—and thence, to nearby stables—or the sewers). The Wyrms of Many Spells also owns several houses full of genteel rental rooms in Sea Ward and North Ward; she customarily assumes a different human shape when buying and visiting one shop than she wears for dealings with another. She is known to have at least one secret cache somewhere in the sewers, and another in a spell-guarded tomb somewhere in the

City of the Dead, that contain nothing but clothing, makeup, and accessories that allow her to change one human identity for another.

It is hard to say which of her various Waterdhavian properties is her true lair; Jalanvalloss has even been known to curl up for a rest in dragon form on the roof of a tomb in the City of the Dead and use a spell to make her appear to be no more than sculpted—and weathered—stone.

In her various human guises, Jalanvalloss is the friend, ally, or business partner of many Waterdhavians, but (so far as is known) she can't be said to have any true servants or kin.

## The Domain of Jalanvalloss

Jalanvalloss doesn't patrol and defend a territory as most dragons do, but her domain could be said to be the city of Waterdeep, its underside in particular (though the pretensions and indulgences of its nobles afford her the most fascinated viewing and amusement).

She'll happily share the city with other dragons who hide in human-shape and don't disturb city life, and she tolerates the brief visits of such wyrms as Galadaeros (keeping herself hidden), but will reveal herself to savagely fight off any wyrm who dares to attack the city or folk in its immediate surroundings.

## The Deeds of Jalanvalloss

Jalanvalloss is both a sponsor and an enthusiastic fan of adventurers. She spends most of her time consorting with such daring folk. Though she admires the most capable, daring, and clever of such persons, her love of watching their exploits (via a number of variants of the *wizard eye* spell) doesn't stop her from constantly manipulating them.

The Wyrms of Many Spells uses adventurers to extend her own long-term goals (of which more later); to set the intrigues she loves so much into motion; for practical reasons (such as frustrating local Cult of the Dragon agents as much as possible), and for short-term entertainment.

## The Magic of Jalanvalloss

Here are two of the many magics employed by Jalanvalloss in her Waterdhavian life of endless intrigues and deceptions.

### Scattergloom

(Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 3

Range: 0

Components: V

Duration: 4 rounds

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 90-yard sphere

Saving Throw: Special

This spell brings into being six amorphous masses of magical darkness, like wispy, opaque black shadows. They appear instantly within spell range and whirl about at random speeds and in random directions.

They serve to hamper the aims of any beings who are within spell range, or firing into the area, so that all attack rolls are at -3, and aimed spells are penalized by the same or a lesser amount (a +1 THAC0 penalty or a bonus to the target's saving throw).

Two of the six "shifting shadows" this spell creates are under the limited control of the *scattergloom* caster; they can be directed to "cloak" or enshroud one target being each (both cannot be attached to the same being). The choice of target can be made at any time during the spell and is irrevocable once made. A shadow takes one round to "attach" itself to a target being.

An unwilling target of a controlled shadow receives a saving throw against the spell. If successful, the caster loses all control over that shadow, and it accompanies the target only for one round (moving away at random thereafter).

An enshrouded target suffers a -4 penalty to all attack rolls (-2 if the being possess the blindfighting proficiency), a negation of any damage bonuses normally possessed, and a -4 penalty on both Armor Class and saving throws (note that this penalty is not applied to the saving throw against the shadow's attachment).

The caster of a *scattergloom* spell can always see through its shadows clearly and suffers no ill effects from being shrouded. This spell is often used to enshroud its caster (to conceal identity), with the second controlled shadow being "set" across a window or to block out light, so as to conceal the caster's presence.

The two "controlled shadows" can also be shaped by the caster to appear as if they are undead shadows or an unknown sort of creature with limbs, jaws, wings, and the like, and

moved about by the silent will of the *scattergloom* caster as if they are attacking specific beings or objects. This shaping can be maintained even if the shadows subsequently "cloak" a being—so that the moving being might appear to others to be some sort of shadow creature.

Any "shadow" created by a *scattergloom* spell vanishes upon contact with a *dispel magic* spell or any magical barrier created by a fourth or higher level magic.

### Steelsting

(Evocation)

Level: 4

Range: 90 yards

Components: V

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Cylinder 6' across and 24' long

Saving Throw: Special

This spell brings into being a brief maelstrom of dagger-like flying darts of enchanted force, that whirl and flash about within the spell's area of effect, slicing all creatures they come into contact with for 6d4 hp damage. Victims who are free to move out of the area of effect are allowed a saving throw vs. spell (if successful, they suffer only half damage), but victims who are constrained (for example, beings in a narrow passageway, or who are climbing a ladder or tethered to a heavy weight) against agile dodging or an ability to get out of the area of effect receive no such saving throw.

The blade-like "darts" the spell creates are emissions of a whirling magical field, not metal weapons or anything that can be considered a solid, "normal" missile. Shields and armor can't stop them, though a wall or closed door can; rather than ricocheting off a partial barrier such as a shield, a dart simply "dissolves" back into the field and flares into sharpness again on the other side of the barrier.

## The Fate of Jalanvalloss

The Wyrms of Many Spells has a long-term dream of founding her own kingdom, with herself as queen, commanding an elite army of human adventuring bands, to protect a cultured, prosperous elven populace. Perhaps in the western High Forest . . .

Realizing such a dream will be very difficult; it is likely to result in Jalanvalloss's death. She knows this



danger, and that's why her notion of a realm of her own is a "some-distant-day" vision; she'll pursue it in earnest only when the daily cuts, thrusts, and intrigues of Waterdeep grow wearisome. Judging by her performance thus far, that's apt to be centuries yet, and to involve the climbing of one of her human personae to the heights of noble rank. There is always the danger of her true nature being discovered, but it seems unlikely that Jalanvaloss will lose out in many struggles for power, or not have adventurers galore to call upon if something goes seriously wrong.

Elminster of Shadowdale, the Lady Mage of Waterdeep Laeral Arunsun, and at least three Harpers resident in Waterdeep know of the presence (if not the precise current human disguises) of Jalanvaloss in the city, but they're quite willing to let her remain part of life in the City of Splendors. In the rueful words of Laeral, "In many ways, she's more Waterdhavian than most Waterdhavians."

## Wyrmfighting Magic

Folk who must deal with dragons can never carry enough spells. To aid such "doomed unfortunates" (as he muttered darkly), Elminster reluctantly agreed to furnish details of a spell Khelben used in his famous "duel with Jalanvaloss, as follows:

### Binding Chain of Fate

(Evocation)

Level: 9

Range: 10 yards per 2 levels

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 9 rounds

Casting Time: 9

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell brings into being a "chain" of shimmering, translucent links of magical force that forms in a whirling ring above a single chosen target creature, and then descends, its ends flailing. To the target, the binding chain has physical solidity; to all others, it's no more than the vision of a lashing chain and a clashing, metallic rattling sound. (If the chosen target is outside spell range at the moment casting is complete, the chain won't form, and the spell is wasted.)

The binding chain whirls above the target for a full round before descending. It moves to stay above the target

during this time, but doesn't hamper target actions in any way. It will fall harmlessly into nothingness if its target can teleport away, become ethereal, adopt *wraithform* or otherwise become non-corporeal; or is an illusion or projection rather than a solid, physical body. It takes instant effect if the target rises up into or seeks to pass through its whirling ring.

The chain can form and whirl unaffected by magical barriers (even those of the greatest efficacy, such as *prismatic sphere*), physical barriers (castle walls or solid rock), and water (even underwater). It is 10 feet high and 10 feet thick, with its length and the diameter of the area it encloses determined by the size of the creature it's enclosing, from a minimum of ten feet to a maximum of 60 feet.

A *binding chain of fate* prevents the operation of all magic within its ring save its own. No magic can pass through it or take effect within any part of it, nor can the area of effect of a spell that erupts or is already in force outside the ring persist within or include the area occupied by the ring or the area it encloses. (A non-target being who stands within the enclosed area or in the space occupied by the phantom "chain" won't suffer the damaging effects of the spell, but is governed by this freedom from all contact with other magic.) A binding chain can withstand even the mightiest of known spells, even *dispel magic* or *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, and its caster cannot banish it before the spell has run its course,

Once settled around the chosen target, a *binding chain* prevents that being from moving outside its ring; though they are free to move within the enclosed area, the chain acts as an impregnable ceiling, floor, and continuous wall to them (that is, to the target only; other beings can pass through it freely and can launch physical attacks on the target being normally, though the visual chaos of the chain causes all missile attacks through it to be made at -3 to hit).

A binding chain flails its target being for 4d4 hp damage per round and prevents them from working any magic, negating any existing enchantments at work upon them for the duration of its existence.

A target aloft due to flying or levitation magic when enchained would

not fall, because the chain's invisible "floor" would hold them aloft. If that magic reaches its normal expiration before the chain does, the target will fall when the binding chain ends,

Once settled, the chain also prevents its enchained target from changing form; a vampire in solid form can't become gaseous, a phase spider can't phase, and a dragon in human shape can't revert to draconic form. This prohibition lasts as long as the chain does.

This ancient spell has seen many lesser variations down the years and has primarily been used to make magically-powerful opponents 'stand and fight,' preventing their escape before force can be readied against them. (There is a specific but little-known counterspell that prevents a protected target from being enchained. Certain writings in Candlekeep also speak of at least two methods of magically shattering a chain, each employing a different trio of specific ninth-level spells, that must be cast at or on the chain within three consecutive rounds.)

The material components of a *binding chain of fate* are a strand of hair taken from a living creature who possesses at least three spell-like natural abilities (such as a ki-rin or rakshasa; the ability to cast wizard spells is one ability, and the ability to cast priest spells is another; the creature must have hair in at least one of its natural forms, so a hair from a phoenix or illithid who "grew" hair as the result of a spell wouldn't work), and a magical potion of any sort.



*Ed Greenwood insists that only Elminster knows which gates link our real world with Toril, Oerth, and Krynn. He does admit that he's wandered the back streets of Waterdeep more than once in the Old Mage's footsteps, though—and he has a bathrobe that reeks of truly strange pipesmoke to prove it. Eiminster said that the torn and patched blue terrycloth was the only clothing Ed owned that was good enough for his debut in the City of Splendors.*



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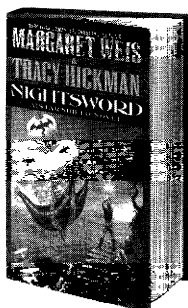
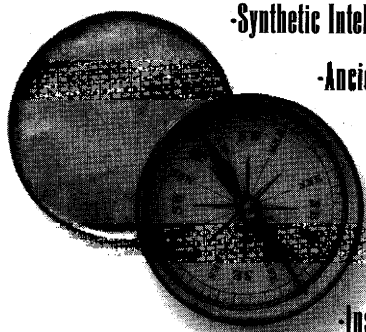
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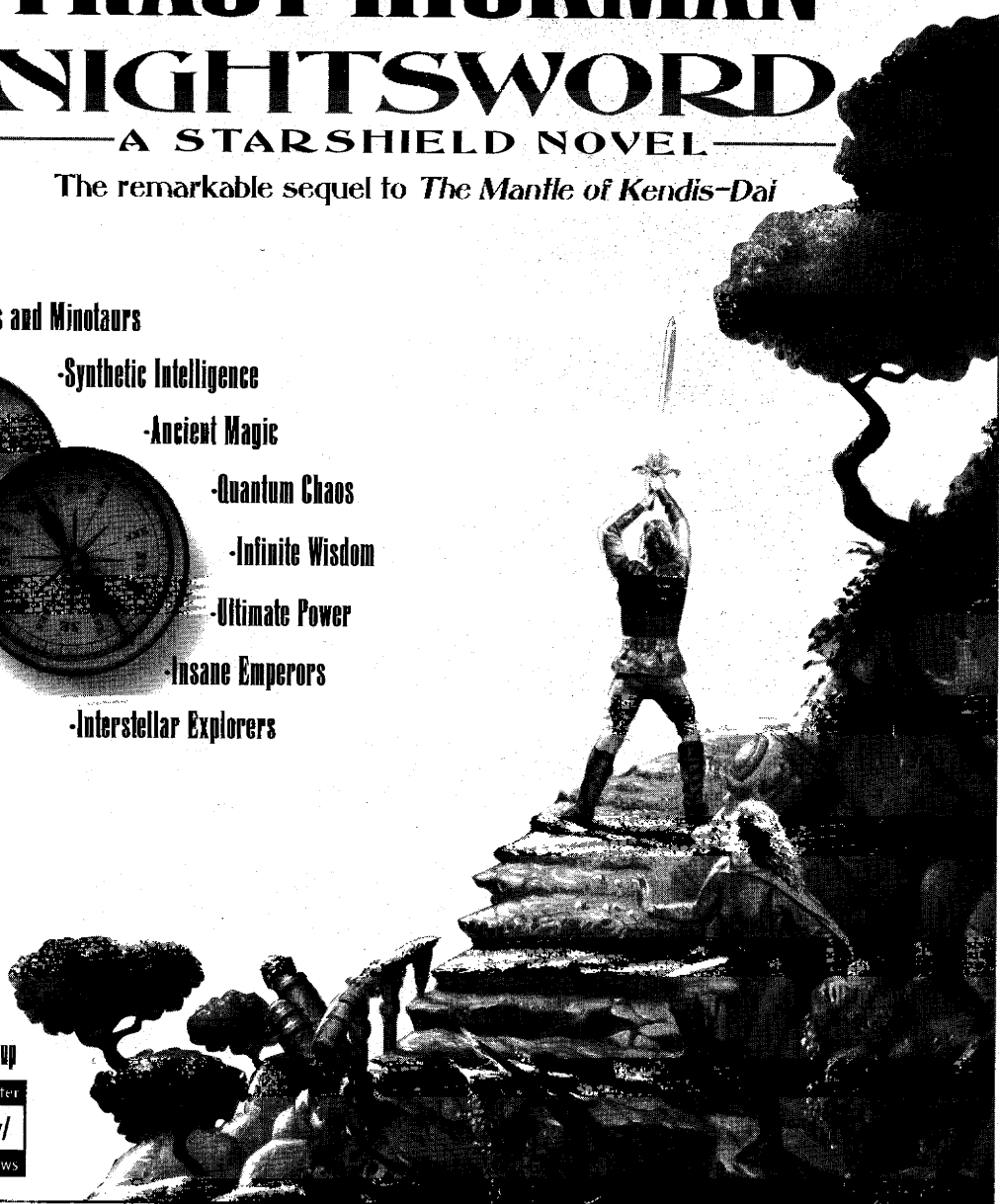
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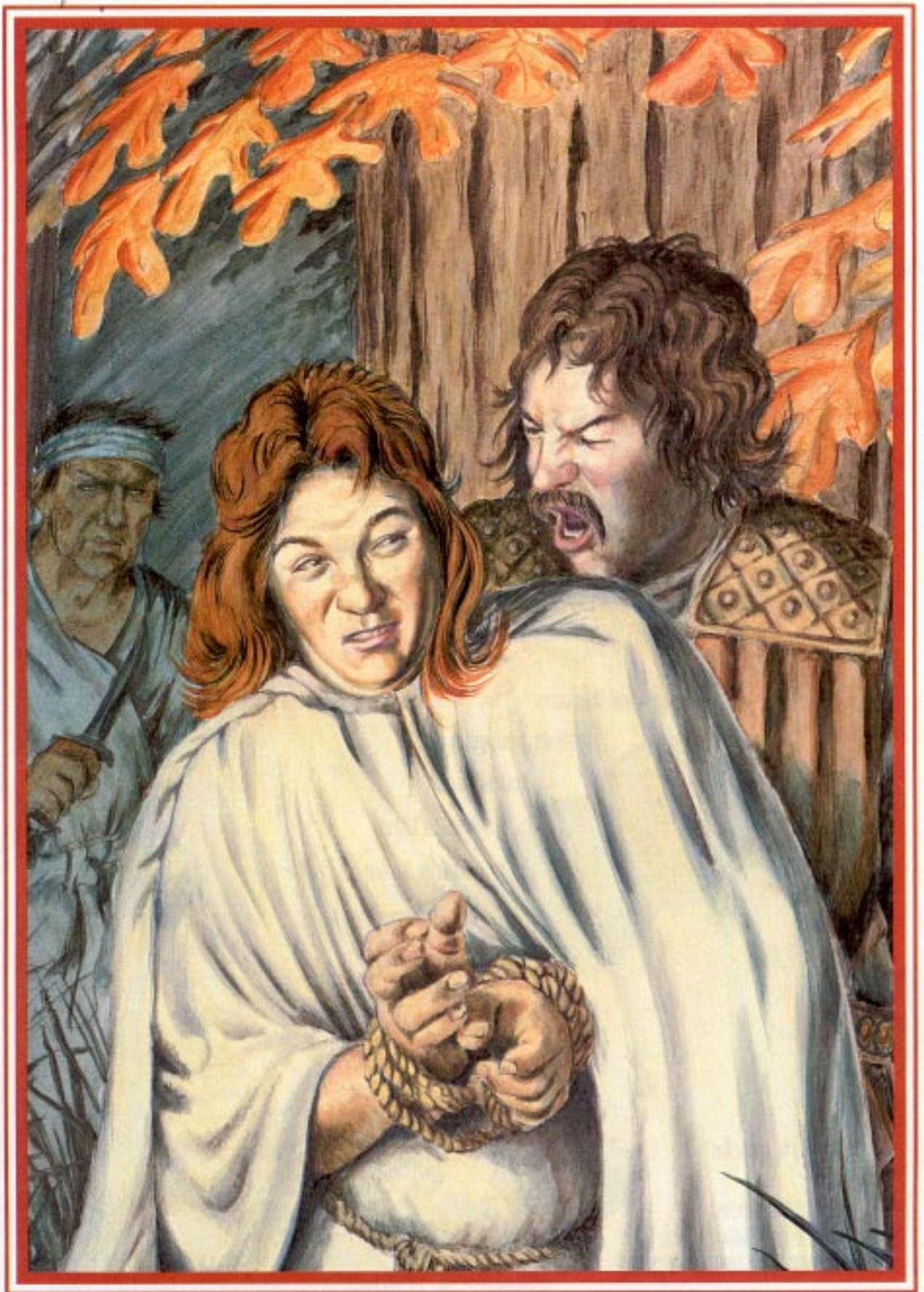
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# HONOR AND Guile

Margaret Weis

*Artwork by Dan Frazier*

LOCATED ON A WELL-TRAVELED CROSSROADS, the town of Solace, unlike many towns, welcomed strangers. Solace even offered the parched and weary traveler a choice of drinking and dining establishments. The best known of these was the Inn of the Last Home. Built high among the limbs of one of the enormous vallenwoods, the Inn was renowned all the way to distant Palanthas for its ale, its friendliness, and the proprietor's spiced potatoes. Light beaming through the Inn's stained glass windows was a beacon to the thirsty, the smell of the potatoes a lure to the hungry. Otik's smile, as he greeted arriving guests, was warmer than his own hearth fire.

Not all travelers find that spiced potatoes, warm smiles or bright lights agree with them, however. Some find the darkness welcome and soothing, never mind that the potatoes are boiled and generally underdone at that. Some prefer the more potent dwarf spirits to foaming nut-brown ale. Thus some travelers to Solace found that its second tavern, one known as The Trough, more suited to their tastes,

Built on the ground for the primary reason that no person under the influence of dwarf spirits should be climbing trees, The Trough lived up to its name and its signboard, which featured a pig wallowing in swill. The tavern even looked like a trough, a V-shaped gray building with a collapsing roof wedged between the boles of two large vallenwoods. The Trough had another advantage. People could reach The Trough from the main road without going into Solace proper. People could meet safely in The Trough, where they could meet safely nowhere else.

Three such people sat this night, eating the watery potatoes and the stringy beef and drinking beer, not dwarf spirits, since the three were discussing business. They kept their voices low, although it was well-known that the barmaids in The Trough were deaf, the tavern keeper mute, and all of them blind—handicaps purchased with good steel coins. "This is a rich town," said one with a knowing wink and a cunning leer. "I tell you, Cutthroat. I've lived here three months, and there's money for the taking. Why, the amount raked in by that fat old innkeeper Otik alone would set us up for a year in Sanction!

"And I say that I've seen no sign of it," argued another, glaring down at his potatoes with a scowl they richly deserved.

"That's because you have no imagination, Cutpurse," said his brother. The two thieves, in a fit of cleverness from which they had never fully recovered, called themselves Cutpurse and Cutthroat. "Go on, Jack Ladyfinger. What else have you found out?"

"There's a wife of a Solamnic knight living here. You know that she's just dripping with jewels, for all she



pretends to be so poor! And a dwarven metal-smith. His house must be loaded with silver and steel."

"Well and what if they are?" groused Cutpurse. He was in a bad mood, the beef was doing strange things to his insides. "We can't rob them all in one night! And after the first heist, the whole damn place will be up in arms. Ogres take them! This stuff is swill!" He flung his plate to the floor, spilling the potatoes and scattering the beef.

The tavern dog—a lean and perpetually starved animal—dashed up, sniffed at the beef, wisely ignored it, and ate the potatoes. The barmaid let the dog do her cleaning for her, then picked up the plate. She kicked the beef under the table.

"Would I have sent for you if I didn't have a plan?" demanded Jack Ladyfinger—so called because of his deft and delicate hands. He bragged that his touch so light he could slide his hand inside a marks pocket, sort out the steel coins from the pence, take only the steel, with the mark being none the wiser.

"No, of course, you wouldn't, Jack," said Cutthroat, giving his brother a kick in the shins.

"Listen to this, my friends," said Jack. He beckoned the other two to lean their heads closer. "Three weeks ago, the sheriff caught wind that goblins were planning a raid on the town. He called out the militia, and all the warriors in the town left their homes, ready to defend the town. The women and kids holed up in the Inn."

"So?" Cutpurse growled.

"So, I'm not finished yet. The Sheriff told the good citizens to bring all their valuables to him. He and a couple of guards carried them off in a box to stash them away in a safe hiding place." Jack sat back, looking pleased. What do you think of that? It will be the easiest job we ever pulled."

"I get it. We rob the houses while the men are away!" said Cutpurse.

"No, you booby!" His brother kicked him again. "What's the use of robbing the houses if the owners have hauled off all the steel and the jewels?"

"Well, then, I don't understand," said Cutpurse sourly.

"We rob the place where they're hiding the valuables!" Cutthroat explained.

"Oh," said Cutpurse, considering. "Yeah, that's a good plan. Well done, Jack." He belched. "Where is this hiding place?"

"I don't know," said Jack, shrugging.

"What?" Cutpurse demanded. His hand went to the knife he carried hidden in his boot. "I don't like games, Jack Ladyfinger."

"How could I find out?" Jack protested. "You think they'd tell me?"

"Hell, most of them don't know. The sheriff uses a different hiding place each time. The only ones who know the hiding place are those who help to carry the loot there and those who stay behind to guard it."

"So we follow them to the hiding place?"

"Naw. I tried that last time. They keep a close lookout. Nearly tossed me in the lock-up, but I pretended like I was drunk, and so they let me go."

"What good does this do us then?" Cutthroat frowned. He was starting to agree with his brother. "You've brought us here on a wild kender chase, Jack Ladyfinger, that's what I think."

"You should do less thinking," suggested Jack. "It obviously hurts." He motioned them all closer. "Now, here's my plan . . ."



The horn blast split the quiet night wide open and woke the twins out of a sound sleep.

"Not again!" Raistlin complained. Pulling the blankets up around his chin, he rolled over and clamped his pillow over his head to shut out the raucous noise.

Caramon was out of bed, pulling on his breeches. "C'mon, Raist! You've got to come. We're part of the militia. You know the law. All able-bodied men sixteen and older—"

"I am not able-bodied," said his brother, his voice muffled by the blanket. "Tell them that, and leave me in peace."

"I did tell them last time, Raist," said Caramon earnestly. "But the sheriff said that even if you couldn't fight you could be useful gathering up spent arrows or carrying water—"

"No," said Raistlin, snuggling deeper into his warm bed.

The horn brayed. Torch lights flared. Voices shouted, spreading the alarm. Children wailed. Booted feet clumped past, running along the boardwalk.

Raistlin sighed and threw off the blanket. He sat up in bed.

"You might be able to use your magic," Caramon suggested, hoping to cheer his disgruntled twin.

"And do what?" Raistlin snapped. "Pull coins from their ears? Pluck silk scarves from their navels? Don't be an ass, Caramon. You know very well that I have no spells in my spellbook! Not yet. I am only a student. Well, don't just stand there gawking at me! Go on! Answer the call! Go protect us from the forces of evil!"

"Aren't you coming?" Caramon asked, worried.

"I suppose I must," Raistlin said crossly. "I might as well. I'm not going to get any more sleep tonight."

That much is obvious. Besides, I look forward to plucking bloody arrows from mangled corpses."

"Do you, Raist?" Caramon was pleased. "I'll tell the Sheriff."

Raistlin didn't bother to respond. Sarcasm was wasted on Caramon.

Caramon dashed out, grabbing hold of his father's wood-chopping axe, Gilon's one legacy to his children, which stood beside the door. Merging with the throng of people clattering along the boardwalk, Caramon hurried off to the blacksmith shop, the gathering point for the militia. Women and children, the elderly, and the infirm hastened to the Inn of the Last Home, where they would take refuge.

Pulling on his white robes—robes that he wore to honor his mentor, an archmagus of the White—Raistlin stood in the doorway. Men and women, armed with sword or bow, hurried past, ready to do their part to defend their town. Watching them, Raistlin contemplated his own uselessness. Although he and his brother were twins, they were nothing alike. Caramon at sixteen was taller than most of the men in Solace, with well-developed muscles from laboring on a nearby farm. Genial and cheerful, he was everybody's friend.

Raistlin, by contrast, was thin with spindly arms and legs. Often sick, he was easily and quickly fatigued. He could not so much as lift his father's axe, which Caramon hefted with ease. To compensate for his weakness, Raistlin sharpened his wit instead of steel. Brains would win him his way in the world, not brawn. Brains and his skill as a mage. That skill was not much in evidence at the moment, however. Raistlin was still a student, permitted to learn only a very few minor spells, and then he was ordered not to use them.

Standing in the doorway of the home he shared with his brother, he wondered bitterly if he should go to the Inn with the women and children. At least there he could sit beside a roaring fire; no standing about on the frost-riven ground in the dead of night, waiting to be attacked by goblins. Otik would undoubtedly be serving hot cider. Just as he was considering this pleasant possibility, he remembered that the Inn would be crowded with mewling infants and bawling toddlers. Upon consideration, Raistlin decided to take his chances on the goblins.

It occurred to him then that he could be of some use in a battle—and not picking up arrows. His studies in herb lore had gained him a reputation as a healer, an occupation much in demand in these days when the clerics had disappeared with the Cataclysm. Hastily Raistlin gathered some of his unguents and salves known to help ease the pain of burns and

prevent wounds from becoming infected. He added to this strips of cloth for bandages, of which he kept a supply. Armed with these, he hastened out to join his brother and the rest of Solace's defenders.

"Hurry up there, lad," grumbled one of the town guards. "We're about to hoist up this ladder."

Raistlin descended the ladder that led from the boardwalk to the ground below and that could be pulled up as part of Solace's defense. No enemy without wings could launch a truly effective attack against the tree-top town. Fire was the biggest danger. The vallenwood trees did not burn easily, but they would burn, as would the houses within the trees. Buckets of water were being drawn from the wells, swung up on ropes, placed at strategic locations.

Raistlin searched through the large crowd which had gathered in a semi-circle around the Sheriff, looking for his brother, whom he found standing next to Sturm. The flaring brands lit the area as bright as day, filled the air with smoke. Raistlin began coughing.

"Are you all right, Raist?" Caramon asked anxiously.

"No, he isn't," said Sturm, casting Raistlin a disapproving glance. "What's more, the night air is chill, and there is liable to be fighting. He should not stay."

Sturm Brightblade, two years older than the twins, was the son of a knight of Solamnia and, as such, had little use for mages. He and Raistlin had known each other for about ten years and had disliked each other for at least that long.

"Perhaps you should go to the Inn, Raistlin. At least there you will be out of the—" Sturm paused, amended his statement. "You will be safe."

"Perhaps you should go soak your head in a bucket, Sturm Brightblade," Raistlin returned caustically. "If you're lucky, people might mistake the bucket for a helm and so mistake you for a knight."

"Suit yourself," Sturm retorted, coldly angry. "But keep out of my way. I shall not have time to look after you." He moved several paces away.

"Hush, you two," said Caramon, unhappy at the quarrel. "The Sheriff is talking."

"We have word that the same roving band of goblins we heard about three weeks ago is still in the area and planning an attack on our town." The Sheriff pointed to a tall, thin, shabbily dressed man. "This man claims to have seen them while he was out hunting. He overheard their plans."

"I speak a little goblin," said the shabby man modestly.

"Humpf!" Raistlin snorted. "And I speak gully dwarf."

"Be quiet!" Sturm said, glaring at Raistlin severely.

"You all know the drill," the Sheriff continued. "You know where you're supposed to be. You know your



duties. Bowmen up above in the trees, those with swords and axes on the ground below."

"I saw a goblin once!" cried a shrill voice. A small hand could be seen waving from the depths of the crowd. "Back in Kendermore. Or was it the Ruins? Maybe it was Palanthas. I can show you the place. I have a map. Anyway this goblin was a big, ugly brute with squinty eyes and he said to me, he said—"

"It's that kender," whispered Caramon under his breath. "The one who lives with the dwarf."

At the sound of the kender's voice, every person in the crowd—including the Sheriff—checked to make certain they were still in possession of purses, pouches, weapons and any other articles likely to fall victim to a kender's curiosity. Raistlin took a hasty inventory of his bag of unguents and salves, made certain it was still tied securely to his belt.

The kender's speech was interrupted by the sounds of a scuffle.

After one indignant "ouch!" the kender's voice was silenced, replaced by a gruffer, deeper voice.

"Beg pardon, Sheriff. He won't interrupt you again."

A muffled shriek could be heard, a shriek which might have come from a kender with a hand over his mouth.

"You do that, Fireforge," said the Sheriff, frowning. "And make certain he stays away from our belongings."

"I'll keep an eye on him," said a tall, soft-spoken man, a half-elf.

"Thank you, Tanis. Now, speaking of our belongings, those who have brought valuables to be taken into hiding, bring them forward."

People took turns trooping forward, depositing bags of coins, family jewels, and other precious objects and heirlooms into a large metal box. The Sheriff noted down the contents on a board, which was to be taken to the Inn for safe-keeping. When the last person had made a deposit, the box was closed and padlocked.

"I need volunteers to help carry it," called the Sheriff.

The shabby man raised his hand with alacrity.

The Sheriff gave him a dubious glance and passed over him. His gaze rested on the stalwart Caramon and upon Sturm, standing at his side.

"You two young men." The Sheriff beckoned. "Bring the box and come with me. I'll show you where to stash it. You men"—he singled out two of the town guards—"follow along behind and keep a close look-out."

The Sheriff gave Caramon and Sturm each a piercing glance. "You promise never to reveal the location of the box."

"I swear on my honor as the son of a Knight of Solamnia," said Sturm solemnly. Lifting his sword, he kissed the hilt. "Death will take me before I break my oath."

"Yes, well. I don't hold with oaths, young man," said the Sheriff, looking displeased. "Just a promise will do. What about you, Caramon Majere?"

"I won't tell a soul," Caramon promised, adding eagerly, "I'll even close my eyes so that I won't see where it is!"

"Fine, you do that," muttered the Sheriff, rolling his eyes. He was probably regretting his choices. "Come with me. The rest of you, take up your positions."



The night wore away with no sign, no sight, no sound, no smell of a goblin. Raistlin sat yawning and shivering beneath a tree near the smithy's, waiting for something to happen. He was regretting having ever left his bed and was seriously considering returning to it, when one of the town guard who had been detailed to accompany the sheriff and the box ran into the clearing.

"Majere! Come with me!" he cried, spotting Raistlin. "There's been an accident! It's your brother!"

"What's Caramon done now?" Raistlin demanded, a sliver of fear piercing his heart. Caramon might be a dolt, an idiot, an oaf, but he was Raistlin's twin and the only family he had left now that both parents were dead.

"Smashed into a tree. Knocked himself out cold." The guardsman grinned. "He was walking with his eyes closed."

As Raistlin checked to make certain once again that he had everything he needed, he noted, out of the corner of his eye, the shabby man looking his way with interested attention.

"What business is it of yours?" Raistlin demanded irritably.

"Only the concern of a friend," said the shabby man humbly. "I hope your brother has taken no serious harm."

"If the injury is to his head, you may count upon it," Raistlin returned.



Caramon was already conscious by the time his brother arrived, which was a good sign. He recognized those standing anxiously around him.

"Hullo, Sturm. Gee, my head hurts. What happened? Hi, Raist? What are you doing here? Say, I know where they hid that box. In a boat—"

"Shut up!" cried Sturm, the Sheriff and the two guards simultaneously.

"What's your name?" Raistlin interrupted, gently examining the egg-size bump on his brother's forehead.

Caramon thought a moment, then, brightening, he said, "I'm the Kingpriest of Istar."

Raistlin sighed and turned to the Sheriff.

"The injury isn't serious, sir, but, as you see, he needs attention. Could some of your men take him to the Inn? He must be kept warm, made to lie still, and watched to make certain that he does not fall asleep."

"I'll see to it. He won't keep blabbing about the hiding place, will he?" the Sheriff asked.

"If he does, tell him he's wrong, it's at the bottom of the Blood Sea. I must go to Weird Meggin's to fetch a few things I need to make a poultice for him, and then I will join you at the Inn."

"But you shouldn't be wandering around here alone, son," said the Sheriff. "Not with goblins about."

Raistlin bit off a caustic remark about just what he thought of this supposed goblin attack. "I must tend to Caramon immediately, sir. Otherwise he might think he's the Kingpriest for the rest of his life."

"That would indeed be a pity," said Sturm. "One was more than enough." He added magnanimously, "I will go with Raistlin, Sheriff."

Raistlin frowned, annoyed, but there was no time to waste arguing.

"Very well. If you insist! Come along, Brightblade."

The guardsmen lifted the groggy Caramon and, groaning under the strain, hauled him off in the direction of the Inn. His last words, as they carried him away, were, "Burn the heretics!" The Sheriff left to inspect the town's defenses.

Raistlin and Sturm headed in the opposite direction, taking a short cut through the trees. Weird Meggin's house was located in the same disreputable part of town as The Trough. Soon, the two left the sound of voices and the flare of torches behind. The boardwalks under which they walked were empty.

Solace had long ago abandoned this portion of itself. The boardwalks were falling into disrepair, the rope bridges sagged. Those houses which were still standing were uninhabited. The two young men walked in silence, neither having much of anything to say to the other.

"You are certain Caramon will be all right?" Sturm asked at one point. "Perhaps someone else should examine him. Someone more experienced in the healing arts."

Raistlin saw no reason to respond to this insult, and that ended all attempts at conversation. They continued walking among the thick trunks of the

trees, Sturm holding a torch high so that they could find the path which led through the tangled undergrowth. The two moons, silver Solinari and red Lunitari, had risen and set long ago. Raistlin guessed that it must be long past midnight.

"Are we clo—" Sturm began, but his question was never finished.

Raistlin heard the rustling in the brush. He had no time to react.

A heavy weight struck him from behind, a hand clamped firmly over his mouth. Cold steel pressed against his neck.

"Breathe a sound and I'll slice you ear-to-ear," said a voice.

Raistlin nodded to show he understood and would keep silent. The man pricked Raistlin's skin, just to show he meant what he said. Raistlin held perfectly still, tried to see what had become of Sturm, for he could hear the clash of steel and the sounds of panting, grunting and scuffling feet. The torch lay upon the ground, its light extinguished, and Raistlin's eyes had not yet adjusted to the darkness. A groan, a thud. The sound of heavy breathing indicated that the fight was over.

"You haven't killed him, have you Cutthroat?" asked another man, emerging from the forest.

"Naw, Jack. Just rapped him on the head to teach him some manners."

Cutthroat rubbed his jaw, glared down at Sturm. "He'll pay for this, the bastard."

"All in good time. Tie his arms with bow strings and get him on his feet. And show a light. I want to see their faces. If either of them so much as squeaks, stick them."

"A light? What if someone sees us?"

"They'll think we're part of the militia."

One of the men lit a lantern. The other trussed up Sturm and dragged him to his feet, bleeding from a cut on his forehead, but otherwise unharmed. The man named Cutthroat grabbed Sturm's short sword, tossed it into the trees. Sturm stood rigidly straight and glared at the men in defiance, particularly at the shabbily dressed man named Jack.

Raistlin recognized him—the man who had claimed to have overheard goblins talking about attacking Solace. Raistlin saw the thieves' scheme with sudden, sickening clarity.

"There are no goblins, are there?" Raistlin said, as they bound his wrists with a rope.

"Oh, sure there are. Lots of goblins." Jack winked. "About a hundred miles from here."

"It was a ruse," Raistlin explained to the glowering Sturm. "A ruse to trick us into gathering all our valuables together and depositing them in one place."



"And you're going to tell us where they're hid, boy," said Jack, walking over to stand in front of Sturm. "And don't tell me you don't know. I saw you go off with the box."

"I will die before I tell you," said Sturm calmly.

"We're not going to kill you," Jack returned, leering. "You're of no use to us dead." His voice hardened.

"But we can make you wish you were dead. Cutthroat here as a way with people. First he slices off a finger or two. Then he gouges out an eye—"

"Do your damndest," said Sturm coldly. "I will not break my trust."

No, you will let them chop you into pieces, you great fool, Raistlin thought.

Seeing that the thieves were paying no attention to him—their eyes were fixed on Sturm—Raistlin twisted his wrists in their bindings, testing to see whether he might be able to work the knots loose. He might be able to, but it was going to take time. Time he didn't have.

"Maybe he don't mind dying," Cutthroat was saying. "But what about watching his friend die? That might change his tune."

Not likely, Raistlin thought and decided to avoid hearing Sturm's answer.

"I'll tell you where to find the treasure!" Raistlin offered, cringing. "Just don't hurt me. I'll tell you everything!"

"He knows nothing," said Sturm scornfully.

Raistlin ignored him, kept his gaze fixed upon the thieves.

That's right. You don't know," said Jack, coming around to eye Raistlin. "You weren't with them. You were at the smith's shop with me."

"My brother told me," Raistlin said.

"Your brother? The big lout? The one who knocked himself silly?" Jack was dubious.

"That's him. He told me when I leaned down to examine him."

"He's right, Jack," said Cutthroat. "I heard the big guy say something about a boat. Then the others shut him up."

"A boat, huh?" Jack eyed Raistlin with interest.

"I know which one. I'll take you there. Just don't hurt me!" Raistlin pleaded.

"You coward!" Sturm struggled furiously against his bonds. "I'll—"

"Gag him!" Jack ordered. "You, boy. You lead the way. And remember, if you're tricking us, your friend here dies first while you watch. Then it'll be your turn. March."

Raistlin marched. He knew where he needed to go. He'd been there many times before, gathering herbs with Weird Meggin. But he'd never had to find the

place in the darkness before, never had to find it with a killer walking behind him, prodding him in the back with a dagger. He dared not show any hesitation or they would cease to believe him. And then they would kill him.

Raistlin slogged through the undergrowth, searching frantically for landmarks, for something which would tell him he was on the right trail. At least he could be thankful for one thing—they'd tied a gag around Sturm's mouth. It would be just like the would-be knight to blurt out the truth in a fit of misguided honor.

"Hey, it can't be this far," Jack said, growing suspicious. "The men weren't gone that long."

"It's just up ahead," said Raistlin and hoped to the gods—if the gods did truly exist—that he was right. He was near exhaustion, panting for breath, shivering with the cold and his fear.

Just when he knew he had failed utterly, knew that he'd come the wrong way, he caught the whiff of decay, saw a glimmer of starlight reflected off water. This was the place. He could never forget that smell.

"We're here." Raistlin breathed a heartfelt sigh of relief.

"Where?" The thieves flashed their lantern about.

The light flashed on the still surface of a large pond, where farmers watered their herds. A small skiff, tied to a tree, floated on the smooth water.

"A boat!" cried one.

"It's in there," Raistlin said. Seemingly exhausted, he slumped against a tree.

Raistlin cast Sturm a warning glance. Sturm either caught the warning or he had guessed Raistlin's intent. He came to a halt.

"I'll go fetch the treasure," Jack said. "You two stay with the prisoners."

"Yeah, and let you sail off with the loot. I wasn't born yesterday, Jack Ladyfinger. I'm going with you," said Cutthroat. "Cutpurse can stay with the prisoners."

"And let you two split it two ways instead of three? Not bloody likely!"

The three thieves plunged on ahead, running for the boat over the leaf-covered ground. In their haste and excitement, they did not see the sticks, painted red, which had been placed there to warn the unwary to keep away from this place.

Their excited cries suddenly gave way to curses and splashing. The lantern light vanished. The curses changed to panicked shrieks and yells for help. They were caught in the sucking mud of a deadly bog.

Raistlin slid his thin wrists from out of the loosened bindings, rubbed them a moment to ease the burning where the ropes had cut into his flesh. Then Raistlin removed the gag from the young man's mouth and

used his knife to cut through the ropes on his arms.

The thieves' cries were piteous, blubbing, begging for help. Raistlin turned away.

"Where are you going?" Sturm demanded. He was unlacing his leather vest. "You can't leave them to die!"

"Oh, yes, I can," Raistlin returned. "What do you think they were going to do us?"

Sturm made no reply. Calmly, he stripped off his shirt.

"Go in there and the bog will suck you down, too," Raistlin said grimly.

"That's a chance I will have to take." Sturm peered around, trying to see by the lambent light of the stars. "We need to find a large tree branch. Hurry up. They can't last much longer."

"They're thieves, Sturm!" Raistlin said. "They're murderers!"

Sturm found his branch. Hefting it, he began dragging it toward the bog.

"They are Paladine's children," said Sturm, wading carefully out into the mire. "Come here, Raistlin," he added in a commanding tone. "I require your help."

"You can go to the Abyss," Raistlin told him. "You and Paladine's children."

Sturm said nothing. He continued on.

Raistlin's hesitated a moment, fuming, then, seeing that Sturm was not going to listen to reason, Raistlin tucked the hem of his white robes into his belt and followed the would-be knight into the muck of the stinking, oozing bog.



Sturm and Raistlin returned to the Inn of the Last Home, where Sturm handed over the muddy, sodden and sullen children of Paladine and explained the plot to steal the treasure. The Sheriff eyed his charges gloomily. Not only would there be the bother and expense of a trial, but he would have tell the good citizens of Solace that he'd been duped. "You should have let the bog have them," the Sheriff grumbled. "That way no one would have known the difference."

"I would have known, sir," Sturm replied stiffly.

Shaking his head, the Sheriff marched his prisoners off to jail.

Raistlin's robes were soaked through. His shoes were wet. He shivered uncontrollably, could already feel the pain in his chest and the fever start to burn in his blood. He would be sick for days after this.

After checking on his brother, finding Caramon much improved—he no longer thought he was the Kingpriest—Raistlin sat huddled near the fire, drinking a honey posset to soothe his throat.

"May I join you?" Sturm walked over to stand beside the fire.

"Sure, Sturm!" Caramon shoved over a chair. "Sit down and have a drink."

"I cannot stay long. My mother will be worried. I only came by because I owe Raistlin an apology."

Raistlin glanced up. "For what?"

"I misjudged you tonight," Sturm replied. "I thought . . ." He paused.

Raistlin filled in the blank. "You thought I was a coward who would betray my friends to save my own skin."

"I made a mistake," Sturm admitted. "What you did took quick thinking and courage. I admire you for it."

"Thank you," said Raistlin.

Sturm made a bow and started to leave.

"Sir Knight," Raistlin called.

Sturm looked back, frowning, fearing Raistlin was mocking him.

"Yes, what is it?"

"Risking your life to save those miserable wretches was stupid and foolish," Raistlin said. "Stupid and foolish and noble. I admire you for not leaving those men, who would have taken your life, to die."

Sturm smiled, a rare thing for him.

"Thank you," he said

We make a good team," Caramon chimed in enthusiastically. "We should go adventuring together someday."

The two young men nodded politely, glanced at each other.

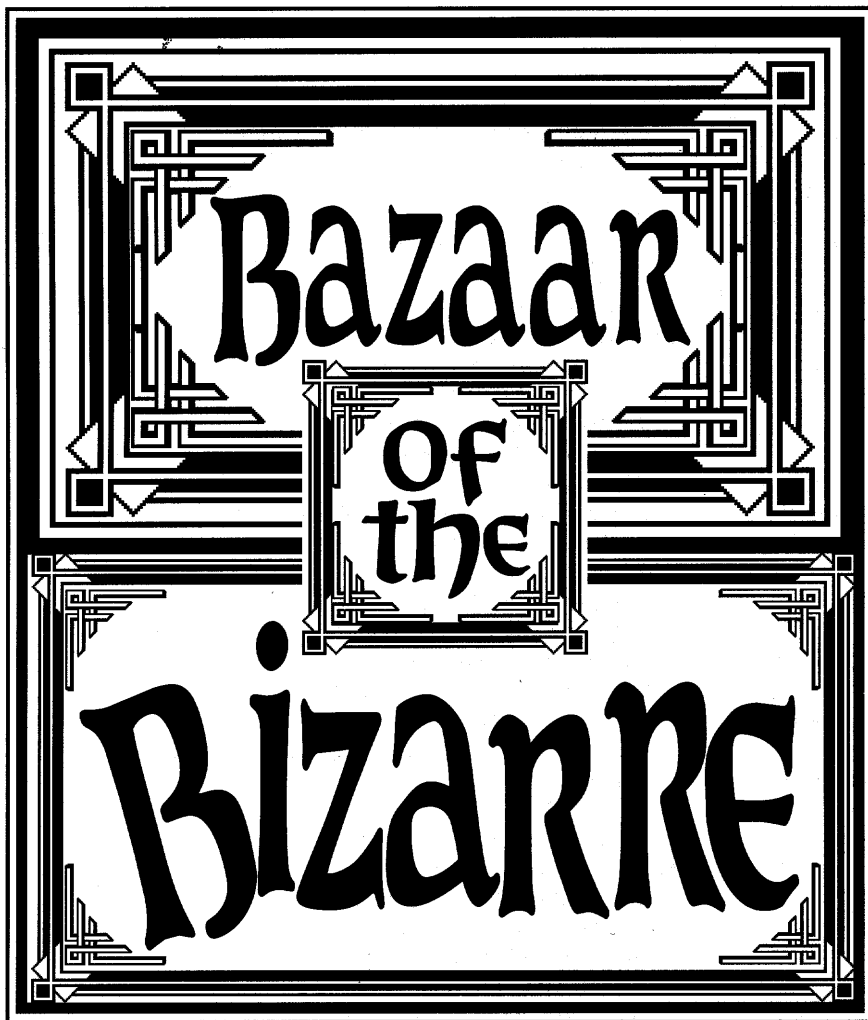
"Heaven forefend!" Raistlin muttered.

"Paladine forbid it!" Sturm prayed.



*Margaret Weis is the first creator interviewed in the revived "ProFiles" column, appearing on page 120 of this issue. With Tracy Hickman, her co-author on many novels, she helps oversee the direction of the current DRAGONLANCE setting.*





## Heroes' Armor

by Brian Dunnell

illustrated by Todd Lockwood

*COTE AND ALEXANDER RAN along the riverside gleefully, spades in hand. The boys were playing knights and bandits as they made their way to the crossing of Frontebeuf. Just 20 years ago, during the civil war of Brundasia, an advance force from Gwendolin Fairhair's army was caught at the crossing, running into the middle of the main force of the Emperors Army. It was deep winter then, the river largely iced over. The ice was slick with blood.*

*Even now, there were many souvenirs to be found where gear had been lost in the snow; rusting daggers, arrow heads, and the like. Arriving at the old ford, the lads set to work, scouring the nearby fields for good places to dig. They were determined and kept at it most of the morning, stopping only occasionally for a*

*drink from the river. As the sun rose high overhead, they grew tired, but the work was worth it.*

*They had an old bucket with them that the local blacksmith, Erinson Gnintin, had loaned them. As they day progressed they filled it with all sorts of baubles: old buttons, spear heads, insignia, and other remnants of the battle. Alexander cried out that he had found something. Cote ran over, and the two worked to unearth a battered horseman's helmet, rusted with age. It still had some of its plume left, though most had rotted away. They grabbed the helm, their tools, and the bucket of booty, then ran to their friend Erinson's smithy.*

*Erinson had arrived in town years ago. As the only gnome in the area, he had at first been treated with suspicion. This feeling*

*eventually faded, particularly when the locals discovered the quality of the gnome's work. They'd been without a blacksmith since Frontebeuf relying on Elmer Jorgenson from the next town over. Erinson missed his mountain home, but he loved the people of the town, particularly the children. He delighted in making them little surprises and telling them stories of days gone by. As he hammered away on a new harrow for the Deacon, Cote and Alexander rushed into his shop, each trying to tell him a story at the same time.*

*"Hahaha, boys. Slow down, you're harder to follow than dwarven opera. Sit yourselves down, have a drink from that pitcher, and tell me yer tale in yer own time."*

*The boys settled down, showing Erinson their booty and telling him how they had found the helm. Erinson picked up a rag and began to polish their find.*

*"True enough boys, a fine piece ye have here. Belonged to a fine gentlemen in the Emperor's army, I warrant, or maybe one of the knights under General Fairhair's command. A good piece of work this is. I bet this helm could tell a tale or two. In fact, reminds me of a few stories."*

*The boys sat in rapt attention as Erinson cleaned the helm and began to talk...*

### Black Mithril Chain Mail

This unique chain mail was forged before the Kinslayer War, probably by the gray elves. The armor is similar in design to elven chain, being of fine links and unusually light weight. Worn by the elven hero Autumnwind during the Chaos War, it was thought to have been lost during the siege of Highreaches. However, rumor has it that the armor is currently in the possession of the wicked rogue Grim Jack of Darfolk.

The armor is made from the exceptionally rare and precious metal, Black Mithril. Once purified, forged, and alloyed correctly, this metal is virtually indestructible, immune to all forms of attack. It can not be harmed by heat, cold, electricity, or acid. As a result of the armors durability, anyone wearing it receives a +3 bonus to saving throws against these forms of attack. The mail is immune to all forms of magic, behaving as if imbued with an *anti-magic sphere*. However, this effect applies only to the armor itself and does not extend to anything within the armor or in its immediate area.

**XP Value:** 7,000 **GP Value:** 45,000

## Black Mithril Gauntlets

These armored gloves were created before the Kinslayer War by the finest dwarven craftsmen of the Hammer-skold Mountains. They are made from the exceptionally rare and precious metal, black mithril. Once purified, forged, and alloyed correctly, this metal is virtually indestructible, immune to all forms of attack. The gauntlets cannot be harmed by heat, cold, electricity, or acid. The gloves are immune to all forms of magic, behaving as if imbued with an *anti-magic sphere*. However, this effect applies only to the gloves themselves and does not extend to anything within the gloves or in their immediate area. The wearer of the black mithril gauntlets gains a -1 AC bonus.

**XP Value:** 2,000 **GP Value:** 12,350

## The Blood Shield of Dreen

The *Blood Shield of Dreen* was given as a gift to Dreen by his magistrix Lolth, or so legend states. Dreen led the armies of darkness in the Kinslayer War, carrying his prized shield into every battle. It was thought to be lost in the final great battle, when Dreen faced the elven hero Val Havel. Rumors that the *Blood Shield* has been recovered and is in the hands of some great and evil lord circulate from time to time.

The *Blood Shield* has a smooth, deep red face that seems to ripple as a wind-stroked liquid. The face of the shield isn't solid but is a portal to an unknown demi-plane. After the first round of any combat, the shield's portal opens, releasing a nightmarish creature, the blood weird. The weird appears to be a great tentacle of blood extending from the face of the shield. In many respects, the tentacle resembles the water weird. The blood weird supports the shield's bearer in battle, attacking anything it can reach. It attempts to grasp its victim, binding the creature like a python. Once a creature has been subdued, the weird drags the victim toward the shield and—if the creature is of size M or smaller—into the portal. Once caught, it takes 1d4 rounds for a victim to be absorbed into the shield. Once absorbed, the victim is trapped within the shield's demi-plane. The weird's attacks don't hinder its wielder in any way, nor do they prevent the shield's normal use. The shield's magic com-

pensates for the weight and bulk of victims being dragged into in. Anyone caught in this manner can free himself by making a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates check. This attempt may be made once per turn.

The blood weird has the following statistics: AC 2; MV 15; HD 5+5; THAC0 15; #AT special; Dmg special. The creature entangles its victim on any a successful hit, causing 1d4 hp damage per round. Edged weapons cause half damage to the weird, as it is a semi-liquid creature. Blunt weapons



have full effect. Fire causes half or no damage, depending on whether the weird makes its saving throw. Cold attacks have the effect of a *slow* spell but don't otherwise harm the creature. If the weird reaches 0 hp, it is not killed but only disrupted for 1d4+1 rounds. After this time it reforms and attacks again. The *Blood Shield of Dreen* acts as a *shield*+2 otherwise.

**XP Value:** 2,500 **GP Value:** 16,000

## The Gnomish Shield of Drago

The *Gnomish Shield of Drago* was made for Lord Drago by a gnomish artisan whose life he'd spared. Once the shield was complete, Drago had

him slain so no one else in the land could possess such a device. The shield is an iron great shield with a three-dimensional gnomish warrior worked into its face. This warrior is cunningly detailed down to armor, weapons and a Gnimshian mustache.

When the bearer of the shield is attacked, the gnome, while remaining affixed to the shield, becomes animated, defending and attacking as a warrior of 6th level with a short sword and weapon specialization. If attacked directly, the shield saves as its wielder with a +3 bonus, has 20% magic resistance and can only be affected by +3 or better weapons. The shield can attack and defend only against a single opponent each round. Thus, if the bearer of the shield is fighting three opponents, two of them may not be attacked by the shield and may in turn attack the bearer without the shield's AC bonus. The shield endures 50 hp damage before losing its enchantments. A sufficiently skilled craftsmen can repair damage to the shield at a cost in materials of 250 gp per hit point repaired and a time of one day per point. The shield acts as a +3 great shield in all other respects.

**XP Value:** 3,500 **GP Value:** 24,000

## Helm of the Bat

The history of this helm has been lost, but its design suggests gnomish or perhaps dwarven craftsmanship. This helm is dull black with an open face. The inside is lined with red padded leather. The helm is topped with a life-size pewter bat. The figure has red paste gem eyes, outstretched wings and a closed mouth. The bat figure is surprisingly resistant to damage despite its apparent fragility, saving vs. physical blows with a +4 bonus.

The helm has a number of powers that become known to the wearer when the helm is first worn. One power per round can be activated with an initiative modifier of 2. Three times per day, the helm can bestow *clairaudience* on the wearer. Crystal lenses that lower over the eyes allow the wearer to see with ultravision out to 60 feet. Ultravision allows a person to see in darkness as if it were normal daylight. The bat's eyes can create a cone of light extending outward 120 feet with a 60-degree arc at the apex of the cone. Finally, once per day the bat can shriek, creating the equivalent of a *fear* spell affecting all who hear





the noise. All of these powers operate as if cast by a 9th-level mage.

**XP Value:** 1,500 **GP Value:** 12,000

### Gimgabar's Armor

Gimgabar founded the dwarven kingdom of Hammerskold, carving out a vast underground empire in the mountains of the Northern Spine. In the heart of his kingdom, he discovered an exceptionally pure vein of iron. From this he forged his masterpiece, a suit of dwarven plate mail. This armor was passed from father to son for several generations. It became a tradition that the king of the Hammerskold dwarves would bestow the armor on a hero of great renown, especially when this hero was charged with some great quest or grave duty on the king's behalf. Thus, the armor eventually fell into the hands of the Gate Keeper of Chan Kranfil. When Kranfil was lost during the Kinslayer Wars, so too was the armor.

Recently the armor was rediscovered by the adventuring party known as Black Elks Brigade, when they discovered and liberated Chan Kranfil. The armor became the possession of Dargoth Blackblade, a dwarven warrior. Later, when he was killed during a raid into Rags Rock, his cousin,

Odain, took up the armor, wearing it to this day.

*Gimgabar's Armor* is dull gray, engraved with black runes singing the praises of dwarfdom. Small spikes stud the shoulders, elbows and knees. The helm is fitted with a special grated mesh to cover a dwarf's beard. Any dwarf instantly recognizes this armor, and the wearer receives a +2 bonus to reaction checks made by dwarves. Those who react favorably accord the wielder respect and seek to aid him to the limits of their ability.

Though of archaic design, this armor is equivalent to dwarven *plate armor* +3. The wearer gains benefits from the armor equal to a *ring of fire resistance*. The wearer is totally immune to the effects of normal fire such as torches and oil. Very hot fires or large conflagrations such as the breath of a hell hound, *walls of fire* and lava cause a maximum of 10 hp damage per round if the wearer is directly in the conflagration. The wearer also gains a +4 bonus to saves against exceptionally hot fires such as dragon breath, *fireballs* and *flame strike* spells, and all damage dice are calculated at a -2 penalty per die, though each die never causes less than 1 hp damage. In any case, the armor is totally immune to all types of heat and fire damage and saves automatically against heat- or fire-based attacks.

**XP Value:** 5,000 **GP Value:** 43,000

### The Helms of the Celestial Temple

These recently rediscovered helms date from the Kinslayer Wars. The humans found them in the Celestial Temple, an abandoned elven holy site.

The four *helms* are of elven style with accentuated side guards and long stylized nose pieces. Each helm has silvered mail of fine links protecting the neck, and small mithril eagle's wings adorning the sides. The main part of the helm is lacquered white. The helms do not tarnish, dent, or become dirty under normal use.

All of these helms provide a +1 on attacks, damage, and ability checks when used in battle against the forces antithetical to elves. All saves against attacks by such foes are made at +2. In addition, each helm bestows the following powers on its wearer:

*The First Helm:* Bestows 60' infravision to a wearer without infravision, doubling the range of infravision for a

wearer who already has infravision.

*The Second Helm:* Bestows *comprehend written languages/read magic* to the wearer who concentrates for one full round.

*The Third Helm:* Bestows *clairvoyance/clairaudience* three times per day.

*The Fourth Helm:* Bestows *ESP* three times per day.

Each of these effects operates as if cast by a 10th-level mage and, unless otherwise stated, has an initiative modifier of 2.

**XP Value:** 1,250 **GP Value:** 12,000

### Leather of the Telereath Rangers

The Telereathan Rangers are an elite guard of scouts, woodsmen, and rangers sworn to protect the sanctity of the sylvan woods of Telereath. Each Telereathan Ranger, on being inducted into this group, is presented with a suit of finely crafted leather armor. This armor is considered to be a uniform, a badge of honor, and a symbol of the Rangers. Anyone wearing such armor will be recognized as a Telereathan Ranger and treated accordingly.

These suits of leather armor are very distinctive in design, worked with



patterns of leaves and foliage. In addition, the leather is, dyed various shades of green to enhance the effect. Telereathan armor is always of the highest quality, providing a -1 AC bonus non-magically. There are rumors of magical versions of this armor, but if such suites exist, they are truly rare.

**XP Value:** 750 **GP Value:** 2,000

### Helmet of Pure Vision

This magical helm was created long ago, sometime before the Chaos War, by a cleric of Altrue, a deity dedicated to truth and purity. A great helm made out of resilient metal alloy, the *Helmet of Pure Vision* is topped by a white plume, lacquered off-white and chased with gold scrolling.

The helm automatically allows the wearer to save against any illusory spell or effect, even if the wearer does not suspect an illusion is present or a save isn't normally allowed. (Such rolls should, naturally, be made secretly by the DM.) If the check fails, the wearer is allowed to save or make a disbelief check as normally allowed. This second save or check is made at a +4 bonus. Once per day, the helmet bestows *true seeing* on the wearer. This power takes one full round of concentration to activate and as with the clerical version of the spell allows the wearer to determine alignment. The effect lasts 1 turn + 1d4 rounds.

**XP Value:** 5,000 **GP Value:** 18,000

### Largem's Cursed Armor

Whether this armor is actually cursed or some sort of magical parasite is open to debate. The armor appears to be a suit of beautifully crafted full plate armor. It magically adjusts itself to fit any potential wearer, from gnome and halfling-sized beings to half-orcs and minotaurs. It also magically adopts its victim's heraldic symbols, if such are possessed. These will appear on the armor's breast plate when worn. If a victim has no symbols as such, insignia appropriate and pleasing to creature will appear on the armor.

*Largem's cursed armor* radiates a strong aura of enchantment but does not detect as evil or cursed. It bestows a +1 AC penalty but enhances the wearer's Strength, raising it to a 19 as long as the armor is worn. This ability is probably a side effect of the armor's curse, or, as some scholars argue, an

enticement to keep the armor even after its true effects are discovered. As long as an individual wears the armor, they receive no benefit from magical healing. The armor absorbs these effects, even those bestowed by potions and magical devices. This effect lasts 1d6 days after the armor is removed. Once this period has passed, the curse is broken, unless the armor is put on again. Natural healing is unaffected. *Remove curse* and *dispel magic* have no effect on the armor, but *limited wish* will break the armor's bond to its wearer. However, the bond can't be permanently destroyed unless the armor is not worn again. If the armor is worn, the curse reasserts itself.

**XP Value:** Nil **GP Value:** Nil

### Missile Bane

Ben Dirxby, distant ancestor of the famed knight Wilshire Dirxby, was a paladin who found his way into the Underdark. Befriended by deep gnomes, he led them in a war against their hated foes, the duergar. He taught the gnomes the arts of human strategy, tactics, and logistics as they had been handed down to him from his long-dead ancestor. In reward for his selfless service, the deep gnomes created a unique set of armor for Ben: *Missile Bane*.

*Missile Bane* is a suit of black lacquered field plate made of small interlocking plates connected by finely linked chain mail. The lacquer gives the armor a dull, coal-black finish. In the right light, deep red runes describing Ben's many deeds can be seen faintly below the lacquer.

*Missile Bane* has a +2 defensive adjustment. The armor has several powers designed to enhance its utility to the wearer. Its unique design and magical qualities render it virtually silent, making no more noise than an unarmored being. Further, the armor muffles blows upon it.

The chief power of the armor rests in its ability to repel missile weapons. Any missile fired directly at the wearer is affected as if by a *protection from normal missiles* spell. Further, magically created missiles, i.e., *magic missiles*, *elf's acid arrow*, *flame arrows*, and the like are completely disjoined when directed at the armor. The magical missiles dissipate within one foot of *Missile Bane*.

**XP Value:** 2,500 **GP Value:** 32,000



### Silk of the Dred Shalen Guards

Only the greatest and most loyal soldiers of the Merchant Empire are elevated to the coveted position of palace guard in Dred Shalen. Each such individual is presented with a silk shirt of the highest quality, to be worn as part of the guard's uniform. Each shirt is individually tailored for its wearer. If worn by anyone else for more than a day, the shirt's magic fades in 1d6 days. These shirts provide the same protection as *bracers of defense* AC 4. They also provide a +2 bonus to all saves. Finally, the shirt itself is highly resistant to damage, receiving a +3 bonus to all saving throws.

**XP Value:** 2,000 **GP Value:** 8,000

### Muckden's Miraculous Mechanized Buckler

This unique shield is forged from a dull gray metal. The center is a half sphere with a single spike protruding from it. This sphere is surrounded by a flat round edge. Adjustable leather thongs with brass buckles are bolted to the opposite side. *Muckden's Buckler* protects as a *shield +1*. The shield radiates strong magic of an indeterminate nature. A small compartment hidden





between the thongs is large enough to hold thief's tools, a small vial or a scroll. The shield has a number functions. A specific command word activates each of these:

**Kurnak:** Fan-like vanes fold out from the disks edge with a loud snap. The edges of these vanes are razor sharp. The vanes expand the size of the buckler, turning it into a medium shield.

**Antrac:** The vanes spin rapidly around the edge of the shield at a slight angle making a loud buzzing noise. If wielded as a weapon the blades are -3 to hit, +4 to initiative and cause 1-6 hp damage.

**Enbrg:** The vanes rotate 15% while spinning even faster. This creates considerable lift. The shield now operates as a floating disk. It can move forward, up, or down at a movement rate of 20 feet per round. The shield can be adjusted to strap onto a person's feet. If the wielder loses contact with the shield, it drops to the ground, de-activated. It can carry up to 500 lb. weight.

**Aras:** The center sphere drops out of the shield, revealing a thin but durable chain 100 feet long, the shield attached at one end, the sphere at the other. Saying *aras* a second time recoils the chain and ball.

**Oels:** This command de-activates the shield and returns it to its original state.

The various powers can be activated one at a time at a +2 initiative modifier.

**XP Value:** 1,000 **GP Value:** 3,500

### Shield of the Lion's Heart

This shield was rumored to have belonged to Shalantram, the Prince who founded the famed port city of Dred Shalan. Shalantram found the shield in abandoned ruins near his city. The shield was lost in Shalantram's final battle against the hordes of Raiza Khan.

**Lions Heart** is a medium round shield crafted of bronze with a gilded outer face. The face of the shield has been forged in an extremely realistic image of a lion's head, complete with mane. The shield gleams in the faintest light, neither tarnishing nor denting. It weighs half the normal weight, about 5 lbs.

**Lions Heart** acts as a *shield +3*. Once per day it can raise its user's Strength by 4 (up to a maximum of 19) for 2d6 rounds. The user then falls into exhaustion lasting 2d4 turns. The exhaustion causes a -2 penalty to all ability checks, combat rolls and saves. The shield provides a +3 bonus to all checks and saves involving fear and horror. It continually radiates *protection from evil 10' radius*. Once per day, the lion's head on the shield's face can be commanded to roar. All allies of the shield owner within earshot receive a +2 to their morale for the next 2d6 rounds. In addition, they receive a +1 bonus to saves against fear, their ability checks and attack rolls. All enemies of the shield bearer who hear the roar suffer a -2 penalty to their morale. Further, those with fewer than 5 HD must make a Morale check or flee for 2d6 rounds.

**XP Value:** 3,500 **GP Value:** 25,500

### Armor of the Silver Brigade

This armor is not magical. Several dozen suits of this armor were specially crafted for the Knights of Silver Brigade, a fraternity of warriors pledged to protect Ten Isles. Each member of the order was presented with a set of this armor as a symbol of trust and a badge of station. Each suit of armor is crafted of the finest materials, equivalent to a suit of field plate armor. Although several different styles of armor have been produced over the years, all are chased with intricate, silver filigree; heraldic symbols depicting the history of the Brigade. The age of

the armor can be judged by the histories inscribed upon it.

Anyone seeing such armor and recognizing it will treat the wearer with respect appropriate to the wearer's station, effectively providing a +2 reaction modifier. Enemies engaged with an opponent wearing armor of the Silver Brigade fight at a -2 Morale penalty if they are of less than 5 HD.

**XP Value:** 1,000 **GP Value:** 3,000

### The Tower shield of McFlaggin

The front side of this great shield is emblazoned with the heraldry of Elwyn McFlaggin, hero of the Chaos War and King of Caer Regnum. The opposite side of the shield is nondescript, aside from a series of small runes inscribed near the straps.

Legend has it that the shield was discovered by Elwyn McFlaggin in the ruins of the Tower of Fantar on the Sea of Glass in the Desert of Whispering Winds. As the legend goes, Elwyn carried the shield with him throughout the Chaos War. After he had settled into the life of a monarch, he had the shield placed in the grand hall of McFlaggin Castle. Later, he took it with him on his quest to destroy the dreaded Tarrasque of Alius Terra. The shield was said to have been placed with Elwyn in his tomb.

The *chaos shield* acts as a *shield +4*. Each of its sigils activates a specific power when touched. Each of these powers can be used once per day and has an initiative modifier of 1 to activate. The powers are: *improved invisibility*, *protection from evil 10' radius*, *protection from normal missiles*, *globe of invulnerability*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*, and invulnerability to normal weapons. Each of these effects acts as if cast by a 12th-level mage and is centered on the shield, or if the effect is immobile, on the shield's location at the time of creation.

**XP Value:** 5,500 **GP Value:** 35,000



*Brian Dunnell started playing the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game in 5th grade, when Rob, a friend of his, had his nose broken in a fight with a school yard bully. To help him feel better, Rob's mother bought him the red boxed basic set. Brian and Rob have been playing ever since.*



# The Dragon's Bestiary

## Magical Crossbreeds

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by Johnathan M. Richards

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illustrated by George Vrbanic

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MAGICAL CROSSBREEDING is becoming more common as wizards learn the intricate processes involved in merging one life form with another. Several creatures familiar to those who adventure in an AD&D® game world have been around a long time; others are only now being developed.

Perhaps the most well-known magical crossbreed in the AD&D® game is the owlbear, a monster originally created by a wizard's magical merging of an owl and a bear, presumably to take the most beneficial traits of each animal and duplicate them in a single creature. Thus, the owlbear is gifted with the bears strength, stamina, and claws, as well as the owl's senses (particularly hearing and sight). However, while it sounds good in theory, the owlbear was probably somewhat of a disappointment to the first wizard who created one, for its foul disposition makes it difficult, if not downright impossible, to train.

Another crossbreed is the rohch, the result of a magical merging of a beetle and a wolf (see MC11: *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Appendix*). What that particular wizard was thinking when he came up with the rohch is anyone's guess. Odds are, it was just a preliminary experiment in the merging of different life-forms, as the wizard "learned the ropes" of such magic.

In any case, magical crossbreeding is not something any sane wizard (maybe that's the key right there) will undertake lightly. It is a dangerous field, both because of the hazards of working with some of the creatures (even before they're merged), and because the end results of such magic are highly unpredictable. It can also be quite expensive, and the failure rate tends to be rather high. On the other hand, if a merging is successful, the wizard gains a unique creature with traits taken from both of its "parent" animals. Such a success can bring riches to the wizard if the new creature possesses traits desired by those willing to pay, especially if the wizard is currently the only one capable of producing such a being.



# Armadillephant

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subtropical and tropical jungle and plains
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Herd
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2-4)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-10
ARMOR CLASS:	1
MOVEMENT:	15 (burrowing 3)
HIT DICE:	12
THAC0:	9
NO. OF ATTACKS:	5
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-16/2-16/2-12/2-12/2-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (11' tall)
MORALE:	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	3,000

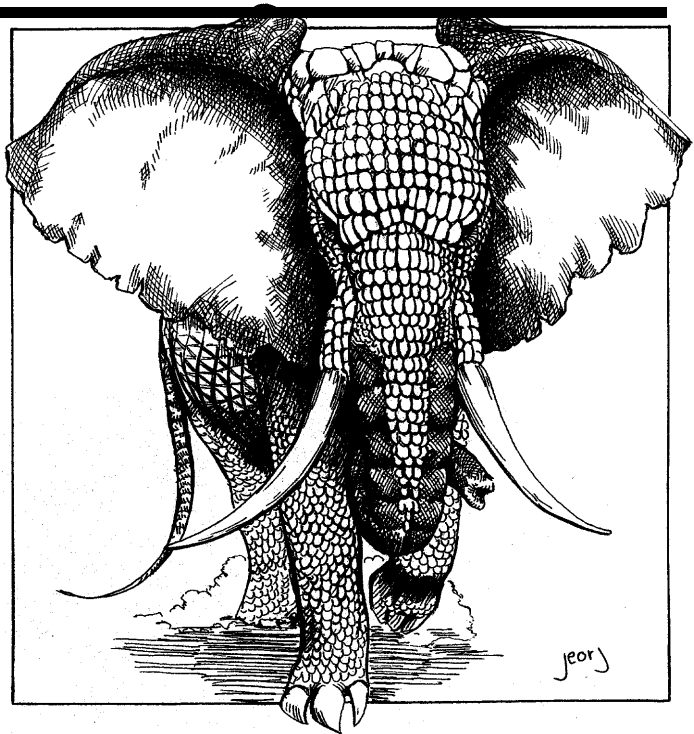
As indicated by its name, the armadillephant is a creature resulting from the magical merging of an elephant and an armadillo. The elephant physiognomy is predominant, with the armadillo's hardened armor covering the creature. In addition, the armadillo's sharp, curved burrowing claws appear on the creature's forelegs, and its armored tail is much longer than a normal elephant's.

**Combat:** The mighty armadillephant is a creature created specifically for combat, Combining the attributes of a war elephant and the added protection of an armadillo's tough outer hide, the armadillephant is able to wade into a pitched battle and take little damage while it dishes out plenty of its own. Each of its two tusks inflicts 2-16 hp damage, while it simultaneously tramples with its two front feet and constricts with its trunk. The three latter attacks each cause 2-12 hp damage.

In addition, armadillephants often carry battle platforms on their backs. These howdahs usually carry the general and his advisors and frequently are equipped with crossbows or other similar ranged weapons, often making the appearance of an armadillephant in the ranks of the enemy a cause for a morale check;

**Habitat/Society:** Except for their armored skin, armadillephants are indistinguishable from normal (African) elephants. In fact, they are occasionally found in herds of normal elephants, with whom they are capable of breeding (90% of the offspring are standard elephants; 10% are armadillephants). Armadillephants, because of their greater defensive abilities, are often the herd leaders in a mixed herd.

Most armadillephants, however, are created solely for the purpose of combat and so spend their lives in the care of the army for which they fight. The majority of armadillephants are created by the deities of the humanoid races, as gifts for particularly worthy humanoid tribes. Thus, armadillephants are most often ridden into battle by orcs, goblins, gnolls, and the like. A human or demihuman mage can certainly create an armadillephant on his own, but such an act is likely to



incur the wrath of various humanoid deities, who consider the creation of such a beast to be their own purview.

**Ecology:** Armadillephants are highly prized by the tribes to whom they are given, and the tribes will go to great lengths to keep the beasts happy and healthy. In many cases the armadillephant is valued much higher than that of individual tribal members, a fact that causes some resentment, especially among those assigned to care for the beasts. Of course, this varies from tribe to tribe; in some humanoid armies, the armadillephant handler is a position of great respect.

In addition to being assets during battle, armadillephants are useful in other ways. With the proper training, they can be taught to use their sharp foreclaws to dig trenches, latrines, and pit traps in a fraction of the time it would take a small group of humanoids. A humanoid army with an armadillephant is sure to make use of this ability, so raiders should expect to find a great number of pit traps surrounding the army's campsites.

Armadillephant meat is quite tasty, although the beast is too highly regarded to be slaughtered for food. However, if an armadillephant is slain in battle, the surviving humanoid troops will certainly take the opportunity to feast well that night. Of course, before devouring armadillephant flesh the band undergoes a ceremony of thanksgiving, thanking their deities for the mighty war beast who first aided them in battle and then made them stronger. It is believed that eating an armadillephant's heart causes fearlessness in battle; this vital organ is usually reserved for the chieftain.

As might be expected, armadillephant hide makes excellent armor. While generally too inflexible to be used by smaller races except as shields, hill giants and larger creatures can fashion respectable armor from an armadillephant's hide. In addition, the hide is often used to form a crude type of barding for normal elephants, giving them added protection in battle. In this way, a slain armadillephant can still benefit its humanoid tribe long after its own death.

# Dragonfly Turtle

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0/3
MOVEMENT:	3, fly 36 (C)
HIT DICE:	8 (adult)
THACO:	1-2 HD: 19      5-6 HD: 15 3-4 HD: 17      7-8 HD: 13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-4,2-8, or 3-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Hide limbs
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (10' long)
MORALE:	Steady (11-12)
XP VALUE:	1 HD: 35      5 HD: 420 2 HD: 65      6 HD: 650 3 HD: 120      7 HD: 975 4 HD: 270      8 HD: 1,400

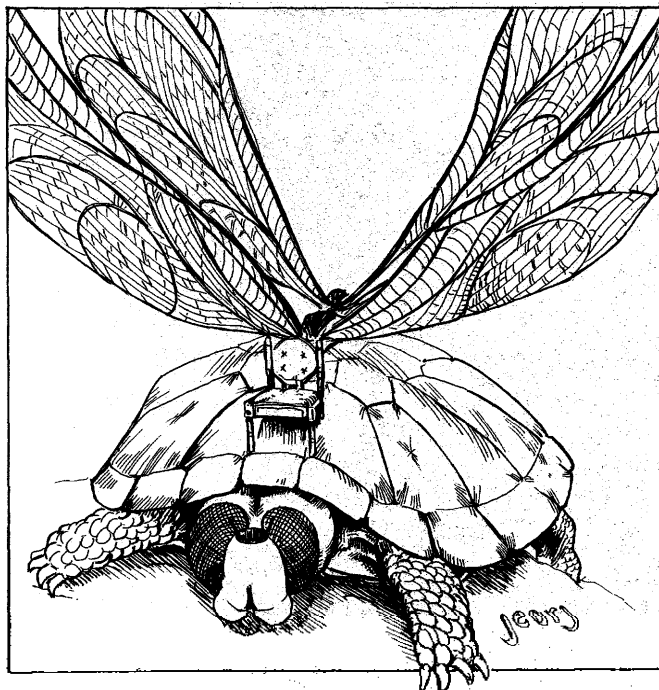
Also known as "hovershells," these creatures are a mix between a giant turtle and a giant dragonfly. They retain the turtle's shell and limbs but sport the dragonfly's head and wings. These creatures are highly valued as flying mounts.

Adding to the creature's already bizarre appearance are the frequent "modifications" on its shell. To make it a more comfortable mode of travel, wizards often apply *sovereign glue* to the shell, attaching such things as chairs, chests, and the like. Dragonfly turtles are quite a sight, buzzing through the air with their legs pulled into their shells, ridden by a wizard seated comfortably on a padded chair mounted to the creature's shell.

While dragonfly turtles do not understand the concept of treasure, there are often valuables in the furniture glued to them. The type of treasure, if any, varies on a case-by-case basis depending upon the needs and habits of the wizard using the dragonfly turtle as a riding mount. For obvious reasons, any chests making up part of a dragonfly turtle's "furniture" are equipped with strong locks to prevent them from being accidentally opened while in flight.

**Combat:** The dragonfly turtle's only attack is with its razor-sharp mandibles, which cause 3d4 hp damage per round. Because of their large, heavy turtle shells, these creatures are not as maneuverable as the giant dragonfly, dropping down to maneuverability class C. While they can hover in place and fly as fast as a giant dragonfly, they are unable to dodge missiles as the giant insect can. Fortunately, their thick armored carapace protects them. The head and wings of a dragonfly turtle are AC 3; the armored shell is AC 0.

The wings of these creatures are gauzy and fragile; hitting one in combat requires a called shot, but once any of the creatures four wings suffers 4 hp damage, that wing is destroyed, and the dragonfly turtle is unable to fly, plummeting to the ground if airborne. Wing damage is calculated separately, as damage to the wings does not injure the beast.



Of course, as dragonfly turtles are used primarily as a means of transportation, anyone in combat with one of these creatures most likely must fight the person or persons riding aboard the beast. A dragonfly turtle's hovering ability makes it a relatively stable platform, allowing missile weapons and spells to be used from the creature's back without penalty.

**Habitat/Society:** Dragonfly turtles are a new race, purposely created by wizards as a means of transportation. As such, they are almost never encountered in the wild. Rather, they are kept in comfortable "stables" until needed. Because of their rather limited intelligence, dragonfly turtles will not seek to escape confinement as long as they cannot see outside; any barn-like structure will do to keep them in one place. If they must be "parked" outside, a strong chain is necessary, as they easily chew through even the strongest rope. They are intelligent enough to obey simple commands if properly trained: dragonfly turtles are controlled by a bridle and reins.

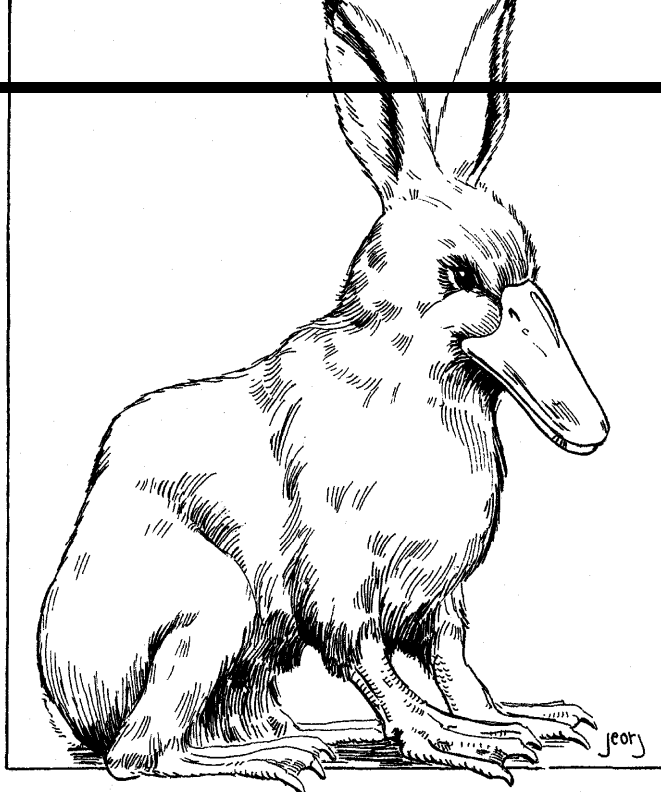
**Ecology:** If a wizard creates a male and a female of these creatures, they can be induced to mate. (Mating is a much simpler procedure for the beasts if there's no "furniture" glued to the female's shell, however.) The female lays 2-5 (1d4+1) leathery eggs that hatch in about 4 months. Newly-hatched dragonfly turtles are wingless and aquatic, able to swim at a movement rate of 3. They are about 3' long when born, have 1 HD, and can bite for 1d4 points of damage. Each year thereafter they grow 1 HD and 1' in length, adding 1d4 to their bite damage every three years, until they do full damage (3d4) when 6 years old. Their wings grow in when they reach 4 years of age, at which point they stop swimming (their wings don't function well when wet). Dragonfly turtles live about 20 years.

Their diet consists mainly of insects captured in flight and fish, although they also ingest small quantities of plant matter (especially algae).



# Duckbunny

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-10
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	6, swim 12
HIT DICE:	1-3 hp
THACO:	20
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	T
MORALE:	Unreliable (2)
XP VALUE:	7



Magical crossbreeding is a dangerous endeavor. Rather than start experimenting in this field with potentially lethal creatures like the owlbear, most wizards prefer to begin their efforts with tamer, less deadly beasts. In this respect, duckbunnies are perfect candidates for the enterprising young mage just beginning his journey on the path of the crossbreeder. Made from harmless creatures of two separate types of animals—a mammal and a bird—the duckbunny provides a valuable lesson in crossbreeding magic.

Duckbunnies are the result of combining a snowshoe hare and a duck. With their ducks beak and webbed feet, they resemble nothing so much as some bizarre member of the platypus family, although their long bunny ears prevent them from being mistaken for those creatures. Almost all duckbunnies are white with orange-yellow bills and feet, and big, black eyes.

**Combat:** Duckbunnies generally do not engage in combat, fleeing instead from any encounter. If cornered, they will snap their beaks at any extended extremities within reach, from fingers to noses, but these attacks do no damage. Instead, the recipient of a duckbunny bite must check for surprise; if surprised, he is so shocked by the attack from such an inoffensive creature that he loses his initiative the next round. The duckbunny then takes the opportunity to flee.

**Habitat/Society:** Duckbunnies tend to follow the lifestyles of normal rabbits, with some exceptions. Like rabbits, they live in underground burrows, prefer a vegetarian diet, and breed in great numbers. However, due to their partial waterfowl nature, duckbunnies lay eggs instead of giving birth to live young have an insulating layer of fluffy down feathers underneath their fur and are excellent swimmers. They occasionally supplement their vegetarian diet with small fish they catch in their bills.

If freed, duckbunnies tend to make their homes along the banks of small bodies of water such as lakes and ponds. They can be as big a nuisance to vegetable gardens as are normal rabbits, although as long as there are water plants available most duckbunnies would prefer not to risk the dangers of cultivated gardens. In turn, duckbunnies are

preyed upon by cats, wolves, and just about anything that hunts rabbits—and since a duckbunny's waddling gait on land is much slower than a true rabbits leaps and bounds, duckbunnies are often slain in the wild. Their main defensive strategy is to head for the water and swim to safety.

Occasionally, a duckbunny will answer the summons of a *find familiar* spell and serve a wizard in that capacity. As far as familiars go, a wizard could certainly do worse, but most wizards are less than pleased to see a duckbunny waddle up to them after the intensive preparation and effort involved in the casting of the *find familiar* spell.

**Ecology:** Normally created by fledgling wizards as an initial exercise in magical crossbreeding, duckbunnies nonetheless have several valuable features. Their eggs are delicious, and their high breeding rate ensures a steady supply. Because of the insulating properties of their downy feathers, duckbunny skins make excellent cloaks, capes, and boots. Duckbunny meat makes for a good stew, and is almost indistinguishable from rabbit meat.

When disturbed or surprised, duckbunnies cry out with a loud, duck-like "quack." This quacking makes duckbunnies an inexpensive alarm system, and many people are starting to use duckbunnies as the first line of defense in their home security systems. Granted, a duckbunny won't attack intruders like a good guard dog will, but he'll make a loud enough racket to warn the inhabitants and possibly scare off the intruder in the meantime. In addition, their high breeding rate makes duckbunnies much easier to replace than guard dogs, in the event that one or two are killed in the line of duty.

Finally, and most importantly to some, duckbunnies are almost irresistibly cute, with their big eyes, floppy ears, and soft, downy fur. It is no coincidence that a majority of the wizards who have created duckbunnies in the laboratory have young daughters at home, and it must be stated that duckbunnies do make wonderful pets.

Domesticated duckbunnies live for about ten years on average (much less in the wild), although those that become wizards' familiars can live for much longer.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Aquatic (usually moats)
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary or family group
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2-4)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-4
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT:	15, sprint 30, swim 12
HIT DICE:	3
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-3/1-3/1-6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Surprise, rear claws 1-4/1-4
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Surprised only on a 1
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (4'-5' long)
MORALE:	Average (8-10)
XP VALUE:	175

Moat cats are magical crossbreeds of newts and large cats such as cheetahs or mountain lions. Amphibious, they must keep their skin wet, and thus make perfect guardians for a wizard's castle moat.

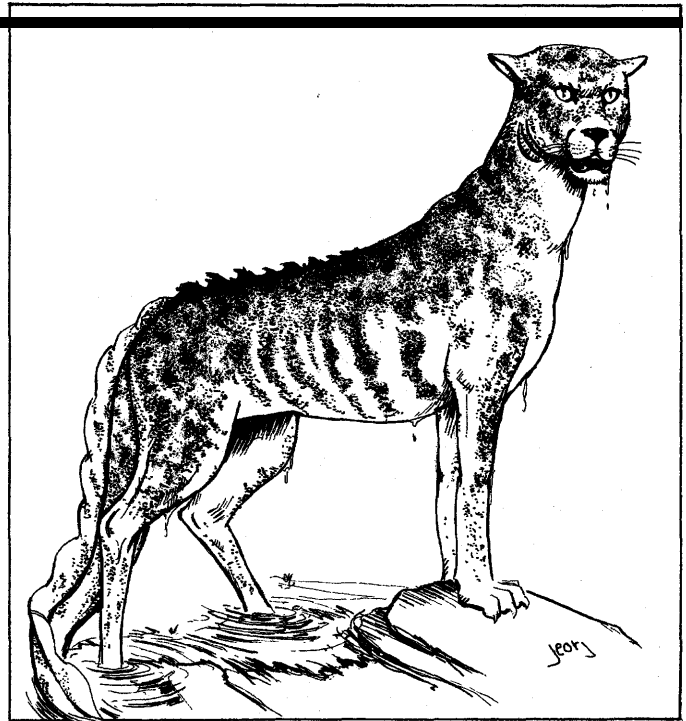
Coloration differs from animal to animal but generally follows that of the newt used in the creature's creation. Black, red, and brown are common colors for moat cats, but in each case there is often a series of spots of contrasting colors—white mottling on a black-skinned moat cat, for instance, or black mottling on a red one. Gills are located on either side of the head, just behind the jaw. The eyes of a moat cat are in almost all cases cat-like: green, with vertical pupils.

**Combat:** Moat cats have kept the standard cat-like physiognomy, except for their tails, which are thicker and generally more lizardlike, and their skin, which is sleek and smooth. They attack with their teeth and front claws. If both front claws hit, they may rake with their back claws for an additional 1d4 hp damage each. Moat cats, able to breathe water or air with equal ease, often stay completely submerged, then spring up to attack intruders. Opponents suffer a penalty of -3 to their surprise rolls when this occurs.

Those that flee the moat for the safety of dry land are in for a surprise, as moat cats are not restricted to the water. In fact, they are quite mobile on land, able to reach a speed of 30 for three rounds before tiring. However, after three rounds of sprinting the moat cat must rest up for a full three turns before sprinting again.

**Habitat/Society:** Since moat cats must remain near water, they are unlikely to travel far from the moats where they are placed. They usually stray only a mile or so, and then only to hunt, returning to the moat to feed and sleep. This inadvertent loyalty keeps the creatures near the wizard's moat.

Perhaps because of their amphibious nature, moat cats do not need to feed as often as would a great cat of a comparable size. Each adult moat cat requires a sheep or similarly sized creature every other week or so. They are gluttonous during feasting but then become somewhat lethargic during the next day while they digest. One way to try to get past a



moat cat is to provide it with food, but this tactic isn't always successful, as moat cats prefer to hunt down their own food rather than be fed by others. An intruder dumping a slain goat into a moat cat's moat in the hopes of slipping past it while it eats will probably find the creature ignoring the proffered meal in favor of the intruder himself.

**Ecology:** Besides being able to breathe water and requiring moisture on their skin to prevent them from drying up (moat cats take 1d6 hp damage every full hour they are out of water), they also lay jellylike eggs in the water. These eggs will hatch into 20-50 (1d4+1 x 10) moat cat cubs, over half of which will end up being devoured by the adults. Usually only 1-4 of a given litter survive to full adulthood.

The "cub" stage of a moat cat's development is similar to that of the "tadpole" stage of most frogs and toads. As a cub, the moat cat has no limbs, but swims by means of its powerful tail. Moat cat cubs have 1 HD, swim at a speed of 6 and bite for 1-3 hp damage. After a year, they gain another hit die, grow legs, and begin to move about on land. At this point, they will be taught how to hunt by the parents, and by two years of age they will have achieved full adult status. Moat cats have a life span of about 12 to 15 years.

Like true amphibians, moat cats cannot survive in salt water. They will occasionally make their homes in rivers, lakes or ponds, but wizards who create moat cats make them specifically as guard animals for their castle moats. Moat cats can be trained to some degree, but training must begin at a very early age in order for it to take effect. Most wizards have a few *charm monster* or *hold monster* spells ready for use when dealing with their moat cat guardians, to prevent them from attacking expected guests.

It should be noted that moat cats are silent creatures. Like the newts that are used in their creation, they make no vocalizations, so no great cat's growl or roar will alert prey to the moat cat's existence. More often than not, intruders first become aware of the aquatic predator when it pounces up at them—and by then, it's usually far too late.



# Spider-horse

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any, but usually mountainous
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	18
HIT DICE:	3+3
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-4/1-4 or 1-3/1-3
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Webbing
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L
MORALE:	Average (9-10)
XP VALUE:	175

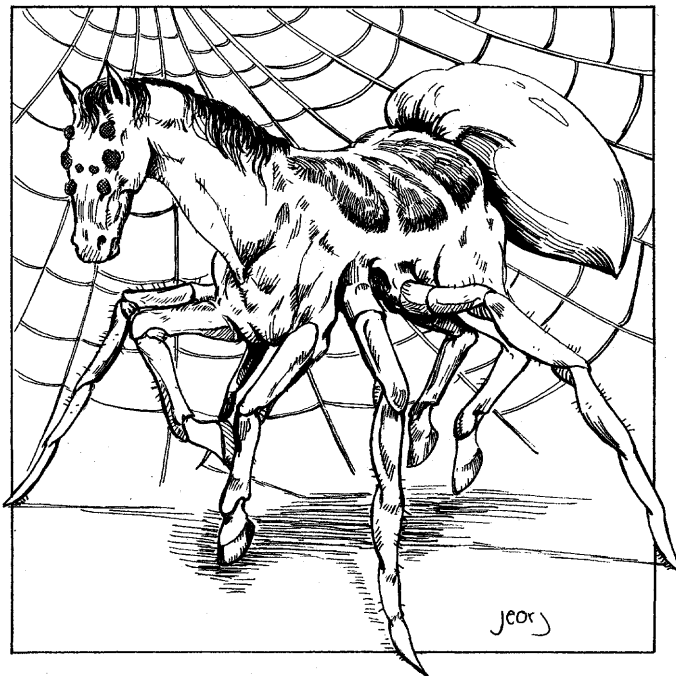
Spider-horses, as the name suggests, are magical cross-breeds of a riding horse and a giant spider. The body is primarily horse-like, although a spidery abdomen, complete with spinnerets, sticks out at the end. Four of the spider-horse's legs are horse-like, down to the hooves, while four more spider-like legs grow out of the horse-body. The spider legs are situated between the front and rear horse legs. The head is equine in nature, except for the eight eyes, all of which are compound.

**Combat:** A spider-horse attacks with either set of its front legs, whichever ones aren't being used for balance. Its hoofed horse-legs each strike for 1-4 hp bludgeoning damage, while its clawed, spidery legs slash for 1-3 hp each. Optionally, the spider-horse can shoot a strand of webbing at a single opponent, then reel him in with its front spider-legs. Treat a spider-horse's web-strand attack as a roper's strand attack, without the roper's magical Strength drain.

Since spider-horses have four normal hooves, they can be fitted with magical horseshoes, such as *horseshoes of speed* or *horseshoes of a zephyr*. In either case, the magical effects of the horseshoes only occur when the spider-horse is traveling on its horse-legs. It does not, for instance, gain a higher movement rate while using its spider-legs to climb up a cliff face simply because it has *horseshoes of speed* on its hooves.

Because of the unusual shape of the spider-horse's body, and its requirement to have its spider-legs flexible and free, standard horse barding cannot be used on a spider-horse. It might be possible to modify horse barding or have barding custom made, but this would at least triple the price.

**Habitat/Society:** Spider-horses, for reasons still unknown to wizards, cannot reproduce. The magic employed to merge the two beings renders the newly-created being sterile. Therefore, spider-horses usually live a solitary existence. Their spidery bodies often make standard horses skittish and nervous around them. However, this often makes them more emotionally attached to their masters, which wizards agree is a good thing. Nonetheless, wizards are currently experimenting on ways to correct this defect, in the hopes of creating spider-horses able to reproduce on their own.



**Ecology:** Spider-horses are usually created as riding mounts by wizards living in rough, mountainous terrain. Spider-horses are able to move about on either of their sets of four legs, running like a horse with their horse-legs (during which time their spider-legs are tucked under their bodies), or using their longer spider-legs to climb up or down steep surfaces such as sheer cliffs. Wizards employing spider-horses as mounts have intricately-buckled saddles which hold the rider in place during such steep ascents and descents. Because of the differences between spider-horses and normal horses, and between the kinds of gear needed to ride them, a separate proficiency is required to ride a spider-horse. This is the riding land-based proficiency, with spider-horse selected as the specified creature. Anyone attempting to ride a spider-horse with a riding proficiency geared toward normal horses is likely to end up being pitched head over heels at the first steep ascent or descent, although they could probably get by as long as the spider-horse kept to level terrain.

Besides their ability to travel where normal horses cannot, the spider-horse is prized for its ability to spin webs. A single web-line can be used to help lower the creature and its rider down a mountain slope, or the spider-horse can make an intricate web like those of a standard spider. A lone rider can often sleep easier knowing his faithful spider-horse steed has created walls of sticky webs around his master (essentially, weaving a "tent" in which the wizard can sleep). Because spider-horses cannot close their compound eyes, they are peripherally aware of their surroundings even when sleeping and can awaken at a moments notice, sounding a warning to their masters in case of trouble.

Any creatures caught in a spider-horse's web are left alone by the creature, who is strictly herbivorous. While it is not understood why spider-horses do not retain the venomous bites of the giant spiders used to create them, most wizards are happy 'enough with the beneficial traits.

	Viper	Scorpion
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any	Any
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Carnivore	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2-4)	Semi (2-4)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	Variable	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	4	3
MOVEMENT:	12	12
HIT DICE:	3+3	4+4
THACO:	17	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-8	2-8/1-3
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poison	Poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	S-M (3'-5')	M (4'-6')
MORALE:	Average (10)	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	270	420

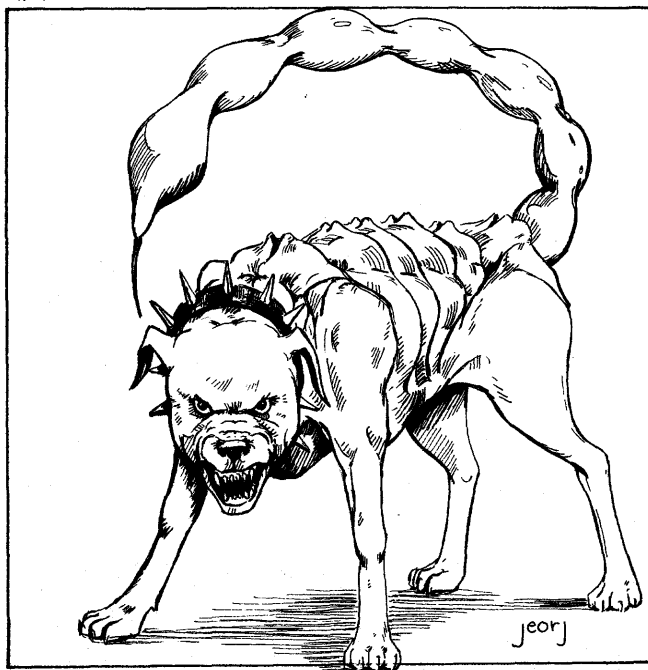
Venom dogs are greatly valued by wizards, as they are loyal, easy to train, and highly dangerous. Two types exist: the smaller is a merging of a pit viper and a mastiff; the larger, a mastiff and a huge scorpion. Both primarily retain the dogs physiognomy, but the smaller gains both the scales and the fangs of the pit viper, while the larger looks like a regular dog except for the large, venom-tipped scorpion tail rising from its hindquarters. Coloration ranges from a glistening black to tan for the "viper" venom dog, while the only difference between a "scorpion" venom dogs coloration and that of a normal dog is its tail, which can be either red, brown, or black.

**Combat:** Venom dogs bite for 2d4 hp damage. In addition, the bite of a "viper" venom dog is poisonous, causing the victim to save vs. poison at +2 or be slain the next round. Like pit vipers, these creatures have heat-sensitive organs on their snouts that gives them the equivalent of 30' infravision.

"Scorpion" venom dogs get two attacks per round: a (nonpoisonous) bite and a tail-stinger attack. These creatures can attack two different opponents each round, or concentrate both attacks on a single victim. Opponents hit by the stinger suffer 1-3 hp damage and must save vs. poison or die the next round.

**Habitat/Society:** Like normal domesticated dogs, venom dogs live to serve their masters. They are quite easily trained, a fact that makes them very desirable and quite valuable (venom dog puppies of either type can go for as high as 3,000 gp on the open market). Of course, special precautions must be taken while they are being trained due to their poisonous nature. However, it is this ability to poison enemies that makes these creatures so valuable as watchdogs. They live for about 15 years.

**Ecology:** "Viper" venom dogs are strictly carnivorous and swallow their prey whole in the fashion of snakes. Also like snakes, they require much less food than a normal dog, being content with a decent meal every few weeks. This makes caring for viper venom dogs relatively inexpensive.



"Scorpion" venom dogs have normal, canine heads and teeth, and thus eat the same things any normal dog eats.

"Viper" venom dogs share many traits with the serpents from which they get half of their heritage. Because of their reptilian nature, "viper" venom dogs must shed their skin periodically as they grow in size. Unlike true serpents, these skins do not cover the creature's eyes—"viper" venom dogs have standard canine eyes and eyelids as well. However, like many serpents, they do lay leathery eggs from which the venom dog puppies hatch. While warm-blooded, "viper" venom dogs do enjoy basking in the sun like many reptiles.

While looking the least like normal dogs, the scale-covered "viper" venom dogs maintain a disposition most similar to that of the standard canine. Thus, they can be raised in litters and trained to work together. "Scorpion" venom dogs, however, tend to be loners. They viciously attack other members of their own species except during mating season. Therefore, it is uncommon to see more than one of these creatures at a time, and a wizard owning and raising several "scorpion" venom dogs must make special arrangements to keep them separated.

"Scorpion" venom dogs are not immune to the effects of their own poison, nor to the poison of giant scorpions or scorpion-like creatures. Of the two types of venom dog, the "scorpion" is the only one able to bark like a dog, and is therefore a better guardian when it comes to alerting its masters of trouble. "Viper" venom dogs are capable only of a reptilian hiss, although the volume of the hiss can get rather high when the dogs are excited.

Venom dogs of either type are highly desirable as animal followers to rangers, although the opportunities of coming across one of these creatures in the wild are negligible. This is because nearly all venom dogs are specifically created as watchdogs, either for the Wizards themselves or for a particular client who wishes to purchase one. Venom dogs are treated well by their masters, so the chances of one escaping to the wild are slim. For this reason, a ranger wishing a venom dog is more than likely going to have to go out and buy one from a wizard like everyone else.



# In a class by themselves

## Using the DUNGEON MASTER® Guide To Create New Classes

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by Tom Doolan

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illustrated by Rags Morales

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SOME PLAYERS COMPLAIN that humans are too limited in their abilities, that there is no reason to play them when a demi-human does much better and has many more options. This outlook is somewhat understandable. Having no limit to level advancement is great, but that doesn't help the low-level human character. And the dual-class rules work well within the framework of the game, but they lack in realism and short-term payoff.

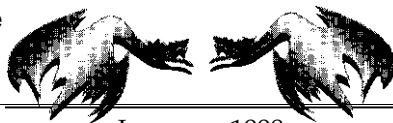
### Building New Character Classes

Some of you DMs might be saying to yourselves, "This is true, but what is there to do about it?" Well, you have no further to look than your faithful *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide (DMG)* for the answers. In Chapter 3 (Player Character Classes) there is an optional rule for creating a new character class. Why not use this rule to make some multi-faceted human classes? With this method you can make a fighter/thief type class, or a fighter/mage class, or any number of combinations to fit your needs. try to avoid just rehashing or repeating existing classes though. What is a paladin but a fighter/cleric with a certain ethos? And the ranger is more or less a specialized form of fighter/druid. It should also be noted that the use of this system negates the use of the dual-class rules.

Start by reading the entire text on the optional rule. When you've done that, you'll see that it would be impractical to make a true multi-classed human. It is tempting to play a character with all the skills of a fighter, a mage, and a thief, but the experience requirements would be outrageous—and it still wouldn't be very realistic.

Because a human has such a comparatively short life span, wouldn't it stand to reason that if he wanted to learn two different careers at the same time, he would have to sacrifice some from each? This is evidenced by the limited priest abilities of a paladin (turn undead and spell casting) and his limits as a fighter (no specialization or followers). The same is true for the ranger, who gains druid spells only after a long time of adventuring and experience.

How about the battlecaster, a warrior with Wizard spell capabilities? Or the street avenger, a warrior who uses thief abilities to help rid the streets of crime? Then there's the elusive shadowcaster, a thief who has dabbled in the arcane arts. How about the enforcer (fighter/thief), the woodmage (druid/mage), or the spell dancer (bard/mage)? All of these and many more could become playable classes to fill that empty niche in your fantasy campaign world.



# New Class Worksheet

[illegible]

**Total Multiple** .....

## Base Experience Points

Level	Base Experience	Multiplier	Result
2	200	× _____	_____
3	400	× _____	_____
4	800	× _____	_____
5	2,000	× _____	_____
6	4,000	× _____	_____
7	8,000	× _____	_____
8	15,000	× _____	_____
9	28,000	× _____	_____
10+	30,000/additional level	× _____	_____





## Building the Battlecaster

As a young fighter in training the prospective battlecaster possessed great intelligence and began incorporating magic study into his daily routine. Gradually, he became something more than a simple warrior but not entirely a wizard. To create this class, consider the rules as they appear in Chapter 3 of the *DMG* to see what they yield:

**Race (Table 11):** This choice is the simplest: human. Note the 0 multiple beside it.

**Combat Value (Table 12):** Since the battlecaster should fight like a true warrior, select the warrior option. Note it along with the +2 multiple.

**Saving Throw Table (Table 13):** The battlecaster should use the wizard table, as it's more advantageous and reflects his study in the arcane lore. Because it already exists for another class, the multiplier is 0.

**Hit Dice (Table 14):** The battlecaster should be almost as tough as a fighter, so choose 1d8 for Hit Dice at each level. This choice adds a +1 multiple.

**Armor Allowed (Table 15):** Since casting spells is next to impossible in heavy armor, we'll elect to give this class a limited AC. This choice allows the battlecaster to wear armor of AC 5 (chainmail) or worse and gives a -0.5 multiple.

**Weapons Allowed (Table 16):** For weapons, the battlecaster is open in his options. He can learn any weapon he desires, just as a normal fighter. This option has a 0 multiple.

**Hit Points Beyond 9th Level (Table 17):** Since the battlecaster is human, he can advance to any level. So above 9th, let him gain +2 hp/level. This choice makes the class slightly stronger than a mage, but not as tough as a true fighter, and it gives him a multiple of +1. (Note that the April 1995 edition of the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* mistakenly notes this value as +2.)

Now you have a bare-bones class, with no real special traits. Move on to the optional abilities (Table 18).

Obviously, the battlecaster should have spell-casting capabilities. However, the ability to cast spells from all schools of magic adds +16 to the experience multiple! Assume that the battlecaster's nature would limit him to casting the Invocation/Evocation school, as it affords the most combat-oriented spells. This ability adds only +3 to the experience multiple.

The battlecaster should be able to use magical items usable by warriors and wizards, for a total of +2 to the experience multiple. (That is +1 per class.)

Assuming you use the proficiency system, the battlecaster must buy some slots. Allow two weapon slots and four nonweapon slots upon creation, for a total of a +1.5 multiple.

After looking at the overall class, you can see that a battlecaster will spend much of his time in the study of books, in addition to his warrior skills. Naturally he's not going to be as strong or as tough as a normal fighter. Therefore choose not to allow fighter Constitution or exceptional Strength bonuses.

Whether serving in an army, or just out adventuring, a battlecaster sets himself outside the norms, due to his unique nature. Therefore he would not have any restrictions in alignment or ethos.

With the simple example of the battlecaster, don't worry about any of

the restrictions (Table 20). Those can be useful in balancing a class with more optional abilities, but the battlecaster doesn't need them.

Now you have a workable character class. Your worksheet should look something like Table 1 on this page.

Using the Base Experience Points, you can create your own table for the battlecaster. You may notice that the experience requirements seem too easy, especially when compared to the wizard chart. But think about this: the mage and the specialist can cast from multiple schools, whereas the battlecaster cannot. And when compared to the physical prowess of the fighter, the battlecaster comes up short. That this class straddles the middle-ground of the two class types, without throwing off the balance of the game.

The more abilities you add to a class, the more experience it takes to reach each level. If the requirements are too high, the character advances too slowly. He won't be able to keep up with the other single-class characters, and the multi-class demi-humans will surpass his limited abilities too quickly.

Once you have all of the technical kinks worked out, the final step is to fill out the details. For this you should look to the *Player's Handbook* and write a class description, modeling it after one that exists. At this point you will want to decide what ability requirements the class demands.

For the battlecaster, say that he must be physically able to withstand the stress of combat training (Strength 9), and show a somewhat higher degree of common sense and ingenuity (Intelligence 12). You'll also want to decide any special traits the class has, and whether or not followers are in order at higher levels. Other details will fall into place as you read your model class description.

Our finished text for the battlecaster might look something like this:

**Battlecaster**

- Ability Requirements: Strength 9,  
Intelligence 12
- Prime Requisites: Strength,  
Intelligence
- Allowed Races: Human

The battlecaster is a human warrior who has incorporated magical study into his usual martial training. This could be because the battlecaster joined a military group, or perhaps it

Table 1: Battlecaster Worksheet

Class Abilities		
Ability	Choice	Multiple
Race	Human	0
Combat Value Used	Warrior	+2.0
Saving Throw Table Used	Wizard	0
Hit Dice Per Level	1d8	+1.0
Armor Allowed	Limited	-0.5
Weapons Allowed	All	0
HP/Level Beyond 9th	+2	+1.0
Optional Abilities	6 proficiency slots	+1.5
	May learn and cast spells	
	From one school of magic	+3.0
	May use magical items allowed to Warriors	+1.0
	May use magical Items allowed to Wizards	+1.0
Total Multiple		+10.0

Base Experience Points

Level	Base Experience	Multiplier	Result
2	200	x 10	2,000
3	400	x 10	4,000
4	800	x 10	8,000
5	2,000	x 10	20,000
6	4,000	x 10	40,000
7	8,000	x 10	80,000
8	15,000	x 10	150,000
9	28,000	x 10	280,000
10+	+30,000/additional level	x 10	580,000

is the result of hobby-style study with a wizard mentor. The principal attributes of a battlecaster are Strength and Intelligence. Any member of this class with scores of 16 or better in each of these abilities gains an additional 10% bonus to earned experience.

Battlecasters may be of any alignment. However, if a player selects a military background for his character, Lawful alignment should be seriously considered.

Due to the extensive time battlecasters spend in study, they are somewhat weaker than normal warriors. They use the B-sided die for hit points. Battlecasters are not allowed Warrior Constitution bonuses or exceptional Strength.

Battlecasters are able to learn any weapon of their choice. However, because heavier armor makes it difficult to cast mage spells, battlecasters are limited to wearing armor of AC 5 or worse.

Although a capable warrior, the battlecaster's main focus is combining

the skills of a fighter with the casting of mage spells. To this end, the battlecaster must choose a single school of magic to study. Thereafter he is bound to that school alone, and may not change. The spell limits and progression are limited by Intelligence Table 4 (PHB), and Wizard spell progression Table 21 (PHB). Do not confuse this

Table 2: Battlecaster Experience Levels

Level	XP	HD (d8)
1	0	1
2	2,000	2
3	4,000	3
4	8,000	4
5	20,000	5
6	40,000	6
7	80,000	7
8	150,000	8
9	280,000	9
10+	+300,000/level	*

\* +2 hp/additional level



**Table 3: Battlecaster Proficiency Slots**

**Weapon**

Initial	# levels	Penalty
2	3	-2

**Nonweapon**

Initial	# levels
4	3

limitation with the abilities of a specialist wizard. Unlike the specialist, a battlecaster gains no bonuses when casting spells from his chosen school, and he cannot learn spells from any other school. However, the battlecaster is able to research new spells in his school but still gains no bonuses. This is all due to the rigors of the rest of the class abilities (i.e., fighting).

A battlecaster uses the combat value of a warrior but makes saving throws as a wizard. He is able to employ magical items usable by warriors and wizards, as long as they meet the limits of the class.

Finally, at 9th level, a battlecaster can attract a following of men-at-arms, in the same manner as a fighter.

**Table 4: Battlecaster Elite Unit Followers**

**Roll Elite Unit**

01-20	Ten 2nd-level half-elf fighter/mages, with <i>scale mail +1</i> , <i>long swords +1</i> , and short bows.
21-45	Five 3rd-level mages, with <i>bracers of defense AC 4</i> , staves, daggers, and darts.
46-65	Ten mounted knights (1st level fighters with field plate, large shield, lance, broadsword, morning star, and heavy warhorse with full barding).
66-99	Five 4th-level battlecasters with <i>chain-mail +2</i> , <i>bastard sword +2</i> , and light warhorse.
00	DM's Option

The DM might wish to modify this chart to suit the campaign.

For this purpose, use the rules listed in the *PHB* for fighters. However, for the Elite Unit roll on the following chart:

**Nonweapon Proficiency Groups:**

Warrior, Wizard, General.

**Money:** As Warrior.

**Notes:** Weapon specialization not allowed.

**Attacks per Round:** Use **Table 15** in the *Player's Handbook*.

The finished battlecaster class is fairly well balanced and playable, and it could be a welcome addition to almost any campaign. Those who feel that the battlecaster is too limited can easily add more abilities, such as extra schools of magic or fighter ability bonuses. Keep in mind the experience costs that come with such additional abilities.

This example was created by generally following the path presented in the rules, without straying much. That is not to say that this is the only way. The AD&D game rules were made to be flexible, changing to suit many styles of play and always leaving room for the creativity of the players and DMs. Perhaps there is some skill you want your new class to have that makes it more unique. This special ability could be as simple as a new proficiency or as interesting as a new granted power. Another new class can provide an example of how to incorporate original abilities into the new classes you create.

## Constructing the Street Avenger

Here is the peasant's paladin, the back-alley hero. The street avenger has made it his personal quest to rid his city of violent crime. He uses the criminals' own methods to root them out and destroy them, yet he remains the hero and savior of the helpless victim. Here's how to make this class:

For ability requirements, assume that a street avenger must be stronger than average (Strength 12), somewhat agile (Dexterity 9), and slightly wiser than most (Wisdom 14). A street avenger's alignment should be neutral good. Although a staunch supporter of the law, the street avenger must be willing to bend or break it in order to deliver justice.

The new streetwise proficiency, and the "see criminal" granted power are examples of how a little creativity can enhance the uniqueness of a new class. Streetwise represents the char-

acters affinity with the streets. He can read subtle signs in the behavior of the street's inhabitants. See criminal is a special power that allows the street avenger to learn who is responsible for certain heinous crimes.

The next step is to write a class description. Start with the paladin, ranger, and thief descriptions for examples, as these three share consistent traits with the concept of the street avenger. The new class description might look something like this:

## The Street Avenger

Ability Requirements: Strength 12,  
Dexterity 9,  
Wisdom 14

Prime Requisites: Strength,  
Wisdom

Races Allowed: Human

The street avenger is a warrior who seeks to clean the streets of crime. He is a vigilante champion of the weak. He tends to work outside the law, yet he will work with the law if it serves his purposes.

The main attributes of a street avenger are Strength and Wisdom. A good Dexterity is also required. Street avengers are always neutral good and must remain so for their entire career. They fight for justice, but they realize that sometimes laws hinder as much as they protect.

A street avenger with Strength and Wisdom scores of 16 or more gains a 10% bonus to earned experience.

A street avenger can use any weapon; however, he is limited in his choices of armor for the same reasons as a thief. He can wear leather, studded leather, padded leather, or elven chainmail. Like the thief, if he wears anything heavier than leather, his thief skills suffer.

The street avenger fights as a warrior and saves as a rogue. He uses the lo-sided die for Hit Dice up to 9th level; thereafter, he gains 2 hp per level.

The street avenger is attuned to the ways of his city in the same manner as a ranger is to the forest. Even if the optional proficiency system is not otherwise used, the street avenger should have the disguise and streetwise proficiencies.

With streetwise, he can discern certain aspects about his environment. These include detecting a criminal scoping a target, gang movements, and the imminence of a crime

about to happen. When a check is made, use the character's Wisdom score with a -2 modifier. Determining the extent of the knowledge gained with a successful check is up to the DM, and should be based on the intent of the character. For example, if the character is scanning a crowd for potential thieves, a successful check will indicate that he has spotted one if there are any—maybe in the act, or maybe before it. this ability improves by +1 for every three levels of the street avenger.

Over the course of his life, the street avenger has learned several of the abilities of thieves. At first level, the street avenger gains the following abilities:

Ability	Base Chance
Move Silently	15%
Hide in Shadows	10%
Hear Noise	10%
Climb Walls	65%

As he progresses to each new level, the street avenger gains an additional 15 points to distribute among his skills as he sees fit (with a limit of 99 percent allotted to any one ability).

See criminal is a special empathic power that is granted by the patron deity of the street avenger (usually a god of vengeance or justice). To use this power, a street avenger must look into the eyes of a victim of a personal crime. The victim must make a saving throw vs. spell, with a -1 modifier for every two levels of the street avenger, because no one consciously wishes to reexperience a violent crime. If the victim fails, the street avenger "relives" the crime through the senses of the victim. He feels any pain, shock, and anger that the victim experienced. Most importantly, the street avenger has a 25% plus 5% per level chance to see the face of the perpetrator, thus having at least a face to look for. At this point the DM may wish to modify the outcome. The criminal might have been crafty and hidden his identity from the victim. Therefore, the street avenger must concentrate to find other tell-tale clues about the criminal, such as a peculiar odor or a certain piece of clothing. Naturally this power is limited to crimes in which the criminal and the victim were in personal contact (i.e., assault, robbery, etc.). On rare occasions, this could include such

Table 4: Street Avenger Worksheet			
Class Abilities			
Ability	Choice	Multiple	
Race	Human	0	
Combat Value Used	Warrior	+2.0	
Saving Throw Table Used	Rogue	0	
Hit Dice Per Level	1d10	+2.5	
Armor Allowed	Limited	-0.5	
Weapons Allowed	All	0	
HP/Level Beyond 9th	+2	+1.0	
Optional Abilities	May cast Divination sphere spells	+2.0	
	Climb Walls	+1.0	
	Hear Noise	+0.5	
	Hide in Shadows	+1.0	
	Move Silently	+1.0	
	Use Warrior and Rogue magical items	+2.0	
	Granted Power:		
	see criminal	+1.0	
	Must be neutral good	-2.0	
	Must Donate 10% Wealth	-0.5	
	Spellcasting Delayed		
	Until 6th Level	-0.5	
	6 proficiency slots	+1.5	
	Bonus proficiency: disguise	+0.25	
	Streetwise (new)	+0.25	
Total Multiple		+12.5	
Base Experience Points			
Level	Base Experience	Multiplier	Result
2	200	x 12.5	2,500
3	400	x 12.5	5,000
4	800	x 12.5	10,000
5	2,000	x 12.5	25,000
6	4,000	x 12.5	50,000
7	8,000	x 12.5	100,000
8	15,000	x 12.5	187,000
9	28,000	x 12.5	350,000
10+	30,000/additional level	x 12.5	725,000

crimes as burglary, assuming the victim glimpsed the criminal as he fled the scene of the crime.

At sixth level, the street avenger can learn to cast priest spells, but only of the divination sphere. He gains and uses his spells according to the rules governing priests. He doesn't gain bonus spells for high wisdom, nor is he ever able to use clerical scrolls or magical items unless otherwise specified.

Street avengers gain no followers by building a stronghold.

At 8th level, a street avenger gains 1d6 contacts in the local government. These NPCs can be members of the ruling class, the sheriff, or the city

Table 5: Street Avenger Experience Levels		
Level	XP	HD (d10)
1	0	1
2	2,500	2
3	5,000	3
4	10,000	4
5	25,000	5
6	50,000	6
7	100,000	7
8	187,500	8
9	350,000	9
10+	375,000/level	*
* +2 hp/additional level		





guards. These contacts might secretly meet and help the street avenger, whenever needed, at the DM's discretion.

Street avengers fall into two general types. There are those who work alone, in which case it is rare for more than one or two to occupy a single city. These types tend to lead a double life, posing as a working-class citizen when not seeking justice.

Then there are secret societies, usually funded by a wealthy noble or

merchant, which have several street avenger members, along with informants and guards who work with the society. Player characters can be of either type.

Finally, "the cause" is more important to a street avenger than material wealth. Therefore they must donate at least 10% of all treasure they gain to the homeless and needy. What they keep is usually in a portable form.

**NWP Groups Allowed:** Warrior, Rogue, General

**Table 6: Street Avenger Proficiency Slots**

**Weapon**

Initial	# levels	Penalty
3	3	-2

**Nonweapon**

Initial	# levels
3	3

**Money:** As rogue

**Notes:** Weapon Specialization not allowed

**Attacks per Round:** Use Table 15 (PHB)

This class is highly specialized, and probably won't fit into just any campaign, though it is perfect for a city-based campaign. For any setting, this example illustrates the DM's freedom to create new ideas, and modify those that exist.

## Conclusion

Both the example of the battlecaster and that of the street avenger are complete as they are, but you may want to be even more creative, changing some of the abilities and restrictions to fit your own ideas. Play with the rules, and see what you can come up with. The only important rule to keep in mind is to make sure that the new class maintains the game balance. Other than that, you have all the freedom in your world to put humans in a class by themselves.



*Tom Doolan still can't decide whether he'd prefer to administer justice with sword and spell or with the cunning stealth of rooftop detective work. Whichever he chooses, we feel safer already.*

# ARCANE



## "Traveling" Spellbooks

by Anthony Nixon and David Head

AS WITH ANY FANTASY WORLD, the Flanaess of the GREYHAWK® setting is known for its many tomes of magical spells. Each of the following three tomes is from a remote corner of the Flanaess, and each has a history uncertain enough that DMs may decide what of the following information is fact and what is conjecture. Naturally, these spellbooks are just as appropriate for the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, BIRTHRIGHT®, RAVENLOFT®, or other AD&D® game settings.

The following pages reveal some, but not all, of the secrets of the *Ice-Shard Tome*, the *Incunabulum of the Forgotten City*, and the *Book of Darazell*. Eager spellcasters be warned: Few tomes of such worth are left unguarded, unwarded, or without a curse against thieves. Clever DMs will not limit themselves to the protections described in these pages.

### The Ice-Shard Tome

This infamous spellbook first came to prominence in the year 574 C.Y. in the port city of Marner, capital of the Archbarony of Ratik. It was purchased by Crylandren, a wizard of that city, from a band of Frost Barbarians

recently returned from dangerous explorations in the great Corusk Mountains. Distrustful of wizardly magic, the barbarians were quick to take their gold and leave, eager to join the spring raids on the coast of Aerdy.

Crylandren recorded the Frost Barbarians' strange tale of how they acquired the book thusly:

*While searching for the lair of a white dragon, the barbarians chanced upon an illusion-cloaked dungeon entrance and ventured inside. There they fought evil, cold-dwelling creatures and passed through strange areas of chilling, life-sapping vapor. Finally, they reached a great ice-encrusted chamber. While the intruders were busy digging out a chest from the ice, their activity awakened the dungeon's most dangerous guardian: a massive automaton fashioned—so swear the barbarians—of steel-hard ice. Although the golem slew two of their number, the barbarians were ultimately triumphant and claimed the icy dungeon's treasures as their own. Among the hoard was the book that was to become known as the Ice-Shard Tome. Of the book's owner there was no sign.*

Crylandren copied what he wished from the book, noting the difficulties in scribing spells, before selling the book. Over the next few years, the *Ice-Shard Tome* was sighted variously in Rel Astra, Rauxes, and Rel Mord, moving ever deeper into the central Flanaess. On its journey the tome acquired both its popular title and a sinister reputation. Rumors persist of either some kind of curse associated with the tome or of a powerful, extraplanar mage tracking the book, slaying those who have handled it, but always failing to possess it himself.

Certainly Crylandren is now dead. His corpse was said to have been found frozen, the windows of his study thrown open, and the blood in his veins reportedly turned to ice. Alternatively, the old mage's death could be accounted for by nothing more than the bitter winter of 577 C.Y. It is certainly true that he often neglected his health while performing spell research. A list of similar deaths, always grisly but unsubstantiated, precedes the book. Currently, the book is on the market in the Free City of Dyvers and any buyer can be sure of paying only a middling price for this spellbook. Caveat emptor!

The *Ice-Shard Tome* is three hand-widths wide by four high. The book is bound in pebbled, bluish-white hide of indeterminate origin. A few severed bits of blue thread remain on the cover, suggesting that a symbol was once sewn upon it. Some kind of minor dweomer lingers upon the book, for it continually radiates a slight chill; if the book is left unopened for any length of time, a covering of rime forms on its surface. (This frost does not affect the pages within: they are clammy to the touch but are seemingly immune to dampness.)

The spells within are difficult to understand, as if written by someone working from a radically different theory of magic. (Those attempting to learn these spells suffer a -25% penalty to their chances.) The mage responsible for this work had a morbid fascination with cold and the suffering it can cause. The book contains the spells *chill touch*, *frost shroud* (from RA2 *Ship of Horror*), *ice storm*, *cone of cold*, *Otiluke's freezing sphere*, and *Otiluke's polar screen* (from the GREYHAWK Adventures hardcover); but



also the following rare spells: *ice shard*, *coldlash*, *frostbite*, and *cloak of winter*. Finally, the book contains an accurate map to the Hanging Glacier of Alisedran, with notation in no language known in the Flanaess, either current or ancient.

### Ice Shard

(Evocation)

Level: 1

Range: 60 yards + 10 yards/level

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 1 or more creatures in a 10' cube

Saving Throw: None

This spell is a *magic missile* variation, and the restrictions placed on that spell apply here also. It creates a like number of missiles per level (one for every two caster levels) and causes the same amount of damage. When the wizard casts the spell, razor-sharp darts of ice are summoned into existence and are propelled at an opponent. The wizard uses his own THAC0, modified by skill with missiles (if applicable), and, in addition to the damage, each successful hit causes an opponent to shiver uncontrollably (-1 to hit and damage, no save). These penalties can be cumulative and last for 1 round per level of the casting wizard, leaving a badly-hit opponent virtually helpless.

### Coldlash

(Evocation)

Level: 3

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 3 rounds + 1/level

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

Use of this spell creates a 10'-long, flexible tendril of magical energy that is comprised of sparkling snowflakes. The wizard uses this coldlash as a weapon, inflicting 1d6 hp damage plus 1hp damage per caster level. An opponent struck must also save vs. spells or be unable to take any action the following round due to their body being wracked with uncontrollable shivers.

Additionally, if a *coldlash* comes into contact with a mage protected by a warm *fire shield* or a *fire aura*, both magics are cancelled with a (harmless) burst of orange light. A wizard can will the *coldlash* spell to dissipate at any

moment. The material component is a whip that has been affected by a *chill touch* spell.

### Frostbite

(Conjuration, Necromancy)

Level: 4

Range: 15 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 8 rounds

Casting Time: 4

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throws: Special

This nasty spell causes the caster's hand to glow dimly with bluish radiance for a split second. The full effects are then launched at an opponent. If the opponent saves vs. spells, he is affected as per a *chill touch* spell (undead, however, do not suffer the "special effect" of that lesser spell). If the opponent fails to save, then the following effects occur:

Round	Effect
1	Victim's feet "burn" with the pain of cold. Half movement rates thereafter. The victim suffers 1d4 hp damage.
2	Victim's hands "burn." Constitution check to cast spells or use a weapon. The victim suffers another 1d4 hp damage.
3	Victim's hands "burn." As above and a -2 to hit in combat. The victim suffers another 1d4 hp damage.
4	Victim's hands "burn." As above and a -4 to hit in combat. The victim suffers another 1d4 hp damage.
5	Victim's hands "burn." As above but unable to cast spells that require material or somatic components. The victim suffers 2d4 hp damage.
6	Victim's hands "burn." As above but now totally unable to use weapons. The victim suffers another 2d4 hp damage.
7	Victim's face "burns." The pain increases. The victim suffers 3d4 hp damage.
8	Victim's face "burns." The victim is now unable to stand. The victim suffers another 3d4 hp damage.

During each round, the victim may save vs. spell to suffer only half the noted damage. This spell obviously

requires an opponent to possess recognizable hands, feet and facial features. A *dispel magic* can halt the spell's effect, and exposure to a large fire source can also stop the full onset of the spell (but the victim must concentrate solely on ridding himself of the chill in his body, allowing 1d4 rounds to recover). The caster can stop the spell's effects with a word, making it a good tool for interrogation.

### Cloak of Winter

(Alteration)

Level: 5

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 week/level

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: 20' cube/level

Saving Throw: None

This spell works on an enclosed area such as a cave or a building. It coats the entire area in ice (roughly an inch thick), covering any objects in that area and keeping the area constantly cooled, despite external weather conditions. Cold-dwelling creatures are not hindered by the *cloak of winter*, and it can serve more mundane purposes (e.g. keeping perishables fresh).

Movement rates are cut by two-thirds in the affected area and Dexterity-related bonuses are negated for those not used to movement in such conditions. Cold spells function with greater effectiveness in the area (+1 per die of damage and -1 to saves), while the opposite is true for heat-based spells. Fire can melt one square foot of ice per 5 hp damage rendered, negating its effects in that area. The ice reforms in one day, duration permitting. The spell is best cast on stone surfaces because of the effects of damp. The caster can place this spell over any size of area, up to the maximum area of effect. It can, for instance, merely be cast on a single stretch of dungeon or inside a one-room larder.

The material components for this spell are a piece of clear crystal and a winter bloom.

## The Incunabulum of the Forgotten City

The hazards and dangers of the Sea of Dust are well-known among the sages of the Flanaess. It was armed with this knowledge that an expedition set out in search of the Forgotten

City, thought to be the best-preserved known city of the Suel) empire, in 570 C.Y. Consisting of hardy Yeomanry adventurers, including the elven mage Aelistrifel Elinareth, they were able to traverse the Hellfurnaces and cross the hellish Sea of Dust. Their journey was not without loss of life, however.

Eventually the party discovered a well-preserved Suel settlement of modest size. Investigating further, they ascertained that they had discovered the legendary Forgotten City of the Suel. The city was blanketed in a white ash of caustic properties. Attempts to map the ash-choked city and catalogue its various great buildings, already difficult, was made more difficult by harrying monster attacks. Eventually the band stumbled across a mage-tower protruding from the ash. Unfortunately for the searchers, many powerful wards were still in place within the tower, and these tested Aelistrifel's magic to the utmost. Ultimately, the party found a hidden entrance to subterranean vaults.

Therein they encountered *walls of force* appearing apparently at random, blocking their progress at times and seemingly maneuvering them in certain directions. They found themselves in time in a shadowy, pillared chamber with a central mosaic of arcane design upon the floor. By trial and error, the party found that by gesturing and positioning themselves in certain ways, the room would subtly change. Glowing golden runes would appear on the pillars and the mosaic designs would writhe and change.

Aelistrifel would sit for hours, cross-legged on the stone floor, contemplating the chamber. In the end, Aelistrifel was virtually dragged from the chamber by her friends and taken from the tower. However, the elf-mage was rewarded with one item, the so-called *Incunabulum of the Forgotten City*, found in a secret compartment in a pillars torus.

Aelistrifel realized that two of the four spells inscribed within were both extremely potent and beyond her skills to master. The former owner of the tower had obviously been a powerful wizard. Her sadly denuded party were forced to journey back to the Yeomanry, bringing back less knowledge and treasure than they had hoped for. Aelistrifel, to this day, still hopes to mount another expedition to the city. Some great magical force

within the city makes teleportation and plane-shifting magics too risky a venture: such an expedition would have to again cross the Sea of Dust. Few are willing to accompany her.

The *Incunabulum* was allegedly stolen from Loftwick and sold to the Society of Magivestre in Geoff. Now that this state is a Lost Land, under the rule of giants, the book is rumored to be in one of two places: either left in the Society's spell-guarded treasure chambers in Istivin, or in the possession of a minor fomorian warlord, who is quite aware of the book's value. Rumors suggest that a group of drow renegades, followers of some bizarre elemental power, are after the book. The Scarlet Brotherhood, too, would most definitely want to acquire a spellbook of Suel origin if they ever learned of its existence.

The *Incunabulum* is merely a collection of worn parchment pages, collected in a folder of soft calf leather. Patterns of Suel design line the borders of the pages. Although it has weathered the centuries well, its pages are dry, brittle and in danger of flaking away to nothing if handled roughly. Jawal Severnain, librarian of the Greyhawk Guild of Wizardry, would dearly love to see the book brought safely to the Guild Library and its spells copied before they are lost forever. These rare spells are *image trap*, *veil of watchfulness*, *dweomer warp*, and *spell siphon*.

### Image Trap

(Illusion, Alteration)

Level: 3

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: 6' radius

Saving Throw: Special

This spell resembles a *mirror image* spell but is in fact an illusion-covered trap. The duration and effectiveness of the *image trap* are less than those of the *mirror image* (only 1d4+1 images appear). It is otherwise in all ways similar to that spell.

However, whenever a missile or melee blow is landed on an image, it not only disappears but also explodes outward in a scintillating ball of color. The attacker, if within five feet, must immediately save vs. spells at -2 or become stunned, unable to act for the next 1d6 rounds.

The material component for this spell is a clay figure of the caster soaked in naphtha.

### Veil of Watchfulness

(Divination)

Level: 6

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 hour/level

Casting Time: 6

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster to gain a total awareness of any disturbance within an area familiar to her (usually the wizard's residence). The caster must designate an area to be watched over, and for the duration of the spell the wizard instantly knows via a mental image (no sound) the location and activities of any intruders, or any significant disturbance among items in the area. Only intruders larger than a normal rat are registered.

The caster need not be in the area to become aware of intruders, and the spell ceases to function only if the caster journeys to another plane. Any individuals in the designated area at the time of casting are not detected, even if they leave the area and later return while the spell is still in place. The mental image does not interfere with the wizard's actions (e.g. if she was casting a spell at the same moment a band of thieves were entering her study, the mental image would not cause the spell to be lost). However, she must concentrate to keep intruders observed beyond the first round.

The area must be well-known to the wizard (DM's discretion) and the spell simply fails if cast on an unfamiliar area. There are certain areas where casting this spell would be pointless, e.g. a busy city street. The veil can function over an area of up to 400 square feet floor space.

The material components of this spell are a bit of fur from a guard dog and a gem of minimum 500 gp worth. Neither is consumed in the casting.

### Dweomer Warp

(Alteration)

Level: 7

Range: 5 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 7

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None



This insidious spell is effective against enemy spell-casters (creatures with spell-like abilities are not affected). The caster simply points her finger at an enemy spell-caster and a green ray unerringly shoots from her hand, enveloping an opponent in a coruscating emerald field (with radiance equal to a *faerie fire* spell). While this field is in place, the affected spell-caster will find that the way he channels spell energy is strangely affected. There is a 90% chance (-2% per level of the enspelled caster) that the spell energy is warped and the intended spell is bent, wasting the spell and causing the victim's body to be ravaged by magical flames (1d6 hp damage per level of the intended spell).

An affected mage can use magic items normally, and the magical flames can cause no damage to equipment, clothing etc. The material component for this spell is an emerald that has been bathed in the fiery breath of a red dragon, hellhound, firedrake, or similar fire-breathing creature. The spell has no effect whatsoever on non-magic-using creatures.

## Spell Siphon

(Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 9

Range: 10 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 9

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast at an enemy spell-caster, spell levels can be leached from his memory and a randomly rolled magical effect Instantaneously appears in the vicinity. A number of spell levels equal to the casters level plus 1d10 can be instantly stripped from the opponent's mind, beginning from the highest level spell memorized. (Round down when determining how many spells are removed.) Note that it is possible for all spells to be drained from an opponents mind—a negative sum also indicates this. A die roll then determines the ensuing effect, always at the casters level:

### Roll 1d8

- 1 Caster is affected by a *blur* spell.
- 2 Caster is affected by a *detect magic* spell.
- 3 Opponent is affected by a *dispel magic* spell.

- 4 Opponent is affected by a *feeblemind* spell.
- 5 A *lightning bolt* spell strikes the opponent.
- 6 Opponent is affected by a *slow* spell.
- 7 Opponent is affected by a *summon swarm* spell.
- 8 Opponent is affected by a *vampiric touch* spell (no touch necessary).

An opponent can save where applicable. Spells function at the level of the caster, and effects last 1d6 rounds (even the *feeblemind* spell effect) unless the effect is instantaneous. These spells cannot be blocked by a *minor globe of invulnerability* or a *major globe of invulnerability* spell. Sages speculate that it might be possible to key other spell effects into a *spell siphon* spell, but such variations must always consist of one spell effect from each of the recognized schools of magic.

The material component of this spell is a magical item that has been drained of power (e.g. a wand with no charges remaining, a piece of broken magical armor, etc.). This spell has absolutely no effect on non-wizards.

## The Book of Darazell

This spellbook has a dark and evil history—a legacy that mirrors the land from where it came, the blighted Kingdom of Aerdy. Its spells were first put to paper sometime in the 4th Century by the assassin-wizard Darazell. Little is known of the history of this evil mage save the infamous and rare spells he perfected, especially his trademark *Darazell's noose*.

Darazell met an ironic fate when he himself was assassinated by unknown hands, his body found slumped over his beloved spellbook. It is a puzzle to those who know his tale that such an efficient killer was taken unawares and murdered. It is sometimes said that Darazell knew rare rituals and had made a pact with a dark power, one that would allow him to rise in eternal undeath. Indeed, it is said that Darazell ordered his own assassination as the final stage of the ritual.

So, the book was sold, bartered, stolen, lost and found from the See of Medegia to North Province and back over the next 200 or so years, falling into the hands of various lesser

mages. The common thread that bound these mages together was that none kept the book for any length of time, and many reported strange phenomena surrounding the book.

A rumor persists that Darazell, cheated by the dark power, lives on within the book as a rare form of undead, a "tome-haunt." Supposedly, he searches for a particular type of owner to possess in order to finish some unknown goal. It has been said that there are a couple of secret pages within the book that give clues to what this is, but no one has been able to record what they hide.

The spellbook is compact and bound in bleached, patchy, green leather. It has silver corner caps and an ornate silver dagger device, blade pointing downward, painted on the front. The book is apparently difficult to destroy and always seems to reappear eventually, whether burnt, discarded, etc. Inside, written in Darazell's spidery script, are his favorite spells: *change self*, *spider climb*, *sleep*, *darkness 15' radius*, *invisibility*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *dispel magic*, *hold person*, *secret page*, *vampiric touch*, *phantasmal killer* and *stoneskin*. In addition to these are four rare spells: *deaden senses*, *Darazell's noose*, *poison blade*, and *bladebane*. There are also descriptions of methods of assassination, and writings on efficient and subtle ways to commit murder. Oddly, there are 10 blank pages at the end of the book—pages that defy any attempt to write on them.

## Deaden Senses

(Charm)

Level: 1

Range: 5 yards

Components: V, M

Duration: 1 hour/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Neg.

By means of this spell, the caster may dull the senses of an opponent. The victim, failing a save vs. spell, becomes lethargic, slightly unaware of his surroundings, and is slow to react. While thus affected, the victim subtracts 10% (or a -2/1d20 penalty) from his chances to detect noise. More importantly, he must make a Constitution check each round or automatically loses initiative in a round of combat. Additionally, he suffers a -2 penalty to surprise rolls. The material

component for this spell is a fragrant flower that the caster, crushes in his hand during casting.

### Darazell's Noose

(Conjuration, Necromancy)

Level: 2

Range: 20 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 10 rounds

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Special

This spell summons into existence a noose-shaped area of force from the Negative Material Plane that hangs in mid-air over the head of an opponent. Each round the opponent must save vs. spells to avoid the grip of the noose, which causes 2d4 hp damage per round. Once caught, a victim is virtually helpless and must make a strength check to wrench himself free (with a cumulative -1 to the check per round). The noose cannot move very fast (MV 3) and a victim can usually escape, if a save is made, by simply fleeing from the spell's range. The body of someone slain by a *Darazell's noose* is lifted to hang lifeless in mid-air until the spell's duration expires. Once cast, the mage cannot will the spell to end—it is there for the duration unless dispelled.

The material component is a knotted piece of rope.

### Bladebane

(Alteration)

Level: 4

Range: 0

Components: V, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: Caster

Saving Throw: None

Upon casting this spell, the wizard's skin gains a silvery, metallic sheen. The wizard is now protected against all types of slashing and piercing melee weapons. Any hit from such a weapon inflicts only half damage, and the weapon must save vs. crushing blow, or its blade breaks. Magical weapons and weapons of exceptional quality are merely deflected. This spell offers no protection against other forms of attack (e.g., bare knuckle attacks, etc.). The material component is a toy wooden sword that the wizard must break during casting.

### Poison Blade

(Evocation)

Level: 4

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 4

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

Upon casting this spell, the wizard gains a momentary immunity to all forms of ingested poison. The next stage of casting can test the nerve of even the bravest mage, for it is at this moment that the mage must swiftly swallow the poison. This act summons into existence a pulsing maroon force shaped like a short sword controlled by the caster. The caster may strike with the weapon at his own THACO, with no non-proficiency penalty. When the blade strikes an opponent, the caster forces a save vs. poison or else one of the following effects occur:

1. The victim suffers 4d4 hp damage. A successful save indicates that the victim suffers only half damage.

2. Paralyzation, duration 2d4 rounds. A successful save negates the effect.

3. *Slow* (as the spell), duration 3d4 rounds. A successful save negates the effect.

The caster can choose only one type of poison blade per casting, but he can poison an opponent or opponents as many times as he can strike within the spell's duration (the second and third effects could be made cumulative). The mage can cause the spell to end at any moment he wishes. The material component is ingested poison of any type.



*David works in a bar to pay off his student debts, and Tony is a proofreader. When not having to do any of this boring stuff, they play the AD&D® game. The GREYHAWK® campaign's their favorite setting.*

By George Vrbanic



YOU'VE JUST REDEFINED THE TERM  
"CLERICAL ERROR"!





## Knights of History

by Don Perrin

THE CONCEPT OF THE PALADIN stems directly from the warrior monk ideology of the military orders of knights in our own history. Any DM who wishes to add depth and variety to the knightly orders in an AD&D® campaign world can find a wealth of information in real history.

There were three main orders raised in Jerusalem: The Knights Templar, The Knights Hospitallers and the Knights of St. Lazarus. All started as forces of protection but changed over their history in varied and unexpected ways. A fourth order rose to power in the same period and survived all the way into the twentieth century: the Teutonic Knights of Germany.

### The Knights Templar

The Knights Templar began as a group of Crusaders who escorted pilgrims from Europe to the Holy Land. They were formed in 1115 by two knights, Hugue de Pavens and Godfrey de Saint Adhemar. They, along with the seven other knights they recruited, operated out of Jerusalem, taking pilgrims to Jericho and then on to Christ's baptismal site in the Jordan river. They were known as the Poor Knights of Christ, as they had sworn vows of poverty, obedience and chastity.

The knights impressed the King of Jerusalem and were given quarters in a wing of the Royal Palace. The wing was built on the site of the Temple of Solomon, so the knights became known as the Knights Templar.

In 1124, Hugue de Payens went to France to find religious thinkers who would aid him in establishing monastic rules for the knights. He found Bernard, the abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux, and worked out the statutes. This is the first set of monastic statutes for "military monks" in history. Included in the statutes were bans against impudent words, senseless occupations, immoderate laughter, whispering or even suppressed giggling. The knights were to never play chess or dice and were to wear their hair short, as having long hair was considered a sign of vanity. They were to despise mimes, jugglers, story-tellers, dirty songs, and the performances of buffoons.

Through military successes in the Holy Land, great influence was created in the royal courts of Europe. Most of the castles, land, and wealth of the order came from donations from kings and dukes inspired and awed by the holy knights. The whole military force of the Knights Templar never grew above 2,000 knights and an accompanying number of Sergeants (armored mounted warriors who were not knights) and squires, some 8,000 in all.

After the fall of Jerusalem to the Moslems in 1243, the knights fell in numbers and reputation. Eventually, in 1307, the Pope agreed to an inquiry into allegations of blasphemy, idolatry, and sodomy. The King of France, King Philip, had all of the Templars in France arrested, including all of the senior hierarchy, and ordered them

tortured until confession. Many died, and those that later retracted their confessions were burned at the stake.

Today, the most notable sign of the Knights Templars is the existence of international banking. When pilgrims would set out from Europe, they would deposit sums with the Templars in their home country or country of embarkation, and receive a promissory note. They could retrieve their money in the Holy land when they arrived, making travel much safer. That money empire survives today as the banks of Geneva are direct descendants of the institutions put in place by the Templars.

### The Knights Hospitallers

In 1070, a group of merchants in Jerusalem, after the Crusaders had taken the city, set up a hospital for the dying and wounded within the city. The merchants were originally from the city of Amalfi in Italy, and they founded the Hospice of St. John the Almoner. The place was run by Benedictine monks and nuns. By 1113, the Hospice had broken away from Benedictine rule, and the Hospitallers were created as an independent religious order by Papal bull. The Orders statutes allowed the monks to take up arms in the defense of the hospitals (now several, scattered across the Middle East and into Europe.)

By 1126, the Knights of St. John were organized but were more commonly called the Knights Hospitallers. The knights fell under the same rules as the Knights Templar, and fulfilled a similar function. In the Holy land, their armored heavy cavalry were the best troops in the entire region, and could dominate any fighting, far in excess of what their small numbers would normally merit. By 1210, the military wing of the Hospitallers rivaled the Knights Templar in military power. After the fall of Jerusalem, the power of the Knights Hospitallers fell off to such an extent that the finest castle in all of Christendom, the Krak des Chevaliers, was forced to surrender without much of a fight because there weren't enough defenders.

In 1256, the Hospitallers and the Templars took opposite sides in a desperate struggle in the city of Acre, where Genoese and Venetians were fighting for control. In 1258, a treaty between the two orders of knights was drawn up, but by that time, the damage had been done, and the

growing strength of the Moslem Turks overtook the lands and castles of both orders of knights. After the fall of Jerusalem, the knights moved their headquarters first to Cyprus, then to the small island of Rhodes, and finally to the island of Malta.

The order continued to exist until the Napoleonic Era. The island of Malta was surrendered to Napoleon's forces in 1798, effectively ending the Knights Hospitallers.

## The Knights of St. Lazarus

Little is known about the Knights of St. Lazarus. It is not known when the order was formed, but it was in existence by 1142 and had the alternate name of "The Leper Brothers of Jerusalem." All of the knights and their brother Sergeants and Squires were victims of leprosy. It was a rule that a Knight Templar or a Knight Hospitaller who contracted leprosy was immediately to join the Knights of St. Lazarus and wear a habit of all black, with no badges adorning it.

The Knights of St. Lazarus did little in the sweeping military engagements in the Middle East, as their numbers were so small and their forces all the victims of a terrible disease already. They did work to protect their hospitals, and they fought in many of the same battles as the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller. They were disbanded around 1790, with all of their lands and holdings falling to the French Revolutionary Government.

## The Teutonic Knights

At the siege of Acre, in 1190, both the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller (possibly with the Knights of St. Lazarus) set up a hospital for the sick and wounded from the fighting. The hospital, and the hospitallers who guarded it, were eventually recognized by the Holy Roman Church and established as an order, although an exceedingly small one. The hospital, and over time, all of the hospitals that were set up under the Teutonic Order, were to aid German speaking sick and wounded. Frederick of Schwaben and his brother financed the organization of the order and of its defense force, the Teutonic Knights, based on the Knights Hospitallers.

The other orders of knights had already formed and taken over the prime castles and holdings in the Holy Land, and the Teutonic Knights

remained somewhat smaller and poorer than their knight cousins. Because of this inability to expand in the Holy Land, and because of its origins, the Teutonic Knights maintained a distinctly German flavor. King Andrew of Hungary offered a portion of his territory to the knights if they would put down a revolt there. This they did, but in seeing how efficient the knights were, Andrew became afraid of the knights, and evicted them. Without enough support, the knights withdrew.

The knights found a new home in Germany proper when in 1226, Emperor Frederick II made the leader of the knights and his successors Princes of the Empire and could wear the imperial eagle of the Holy Roman Empire on their livery.

Wars were fought over the next several centuries with the Teutonic Knights operating mostly in eastern Europe. One of their most famous defeats occurred when the knights were on the attack against the eastern Russians. The Russians defeated the knights when the ice of the frozen lake on which the battle was fought collapsed, killing all of the knights present, but the lighter armored Russian cavalry escaped. The incident was made famous by the classic film *Alexander Nevsky*.

By the fifteenth century, the Order became its most powerful by concentrating on eastern Europe against the Lithuanians. They did not suffer anywhere near as badly for the loss of the Holy Land as did the other Orders of knights. During this period, it was fashionable for a European noble to be trained by the Teutonic Knights and to return to military prowess. The King of Hungary, King John of Bohemia and King Henry IV of England all once rode with the Teutonic Knights.

The Order remained in existence well into the twentieth century, but as a whole did not fight any major wars. In both world wars, the German Army boasted the *Hochund-Deutschmeister Regiment*, all members of the Order. The second world war saw the true spirit of the knights rise up when twelve of the Order attempted to assassinate Hitler in his bunker in 1944. All were executed.



*Don Perrin is a freelance author living in Williams Bay, WI, and is currently working on the Sovereign Stone role-playing game by Larry Elmore. He writes DRAGONLANCE® fiction and is a nut for historical military miniature gaming.*

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# onventions

## JANUARY CONVENTIONS

### Georgecon

**January 2-4 1998** **MO**  
 Stafford Inn, St. Louis, MO. Guests: Jerry Rector (Star of the new *Star Trek* series *The Privateers*), Ray Greer (*Champions\**, *Fuzion\**, and other RPGs), Rick Loomis (President & Founder of *Flying Buffalo*), and Matt Faileigh (former President of Society of Ancients and Game retailer). Events: Four major *Magic\** tournaments, roleplaying events, *Warhammer\** and *Warhammer 40K\**, *Necromunda\**, *Vampire\** LARP, Super Hero LARP, *anime*, masquerade ball, filking, etc. Contact Georgecon c/o NHGG P.O. Box 398 Gerald, MO 65066. Email: ike96@fidnet.com

### Crusades '98

**January 16-18, 1998** **CT**  
 Quality Inn Conference Center, New Haven, CT. Events: Board games, miniature wargaming, TCGs, painting contest, and seminars. Contact: Connecticut Game Club, P.O. Box 403, Fairfield, CT 06430-0403. Email: quillup@concentric.net.

## FEBRUARY CONVENTIONS

### Winter War XXV

**February 6-8** **IL**  
 The Chancellor Hotel, Champaign, IL. Events: *Magic: Vampire*, AD&D® game, *Call of Cthulhu\**, Hero System, *Warhammer*, *GURPS\**, LARPs, historical games, miniatures, board games, *Star Fleet Battles*: and more. Contact: Donald E. McKinney, 304 W. Sherman Box 1012, St. Joseph, IL 61873. Email: winterwar@prairienet.org.

### DunDraCon

**February 13-16** **CA**  
 Marriott Hotel, San Ramon, CA. Events: 150+ convention-sponsored RPGs, seminars on gaming, CCGs and board game tournaments, miniatures games, SCA rooms with seminars, displays and demos, large dealer room, flea market, figure painting contest, video arcade room and lots of open gaming. Registration: \$30. Contact: DunDraCon, 1145 Talbot Ave., CA 94706. Email: ashland@ccnet.com.

### Total Confusion

**February 19-22** **MA**  
 Ramada Rolling Green Hotel, Andover, MA. Events include role-

playing, board, and card games. Contact Total Confusion, P.O. Box 403, N. Clemsford, MA 01863. Email: mikechambers@juno.com.

### Con of the North

**February 20-22** **MN**  
 Radisson Hotel, Downtown St. Paul. Events: collectable card, roleplaying, live-action, computer network, and board games. Contact P.O. Box 18096, Minneapolis, MN 55418. Email: cotn@omnifarious.org. Website: <http://www.real-time.com/~cotn>.

### Jaxcon '98

**February 20-22** **FL**  
 Ramada Inn on Arlington Blvd., Jackson, FL. Events: roleplaying, card, and miniatures games. Other activities: an AD&D tournament, sanctioned *Magic* tournament, *Vampire* LARP, dealer's room, and flea market. Registration \$20/weekend until Jan. 1; afterward \$25 for weekend, \$15 for Fri/Sat. Contact: Jaxcon, P.O. Box 14218, Jacksonville, FL 32228-4218. Email: Jaxcon@usa.net.

### SheVaCon

**February 27-March 1** **VA**  
 Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Guests: C.S. Friedman and Larry Elmore. Events: art show and sale, 24-hour gaming, live-action roleplaying, *Vampire*. Contact SheVaCon, P.O. Box 2672, Staunton VA 24402. Email: drgnshrd@rica.net

### Winter Fantasy '98

**February 26-March 1** **IL**  
 The 1998 Winter Fantasy convention offers an unequalled opportunity to hone your gaming skills. With multiple seminars on a broad range of topics, there has never been a better

## Convention Listings 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) 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! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions

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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 (425) 204-7226 (U.S.A.).

**Important:** *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

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 it was received. You also might 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 do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

- ❖ Australian convention
- \* Canadian convention
- \* European convention

place to study and practice gaming. There will be featured events to discuss becoming a better gamer, seminars from companies that drive the industry, and other game-related topics. Also being added this year is a full slate of board, card, miniature, and non-Network roleplaying. As always the RPGA® Network will be a main focus of Winter Fantasy, with daily gaming events, seminars, and LIVING CITY events. Contact: Winter Fantasy, P.O. Box 13500, Columbus, OH 43213. Email: andon@aol.com.

## Coscon '98

**February 27-March 1** PA

Days Inn Conference Center, Butler, PA. Events: Card, board, miniature, and roleplaying games, including RPGA Network LIVING CITY™ and Benefit events. Other activities: Deadler's area, new game demonstration, computer room, movies, and guests. Registration: \$15 before February 15, \$20 thereafter and at the door. For more information, send a SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003.

## MARCH CONVENTIONS

### MegaCon '98

**March 13-15** FL

Expo Center, Orlando FL. Guests: Julie Bell, John Byrne, Tony Daniel, Joseph M. Linsner, George Perez, Don Rosa, William Tucci, Boris Vallejo, Mark Waid, and Steve Bryant. Events: roleplaying, RPGA Network, miniatures gaming, comic book artists, CCGs, anime, LARP, comics, and gaming dealers Room. Other activities: board gaming, fantasy art show and auction. Contact: P.O. Box 3120, Winter Park, FL 32790. Email: megacon98@aol.com. Website: <http://www.edgeglobal.com/megacon>.

### Gamer's Con IV

**March 20-22** NJ

Four Points Inn, Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ. Events: RPGA Network events, including first-run LIVING CITY and LIVING DEATH™ tournaments, and a LIVING DEATH interactive event. Artist Guest of Honor: Jason Alexander Behnke (L5R/Tempest). Other activities: All new "Lords of Gaming" contests, vendors, artists, auction, demonstrations, computer gaming and more. Registration: \$30 pre-reg; \$40 at door

for weekend. All events free. Contact: Heleen Durston, c/o Multigenre, Inc., 2432 Steiner Rd., Lakehurst, NJ 08733-3437. Email: [info@multigenre.com](mailto:info@multigenre.com) or [acd@lucent.com](mailto:acd@lucent.com). Website: <http://www.multigenre.com>.

### AggieCon XXIX

**March 26-29** TX

Texas A&M University. Guests: Robert Asprin, Kerry O'Quinn, Joe R. Lansdale, Thomas Knowles, Darlene Bolesney. Events: dealer's room, art show, panels, gaming, charity auction, *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, masquerade ball, costume contest, 24-hour anime room. Contact: Texas A&M University, MSC Student Programs Box J-I, College Station, TX 77844. Email: [aggiecon@msc.tamu.edu](mailto:aggiecon@msc.tamu.edu). Website: <http://cepheid.tamu.edu/aggiecon>.

### Egyptian Campaign '98

**March 27-29** IL

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL. Events: RPGA Network events, AD&D game, *Shadowrun\**, *Battletech\**, *Warhammer 40K*, *Empire Builder\**, *Diplomacy\**, *Axis & Allies\**, *Magic*, *Star Fleet Battles*, *Car Wars\**, and many other board, miniature, card, and roleplaying games. Contact: Egyptian Campaign 1990, c/o S.I.U.C. Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Third Floor Student Center, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425. Email: [ECGamCon@aol.com](mailto:ECGamCon@aol.com). Website: <http://www.siu.edu/~gamesoc>.

### Con-spiracy 8

**March 28-29** IL

Grace Roper Lounge at Rockford College, Rockford, IL. Events: roleplaying, card, board, and possibly miniatures games. Registration: \$3 at the door, or free entrance with last year's button. Contact: Theresia Conner, Rockford College, Campus Box 120, 5050 E. State Street, Rockford, IL 61108. Email: [connert@rockford.edu](mailto:connert@rockford.edu).

## JUNE CONVENTIONS

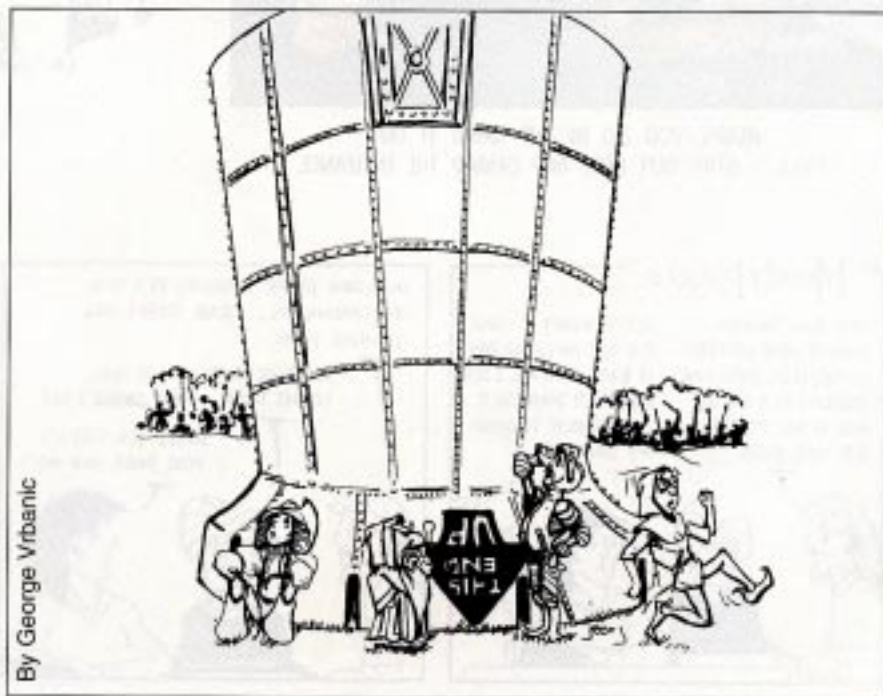
### Milwaukee Summer Revel

**June 5-7** WI

The Inn Towne Hotel, 710 Old World Third Street, Milwaukee. Guests: Gary Gygax, Janet Pack, Tom Wham. Events: All first-run roleplaying events, including LIVING CITY and LIVING JUNGLE tournaments, AD&D game, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Boot Hill*, *Paranoia\**, board games, miniature events, war games, nonstop Dawn Patrol, TCGs, and the always exciting Wham-A-Thon. Other events: Seminars, dealer's area, game demonstrations, and strategic breaks for lunch and dinner. Registration: \$20. Contact: Bruce Rabe, Summer Revel, P.O. Box 779, New Munster, WI 53102.



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# DragonMirth

## Flint and Steel

by Bill Hrenchuk



HEADS, YOU GO IN AND CHECK IT OUT.  
TAILS, I STAY OUT HERE AND GUARD THE ENTRANCE.



by Joseph Pillsbury

by Harry Dolan







by Mathew Guss



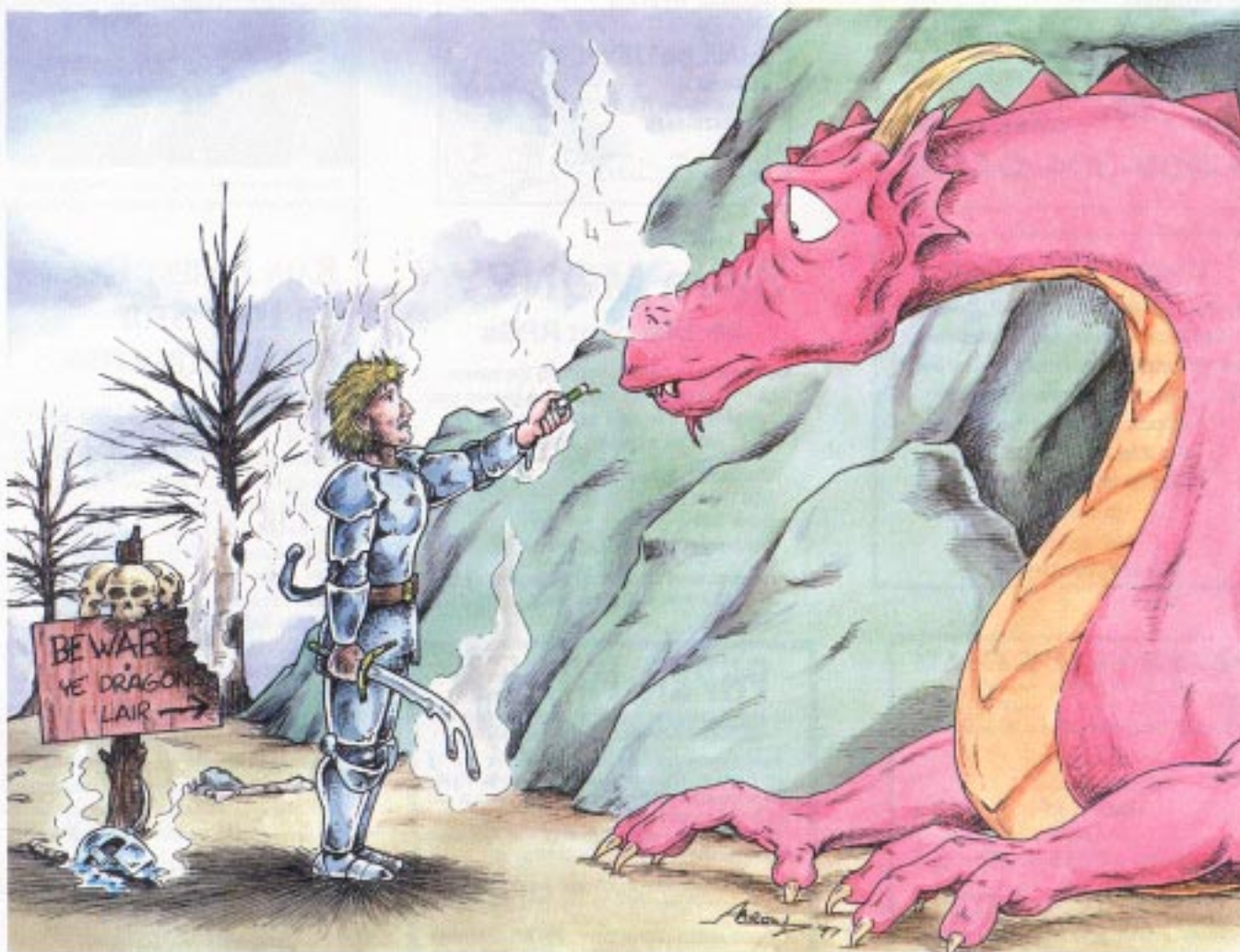
THE MISSION IS  
NEAR IMPOSSIBLE,  
WHO WILL RISK THEIR  
LIVES FOR ME?!?



HUNDREDS HAVE  
PERISHED TRYING.  
WHO WILL VOLUNTEER  
FOR A SHARE OF THE  
TREASURE? FOR GLORY?  
FOR THE MAGIC ITEMS?



by Aaron Williams



"MINT?"



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Trees are the basic building blocks of the rain forest.  
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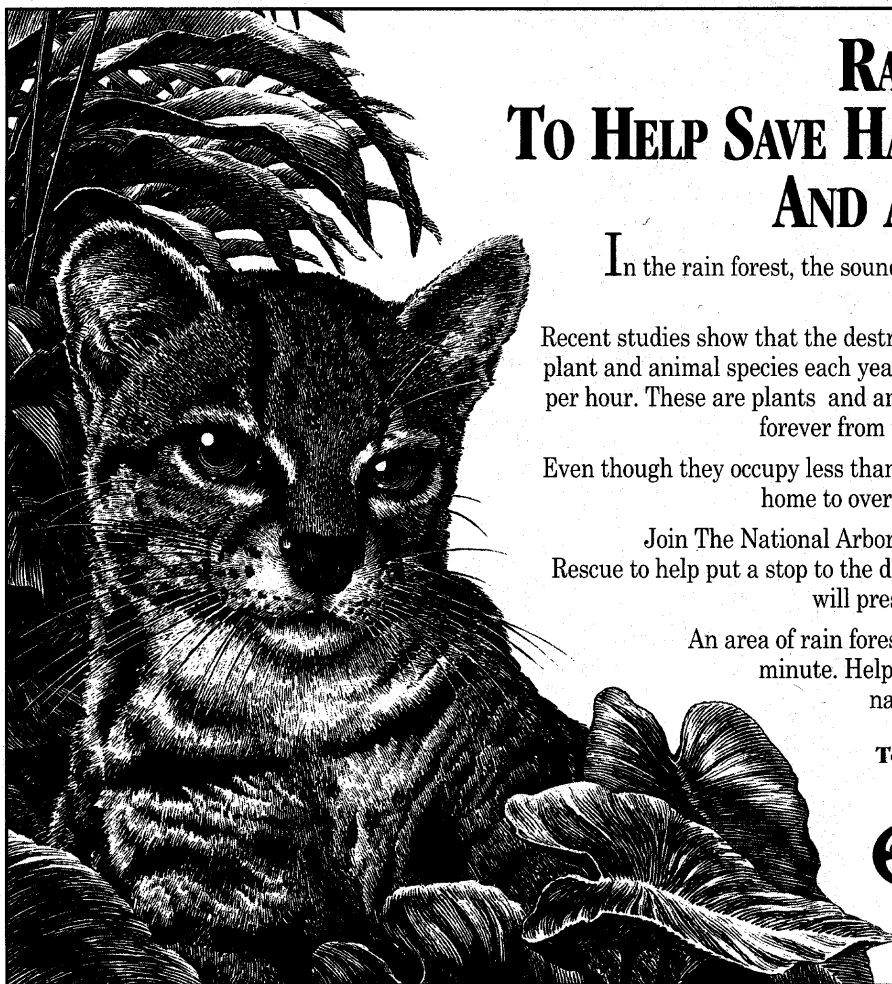


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1-800-222-5312**

 **The National  
Arbor Day Foundation**

The Margay is one of many species whose habitat is threatened rain forest.



# FLOYD

Written  
and  
illustrated by  
Aaron Williams



YEAH, YEAH... COOL.  
IT, WILL YOU? I'M NOT  
HARKING YOU ALL THE WAY  
TO IRCARDIA!

WE'RE JUST GOING TO HOLE UP  
IN THIS DUMP WHILE CARMEN  
FINDS OUT WHY YOU'VE LOST  
YOUR MARBLES, OKAY?



TIRED?

YOU COULD'VE  
HELPED

YOU NEEDED  
THE EXERCISE

FINE! BUT  
YOU GET TO  
DRAG THE NEXT  
FRUIT LOOP!



YOU KNOW WHAT  
REALLY WEIRDS  
ME OUT...

...IS HOW MUCH  
HE SOUNDS LIKE  
MY LATE TEACHER,  
MELZAK.



PERHAPS THAT'S  
BECAUSE...

HE IS  
MELZAK.



WHAT?!

WELL, IT'S  
ONLY A  
THEORY.

...BUT I'M  
DETECTING TWO SETS  
OF THOUGHT ENGRAMS  
IN MELVIN'S HEAD; ONE OF  
THEM HAS EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE  
WITH SPELLCASTING--



OK, BY THE  
WAY:











IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU SHOWED UP!



MELVIN! GET AWAY FROM HIM!

FLOYD! STAY BEHIND ME!



NOW!



SORRY TO BE SO RUDE, BUT MY BOSS FELT YOU AND I SHOULD CHAT WHILE SHE SPENDS SOME QUALITY TIME WITH YOUR FRIENDS.

I'LL GO FIRST: MY NAME'S ORGATH. MY TURN-OFFS ARE SMOKERS, SHARP IRON OBJECTS...



OKAY FLOYD: EXAM TIME. YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO TRY OUT SOME OF THE MORE DESTRUCTIVE MAGICS NOW...

I'LL TRY TO STABILIZE YOUR ENERGY WEAVES SO WE CAN TAKE OUT THE WANSSED MEIRDO WITHOUT DETONATING THE COUNTRYSIDE!



AH YES... THE TEACHING DEVICE.

MISTOPE!



CARMEN!



MY, SUCH CONCERN FOR A MERE TOM! IT'S SIMPLY RUNNING A SELF-TEST. NOW UNLESS YOU WANT ME TO ERASE HER...

I SUGGEST YOU CAST THIS SPELL



UM, WHY? WHAT DOES IT DO?

IT KEEPS YOUR FRIEND INTACT...

...AND PREVENTS ME FROM USING YOUR SKULL AS A LITTER BOX SCOOP!







# Role Playing Reviews

## Three Views of the Future

© 1997 Rick Swan

**BEFORE WE PROCEED** with our regularly scheduled program—a look at science fiction extravaganzas—flip over a couple of pages and read what Lester Smith has to say about the art of game reviewing. I'll be here when you get back.

Done? Good.

I agree completely with everything Lester says, especially the part about not playing a game before reviewing it (which happens more than you think). And let me add: I'd be suspicious of any review of a new roleplaying game that appears immediately after the game's publication. RPGs, complex as they are, take a while to digest, and first impressions aren't necessarily the most accurate. Or the most reliable. Proceed with caution.

Want to know what I look for in an RPG?

**1. Strong characters.** I want three-dimensional PCs, characters so compelling I can't wait to play 'em. And I want PCs capable of growing and changing over the course of a campaign.

**2. Strong setting.** The game world should be vividly described; I want to see it in my head as clearly as I can see my home town. It should burst with potential for exciting adventures. And originality's nice too; I'm not interested in carbon copies of settings I've seen before, or settings whose principle sources of inspiration seem to be other RPGs.

**3. Internal Logic.** Spare me from humans who can survive falls from airplanes and erudite mages who can't count to ten unless they have the Mathematics skill. The mechanics should compliment the game's intent. A game stressing exploration and verbal interaction doesn't need 50 pages of combat rules. But a game stressing violent encounters and battlefield action just might.

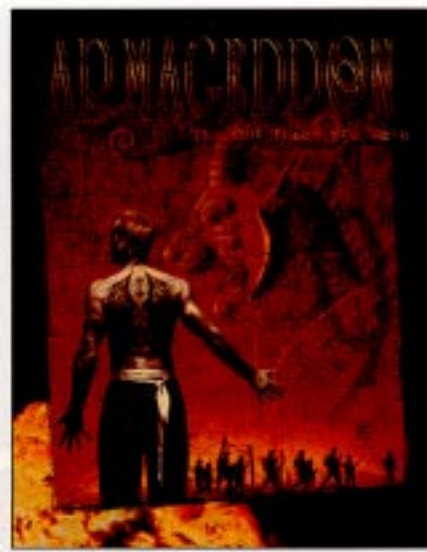
**4. Playability.** Is it any fun? Does it hold your attention, challenge you, delight you? Or is it more like a job than a game? If the game's complicated, do the extra rules make for a richer experience?

**5. Completeness.** Everything you need to know to play should be included in the basic rules. Nothing is more irritating than having to round up an extra book or two just to get an introductory adventure off the ground.

**6. Presentation.** Poor writing and editing have been the downfall of many an RPG with the potential for greatness. If you have to suffer through endless typos, ambiguities, and incomprehensible rules, why bother? Major publishers, by the way, are just as guilty as the small press guys.

I could go on, but you get the idea. Oh, here's one more tip. If the cover shows a half-naked woman, in most cases, that's as good as saying: WARNING—CRAP AHEAD.

Now, let's get back to the future.



### Armageddon\* game

One 256-page  
softcover book

Myrmidon Press

Design: C.J. Carella

Illustrations: Timothy Bradstreet, Mark A. Nelson, Scott Baxa, Guy Davis, Fred Fields, Tony Harris, John Nyberg, James O'Barr, R. K. Post, Michael Sutfin, Karl Waller, and Berni Wrightson

Cover: Timothy Bradstreet and Grant Goleash



\$25

The future according to *Armageddon* is a strife-ridden hellhole populated by morally ambiguous "heroes" and psychotic bad guys who make Charlie Manson look like Martha Stewart. Decaying cities teem with chaos and despair. Random violence, both supernatural and manmade, ripples across our crumbling planet. In short, it's a lousy place to live. But it's a great place to roleplay.

No one can accuse designer C. J. Carella—whose nightmares are also on display in the *Witchcraft*\* game and a zillion *Rifts*\* game supplements—of being a Pollyanna. Nor, for that matter, can he be accused of thinking small. The war waged in *Armageddon* encompasses not just poor old Earth, but every single plane in the multiverse. The bad guys—led by the ultra-nasty Church of Revelations—aren't interested in territory or resources; they want souls: yours, mine, your dog's, everybody's. The Church's arsenal includes everything from nuclear weapons to supernatural fiends (led,

some say, by Lucifer himself). Televised executions are commonplace, as are death camps for non-believers.

An ordinary mortal has as much chance of surviving the day to day carnage of *Armageddon* as a snail on the Los Angeles freeway. Accordingly, Carella escalates the power of the player characters to extraordinary levels; PCs can be spellcasting Immortals, reality-bending Inheritors, or godlike Seraphim (angelic beings wielding celestial fire). To create one of these marvels, the player first selects an archetype (Avenger, Daredevil, Fanatic) and a genus (such as the aforementioned Inheritor or Seraphim). He then receives a fixed number of points to spend on attributes (Strength, Intelligence, Constitution) and Skills (Climbing, Martial Arts, Medicine). Points may also be spent on advantages called Qualities (Artistic Talent, Charisma, Acute Senses). Accepting one or more Drawbacks (Cowardice, Prejudice) earns additional points to buy more Qualities.

Although it's a blast playing an invincible angel, the character rules—which comprise about a fourth of the book—contain an annoying amount of clutter. Half of the archetypes are either dull (Reluctant Hero, Avenger) or redundant (who needs the Student when you've got the Seeker of Knowledge?). Too many of the Qualities and Drawbacks are poorly defined (what's the difference between Habitual Drinking, which costs 1 point, and Heavy Drinking, which costs 2 points)? And some of the skills are just plain goofy (Beautician?). Tellingly, *Armageddon* doesn't include a credit for an editor. Tsk, tsk.

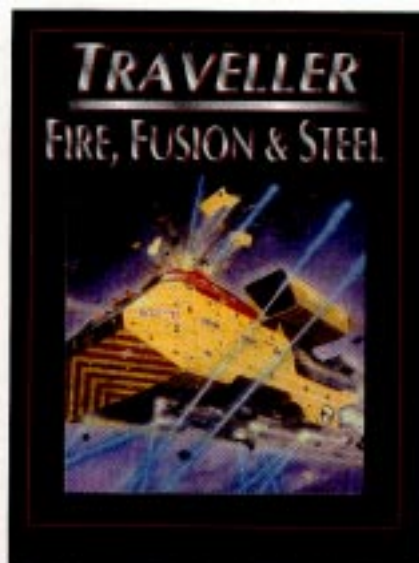
Task resolution uses the Unisystem, a streamlined, flexible, set of mechanics introduced in *Witchcraft*. Basically, you roll a 10-sided die, add the relevant Attribute and Skill numbers, then add or subtract any situational modifiers (if, for instance, the PC has a sprained wrist, he might suffer a penalty when he's throwing a dagger). If the result is 9 or higher, the action succeeds. Spells are treated as Skills, enabling PCs with an aptitude for magic to create waves of flame or travel to another world. Combat adds another later of complexity, but that's acceptable, even expected, in a game this combat-intensive. Combat, in fact, is the game's focus—and we're talking brutal, blood-splattered, take-

no-prisoners combat. Characters can stab, spin kick, and sucker punch each other into oblivion, inflicting damage of phenomenal magnitude. Believe me, you ain't been sucker punched till you've been sucker punched by an angel.

Carella's pretty good with mechanics, but he's a superstar at settings. *Armageddon's* "world of fear and uncertainty" crackles with horrific energy, imaginative flourishes gracing nearly every page. Jet fighters square off against hordes of winged ghosts while the city below bursts into flames. The reanimated corpse of a Nazi officer leads a squad of zombie knights on a rampage of destruction. The sinister Dark Apostle, leader of the Church of Revelations, orders nuclear strikes to punish the heathens of Texas and New Mexico. Too bad, then, Carella neglects to give us any adventures. Or maps. Or much of anything else to help get a campaign up and running.

**Evaluation:** *Armageddon* suffers from Kitchen Sink Syndrome; that is Carella threw in everything he could think of—magic, science, religion, you name it—making the game a fascinating mess, but a mess nonetheless. And all this apocalyptic gloom and doom seems suspiciously derivative of White Wolf's World of Darkness RPGs (like the *Werewolf: The Apocalypse\** game). I half-expected *Armageddon* to sprout fangs and howl at the moon.

That said, *Armageddon* has much worth recommending: a setting of breathtaking scope, unforgettable PCs, and Carella's crisp, always entertaining text. Should Myrmidon decide to spring for a second edition—and here's hoping they do—I have a few suggestions. (1) Tone down the high-tech stuff; the *Shadowrun\** game has already explored the relationship between science and magic, more convincingly than *Armageddon*. (2) Drop the power level down a notch; I don't know how a gamemaster can possibly keep coming up with adversaries formidable enough to challenge PCs this strong. (3) Hire an editor (or two). And, oh yeah, (4) keep Carella at least 10 feet away from anything with a White Wolf logo. (Information: Myrmidon Press, P.O. Box 1374, Royal Oak, MI 48068.)



## Fire, Fusion & Steel

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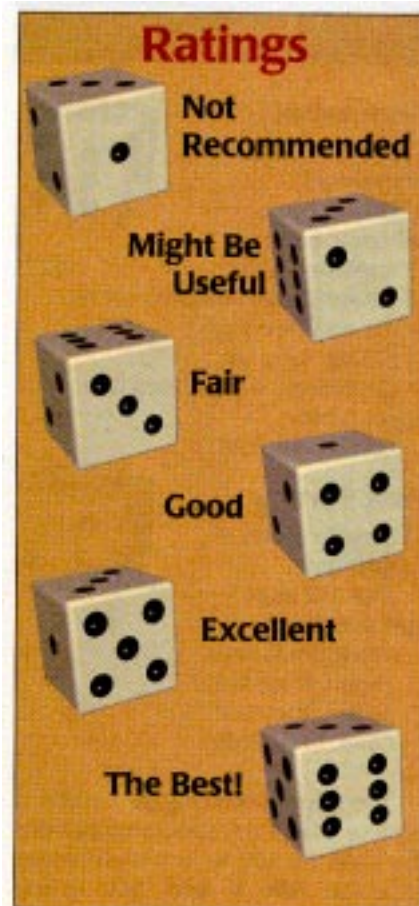
Imperium Games \$23

Design: David Golden and Guy Garnett

Editing: David Wise

Illustrations: Steve Bryant and Bryan Gibson

Cover: Chris Foss





## Pocket Empires

*Traveller* game supplement

One 112-page softcover book

Imperium Games

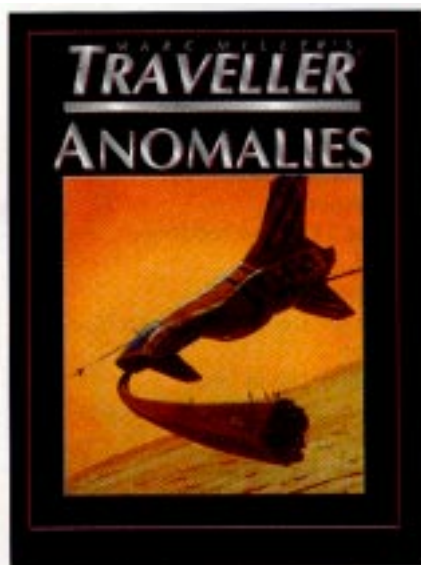
\$23

*Design:* David Burden, Stuart Dollar, Jo Grant, Andy Lilly, and Joe Walsh with Marc Miller and Timothy Brown

*Editing:* Suzette Dollar, Andy Lilly, and Tony Lee

*Illustrations:* Bryan Gibson and Stephen Daniele

*Cover:* Chris Foss



## Anomalies

*Traveller* game supplement

One 112-page softcover book

Imperium Games

\$23

*Design:* Duane Maxwell, Steve Miller, and David Wise

*Editing:* Tony Lee

*Illustrations:* Steve Bryant and Bryan Gibson

*Cover:* Chris Foss



## First Survey

*Traveller* game supplement

One 112-page softcover book

Imperium Games

\$23

*Design:* Marc Miller

*Editing:* Tony Lee

*Cover:* Chris Foss



important than expertise with a calculator. It's my favorite science fiction RPG because it makes me feel like a scientist, something an arithmetically challenged fool like yours truly could never ever be in real life.

In its two decades of existence, *Traveller* has earned a reputation as the hardest of the hard science games; bug-eyed monsters are as out of place in *Traveller* as pro football players in the AD&D® game. And by the way, that's "hard" as in "serious," not "difficult." Despite its ambitions, *Traveller* remains reasonably easy to master, thanks to the designers' commitment to lucid writing and logical rules.

Having said that, I confess to being baffled by *Fire, Fusion & Steel*, a supplement so dense with numbers that it might as well be written in Chinese. Ostensibly an instruction manual for designing space vehicles—everything from grav tanks to atmospheric cruisers—it more closely resembles a physics text for precocious grad students. For instance, to compute the required thrust (in newtons) of a rocket, you add the unit's mass in kilograms to the square root of the design velocity (in kilometers per hour) divided by the technology modifier from Table 119. (There are 225 tables in all.) An excerpt from the jump drive section: "The amount of fuel required for a successful jump is equal to 10% of the displacement of the ship per parsec of jump distance. The amount of energy [required] is equal to 64 megajoules per cubic meter per parsec jump [meaning that] a starship must have 0.018 megawatts of power plant per cubic meter per jump number."

Players comfortable with parsecs and joules should have a field day with all this, as it allows them to put together the rocket ship of their dreams. But for those of us who still count on our fingers, *Fire, Fusion & Steel* is about as appealing as a rat in our lunch box. My three-pip rating? A wild guess. If the math is flawed—which I have no way of determining—it deserves one pip (or maybe none). But if the math is valid, it deserves six, easy, on the basis of scholarship alone. Even if you're not a *Traveller* fan, you ought to thumb through this book just to get an idea of the extremes to which an RPG can go.

More manageable is *Pocket Empires*, in which players to own and operate

their own planets, making it sort of an outer space version of the AD&D game's BIRTHRIGHT® campaign. Although *Pocket Empires* builds on the concepts in the original *Traveller*, it's pretty much a game in itself. In *Traveller*, you play a regular guy, typically an explorer or academic, relatively insignificant in the grand scheme of the universe. In *Pocket Empires*, you play the ruler of a world, struggling to establish a workable government and maintain productive relationships with other Imperium empires. *Pocket Empires* thinks big. And it rewards players who do the same.

The book provides clear, imaginative rules for selecting a suitable planet, developing an infrastructure, and exercising political influence on one's own constituency as well as rival rulers. Especially nice is the "Creating the Family" chapter, featuring a clever system for generating ancestral histories. Once all the players' empires are in place, the game unfolds in a series of year-long turns. Players attempt to shape history by initiating Meta-Tasks, such as technological investments and declarations of war. The success or failure of Meta-tasks—affected by resource allocation, random events, and die-rolls—determine a player's status in the Imperium. Though parts of the book seem rushed—the combat rules are superficial, many of the random events are underdeveloped—overall, *Pocket Empires* is a masterful design. Because virtually every decision has momentous implications, *Pocket Empires* does a remarkable job of making players feel like monarchs.

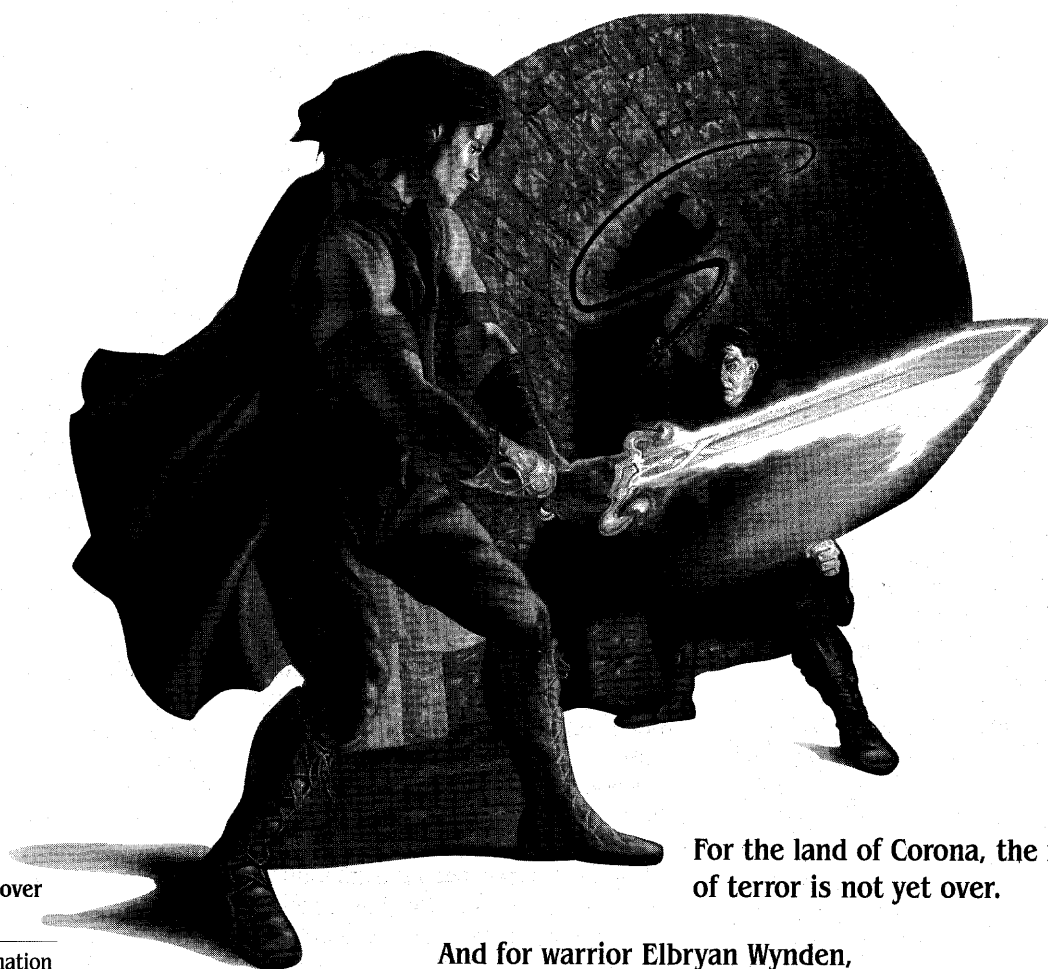
*Anomalies*, a collection of nine loosely linked scenarios, is a triumph, one of the best sci-fi anthologies I've ever come across. Brilliantly staged, featuring compelling characters and jaw-dropping plot twists, every episode is a winner, and I'd be hard-pressed to pick my favorite. In "Lock and Loot," the PCs attempt to thwart a renegade diplomat scheming to enslave the primitive population of a dying civilization. "The Sleepers" features a mysterious cyrogenics facility, acolytes of a deadly religion, and a horde of malevolent robots. "Dead Space" sends the PCs to a deserted research station for a confrontation with a genetic experiment gone disgustingly wrong.

Flaws? Well, the maps are bland, the art so-so, and the pages of dense

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text are hard on the eyes (somebody ought to introduce the writers to the joys of short paragraphs). But nit-picks aside, **Anomalies** is a first-rate effort, absorbing, intelligent roleplaying of the highest caliber.

Finally, we have **First Survey**, consisting of page after page of planetary information pertaining to the worlds of the Sylean Federation. Though the sheer number of entries is impressive (well over 10,000), the amount of hard data is sparse to the point of non-existence; a typical entry includes little more than the world's name, location, and terrain type. The sparseness, for the most part, is intentional, the idea being that players are supposed to fill in the blanks as they explore the planets over the course of a campaign. That's an appealing concept, but I have a couple of objections: (1) Any experienced gamemaster ought to be able to cook up a perfectly adequate list of planets all by his lonesome. (2) Considering the quality and type of information, this is hardly a bargain at \$23.

**Evaluation:** I recommend **Anomalies** to all sci-fi roleplayers, as the adventures can be adapted to virtually any system with a little work. (I'm adapting one of 'em—probably "Lock and Loot"—to White Wolf's just-released *Trinity\** game, an RPG we'll be examining here in a month or two). **Pocket Empires** builds on fundamental *Traveller* concepts and hence doesn't adapt as easily; it's better left to *Traveller* veterans with the time and patience to manage entire worlds. **First Survey** is an easy call; if you have a hankering for a book stuffed with thousands of description-free computer-generated planets, here you go. As for **Fire, Fusion & Steel**, the next time you run across somebody who thinks roleplayers are weird, show 'em a copy of **F, F&S**; then they'll *really* think you're a mutant.

## Lords of the Expanse

*Star Wars\** game supplement

One 80-page booklet, one 72-page booklet, one 48-page booklet, one 22" x 17" double-sided map sheet, eight character sheets, 16 character cards, six 6-sided dice, boxed.

West End Games \$30

Design: Paul Sudlow and Chris Doyle



Editing: Paul Sudlow

Illustrations: Tim Bobko, Tom Blondolillo, Jacen Burrows, Tom O'Neill, and Christina Wald

Cover: Brian Schomburg

The future according to *Star Wars* is—oh heck, you've seen the movies, so you know all about it, right? Or do you? 'Cause when you weren't looking, the *Star Wars* universe (as depicted in the RPG) became substantially darker, a trend that began with the excellent *DarkStryder* campaign set from a couple years back and continues apace in **Lords of the Expanse**.

**Lords** casts players as citizens of the Tampani sector, a self-ruling network of noble houses reminiscent of the feudal empire depicted in the *BattleTech\** game. Nobles, house guards, and entrepreneurs—all of whom are available as player characters—vie for economic dominance and political control. Treachery and betrayal are not only tolerated, but encouraged. As designers Paul Sudlow and Chris Doyle point out, the traditional *Star Wars* setting defines character behavior in stark blacks and whites. Tampani society, however, "is pretty much made up of various shades of gray."

Book One, *Sector Guide*, spells out the basics, featuring a capsule history of Tampani, an overview of the most influential houses, and an examination of the major planets. Despite superfluous chapters on ships and equipment—leftovers, perhaps, from other *Star Wars* supplements?—the *Sector Guide* does an admirable job of making a complex society easier to understand.

The *Sector Guide* is intended primarily for players. Books Two and Three, the *Gamemaster Guide* and *Campaign Guide* are aimed at referees. The *Gamemaster Guide* focuses on political and social organizations, such as the Firebird Society (an all-female paramilitary group skilled in martial arts) and the Justice Action Network Cell (a terrorist collective specializing in blowing up shopping malls). The book also includes thoughtful essays on the court system and financial policy, as well as a number of intriguing adventure hooks.

The *Campaign Guide* contains all the elements necessary to get a campaign going: a base of operations (a customizable Rebel cell, which can be established on the planet of the players' choice), some interesting places to explore (Estalle Island, the Alaphoe Gardens), a roster of ready-to-go non-player characters (the manipulative Lord Vaskel Savill, the twisted Dr. Arkeld), and a terrific introductory adventure ("Hunting Grounds," fast-paced and solidly written). All told, **Lords of the Expanse** succeeds as an inventive fusion of setting and character, a shade lighter than the bleak *DarkStryder*, but significantly more solemn than the original film trilogy.

It's not perfect. Though the ideas are strong, West End could've made the set more user-friendly. None of the three books has an index, and two lack contents pages. The map sheet doesn't contain enough information to justify its size. There aren't enough templates to handle all the new characters. (Here's a sentence to make you pull your hair out: "Thirty more templates customized for Tampani sector are included in the *Tampani Player's Guide*, most of which do not appear in this box set."). And there's a lot of background material to digest—too much, I suspect, for novices.

**Evaluation:** As someone who got his fill of Wookiees about in, oh, 1982 or so, I applaud West End's efforts to nudge *Star Wars* in new directions. A little bird (okay, it was a little bird from West End) told me that the forthcoming prequel films will be more sinister than the original trilogy, downplaying the kids' stuff in favor of more mature themes. Don't get me wrong: **Lords of the Expanse** doesn't feature any plot elements from the new movies. But it's apparently compatible in tone. So who knows? **Lords of the Expanse** might

turn out to be more than just a launching pad for a great *Star Wars* campaign. It might also be a preview of what George Lucas has up his sleeve.

## Short and Sweet

**Titan: The Arena\*** game, by Reiner Knizia with Don Greenwood. Avalon Hill Game Company, \$20.

To Avalon Hills library of classics—which includes the *Civilization\**, *Stellar Conquest\**, and *Diplomacy\** games—add **Titan: The Arena**, an appallingly addictive card game. Players represent spectators at a Roman-esque arena, placing wagers on battles waged among the Cyclops, Troll, Hydra, and five other combatants. One creature dies at the end of every round. Players may then make additional wagers on any surviving creatures, but at lower odds; in other words, the earlier you commit your money, the better your chance of hitting the jackpot. Each player also holds an eight-card hand of power cards, deployed at opportune moments to boost the fortunes of a favorite or cripple an enemy. Thanks to the interplay of strength cards and the creatures' special abilities—the Hydra, for instance, gets a strength card bonus—outcomes are impossible to predict, making every game a start-to-finish nail-biter. Irresistible, exhilarating . . . and I wanna play again! Now!

**Big Eyes, Small Mouth\*** game, by Mark C. Mackinnon. Guardians of Order, \$14. **GURPS Mecha**, by David Pulver. Steve Jackson Games, \$18.

If your idea of a good time is role-playing "one-dimensional stereotypes" (the designer's words, not mine), welcome to **Big Eyes, Small Mouth**, a stripped-down, entry-level RPG based on Japanese cartoons. To create a one-dimensional wonder, you roll two 6-sided dice, add 10 to the total, then spend the resulting number of points on three basic stats (Mind, Body, Soul). Another set of points is invested in various advantages (Acrobatics, Heightened Senses) and disadvantages (Awkward, Easily Distracted). It's a reasonable character creation system, but that's pretty much all you get. There's little in the way of background material, campaign outlines, or staging tips, making this more of an introduction to roleplaying than a ready-to-play game. Hardcore *anime* fans might be better off investigating the *Bubblegum Crisis\** game by R. Talsorian.



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 "Even the Dark Side pales compared to this card game" - D. Vader  
 "I'd trade a Black Lotus and two Moxes just for a chance to play" - name and address withheld

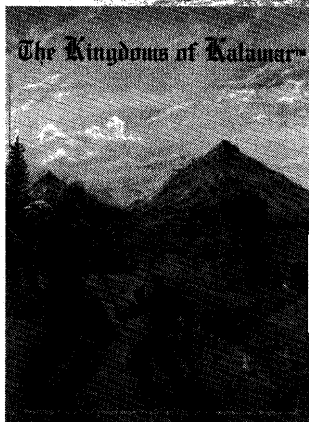
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(Information: Guardians of Order, 176 Janefield Ave., Unit #300, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G 2L6).

Or, if you're conversant with the *GURPS*\* game, you might want to check out *GURPS Mecha*, by ace designer David Pulver (responsible for the superb *GURPS Robots* and *GURPS Ultra-Tech*). Where

*Mouth* emphasizes humans, *GURPS Mecha* goes for the machines, gaudy robotic monstrosities that take the form of everything from anthropomorphic tanks to cybernetic kitty cats. The book provides step-by-step instructions for designing mecha from scratch: choosing drivetrains, customizing equipment pods, debugging software. Once your machines are up and running, you can turn them loose in "Cybermech Damocles," a lively campaign setting that pits a secret agency against some nasty alien invaders. Note, however, *GURPS Mecha* requires solid math skills, evidenced by a sample sentence from the power plant section: "[A TL9 fission reactor] weighs  $(1 \text{ lbs} \times 1,500 \text{ kW}) + 1,000 = 2,500 \text{ lbs.}$ , takes up  $2,500/50 = 50 \text{ cf}$  in the body and costs  $\$40 \times \text{weight} = \$100,000$ , plus

$\$40,000$  for the reactor core." Clearly, this is best-suited for *anime* fans whoaced algebra.

*Spirit West*, by Wayne Breaux Jr. and Kevin Siembieda. Palladium Books, \$21. In the anything-goes tradition of the *Rifts* game, *Spirit West* gives American Indian culture a psychedelic once-over. The cover says it all: an Indian warrior astride a robot stallion blasts a laser rifle at a multi-horned buffalo. Blending fantasy and frontier American history is hard to pull off, as demonstrated by the *Werewolf: The Wild West*\* and *Deadlands*\* games. But with its psionic shamans, levitating cacti, and Two-Faced Star-People (shapeshifting cannibals from another dimension), *Spirit West* makes the competition look as tame as a Roy Rogers movie.

*Nasty, Brutish, and Short*, by Edwin King. Columbia Games, \$18.

No, the title doesn't refer to game critics (I'm not that short), but to orcs, everybody's favorite thugs. Ostensibly for the *HarnMaster*\* game but adaptable to any fantasy system, this breezy tome serves up a handful of orc-oriented adventures, along with

some brief, informative essays on orkish culture and biology. This generous number of well-rendered maps are also welcome. But at 56 pages, this isn't a particularly good value—in fact, you could say the price is downright nasty. (Information: Columbia Games, Box 3457, Blaine, WA 98231.)

*Moon Dragon*\* game, by Josh Friel, Jules McCann, and Tony Rousmaniere. New Dimension Games, \$50.

Not quite a miniatures game and not quite an RPG, *Moon Dragon* simulates lunar dogfights in three-dimensions, utilizing pewter spaceships attached to metal rods protruding from large wooden blocks. Players expend energy points to move and fire weapons until one ship falls off its block and dies. Flexible joints enable you to adjust the position of the ship on the rod physically, allowing for all sorts of tricky maneuvers; rotate the ship's wings upward and twist the ship to the right, and you've got yourself a 30-Degree Roll (which makes the ship harder to hit). Advanced rules cover explosions, electronic warfare, and afterburners. PC pilots spend experience points on skills (Endurance, Quick Reaction Time) and their salaries on equipment (Wasp Missiles, Shield Boosters). The components are pretty cool, and the streamlined mechanics—the "Quick Start" rules comprise only a couple of pages—mean you can get a dogfight underway in a matter of minutes. The RPG material, however, isn't convincing (like the lame history of the United Earth Government) and a few of the rules should've been dumped (there's no compelling reason for Slow Turns and Fast Turns). Still, I'm inclined to give the benefit of the doubt to any game that lets you play with blocks. (Information: New Dimension Games, 4 Kennedy Rd., Cambridge, MA 02138.)



"APPRENTICE, GO DOWN TO THE CRYSTAL BALL REPAIR SHOP AND TELL THEM THAT THE LOANER ISN'T WORKING OUT!"

Freelance writer Rick Swan has reviewed 624 game products for *DRAGON* Magazine. Yes, he counted.

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# Re: Views

Date: Thu, 23 Oct 97 22:14:00 PDT

From: **lester smith** <lester@pensys.com>

To: DRAGON Magazine <dragon@wizards.com>

The first hobby game I ever played was *Richtoffen's War* — a WWI airplane simulation—and I've been hooked on aerial dogfight games ever since. Similarly, the first writing I ever sold was a tiny "capsule review" of a small-press RPG, in the old *Space Gamer* magazine, and I've been hooked on doing game reviews ever since.

As with most things I'm fond of, I have some pretty strong opinions about how reviews should be done. In launching this new column, let me take a moment to confess some of those opinions.

First, I think reviews ought to analyze a product, not merely report on it. Forgive my audacity for saying so, but far too many do little more than summarize a game or simply restate the its own hype about itself. Others just effuse about how cool a concept is, or harp upon some pet peeve of the reviewer, without really considering whether the game works or not. All too often, it becomes obvious that the reviewer didn't even read the entire product. I think that reviewers owe readers more than that.

In part, this attitude is the result of that first review I sold. The *Space Gamer* editors insisted upon a four-part format: 1) What's the product all about; 2) What's good about it (find something); 3) What's bad about it (find something); and 4) What's your recommendation to prospective buyers? I've found that reviews that adequately describe a product, then consider both its strengths and its weaknesses, are far more likely to come to a responsible recommendation.

Second, I believe that a reviewer ought actually to play a game before writing a review. Far too many reviews either gush with the first flush of a reviewer's excitement or unfairly heap disdain upon a product, without actually "taking the thing out for a test drive." Even after designing and reviewing games for over a decade, I am still frequently surprised by how differently some product reads from how it plays. Perhaps more importantly, in playing a game, I get a chance to see other players' reactions to it, which helps to either confirm or challenge my own.

Third, I think that reviewers should reveal some of their own personality in their pieces. Not only does this make the text more entertaining, it also lets readers develop a sense of the writer's likes and dislikes, blind spots and biases, which can help them to judge the product's suitability for their own gaming.

These opinions shape my reviews. Now that you know them, you can better judge my comments concerning individual products. They also stand as a commitment from me to you.

## Asylum\* Game

176-page, perfect-bound book, \$20.00  
Clockworks, P.O. Box 13403,  
Overland Park, KS 66282-3403; Email  
asylum@interaccess.com; website [http://  
homepage.interaccess.com/~asylum](http://homepage.interaccess.com/~asylum)

Design: Aaron Rosenberg

Editing: Alex Kolker and Amy Sparks  
Kolker

Cover Art: Aaron Rosenberg & John  
Berg

Interior Art: Jeremy Rizza, DiAnna  
Adams, Jim Janousek, Jen Purcell, Jim  
Norem, Aaron Rosenberg, Liesl  
Montgomery

Historically, most RPGs have arisen to provide opportunity to adventure within an already popular genre. As just a few examples, the AD&D® game came in the wake of a fantasy revival spawned by reprintings of *Lord of the Rings* and various Conan books, the *Cyberpunk\** RPG came less than a year after novelist William Gibson's *Neuromancer* crystallized the cyberpunk genre, and the *Vampire: The Masquerade\** game followed the rise of Anne Rice's vampire Lestat series and a spate of bloodsucker films. More recently, this link from film and books to RPGs has increasingly involved direct licenses of popular properties.

Given that situation, it is fairly unusual for a RPG to invent a truly distinctive world. But that is where the *Asylum* game really shines. The game postulates a future in which a couple of major volcanic eruptions have tilled the skies with "Blanket Seed," a cloud of algae which thrives in the upper atmosphere. As a result, most surface plant life has died out, along with

all but the most savage carnivores, and the entirety of humanity has gone insane due to sunlight deprivation. Player characters are inmates of one of a few city-sized wards, which were walled off before the US government gave up the ghost. The setting is convincingly explained, with enough details that the reader can hardly help but visualize it clearly.

Less exciting, however, is the game's physical presentation. Although the cover is odd enough to attract attention, the interior layout is pretty primitive, with an uninspired font, confusing column breaks, and mostly amateurish art, interspersed with a scattering of muddy photos with no real connection to the text. I suspect that many potential customers will take one glance and pass on by, without delving any deeper.

The game mechanics are also troublesome. They are constructed around the blind draw of two colored marbles from a group of ten. Players then have to convert those colors to numbers in most cases, though tables in the game are built upon specific color matches. The marbles are intended as a flavorful little quirk, but the system is marred by missing combinations on virtually every table. This makes game play frustrating, with marbles being drawn and redrawn until a match that the tables can handle comes up. Dice would have done the same job much more easily, if less uniquely.

The writing is also unclear in many places, and difficult to reference during play, despite the inclusion of indices. Everything is so scattered, and tables are so visually indistinct, that searching through the book is something like scanning snow flurries.

Still, the setting alone is worth the price of admission. This is a world worth gaming in, though game masters will have their hands full in conveying an entire city of NPCs with variant mental aberrations. In all, the game is not bad as a designer's first effort. With some mechanics development, another editing pass, and a professional layout, it would really rock.





# TSR PREVIEWS

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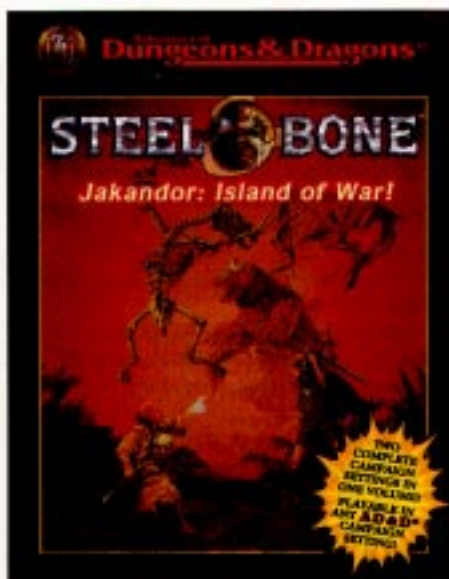
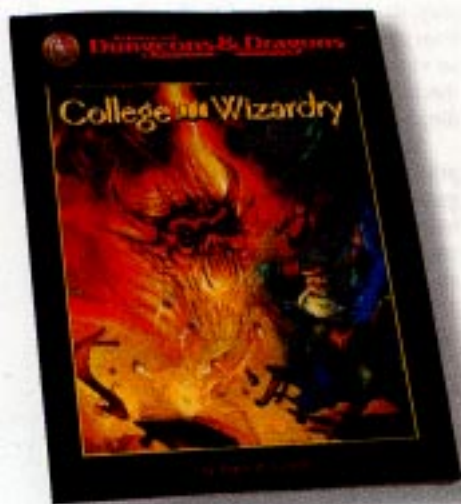
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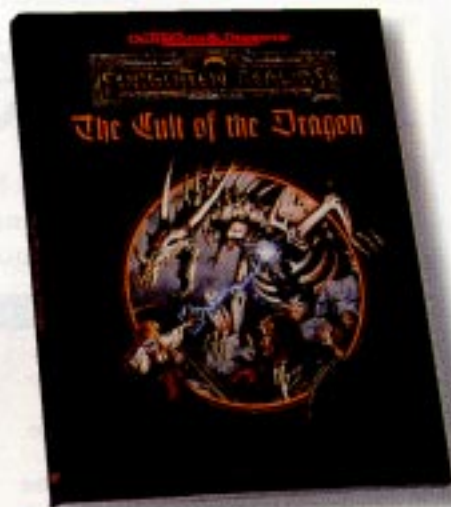
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Cover by Roger Raupp

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## Legends of the Lance Issue # 1

A **DRAGONLANCE®** Saga Newsletter  
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All **DRAGONLANCE** fans will want a copy of this quarterly newsletter. The first issue includes an interview with Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, several new articles about the **DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE®** setting, new information about upcoming **DRAGONLANCE** releases, and other fascinating items exclusive to this publication. To receive your *free* newsletter, write to legends@wizards.com or Wizards of the Coast, Customer Service Department, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98055. Be sure to include your name and mailing address.



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## Margaret Weis

Co-author (with Tracy Hickman) of the original DRAGONLANCE® trilogy *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, *Dragons of Winter Night*, and *Dragons of Spring Dawning* (1984-85) and the 1995 sequel *Dragons of Summer Flame*. This month TSR publishes her newest DRAGONLANCE novel, *The Soulforge*.

# Profiles

by Allen Varney

MARGARET WEIS STARTED with the Jesse James gang. In the late 1970s and early '80s, she wrote children's books, leading off with a biography of notorious frontier bandits Jesse and Frank James. She loved to write, anything and everything. But after tackling computer graphics, robots, the history of Thanksgiving, and an adventure book written at a 2nd-grade reading level (intended for prisoners), Weis needed a change. In 1983 she took a staff job in TSR's book department. She was assigned to edit "Project Overlord," a novel coordinated with a trilogy of AD&D® modules.

"I worked with Tracy Hickman to plot the novel," Weis recalls. "We hired an author, who didn't work out. By that time, Tracy and I were so into the project that we felt we had to write it." Overlord grew into a trilogy of novels and 15 linked modules, and it got a new name: DRAGONLANCE. Weis had a wonderful time working on it. "To my mind, what made the project so successful was that everyone was involved in it, excited about it, and believed in it."

Calling DRAGONLANCE "successful" is like calling Bill Gates "rich"—true, but inadequate. The original DRAGONLANCE trilogy has sold well over three million copies worldwide and spawned dozens of sequels, as well as the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE™ roleplaying game (1996). DRAGONLANCE made TSR a major publisher of paperback fantasy and inspired the whole category of game-related novels. Meanwhile, Weis and Hickman left TSR to write the Darksword trilogy (1986-87) and the seven-book Deathgate Cycle (1988-94) for Bantam Books. Weis also moved from fantasy to space opera with the Star of the Guardians novels, her favorite of her series.

After recovering from breast cancer (1993) publishing games (Mag Force 7, 1994-96), and marrying writer/game designer Don Perrin (1996), Weis returned to DRAGONLANCE. Following *Dragons of Summer Flame*, written with Hickman, Weis worked solo on this month's brand-new hardcover. *The Soulforge* concerns her favorite character from the trilogy, the dark wizard Raistlin.

"It's the story of Raistlin's early years, beginning at age six," says Weis. "It follows his experiences growing up, his meeting with the other

companions, and it culminates with the Test in the Tower when he's 21. I think readers will like it. People can identify with Raistlin. We can relate to feelings that nobody loves us, to the struggle for recognition and acceptance. I really understood Raistlin right off the bat."

Fans now recognize and accept Weis at the many conventions she attends each year. Readers tell her of their emotional responses to Raistlin and the other DRAGONLANCE characters. "I got a letter from a young man who said his older brother would always tell him about the DRAGONLANCE books and try to get him to read them. Then the older brother was killed tragically in a car accident, and all this young man felt he had left was the books. He read them and loved them, and felt that reading the books brought him closer to his late brother."

A different response came from a Swedish heavy metal band, Lake of Tears, whose album *Crimson Cosmos* includes a song called "Raistlin and the Rose."

Weis gladly offers experienced advice to anyone interested in writing. Why? "I promised my agent, Ray Puechner, who died of cancer in 1986, that I would help other young writers as he helped me." Weis and Perrin also support the gaming community in their home town of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, through their spectacular Game Guild gaming center and (less publicly) through Sunday potluck dinners.

Weis is currently working with Hickman on *Sovereign Stone*, a fantasy trilogy in a setting created by artist Larry Elmore. Weis says, "It's a fantasy world with elves, dwarves, and orcs, but we've taken a different twist. Elves have strict warrior codes and a disciplined society, rather like the medieval Japanese. Dwarves are nomadic, like the Mongol hordes. It's much different [from DRAGONLANCE], more complex, with more intrigues." Del Rey will publish the *Sovereign Stone* novels, but no dates have been set.

Margaret Weis may have started with the James gang but they never managed what she's achieved: many friends and spectacular success, doing the work she loves.





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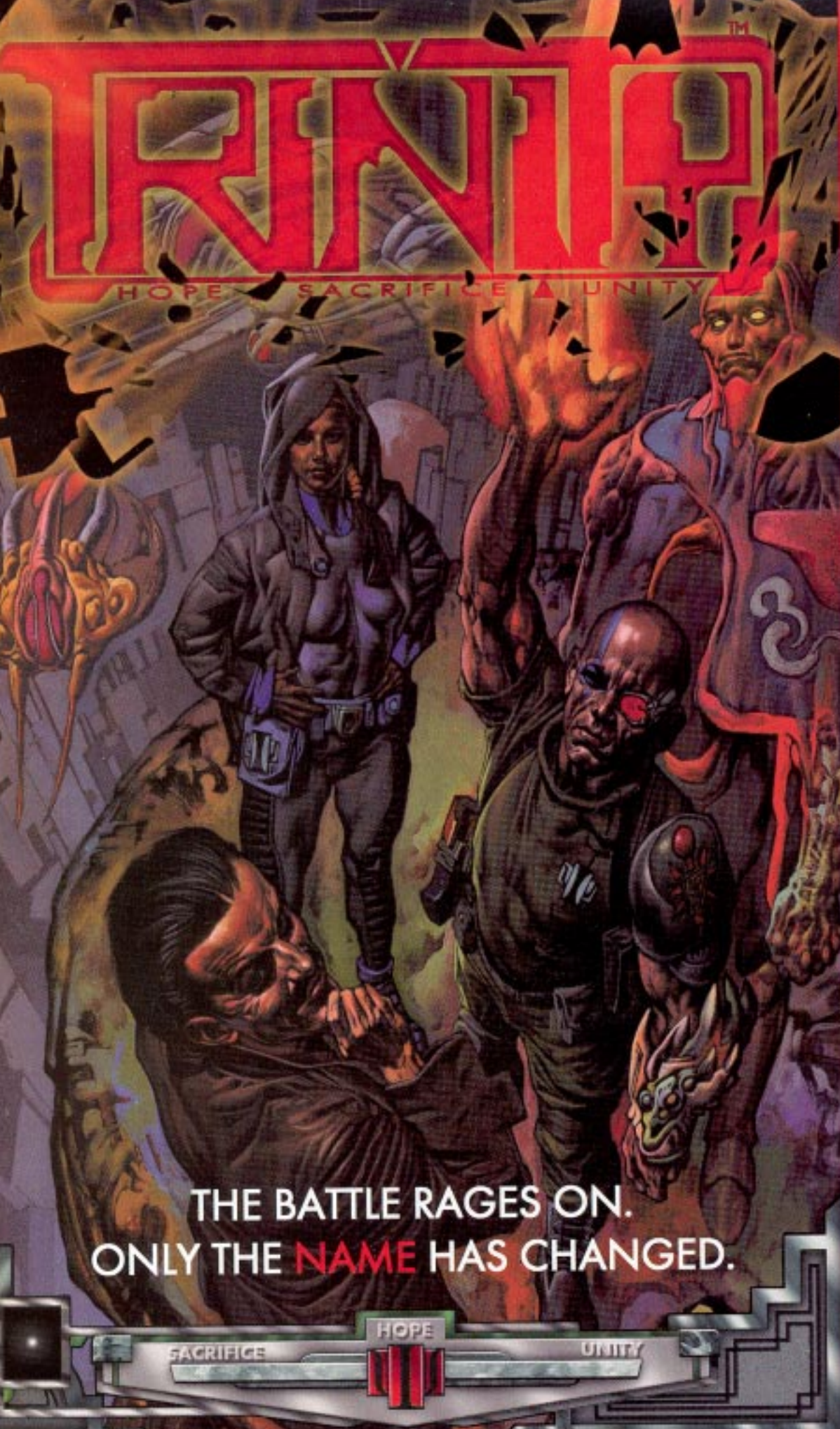


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