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#25



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by Neal Barrett, Jr.

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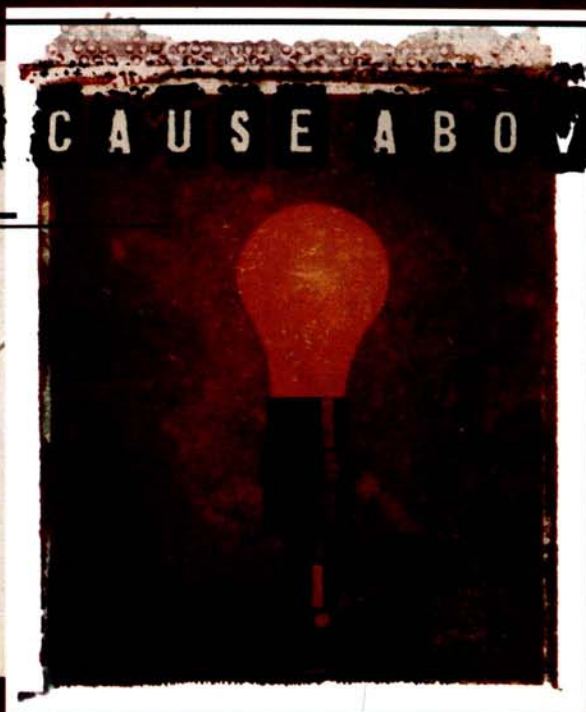


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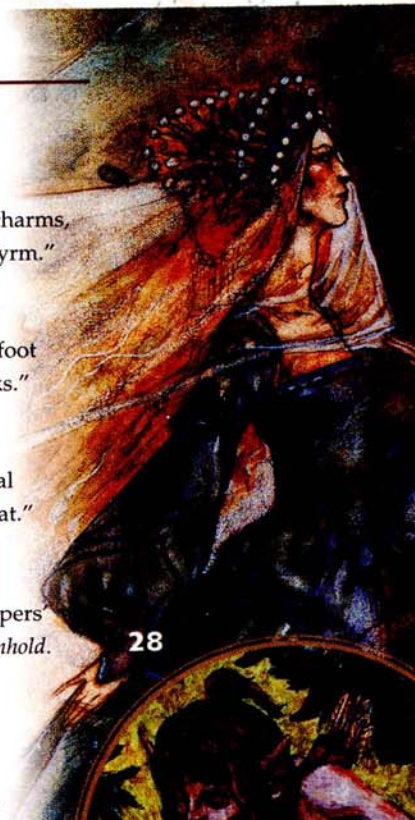
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The Wyrms' Turn™

Veteran's Day

You might notice that this issue of the magazine is a bit thicker than usual. (You might also have bought this issue someplace you didn't expect to find it, but I'll get to that in a minute.) This issue includes 16 pages of the D&D® Fast-Play Game, similar to the ALTERNITY® Game Fast-Play Rules we included with the magazine a few months ago.

Allow me to digress.

Jeff Grubb recently rejoined the TSR fold, so we've been catching up on the usual shop talk. Jeff mentioned an interesting phenomenon he'd noticed more often lately. Someone introducing a new friend to his wife might say, "This is Joe. We played D&D together." To Jeff that sounded a lot like, "This is Joe. We went to boot camp together."

What struck me most about the anecdote was not how long the D&D game has endured but how much it's remained a part of people's lives. Like any long-term endeavor requiring teamwork and personal interaction, playing D&D forges lasting bonds of friendship and inevitably leads to fond reminiscences, the gaming equivalent of war stories. You never hear someone say, "This is Joe. We played *Space Invaders* together."

What should you, a veteran of the game, do with these rules? I'm glad you asked. As I mentioned, you don't need the Fast-Play Game, because you're already a veteran. But maybe you know someone who would dig playing D&D.

Maybe your cousin is a big fan of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. (You can't tell me that show isn't a roleplaying game just waiting to happen.) Give her a copy of this magazine, and within months she might

have gathered her own group of vampire hunters for a weekly game session.

If your nephew is a great fan of Robert Jordan's fantasy novels but his idea of roleplaying is spending a few quality hours alone with his Playstation, give him this magazine. Soon you might find him and his friends creating their own adventures.

If your kids watch too much TV, spend all night surfing the web, and have the attention spans of tse-tse flies, try showing them just 16 pages of rules and adventure and see what they do with it. If you're lucky, if the Fast-Play Game does its magic, they'll be playing D&D for years to come. One day, they too will be veterans.

Two new things this month:

First, we're distributing *DRAGON® Magazine* more widely starting with this issue, so keep an eye on your local newsstand if you've had trouble finding us in the usual places. If you know anyone who's given up searching for the latest issue, pass this tip along.

Also, check out the new "PC Portraits" column. If you're like most people, you're better at writing characters than drawing them. Now you can swipe portraits from the best illustrators around. (You've got permission, but don't let that spoil your fun.)

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A Few Complaints and Compliments

I have been a player for eight years and a DM for six. I wish to make a few complaints, a few compliments, and of course, a few suggestions.

I'll start with complaints. Many TSR products require the use of other TSR products, making them hard (and expensive) to use. For example, the PLANESCAPE® adventure *In the Abyss* uses Armanites, a tanar'ri sub-species detailed in *Planes of Chaos*, a product I do not have. While it is good that they are there, I believe that there should be optional selections for the beasties. Another example is that *Dead Gods* uses the Ratatosk, and in *For Duty and Deity*, Specialty Priests. Not everyone has *Faiths & Avatars*, though I do.

OK, the compliments: I love the AD&D® game, and I play it constantly,

Month" in *Faiths & Avatars* format (from *Legends & Lore*, other campaign worlds, etc.)

I also think that you should print more articles on AD&D in general, as well as new races, kits, spells, psionics, and possibly new NPC classes (like those from *Sages and Specialists*).

Jeff Bunde
Windsor, Ontario, Canada

The Return of the Realmsmaster

Hurray for the return of the *Realmsmaster* crew! Now, all we need is for Jeff Grubb to write some of their earlier adventures in one of TSR's novels!

The write ups were a little hasty. I suspect that the group's weapons and armor is better than listed. Bluntly, Ishi's AC is a lot better than 2.

A more serious omission was the issue of how much damage Minder causes.

Wind and Water

Two quick notes from the last issue (#245). First, Paul Benfield, in his Aerial Assaults letter, seems to have forgotten about wind resistance.

A penny dropped from the top of the Empire State building causes no more damage than one tossed from say, the third floor window.

While dropping large rocks can cause damage, the odds of successfully hitting anything are slim, and most flying creatures probably can not carry enough to do any serious damage.

Second, on Bruce Heard's Rakasta of Mystara, what's with the fear of water? While domestic cats don't care much for it (being descended from a desert breed), the vast majority have no fear at all; many actually love to go swimming.

John Van Stray
Address Withheld

Showcasing individualized, "big" monsters that DMs can use in their campaign is a good idea.

three or four times a day (OK, OK, twice a week). I enjoy many of the campaign worlds; the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, PLANESCAPE, and DARK SUN® settings are my favorites.

As for *DRAGON® Magazine*, I like "Knights of the Dinner Table" (Brian is cool), "Wyrms of the North," "Sage Advice," "Forum," "D-Mail," "Dragonmirth," "Dragon's Bestiary," and "The Wizards Three." I actually read the introduction to "The Wizards Three" first, then look at the spells a few days later.

Suggestions: *Faiths & Avatars* had the most excellent way to detail a deity, so why not sport a "Pantheon of the

Oh, well, it was still great to see these characters, especially with art by Rags Morales.

In "Wyrms of the North," I was a little unclear why Miirym, a silver dragon, was acting so nasty in the first place. Upon her death, why does she suddenly get a broad menu of breath weapons? It really does not make sense. It seems to me that "Wyrms of the North" is running its course, but the idea remains good. Showcasing individualized, "big" monsters that DMs can use in their campaign is a good idea.

David Rakonitz
San Francisco, CA

We passed this note along to Bruce, and he responds: "The term 'fear' would indeed be strong for real-world cats. 'Dislike' would be more appropriate in this case. However, this 'fear of water' should be taken in a fantasy context for a race of imaginary cat-like people. They are merely inspired from real-world cat and their wildlife cousins. For example, the sherkasta and jakar, which are inspired from the tiger and the jaguar, show no fear of water, while a simbasta (leonine rakasta) would prefer staying out of it. The rest is there for roleplaying and color."

Dragon Down Under?

As a long-time reader, I can truthfully say that your magazine has kept up its amazing quality over the years. In issue #246, the "Dragonmirth" cartoon of the king looking at the enemy castle which

had a sign entitled "Up Thine!" was brilliant. It almost equalled the March 1985 "DragonMirth" picture of the thief auditions. Brilliant!

It is good to see what is coming up in the gaming world, as we here in New Zealand don't have many roleplaying stores. Any chance of moving your company to Auckland, NZ? Finally, congratulations on issue #246 with the flumph's decorating the pages. I especially like the cartwheeling flumph. Keep up the good work.

Stephen Trinder
Auckland, New Zealand

Use Your Imagination

I like some of Jason Francis Smith's comments (appearing in "D-Mail" in issue #247) about a lot of different issues, but I feel his comments on magical items and spells goes a little farther than positive criticism. He seems to like to use a lot of ideas (plots and settings) from all these different articles, but when it comes down to the smaller ideas (items and spells) he doesn't have any more time for them because he is now the advanced player who needs all the history and future plot written up for every little detail. I think he has gotten away from using his own imagination. In my campaign, finding new items and spells never heard of before is an exciting thing. Basing adventures around trying to gather information on history or abilities is grand. You should see what a bunch of characters are willing to do

when the normal *identify* spell doesn't tell everything there is to know about an item. Keep on publishing all those magical items and spells.

When I saw the ALTERNITY® game covered in *DRAGON Magazine*, I thought nothing of it. I figured it was a paid advertisement. Now that I am seeing *DRAGON Magazine* putting more ALTERNITY stuff inside and now a full article in issue #249, I get a bitter taste in my mouth from about 5–10 years back when *DRAGON Magazine* had so many articles from so many different games that it wasn't worth the money to buy the magazine. I would go down to the local library and copy the few (very few) pages from the magazine that pertained to AD&D.

This next part is directed solely at you, *DRAGON Magazine*. In the past year, you have repeatedly asked your readers what they would like to see in the magazine, yet in most every issue I have not seen much response to the ALTERNITY game. I saw the flyer sent several issues ago and applauded the new game coming out. But I started subscribing three years ago because *DRAGON Magazine* went back to filling the magazine with AD&D articles. Was there a response that other readers like myself don't know about? Are people asking for ALTERNITY articles, or are you just trying to promote a product? I would say: "If I still get the same amount of pages put towards AD&D and wizards/warrior type stories, then go ahead and put ALTERNITY in." But I believe in quality, not quantity. Too many people try to sell the world free things and then meanings are lost in the clutter. I enjoy your maga-

zine too much now just to sit idly by and let a good thing go. Please, listen to Michael Seymour from issue #249. He even throws in a couple of good solutions to the problem.

Dave E. Teets
Via email

Sixguns

I just got done reading issue #249, and the high point of that issue was the "Sixguns & Sheseyans" article by Rich Baker. It was really cool seeing how adaptable the ALTERNITY® system is, and I'd definitely like to see more ALTERNITY articles in the future ... even if I have to write 'em myself.

Just one article an issue would keep me happy, more would be great, but *DRAGON Magazine* is sort of an AD&D kind of place, and I understand that. Still, something like the old *Ares* section or possibly a regular feature would be infinitely awesome.

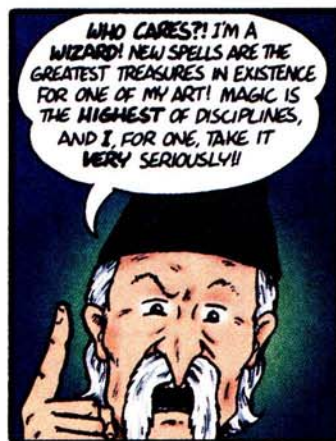
Finally, I agree with Mr. Michael Seymour's letter in #249. I do think there should be a separate magazine for the ALTERNITY game—however, I think that *DRAGON Magazine* should be the surrogate home for ALTERNITY materials until that happy day comes about.

Adam Schwaninger
Via Email

Issue #248

I would like to thank you for an excellent issue recently. Issue #248 had more information and useful bits and pieces for my campaign than any issue in over a year. I especially liked the article on Vore Lekiniskiy by Ed Stark and hope to see more of his work in both *DRAGON*

By Aaron Williams





Magazine

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Magazine and in gaming supplements this year.

The article on gems was a little more technical than I would prefer, and the long lists of gems seemed boring and repetitious at times, but even that article will find some use (especially when tied in with the magical gems of Vore Lekiniskiy's hoard).

The short fiction by Ben Bova is some of the best (although I am biased, being a major Orion fan), and I hope that there is an intent by the magazine to procure even more of his short fiction.

The "Dungeon Mastery" article by Rob Daviau was also quite nice to see. More articles like this will help beginning and even old-time game-masters. I know I have been DMing for almost 15 years, and it was a novel idea of which I had never really thought, although I had used it subconsciously on at least a few occasions.

I have been quite pleased with TSR's resurgence in the market with WotC. The recent issue of DRAGON Magazine was great, and I am looking forward to the new BIRTHRIGHT® look as well as more GREYHAWK® material. FORGOTTEN REALMS is OK, but when it comes down to getting back to basics, GREYHAWK did it right.

John Wright
Cookeville, TN

Get a Life!

After reading the letter of one of your subscribers, in issue #249, I just had to respond.

The writer tells how he feels betrayed when he reads one of your issues and there are articles within it on subjects other than D&D® or AD&D. He then, later in his comments, says he has been trying to think of a way to "circumvent the cancelation of his subscription." Well I have some advice for him: *Get a life!*

I am 32 years old and have been subscribing to DRAGON Magazine for longer than I can remember. I even purchased it off the shelf prior to my subscription. I have *always* loved the magazine and shall continue to hold a subscription as long as it is produced. One of the strengths of the magazine is its diversity. I usually play only AD&D games (GMing over 12 years, playing over 20) and also use DRAGON Magazine as a

Billy is asked to DM.

Billy has no time.

Billy says "yes" anyway.

Billy is screwed.

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source of reference and ideas. I even use the critical hit/miss charts from the *Best of Dragon*, much to the dismay of my players).

I read every article and, before the next issue arrives, have gone over it front to back about 5-6 times. One thing I get out of all the articles is ideas. Even reading an article on the MARVEL SUPER HEROES® game gives me ideas to use in my AD&D worlds. *DRAGON Magazine* has even introduced me to games I might not have considered playing. For example, I have played many sci-fi games and found most lacking. Therefore, I am apt not to try new ones. Your articles, advertisements, and mini-adventure on the ALTERNITY game has really grabbed my attention. As soon as I have the funds to purchase the rules and gather enough players to play, I am going to do so.

So what am I saying to my fellow subscriber is, deal with it! If you feel *that* strongly about a magazine, get help!

I, like thousands of others, have always and am sure will always enjoy *DRAGON Magazine*.

Please continue to publish this great magazine with all the great articles.

Karl Radloff-Licht
Louisville, Kentucky

Alternity No!

I am writing to say that I agree with Michael Seymour. From what I can see (from my almost-year or so of a subscription), *DRAGON Magazine* is for AD&D gamers. What little else is in there is fantasy (medieval fantasy, not science fiction). The reason people subscribe to your magazine is because they play AD&D, not ALTERNITY, *DRAGON DICE*™, or any other game you publish ... at least not as their main reason. I don't see that ALTERNITY has any place in *DRAGON Magazine's* pages, just because it is published by the same company.

Also, ALTERNITY seems to be a big enough game to have its own magazine (even if there's not as much in it as in *DRAGON Magazine*), though I've never played it, my self.

Jeffrey Piercy
Mountain View, CA

Alternity Yes!

I have been a part of the ALTERNITY mailing list for only a short time now, but one subject keeps coming up: ALTERNITY articles in *DRAGON Magazine*. There are quite a few of us who would love to see ALTERNITY covered in *DRAGON Magazine*.

Perhaps just a single article per issue, even. That would be enough to placate us, for now. What I would really like to see is an entire monthly publication dedicated to the ALTERNITY universe. I'm already playing with some short story ideas.

So thank you for your time, and please extend my thanks to the production team for the ALTERNITY game. They did a terrific job!

Patrick Howes
Via Email



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Last Unicorn Games announces new STAR TREK® roleplaying games, miniatures and live action games.

Los Angeles, CA - Last Unicorn Games has signed a multi-year license agreement with Viacom Consumer Products, the licensing division of Paramount Pictures, for the production of roleplaying games, supplements and accessories based on STAR TREK®: THE ORIGINAL SERIES™, STAR TREK®: THE NEXT GENERATION™, STAR TREK®: DEEP SPACE NINE™ AND STAR TREK®: VOYAGER™. This license will also allow Last Unicorn Games to produce miniature figure playing pieces and live action gaming-material based on each of the properties, it was announced today by Bernard Cahill, business affairs and licensing, Last Unicorn Games.

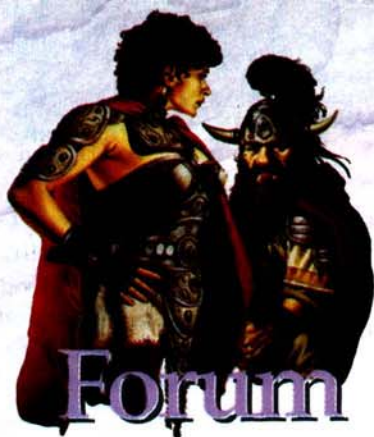
We are expanding our presence in the mass market through our new distribution arrangement with Simon and Schuster and are very excited about the opportunity to bring STAR TREK® to game fans everywhere," said Christian Moore, creative director, Last Unicorn Games. "The richness and detail of the STAR TREK® universe truly places it in a class by itself. Its worlds, characters and stories are classics, and its tremendous fan appeal remains unequaled. It is our job to continue this great tradition, and our design team's initial development work is pushing the envelope for game play and graphic presentation. These games are gonna rock!

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In addition, Last Unicorn will be producing miniatures lines for each property, as well as rules for tabletop miniatures battles set in the Star Trek universe. Finally, a series of Live Action roleplaying books will allow fans to act out their character's adventures in sanctioned live action games and events throughout the world.

Last Unicorn Games, a Pennsylvania corporation with offices in Los Angeles, California, publishes the award winning roleplaying series - ARIA: Canticle of the Monomyth™ and collectible card games such as the critically acclaimed HERESY: KINGDOM COME™ and the best-selling DUNE™: EYE of the STORM™. Aria: Canticle of the Monomyth™ and Heresy: Kingdom Come™ are trademarks of Last Unicorn Games, Inc. DUNE™ is a trademark of the Herbert Limited Partnership. Last Unicorn Games and Last Unicorn Publishing are subsidiaries of Last Unicorn Games Inc.

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Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; 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 or print your full address if you so request.

For those who've tried the ALTERNITY® game, what house rules have you already created?

Alterations Revisited

I am writing in response to Gary Sturgess's letter in issue #247. I find that I disagree with many of his objections to spells in the school of Alteration.

The spells in the Alteration school alter reality. They can change the physical form of an item or being (*polymorph* spells), warp the aspects of space (*teleport*), give the caster (or others) a special ability (*fly*), alter how a person perceives the world (*distance distortion*), change the nature of the caster's surroundings (*light*), and even stop the flow of time itself (*time stop*).

receiver. It also amplifies those vibrations so that the whispered message is audible to the recipient.

Fog Cloud. Alters the moisture content of the air, concentrating it into the area of effect and lightly holding it there.

Irritation. The spell description even says that it affects (alters) the epidermis of the victim.

Delude. Alters the alignment aura of the caster, making him appear to be of a different alignment.

Gust of Wind. Increases the speed and changes the direction of air currents in the area of effect.

diamond or crystal and a matching piece of gum arabic—into the sphere around the target.

Rainbow Pattern. Bends the existing light into the Rainbow Pattern, hence a crystal prism for a material component.

Solid Fog. Same as *fog cloud* above except that it is much more dense.

Vacancy. Alters the victim's perceptions.

Even though the school of Alteration might seem like a "grab bag" of miscellaneous spells, there is a method to the madness. If you know how to decipher it, you can generally figure out the reason a spell is part of the school.

Matt Wilson
Tempe, AZ

Even though the school of Alteration might seem like a "grab bag" of miscellaneous spells, there is a method to the madness.

Now, following this list of things the school of Alteration can do, let us examine Gary's objections:

Burning Hands. This is one of the spells that gives a caster a special ability—the ability to shoot fire from his fingertips. It is similar to to the sixth-level *fire eyes* spell from the *Seven Sisters* FORGOTTEN REALMS® accessory, wherein the spell endows the caster with the ability to shoot beams of flame from his eyes.

Color Spray. This spell transforms its material components—dyed sand—into beams of dazzling color shot forth from the caster's hand; it creates both a transmutation and ability granting effect.

Message. Sound is basically a series of vibrations in the air, and this spell alters the surrounding air currents so that the vibrations are only transmitted along the straight line path to the intended

Leomund's Tiny Hut. Changes the temperature in the Hut, deflects rain and the like, although this spell should probably also be considered of the Evocation school.

Melf's Minute Meteors. The spell's material components (a bead of nitre, sulfur, and pine tar) are turned into the mini-fireballs. (Hmm ... aren't those all flammable substances?)

Wind Wall. Read *gust of wind*, above; anyway, all "wall" spells are not necessarily Evocation.

Fire Shield. This spell is Alteration only because anyone who successfully damages the caster in melee has the same amount of damage visited upon him.

Leomund's Secure Shelter. Read *Leomund's tiny hut*, above.

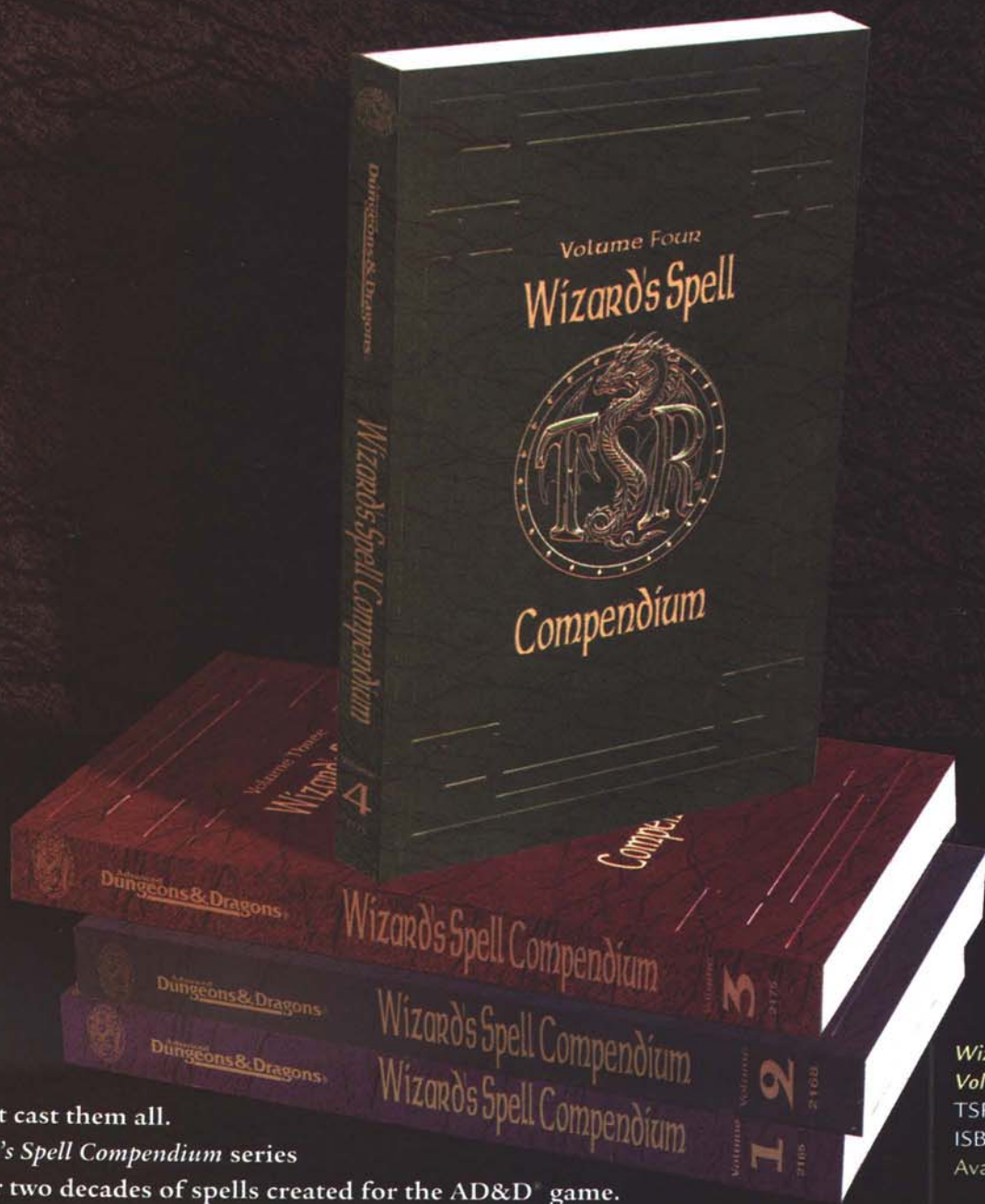
Otiluke's Resilient Sphere. Transforms the material components—a piece of

Psionics & 3rd Edition

I'd like to say "yes" to the question of the month (from issue #247): Psionics do belong in the core rules, at least in the *DUNGEON MASTER®* Guide. Quite a few monsters have psionic abilities.

Second, a comment on the letter sent by Gary Sturgess: I agree 100 percent! The core rule books need a lot of cleaning up, and that's a good place to start. There are too many alteration spells that aren't alteration spells at all. Also, the *Player's Handbook* and *DMG* leave many unanswered questions. Sure, you can make up a solution, just like David "Zeb" Cook suggested in the foreword in the *DMG*, but it leaves you doubting yourself over time. One of the things that neither book mentions is what a character's chance is (besides and elf) to find a secret door. Another is ambushing. The rules mention it, but that's about all. One of the things that boggled my mind for a while is creature saving

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throws. On page 92 of the *DMG*, 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence, it says, "Any additions to their Hit Dice are counted as well, at the rate of one die for every four points or fraction thereof." The *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ tome indicates that the rate is three, not four. Another mind-twister in the *DMG* concerns potions. Table 56 indicates that drinking a potion has an initiative modifier of 4, but on page 191, 2nd paragraph, first sentence, it reads, "Opening and drinking a potion has an initiative modifier of 1," and that serves to confuse.

I also agree with Paul Benfield: The magic system is awesome, and don't you dare change it!

One last thing: If a 3rd Edition must be made, try not to put a whole lot of unnecessary information into the rule books. For instance, in chapter 15 of the

should be eliminated. Players should be encouraged to explore their characters' values and motivations. Unless their class specifically designates a specific alignment (such as with paladins, druids, and rangers), there should be no penalty for alignment changes. This is just a part of the growth of a character. It makes little sense that an individual would suddenly forget how to use a sword or cast a spell because he or she became more or less compassionate or orderly.

However, I do disagree with subjective definitions of alignment. Few claim that law or chaos are dependent upon your culture (although certainly the specific rules to followed or broken do). This is because law and chaos have more objective definitions. Law means simply following rules and promoting order,

taught in Philosophy and Ethics classes: Utilitarianism and Rights-Based Theory. Utilitarianism is essentially the belief in the greatest good for the greatest number. It places great value on the well-being of others. Sometimes, though, the rights of the minority might have to be put aside so that the majority can enjoy maximum benefit. This is essentially the same as lawful good, in my opinion.

Rights-based theory holds that all sentient creatures have some form of inherent right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Whereas Utilitarianism places positive duties on people, stating that they must take specific actions to aid others, Rights-based theory places only negative duties. Under this philosophy, people must simply avoid taking actions that would infringe upon the rights of others. While charitable actions are not discouraged, they are not required and should be a matter of individual choice. This is close to the chaotic good alignment, in my opinion.

Utilitarianism and Rights-Based Theory are not opposed. They both hold many of the same actions as immoral: killing, torturing, stealing, etc., even if they find them immoral for different reasons. To oppose one of these philosophies is to be evil. Chaotic evil people oppose the greatest good for the greatest number and seek the greatest good for themselves at the expense of everyone else. Lawful evil opposes rights for many individuals. Like many dictators and racist groups, they actively seek to deny people of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Combining and attempting to balance two or more of these ethical poles results in a neutral alignment. Neutral good tries to combine Utilitarianism and human rights, seeking to bring the greatest good to the greatest number without trampling in the rights of the minority. Neutral evil opposes both of these philosophies, seeking to eliminate concern for the well-being and rights of others altogether. Lawful neutral truly believes in Utilitarian goals while also seeking to eliminate individual rights (as it is the group, not the individual, who has any sort of right to exist). Chaotic neutral individuals despise Utilitarianism but also respect the rights of individuals. They try to balance both of these

**If you follow the rules of your culture,
that means you are lawful, not good.**

DMG, it explains a great deal about lycanthropy. What's the point? All one needs to do is look in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* rules.

Before TSR excitedly runs off to write a revision of a now-cherished phenomenal roleplaying game, they should first look over their previous work to see what could have been done better.

Jeremy W. Burks
War, WV 24892

A Question of Alignment

In response to the question "should alignment in the AD&D® game represent an absolute value or a subjective guideline," my response is "yes."

It should be remembered that alignment is not a substitute for personality, nor does it automatically dictate what your character will or will not do. I hate it when a DM tells a player "You can't do that! You're (alignment)!"

People often take radically different actions despite having the same goals and the same values. I believe this problem stems mainly from the fear of alignment change. Many players fear stepping out of the narrow definition they have of their alignment for fear of losing experience. I think this rule

while chaos means breaking rules and promoting unlimited freedom. It is good and evil that have value-laden, subjective words to describe them.

Many people take a cultural relativist view about good and evil alignments. There are a few problems with this approach. First of all, it implies that every culture is "good." A dwarf or orc who kills without mercy is every bit as good as a paladin defending the victims of these creatures. Drizzt would be one of the most evil creatures ever to live for forsaking the moral values he was raised with. That doesn't really work. Second, this approach provides essentially the same definition we already have for law and chaos. If you follow the rules of your culture, that means you are lawful, not good. If not, then how could lawful evil or chaotic good even exist? I think a more objective definition of good and evil needs to be found. This does not mean that it has to be an absolute dictator of the character's actions. However, what is truly valued by good creatures (i.e., the rights and well-being of others) and evil creatures (i.e. ruthlessness and mercilessness) should be more clearly defined as to avoid confusion.

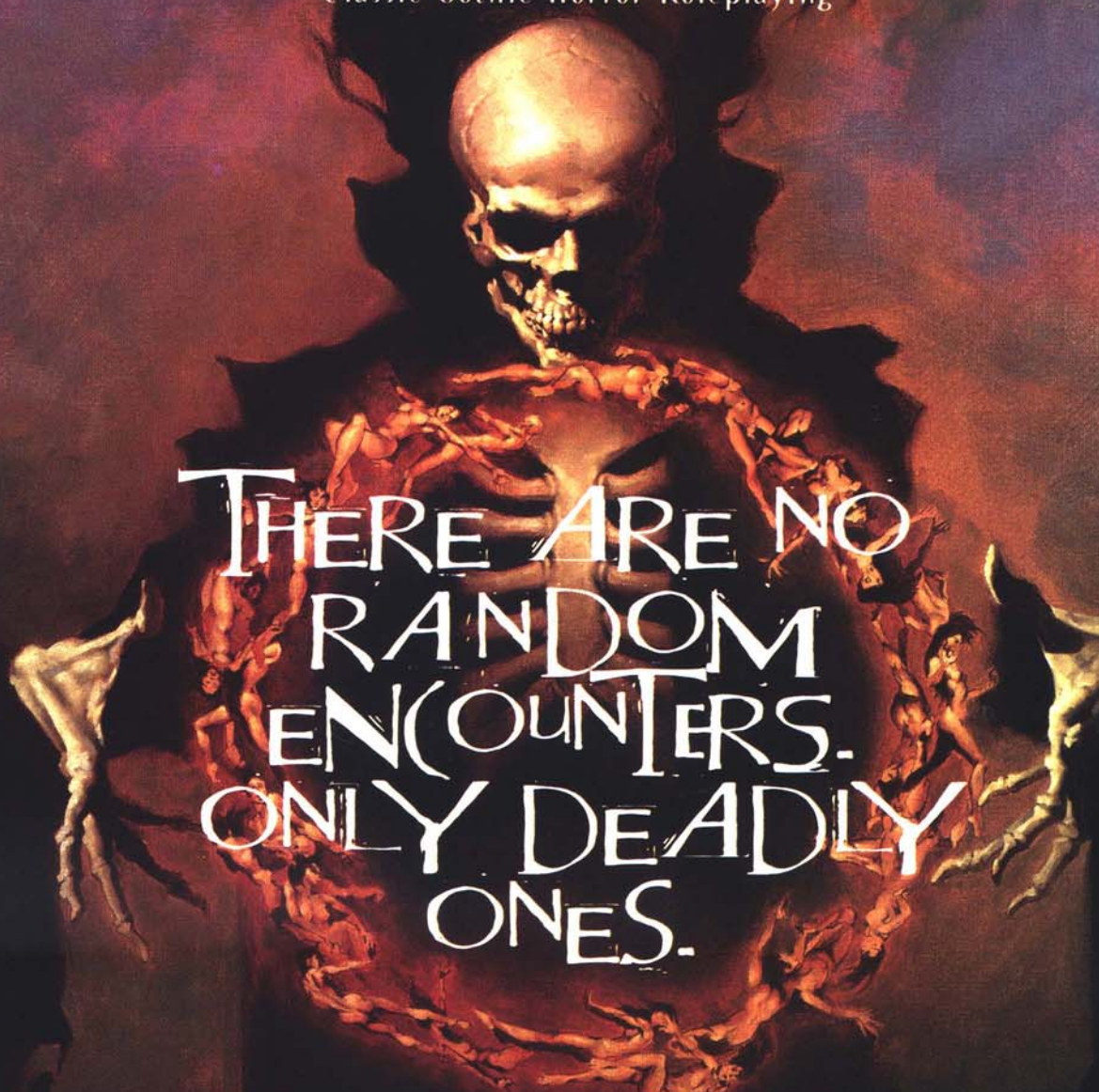
There are two main theories of ethics

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concerns, embracing anarchy in the process. True neutrality tries to balance all of these philosophies, trying to avoid any kind of extreme. Either that, or they just have no opinion (like animals).

Greg Jensen
Pullman, WA

Poison and Energy Drain

The talk of possible changes to be made in the third edition of AD&D got me thinking about some small things in the game that upset players.

The first of these is level draining. I find that level draining creatures are just too nasty. They don't beat the characters up; they deny the player something they worked hard to gain. Sure, the fear factor is nice, but only if you can actually use it. I have changed such creatures in my game to drain a fixed amount of experience, usually on the same order of magnitude as the creature itself is worth. This way, I can have the creature hurt the

Superior to Swords

In the "Forum" of *DRAGON Magazine* #248, M. Kant wrote that the reason some weapons are clearly superior in the AD&D game is that they are clearly superior. He then says that the sword is one of the best weapons in human history and that almost every culture to be successful in war developed it. So far, I cannot disagree. His subsequent comments are, in my opinion, completely inaccurate. If Mr. Kant is correct, people appear to make a habit of going to war with the wrong weapons. I hope to show why he is in error.

The sword is a versatile weapon. Both the point and the edge are useful for attacking. It is also an effective parrying weapon in suitable circumstances. The only other weapons with this many uses are certain specialized and two-handed pole-arms. It is even possible to modify sword designs to perform specific functions. The medieval falchion is one

weapon. The mace was probably the most popular melee weapon of the late medieval knight. Foot soldiers tended to employ larger two-handed weapons, such as the Flemish *godendag*. Mercenary Stradiot light cavalry fighting in the Italian Wars began to use the mace after they encountered plate armored knights, specifically to have an effective weapon against them.

The major advantage of polearms, in which category I include spears and pikes, is reach. A formation of foot soldiers in close order can present several rows of weapon-points to an approaching enemy, up to four in the case of pikes. As long as the formation remains intact, it is impossible for troops with shorter weapons to break through to the soldiers. Pole-arms are also very effective against cavalry. Historical examples of troops using pole-arms as their primary weapon are numerous. In the medieval period, the Swiss are just the most famous.

The ease of use Mr. Kant ascribes to the axe and, by implication, other weapons is somewhat exaggerated. There is a specific fighting technique for using the axe, and someone just picking one up is not likely to use it correctly. The same applies to other weapons. I do, however, agree that the sword is a harder weapon to learn, owing to the variety of ways it can be used. When it comes to training large numbers of soldiers, the hardest part is training people to move and fight in formation.

Mr. Kant also writes about the crossbow. He writes that "contrary to popular belief, the crossbow was not developed because it was more powerful than the longbow." He is quite right. The crossbow was developed as a by-product of the invention of torsion artillery in the 4th century B.C. Just as the handgun is a small cannon, the crossbow is a miniature siege weapon. The Greek inventors were not seeking to outdo the longbow, of which they had no knowledge.

In conjunction with Mr. Kant's next sentence, I am inclined to believe he thinks that the crossbow is not more powerful than the longbow. This is wrong. Fundamentally the two weapons work the same way. A piece of wood or other material is bent to store energy in it. When it is released, the energy is

can have the creature hurt the characters,
and the experience draining doesn't
spoil the players' fun.

characters, and the experience draining doesn't spoil the players' fun.

The other thing that I find depressing is poison. Most of the time poison is defined as "make your saving throw or die." Such a black and white, life and death roll results in some very unhappy players! I have made up my own system where poisons get two ratings: speed and damage. For example, a slow, weak poison might inflict 2d6 hp damage over two turns, while a fast, strong poison might cause 10d6 hp damage over two rounds. Without a scheme like this, DMs need to resort to non-deadly poisons that cause paralysis or something. Truly deadly poisons need to exist, but they should not be the norm.

I think my views here are shared by a lot of DMs out there, and even if my particular schemes are not adopted, I'd love to see any future edition of the AD&D game address these points.

Stephen D'Angelo
Santa Clara, CA

example, optimized for dealing with opponents in heavy armor.

This versatility also points to the sword's major weakness. Since it is generally adaptable to several different functions, it is not as effective in any of them as a weapon designed for that function alone. While most swords are able to thrust, none has the reach of a spear. Similarly, swords have a cutting edge but are not as good at this as specialized cutting weapons such as axes. A sword used to parry a blow from a mace will almost certainly break.

The mace and similar blunt weapons have an additional advantage over bladed weapons. Since their effect comes from the transfer of kinetic energy from the weapon to the target, it is not absolutely necessary to penetrate the target's armor to inflict injury. Concussions or bone fractures are perfectly possible even when the armor remains intact. Medieval plate armor, with carefully designed sloping surfaces, is effective at deflecting blows from edged or pointed weapons, but this does not affect a blunt

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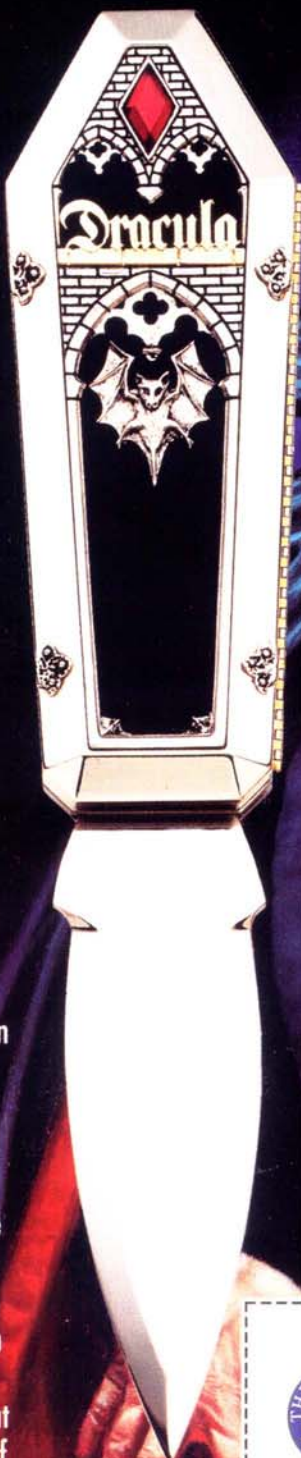
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transferred to a projectile. The amount of energy stored depends on the amount of force used to bend the bow/crossbow. With the longbow, this principle works in a pure form, depending solely on the strength of the archer. A crossbow uses a mechanical crank and gearing system to draw back the string and is less dependent on the physical strength of the user.

The amount of energy involved can be measured easily. The bow or crossbow is fixed to fire vertically upward. Weights are then added to the string, until the weapon is in position to shoot. The amount of energy the weapon can use is directly related to the amount of weight required to do this. Tests on longbows recovered from archaeological sites and on modern reconstructions show that the maximum weight required to draw the bow is approximately 60 kg. This is close to the upper limit for human body strength. With crossbows, much greater weights are required. Weights well in excess of 100 kg are required to draw most medieval military crossbows. This, however, exceeds the capability of human strength. This is why the crossbow requires a hand crank connected to gears. With a ratio of 6:1 in the gearing, a crossbow which would require 120 kg to draw, twice the strength of the largest longbow, can be drawn with 20 kg of weight (excluding friction effects—these make the figure closer to 22 kg). The heaviest crossbow I know of is a 15th-century steel siege crossbow, which required over 500 kg. to draw. Crossbows that can be drawn by hand are known. These are light pieces that were used for hunting, often with blunt quarrels to knock out the prey without piercing the flesh.

The training of English archers in the Hundred Years War period is much more involved than hiring peasants. Laws in existence in medieval England made it compulsory for parents to buy a bow suitable for their stature for all boys at the age of 7, and for all 17-year olds to own a longbow. All men physically capable of doing so were required by law to practice regularly with bows, and towns were required to set aside suitable areas for this practice. Many towns and

cities in England still have streets named "The Butts," showing where this practice was carried out. Individuals who used their skills for hunting would, if caught, have been punished for poaching. This carried a sentence of outlawry.

Describing the longbow as the deadliest weapon of its day is in disregard of the evidence. The longbow was highly effective at certain times and against certain opponents. On other occasions it was less useful.

English archers were exceptionally useful against Scottish armies, which depended heavily on lightly armored infantry. In battles such as Falkirk, Neville's Cross, and Homildon, English archers bombarded stationary Scottish infantry until the latter began to break formation, allowing English cavalry to charge and complete their defeat. Even against mailed Flemish militia, the longbow was effective at breaking up the defensive infantry formations.

Massed longbow fire also proved effective at dispersing opposing skirmishers. At Najera, English archers quickly routed Spanish skirmishers armed with a mix of crossbows, short bows, and javelins. Even well armored and professional Genoese crossbowmen retreated at Crecy, as did Scottish archers at Bannockburn.

English archery fire was not always so effective. At Nogent-sur-Seine, the Paris militia attacked an English force trapped in a bend of the Seine. Equipped with large shields, the French infantry proved virtually invulnerable to the English archers and were able to defeat them in hand-to-hand combat. Men-at-arms in plate armor were almost invulnerable to archery. The main effect on these seems to have been to discourage them and to force them to pack together. After the Hundred Years War, Scottish infantry at Flodden had their front ranks made up of plate-armored, unmounted knights. According to English chroniclers, they were so well armored that the archers could do little harm.

Cavalry were also capable of charging English archers successfully. This occurred at Bannockburn, Mauron, Verneuil, and Patay. The normal English

way to prevent this was either to use natural obstacles such as hedges or to create their own obstacle with stakes or by digging pits in front of the archers' position. This is how the English won major victories such as Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt. The combination of massed missile fire and dismounted men-at-arms is what was effective.

Other armies used similar tactics on various occasions. Ottoman Janissaries behind a screen of stakes inflicted losses and disruption on attacking French knights at Adrianople, allowing lighter Ottoman cavalry to defeat the knights. In Scandinavia, Swedish militia infantry armed with a mix of pole-arms and crossbows and fighting behind obstacles of felled trees were able to defeat attacking Danish and German mercenary knights. Russian militia infantry defeated an attack by elite Teutonic knights at Lake Peipus in 1242 by a combination of archery and close order infantry. Nothing about the English combination of close order infantry with massed missile troops was unique. Against opponents who refused to mount a frontal assault, these tactics were found wanting.

Recommended Reading

For general information on medieval warfare: David Nicolle, *Medieval Warfare Source Book*, volumes 1 & 2.

For infantry tactics in medieval warfare: Kelly DeVries, *Infantry Warfare in the Fourteenth Century*.

On the longbow: Robert Hardy, *The Longbow: A social and military history* is excellent for how English armies trained and recruited archers.

On crossbows: F Bilson, *The Crossbow*, provides information on historical development and medieval examples.

On Medieval warfare: Curry & M. Hughes, *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*.

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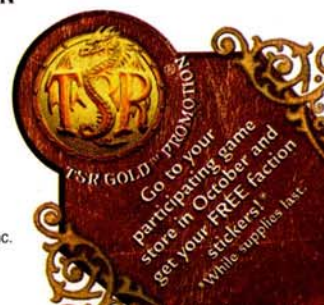


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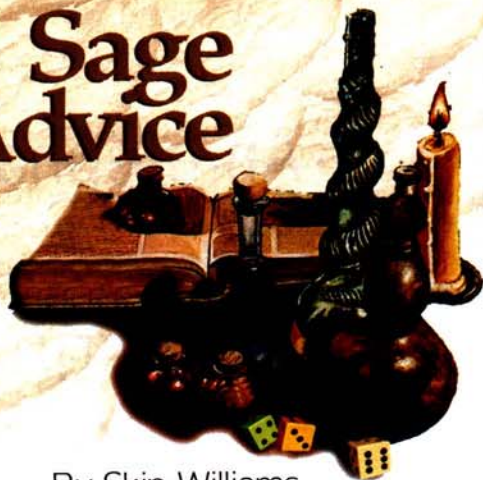
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Sage Advice



By Skip Williams

Need Some Help With Your Game?

Send your questions about the games produced by TSR, Inc. to "Sage Advice," *DRAGON* Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055. In Europe, write to: "Sage Advice," *DRAGON* Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, CB1 3LB, U.K. You may also email your questions to thesage@wizards.com.

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This month, the Sage tackles questions peculiar to the AD&D® game's various worlds and optional rule books, and considers a few oddities from the core AD&D rules.

How does the BIRTHRIGHT® blood ability Detect Life (from the *Blood Enemies* sourcebook) work in relation to effects such as *nondetection*, *invisibility*, *misdirection*, or *mind blank*?

Effects that block divinations (such as *nondetection* spells) block the ability. *Misdirection* causes the Detect Life user to be unsure of the protected creature's exact location (assuming the user has enough power to determine locations). The power detects invisible creatures but does not render them visible; if the user is not strong enough to determine a creature's location, Detect Life simply indicates a living creature somewhere in the area of effect.

Can a character wearing a ring of vampiric regeneration gain hit points from a creature shapechanged into a spectre?

Yes. The character could drain hit points from a real spectre, too. A ring of vampiric regeneration bestows hit points on the wearer anytime the wearer strikes and damages an opponent. Spectres are immune to non-magical weapons. If the ring wearer has no magical weapon, he cannot harm the spectre and cannot gain any hit points from striking it.

I have been reading through the *Illithiad*, and I am finding the informa-

tion within to be quite fascinating and useful. However, the monster entry on page 87 says the Intelligence of an illithid vampire is genius (17-18), while the accompanying text says the creatures are of animal intelligence. Which is correct? I'm also somewhat confused about how sunlight affects illithid vampires. The text says they are harmed by sunlight just like any other vampire. However, the special defenses section of the monster entry says "unharmful by sunlight."

Illithid vampires have animal Intelligence; the reference to genius intelligence is an error.

Sunlight harms illithid vampires; they suffer 1d6+1 hp damage each round they are exposed to sunlight.

A character in our party has the spellfire ability. The rest of the party tends to keep this character topped off with spell energy and protected from direct assaults to be ready to tear up monsters. Recently, our DM has been allowing creatures with the psionic ability of Energy Containment to absorb and dissipate the spellfire energy. We are of the opinion that spellfire does not fall under the categories of "energy" as defined under the ability description. Is this possible?

Sure it's possible (especially when your DM says so). While you could argue that a spellfire blast is not fire, heat, cold, electricity, or sound (all energy forms mentioned in the Energy

Containment power description), a reasonable DM could decide to extend the power's effects to spellfire blasts. Spellfire is energy of some kind (perhaps of a unique kind). The DM also could decide that a spellfire blast is the equivalent of some more common form of energy (the DM should choose a type or types).

I've been DMing for a while now and just recently picked up the *High-Level Campaigns* book. I also use the *Tome of Magic* and the *Chronomancer* accessory and was wondering about true dweomer spells for the schools of chronomancy and wild magic. Is there a wild surge table for true dweomers?

In both cases, simply use the spell types from Table 28. A wild mage or chronomancer gets the specialist bonus (from table 34) when creating spells that reflect her specialty.

True dweomers don't cause wild surges.

Chronomancy true dweomers require a second application of the duration table (Table 32) to reflect displacement in time. Anything that shifts time more than a year uses the "permanent" line (100 points).

Can a psionicist with Split Personality and Astral Projection be effectively in two places at the same time? If his astral body is on the other side of a wall of force or other barrier (assuming it wasn't big enough to block the power), could the psionicist in his physical body teleport



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inside, or use telepathic powers inside, through the astral body?

No. If a character using Split Personality goes astral, both halves of the personality go astral together. Note that *wall of force* doesn't prevent teleportation.

is suppressed, the Moon card still bestows wishes on the drawer, but the character might have to wait to use those wishes until she leaves the area. In some cases, the character gets to decide about an instant effect. For example, the Jester either grants 10,000 xp immediately or

oversight exists all the way through both *Faiths & Avatars*, as well as *Powers & Pantheons*. Every time a demihuman is eligible for a specialty priesthood, no level limit is mentioned.

All demihuman specialty priests in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting gain experience normally until they reach a level equal to their race's normal advancement limit for a cleric, plus four levels. Thereafter, the character can keep advancing but requires triple the normal experience requirement. See Specialty Priest Level Limits at the bottom of this page for the information as it appears in the upcoming *Demihuman Deities* book (courtesy of TSR's Julia Martin).

I have an ambitious Signer in my PLANESCAPE® campaign who also just happens to be a luckbringer of Tymora. Once he made Factor rank, he ingeniously used his access to the *feat* spell (from *Faiths & Avatars*) to succeed automatically at his imagining checks. Needless to say, it wasn't long before he ascended to Factor rank and now can potentially wield the effects of any wizard or priest spell simply by casting *feat* first and then putting his imagination to work. He never risks imagining himself right out of existence and can use his imagining abilities as often as he can cast this fourth-level spell, instead of the once or twice a week that other Factors and Factots dare attempt. Can a *feat* spell affect a saving throw that has an ability score adjustment? What about attempts at disbelieving illusions?

A *feat* spell helps characters accomplish only tasks that have some physical element (jumping, running, climbing)

Exactly when can characters claim the benefits from a deck of many things?

If a character has shield and weapon style specialization, he receives an extra attack each round that can be used for a shield punch. Would such a character be considered proficient with the shield and automatically gain that proficiency's AC benefits without spending any slots?

No. If the character wants the extra AC bonus for shield proficiency, he has to buy shield proficiency.

Exactly when can characters claim the benefits from a *deck of many things*? Here's a situation that arose in my campaign: A character walks into a null magic room that copies everything that enters (something like a *mirror of opposition*). The character fights his double for awhile and is eventually forced to step out of the room to heal up. Once healed, the character returns to the room to take up the fight again. The battle eventually comes down to one roll: whoever hits the other guy first wins. The character dies, and the playing session ends. Now, one month later, the character's player argues that the character shouldn't be dead because the character had previously drawn the Fates card from a *deck of many things*. Will this card work in a place where magic is nullified? How long can someone wait before using the card?

Most cards from a *deck of many things* take effect immediately upon drawing and simply work instantly, no matter what the circumstances. For example, cards such as the Jester, the Moon, or the Idiot inexorably work their changes on the character drawing them. In some cases, the character might be prevented from using a benefit a card has brought. For example, in a locale where all magic

allows two extra draws. The character drawing the card must choose the effect the moment she draws the card, and the choice takes immediate effect regardless of local conditions. I would recommend that a character drawing the Fates card keep the card until she uses it. The card might be powerful enough to work even where other magic doesn't or it may not—that's up to the DM. In any case, to avoid a fate, the player must say when the character uses the card and must say so promptly. The card allows the drawer to avoid a fate, not reverse a fate. So the card must be used more or less as the fate happens. The DM should not subject the player to any sort of countdown, but trying to use the card a day or a month after the fact doesn't do any good.

If memory serves, halflings can be luckbringers (specialty priests of Tymora). That's nice, but the *Faiths & Avatars* book fails to mention the level limits of these demihuman specialty priests. Since halflings can make it to 13th level as mystics, but only something like 8th or 9th level as clerics, the answer isn't intuitively obvious. Unfortunately, this

Specialty Priest Level Limits

	Human	Drow	Dwarf	Elf	Gnome	Half-elf	Halfling
Cleric	U	12	10	12	9	14	8
Crusader	U	12	13	12	—	12+	—
Druid	U	12+	—	12+	—	9	—
Monk	U	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mystic	U	12	—	12	—	14	13
Shaman	U	—	—	—	—	—	—
Specialty Priest	U	16	14	16	13	18	12

†Character race and class combinations normally not allowed in the AD&D® game rules. These changes are recommended specifically for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting; however, Dungeon Masters are free to exclude these races from the given classes.



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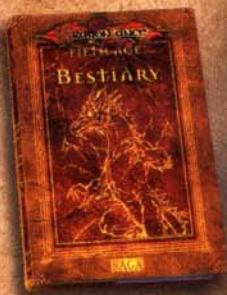
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and that can be completed in one minute or less. It does not affect mental tasks (imagining checks, arithmetic, recalling facts), long-term tasks (armor making, ship building), saving throws, or attempts at disbelief.

Dweomerkeepers (specialty priests of Mystra) are capable of casting their spells inside wild and dead magic areas, courtesy of their patron deity. Could they also cast spells inside the area of effect of a beholder's antimagic ray?

What do the various types of armor mentioned in the *Arms & Equipment Guide* actually cost?

Antimagic shell and similar effects (such as a beholder's antimagic ray) shuts down dweomerkeepers' spells. Wild and dead magic areas are aberrations in the Weave, which is the purview of the goddess Mystra. The goddess does not concern herself with antimagic effects created with spells or through creature special abilities.

Is it true that channeler spellcasters (from the *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Spells & Magic* book) who have access to the necromancy priest sphere can use the *dispel fatigue* spell to wipe away the effects of their exhaustion? And that, in so doing, they become a veritable bottomless well full of magic spells, casting and re-casting high level spells time and again with no memory loss of their spells or physical weariness for channeling all that spell power?

No. It's true that the *dispel fatigue* description says the spell works on fatigue caused by channeling, but—according to *Spells & Magic* author Rich Baker—that's an error.

According to the *Planes of Law* boxed set and *The Factol's Manifesto*, the Great Modron March takes place every 17 years. According to *The Great Modron March*, an anthology of adventures, the March takes place every 17 years squared, or about 289 years. Which is accurate?

The Great Modron March normally occurs every 17 times 17 (289) years.

The owner of a *book of infinite spells* can cast the spell to which the book is opened, once per day. Can a character choose to open the book to more than one page in a day? That is, can a character flip through the first 10 pages of the book in one day, and be able to cast all the spells on those pages? If so, can the character then close the book and repeat the procedure the next day? The book disappears when the last page is turned. But what if the owner closes it before reaching the last page and starts

again? I assume it is impossible to "cheat" the usefulness of this book by putting tabs on the pages. Is it possible for two characters to create a book of infinite spells together, placing their most potent spells in it?

The owner can turn as many pages as he likes but can cast only one spell a day from the book; the spell always must be from the page to which the book is opened at the time of casting. Spells on pages that already have been turned are lost. Once turned, the pages either go blank or disappear from the book, as the DM desires.

If the book is closed, then opened again, I suggest that the book either opens to the page where it was previously opened, or to the next page (which means that closing the book "turns" the page).

The pages in a *book of infinite spells* are never labeled (and cannot be labeled), the only way to find out what's on a page is to turn to it—thereby rendering all previous pages useless.

No character (or group of characters) can make a magical book, libram, manual, tome, or artifact.

What does the gas breath weapon of a green or gold dragon count as? Is it poisonous or something else? Does the immunity to gas include poison gas and corrosive gases? My understanding of poisons is that they need to get to the bloodstream to be able to wreak their havoc, regardless of their method of entry. How far off am I?

Unless specifically stated otherwise in the creature description, a gas cloud from a dragon (any dragon) counts as a breath weapon attack, not poison. Creatures subjected to the breath must attempt breath weapon saving throws and usually suffer damage even if they succeed. Immunity to gas confers immunity to gaseous breath weapons and other types of gas (corrosive, petrifying, etc.). Immunity to poison gas usually is just an inaccurate way of saying immunity to gas, but sometimes it just means immunity to inhaled poisons. You'll have to read the text carefully to determine which it is. If it isn't obvious, "Sage Advice" is here to help.

What do the various types of armor mentioned in the *Arms & Equipment Guide* actually cost?

Spiked Leather: 30 gp

Drow Chain: 37,500 gp

Coin Scale: 120 gp + coins used (1,000 coins)

Dwarven Chain: 750 gp

Gnomish Workman's Leather: 50 gp

Elven Plate: 25,000 gp (protects like field plate—AC 2)

Sea Elf Scale: 6,000 gp

The description for the fifth-level priest spell *rainbow* says the spell can produce seven arrows but lists only six colors. Is this a printing error? I suspect so, especially given that a blue arrow would seem more fitting against aquatic creatures than a green arrow.

Yes, it's a printing error in the full-color *Player's Handbooks*. Here are correct effects for the arrows:

Red: Fire dwellers/users and fire elementals.

Orange: Creatures or constructs of clay, sand, earth, stone, or similar materials, and earth elementals.

Yellow: Vegetable opponents, including fungus creatures, shambling mounds, treants, and the like.

Green: Aquatic creatures and water elementals.

Blue: Aerial creatures, electricity-using creatures, and air elementals.

Indigo: Acid- or poison-using creatures.

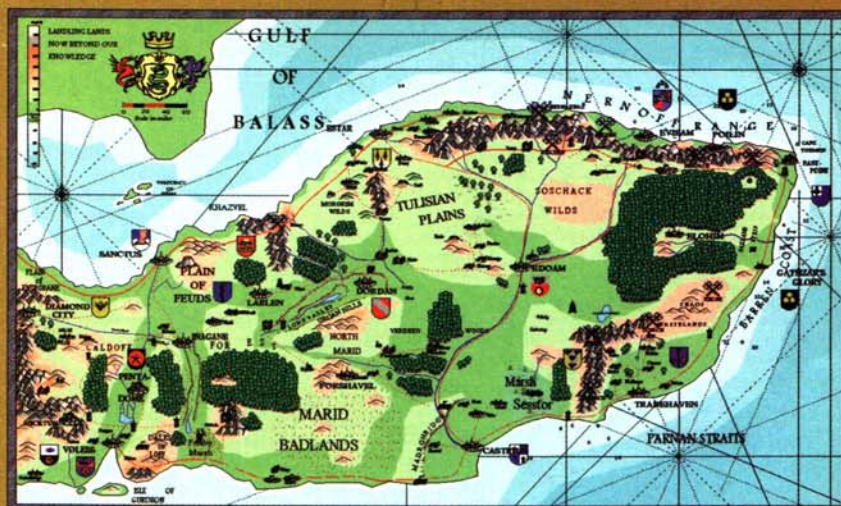
Violet: Metallic or regenerating creatures.

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What is the maximum speed that can be attained by an object moved by a *telekinesis* spell? Does the speed depend on the mass of the object? or do all objects move at constant speeds?

An object moved with the fifth-level wizard spell *telekinesis* moves 20 feet a round, or at the speed of a missile (several hundred miles an hour), depending on how the caster chooses to use the spell. The object's mass has no effect on the speed, but there's a limit on how much mass the caster can move. (See the spell description.)

I have a paladin who owns an enchanted suit of armor passed down to him from his late father. After a harrowing set of adventures and a close call with a rust monster, he decided it would be best leave the armor in his keep to avoid damaging a valuable heirloom. Does the heirloom armor fulfill his limit of owning only one suit of magical armor (even through though

he never intends to use it again), or can he gain a new suit of enchanted armor without penalty?

Any suit of armor the paladin owns counts toward the limit, even unused heirlooms. The character would have to give the armor to a relative, donate it to a museum, or otherwise divest himself of it before he could own another suit of magical armor.

Is the damage from an owlbear's hug regular, lethal damage or temporary damage? That is, does hug damage have to be healed, or does most of it automatically return the way damage from a wrestling attack does?

Hug or constriction damage from any monster is regular, lethal damage unless the monster description specifically says otherwise.

Here's a question that has plagued me for years. In every version of the AD&D 2nd edition game I can find, the rules say a hierophant druid gains four pow-

ers at 16th level; however only three are listed. What is the fourth power?

The *Unearthed Arcana* tome, which introduced hierophant druids, listed the four abilities as: immunity to natural poison, extra longevity, vigorous health, and the ability to alter appearance. The current AD&D books list the same four abilities, but merge "vigorous health" and "longevity" into the same section, since vigorous health has no real game effect. The text introducing the power descriptions still mentions four powers, but that's an error since there are really only three.



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Magic of the Seldarine

MAGIC IS SO STRONG AMONG THE SELDARINE that most elven gods—including their nemeses, the gods of the drow—have a certain association with some form of magic. Although Corellon Larethian is the one Greater God of Magic among the Seldarine, much as Mystra is among Faerûnian deities, he allows this distribution of the portfolio of Magic since it strengthens the Seldarine as a whole.



by Chris Perry

Illustrated by Rebecca Guay

Table 1: The Elven Gods of Magic

Aedrie Faenya	Elemental Air magic
Corellon Larethian	Magic in general, High Magic (see <i>Elves of Evermeet</i>)
Erevan Ilesere	Chaos (Wild) magic
Hanali Celanil	Charm magic
Kiaranshalee (drow)	Necromancy
Kirith Sotheril	Divinations, Enchantments
Labelas Enoreth	Chronomancy
Lolth (drow)	Shadow magic
Melira Taralen	Song magic
Rellavar Danuvien	Elemental Ice magic
Deep Sashelas	Elemental Water magic (sea elves only)
Sehahine Moonbow	Illusion/Phantasm, Alteration
Tethrin Varalde	"Battle" magic (Invocation/ Evocation)

The magical associations of the elven gods (including the drow pantheon and those elven gods mentioned in "The Seldarine Revisited" in *DRAGON*® Magazine issue #236) appear on Table 1.

In addition to these well-known elven deities, there are several more elven gods of magic. None of them is particularly well known—and some are in danger of losing their status among the Seldarine—but they can make your campaign even more interesting and round out the pantheon.

Note: The following priesthood entries make use of many spells not found in the *Player's Handbook*. If in question, check the *PLAYER'S OPTION*®: *Spells & Magic* rulebook. Also, see the *Faiths & Avatars* book for more details).

Mythrien Sarath

(The Protector, Watcher over Mythals)
Demipower of Arborea, CG
(formerly a Lesser Power)

PORTFOLIO:	Protection, Abjuration, Abjuration magic, Mythals
ALIASES:	None
DOMAIN:	Arvandor/ Mythralan
SUPERIOR:	Sehahine Moonbow
ALLIES:	The Seldarine, Mystra (FR)
FOES:	Drow/orc pantheon, Malar (FR), Mask (FR), Talos (FR)
SYMBOL:	Three rings, the middle ring of blue and the other two of gold
WOR. ALIGN.:	Any (good-aligned preferred)

Mythrien is one of several elven gods who have fallen since the Elder Days, when elven culture was more prominent in the world than it is now. In those days, mighty protective magic was wielded for the people's benefit, and Mythrien played his part by assisting elven wizards in constructing mythals around certain cities (though not Myth Drannor, according to lorebooks found on Evermeet). As elven sages can attest, Mythrien's greatest gift to the elves was in assisting elven wizards and priests in mastering the creation and weaving of mythals. He surrendered too much of his power in the process, however, and in an effort to boost his powers to their previous level he decided to create a mighty artifact at a hidden delve somewhere on Faerûn.

Known as Mythrien's Ring, this relic proved his undoing, because at a critical point in the creation process, Malar appeared and attacked Mythrien's avatar. The magic went awry, the ring was lost, and Mythrien's lone avatar was imprisoned in the ground beneath the site of the battle. (Some claim that this occurred in Askalvar, which is now called the Wood of Sharp Teeth.) Since that time, Mythrien has been unable to dispatch avatars to the Prime Material Plane and has instead relied upon visions and manifestations to communicate his desires to his priests. It goes without saying that he counts Malar as a blood enemy, but Mask and Talos are also included, since Mythrien believes that they assisted Malar in his attack. Mythrien's priests are likewise ill-

disposed toward the followers of these three and hunt them mercilessly in their quest for the ring (and vengeance) and the restoration of Mythrien's power.

Mythrien never leaves Arborea, remaining in his palace, Mythralan. It levitates above the ground within a swirling mass of invisible (but tangible) mythal fields, and no other deity except Corellon or Sehahine know how to bypass these fields without his permission. This morose Mythrien has lost the spark of gaiety that typifies the Seldarine, and his disposition isn't likely to change soon.

The Church

CLERGY: Specialty priests, crusaders

CLERGY'S ALIGN.: CG

TURN UNDEAD: SP: Yes Cru: Yes

CMMD UNDEAD: SP: No Cru: No

Mythrien's priesthood has lost all clerics, relying upon specialty priests and crusaders to carry on the work (in a 7:3 ratio). Specialty priests wear blue robes with yellow borders, crusaders use black robes with blue borders, and the rank of any follower is shown by the number of circles on their robes—one gold circle for specialty priests upon reaching 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th level; an equal number of blue circles for crusaders of the same levels.

Mythrien's priests celebrate special days of worship twice per month, with one additional holy day each year. The Forging & The Loss (of the ring) occurred on Ches 12th, according to church doctrine, so that day is a time of mournful remembrance. Holy wars against worshippers of Malar or Talos commonly erupt on this day, and it's safe to say that any human thief of ill repute found near these days is considered a spy for Mask and dealt with in the same (bloody) manner.

Specialty Priests (Seekers)

REQUIREMENTS: Wisdom 13

PRIME REQ.: Wisdom

ALIGNMENT: CG

WEAPONS: Bow, dagger, mace, sword

ARMOR: Leather or ring mail, no shield

MAJOR SPHERES: All, Astral, Charm, Creation, Guardian, Healing, Protection, Time, Wards

MINOR SPHERES: Chaos, Divination, Thought

MAGICAL ITEMS: Same as clerics

REQ. PROFS.: Spellcraft

BONUS PROFS.: Seekers receive free training in the use of one weapon of their choice, so long as it is an allowed weapon.

- Once per day, for one turn, a seeker can lower his armor class by 2 for every five experience levels. This bonus is in addition to armor or magical protection of other sorts currently in use.

- A seeker can sense the presence of mythals.

- Seekers receive a +1 on attack and saving throws when fighting priests of Malar, Talos, and Mask.

- At 5th level, a seeker can *identify* mythals 1/week. This is variant form of the *identify* spell allows the priest to identify random properties (much as the *identify* spell allows a wizard to identify the abilities of a magical item). This ability does not immunize the seeker from the effects of corrupted mythals, but the seeker receives a saving throw (at +2) against possible harmful properties.

- At 7th level, a seeker can turn aside one attack per day as if wearing a *cloak of displacement*.

- At 10th level, a seeker can *weave* mythal (as the spell, found in the *Ruins of Myth Drannor* boxed set) once per day. At 14th level, a seeker can use this ability twice per day.

- At 12th level, a seeker gains minor access to the school of Abjuration and may pray for these spells as any other. Also, seekers receive immunity to the harmful effects of corrupted mythals.

Sarula Iliene (The Nixie Queen) Lesser Power of Arborea, CG

PORTFOLIO: Lakes, streams, nixies, and water magic

ALIASES: None

DOMAIN: Arvandor/The Brythanion

New Magic: Mythrien's Ring

This unadorned silver ring was forged by the god Mythrien, and not much has been heard of its existence since it was lost. Some 400 years ago, the priests of Mythrien went on a killing spree of Malarites in the Western Heartlands after rumors of a high huntmaster of Malar possessing the ring first surfaced, but it was never found, so speculation continues.

Powers

It is clear from legends that Mythrien's Ring holds the power of a god within, but it's unclear what powers can be accessed and used by mortals who possess it. At the very least it gives the wearer the following powers:

- Abjuration/Protective spells cast are of double normal duration.
- All the special powers of a specialty priest of Mythrien as listed above.
- Gain 20 bonus hp when wearing ring; hit points lost for whatever reason are deducted from these bonus points before depleting the wearer's true hit points. The 20 hp regenerate once each day so long as the wearer takes the time to rest normally.
- May cast one additional spell of each level from the Abjuration wizard school or the Wards clerical sphere, once each day.
- Wearer is immune to the effects of mythals and can create/destroy a mythal once a year.

Side Effects

Mythrien's Ring has no side-effects except for priests of Malar who try to use its powers. Each time a power is used, the priest must roll a saving throw or suffer 1d6 hp damage. If the priest attempts to destroy a mythal by using the ring's power, he must roll two saving throws. If the first one fails, then he disintegrated and unrecoverable even by a *wish* spell. If he makes the first save but fails the second, then the priest turns CG and is *geased* to search for the nearest priest(s) of Mythrien and offer the ring back to them.

Possible means of destruction:

- Being trampled under the feet of the Elf-Eater (an Elder Elemental Evil supported by Talos).
- Being given back to the last avatar of Mythrien, rumored to lie imprisoned somewhere in the Wood of Sharp Teeth. The ring will not be destroyed, merely becoming part of him and elevating the god to lesser power status (as opposed to just a demipower).

SUPERIOR: Rillifane Rallathil

ALLIES: Eldath, The Seldarine (Rillifane Rallathil and Deep Sashelas in particular)

FOES: Drow/orc pantheons, The Queen of Air and Darkness

SYMBOL: Three blue lines with three crested points each (to symbolize waves)

WOR. ALIGN.: Any (G/N preferred)

Sarula is a lesser nature deity who has allied herself with the elven god of nature, Rillifane, as a means of securing

her place in the Seldarine. They act more like a father and daughter, but she also has a special relationship with Deep Sashelas, for much of the water she rules over eventually flows to the sea (and into his area of control). It is said that Sarula collects water from Aedrie's rain showers to give them to Deep Sashelas, but there's nothing more to it than that. (Sashelas' consort, the dolphin goddess Trishina, is a watchful lover and makes sure that his attentions never go further.)

Sarula is a quiet deity but not as passive as her friend Eldath. She has no qualms about sending floods to drown enemy armies nor to erecting walls of water to protect her faithful. She resides

in Arvandor at the bottom of a huge lake called Brythanion, within a glass and marble palace. There she is served by nixies and other creatures found in fresh water, as well as her most devoted priests and priestesses.

The Church

CLERGY:	Clerics, specialty priests, mystics, water wizards
CLERGY'S ALIGN.:	CG, NG, CN, N
TURN UNDEAD:	C: No SP: No Mys: No WW: No
CMND. UNDEAD:	C: No SP: No Mys: No WW: No

Clerics and specialty priests make up the majority of any given church (60%–85%), the rest being mystics or elemental wizards who have chosen to specialize in water magic (since it's part of her portfolio). There are no particular holy days to be observed, only times of offering to be declared when a boon is needed or a natural disaster to be averted. At such times they don black robes with blue waves embroidered upon them (gray and green waves for mystics and water wizards, respectively), and they offer elven wine in carefully prepared urns to their god—a *purify water* spell is cast upon the wine in order to make it suitable to Surula, then it's poured into the river or lake. Other events to be observed are the deaths of elder priests, the rise of new leaders, or the birth of children to those within the faith. Their attire changes little in times of war, except to don arm bands and armor. Their aim is to watch over the rivers and other sources of freshwater to ensure they remain unpolluted, and to protect elves and others from suffering ill fates in or near water that lies within their chosen area of guardianship.

Specialty Priests (Brooktenders)

REQUIREMENTS:	Wisdom 12
PRIME REQUISITE:	Wisdom
ALIGNMENT:	CG
WEAPONS:	Dagger, dart, net, spear, short sword
ARMOR:	Leather, elfin chain, or ring mail (maximum)
MAJOR SPHERES:	All, Animal, Charm, Divination,

MINOR SPHERES:	Elemental (Water), Healing, Protection Animal, Plant, Summoning, Sun, Travelers
MAGICAL ITEMS:	Same as cleric, plus any aquatic magical items
REQ. PROFS.:	Swimming
BONUS PROFS.:	Modern languages—The priest can choose two of the following: Lizard man, Nixie, Ogre (Merrow), Troll (freshwater)

- Once per day, a brooktender can detect the presence of freshwater and can cast *purify water* or *create water*.

- A brooktender gains a +2 bonus on saves vs. water-based magic and is immune to the cursed effects of the *bow of watery death*.

- At 3rd level, a brooktender can breathe (fresh) water at will.

- At 5th level, a brooktender can act normally while in freshwater (as *free action* spell) 1/day.

- At 7th level, a brooktender can cast *water walk* or *wall of water* 1/day.

- At 9th level, water elementals refuse to attack a brooktender unless first attacked by the priest. Also, the brooktender can *move water* or *part water* 1/day.

- At 11th level, brooktenders can become "one with the water." In essence, this is the aquatic version of *wind walk* (a seventh-level spell), granting him 90% invisibility while in water and a swimming movement rate of 24. This ability can be used once per day for one hour per level.

- At 13th level, brooktenders can invoke the Healing Touch of the Nixie Queen upon critically wounded or dead elves. The priest must bring the recipient to the edge of a lake, cast a *prayer* spell, then take the recipient into the water. Regardless of whether nixies live there, a contingent of nixies magically appears, takes the recipient, and disappears for a period of 2–7 days. At the end of that time, the nixies bring back the recipient. If the recipient was near death from loss of hit points or missing body parts when taken, he fully healed and regenerated.

If already dead beforehand, the recipient appears alive but weak (with 20% of his original hit points). Note that the target must be brought to a lake within a week of suffering major damage or death; otherwise, the spell fails, and the nixies do not appear. This power can be invoked once per month.

Darahl Firecloak

(The Even-Tempered, Lord of the Green Flame) Demi/Lesser Power of Arcadia, LN(G)

PORTFOLIO:	Earth and Flame phenomena, Earth/Fire magic
ALIASES:	Tilvenar
DOMAIN:	Abellio/The Twin Towers
SUPERIOR:	None
ALLIES:	Dumathoin, Flandal Steelskin, Segojan Earthcaller, Tarsellis Meunniduun, Tethrin Varaldé, Urogalan Laduguer, Lolth, The Queen of Air and Darkness, Selvetarm, Urdlen, others
FOES:	Two outstretched hands holding a green flame between them
SYMBOL:	Two outstretched hands holding a green flame between them
WOR. ALIGN.:	Any Lawful or Neutral

Darahl is a god with a long and checkered past, particularly so for a member of the Seldarine. Long ago he was known as Tilvenar, and he served Rillifane Rallathil, but he suffered a loss of power and prestige when an avatar of his was made insane by touching The Kyrashar Rose (a cursed artifact created by Lolth and the Queen of Air and Darkness to hurt and destroy elves). The insanity spread to several of his avatars, and they rampaged through many communities. In time his avatars were restrained and cured of their affliction, but the damage to his following was irrevocable. The elves largely forsook him, his following drifted and waned, and over the course of time he began to look for a place outside of Arvandor to call his home. It was only after settling in

Arcadia that he finally dropped his old name and began calling himself Darahl Firecloak. By "reinventing" himself, he hoped to begin anew among the elves and eventually to establish himself as an Intermediate Power again.

Darahl is the master of fire- and earth-based magic and phenomena, and as such has strong ties among gods whose portfolios tie into that. He now considers himself friends with the dwarven power Dumathoin and several of the gnomish powers (including the halfling god of earth, Urogalan), but at the expense of his friendships among the Seldarine, of whom only Tarsellis and Tethrin are close to him. However, he's also gained a few new enemies during the course of time. Darahl has not been picky about new converts, so he has tried to sway more neutrally-aligned members of the Underdark races to join with him. This has angered the drow and duergar gods Lolth and Laduguer especially, but he's also gained the unwelcome attention of Selvetarm and Urdlen (and likely Malyk, since Darahl's more even-styled approach to magic conflicts with his own). It's hard to say who would help him more in a fight, the Seldarine or his new allies, but it's not something he wants to test just yet.

Darahl lives on the first layer of Arcadia, among the mountains in a castle known as the Twin Towers. It's called that because, although only one such tower is visible on the surface, an inverted tower of equal size exists underneath, its roof pointing downward (and leading to portals to the Elemental Planes of Earth and Fire, respectively). The irony, of course, is that although the outside is barren, inside are many flame-proofed tapestries and paintings depicting the most beautiful aspects of life in Arvandor. It's clear to visitors that Darahl has not forgotten his ties to the elven pantheon or people.

The Church

CLERGY:	Clerics, specialty priests, crusaders, earth/fire wizards
CLERGY'S ALIGN.:	LG, NG, LN
TURN UNDEAD:	C: Yes SP: Yes Cru: Yes E/FW: No

New Artifact: The Kyrashar Rose

This artifact was created by followers of Lolth and the Queen of Air and Darkness. Soulless elves under the control of the Queen of Air and Darkness took a Black Shard and used it to cut into an oak tree, causing it to bleed as it died. Into this mixture was added the poison from a thousand black roses. Then Lolth's avatar appeared, magically transformed the sap into the shape of a rose, then caused it to harden into amber (but with a greater strength than even steel or mithral). Because some of the residue of the Black Shard fell in with the sap, it became a very potent weapon for use against good elves. It is said to have caused Darahl Firecloak's avatars to go murderously insane, thus attesting to its efficacy.

Powers

- *Darkness, darkness 10' radius, or continual darkness 1/round.*
 - Access to Illusion/Phantasm spells (two spells of each spell level) at the 19th level of ability.
 - *Death spell* that affects elves and faeries only (saving throws allowed, however), 1/day; *fly* and *levitate* at will.
 - Summon 1–3 yeth hounds or quicklings 1/day, they serve for 1 hour before leaving
 - Summon 3–36 unseelie faeries or 2–20 evil elves (or drow) 1/week
 - Wearer has +3 Charisma with regard to drow and evil faeries/elves.
 - *Charm* or *suggestion* 3/day; In the case of *suggestion*, evil actions suggested to good creatures do not incur saving throw bonuses to resist, and elven charm resistance doesn't offer protection from charm.
 - *Create food and water* 1/day—Those eating this food must make a successful Constitution check or become dominated by the wielder, doing their bidding in any way possible so that they can have more of this magical feast as a reward.
 - *Poison* by touch, 1/day.

Side-Effects

The Kyrashar Rose was created to cause havoc among elves, spread evil, and destroy the grip of the Seldarine. Whenever the *death spell*, *darkness*, or *summoning* powers are used, there is a 9% base chance that the attention of Lolth and/or the Queen of Air and Darkness is drawn to them. This chance increases by 1%/level of the one using the powers of the Rose, increasing to 100% if the wielder is a proxy, Chosen, or avatar of a deity of the Seldarine. If this occurs, the wielder must make a saving throw at –5 or become dominated by these two deities. Depending on the status of the Rose's wielder, either Lolth or the Queen of Air and Darkness becomes the primary dominator, issuing commands as desired and turning the wielder chaotic evil. In the case of an avatar in contact with the Kyrashar Rose, however, both goddesses work together and issue contradictory commands to break down the avatar's mind and cause the avatar to blame the nearest elves for its madness, seeking to slay them. This homicidal frenzy does not stop until the avatar is slain or avatars of other elven deities show up to cast *heal* and dispelling spells to end the domination effect.

Another side-effect concerns good or neutral-aligned elves who touch or use the Rose for any non-evil purpose. If three such attempts are made and the wielder resists the domination of both deities, the thorns on the stem of the rose prick the wielder, who must save vs. poison at –3 or suffer the Fate of the Sleeping Death. The wielder immediately falls into a deep slumber and cannot be awakened by any means short of a *limited wish* (which awakens the victim for only 1d4 turns) or a full *wish*. Ironically, the victim does not age and cannot be harmed by any force while in this state.

Suggested Means of Destruction:

- Sending the rose to the elemental plane of fire to burn into ash.
- Having Corellon Larethian strike the rose with his sword in Arvandor.

New Wizard Class: The Pyrogean Wizard

The Pyrogean Wizard is a class of wizard who has managed to specialize in both earth- and fire-based magic, thanks to the efforts of the demipower Darahl Firecloak. They're rare at the moment and primarily found in the Underdark among renegade drow and half-drow wizards, but slowly a few are appearing among his surface elven followers.

Pyrogean wizards can be drow, elven, half-elven, half-drow, or human, must have Intelligence scores of 16 or higher, and have access to all schools of magic except the elemental schools of Air and Water. They have the following powers:

- +2 on saves vs. Earth/fire based spells; -2 on opponents' saving throws.
- +25% bonus to learn earth/fire spells, +0% bonus to learn universal spells, -25% to learn all others.
- Can memorize one additional spell/spell level, provided the spell is from the schools of Earth or Fire.
- At 11th level, need not concentrate in order to control earth or fire elementals (5% chance of losing control remains in effect); at 14th level, there is no chance of losing control.
- Spells of earth and fire are treated as one level lower when being researched by a pyrogean wizard;
- Use d6 for determining hit points;

Hindrances: Pyrogean wizards must be of some neutrally-based alignment, as the philosophy of Darahl Firecloak heavily influences their own philosophy on this particular study of elemental magic. Moreover, they face a certain distrust among surface elves, as well as outright hatred among drow of opposing faiths. They currently suffer a +2 reaction penalty among surface elves and a +4 penalty among drow who worship any of the major drow gods (+6 among worshippers of Ghaunadaur especially). The exception are followers of Eilistraee, whom they tolerate, and followers of those gods with whom Darahl is friendly. The negative penalty among surface elves might disappear as more become acquainted with their beliefs and views on magic, but it is not likely to change in the Underdark except in cities where multiple faiths are the norm—and it will become no less dangerous, as fights between faiths and wizards never cease among the drow.

CMND. UNDEAD: C: No SP: No Cru:
No E/FW: No

Darahl's clergy is small but varied. Clerics make up no more than 20% of the hierarchy, the majority being specialty priests and wizards. Crusaders make up 20% as well. There is some contention between the priests and wizards, but this is kept in check through Darahl's considerable guidance. An affiliated order of mages known as the Pyrogean Wizards has purportedly made itself known in the Underdark, demonstrating the might of his fire/earth philosophy. (See the sidebar above for more information on Pyrogean Wizards.)

Often Darahl is venerated at the outset of a new venture or discovery, whether it's a new tunnel into the Underdark, a new magical item of an elemental nature, or a new convert to be brought into the faith. He is also wor-

shipped during tremors, forest fires, and other such natural phenomena, but it's more for his help in finding a way to end such occurrences. At such times, precious minerals or items of minor magic are sacrificed or left behind as offerings to him. Typical clergy attire varies, but robes of yellow, red, and brown (decorated with green flaming symbols, some magical) are favored. Earrings and necklaces are also common to show religious affiliation. When anticipating battle, they protect themselves as best they can and arm themselves to the teeth (spell scrolls, weapons, etc.). They're a small priesthood at the moment, and none of them is considered expendable.

Specialty Priests (Firecloaks)

REQUIREMENTS: Strength 10, Wisdom 13
PRIME REQUISITE: Wisdom

ALIGNMENT:	LG, NG, LN
WEAPONS:	Any that include a metal component
ARMOR:	Any, up to plate mail and shield
MAJOR SPHERES:	All, Combat, Creation, Elemental (Earth/Fire), Protection, Summoning, Travelers
MINOR SPHERES:	Guardian, Healing, Law, Necromantic
MAGICAL ITEMS:	Same as priest, plus fire/earth-based magical items.
REQ. PROFS.:	Modern languages—choose one of the following: Azer, Derro, Drow, Duergar, Dwarven, Gnomish, Firenewt, Giant (Stone or fire), Pech, Salamander, Umber Hulk, Undercommon
BONUS PROFS.:	Choose one of the following: fire-building, modern languages

- Although elves are Darahl's primary worshippers, Darahl's priesthood welcomes supplicants who are of dwarven, gnomish, or other non-elven heritage (even humans and drow). This affiliation might bring them disdain from their own societies, but not from those who worship Darahl.
- Firecloaks gain a +1 bonus on saves vs. earth- or fire-based magic, plus they can cast *strength of stone* or *affect normal fires* 1/day.
- At 3rd level, firecloaks can *meld into stone* or *flame walk* (as the spell) 1/day.
- At 5th level, firecloaks suffer only half damage from earth/fire-based spells, saving for quarter damage.
- At 7th level, firecloaks can summon 2–5 pech or azer, 1/day. The summoned beings stay to help the priest for up to one hour, then vanish.
- At 9th level, firecloaks can cast *stonetell* or *firequench* 1/day.
- At 12th level, firecloaks may cast *stonewalk* or *firegate* 1/day.
- At 14th level, firecloaks may enter the Elemental Planes of Earth or Fire

1/week or tenday. They may remain on that plane safely only for 1 day/2 levels of experience, plus one additional day per point of Wisdom over 14; beyond that, they must make a saving throw vs. spell or be affected as if by a *harm* spell. Once they return, they may not go back to that elemental plane for an equal number of days, unless they have other means of doing so.

Alathrien Druanna

(The Rune Mistress)

Demipower of the Outlands, N(G)

PORTFOLIO:	Conjurations, Rune magic, Geometric magic
ALIASES:	None
DOMAIN:	Outlands/The Spiral Castle
SUPERIOR:	Labelas Enoreth
ALLIES:	Labelas Enoreth, the Seldarine in general, Deneir, Dugmaren Brightmantle, Gond Malyk, Vaelshaaroon
FOES:	
SYMBOL:	A silver quill tracing elven runes upon paper or a stick tracing geometric lines upon the ground.
WOR. ALIGN.:	Any

Alathrien is a nearly-forgotten member of the elven pantheon. She resides on the Outlands in a sky-blue fortification known as the Spiral Castle, protected by a large maze of thorns (equivalent to the *wall of thorns* spell). In earlier times she watched over summonings that brought forth friends and allies of the elves to their aid, but now most elves seeking such assistance call upon Corellon Larethian instead. Alathrien now devotes her time to rediscovering runic magic as well as strengthening herself among those wizards known as Geometers (see the *Skills & Powers* books for details). Because of her position, Alathrien has relatively few enemies but has attracted the attention of two other powers, Malyk (Talor) and Vaelshaaroon. These two seek to elevate themselves at the Seldarine's expense and so have chosen her as their first target (neither one knowing they're seeking the same deity). To date, however, their efforts

have failed, merely rousing the elven pantheon to a greater alertness and thus further protecting Alathrien).

The Church

CLERGY:	Specialty priests, mystics, geometers
CLERGY'S ALIGN.:	N, NG
TURN UNDEAD:	SP: No Mys: No G: No
CMND. UNDEAD:	SP: No Mys: No G: No

Of all the elven priesthoods named so far, Alathrien's is probably the smallest and most lopsided. Perhaps 25% of the clergy are true specialty priests, the rest being made up of mystics and geometers. However, specialty priests still hold most of the church's highest posts.

Alathrien's followers are a scholarly sort, more given to debating theories and academic achievements than to healing the sick and poor. However, they do their best, and on at least one day per month they set up a feast in honor of their achievements. Supposedly there are secret celebrations afterward by the higher-ups, but for now that is just talk. Holy days are declared whenever great knowledge is attained in the field of magic in general, but discoveries concerning runic magic and geometry are most highly prized.

Followers of Alathrien aren't usually interested in flashy garments, preferring more utilitarian garb, but on special occasions they bring out robes of white with red mantles studded with either show jewels or real ones. In times when battle draws near, they trace temporary runes along their hands, arms, and even their faces.

Specialty Priests (Jadir)

REQUIREMENTS:	Intelligence 12, Wisdom 13
PRIME REQ.:	Intelligence, Wisdom
ALIGNMENT:	NG, N
WEAPONS:	Dagger, knife, quarterstaff, sword (any)
ARMOR:	Leather or elfin chain mail, no shield
MAJOR SPHERES:	All, Astral, Divination, Guardian, Healing, Numbers, Summoning

MINOR SPHERES:	Law, Necromantic, Sun
MAGICAL ITEMS:	Same as priest, plus wizard scrolls
REQUIRED PROFS.:	Reading/writing
BONUS PROFS.:	Reading/writing—The priest can read and write—but not speak—another two languages of choice. Usually Jadir read and write old, forgotten languages.

• Jadir have access to spells from the schools of Geometry and Conjunction/Summoning, up to fifth-level spells. They must pray for these spells as any other. Also, they can read spells of this nature from scrolls, though they do not require *read magic* to do so.

• At 3rd level, a jadir may cast *moon rune* or *erase* 1/day.

• At 5th level, a jadir may cast *sepia snake sigil* or *lesser sign of sealing* 1/day.

• At 7th level, jadir suffer only half damage from rune-based magic and can cast a *greater sign of sealing* 1/day.

• At 10th level, jadir may cast *elemental forbiddance* or *avoidance* 1/day.

• At 12th level, a jadir may cast *symbol* 1/week.

• At 14th level, Alathrien allows the jadir to become dual-classed priests/specialist wizards (either conjurers or geometers). They retain their hit points, skills, and other class attributes but cannot cast clerical magic until they reach 7th level in their new profession, after which Alathrien allows them to use their priestly abilities without penalty. They're known thereafter as Jaradir, a rank so rare that only five have yet achieved it.



A would-be Sir Richard Burton, Chris Perry spends his time in northern California as a college student. He's had many adventures, and he wishes to thank the Lady "M" for making his life seem like dating Tymora and Loviatar at the same time.



by Steve Berman

Illustrated by Dan Burr

KNOTWARDS & WOODSONGS



Sylvan elf magic is unlike the dweomers of their cousins, the high elves and gray elves.

Sylvan reverence for nature is very much a part of their arcane philosophy. Thus, few sylvan mages and priests bother with elemental spells that risk the woods around them. Fewer still bother with spell research and are instead content to make use of what tradition has passed down. Knowledge of these magics is sought after by many others, especially druids and human rangers. Sylvan elves do not share the truths behind the dweomers though, for fear of losing some of their culture. Because of the fragile nature of knotwards and wood elves' tendency to be wary of strangers, human sages have had little success studying sylvan enchantments. Two new proficiencies open to sylvan elf characters are described here. The DM can allow half-elven characters with sylvan elf parentage to learn one of the proficiencies, but these special skills are never taught to those with no elven blood.



Table 1: New Sylvan Elf Proficiencies

Proficiency Name	Group	Base Ability	Base Score	CP Cost	# of Slots	Check Modifier
Knotwards	Wizard	Int	5	5	2	-3
Wood songs	Priest	Wis	5	5	2	-3

Knotwards

Knotwards are specially crafted ropes with a protective dweomer. Sylvan elves are the only race known to use them. This ancient art requires that the practitioner first master the rope use proficiency, as the elf must be skilled at tying intricate knots and hand-weaving hemp. The proficiency user imbues the rope with a minor dweomer. Sylvan elves have devised many different Knotwards, most with an enchantment about as powerful as wizard cantrips.

Creating major knotwards is beyond the ability of most sylvan elves. Any time after 5th level, a character may choose to study the knotward proficiency again, paying the proficiency slot cost a second time to learn to create one of the major knotwards. Note that the character must travel to a sylvan elf homeland and convince the elders he or she is deserving of the knowledge (which might be an adventure in itself).

Woodsongs

Woodsongs are a form of lyrical magic, taught by the sylvan elf elders, that draws upon the forces of nature. Some scholars have suggested that they are remnants of the first elven magics, heartfelt songs inspired by animals and the sounds of weather. The elves themselves remain quiet on the subject. This skill requires the singing proficiency, as the character must be skilled with the ancient sylvan elf tunes and verses. The simplest of these songs can find drinking water or aid in hunting, and they can be used by any sylvan elf. The more powerful woodsongs are a means to defend the elven homeland with the aid of animals and kin.

KnotWards

These enchanted ropes are protective, magical wards that ring the trunks of mundane trees. Many sylvan elves possess the proficiency to craft minor knot-

wards that can aid a tree's growth or create restorative fruit. Only a few of the elders in any sylvan community can fashion more powerful dweomers, some of which can actually prevent a grove from being destroyed by disease or fire.

A knotward begins as hemp hand-woven into rope. Over days, the elf chants and ties, binding protective enchantments along the length of the rope and adding material components to draw strength to the dweomer. When finished, the elf ties the knotward around the trunk of a tree. The tying of major knotwards is always treated with great ceremony, then a feast.

Minor Knotwards

It takes roughly a week to create a minor knotward. During that time, the knot-maker is searching for the right materials, weaving the rope, and studying practice knots. At the end of the week two rolls are made. First a Knotwards proficiency check must succeed to show that the rope and knots are sound. If the roll fails, the knotward creator realizes that his work was inadequate and that the enchantment will not take. If the roll succeeds, however, the DM rolls a secret saving throw for the creator of the knotward. If this roll fails, the dweomer lasts only an hour before fading; the knotwork could not contain the enchantment. A successful saving throw means that the knotward's dweomer is secure.

The duration of a knotward's effect depends on whether it has been applied to a tree. An unused minor knotward lasts a month before fraying and losing its power. Once wrapped around a tree trunk, the dweomer remains potent for a number of weeks equal to the crafter's level. Except as noted, if a knotward is cut or untied prior to the duration's end, it loses all magic instantly.

A few well-known Knotwards are described below:

Easeclimb: This knotward, decorated with strips of bark along the length of its rope, is rarely confined to a single tree; an *easeclimb* may be untied and retied around another tree trunk without harming the dweomer. Any attempt to climb the warded tree is automatically successful as sure hand- and footholds are created and branches drop within

reach. The knots along this rope are thicker and cruder than those of other wards.

Feycall: This knotward attracts the attention of a woodland spirit or local fey folk. When it is wrapped around a stout old tree, there is a 5 percent (non-cumulative) chance some fey creature from the surrounding woodlands is attracted to admire the rope. Sylvan elves use a *feycall* to gain the attention of such creatures as brownies, dryads, pixies and the like. What being appears can be determined by using the *call woodland being* spell. The creature arrives to admire the knotward for at least two rounds. If interrupted, the creature becomes irate or peeved, depending on its nature. After the two rounds, the creature is amicable and listens to whatever the sylvan elf has to say. A *feycall's* rope is decorated with whatever wild fruit is in season and often has small pieces of sweet cake tied and dangling from the length.

Halefruit: This knotward must be used on a fruit tree, preferably one that is just bearing fruit. The rope has a variety of fruit seeds and dried cores twined about the length. The dweomer grants fruit slight restorative properties. Eating this *halefruit* eases exhaustion, allowing restful sleep. It also heals 1–3 hp damage caused by disease and for the next week gives a +1 to any Constitution roll to avoid illness. *Halefruit* must be devoured fully and within an hour of being picked; otherwise, the dweomer is lost. There are no benefits to eating more than a single *halefruit* within a 24-hour period. A *halefruit* appears as a more appealing fruit with a sweet but not cloying taste. This knotward produces a total of 2–5 *halefruit* over a period of a week before drying and falling apart.

Rustlewatch: Another knotward that may be reused, the *rustlewatch* is often carried by traveling sylvan elves over their shoulder. When the elf finally lies down for a few hours rest, he ties the *rustlewatch* around the trunk of the nearest tree and lies in the shade of its branches. Should any creature larger than tiny (T) size approach within twenty feet of the slumbering elf, the branches of the tree suddenly rustle and drop fruit, nuts, or snow (depending upon the season) upon the elf. Unless in

poor health or an enchanted slumber, the elf awakens instantly. A *rustlewatch* has small, dried seed pods woven into the rope; the pods make a sound like a gentle bell.

Saplingsure: To ensure that a young tree grows, this knot is loosely wrapped around the trunk and the lowest branch. If left for a full year, the sapling will have reached twice the size of an unwarded tree. At the end of the year, the *saplingsure* frays and breaks, the dweomer no longer needed. When crafting a *saplingsure*, the elf makes sure to tie the fresh, green leaves of an adult tree of the same kind as the sapling among the rope strands. The knots along the rope are smaller than on other knotwards.

Sharemark: This twin knot, part of the courting rituals of sylvan elves, has brightly colored ribbons and dried flowers attached along the length. The abjorative dweomer of the *sharemark* binds the love of two elves, granting an additional +5% to resist *charm* spells. Normally a male elf expresses his affection for his maiden by wrapping a *sharemark* around the tree where they first met or danced. If she accepts his love, she works her own knotted rope to twine around his. There have been occasions when the maiden begins the ceremony hoping to catch a youth's eye. A *sharemark* remains potent on the tree well after betrothal. If the knot is cut or undone before the hand-tying ritual (analogous to a wedding), the dweomer is lost and symbolizes a bad turn for the relationship.

Major Knotwards

Major knotwards are used to defend the sylvan elf homeland. These are some of the most potent dweomers used by the elves, and they inspire wonder (and envy) in the lucky few outsiders that see their workings.

Few sylvan elves possess the skill to craft a major knotward. Player characters will have spent five nonweapon proficiency slots to learn this rare art (one for rope use, two for minor knotwards, and another two spent on mastering major knotwards). While the materials used in the knots and ropes are not harder to acquire, the weaving is far more complicated than that of a minor knotward.

It takes two weeks to fashion a major knotward. A proficiency check and a

saving throw must be made as mentioned under minor knotwards. Both rolls, however, are made at a –2 penalty due to the complexity of the task. Once a major knotward has been tied around a tree, the protective dweomer lasts one month for every level or Hit Die of its maker.

Some of the known major knotwards are described below.

Evergreen: Travelers to sylvan elf woods often remark on the variety of trees that still bear foliage in winter. Of course they suspect magic, and the *evergreen* knotward is the secret. Any tree ringed by this knotward resists the natural changes of the seasons, remaining fresh and verdant all year round. The rope and knots of the *evergreen* are smeared with pine or fir sap, and natural green dyes are applied to the edges of each knot.

Firesafe: The knowledge of these knotwards is extremely rare and guarded. The *firesafe* knotward ensures that a tree remains undamaged after exposure to fire or lightning. Magical flames cannot char the tree but instead cause the knotward to make a saving throw vs. spell at the level of its maker. Should the save fail, the *firesafe* is destroyed after saving the tree from the immediate threat. Thus, a *firesafe* that fails can still save its tree if it is destroyed by a *fireball* spell, but a raging forest fire can still consume the tree after the ward is gone. Creating a *firesafe* requires the rope be rubbed in natural charcoal so that the whole length is blackened, and each knot is hung with a pine cone.

Illguard: Often found protecting fruit-bearing trees, the *illguard* knotward prevents disease, mundane or magical, from harming the tree. Any spell that would cause an unnatural deterioration to plant life fails when used against an *illguarded* tree. Dried berries and leaves are entwined around each knot. The whole rope gives off a pleasant, fresh scent that repels harmful insects.

Ironwood: This knot protects a tree from the threat of an axe. Any tree bearing an *ironwood* cannot be chopped down by a metal weapon; the bark toughens against blows like the hardest armor. Also all trees in a 100' radius surrounding the knotwarded tree are protected to a limited extent, suffering only

Table 2: Woodsongs

Note that zero-level songs may be cast by any sylvan elf with the woodsong proficiency.

Some woodsongs, noted with an asterisk and a parenthetical note, are sung versions of normal priest spells.

Zero Level

Arrow Bides
Seek the Stream
Trail Lilt
Venery Call

First Level

Animal Friendship
Elhorna's Bowstaff
Forest's Simple Fare
Walk within the Woods
(*Pass Without Trace*)
Woodland Ruse Woodland Wile

Second Level

Call for the Woods
Feathered Watcher Up High
Sheltered Form

Third Level

Our Canticle of Loss
Token Leaf

Fourth Level

Call the Children of the Woods (Animal Summoning)
Hear Nature's Will

Fifth Level

Entrusts the Beast
Walk All Paths

half damage from blows. Huge pieces of flint hang from the hemp rope and small stones are at the center of each ornate knot, making this the heaviest knotward.

Woodsongs

Woodsongs are subtle magic, with many having only a verbal component. Most observers mistakenly believe an elf casting a woodsong is merely singing naturally, never attributing the magical effects to the song. Even the higher level woodsongs can be mistaken for natural events. If the campaign uses the subtlety rules from the *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Spells & Magic* book, most of these spells have a subtlety rating of +3 to +6.

Because they draw power from Nature (considered a demipower), these songs are considered priestly magic. Sylvan elf priests with the proficiency may choose to memorize woodsongs but cannot then have access to the spheres of Animal or Plant. Bards and rangers may also learn woodsongs, choosing to memorize a song in the place of a wizard spell (for bards) or priest spell (for rangers) of the same level.

Zero-level woodsongs may be used by any sylvan elf with both the singing and woodsong proficiencies. Each day, a spellcasting character may sing one 0-level woodsong per level. Non-spellcasters (fighters and thieves) can sing one 0-level woodsong per day for every three levels. Thus, a 5th-level wizard can sing five 0-level woodsongs a day, while a 5th-level warrior can sing only one; when that warrior reaches sixth level, he can sing two woodsongs per day. Note that the average sylvan elf, a 0-level character, can perform one 0-level woodsong per day.

Arrow Bides
(woodsong)
Level: 0
Sphere: Combat
Range: 0
Duration: 1 turn
Area of Effect: One arrow
Components: V
Casting Time: 1
Saving Throw: None

This quick verse is sung while the elf shoots a bow. It ensures that, should the arrow miss its mark, it falls to the ground upright and remains intact. Also, should the elf seek out the arrow within the song's duration, as long as he is within 100 feet of the shaft, he has no difficulty spotting it.

Seek the Stream
(woodsong)
Level: 0
Sphere: Divination
Range: 0
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: See below
Components: V, M
Casting Time: 2
Saving Throw: None

A sylvan elf sings *seek the stream* when exploring an unknown area or when

thirsty and desperate for water. This woodsong immediately leads the elf in the direction of the nearest small body of running water (a stream, brook, even river) and also gives him some mental hint as to how long it takes on foot to reach. The material component is the elf's empty waterskin.

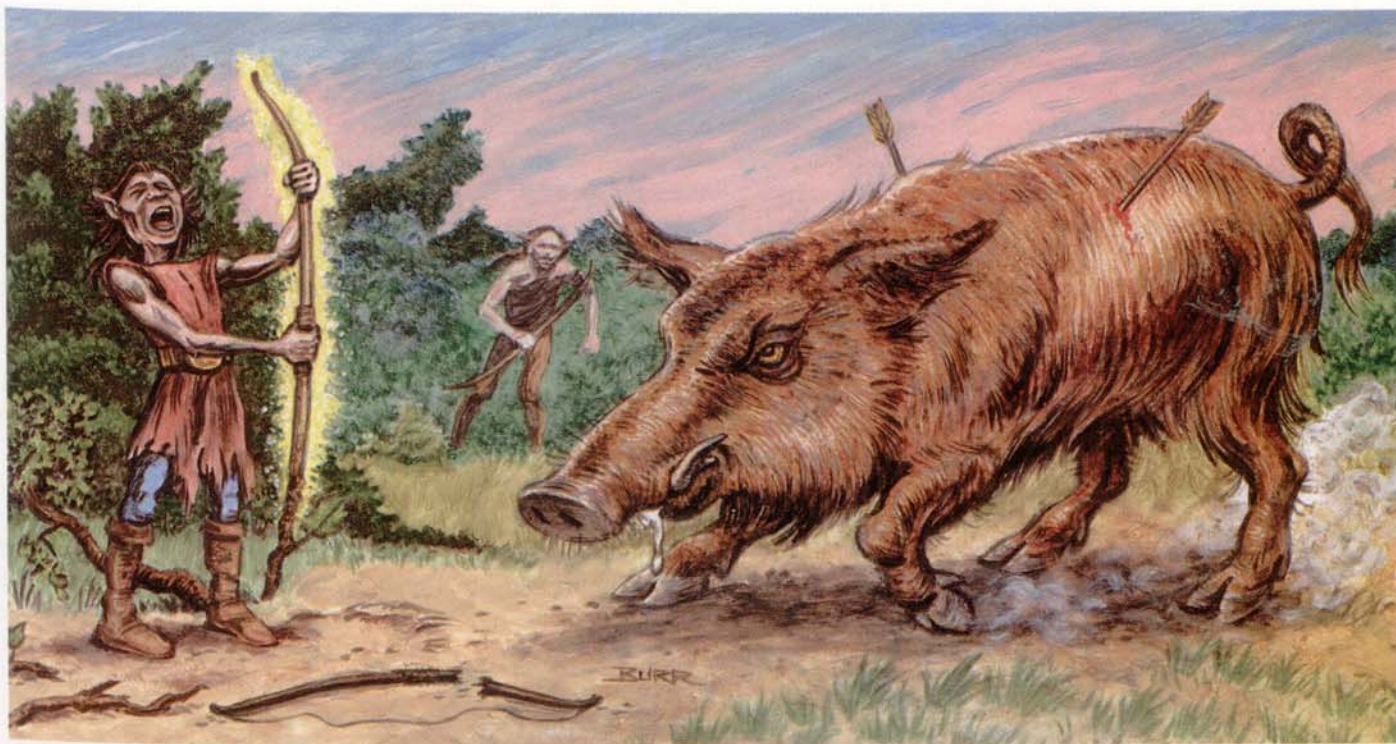
Trail Lilt
(woodsong)
Level: 0
Sphere: Elemental (Earth)
Range: 0
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: See below
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 5
Saving Throw: None

This light song is used often by sylvan elf woodsmen to improve their chance of tracking. The elf gently sings while leaning down near to the ground. The soil and grass shift about slightly so that the impressions of any animal or individual are more obvious. The singer gains a +1 bonus to the tracking proficiency.

Venery Call
(woodsong)
Level: 0
Sphere: All
Range: 20 yards
Duration: 2 hours
Area of Effect: One sylvan elf
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 turn
Saving Throw: None

Using this song, up to five sylvan elves may combine their talents so that one of them alone can gain a superior edge in hunting. The target of the spell is usually the highest ranking woodsman. All elves taking part in the *venery call* song must have the singing nonweapon proficiency.

The *venery call* song is a low tune of many verses. It rustles like leaves in the wind. No animal is ever disturbed by it, so the casting elves suffer no penalties to their chance to surprise a target. When completed, the leader gains a -1 bonus to his THAC0 for every three levels/hit dice of the elves singing, to a maximum gain of a -6 bonus. This bonus applies only to a single bowshot, spear throw, or other attack intended to bring down a game animal. In addition, the leader



gains an equivalent bonus to his hunting proficiency check for the entire duration of the woodsong.

Though not its intended purpose, a *venery call* can be used to defend a homeland. The prey in such cases is not an animal but rather the intruder. In such instances, the intruder is permitted a saving throw to hear the song (and perhaps avoid surprise), but the hunt leader still gains the bonus to one attack roll.

Forest's Simple Fare

(woodsong)

Level: 1

Sphere: Creation

Range: 0

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: See below

Components: V, M

Casting Time: 1

Saving Throw: None

The *forest's simple fare* woodsong provides limited sustenance for the hungry. While singing, the elf peels off strips of rough bark from an adult tree. This fare may be eaten as dried rations; the strips are tasteless and difficult to chew but sustain a lightly built person if no other food is available. A continued diet of this fare causes weakness, inflicting a cumulative -1 penalty to Strength and Constitution scores for every week spent without other food. The fare keeps for up to a week before crumbling apart.

Elhorna's Bowstaff

(woodsong)

Level: 1

Sphere: Combat, Plant

Range: 0

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: One branch

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 5 rounds

Saving Throw: None

A sylvan elf sings this song when in need of a bow. The song can transform any long branch or stick that the elf holds into a strong short bow. The change is permanent, and the new bow bears no magical dweomer; it is normal in appearance and can be as easily broken as any other wooden weapon. Traveling elves who wish to appear unarmed often take along a stout staff that they can cast *Elhorna's bowstaff* upon when ready.

Woodland Ruse Woodland Wile

(woodsong)

Level: 1

Sphere: Plant

Range: 10 yards

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 20 yards

Components: V

Casting Time: 2

Saving Throw: See below

This song causes the woods near the elf to rustle as if an animal were hiding in the vegetation or a gust of wind were

blowing. *Woodland ruse woodland wile* is used to provide a distraction so that the caster might escape or gain initiative. Anyone within the area of effect must make a saving throw, modified as follows: animals receive a -1 penalty, chaotic targets suffer a -1 penalty, and city dwellers receive a -3 penalty for being unfamiliar with forest environs. These penalties are cumulative, so a chaotic city dweller suffers a -4 penalty.

Should all present fail, the elf gains a +3 to his initiative roll and a +10% bonus to any hide in shadows and move silently skills for the following round only. Should only a single target fail, the caster still gains a +1 to its following initiative roll. No benefit is gained if none of the spell's targets fail.

Call for the Woods

(woodsong)

Level: 2

Sphere: Guardian

Range: 0

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 1 mile/level of caster

Components: V, M

Casting Time: 2

Saving Throw: See below

This song warns the other denizens of the forest and sylvan elves of an intruder. Because of the distress it causes, an elf should use a *call for the woods* only in a dire emergency.

All normal animals within the area of effect of the *call for the woods* are entitled to a saving throw. An animal that fails instantly becomes frightened and seeks out its lair or another safe place in which to hide, whichever is nearest. The animal remains hesitant to leave its shelter for the next few hours.

the bird immediately flies off to seek the caster and tell him of the news. A watcher bird will not travel more than one mile out of its natural environment to find the elf. The bird can communicate with the caster only crudely, enough to fulfill its mission. When the song's duration expires, the watcher bird returns to

from such conditions but also poor visual conditions and bad terrain. To an observer, the elf appears only slightly dampened or hindered by the weather.

The song offers slight protection against magically-generated weather (*dust devil* or *ice storm*), granting the elf a +1 on his saving throw for the duration of the *sheltered form*.

Our Canticle of Loss

(woodsong)

Level: 3

Sphere: Enchantment/Charm

Range: 0

Duration: 3 rounds

Area of Effect: 30 yards

Components: V

Casting Time: 3

Saving Throw: Neg.

An elf sings *our canticle of loss* for three rounds to determine whether a stranger can be trusted by the sylvan elf community or the stranger means harm to the homeland.

The song has different effects to different listeners. To the ears of a sylvan elf, druid, or ranger, the lyrics are beautiful but sad as they describe an elven wood's growth and then destruction. For the spell's duration and the round following, those who fail a saving throw vs. spells are *enthralled* (as per the second-level priest spell) and at the end are left in tears.

Listeners who have committed a wrongful act against any elf (which not only includes assault but also theft and deceit) and fail their saving throw feel compelled to confess the misdeeds through a haze of tears.

Finally, those who have performed acts of wanton destruction to any forest must save; failure indicates that the victim becomes enraged during the song and, depending on his nature, might well attack the caster or others present, at the DM's or player's discretion.

Humans, dwarves, and halflings are often deeply affected by *our canticle of loss* and make their saving throws at a -1 penalty. Humanoid races are the ones most often antagonizing the sylvan elves and suffer a -3 penalty to their save. (Few goblins can stand to hear this song without flying into a bloodthirsty rage.)

Because they draw power from Nature, these songs are considered priestly magic.

All sylvan elves within the area can hear the song, even if within a closed environ, and immediately know the nature of the threat, as it is briefly described (in no more than six words) within the lyrics of the song. Each feels a sense of urgency and a pull that lasts for a moment in the direction where the caster can be found.

The material component is a fragile berry or flower that must be crushed in the hands of the caster.

Feathered Watcher

(woodsong)

Level: 2

Sphere: Animal

Range: 20 yards/level

Duration: 1 day/level

Area of Effect: One bird

Components: V, M

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Saving Throw: None

This song charms a small bird into acting as a sentinel. The bird must be of a normal variety (not giant-sized or of abnormal intelligence or ability). It spends the duration watching for a specific event or person indicated by the caster. Should it spy that event or person,

its normal activities regardless of whether it has seen what the elf charged it to find.

The material component is a handful of seed thrown to attract the bird.

Sheltered Form

(woodsong)

Level: 2

Sphere: Weather

Range: Touch

Duration: One hour + one hour/level

Area of Effect: Caster

Components: V

Casting Time: 2

Saving Throw: None

When *sheltered form* is sung, it prevents bad weather conditions from having adverse effects on the elf. The caster is protected from the effects on nonmagical heat and cold in a range of 10° F to 100° F, with such temperatures feeling as if they were only a mild 70° F. The ward ceases to function in extremes of temperatures beyond the limits mentioned above.

The *sheltered form* does not have a visible aura, yet it also prevents the elf from being hampered by mundane rain, snow, hail, and gusts of wind; the character avoids not only illness brought on

Token Leaf

(woodsong)

Level: 3

Sphere: Protection

Range: 0

Duration: One day/level

Area of Effect: See below

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: One hour

Saving Throw: None

This song requires time and patience, as the elven caster must travel through the forest until he finds a perfect, healthy leaf to fashion into a protective charm. Through the workings of the woodsong, a fraction of the tree's properties are bestowed upon the wearer. The following are the powers of only some of the known *token leaves*:

Alder	+2 on swimming proficiency checks
Ash	+1 on Constitution (Health) checks
Beech	+2 on reading/writing proficiency checks
Birch	+2 on healing proficiency checks
Elder	+1 save vs. poison
Fir	+2 on awareness proficiency checks
Hawthorn	+1 save vs. cold
Hazel	+2 on weather knowledge proficiency checks
Oak	+1 save vs. lightning
Rowan	+1 saves vs. Enchantment magic

Should the bearer not possess a proficiency augmented by a *token leaf*, for the duration of the spell, he may make use of that skill on a roll of 8 or less (no additional bonus is gained from the charm). The charm can be removed, forfeiting the protection until it is worn again.

A delicate thing, a *token leaf* can be easily destroyed, especially by fire. The abjorative magic of the *token leaf* fades with the duration. At that time, the leaf shrivels away.

Hear Nature's Will

(woodsong)

Level: 4

Sphere: Protection

Range: 10 yards + 10 yards/level

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: See below

Components: V

Casting Time: 4

Saving Throw: See below

Now and then a sylvan elf encounters an enemy spellcaster with power over animals or plants. Perhaps a druid has unlawfully entered the homeland seeking forbidden knowledge, or a servant of some beastly god wants to prowl the sylvan forest. *Hear nature's will* is a song that seeks to return nature to its proper course and dispel outside influences.

The song works like a *dispel magic* spell and is sung in response to any magic that targets a plant or animal. The caster has a base 100% chance of success modified by the following conditions:

- -5% for every level of the target spell above first
- -10% if the enemy caster is a druid
- -5% if the enemy caster is a ranger
- -5% for every level that the foe is higher than the caster
- -10% if foe is a sylvan elf
- -25% if the caster is outside a forest environs

The caster must be aware of the target spell to sing *hear nature's will*; the spell cannot be used indiscriminately and cancels only a single dweomer. This song has no effect on the spells cast from magical items.

Entrust the Beasts

(woodsong)

Level: 5

Sphere: Animal, Guardian

Range: 30 yards

Duration: See below

Area of Effect: One creature or site

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 turn

Saving Throw: See below

This song charges an animal to become a guardian to an individual or a specific site. The caster can communicate his desires to the animal in a crude fashion, enough so that it understands its task. Any creature of at least animal intelligence may be the target of this song. Normal animals are affected without a saving throw. Giant-sized animals and those animals with low Intelligence or higher may save vs. spell to resist the influence of the song.

Once affected, the animal does not stray from the designated area except to acquire food. It guards the site for a

number of days equal to twice the caster's level. Should the animal be told to guard a person, the creature follows to the best of its ability for a number of days equal to the caster's level of experience.

While guarding, the animal attacks any intruder except for the caster. The entrusted beast is not given any additional abilities. Thus it cannot speak with a person it guards or encounters nor does it abandon the need to eat or sleep. Should a defended person make any attempt to harm the guardian, the song's influence ends at once.

Walk All Paths

(woodsong)

Level: 5

Sphere: Travel

Range: 0

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 10 miles/level of caster

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 turn

Saving Throw: None

This song helps the elven caster protect any forest. The caster begins the song while walking or running along one forest trail; by the end of the casting time, the caster emerges onto any other known path within the area of effect as long as the new trail is in the same woods. No other time has elapsed, though if the caster emerges into a melee situation he automatically loses initiative that round. This song cannot be used to travel the distance of the same path the caster started on; the destination trail must be a different path that the caster has at least once traveled; otherwise, it is unknown to him and cannot be reached using this song.


For every three levels of ability, the caster may take along with him another sylvan elf. Others of the different elven races may accompany the caster, one other elf for every five levels of the caster.



In Steve Berman's campaign, the elven race is so closely tied to nature, being the will of the land, that few humans can understand them. He hopes this article instills some of that wonder into the realms of others.

by Miranda Horner

Beyond the Tree



Throughout the ages of Ansalon, people have spoken of alluring beings who live inside ancient oak trees. These spirits, called dryads, possess delicate features reminiscent of an elf's, and they have been known to lure travelers away from their journeys for a time. Those who seek to harm an oak often tell of being led away from the tree by these exquisite spirits. Some have become tangled amid the brush surrounding the tree and rendered unconscious by protective dryads. The teller of the latter tale usually wakes up miles away, his belongings dropped several hundred yards apart on a path, leading him farther from the tree.



Ansalonian scholars calculate that if all tales of dryads are true, several hundred of the spirits must live within the Qualinesti Forest alone. To account for the high numbers of dryad sightings, some scholars theorize that dryads migrate every year or just travel away from their trees for a while. However, elf scholars lucky enough to have observed a tree sprite for a time know that dryads can never leave their home grove, or even their chosen tree. To do so would cause the dryad to wither away within hours. Finally, scholars must simply discount some of the tales to mark the true numbers of dryads in Ansalon. By making adjustments for mistaken identity (such as the pranks of mischievous Kagonesti), tall tales, and outright lies, sages believe that one in every fifty or so healthy, ancient oak groves supports an exquisite dryad to protect it.

Of course, that was before the Dragon Purge. Some time around 30 S.C., new tales began to surface that countered much of the accepted information on tree spirits. The Herald tells a story of a lonely dryad traveling from what used to be Balifor, looking for a way to restore the natural terrain to what was once her grove and is now part of the dragon Malystrix's Desolation. By all rights, the dryad should have died when her tree was "shaped" out of existence by the dragon overlord's ability to change the terrain she controls, but the Herald tells of how the dryad's soul, shared with the tree that was her home, was pared in half instead of released unto death.

Other stories speak of dryads who leave their home trees to fulfill a strange quest that ultimately helps restore the balance of nature in some fashion. They seem driven by instinct to set up protections around their tree and grove before leaving.

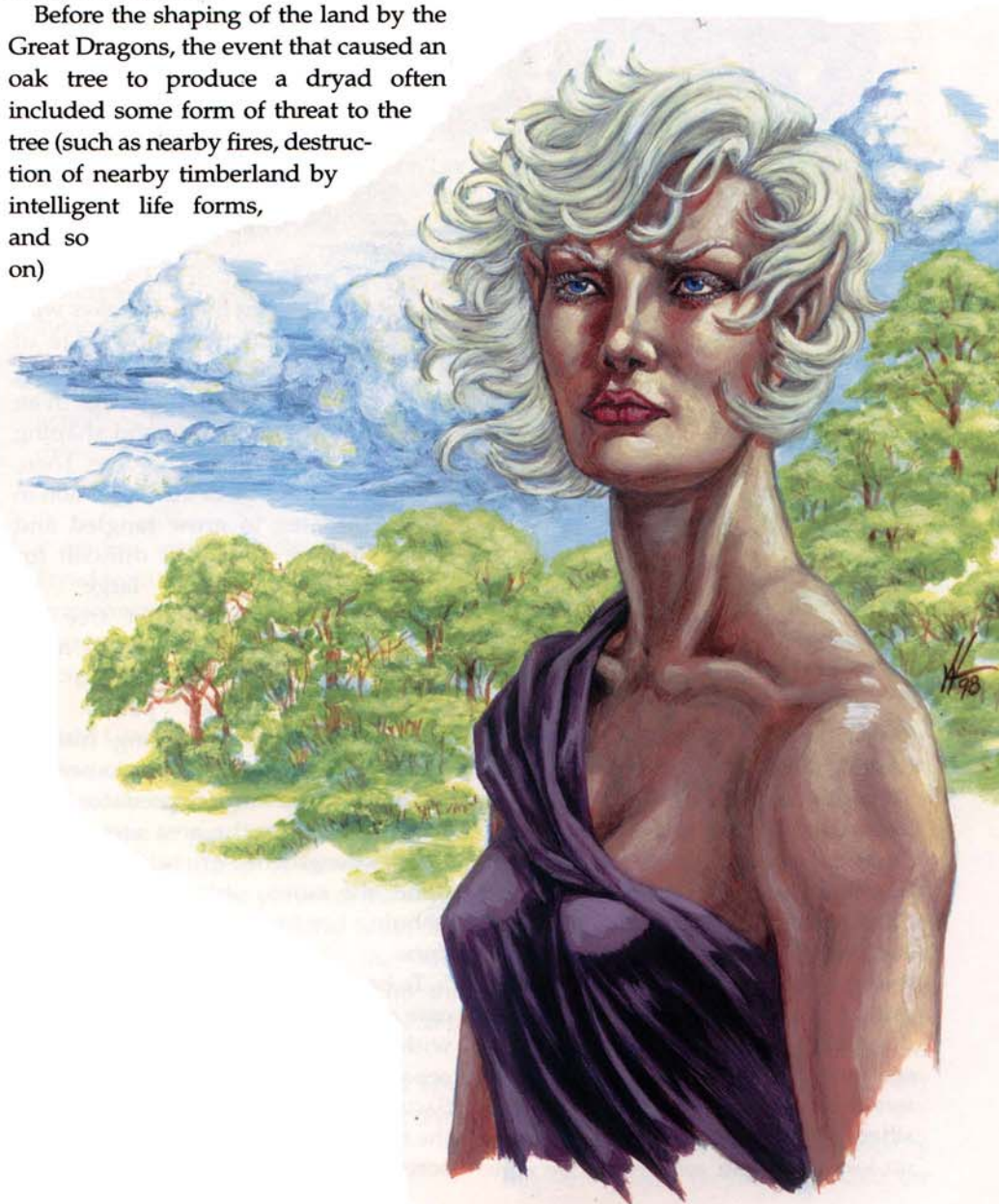
Some speculate that when the Great Dragons shaped the terrain in Kendermore, Balifor, Southern Ergoth, and other places, many dryads died with their trees. However, the tinker gnome theory that, for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction seems to hold true in this instance. Scholars believe that the reaction not only allowed some "shaped" dryads to survive but also caused new ones to be formed for "questing" purposes.

The Birth of a Dryad

When an oak tree ages into the latter half of its first century, its life force sometimes grows strong enough not only to provide seeds for future generations of oak trees but also to produce a symbiotic entity. At the same time seeds spring away from the oak tree's limbs, a small life forms deep within the heart of the gnarled oak. As the tree's seeds sprout into life, so does the awareness of the newly-created dryad at the center of the tree. By the time the first true leaves form on the oak seedlings, a dryad, an extension of the spirit of the oak tree, has stepped out of her tree. As an extension of her tree, a dryad feels a duality in her life: She is part of the tree that birthed her, but she also has enough individuality to form her own judgments.

Before the shaping of the land by the Great Dragons, the event that caused an oak tree to produce a dryad often included some form of threat to the tree (such as nearby fires, destruction of nearby timberland by intelligent life forms, and so on)

or the loss of an intelligent life form within range of the deep roots of the oak tree. In the case of the former, the dryad tended to be mischievous, often ready to defend her tree from the moment she stepped from it. The latter events often led toward a more thoughtful dryad who preferred to "persuade" those who threaten into forgetting their actions. After the dragon overlords began to change their land, those few dryads in "shaped" areas often became more militant and practical. These "remnants" of their trees often appear morose or driven to an observer, but they house great intelligence—enough to realize that attacking a Great Dragon outright is not the way to return their land to its former state.





stantly feel its death cry surging through their blood, reminding them of their efforts to restore nature to its balance.

Dryads born with a "quest" possess the advantages and weaknesses of a "traditional" dryad (see sidebar) with one additional note: They can leave their tree if they take a few precautions beforehand. In addition, their appearances change with the season. In the spring and summer, they possess green hair and deeply tanned skin. In the fall, their hair and skin changes to reflect the oranges and reds of their trees. Once winter has come in full force, the dryads' appearances become starkly white, enabling them to blend in with the snow.

As a quested dryad leaves her tree for the first time, she takes with her an instinctive knowledge of wood magic. With her first steps, she touches all of the foliage in an area, strengthening and shaping them to help hide her tree. Then, she causes all of the vegetation in the area to grow tangled and thorny, making it difficult for anything large to approach her tree. To make an even more effective barrier, she chooses plants that

repel wood-boring insects.

Finally, she spends a few weeks searching for several natural predators and enticing them to the area around her newly strengthened grove. Once that is done, she moves onto the next stage: imbuing her tree with magical protections.

To be able to come back to the tree in case of danger, the dryad must supply it with some extra magical energy via a separation ritual of sorts. (If using SAGA® rules, the dryad uses her link to the tree to supply it with 10 permanent sorcery spell points of her own, allow-

ing the tree to summon her if she steps into a tree near her. If using AD&D® rules, the concentration allows her fully to grasp her aptitude to use her *dimension door* ability.) By meditating within her tree, not only does she learn of all the events that occurred within the radius of its roots, but she also leaves a little of her magical energy behind in case something threatens the tree. After understanding the complete entity the oak tree represents, she knows her responsibility to it and can leave it without dying. The tree, should something attack it after she leaves, can call to her over the miles, telling her the nature of the threat. If the dryad doesn't answer her tree's call by stepping into a nearby tree and transporting to it, she dies within a few hours. Fortunately, due to the nature of her quest and the powers given to her by her tree, once the dryad takes care of the threat, she can return to the same spot that she left. (Unfortunately for her, the dryad must face this threat alone.) The power to return to her tree like this works only when the tree faces certain danger.

Once she fulfills the instinctive call to protect her tree, the dryad's understanding of her quest comes clear to her in a vision.

Quested Dryads

A "quested" dryad is born with the knowledge that she must leave her tree within the space of a few weeks after stepping out from it. Once she has prepared her tree for her absence, she falls into a deep sleep inside her tree for a full day. During that time, she dreams about traveling from root system to root system of all manner of plants. As she travels, she slowly realizes that she is being led toward an area that "shouldn't be." After she learns the nature of that area, a dragon overlord's domain, she is led to another, and another, until she knows that her duty lies in finding a way to restore these "unnatural" areas to their natural state. As she slowly leaves her state of deep sleep, she decides upon some immediate, short-range goal that she can achieve. Usually, her wandering mind finds an intelligent being of good intentions who needs help that she can give. Once she wakes up, she bids her tree farewell and begins her quest.

Leaving a Tree

Those dryads who survived the transformation of the land by the Great Dragons have no tree left to protect. In fact, the changing of the land changed them as well, or they wouldn't have survived their tree's death. Frequently, the type of dragon that controls the terrain affects what type of abilities and disadvantages a shaped dryad possesses. (To see how a shaped dryad differs from a "quested" dryad, see the sidebar.) Even though shaped dryads no longer have a real tree, they con-

Dryad Magical Items (AD&D)

Spear of Entanglement

(Quested Dryads)

Made from living wood, the *spear of entanglement* not only causes normal spear damage when it successfully hits an opponent, but it also wraps him up in thorny vines, which grow profusely and quickly from the wood of the spear. Immediately upon hitting the foe, the spear causes an additional 1d6 hp damage. Furthermore, for every round that the foe remains entangled in the spear, it continues to inflict 1d6 hp damage. In order to break free of the vines, though, the foe must make a successful Strength check against the magical vines. Once the spear entangles a foe, it cannot be wielded against another without first calling back the vines.

Since the wood of the spear is still living, the bearer must stand the staff in water for at least three hours every day or the wood dies and loses its enchantment.

Vines: AC 4; MV 8; HD 3; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SZ M (6' long); ML fanatic (18); Int semi- (4); AL N; XP 65.

XPValue: 2,500 GPValue: 5,000

Scroll of Blending Leaves

(Quested and Shaped Dryads)

Although quested dryads can camouflage themselves in their native forests,

sometimes they need a little extra help amidst nonforested locales. By creating a *scroll of blending leaves* (the "scroll" consists of a large oak leaf with plant dyes to make symbols), a dryad can hide in any situation with different colors or textures. Essentially, the user of this scroll becomes invisible 10 yards or farther away. Should someone come closer, the dryad must make a successful Wisdom check (the spell camouflages the dryad as if she has a Wisdom of 16). Of course, if she moves, the observer will notice her. For quested dryads from Khellendros's, Malys's, or Gellidus's realms, this scroll helps them camouflage themselves in the forest (same effects as detailed above).

XPValue: 800 GPValue: 1,500

Wooden Ring of Calm

(Quested Dryads)

Sometimes a dryad finds herself in a situation where she cannot persuade her foes into taking her course of action. At such a time, the dryad can call upon her *wooden ring of calm* to help soothe her foes into a more amenable mood. The ring affects a group of individuals as the *friends* spell. Once the effect begins, the subjects lose all hostility toward the wearer, often allowing the dryad to persuade them into normal, nondestructive actions. Of course, the moment the dryad acts in a hostile manner or

attempts to make the subjects perform some self-destructive act, the effect ends.

XPValue: 2,000 GPValue: 5,000

Powder of Mossy Growth

(Quested and Shaped Dryads)

Powder of mossy growth causes moss to grow on any surface. One application covers ten square feet or one average-sized humanoid and grows into fullness in about five minutes. Dryads can use this powder to cover their tracks, hide small objects in a natural setting, or fool observers into thinking an object has been in a certain place for a long time. If used on humanoids, this powder causes moss to grow on the top layer of skin (even spreading under clothing). While on a person, the moss causes itching, attracts other growths (such as fungus), and makes the subject unrecognizable at first glance. To get rid of the moss, a subject must sit near a blazing fire for a full week to dry out the moss. Even then, the subject's hair falls out (due to its mossy growth), and his skin looks patchy for several weeks. (The character loses 3 points of Charisma for three weeks unless someone magically heals him.) Since this powder causes no ill effect to dryads, shaped dryads often use it to camouflage themselves in forested settings.

XPValue: 600 GPValue: 1,100

Wood and Fifth Age Magic

Not only does a quested dryad gain the ability to leave her tree, but she also has knowledge that most sorcerers and mystics of the Fifth Age find intriguing: Dryads can use sorcery and mysticism on wood with no penalties. Of course, they must still use sorcery on nonliving wood and mysticism on living wood, but they suffer no penalties when using wood as a medium for spells.

Shaped dryads also suffer no penalties when using wood as a medium for spells, with one addendum: They must use their special school or sphere of magic to gain this benefit. Any time a shaped dryad attempts to work magic on wood, she must use the school or sphere of magic that she gained when she was shaped. If she doesn't, then all of the normal penalties described in *Heroes*

of *Sorcery* apply. Of course, a shaped dryad from Malys's Desolation must use pyromancy (or fire) against nonliving wood—a thought that often causes even more sadness or anger in the dryad.

Quest Guidelines

In terms of game play, the Narrator can easily come up with an immediate mini-quest to get a dryad hero into the midst of the group of heroes, but he should also help the player of the dryad hero create an overarching quest that meshes with the goals of the other heroes. The Narrator should do this before he introduces the dryad hero to the rest of the party.

Here are some suggestions to help both the Narrator and player flesh out a quest:

✧ Although the overall focus should be to restore a dragon realm to a natural state, the dryad is not bound to a certain plan of action regarding this goal. In fact, she can feel impelled to restore Gellidus's realm back to normal, but then leave the area to go to the Dragon Isles or some other far-away locale if it serves her quest's best interest to do so. (Those who wish to use dryads in an AD&D campaign should choose a quest that would allow the dryad to be involved in the game for as long as the player wishes. For example, destroying an evil lich-king who has been twisting the realm into a place where undead can roam freely and trees warp into evil treants would be a good example of a fairly long-term quest.)

✧ The Narrator should continue to help the player tie the quest into the

force her into overwhelmingly bad situations. Although she faces a truly large undertaking in bringing a dragon realm down, the dryad should never find herself being forced into a situation where she must

Shaped Dryads

After a dryad's tree has been torn from her by a dragon overlord (or twisted away from it, in the case of those dryads from the realm distorted by Beryl the Green's efforts to make the forest her very own), a dryad finds herself with an aching, empty feeling. The mainstay of the dryad's life, her tree, has been ripped from her. The process that took her tree away from her, though, essentially cauterized the wound before the wood spirit's life could also flow away and changed her essential form into one able to handle a specific school or sphere. Now, bereft of her tree, the shaped dryad wanders the lands of Ansalon, looking for a way to restore the area her grove once occupied to its former glory.

The shaped dryad has a quest much as the quested dryad does: She wants to restore her home to what it had once been. However, unlike the quested dryads (or shaped dryads from Beryl's lands), a shaped dryad immediately dies once her land has been restored.

Because they suffered through the Great Dragons' efforts to shape the land, shaped dryads take on an appearance that differs slightly from their "normal" quested compatriots. Dryads from the twisted trees of Beryl the Green's realm not only find that their link to their tree is broken, but they themselves retain the bright green hair and eyes and tanned skin that usually marks the seasons of spring and summer through all of the seasons to come. Those dryads from Gellidus the White's realm have white hair and white skin with eyes of deep, frigid blue. Because Khellendros the Blue shaped part of his realms into sandy deserts, dryads from this area possess sandy blond hair and skin, with eyes of molten gold. Dryads shaped by Red Malys's realm have fiery red hair and eyes with glowing orange skin reminiscent of metal cooling down from a white-heat color. Finally, those dryads from Sable the Black's realm are dark in hue, with muddy brown hair and skin and mossy green eyes.



current campaign after the initial introduction. For example, if the rest of the party must go to Sanction to deliver an important package, then the Narrator should also try to add some short-term element to the story that would lead the dryad to the same area. Perhaps the dryad hears a rumor that tells her the location of a lost magical item that helps a person resist the effects of cold, allowing her to venture into the realm of Gellidus, the white dragon, without ill effects.

◆ The quest should be the guiding factor of the dryad's life, but it should not

lose her life. As such, the Narrator should plan the campaign to challenge her, not kill her. Strong challenges help the dryad hero grow into her future role.

◆ Allow for minor victories. Even as the heroes around her find satisfaction in achieving some minor goals, so should the dryad. Krynn has more "unnatural" or "unbalanced" areas than just the shaped dragon realms. For example, an undead being that a party of heroes might encounter would truly unsettle a dryad and cause her much joy if she and her hero companions destroy it. Also, the party can obliterate a Chaos Mark that has warped the area around it.

Magical Trinkets for Dryads

By using the rules in *Heroes of Sorcery* or in the *Player's Handbook*, players can create the following magical items for their dryad heroes. Since all of these magical items are made from trees, dryads can lessen their spell point cost by ten points (or research time by four weeks if AD&D rules are used) by making the item from their tree.

Spear of Entanglement

(Quested Dryads)

Made from living wood, the spear of entanglement not only causes normal spear damage when it successfully hits an opponent, but it also wraps him in thorny vines, which grow profusely and quickly from the wood of the spear. Immediately upon hitting the foe, the spear causes an additional +3 damage points. Furthermore, for every minute the spear keeps a foe entangled it inflicts 3 points of damage. To break free of the vines the foe must make an average Strength (Endurance) action against the magical vines.

Since the wood of this staff consists of living wood, the bearer must stand the staff in water for at least three hours every day or the wood dies and loses its enchantment.

Vines: Magical plant. Co 4, Ph 15, In 2, Es 9, Dmg +3, Def -3.

Scroll of Blending Leaves

(Quested and Shaped Dryads)

Although quested dryads can camouflage themselves in their native forests, sometimes they need a little extra help in nonforested locales. By creating a scroll of blending leaves (the "scroll" consists of a large oak leaf with plant dyes to make symbols), a dryad can hide in any situation with different colors or textures. Essentially, the user of this scroll becomes invisible at near missile range or farther away. Should someone come closer, the dryad must make a successful average Reason (Perception) action to remain unnoticed. Of course, if she moves, the observer will notice her. For quested dryads from Khellendros's, Malys's, or Gellidus's realms, this scroll helps them camouflage themselves in the forest (same effects as detailed above).

Dryad Spells (AD&D game)

Shape Plant

Level: 1

Sphere: Plant

Range: 0

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 1 plant

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 minute

Saving Throw: None

By touching a chosen plant, a dryad can shape its growth pattern into several forms. The dryad can straighten a plant so that it grows tall and true, have it grow low to the ground so as to trip a foe, or make any thorns it possesses sharper and more painful (increasing its normal damage by +2 hp). When used before casting the spell *fast growth*, the dryad can make any wooded area defensible. This spell lasts until the plant is destroyed or until someone casts a successful *dispel magic* on it.

Fast Growth

Level: 1

Sphere: Plant

Range: 0

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 1 plant

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 minute

Saving Throw: Special

Invocation: 1 minute

With nothing but a touch and a whisper of magic, a dryad can cause a plant to grow faster than normal. *Fast growth* can enhance growth in existing thorns to increase damage, grow a vine to greater lengths (up to ten feet), cause a tree to grow ten feet in an hour, or whatever the caster wishes (with the DM's approval). For example, if the dryad wishes to increase the damage potential

in a plant, she can use it on a large bramble bush. If someone tries to move through the bush, he suffers 1d4 hp damage for every five feet of bramble. (If used with the *shape plant* spell, the brambles cause 1d4 + 2 hp damage.) Each time a dryad uses this spell, the plant resists (via saving throw vs. spell at the caster's level) for one simple reason: *Fast growth* causes the plant to use a lot of resources all at once. If the caster rolls a 20 on the saving throw, the plant dies. If the spell didn't succeed, then the dryad knows that the plant did not have enough resources to grow as she wanted.

Endure Environment

Level: 2

Sphere: Protection

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 turn/level (one hour max.)

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 5

Saving Throw: None

Those dryads who were shaped by a dragon overlord's actions can automatically endure the environment that they were "shaped" in. However, their traveling companions often succumb to the extreme heat, cold, or other conditions that prevail in a dragon overlord's realm. Whenever a shaped dryad accompanies another through her home "shaped" terrain, she can "toughen" her companion for a time by using the spell *endure environment*. This spell negates any harm that a hero might come to while traveling through an overlord's terrain for as long as the duration lasts. However, it does not prevent harm caused by extreme heat or cold (such as burning oil or a magical blast of ice).

Wooden Ring of Calm

(Quested Dryads)

Sometimes a dryad finds herself in a volatile situation where she cannot easily persuade her foes into taking her course of action. At such a time, the dryad can call upon her wooden ring of calm to help soothe her foes. The ring can affect a group of individuals totalling no more than 60 points of Spirit between them. The wearer must

make an unopposed easy Spirit action for it to work. Once the effect begins, the subjects lose all hostility toward the wearer, often allowing the dryad to work normal persuasion attempts on them unopposed. Of course, the moment the dryad acts in a hostile manner or attempts to make the subjects perform some self-destructive act, the effect ends.

Dryad PCs for the AD&D Game

The following description replaces the information on dryads listed in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ tome.

Ability Min/Max

Strength	3/17
Dexterity	6/18
Constitution	5/18
Intelligence	6/18
Wisdom	5/18
Charisma	8/18

Classes Allowed: Cleric, fighter, wizard, thief, ranger, fighter/mage, fighter/cleric, fighter/thief, fighter/mage/thief, mage/cleric, mage/thief

Initial Languages: Common, elf, pixies, sprites

Special Abilities: *Quested dryads* can cast *charm person* three times a day (only once per round). Targets suffer a -3 penalty to their saving throws. Fighters, can specialize in dagger and short bow only. They can *speak with plants* three times a day. *Shaped dryads*, if of the warrior class, can specialize in use of dagger and short bow only. Gains automatic access to certain schools or spheres and gains a resistance to certain effects, both based on realm of origin (Beryl's realm: Animal/poison; Gellidus's realm: Evocation/cold; Khellendros's realm: Evocation/heat; Malys's realm: Elemental: fire/fire; Sable's realm: Elemental: water/acid).

Special Limitations: *Quested Dryads:* If something threatens her home tree, she must answer its summons to defend it or choose to die within 6d6 hours. *Shaped Dryads* cannot use certain schools or spheres of magic and gains a weakness based on realm of origin (Beryl's realm: Necromancy/-5 penalty to saving throws vs. spells; Gellidus's realm: Elemental: fire/-5 penalty to saving throws vs. heat-based attacks; Khellendros's realm: Elemental: earth/-5 penalty to saving throws vs. cold-based attacks; Malys's realm: Elemental: water/-5 penalty to saving throws vs. cold-based attacks; Sable's realm: Elemental: air/-5 penalty to saving throws vs. poison).

Powder of Mossy Growth (Quested and Shaped Dryads)

Created from powdered moss and other plant ingredients, powder of mossy growth causes moss to grow on any surface. One application covers ten square feet or one average-sized humanoid and grows into fullness in about five minutes. Dryads can use this powder to cover their tracks, hide small objects in a natural setting, or fool observers into thinking that an object has been in a certain place for a long time. If used on humanoids, this powder causes moss to grow on the top layer of skin (even spreading under clothing). While on a person, the moss causes itching, attracts other growths (such as fungus), and makes the subject unrecognizable at first glance. To get rid of the moss, a subject must sit near a blazing fire for a full week to dry out the moss. Even then, the subject's hair falls out (due to its mossy growth), and his skin looks patchy for several weeks (all Presence actions become one degree more difficult for three weeks unless mystical healing is performed). Since this powder causes no ill effect to dryads, shaped dryads often use it to camouflage themselves in forested settings.

Dryad Spells

With their affinity for nature, dryads walk from their tree (or from where their tree used to be) with several basic spells at their command. The details of the most common of these spells lie below.

Shape Plant

Sphere: Animism
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: Instant
Area: Individual
Effect: Varies
Difficulty/Cost: 8+ (see below)

By touching a chosen plant, a dryad can shape its growth pattern into several forms. For example, if the dryad simply wishes to straighten a plant so that it grows tall and true, then she must expend 8 spell points (8 difficulty). If she wishes to have it grow low to the ground so as to trip a foe, she must spend 9 spell points (9 difficulty). If the dryad wants to make any thorns it possesses sharper and more painful, then she must expend

10 or more spell points (with an equal difficulty). When used before casting the spell *fast growth*, the dryad can make any wooded area defensible.

Fast Growth

Sphere: Animism
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: Instant
Area: Individual
Effect: Varies
Difficulty/Cost: 8+ (resisted)

With nothing but a touch and a whisper of magic, a dryad can cause a plant to grow faster than normal. The difficulty and cost of the spell increase based on how much girth, height, or length the dryad wishes the plant to gain in a minute. If used to enhance growth in existing thorns, then the dryad must decide whether she wishes to make the bite of the thorns into a foe's skin anywhere from irritating (8 difficulty/cost) to painful (13 difficulty/cost). Should the dryad simply wish to see a vine grow to greater lengths, then the spell point cost begins at 8 spell points (8 difficulty) for one extra foot of growth to 13 spell points (13 difficulty) for 5 extra feet of growth with each casting. Each time a dryad uses this spell, the plant resists for one simple reason: Fast growth causes the plant to use a lot of resources all at once, and if a mishap occurs during the spellcasting action, the plant dies. To determine the plant's resistance, the Narrator should flip a Fate card and add the number to the spell's difficulty. If the spell didn't succeed, then the dryad knows that the plant did not have enough resources to grow as she wanted.

Endure Environment

Sphere: Mentalism or Channeling
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Individual
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 12

Dryads who were shaped by a dragon overlord can automatically endure the environment that in which they were "shaped." However, their traveling companions often succumb to extreme heat, cold, or other conditions. Whenever a

shaped dryad accompanies another through her home "shaped" terrain, she can support her companion for one hour by using the spell endure environment. This spell negates any harm that a hero might come to during an hour's travel through an overlord's terrain. (Narrators can call for Endurance actions or may use the optional actions described in *Wings of Fury*.)

Dryads as Heroes

The following description takes the place of the description listed for dryad characters in the *Book of the Fifth Age* in the *DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE® Dramatic Adventure Game* box.

Ability Scores

Ag	7 minimum
En	7 maximum
St	6 maximum
Pr	6 minimum

Ability Codes

Dx	"C" maximum
En	"B" maximum
Re	"B" minimum
Sp	"B" minimum

Other Requirements

Quested dryad:	none
Shaped dryad:	Sp 7 maximum

Advantages

Quested subrace: Trump bonus for persuasion actions using Presence or for using sphere of animism to commune with plants. No penalties when using wood as a medium while casting spells.

Shaped subrace: Gains an automatic special sphere or school (which counts toward the total spheres or schools allowed by an ability code) and a resistance to certain effects, both based on realm of origin (Beryl's realm: animism/poison; Gellidus's realm: cryomancy/cold; Khellendros's realm: electromancy/heat; Malys's realm: pyromancy/fire; Sable's realm: hydromancy/acid). No penalties when using wood and their special sphere or school while casting.

Disadvantages

Quested subrace: No trump bonus for actions relating to harming plants or animals or when using any weapon but a dagger or self bow. If the tree is in dan-

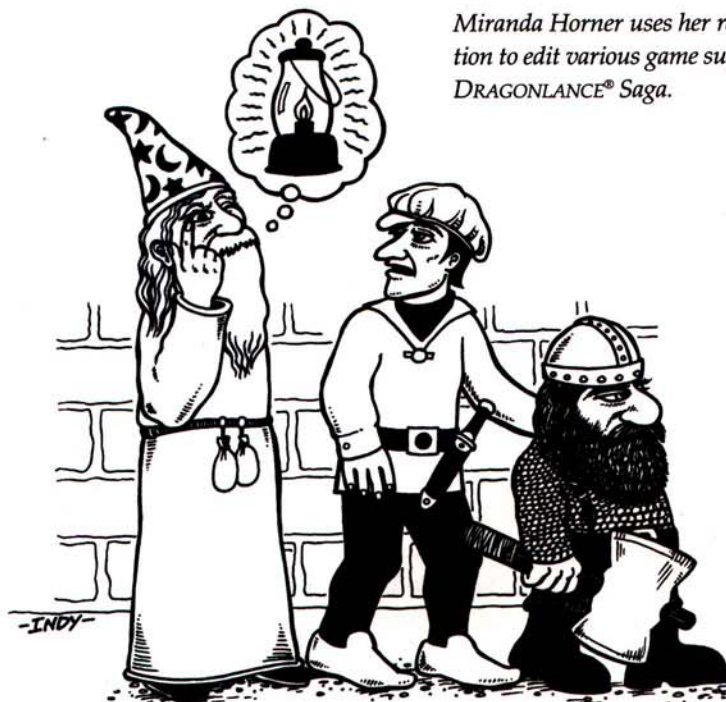
ger, the tree summons the dryad to defend it. If the dryad does not answer the call, she will die within hours of being summoned. (Narrators should flip a card to determine the number of hours before death.) No trump bonus when using geomancy.

Shaped subrace: No trump bonus for actions relating to harming plants or animals or when using any weapon but a dagger or self bow. No trump bonus when using certain schools or spheres based on realm of origin (Beryl's realm: necromancy; Gellidus's realm: pyromancy; Khellendros's realm: geomancy; Malys's realm: hydromancy; Sable's realm: aeromancy). Gains a weakness (adds one degree of difficulty to the action) to certain effects based on realm of origin (Beryl's realm: drain attacks; Gellidus's realm: heat; Khellendros's realm: cold; Malys's realm: cold; Sable's realm: poison).

After the Quest

Once a quested or shaped dryad achieves her goal, she can return to her tree (or the spot where her tree once stood) or visit the Citadel of Light for training in mystical magic, which some dryads who lived on Schallsea have already done. (See *Citadel of Light* for details on these dryads and the process of learning mysticism at the Citadel.)

Once the quested dryad returns to her tree, she remains with her tree for the rest of the tree's life, defending it and the area around it. Because of her former adventuring life, this type of dryad often proves to be even more effective at defending nature in her area than a traditional dryad does. A shaped dryad, on the other hand, returns to the spot that her tree once stood and joins it again, either in death or in restored life. The player must work with the Narrator to figure out which way the dryad's life will end. If the player wishes the hero to go on one final quest, she can search out an oak tree that is producing seeds and take several seeds to the spot where her tree once stood and plant them in the area. Once the seed on the spot of the dryad's tree germinates, the dryad becomes attached to it. If the player wishes, though, the dryad can simply return to the spot of her former tree and take root, forming a middle-sized oak tree from her own body. As time passes, this tree will form seeds and drop them, causing a young grove to develop around it over the next several years. Perhaps one day, another dryad will step from a tree in this grove and grow to defend it!



Miranda Horner uses her red pen of distinction to edit various game supplements for the *DRAGONLANCE® Saga*.

By Bill Cavalier

"Hold on! The wizard has an idea!"



by any other name

elves prefer names
that flow off the tongue
like wind through trees.

(The Complete Book of Elves, pg 49.)

by Owen K.C. Stephens

One of the most common problems DMs and players alike have when playing non-human characters is naming them. Most non-human characters can't be named from a list of historic names, forcing DMs to make up totally new names.

But it is difficult to come up with names that are appropriate for non-human characters and consistent with one another. This is especially true for a DM who may find himself trying to come up with a large number of such names on short notice.

Yet without appropriate names, non-human characters often lose their unique flavor. Especially in the case of elves, it is important that names represent and reflect the race's special attitudes and philosophies.

The elven name generator below has been presented to assist with this daunting task. Although no article that would fit within this magazine could possibly represent all the possible names for a race as old and diverse as the elves, this list can serve as a starting point and quick reference to create a large and consistent list of names.

How It Works

Each elven name consists of a prefix (from Table 2) and one or more suffixes (from Table 3). Definitions have been included in these tables to help determine what a name means once it has been generated. In the case of suffixes, male and female endings have been included where appropriate. Alternate spellings have also been provided in some cases.

You may randomly generate an elven name by rolling on Table 1. If you prefer, it is also possible to pick a set of definitions you like and assemble a name that matches them. If your character is a ranger who is fond of bears, you might decide her name should reflect this. Looking at the definitions, you decide her name will mean "Bear-Friend." This results in the name "Rethar," "Reethar," or "Reithar."

If you don't like a particular combination, try some of the alternate suffixes listed, or add an a, e, i, l, r, s, sh, or an apostrophe. Although not every combination of prefixes

Table 1: First Roll

1d10 Result

- 1-4 Roll once on Table 2 and once on Table 3.
- 5-7 Roll once on Table 2 and twice on Table 3.
- 8-9 Roll once on Table 2 and once on Table 3 for a first name, then once on Table 2 and twice on Table 3 for a second name.
- 10 Roll once on Table 3, add an apostrophe, then roll once on Table 2 and twice on Table 3.

and suffixes will sound right, usually only a minor change is called for. If you can't make a particular name work, try one with a similar meaning. If you didn't like "Reithar," try a name that means "Bear-Sister," instead.

If you have randomly generated a name and don't like its definition, try altering the order of the words. It is also possible to use the definition as just a starting place for a name's meaning. Often the definitions can be combined in

a poetic way for better results. In the case of a three or more syllable name, try dropping one or more of the definitions.

Thus Anenfel could mean "The Hand of Autumn's Lake," "Lake of Autumn's Hand," "Autumn's Hand," or just "Autumn Lake." Don't worry about two names sharing the same meaning or having two definitions for one name. According to *The Complete Book of Elves*, the elven language is so full of subtlety and nuance that only native speakers

fully understand it. Two names may sound the same to a human, but an elf would know the difference.



Owen Stephens surprised the editors by showing up at the recent Wizards of the Coast Game Camp in Seattle. Now that we've printed his article, we understand the names he was calling us.

Table 2: Prefixes

Roll 1d100

- 1 Ael : Knight
- 2 Aer : Law, Order
- 3 Af : Ring
- 4 Ah : Crafty, Sly
- 5 Al : Sea
- 6 Am : Swan
- 7 Ama : Beauty, Beautiful
- 8 An : Hand
- 9 Ang : Glitter
- 10 Ansr : Rune
- 11 Ar : Gold, Golden
- 12 Ari : Silver
- 13 Arn : South
- 14 Aza : Life, Lives
- 15 Bael : Guardian
- 16 Bes : Oath
- 17 Cael : Archer, Arrow
- 18 Cal : Faith
- 19 Cas : Herald
- 20 Cla : Rose
- 21 Cor : Legend, Legendary
- 22 Cy : Onyx
- 23 Dae : White
- 24 Dho : Falcon
- 25 Dre : Hound
- 26 Du : Crescent
- 27 Eil : Azure, Blue
- 28 Eir : Sharp
- 29 El : Green
- 30 Er : Boar
- 31 Ev : Stag
- 32 Fera : Champion

- 33 Fi : Rain
- 34 Fir : Dark
- 35 Fis : Light
- 36 Gael : Pegasus
- 37 Gar : Owl
- 38 Gil : Griffin
- 39 Ha : Free, Freedom
- 40 Hu : Horse
- 41 Ia : Day
- 42 Il : Mist
- 43 Ja : Staff
- 44 Jar : Dove
- 45 Ka : Dragon
- 46 Kan : Eagle
- 47 Ker : Spell
- 48 Keth : Wind
- 49 Koeh : Earth
- 50 Kor : Black
- 51 Ky : Ruby
- 52 La : Night
- 53 Laf : Moon
- 54 Lam : East
- 55 Lue : Riddle
- 56 Ly : Wolf
- 57 Mai : Death, Slayer
- 58 Mal : War
- 59 Mara : Priest
- 60 My : Emerald
- 61 Na : Ancient
- 62 Nai : Oak
- 63 Nim : Deep
- 64 Nu : Hope, Hopeful
- 65 Ny : Diamond
- 66 Py : Sapphire

- 67 Raer : Unicorn
- 68 Re : Bear
- 69 Ren : West
- 70 Rid : Spear
- 71 Ru : Dream
- 72 Rua : Star
- 73 Rum : Meadow
- 74 Ry : Jade
- 75 Sae : Wood
- 76 Seh : Soft
- 77 Sel : High
- 78 Sha : Sun
- 79 She : Age, Time
- 80 Si : Cat, Feline
- 81 Sim : North
- 82 Sol : History, Memory
- 83 Sum : Water
- 84 Syl : Faerie
- 85 Ta : Fox
- 86 Tahl : Blade
- 87 Tha : Vigil, Vigilance
- 88 Tho : True, Truth
- 89 Ther : Sky
- 90 Thro : Lore, Sage
- 91 Tia : Magic
- 92 Tra : Tree
- 93 Ty : Crystal
- 94 Uth : Wizard
- 95 Ver : Peace
- 96 Vil : Finger, Point
- 97 Von : Ice
- 98 Ya : Bridge, Path, Way
- 99 Za : Royal
- 100 Zy : Ivory

Table 3: Suffixes**Id100 Result**

1	-ae (-nae) : Whisper	52	-lyn (-llinn; -lihn) : Bolt, Ray
2	-ael : Great	53	-mah/-ma (-mahs) : Mage
3	-aer/-aera : Singer, Song	54	-mil (-imil; -umil) : Bond, Promise
4	-aias/-aia : Mate, Husband/Wife	55	-mus : Ally, Companion
5	-ah/-aha : Wand	56	-nal (-inal; -onal) : Distant, Far
6	-aith/-aira : Home	57	-nes : Heart
7	-al/-ala (-la; -lae; -llae) : Harmony	58	-nin (-nine; -nyn) : Rite, Ritual
8	-ali : Shadow	59	-nis (-anis) : Dawn
9	-am/-ama : Strider	60	-on/-onna : Keep, Keeper
10	-an/-ana (-a; -ani; -uanna) : Make, Maker	61	-or (-oro) : Flower
11	-ar/-ara (-ra) : Man/Woman	62	-oth (-othi) : Gate
12	-ari (-ri) : Spring	63	-que : Forgotten, Lost
13	-aro (-ro) : Summer	64	-quis : Chant, Chanting
14	-as (-ash; -sah) : Bow, Fletcher	65	-rah (-rae; -raee) : Beast
15	-ath : By, Of, With	66	-rad (-rahd) : Leaf
16	-avel : Sword	67	-rail/-ria (-aral; -ral; -ryl) : Hunt, Hunter
17	-brar (-abrar; -ibrar) : Craft, Crafter	68	-ran (-re; -reen) : Binding, Shackles
18	-dar (-adar; -odar) : World	69	-reth (-rath) : Arcane
19	-deth (-eath; -eth) : Eternal	70	-ro (-ri; -ron) : Walker, Walks
20	-dre : Charm, Charming	71	-ruil (-aruil; -eruil) : Noble
21	-drim (-drimme; -udrim) : Flight, Flyer	72	-sal (-isal; -sali) : Honey, Sweet
22	-dul : Glade	73	-san : Drink, Wine
23	-ean : Ride, Rider	74	-sar (-asar; -isar) : Quest, Seeker
24	-el (-ele/-ela) : Hawk	75	-sel (-asel; -isel) : Mountain
25	-emar : Honor	76	-sha (-she; -shor) : Ocean
26	-en : Autumn	77	-spar : Fist
27	-er (-erl; -ern) : Winter	78	-tae (-itae) : Beloved, Love
28	-ess (-esti) : Elves, Elvin	79	-tas (-itas) : Wall, Ward
29	-evar : Flute	80	-ten (-iten) : Spinner
30	-fel (-afel; -efel) : Lake	81	-thal/-tha (-ethal/-etha) : Heal, Healer, Healing
31	-hal (-ahal; -ihal) : Pale, Weak	82	-thar (-ethar; -ithar) : Friend
32	-har (-ihar; -uhar) : Wisdom, Wise	83	-ther (-ather; -thir) : Armor, Protection
33	-hel (-ahel; -ihel) : Sadness, Tears	84	-thi (-ethyl; -thil) : Wing
34	-ian/-ianna (-ia; -ii; -ion) : Lord/Lady	85	-thus/-thas (-aethus/-aethas) : Harp, Harper
35	-iat : Fire	86	-ti (-eti; -til) : Eye, Sight
36	-ik : Might, Mighty	87	-tril/-tria (-atri; -atril/-atria) : Dance, Dancer
37	-il (-iel; -ila; -lie) : Gift, Giver	88	-ual (-lua) : Holy
38	-im : Duty	89	-uath (-luth; -uth) : Lance
39	-in (-inar; -ine) : Brother, Sibling, Sister	90	-us/-ua : Cousin, Kin
40	-ir (-ira; -ire) : Dusk	91	-van/-vanna : Forest
41	-is (-iss; -ist) : Scribe, Scroll	92	-var/-vara (-avar/-avara) : Father/Mother
42	-ith (-lath; -lith; -lyth) : Child, Young	93	-vain (-avain) : Spirit
43	-kash (-ashk; -okash) : Fate	94	-via (-avia) : Good fortune, Luck
44	-ki : Void	95	-vin (-avin) : Storm
45	-lan/-lanna (-lean; -olan/-ola) : Son/Daughter	96	-wyn : Music, Musician
46	-lam (-ilam; -ulam) : Fair	97	-ya : Helm
47	-lar (-lirr) : Shine	98	-yr/-yn : Bringer
48	-las : Wild	99	-yth : Folk, People
49	-lian/-lia : Master/Mistress	100	-zair/-zara (-azair/-ezara) : Lightning
50	-lis (-elis; -lys) : Breeze		
51	-lon (-ellon) : Chief		



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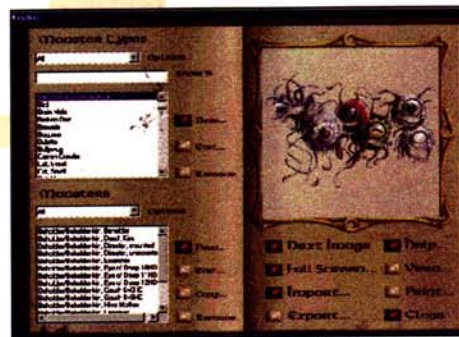
AD&D® CORE RULES 2.0

Sneak Preview

Any computer utility that can be made can be made better. The ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Core Rules is no exception. So after two years of development, TSR and Wizards of the Coast proudly announce the release of AD&D® Core Rules Version 2.0 for Windows 95/98.

by Anthony Valterra

When Core Rules 2.0 (CR2) hits the shelves in October, it will bring computer-aided roleplaying to a new level. The new version of the popular gaming utility has been scrutinized to make sure it meets the highest standards of usefulness, stability, and flexibility.



CR2 combines the text of nine core AD&D rulebooks.

What If I Have Version 1.0?

Owners of the original AD&D Core Rules software can purchase CR2 at a reduced price before it hits the shelves. Starting September 2, registered owners of the original Core Rules can buy CR2 directly from the TSR website for \$39—a substantial savings from the retail price. Those who want Core Rules 2.0 at the lower price must act quickly, because the

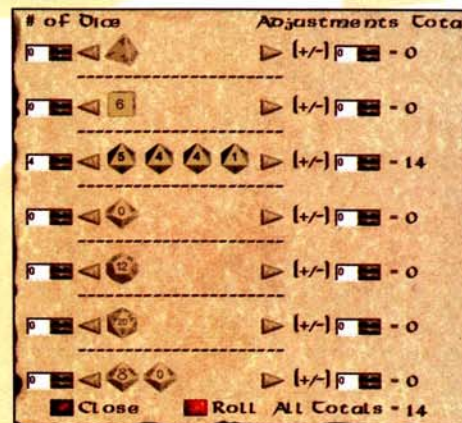
discount price is available only until September 23. Details on this special offer are available at www.tsr.com/cr2.

What's New?

Core Rules 2.0 expands on all of the valuable game utilities of the original. In addition to the complete, cross-referenced, and hyper-text contents of the *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*, *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome, the *Tome of Magic*, and the *Arms and Equipment Guide*, this version adds *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Skills & Powers*, *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*, *PLAYER'S OPTION: Combat & Tactics*, and *DM OPTION: High Level Campaigns*. Keyword searches can access all nine books at once. To find a really obscure bit of information, you can also run a full-text search. As a bonus, the psionics section in Core Rules 2.0 is expanded beyond the scope of the original books.

How About Character Generation?

The original character generator quickly became one of the most popular features of Core Rules 1.0, letting you quickly create new player characters or NPCs. Once generated, a character's statistics could

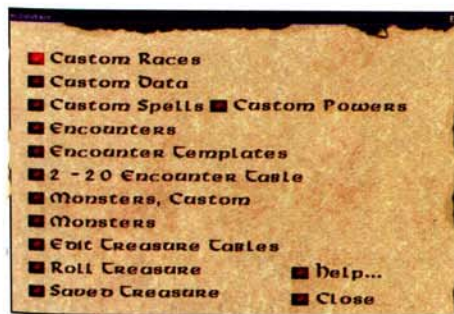


You'll never lose these dice under the couch.

be printed in a tightly organized character sheet and saved electronically. Updating the character sheet after each session became quick and simple. CR2 automatically updates all related characteristics when one characteristic is changed. For example, Max, a 7th-level fighter with 18/40 Strength tangles with a shadow and a wraith. By the time he escapes, his Strength is 17 and he has lost a level. With two clicks on your character sheet, CR2 recalculates weight allowance, damage adjustment, maximum press, bend bars/lift gates, open doors, saving throws, and THAC0. In addition, the character generator automatically calculates encumbrances and movement rates, allowing players to focus on role-

playing rather than number crunching.

The new Character generator does all this and more. Now you can create characters using any of the ten methods or by entering your own values. The generator can also create a character using *Skills & Powers* rules. The character generator not only records a character's belongings, but also tracks where those belongings are carried.



Don't like to play by the rules? Change them!

Sure, But I Use House Rules

House rules are essential to almost every campaign. Want to play a dwarf paladin? Think first-level wizards should have more spells? The new character generator allows great flexibility in stretching—and even breaking—the AD&D game rules. A long list of PC races is available, as well as all spells and magical items from the nine “core” books. Even so, the designers of CR2 realized that even this much information won't cover every possible option in your campaign.

The original Core Rules program let you create your own monsters, treasure, and encounters, then use them in the program. CR2 takes that feature to its next logical step. Now you can also create custom kits, spells, races, or psionic powers—or you can modify an existing entry any way you like. Once you've created one of these new entries, you can use it in any of the other parts of the program just like any other entry in their category. You can add special items you created to a treasure list, create a character using your new race, or give an NPC a mysterious new psionic ability.

And the Maps?

The original Core Rules Map Maker was a late addition to the program. No one was sure whether there was much demand for a mapping program, but

soon the response was loud and clear: Users of the original Core Rules program considered a mapmaking feature not merely useful but downright essential. The designers responded by improving the mapping program—and by including *two* of them this time.

Map Maker II

MapMaker II includes all of the features of the original plus several new additions. You can create maps in a variety of sizes and shapes, ranging from a single page all the way up to a 5' x 5' poster. Map Maker II can print maps in four different color formats: Full color, flat color, grayscale, and black and white. You can even print sections of dungeon maps in one-inch squares, making them perfect for use with 25mm miniatures. New tools let you show or hide encounters, text, and other objects from players. Finally, the entire interface of MapMaker II has been re-worked to make the map-making process as simple and efficient as possible, with features like smart editing, drag and drop text, and drag and drop encounters.



Mapmaker II makes campaign creation easy.

Campaign Mapper

Campaign Mapper is a vector-based map maker created by Pro Fantasy Software, the company that produces the *Campaign Cartographer* program. This powerful program features many of the



Campaign Mapper lets you create highly detailed maps. tools of *Campaign Cartographer* but is simplified and easier to learn. The advantage of vector-based mapping is that there is no loss of quality when an element of a map is reduced or enlarged, or when one zooms in or out on the entire map. This allows for incredibly detailed maps. Campaign Mapper comes with multiple layers, letting you place certain map features on individual layers that can be turned visible or invisible. You can use this feature to hide whole elements of maps from players or to print maps without labels.

As with the original Core Rules, the map makers are integrated with the encounter creation utility. You can drop an encounter marker onto a map, then click on it to open the encounter. Overland, city, and dungeon icons appear in both map makers. You can also link maps, letting you put a city symbol on an overland map, then click on it to bring up your own detailed city map. Both maps let you rotate and label a wide variety of symbols.

Any Last Words?

The interface has been improved to make using the various utilities easier and more intuitive. The utilities let you create more detailed and complex campaigns, and quickly create, update, and track your PCs. Whether you're a player or DM, CR2 lets you spend less time preparing and more time gaming.

For more information, and to register for the special upgrade offer, check out [www.TSR.com/cr2](http://www TSR.com/cr2).



Coming Attractions

If you like Core Rules 2, keep your eyes open for other game utilities and reference programs from the Electronic Media Division of Wizards of the Coast. In 1999, look for a multimedia *FORGOTTEN REALMS*® Atlas as well as a *DRAGONLANCE*® Encyclopedia, both of them editable using CR2's Campaign Mapper.



The Lizard Shoppe

by Neal Barrett, Jr.

illustrated by
Mark Nelson

Finn awoke from an incredible dream ... Not a dream you'd truly call incredible at all. Not if you like to dream of far-away ports and adventurous times. Daring, danger and strange exotic climes. Incredible, because this dream was so tiresome, sober and trite—so downright tedious, boring and flat.

The morning held a chill. Finn slipped quickly into worn leather trousers, pulled on a faded flaxen shirt.

Down the dark stairs and through the narrow hall. From the kitchen came the smell of barley bread and the tang of rose tea. That, and a sad and haunting song from Letitia Louise, a song that spoke of sorrow, longing and regret, heartbeat quickery and twitchery and fear. A song, Finn knew, left over from a when, left over from a where.



As he opened the heavy oaken door, a new flock of odors assailed him on the crisp morning air. Briny river smells, dead things lying in their shells. People smells and creature smells, smells of the dusty cobbled street. And, from the market past the square, the ghost smells of yesterday's onions, cabbages and kale.

The sun was a pale and runny egg, lost in a cloudy sulphur veil. For a moment, Finn watched the fat, weary balloons rise up against the yellow pall, bloated spheres that once wore emerald and blue, red and velvet green, coral, gold and every brilliant hue; faded, now, patched with time and glue. The black willow baskets hung below, too far to see the leaden eyes and copper helms, the sharp points of lances, pikes and deadly quarrels. Too far to see the grim faces and the dark and rusty mail.

The balloons caught the whorls of heated air and drifted north across the walls, north into carnage, death and mutilation, north into the war.

Garpenney Street began to yawn and come awake. Signs hung in shadow over narrow wooden doors. Signs that pictured bottles, boots and ale, swords and pies and spells, every sort of service, every sort of ware. And, just above Finn's head, a rampant lizard, colored copper-green and gold, the symbol of his trade. A symbol that could use a coat of paint, Finn noted, as he'd noted several times before.

To the east, then, the sprawl of the city, ringing the Royal Keep itself. North is the war, to the west the murky sea. Far to the south, he can see a smudge of shadow, black against black, dark etched against eternal night. Coldtown, it is, a presence or a vision, a phantom of the mind. And even though he looks away quicker than a blink, there is something icy cold in his belly, something old and ugly that whispers in his ear.



"A most pleasant dawning to you, Master Finn. My, it looks to be a fine and wondrous morn!"

Letitia's greeting was the same every day, and every day he let it pass. He cared for Letitia Louise. More, he thought, than one reasonably might for a servant, a person of domestic persuasion, a fixture in the house, and, in truth,

not wholly a person, not solely a person at all. Not that it bothered him, truly, what the girl had been.

In the shaft of morning light that struck the workroom walls, Letitia's eyes were a swirl of iridescent color, eyes like river stones immersed in fragrant oil. Her lips were rather small, her ears, while pleasant, perhaps a bit long. Her nose, Finn felt, came almost to a point, then softened nicely at the tip. A girl, he thought, rather pretty, nicely formed in every way ...

Finn caught himself, felt the color rising to his cheeks, a sign he didn't wish the girl to see.

"Close the door to the hall," he told her, in a tone more abrupt than he intended it to be. "I'll be extremely busy all day. I don't wish to see anyone, not anyone at all."

"Not anyone?" Letitia asked. "Does that include me, Master Finn?"

"Yes, it does indeed."

"Then who'll be serving your supper, may I ask. Will you be doing that yourself, Master Finn?"

"Letitia Louise—"

Finn turned to face her, but only caught the corner of her smile, the swirl of her skirt as it vanished past the door.

"It's just as well Mum and Dad were taken by the redworm fever," Finn muttered to himself, "though I miss their happy faces, now and then."

Mum, maybe, would understand his shortcomings, for she had teamster blood twenty-two generations back. Dad, though, was pure merchant stock and had the scrolls to prove it, if you'd sit still and listen long enough.

If he'd seen the way his son just glanced at Letitia, knowing what she'd been, a glance that said he found her quite fair of face and limb, why, he'd have thrashed Finn raw right in the city square ...



The sun crawled half across the room, and still Finn dawdled, staring at his barley bread, staring at his tea. He counted the dregs at the bottom of his cup. He counted the stones in the floor. He picked at a thread that was hanging from his sleeve, but still he did nothing at all.

He looked at the shelves, at the litter and the dust, everything covered with layers of soot, everything covered with rust.

Maybe I could clean the place up, he thought for a moment, a thought that he quickly tossed aside. Something stirred in the corner, something whirled beneath his chair, something scratched along the floor. Just because the Master was a loafer and a slouch, every rattle, every clatter whispered in the eerie morning light, didn't mean everyone had to stand idle all day.

A lizard with scales of ancient ivory scuttled up the wall, grasping at the stone with its wiry silver toes. A lizard of amberglass peeked around a thick and dusty tome, staring at nothing with its pearly empty eyes. A lizard made of pewter darted from its hidey-hole, rolling and pitching like a sailor on a spree, took a dizzy step, then dropped off the shelf in Finn's tea.

Finn picked it up by its tail, frowned at it a moment, then placed it under his magnifier glass.

"Sorry about that," he said. "That left hind leg's still out of step, I see."

Picking up a fine-pointed tool, he flipped it on its back. With a quick little motion, he snapped a tiny plate off its belly and peered at the wonders inside.

Silver wheels whispered and whirled. Gears no bigger than a gnat's teeth meshed with gears smaller than that, clicked and snicked and turned gears even smaller still. The tiny works that made the lizard go were no bigger than a seed. Finn's magnifier was possibly the finest ever made—he'd ground his own glass, taking three years to get it right. There was no magic in it, not the slightest spell. Only time and sweat, and an art he knew so well.

Picking and prying for a moment, he snapped the lizard's belly shut again, and, with the tip of his finger, sent it on its way. The creature scurried off, every limb in synch, walking straighter than a die.

"Life's not perfect," Finn said aloud, "but I surely can't complain. I never drink more than a tankard of ale, unless it's a royal holiday. I'm a master lizard-maker, and no one can say that's not as true as it can be ..."

"What's true, Finn, is you can sit there and wear your trousers out until the sun goes down, that still won't get the work done. It still won't make that pretty toy go away."

Finn felt his face burn and answered without looking up.

"I distinctly remember turning you off last night. If you'll simply go away, I'll pretend you're not here."

Julia laughed, a rude and horrid sound somewhere between a clangor and a squawk, a sound like the howl of rusty iron.

She crawled from a box of galena, cinnabar and quartz, rocks he'd tossed in a corner, thinking that he'd use them sometime.

Dropping to the workbench she held him with a single onyx eye, the ugliest lizard he'd ever put together in his life—splatters of iron, bits of brass and tin, drips of black solder, and scraps from the bottom of the pile. He'd named her Julia Jessica Slagg, a name that had simply come to mind. Like many decisions in his life, it had seemed like a good idea at the time.

"I've told you not to talk unless no one's in the house but me," Finn said. "Never, all right? We've been over this before."

"There's no one here but Letitia," Julia said, "and the lass is so smitten with you, Finn, she'd die before she'd ever breathe a word about me, even if she knew ..."

"Stop right there. We will not discuss Letitia Louise."

"Good. Let's discuss the Count Onjine, and what you plan to do when he shows up to see his pretty toy."

"In the first place, he won't show up. It isn't time. Secondly, I don't require any help from you. I've made a great many lizards. You'll recall I made you. Besides, I haven't been idle; I've been thinking all the time. Thinking is the same thing as doing, in case you didn't know."

"What it is, is the same as doing nothing, Master Finn. If I were you, I'd give some thought to the Count Onjine, who is not a patient man at all."

"And if I were you," Finn said, standing and brushing the wrinkles from his pants, "I'd remember I can turn you off as well as on. I'd remember that, is what I'd do."

Finn turned and stalked out of the workroom, locked the door and checked it twice. Inside, Julia Jessica Slagg clacked her rusty tin jaws, flicked her brass tongue, and spat an iron filing at the door.



Finn stomped through the kitchen and stepped outdoors. Letitia Louise was paring apples, trailing long peelings like carnival streamers on the floor. Why wouldn't Julia leave him be? Finn wondered. The count's project was nearly done. A little touch of gilt here and there, check out the cogs that wagged the tail. A couple days, and that's that.

He knew, though, that wasn't quite so. Something was wrong somewhere, and he didn't know what. It was like a pesky itch you couldn't scratch. And Julia Jessica Slagg—who couldn't itch at all—Julia knew that as well.

He wished he'd told the miserly Count that his fee was too low, that he didn't give a wink that he was related to the Royal House itself. Of course, turning him down might mean he would never get another commission from the court. Someone might see that he didn't get any work at all.

He walked past the square and down the hill. Picked up a packet of cheap oatpaper and a new nib for his pen. Stopped and kicked a stone and grumbled to himself. "Just what," he said, "just what is a man supposed to do?"



Captain Pynch was in the kitchen, drinking tea with Letitia Louise.

"I'd have a word with you," Captain Pynch said, "just a moment of your time."

"Always time for a customer and friend," Finn said. "I'm pleased you dropped by."

He looked at Letitia, who was standing by the table, hands behind her back, a shy little smile at the corner of her mouth. He wondered what Pynch had been saying to the girl just before he walked in.

"Have you offered Captain Pynch a spice cake with his tea?" he asked her. "That's the proper thing to do."

"He's already had three," Letitia said.

"Three, has he?"

"And mighty tasty, too," Pynch added, with a wink at the girl Finn didn't feel was proper at all.

"Letitia Louise, you might find something to do," Finn said. "If the Captain's had his fill of spice cakes, you won't be needed anymore."

"Yes, Master Finn," Letitia said, with an annoying little bow, as she vanished in the hall.

"Keen looking lass," Pynch said. "A credit to her kind."

"Yes," Finn said, "and what can I do for you?"

It was a very small favor, an adjustment to the bore-head lizard Finn had sold him some weeks before. It had been a good idea, and Pynch had sent a number of friends to buy lizards of their own. With their bodies thin as eels and their sturdy brush tails, the lizards could swab out a musket quicker than a rod, without leaving great clots of powder behind.

"I am grateful for your help," Pynch said, coming to his feet and wiping crumbs from his chest. "My, that girl is a pretty, I have to tell you that."

"You did," Finn said. "You don't have to tell me again."

"Going to be a big one, Finn. Major assault at dawn. We're hitting the beggars hard this time."

"Good for you, then."

Pynch gave his mustache a twist. "A right lovely war, Master Finn. A soldier's glory is what it is. Seven hundred thirty-nine years this summer, they say. Were you aware of that? And I have a feeling we're about to wear them down."

Finn walked him to the door. Pynch showed him a snappy salute and took off down the street.

A splendid looking fellow, Finn thought, in his pumpkin-yellow vest and crimson pantaloons. Solid brass helmet, topped with the tangerine plume of the Royal Balloonist Fusillers. Splendid indeed, if he hadn't been missing an arm and a foot, an eye, both ears, and all his teeth as well. If his uniform hadn't been patched a dozen times, scorched and seared black with powder burns.

The war, indeed, took its toll, and Finn thanked his stars his family had been in the lizard trade as long as anyone could recall.



The visit took him wholly by surprise. Finn had just finished supper, woodbine salad and a perch with scarcely any bones, when Letitia Louise came in and said the Count Onjine was at the door.

Finn nearly choked on limpet pie. What was the man doing here, the day nearly over—what was he doing here at all?

"Well, don't just stand there," he told Letitia. "If he's here, invite him in."

Letitia didn't move; all the color drained from her face. She stood there and trembled, and looked as if she'd fainted dead away. Then, she turned with a tiny little cry and fled up the stairs.

Now what's come over her? Finn wondered, more than a little irritated that he'd have to let a guest in himself, that his servant wouldn't go to the door.

Straightening his vest, he walked from the kitchen past the hall, and into the entry way. Lifting the bolt, he opened the heavy portal and faced the Count Onjine.

"Sire," he said, "you'll excuse my casual wear. I fear I wasn't expecting anyone ..."

"My dear Master Finn," the Count said, almost before Finn could get the words out, "forgive the untimely hour, but my errand is urgent, as you'll see."

"Yes, well, you're, ah, welcome, of course," Finn said, knowing there was little else to say to a person of greater birth, to a person, indeed, of truly greater girth, a person who nearly filled the door.

"Gracious, most gracious of you," said the Count, squeezing past Finn with a stench, with a stink, with a reek of great offense, a man with a visage like pudding spilled upon the floor; raisins, suet, potatoes, and all. And, worse still, a man who wore ghastly shades of lavender and green, everything tainted with grime and dirt and sweat,

everything cheap, everything meant to appear of great expense.

"I would like to see our little toy," said the Count. "I can scarcely wait to see how it's coming along."

"There is little to see," Finn told him, careful not to meet the Count's eyes, "little that you haven't seen before."

"Indeed, there is not?"

"If you would care to drop by again. In a few days more, possibly three. By then ..."

"I would see the thing now. Why must I repeat myself, Finn?"

The Count's voice was heavy with spite, with a keen slice of malice and intent.

"Of course," Finn said, moving quickly to the workroom door. If that is your wish, then we'll—"

Finn stopped, the hair standing up on his arms as a shadow whispered into sight. It was there so quickly, where nothing had been, that the thing seemed born of the Count Onjine himself.

He knew, at once, the creature's kind, why Letitia had fled, why her face had filled with dread.

"My servant, Caracal," said the Count, clearly amused by Finn's discomfort. "Pay no attention, he won't bother us at all."

"He is welcome here, sire," Finn told him, swallowing the lie.

Great Stars, it smells Letitia! It knows the girl is here! The thing stood by its master, with its tufted ears and its flat pink nose, its pinched little face and its sleek and muscled form, watching with its pumpkin-seed eyes, eyes of luminescent green, eyes flecked with specks of gold. Finn tried to shake the chill, but it wouldn't go away ...



"Show me again, how to make the sound," said the Count, grinning like a rascal, grinning like a rogue.

You merely touch the nose, not hard," Finn said, "just a gentle tap."

The Count did as he was told. The lizard opened its mouth, flashed its silver tongue, made a little hiss, a little sigh, then closed its mouth again.

"Wonderful, truly a delight! It is really quite charming," said the Count. "You have done yourself proud."

"Well, there are several ... adjustments," Finn said, "a bit of work to be done."

"It's good. It's very good indeed."

"Thank you, sire."

"It's a beauty, I don't mind saying so at all."

"I do my best, sire."

"You are much too humble, Master Finn."

"You are much too kind."

"There will be a few changes, of course ..."

"There will—what?"

"Changes, Master Finn." A cunning, lazy smile. The Count waved a finger at Finn. "How easily we are caught in the web of our conceit, my friend. How quickly the sea of praise draws us to her depths."

Finn's mouth was very dry. "I— do not understand. The specifications I've been given— I have followed them exactly as you said."

Count Onjine laughed and shook his head. "Forgive me, Master Finn, I can't resist a little jest. The changes are mine. No fault rests with you at all. The silver toes. We'll replace them with gold. The tourmaline scales, they really won't do." The Count made a gesture of contempt. "What we will do, we will use Dhalapouri rubies instead."

Finn stared. "Rubies, sire?"

"Isn't rubies what I said? Do you have wax in your ears, Master Finn?" The Count was clearly irritated. He looked at the lizard maker as if he were a dolt, a lunkhead or a loon.

"Caracal," he said, turning to the minion at his side, "give me the packet I asked you to carry, if you will. It seems we must make ourselves clear."

The servant licked his lips, blinked his almond eyes and handed the Count a leather sack. With a showy gesture, much like an actor in the street, he opened the sack and spilled its contents on the table before Master Finn.

Finn gasped at the sight. It seemed as if Onjine had loosed a cluster of burning stars, a hundred demon eyes. The stones caught the dim light of the lamp, trapped its feeble fire, and thrust it back a thousand fold. The gems winked slivers of scarlet, carmine and claret, crimson and vermillion, brilliant and nearly blinding hues.

"What a marvel," Finn said, "what a thing to see! There must be— a hundred or more, unless I miss my guess."

"A hundred fifty-three, to be exact," the Count said.

"I doubt so many have ever been gathered this side of the Misty Sea."

Finn could well believe it. A fortune was scattered there before him, and the lizard master could not but wonder *why?* Why would this pinchfist noble—who wouldn't buy himself a new shirt, or a bar of lard soap—*give away* a fortune to a child?

As if the Count could read this thoughts he leaned in close, close enough to cause offense, close enough to stagger Master Finn with his foul and loathsome breath.

"I have not revealed this before, but I tell it to you now. The toy you have made is not for an ordinary child. It has been your honor to craft this trifle for my nephew, the young prince himself, for His Royal Highness' tenth birthday."

Finn couldn't speak. He felt as if someone had sucked his breath away.

"Yes, yes, I quite understand," the Count said, slapping at a louse that had ventured from the forest in his brow. "This is why I didn't speak of this before. I feared a common person like yourself would be, ah— simply overwhelmed by the task. I see I was right, aye, Caracal?"

The creature smiled, then made a frightening sound, a drone, a hum, a deep ululation, a rumble and a drum, as if a great engine was churning in its chest.

"Sire—" Finn said, as his thoughts changed from pride, elation and delight, to panic, apprehension, and bone-chilling fright. "... while I am filled with joy, I recall that I was given twenty days for this task, and I am near certain I have used but twelve. If I am not mistaken, the prince's birthday is—"

"—two days from now," the Count finished. "Doesn't leave a lot of time, but I know you can do it, Finn, you're a master of your craft."

"This— this is impossible," Finn protested. "I will have to

start anew. I will have to set each precious ruby in its clasp, I will have to—

"Oh, yes, thank you for reminding me. There is one more task you must do." The Count held out his hand, and his servant dropped something in his palm.

"The eyes, you see. Peridot will simply not do, not for a prince. These, I think, will surely serve us well."

Once more, Finn simply stared. If the rubies had shaken him to the core, the sight before him left him stunned. Two perfect emeralds, each the size of his smallest fingernail, lay beside the scattered crimson gems.

"They are — absolutely breathtaking, sire," Finn began. "Still, the element of time ..."

"Yes, yes," the Count said. Waving Finn's objections aside, he turned to his silent vassal.

"Caracal, those eyes of yours are green as these stones, and just as cold, I'd guess. Still, you have earned a small favor. No other being of your kind will ever touch this precious gift. Yes, I give you the honor now."

Before Finn could stop him, the Count lifted the lizard from the table and handed it to Caracal.

"No, don't do that," Finn protested. "I won't have that creature *touching* anything of mine. Tell him to put it down!"

"He won't *drop* it, Master Finn," the Count said with a weary smile. "He's really quite agile, you know."

Caracal showed Finn a terrible smile, a smile that revealed the red flesh of its mouth. He pressed the lizard's head again and again, making the tongue come out, making the toy hiss and sigh.

"Enough," the Count said, placing the toy back among the gems. Before he turned away, he caught sight of Julia Jessica Slagg, sitting silently atop a workshelf.

"My, what an ugly thing. How could you do such lovely work and make a hunk of scrap like that?"

"It's merely a benchpiece," Finn said. "Something to practice on."

"Yes, I would dearly hope so." He looked at Finn a long moment, his ruined face pale as tallow in the light. "Two days, Master Finn. I am certain you won't let me down." With that, he turned and waddled out of the workroom, back to the hall. As the Count's slender menial reached the outer door, it paused to sniff the air and gaze up the stairs with its bright and fearful eyes ...



"Ugly, am I?" Why, that enormous pail of slops—I"

"Don't complain," Finn said. "I made you like you are so you *wouldn't* call attention to yourself. If you were a beauty, we would both be in a great deal of trouble."

"Hah!" Julia said. "Didn't you notice? We are in a great deal of trouble now, and not because of me!"

Finn closed the door, turned into the hall, and ran into Letitia, nearly knocking her down.

"I'm sorry," he said, reaching out to catch her, "I was somewhere else, I'm afraid—"

Finn stopped. Letitia was wearing her outdoor cloak, clutching a bundle of belongings to her breast. He could read the whole story in her eyes. He didn't have to ask, but he did.

"Letitia, I know you were frightened, but we'll work this out. I wouldn't let you come to harm."

"With all respect, I don't see that you can stop that horrid thing," Letitia said. "He's got his awful eyes on me now. He means to have me, Master Finn."

"Well I won't let him, you hear?" He reached out and took her hand in his, a thing he'd never done before.

"Things are different now. He has no right to do you harm."

Letitia looked away. "You know how I felt, that creature in the house? I felt I was a tiny squeaky thing, running for a hole in the wall, and that horror was licking at its chops. Nothing's changed, Master Finn. Everything's the same, it isn't any different than it was. We look like people but we're not."

Finn tried to think of an answer, but nothing came to mind. It took some time to convince her not to go, to give him a chance to make things right again. Just how he'd do that, he truly couldn't say.



Outside, in the hot, oppressive evening air, he could see the glow of campfires beyond the city walls. Even the war got to close down after dark. All the soldiers had to do was fight. They didn't have to deal with nobles who smelled of cabbages and sweat.

Walking through the narrow streets, past the last row of houses and shops, he heard the music of the crickets, midges and katydids. Beyond was the sea, and the shadows of galleons and sleek caravels.

He couldn't forget the sad, hopeless look in Letitia's black eyes, the misery there, the fear she'd brought with her from the past. She was right, he thought. Changing beasts into men had not been a favor at all. The bodies of the Newlies were different, but their hates and dark terrors were the same.

The casters of spells who had done this thing were long gone, dead three times a hundred years. They had paid very dearly for their crime, but they'd left their sins behind, left them to breed and make their place in a world where they truly could never belong. The powers in the land could have wiped the Newlies out, stopped them then and there. But that would have only compounded the deed, added a greater sin still.

Not for the first time, Finn wondered what had compelled the great seers such as Shar and Dankermain to use their powers as they did. And, as ever, the question brought his own deed to mind, a deed, he knew, that wasn't that different at all. He had crossed the line himself, given life to Julia, given her the brain of a ferret, a poor creature found in a hunter's trap, weak and nearly dead. He had laced the tiny organ with gold and silver thread, and placed it in the empty lizard head.

A mad and hopeless task, he'd been certain at the time, but when he was done, Julia was a living creature, much more than a hunk of battered tin. He'd given the precious gift of reason to a thing of brass and iron and lead. And why? The answer was clear: Vanity, pride, the arrogance of creation. As the seers surely reasoned, simply because they could ...



Night was full upon him when Finn reached home again. He hurried his steps, mindful of the dangers that might be encountered in the dark. And, as sure as the thought took shape, his stomach gave a lurch, a chill touched the back of his neck. From the corner of his eye he saw figures indistinct, figures insubstantial, figures ill-defined, forms that were misty, papery thin, wispy and hazy, spindly and dim. And, with these gossamer visions came the terrible, sweet and musty odor of days unremembered, of lives long spent.

"Food for the deceased, Master?" said a voice like gravel in a can. "Anything'll do, mostly anything at all."

"No," Finn said quickly, "I don't have a thing. Go somewhere else if you will."

"We get hungry, like everybody else. We just need us some eats."

"That's fine, but I can't help. Now go along your way."

"You got something against the departed," the voice said. "You got a problem, friend?"

"Not a thing, except I fear you have a most unpleasant scent. I hope that you won't take offense."

"None taken, friend."

Still, the phantoms seemed to rumble, make ill-mannered sounds, as if they were surprised, as if they'd always been accepted in the past.

That was the trouble with Coldtown, Finn thought. Coldies tended to roam about, especially after dark. One couldn't help running into a pack now and then.

Of a sudden, Finn noted the ominous rumbles had turned to "oohs" and "aahs." Turning about, he saw that Letitia had set a bowl from his kitchen on the ground. The Coldies huddled around the food, wraiths pale as smoke and dark emaciation, vapors in the night. They could, of course, only consume the essence of food, the aura of sustenance itself. It was said they didn't hurt it at all, that you could eat it if you liked. Finn, however, didn't know anyone who wouldn't throw it out.

Letitia Louise let out a breath. "I'm not afraid of 'em, Master. Look what I am. I'm alive, that's a fact, but I can't be any more miserable than them."

As ever, Finn tried to think of something to say. Letitia solved his dilemma by stomping back into the house.

The phantoms, gathered about their misty feast, looked up a moment, looked at Master Finn, stared with hollow eyes. What their thoughts might be, Finn didn't care to guess.

"Ummmm, spice cake, if I'm not mistaken," something said. "I like it a lot, at least I think I did. I'm not sure if I recall."

Finn turned to look, and there was Captain Pynch. Or, at least, the frosty dilution of Pynch, a murky reminder of a Pynch that used to be, regimental colors turned to dusty motes of gray, limbs still missing, still with no ears and a single eye. His proud mustache was dry as brittle grass, his face a cloudy veil, his skin the shade of slightly rotten meat.

The major was scarcely worse for wear today, Finn thought, than he'd been in life the day before, and that was an awful thing to bear.

"Pynch," Finn said, "it's good to see you again. Ah, sorry, perhaps that's not the thing to say. What I mean is ..."

"I believe I know you," Pynch said, his words a foul blemish and a blot. "I sort of think I do. At least I think I did. Memory's a bit hazy now. I think I've had a rather bad day, is what it is."

"Well, we all do that now and then," Finn said. "I guess that's how things are."

"What, what's that?" Pynch said. "Now who might you be?"

In another instant, the Coldies were gone, there was nothing left to see. A sweet and sickly smell was in the air. The cobbles on the street were slick and damp, as if a colony of snails had ambled by.



"I'll have to work all night," Finn said, "and all day tomorrow and the night after that. Do you have any idea how long it'll take me to set those rubies—that's after I get the tourmalines out?"

"Yes," Julia said, "and I fear it's worse than that. While you were out having your nightly walk ..."

"What? What could be worse that I don't know now?"

Julia gave a crackly lizard sigh. "There's a reason the Count is so generous with his jewels. Unless I miss my guess, these rubies are spell-bound, Finn. Ordinary gravel with a coating of magic. Like snow on a dunghill, masking what's hidden down below. Like frosting on a mudpie, hiding what's—"

"Stop. I get the picture, all right?" Finn ran a hand through his hair. He felt he'd aged twenty years or so. "How do you know that, Julia? And where did the Count find magic such as this?"

"I know because I use the brain you gave me. And, since I'm not a human, magic scarcely works on me at all. As to where the magic comes from, I would say the Khafirii, by way of caravan across the Misty Sea. They are good at this sort of thing, you know."

Finn sighed. "Is that all? If there's more, I don't care to hear the rest. The emeralds—they're false, as well?"

"Just the opposite is true. They're very real, and very fine indeed."

Master Finn closed one eye in thought. "This is most perplexing. The Count Onjine is the cheapest noble in the land. I can understand the false rubies, but emeralds such as this? Even if he wishes to impress the young prince, it seems unlikely he would part with such precious green stones."

"So it would appear," Julia said, "but the stones themselves are here." She paused, and gave him an onyx stare. "So, do you wish to discuss this matter all night, or shall we get about our business now?"

"Watch yourself," Finn said, "I don't need a lizard to tell me what to do."

"So you keep telling me," Julia said, but in a tinny whisper too low for a human to hear.



The night seemed to go on forever. Finn's eyes grew weary, peering through his glass, setting the tiny rubies in place. Julia, being closer to the size of the work, didn't need the glass at all. She was fast, and better still, she didn't need to sleep. Every time Finn dozed, he would wake to find her wiry fingers moving in a blur, binding yet another row of crimson scales.

Waking again some time in the night, he dragged himself into the kitchen and ate in his sleep. Letitia had left him cold supper, but she was nowhere about.



"If you're through stuffing yourself," Julia said when he returned, "there's something you need to see. I doubt that you can, even with your glass, but I'll tell you what you miss."

"Now what?" Finn said, wondering if he'd ever see his bed again. "I don't think I care to know."

Julia didn't answer. She scrambled across the worktable, dragging the ruby-mailed toy in her grasp, placing it directly under the glass. Finn squinted, saw nothing but a giant Julia eye.

"I have opened its mouth," Julia said. "Look at the back of its tongue. Look, and tell me what you see."

Finn looked. At first, it was only a spot, like a tiny bit of soot. Then, with a practiced eye, he could see what looked very much like a spider, an incredibly tiny spider, its legs curled in upon itself, a desiccated spider, wizened and dry.

"It's a very small spider," Julia said, "as you can see. At least, that's all it used to be. Now, it carries a—"

"—death word!" Finn drew a breath. "Can it truly be?"

"It is indeed a wonder," Julia said. "But no—I fear there is little else it can be."

Finn could scarcely believe his eyes. He'd heard of this horror but never imagined it was more than a tale from across the Misty Sea. It was said a near invisible mote lay within the spider's clutches—a droplet of blood, a snippet of hair, a flake of skin, something from the person the death-word was fashioned to kill. A caster of spells then whispered the word, trapping it in the spider's grip.

And there it would stay, until it came into the presence of the person that could loosen its spell. Finn could see the awful moment in his head. The young prince would squeeze the lizard, watch its silver tongue flick out ... That terrible whisper would be the last word he'd ever hear.

"By the Great Badger," Finn said, clutching his head between his hands, "I've been up all night, making a birthday gift to kill the prince! Why, though? Why would the Count wish to—"

He stopped, the answer quite clear. "Of course! Onjine intends to murder the prince and gain control of the realm. I'll go to the Court, Julia. Now, tonight. I'll tell them what the Count plans."

"You think you'll get near the place? If, by some miracle, they let you speak to someone? Who would believe you, then?"

Finn stared at his hands. Julia was right, of course. He would never get near the Royal Keep. Not a commoner like himself.

He felt a sudden fury, an anger he could scarcely contain. The Count's vassal, that thing with oval eyes—when Onjine had handed the creature the toy, it had placed the death word on the lizard's tongue. So quick and cunning he was, too fast for the eye to see. And that, indeed, was why the Count had come. He had used the rubies and emeralds solely to mask his awful deed.

"There is only one thing for it," Finn said. "We must get that dried up spider out of there. Render the gift harmless before it reaches the prince."

He stared at Julia. "I can't do it, it's much too small. But you can, I think. You're the proper size."

"It's possible," Julia said, "I can try."

"We'll have to make a harmless artifice to replace it," Finn said. "The Count or his creature might well decide to check their deadly gift."

"The artifice will be easy enough to do," Julia said. "Getting there and getting that demon-word out's the tricky part."

Master Finn agreed. While Julia worked to dislodge the near invisible speck, Finn labored to complete the ruby scales and insert the emerald eyes. It was only hours before the dawn when he finished, exhausted and bleary-eyed. Julia was still working when he stumbled up the stairs and fell onto his bed. His mind fairly raced with the troubles of the day. As tired as he was, he was sure he could never sleep again.

Moments later, he was dead to the world. He slept and began to fall into a deep and peaceful dream, a dream that included a sunny day by the river, a jug of apple wine, and, no great surprise, the presence of Letitia Louise.

He had been asleep only a minute and a half when Letitia's awful screams brought him back to life again ...



The prince's gift was gone.

Finn spotted Julia at once. His heart came up in his throat. She lay in a heap in the corner. Her head jerked in tiny circles, and one leg pawed the air. Finn bent to touch her, then made himself stand and turn away.

The narrow window was broken. He didn't have to wonder what had squeezed its way through. No one but the Count's wiry vassal could have done such a thing.

Letitia was standing in the hallway, shaking and pale. Finn grasped her hand quickly, let her go and scurried up the stairs, grabbed his boots and ran down again. Pausing for an instant, he returned to the workroom, hastily glancing about. He never kept weapons around, had never felt the need. Now, he wished he had a musket, or at least a rusty sword. Brushing debris off his bench, he grasped a pair of tinsnips and an awl, the closest things to weapons he could find.

The sky was still dark as he ran through the streets. Clouds had scudded in from the sea, and a cold wind threatened rain. Julia was right. There was no use going to the Keep. No one would let some wild-eyed craftsman in the gate—not in the daylight, and not in the middle of the night.

He knew exactly where he had to go. Onjine's house was in the Upper Quarter, in the better part of town. There might be Guardsmen in the streets, but there was no time to think about that ...



The Count's house was three stories high, with a narrow alley on either side. Finn looked for any sign that Onjine's retainers were about. If they were, they were keeping out of sight. With his heart beating wildly against his chest, he kept to the shadows and quickly crossed the street.

The alley smelled of garbage. Feeling along the walls, his hands touched thick and fleshy vines. There was no light above, no sign of life at all. Without another thought—which might have changed his mind—he began to climb up into the dark.

One story, two. And still no sign of a window, any way inside.

There has to be a way ... houses have windows, they don't have solid walls ...!

Finn set his boots in a tiny cleft of stone, reached up again, grasping for a vine. Suddenly, the wall seemed to explode. A shadowy figure leaped into darkness, scattering glass and leaves and mortar, ripping the silence of the night.

Finn nearly lost his hold. From the corner of his eye, he saw the jumper hit the alley floor, roll to its feet, and scutter away into the dark.

"What are the chances," Finn muttered in disgust, "two burglars at Count Onjine's on the very same night?"

Without a second thought, he pulled himself inside. Someone had surely heard the intruder. In seconds, they'd be swarming all over the alley down below.

He scrambled along the inner wall, came up against something hard, felt it, and found it was a bed. Couldn't be the Count's, he decided, it didn't smell bad.

Someone screeched, then someone yelled, an unearthly yowl filled the air. The noise sent a chill up Finn's spine. The Count's cunning creatures, like his vassal Caracal—nothing else could make a sound like that!

The door to the room burst open. Finn ducked behind the bed. Half a dozen of the Count's retainers rushed to the window, screeched at one another, then charged out again.

Finn quickly crossed the room and peered into the hall. A skylight revealed the fast encroaching dawn. An inner balcony ringed a great courtyard below. He ducked back in the room as three of the creatures, in blood-red pantaloons and vests, dashed down the stairs, wicked blades in their hands.

And where was the Count in this enormous place—the Count, and the deadly toy his minion had taken from Finn's house? Finn let out a breath. There were doors everywhere, and even if the place wasn't in an uproar with armed louts screaming all about—Finn jerked around, but not quickly enough. The thing was upon him, crushing him to the ground. A blade drove at his heart; Finn gave a desperate twist; the weapon flashed by his shoulder, sparking on the floor. The creature thrust again, its foul breath close to

Finn's face. Finn blocked the blow with his arm, forcing the brute back. With his free hand, he snaked the iron tinsnips from his belt, slashing them wickedly across the thing's face.

Finn's assailant looked startled. It reached one hand to its cheek, felt the blood there, and howled. Its pumpkin-seed eyes grew wide as it struck at Finn again.

"I don't think so," Finn muttered, striking out with his weapon once more. "That's enough from you, friend."

Pushing his attacker aside, Finn raced for the stairs. He stumbled, once, and cursed as the tinsnips fell from his grasp. The others spotted him at once. He heard that awful howl, turned and saw two of them right on his heels. Worse still, three more had rushed to the courtyard, blades in hand, waiting for him to arrive.

Finn stopped in his tracks, turned, and started for the pair up above. The two paused, confused at their prey's foolish move. Finn drew the awl from his belt and hurled it at the creature on his right.

Finn's attacker grinned and stepped easily aside. Then, his smile quickly vanished as his foot found empty air. He dropped his sword and tumbled down the stairs. Before the thing could come to its senses, Finn grabbed its blade and ran back up again.

The four brigands were on him at once. Finn backed against the wall. His assailants split into pairs. Two held back, while the others came at him, blades slicing at the air. A sharp edge stung his cheek. Finn cried out, swung his sword blindly and managed to parry the second blow.

The creature's partner laughed. His blade teased the air in a circle. The other two quickly closed in. A blade pricked his shoulder, and another nipped his side. They were playing with him now, well aware he was a novice with the sword, that he'd seldom cut more than a sausage with a rusty table knife.

That's it, then. It ends like this. A foolish lizard maker with his back against the wall ...

One of the brutes snarled, flicking his blade at Finn's cheek. Finn slashed out again and again, desperately trying to hold them off. A hum and a dazzle to his left, and the sword flew out of his hand. He stumbled, fell against the wall. The side of a blade struck his head; Finn gasped, felt his legs give way, felt the awful pain take him down.

"Finish him, finish him quickly now!"

"Wait, wait, kill him very sloooow."

"No time for that ... make it quick and we'll—"

The voices ended in high and fearsome cries, in shrieks of terror, in howls of great alarm.

And Master Finn, lost in agony, lost in pain, lost somewhere that he'd never ever been, imagined a host of loathsome figures, gaunt and wispy phantoms aswirl in smoky mist, reedy things, needy things, with gray and hollow faces, things with empty eyes. And, before the specters vanished, as if they'd never been, he heard one speak like a rasp gnawing tin:

"The dead don't forget ... they're not like the living, who don't seem to care ... the dead, they'll show their gratitude, Master Finn..."



Finn opened his eyes, then closed them again. His head felt much like a melon, dropped from a great height.

"He's awake," someone said. "Thank the Great Otter, he's alive!"

"Letitia," Finn sighed, "I know it's a foolish question, but where might I be? This moment, right now?"

Letitia grasped his hand, laughing through her tears. "Why, you're home, Master Finn, safe at home in your very own bed. You've been fair out of your head four days, but I knew you wouldn't die, I knew you were alive!"

Finn blinked. "Four days? I've been lying here for four whole—"

It all rushed back, then, everything at once. "Stop them!" he shouted, sitting up straight. "You've got to stop them, they're going to kill the prince!"

"Not a chance of that, I'll warrant, not while there's lads like yourself around to serve His young Highness."

"Huh, what's that?" Finn saw a big, kindly face appear beside the bed, felt a rough and heavy hand push him gently back down.

"Major D.D. Grace," the man said, tipping his blue feathered cap. "Royal House Guards. The prince sends his greetings, and good wishes for your health. I expect there'll be a medal in this, I wouldn't be surprised."

"No, you don't understand—"

"It's a shame you couldn't save the Count," said Major Grace, "but we know you did your very best, at very great peril to your life."

He leaned down to shake Finn's hand. "I'll be leaving now and let you get your rest."

Finn stared as the Guardsman walked softly to the door, resplendent in his blue uniform with green and silver stripes.

"Letitia," he said when Major Grace was gone, "what's that maniac talking about? If I've been out four days, the young prince is dead!"

"You'll get all the answers you need," Letitia said, an edge to her voice he'd never heard before. "But you'll have to be patient, and you'll have to be *nice*."

Letitia let out a breath. "I listened at your workroom door, I did it all the time. It's not polite, I know, but when you started talking to yourself, I thought you were losing your mind."

"You listened? Then you know about—"

"—about Julia Jessica Slagg, yes, Master Finn. I know everything. Count Onjine, and that awful spider thing, and the plot to murder the prince. When that creature broke in, you left so quickly you forgot to close the workroom door. I found Julia in the corner. She was quite badly stunned, but other than that—"

Finn nearly sat up again. "Julia's alive?"

"Ask her," Letitia said.

"Do what?"

Letitia reached behind her chair and set Julia on the bed.

"You *are* alive, Finn said. "You look just ghastly, but I'm glad you're all right."

"I am *not* all right," Julia said with a croak. "I can't see straight, and everything's broken twice. I intend to be fixed, and I expect you to do the job proper, Finn."

"I don't understand any of this," Finn said. "The prince is alive, and Onjine's dead? The last thing I recall—"

"I made up a story," Letitia said, "I didn't know what else to do. I ran out and found a city watchman, one of *my* kind, mind you, someone who'd *listen* to what I had to say. I told him you had gone to the Count's, that there was a plot to kill the prince."

"You didn't tell him about the toy, how fatal it would be if it reached the prince's hands?"

"I thought it was enough," Letitia said, "to try and save your life."

"Good point," Finn said.

"When they found you, Onjine's creatures were howling and running for their lives, though no one understands why."

"Letitia and I have tried to put the puzzle together," Julia said. "It's clear that the Count had his vassal steal the toy. Why, though, one must ask, when it would be in his hands the next day?"

"Greed's what I say," Letitia said. "Why should he pay for the task, when he could get the work for free?"

"Maybe," Julia said, "but I think it's more than that. I think he couldn't wait to possess it, to hold that terrible weapon in his hands."

Finn showed the pair a thoughtful frown. "More than that still, and you're both quite right in what you say. He wanted the thing, yes. And he had second thoughts about giving those precious emeralds away."

Julia laughed, that annoying cackle that set Finn's nerves on edge. "Here's where the Fates play a role, Finn, as the Fates are wont to do. I'd guess the gems *did* play a part, for what you say fits, and likely tells us what did the Count in. You see, the toy was harmless when it left the workroom. It could never have harmed the prince at all."

"What?" Finn looked from Julia to Letitia and back again. "How can that be? If it fell into the boy's hands—"

"It hasn't, but it will," Julia grinned. "His Highness has delayed his birthday and declared a week of mourning for his poor dead uncle, Onjine. Which matters little, as the death-word can't harm him, now. I removed it, when you went to bed. You'll recall you asked me to make a harmless artifice to take its place, so I put it where it wouldn't get lost. I pried out one emerald eye, dropped it in the socket, and replaced the eye again ..."

Finn shook his head in alarm. "If the death-word's still in the toy, the prince should be warned. Suppose that eye became dislodged one day. It could cause His Highness' death, no matter where it is!"

"No, it can't," Letitia said. "Julia hasn't finished the tale, but I will. When the house was searched, the Count was found dead, the toy by his side. One of the emeralds was gone. His minion was caught soon after with the stone. He admits he stole the gem and fled through a window—but he claims his master was already dead when he took the emerald. Of course, no one believes that."

"Even though it's true," Julia said. "Once again, that's where the Fates come in!"

Master Finn agreed. "Onjine's greed got the better of him. He couldn't stand to give up the gems, so he decided to pry them out and replace them with lesser stones again. That dried-up spider was waiting where you left it. It whispered the death-word and struck the Count dead."

"Still, how could that be?" Finn paused, doubting his words. "The spell was created for the prince. It was his tiny spot of blood or flesh that—"

Finn stopped. The truth, or what the truth might be, came to him as a flash of brilliant light. "The Count Onjine is of the royal line as well. A family will share a large nose, or a certain shade of hair, this is clearly so. *If there is a sameness somehow in the blood, if it carries more of a message than we know ...*"

"It may well be that it does," Julia said. "Such a thing is hard to tell."

"Not to me it isn't," Letitia said. "My kind were born of fear and strife, and we know about such things as this. If you lie down with evil, sooner or later it'll kick you out of bed. You can drown in half an inch of water if you fall on your head. If the dough goes sour, it'll surely spoil the bread."

"What?" Finn said, and decided not to ask. Sometimes, one could reason things out. Sometimes, though, it was best just to leave things be, to simply leave them well alone ...



Finn didn't go to the square to see the Count's creatures hanged. He knew they protested to the last they knew nothing at all about a plot, but, as Letitia said, who'd believe a tale like that?

He had yet to get a medal, but Major Grace said it would likely be along any time. Finn really didn't care. A day without danger and strife was reward enough for him. What he wanted to do was make lizards, as he'd always done before. Lizards to clean out muskets, lizards to tell the time, lizards to scoop up crumbs when you dropped them on the floor.

And, lately, an idea had come into his head he was almost afraid to think about. If Julia could see things tiny as the dried-up spider, perhaps she could make things smaller than anything he could craft himself. And, if those smaller creatures could make things smaller than themselves, and those things construct things smaller still ...

It was, indeed, an idea that kept him from sleeping many a hot summer night.



There was one other thing that troubled him as well, a thing that was even more awesome than creatures too small to even see.

One day, though, as he walked by the river with Letitia, warm in the afternoon sun, he managed to speak of this thing, showing more mettle than he'd dared to show before.

Letitia, he said, before his nerve abandoned him again, "You and I— We, that is. Us. Do you think we're so different, so very far apart?"

"Well," she said, with a blush he'd seldom seen before, "I'd say no, Master Finn. I'd say we're standing right close to one another now."

"That's not what I mean," Finn said, "and you know it very well. You're making this difficult, Letitia. And, believe me, what I'm trying to say, it's difficult enough as it is."

"I know what you're trying to say," Letitia said, glancing up at a great red balloon, bright against the sky. "And it's you that must answer the question yourself, Master Finn, not me."

She stopped, then, and looked him in the eye, a look so startling and intense that Finn could scarcely get his breath.

"You know what I was, and you know what I am," Letitia said, "you know this very well."

"I know you're a girl—a very pretty girl. And I know you're a fine person, too."

"That's indeed a nice thing to say," Letitia said. "And so, Master Finn ...?"

"Yes, well ... the thing is, Letitia, I'm sure about that. How I feel about you, and who you are, and how I— how I want things to be. There, that's said and done. What troubles me is, after all that's come and gone—the most peculiar way that the world seems to be—the thought comes to me that I am not truly sure what I am anymore."

Letitia smiled. "Why, what a silly thing to say, of course you do. You're a being, Master Finn, you're flesh and bone and heart, you're a maker of lizards, you're a master of your art. What you are is my very own Finn, which is always what I hoped you'd be!" For a long moment, Finn looked off into the waning day.

Since this bold adventure, a thousand thoughts had plagued him, robbing him of pleasure, stealing precious hours of the night. Unknown tomorrows, mysteries present, and wonders of the past, were forever whirling through his head.

How, the thought had come again and again, *How do I fit into all of this? What am I to do, what am I to be? What is the purpose of one small, insignificant mite of a man in this great and awesome universe that fills the dark heavens above?*

"Actually, I haven't the faintest idea," he said aloud, and took Letitia's hand, and walked by the river till the day disappeared.



Neal Barrett, Jr., writes: "I've got a thing about lizards. Friends have tried to help. I've been in and out of LIRCs (Lizard International Rehabilitation Centers) in Denver, Lima, and Novosibirsk for years. Yet, I have continued to write tales that somehow included gilas, chuckwallas, iguanas, and banded geckos. Sometimes they don't appear for long, but they do appear."

"In 'The Lizard Shoppe,' they appear a great deal. And do I feel any shame at all? Hah! Not a bit. I loved writing about Julia Jessica Slagg, Letitia, and Master Finn. In fact, I've got another such story in the works, and a couple dozen in my head. Have you heard the one about Finn, Julia, and Klaus of the Imperial Underwater Balloons ...?"

Neal's SF and fantasy novels and short stories have appeared in publications such as Asimov's, Omni, Fantasy & Science Fiction, Amazing, and Galaxy. He is a Nebula and Hugo Award finalist and a recipient of the Theodore Sturgeon Memorial award. His novels include *The Aldair Quartet*, *Through Darkest America*, *Dawn's Uncertain Light*, *Highwood*, and *The Karma Corps*.

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THE MINSTREL WYRM

Olothontor

Oh, come let me sing of
Olothontor the Old.
Music in thrall this lone
wyrm doth hold.
If you would live to see
sunrise again,
Sing long of love, and
loss, and pain.
Sing as you've never
sung before,
And alive you may be
gently shown the door.

— Stanza from
“Oh, Come, Let Me Sing,”
Harper drinking-ballad of
anonymous collective authorship

by
Ed Greenwood

illustrated by
Storn Cook

SOME HARPER LEGENDS LIVE AND BREATHE, though they're thought by most to be mere failing figments of fancy or memory. Olothontor “the Old,” the Wyrms of Minstrelry, is one such; even many Harpers think him a minstrel-embroidered figure of legend.

Yet, as Volo found (very nearly to his ultimate cost), Olothontor lives not far north of Waterdeep. This venerable blue he-dragon keeps to himself save when intruders call and has thereby completely escaped the notice of other dragons and—save as a Harper legend—of the many residents of Waterdeep.

Olothontor loves music above all else and gives extravagant gifts to lady bards and minstrels whose work pleases him. He dreams of someday finding a mate: a blue dragon who can sing as enchantingly as a splendid human singer. He has sometimes wistfully told intruders who manage to get him to talk about music about this dream, but no Cult of the Dragon member or other intruder has yet managed to empower a blue she-dragon to sing, even temporarily.

Intruders into his lair who play or sing won't be attacked, so long as they furnish good music and plenty of it.

First heard of in trail-lore books written circa 570 D.R. and now collected at Candlekeep, young Olothontor recklessly raided traders encamped at what is now the Rat Hills. Olothontor was observed to break off his attack and perch on the drifting hulk of a ship he'd just de-masted (and de-populated) to

listen when a trio of spellsingers broke into song. The spell they raised was a defensive dome that twisted incoming lightning bolts into outgoing, stabbing rays of cold—as the blue dragon discovered to his chagrin when the song ended and he bounded into the air (sinking the ship) to renew his attack. Wounded, he fled, flying raggedly—but no one there failed to notice that he veered away during his second attack so as not to harm the three humans who'd sung.

Oebryn Evergar, a bard exploring Anauroch some years later, spoke of encountering Olothontor half-buried in the sand, obviously ready to attack. Instead, the wyrm merely raised his head, causing a shower of sand, to listen as the initially-unwitting bard sang his way closer. The blue dragon paced along beside the bard like a restless cat on the prowl, demanding more songs until night fell and the bard fled, whereupon the dragon devoured his camels. When morning came, and Evergar grimly set out on foot to meet his doom under the scorching sun, the dragon swooped down and shaded him with a spread wing, all that day, demanding in return more songs. Thus they traveled, Evergar and the dragon, for several days until the

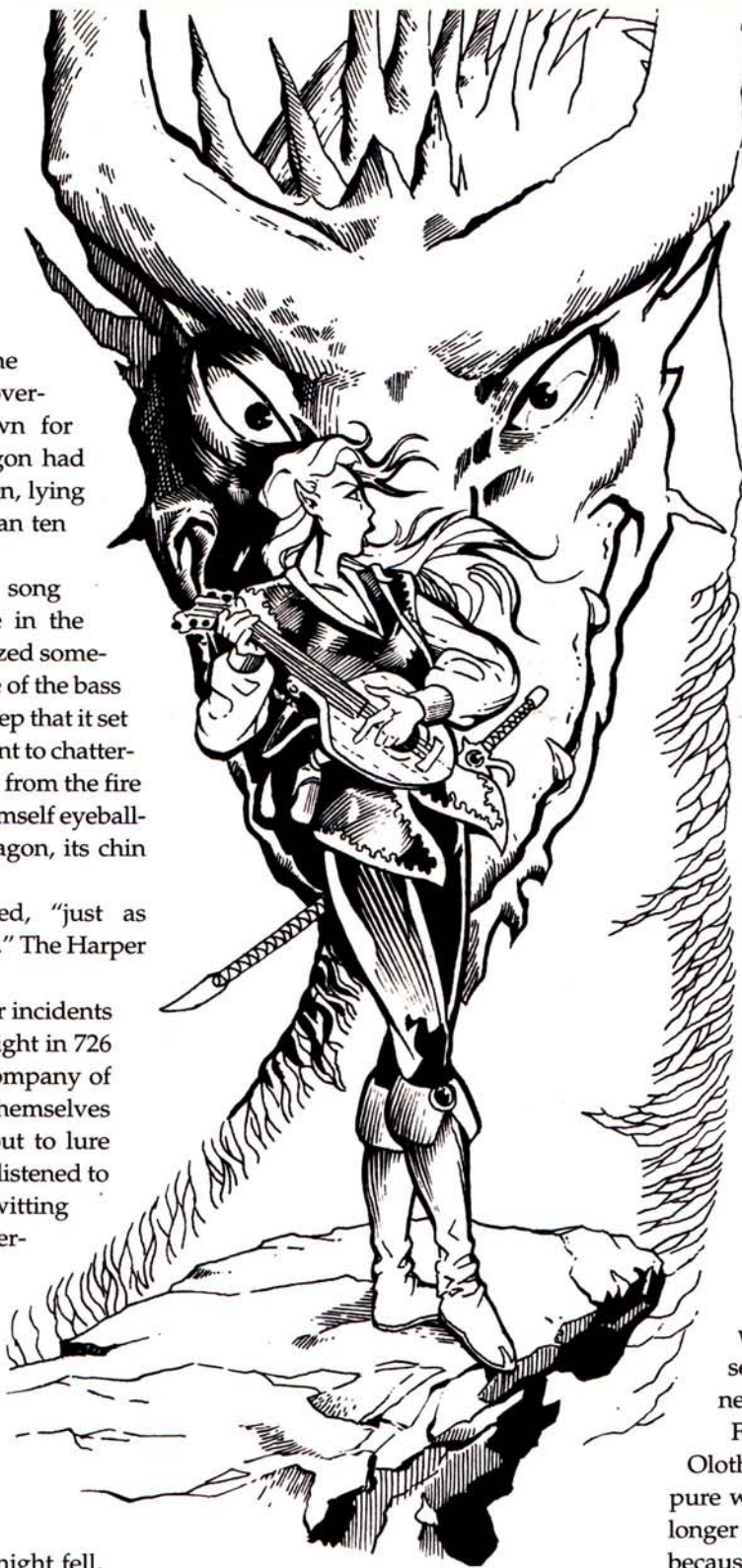
edge of the desert was reached and the bard managed, by walking on through the night, to slip away from the seemingly-tireless Olothontor.

Minstrels who traded ballads around a shared campfire in the Sword Coast wilderlands some years later reported discovering, as they settled down for slumber, that a blue dragon had crept up to the fire to listen, lying flat on the ground less than ten yards from the flames.

A Harper, leading a song around another campfire in the North a decade later, realized something was amiss when one of the bass voices joining in was so deep that it set the jaws of everyone present to chattering. When he strode away from the fire to investigate, he found himself eyeball-to-eyeball with a blue dragon, its chin on its paws.

"Continue," it rumbled, "just as before, and all will be well." The Harper did just that.

A dozen or more similar incidents were recorded until the night in 726 D.R. when a successful company of adventurers calling themselves Glaerikim's Band set about to lure and trap this dragon who listened to music. They hired an unwitting handful of minstrels to perform in a wilderland forest glade, having first built (and concealed, under hides heaped with leafy tree-boughs and mosses) a quartet of loaded ballistae in the trees. Glaerikim himself sat in the top of the tallest nearby tree as night fell, watching the darkening skies as the music began. When the silhouette of a dragon glided silently overhead, turned, and settled slowly to the ground, Glaerikim slipped down the rope he'd left ready and went to each ballista, helping to unhood it as quietly as possible. When the music ended around the embers of the dying fire, one of the



VELSAERT AND SCHALALLA ESCAPED with their lives after Schalalla gave a performance that the sage described as "songs that moved me to tears, despite the danger—and more than once did the same, as near as I could tell, to the dragon."

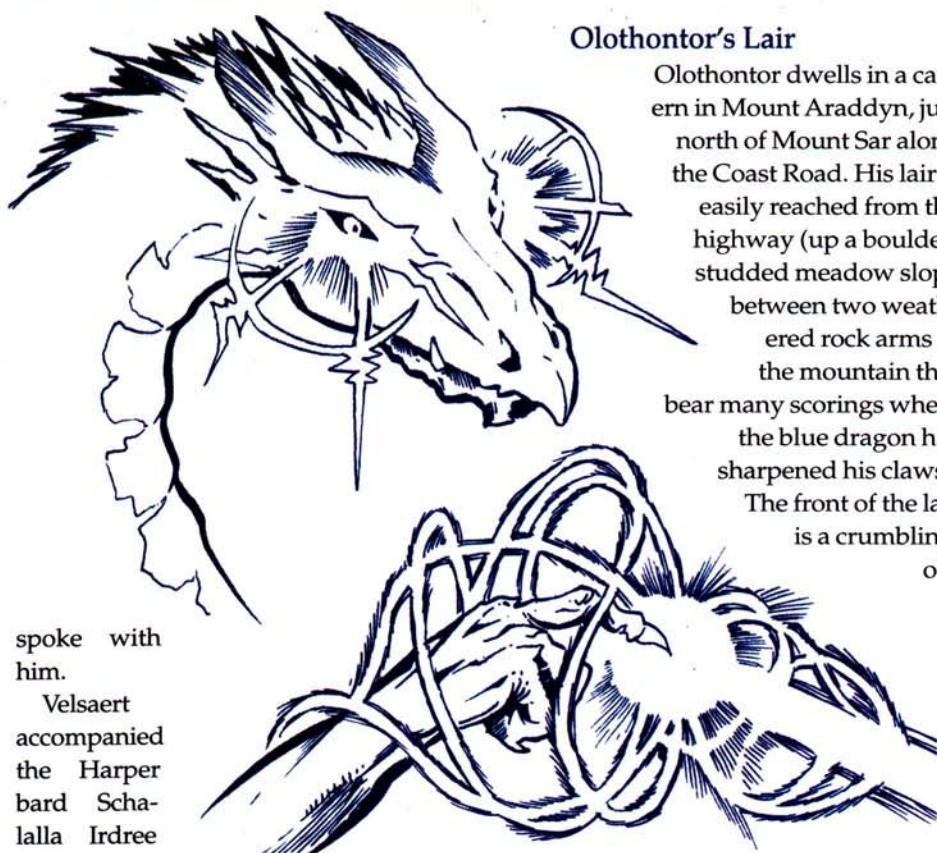
minstrels (as instructed) loudly beckoned the others over to a corner of the clearing, to "teach them a secret song." When Glaerikim saw the dark bulk of the dragon steal nearer, he whistled—and four ballista-bolts flashed at their target. One missed, one glanced off, one struck and shattered apart—and one tore through a wing, earning a roar of rage and pain that shook the very trees and a wildly-flapping ascent into the sky. The adventurers stood their ground, ready to blast the wyrm with their most powerful magical items as the dragon wheeled against the stars.

They never got a chance to wield them. One minstrel alone escaped by plunging into a crevice between two rotting fallen trees and feigning death for hours, and from his telling we know that lightning lashed that glade in crackling bursts as bright as day, hurling cooked bodies high into the air in repeated macabre dances, while the air echoed with howls of rage and savage songs of doom—snatches of the same triumphant battle-songs that men were wont to sing all over Faerûn in those days. Awed, the survivor told everyone of the Minstrel Wyrm who'd slain Glaerikim's Band and seven minstrels besides ... and a new legend of the North was born.

From that day to this, tales of Olothontor have been dismissed as pure whimsy because the dragon is no longer seen crouching near firesides, and because sages scoff at the idea of a desert-lairing blue dragon, lover of hot winds and baking sun and sand, dwelling in the oft-frigid, damp Sword Coast lands. Velsaert of Baldur's Gate (fast becoming recognized as an authority on the history of dragons up and down the Sword Coast), had already investigated a tale told by the lady bard Duthchanna of Athkatla when Volo

Olothontor's Lair

Olothontor dwells in a cavern in Mount Araddyn, just north of Mount Sar along the Coast Road. His lair is easily reached from the highway (up a boulder-studded meadow slope between two weathered rock arms of the mountain that bear many scorings where the blue dragon has sharpened his claws). The front of the lair is a crumbling, old



spoke with him.

Velsaert accompanied the Harper bard Schalalla Irdree on an expedition to find the Minstrel Wyrn (following Duthchanna's directions) and discovered that the dragon was alive and real, dwelling in caverns heated by a volcanic vent and employing magics to listen to music from afar, and even to "hold" the sounds of that music for days (to be heard over and over again). Velsaert and Schalalla escaped with their lives after Schalalla gave a performance that the sage described as "songs that repeatedly moved me to tears, despite the danger—and more than once did the same, as near as I could tell, to the dragon." The Harper bard promised the dragon she'd return with different songs, a better harp, and alone a season later—and, the sage believes, she kept that promise.

As far as Volo and Velsaert know, the Minstrel Wyrn still lairs near Waterdeep, waiting for the promised returns of various bards and minstrels.

The keys to Olothontor's character are his hunger for music and his reported battle-calm; though betrayals enrage him as they do any dragon, he enters anticipated battles with easy, unruffled calm, and is undistracted by outsiders hurling spells into the fray.

stone mansion that was once the home of the brother titans Endrigul and Roevryn Taluth—and was later taken over by the self-styled "Gnome King" Karlus "Goldgoblet" Dlinshoulder to be the seat of his court, only to be emptied by repeated orc raids. Somewhere in its huge but hollow stone pillars are said to be hidden many brass pots full of gnome gold—coins bearing the grinning, bristle-bearded likeness of Karlus. Today, travelers find the mansion pillaged of all but a few tumbled pieces of massive stone furniture, covered with a thick blanket of dust, bird droppings, and the bones of small animals.

Olothontor has placed spells in the huge central rooms (chambers built to a grand scale by the titans, with high frescoed ceilings, balconies, and fluted pillars), so that any living creature entering them causes favorite songs to be heard. These magical "recordings" give the Minstrel Wyrn a warning of intrusion and awe the most timid of intruders into flight from this "haunted" place.

The innermost rooms (the last open to the sky, its shattered ceiling allowing a deft dragon to drop down in a landing that must be more a precise pounce than

anything else) run up to meet a cliff-face of Mount Araddyn—and there lead into the cavern where the dragon dwells.

This cave is warm, wide and long, and its floor is strewn with gravel (for use with Olothontor's *pebble wind* spell). Its floor is broken about two-thirds of the way in by a 40'-wide chasm that drops down four hundred-something feet to a volcanic flow and splits the cavern from side to side. Hot air swirls up out of this chasm, and there is a faint, sullen red glow down below.

On the far side of the heated chasm, Olothontor lies at ease on a bed of treasure, his most prized items (enchanted musical instruments) behind him, well away from the heat. From time to time, as he shifts about, gold coins spill over the edge of the chasm. He'll await most intruders calmly, chin in hand, and demand music before he uses his spells or breath weapons on them. If sorely pressed, he'll leap across the chasm and burst through the intruders, seeking the open air of the mountain (where he'll perch and await emerging adventurers).

Would-be thieves and attackers must cross the chasm somehow, of course, with Olothontor free to strike at them. Well above the main cavern floor where the treasure lies is a high ledge lined with boulders; Olothontor can stretch up to it and bat the boulders at intruders (and when enough of them are gone, he can clamber up onto this ledge so that attackers must climb up to him).

If Olothontor observes a strong band of intruders coming from afar, he often awaits intruders in a side-cave that opens into the walls of the chasm a short distance beneath the main cavern. Hidden there, he'll send a *projected image* of a bound and helpless human captive up to "stand" on the "solid stone" floor of the caver. In other words, he'll conceal the empty air where the chasm gapes open with an illusory "floor" of stone, hoping to lure the intruders to their deaths through falling. Olothontor usually depicts a chained, furiously-struggling warrior woman, but he's had centuries to perfect this act and can also provide a very convincing, seductively beckoning princess, despairing merchant, and so on—complete with

detailed life histories, full knowledge of Sword Coast ways and business customs, and a tale of where the dragon has gone. Olothontor can surge up out of the "underneath" cavern with a roar to confront foes, or bound up in near-silence. If the majority of a band of intruders fall for his trick—"The dragon can make himself very small and has gone down there to where he keeps his magic"—the Minstrel Wyrms races to the opening of that half-mile long crevice and walls it shut by shoving a carefully-carved boulder into place. He has three cottage-sized stones, each of which can seal off the end of the crevice—two precisely, and one leaving small gaps around its edges. Olothontor simply shoves all three boulders in a heap and waits for the trapped intruders to starve or waste any powerful magic they might have in attempts to get out.

No servants or companion creatures dwell in Olothontor's lair, but for about a fifth of each year, cumulative time, various Harpers and other bards can be found there on promised "return visits." Some of them have been making annual appearances for almost 20 years. These visits seldom overlap; Olothontor prefers to have one visitor at a time in his home.

Olothontor's Domain

From his lair, Olothontor roams rarely. When he does, he may wing anywhere between Mintarn and Anauroch, and Neverwinter and Silverymoon to Tethyr, wherever he can hear music. Olothontor is well aware that other dragons regard certain areas as their personal domains, and he flies high or very low to avoid attention. He normally flies this way anyway; terrified, cowering humans seldom create tuneful music.

Olothontor would regard an attempt by any other dragon to dwell or habitually perch on Mount Araddyn as an invasion of his own domain—and he would ferociously battle any wyrm foolish enough to lair nearby and regard Olothontor's presence as a threat to his or her domain. The Minstrel Wyrms really just wants to be left alone by other dragons—as well as by rampaging orc hordes, human adventurers with greed

and glory in their eyes and sharp swords or waiting spells in their hands ... and anyone else who doesn't love music.

The Deeds of Olothontor

The favorite prey of the Minstrel Wyrms is anything handy in the way of "hoofed beasts conveniently herded to Waterdeep for sale," which he likes to swoop down on and devour in a lightning-fast, gobbling raid (by night if need be). He goes for long periods without dining but has been known to gorge himself utterly when the opportunity presents itself—such as the time he flew north to meet a southbound orc horde crossing the Evermoors, and imitated the notorious red dragon Klauth by just rolling around on hundreds of orcs before settling down to a feast that lasted four days—for it took that long for all the orcs streaming south to reach his jaws.

Like a hunting cat, Olothontor spends long periods dozing and even more time lounging on his bed of treasure listening to music or considering how best to employ his magic next. Olothontor collects music boxes and other mechanical or magical means of producing tunes, and has amassed over 600 such items. They occupy various high niches and ledges around the main cavern of the blue dragon's lair, on both sides of the chasm, and Olothontor knows the

precise placing of each; if one is missing, moved, or damaged, he'll notice within a matter of hours and devotes all of his energies—in a maniacal, at-all-costs manner—to regaining the lost items.

Olothontor is believed to have mated only once, with a blue she-dragon of Anauroch. Ingeireirautha is a possessive, ruthless adult dragon who dwells near the eastern edge of the Great Desert and is so self-absorbed that she may have forgotten all about "Olothontor the Dreamer." For his part, Olothontor's disinterest in even meeting other dragons may well be founded in his experiences with Ingeireirautha, despite the three to five offspring they produced (most of whom flew away east or southeast soon after hatching, following—or defying—



their mother's directions to Raurin).

Olothontor's current keen interest is finding spells that can capture and reproduce music with ease, so that he can "record" music spontaneously and not have to arrange performances beforehand (or cast a spell and make his own music on the spot). He wants to acquire stray melodies or sounds whenever he hears them, ultimately to build a library of joyous music instead of hiring musicians to play a few stilted songs that he must struggle to capture magically under exacting conditions. This drive to achieve faster, better spells consumes his driving energies, and he's thinking of sponsoring or coercing certain brilliant mages into crafting the enchantments he can see in his dreams.

It's just a matter of time before someone thinks he has music and magic enough to enter the lair of the Minstrel Wyrm and destroy Olothontor.

Olothontor's Magic

The Minstrel Wyrm keeps his "recording" spells secret, and most of them seem to be decidedly unstable experimental enchantments at present, anyway. It should be noted that Olothontor uses sung, whistled, plucked, or hummed tunes to activate many waiting, "hung" spells around his lair—spells that can trigger darkness effects, cause individual boulders to fall from the ceiling or to swing aside and allow a small avalanche of loose stones to pour down from ceiling cavities, and so on. Some of these spells were apparently cast by mages Olothontor aided during his travels.

Here's one of the more mundane magics that Olothontor uses to defend himself when attacked in the desert or in his lair. When resting far from home, river-mouth gravel bars and quarries are his favorite haunts because of this spell.

Pebble Wind

(Alteration)

Level: 3

Range: 10 yards

Components: V

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 40'-diameter sphere if cast above a surface; a hemisphere of the same dimensions if cast so as to include a surface

Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell works only if cast in the presence of a volume of loose sand, pebbles, glass shards, grain, nuts, or gravel equal in volume to the caster's body (or more); the spell uses but does not consume this material. A *pebble wind* whips these small objects into a brief, blinding whirlwind. No sight is possible through

this whirlwind, but it causes no lasting vision impairment. Flying creatures and missiles can make no headway against a *pebble wind*; they hang motionless until the spell ends (whereupon they resume their previous courses and velocity). No objects larger than the caster's clenched fist are whirled about by this spell, but the nature of objects moved affects the damage done by the spell: if more than one-third of the objects are sharp or are of the largest moveable size, damage is increased by +1 point per die.

Otherwise, a *pebble wind* deals 3d4 + 4 hp damage to all beings caught within it except the caster (who is never harmed by his own spell). All creatures are allowed a save for half damage. The effects of this spell can't penetrate solid barriers but can prevail against non-solid magical fields. A *gust of wind* or similar natural or spell effect can move a pebble wind-cloud 40 feet (regardless of the caster's wishes). If employed against a

painted wall or surface (not graven) inscription, a *pebble wind* has a 40 percent chance of defacing (nearly obliterating) each letter or element of a picture.

Olothontor's Fate

It's just a matter of time before someone thinks he has music and magic enough to enter the lair of the Minstrel Wyrm and destroy Olothontor. Right or wrong, any extensive battle might wreck the lair (and even rend Mount Araddyn, if hotrock flows begin), ending the peaceful existence of the blue dragon who loves music. If Olothontor survives and seeks revenge, Waterdeep itself could suffer—or the High Road could become impassable until adventuring might is whelmed in earnest and the Minstrel Wyrm is destroyed. Claugiyliamatar, the aggressive Dragon of Kryptgarden Forest (a green wyrm, detailed in *DRAGON® Magazine* #233) reportedly confronted Olothontor in midair on one occasion, but the blue dragon simply ignored her, continuing on his way. Not quite daring to attack so calmly superior a dragon, Claugiyliamatar circled away but by all accounts was enraged, spending hours in a shrieking, tail-lashing shredding of trees and grassy hillsides. She might well do just about anything to bring down Olothontor if the opportunity presents itself in the future.

Certainly the Minstrel Wyrm places himself far more at risk from attacks than most blue wyrms of his age, solely through his love of music. His listening forays may yet bring him to grief, as he crouches silently somewhere enjoying music, well within range of hostile poisoned javelins and blades or spells seeking the doom of a certain tune-smitten blue dragon. On the other hand, Olothontor might not regard such a death as a bad way to die, if die he must—for not even dragons have learned the secrets of forever enjoying life as they did when youthful.



Ed Greenwood doesn't mind if he never sees a dancing unicorn before he dies. A really good discussion with a talking lion will do.

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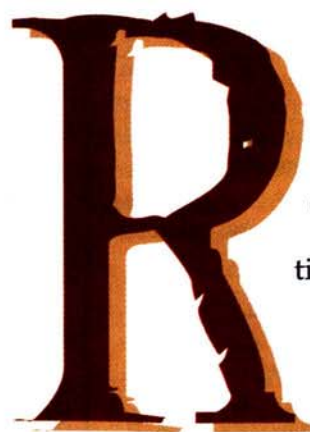


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Missing Links

Humans aren't the only beings to have evolved in the AD&D® world, so don't be surprised to encounter a monstrous missing link.



RECENTLY, SEVERAL NEW CREATURES have been discovered, beings that raise questions of possible genetic ties between various species. These new creatures might be "missing links," evolutionary tie-ins between one species and another, in much the same way some people believe the creature known as Bigfoot or Sasquatch could be a "missing link" between man and ape.

In many cases, it is difficult to ascertain whether such creatures are in fact a "preliminary" form halfway between the development of one species into another, or whether they might be the progenitor of both species. In some instances, it is difficult to prove that these so-called "missing links" are even related to the other species in question.

In a world where magic has the ability to alter the forms of many animal species radically, nothing can be taken for granted. The change could be accidental, a result of a magical mishap, or an effect of wild magic; or it could be deliberate, as in the case of a crazed wizard (perhaps a merlane, as described in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #237) experimenting with the merging of disparate races in an attempt to create something new and powerful.

Some assertions of "missing link" status of the creatures documented on the following pages fly in the face of what has been considered established fact. For instance, it has long been maintained that the mimic was originally created by

wizards. Evidence of a possible genetic link between the mimic and the deadly pudding now would seem to contradict this suggestion. If the two races are related, does this mean that the puddings owe their existence to wizards as well, or is the mimic race a natural offshoot of the puddings? Each discovery of a "missing link" seems to add as many new questions as it answers.

The following creatures are presented with no guarantees of their ties between any previously-documented animals. In fact, sages even now argue the matter in their academic circles, publishing papers "proving" one theory or another. Are these creatures "missing links" or not? That, ultimately, is for each DM to decide.



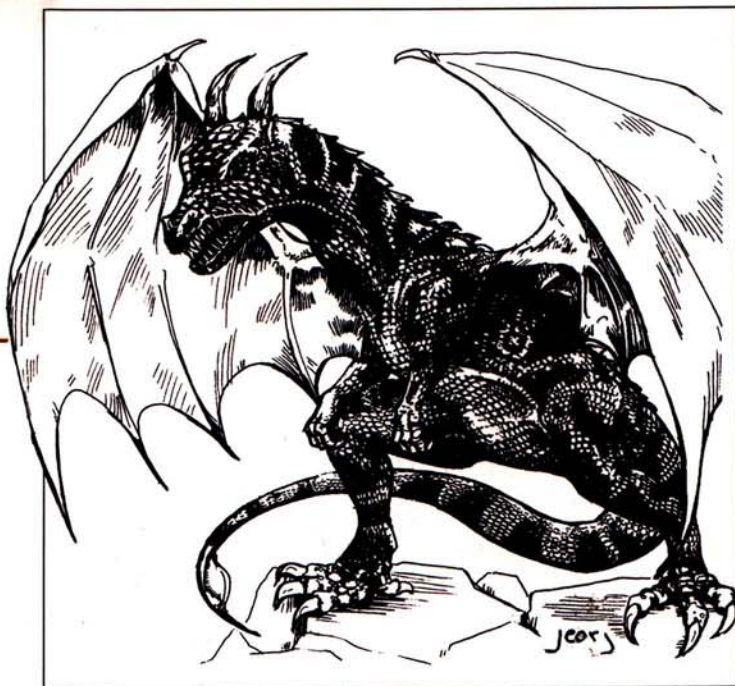
Johnathan M. Richards writes, "I'm pretty sure that Bigfoot isn't the missing link between ape and man, but if he is, he's probably from my dad's side of the family."

by
Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by
George Urbanic

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate or subtropical mountain forests and jungles
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal
TREASURE:	Incidental
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	18, Fly 24 (D)
HIT DICE:	5
THACO:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-8/1-4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	H (15' long, 20' wingspan)
MORALE:	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	650



Other than size, the most obvious difference between the pseudodragon and the wyvern is the number of limbs: the wyvern lacks the front legs of its smaller cousin. The recent discovery of the bloodstinger, a wyvern-like creature with small forelimbs, has led many to believe the creature is a "missing link" between the two reptiles. Whether the bloodstinger is an intermediate form showing how the pseudodragon evolved into the wyvern or how the wyvern evolved into the smaller pseudodragon is a matter of contention in academic circles; many sages discount both theories, believing both creatures are the result of divergent lines of evolution from the "original" bloodstinger stock.

Standing upright on huge, powerful legs, the bloodstinger is rather tyrannosaur-like in build. However, its lengthy tail is equipped with a foot-long stinger, and it sports a pair of bat-like wings. Two backward-curving horns project from the top of its skull, further evidence of common ancestry with the wyvern. Its skin is pebbly, with a texture and coloration similar to that of a gila monster: mottled black and red. It is from its red coloration that the bloodstinger gets its name.

Combat: Oddly enough, the bloodstinger prefers to attack from the ground, using its wings merely as a means of rapid transportation to prey. It delivers a vicious bite for 2-8 hp damage and also stings with its tail-spike for an additional 1-4 hp damage. Those struck by the tail-spike must save vs. poison or be slowed for 4-20 rounds, after which time they must save vs. poison again or die. Subsequent stinger hits are not cumulative; the victim suffers the poison effects of the first hit only (although he suffers 1-4 hp puncture damage from each subsequent stinger hit). Bloodstingers are immune to the effects of their own poison.

Habitat/Society: Bloodstingers are loners, gathering only during mating season in the spring. After an elaborate mating ritual, including aggressive roars and an intricate bobbing dance, the mating itself occurs in flight. The females lay their eggs (3-6 in a clutch) in their mountain-top nests, caring for the young for the first year only.

Strictly carnivorous, a bloodstinger attacks just about anything that moves, regardless of its size. If it finds it has "bitten off more than it can chew," it relies on flight to escape. There is no safety in numbers when dealing with bloodstingers, for they are not intimidated by large numbers of adversaries.

Perhaps because of their relatively poor maneuverability, bloodstingers tend to ignore aerial prey. Strangely, being airborne is one of the safest places to be in combat against one of these flying creatures, for they are much more likely to break away from combat and search out easier, landbound prey than they are to pursue prey once it takes to the skies. It is believed that a bloodstinger's wings tire quickly; except for their mating flights, they are never spotted in the air for long periods.

Some have thought that bloodstingers would make excellent riding mounts. Unfortunately this has never been successfully accomplished; even when raised in captivity, bloodstingers refuse to acknowledge any master and seek to devour those who would use them as steeds. Only through *charm monster* spells can these creatures be used in such a manner.

Ecology: Bloodstinger flesh is next to inedible, but their brightly-colored skin is often sought after by primitive hunters (and several lizard man tribes) for shields or hide armor. The poison sacs in their tails can be used to harvest the equivalent of 1-3 potions of poison, each with the same effects as a bloodstinger's stinger attack once ingested. In addition, the hard, bony stinger itself is often used as a weapon, either as a one-handed weapon as is or mounted on a pole to create a spear.

Boneslither

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (9)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	6
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-3
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (up to 12' long)
MORALE:	Steady (10)
XP VALUE:	975

Boneslithers could be a link between nagas and poisonous snakes. A boneslither appears to be a giant snake, but a hard, bony structure covers its head in a pattern similar to that of a human skull. This "skull" is bone-white, while the rest of the snake tends to be a dark green, reddish-brown, or black, often with reticulated patterns in a slightly lighter color.

Combat: A boneslither bites for 1-3 hp damage. This bite is highly venomous, requiring victims to make a successful save vs. poison or die (onset time immediate). Boneslithers are cunning, often remaining motionless in an area in which a human skull might be found (a dark cave, a jungle path, etc.), then springing out at prey. Because its skull-like head can be startling, potential victims suffer a -2 penalty to surprise rolls.

Like many other serpents, boneslithers can disconnect their lower jaws to swallow creatures much larger than themselves. After eating a large meal, a boneslither remains motionless for the better part of a week while it digests its prey. The indigestible bits, such as bones and metal, are regurgitated midway through the digestion process. Thus, a boneslither will not attempt to swallow a PC wearing metallic armor, preferring to go after those wearing normal clothing or leather armor. This does not mean that they ignore armored adventurers, merely that they do not devour them once they are slain.

Boneslithers are susceptible to such spells as *snake charm* and *snakes to sticks* (the reverse of the fourth-level priest spell *sticks to snakes*). However, because of their relatively high hit dice (when compared to the average-sized snake), these spells are not likely to affect them unless wielded by a high-level priest.

Habitat/Society: Boneslithers are much more intelligent than ordinary snakes, but nowhere near as intelligent as nagas. They have developed the power of speech, however, and often lure



victims in close enough to strike with bogus cries for help. They are also adept at mimicry, accurately reproducing the sounds of various creatures that they have heard.

Boneslithers tend to be solitary, with males and females coming together only in the spring to mate. Young hatch from leathery eggs, in clutches of 4-8 (1d8, treating anything less than "4" as a roll of "4") and remain with the mother only long enough to learn rudimentary language skills and survival.

Boneslithers keep no permanent lair, preferring to search out new types of prey. Some boneslithers are arboreal, but the majority of boneslither sub-species remain on the ground. Arboreal boneslithers have a greenish coloration, the better to blend in with the leaves that surround them.

Ecology: Boneslithers are commonly found in jungle climates. They tend to avoid nagas, whom they fear because of their magical powers. Boneslither skins are useful in the manufacture of scale mail, and their head plates are often used as decorations on tribal totems or magical staves. Since boneslithers molt, shedding their outer skins as they outgrow them, obtaining a boneslither skin is not dependent upon slaying one of these creatures in battle. Therefore, whenever boneslither head plates are used for decoration or proof of valor, other body parts (usually fangs or vertebrae) are prominently featured as well to prove that the creature was legitimately slain in combat. Scale mail requires a boneslither's intact hide, as their molted skins are much too thin to serve as armor.

If captured alive, boneslithers can be "milked" of their venom, producing the equivalent of a potion of poison each week (type F). However, this is a dangerous procedure, for the enraged boneslither will do everything in its power to escape captivity. In the long run, it's generally cheaper (not to mention safer) to purchase flasks of poison from the local alchemist or assassin's guild than to try to capture a live boneslither.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subterranean
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Incidental
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	8
THACO:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-16
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Glue, acid
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S-L (3'-8')
MORALE:	Special
XP VALUE:	2,000

Marble puddings can harden the surface of their normally pliant bodies to appear like chunks of stone. They are usually gray, with streaks of white or black over their surfaces, giving them their distinct "marble" look.

The discovery of the marble pudding has caused quite a stir in academic circles. Many sages believe that this creature proves a genetic relationship between the deadly pudding and the mimic. Certainly, the many similarities between the mimic and the marble pudding would seem to support this theory.

Combat: Like a mimic, the marble pudding relies on imitation to catch its prey. Unlike other puddings, which aggressively hunt down their victims, the marble pudding adopts the shape of a harmless piece of stone and lets its victims come to it. Marble puddings can alter their color to blend in with the stones of their environment. Once prey comes within range, the pudding strikes out with a pseudopod (with a -4 penalty to its victim's surprise roll). If this hits, the pudding secretes an adhesive that bonds to the victim, preventing its escape. The pudding then softens its rock-like outer texture and flows over its victim, engulfing and dissolving it with its acid. The acid produced by a marble pudding is weaker than that of other puddings its size, causing only 2-16 hp damage per round. Similarly, the "glue" it produces is weaker than mimic glue, giving victims a -1 bonus on their Open Doors roll to pull free.

Marble puddings share the deadly pudding immunities against poison, cold, and acid. Lightning and blows from weapons cause them to divide into two smaller creatures.

Since they have no eyes, marble puddings are immune to vision-based attacks (such as *light* and *continual light* spells) and illusions that are primarily visual. Instead of a sense of sight, marble puddings share the deadly puddings' ability to sense heat and analyze material structures at a range of 90 feet.



Habitat/Society: Marble puddings are usually found underground, in natural caverns and tunnels where they use their marble-imitating abilities to best advantage. They are more patient than normal puddings, often waiting motionless for days before attacking a creature who wanders too close. Somewhat territorial, a marble pudding usually remains within a half-mile or so of its "home."

Marble puddings are able to climb walls, ceilings, and sheer surfaces, but they are unlikely to do so unless there is a good chance of encountering prey there. (For instance, a marble pudding might station itself along the ceiling in a cave where bats roost.) Additionally, they are usually encountered singly, for they have no interaction with others of their species. Encounters with more than one marble pudding occur only in areas where the "hunting" is particularly good, and there is enough prey to go around. Even in these cases, though, each marble pudding is on its own—they do not cooperate with, assist, or even acknowledge the presence of others of their kind.

Ecology: Marble puddings can go weeks between meals. They do not have a preference for any particular type of prey; instead, they lash out at anything that moves past them whenever they are hungry. Similarly, they do not seem to fear any type of creature, as anything that moves is considered fair prey. None knows for certain whether the marble pudding is related to the mimic. If the two creatures are related, it would explain the mimic's natural immunity to the acid of deadly puddings.

As if there weren't enough controversy over the marble pudding's genetic ties, one sage has put forth yet another supposition: observing the creature's stone-imitating camouflage and ability to project pseudopods from its body, he has postulated a link between the marble pudding and the roper. While the roper is arguably a much more complex creature, it too can alter the shape of its body, change its coloration better to match the surrounding rock, and shoot sticky strands from its body.

Shadow Panther

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate plains and mountains
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil

NO. APPEARING:	2-7
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	6
THACO:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 or 5
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-3/1-3/1-8, 1-3/1-3
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Constriction
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Hide in shadows
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (10'-12' long)
MORALE:	Elite (13-14)
XP VALUE:	650

As one might guess by their name, shadow panthers are the deepest black. Also known as "mountain ghosts," these predators are greatly feared by those who dwell near them. A shadow panther looks very much like a displacer beast, with several distinctions: the creature's six legs are evenly-spaced along its torso (whereas displacer beasts have two front legs and four hind legs); the two tentacles growing from its forward shoulder blades lack the displacer beast's horny ridges, instead tapering to a single bony hook; and the male possesses an almost leonine black mane of shaggy hair around its head and neck. Many sages believe the shadow panther to be an evolutionary link between the displacer beast and the wemic, a view supported by the fact that the creature has a second hip joint at its middle set of legs, allowing it to raise its upper torso and travel on its rear two sets of legs in a wemic-like fashion.

Combat: A shadow panther attacks primarily with its teeth and foreclaws; if backed into a corner, it can rear up on its hind legs and attack with its middle claws also. Each claw attack causes 1-3 hp damage, and the creature bites for 1-8 hp damage. In addition, it can use its tentacles to restrain particularly difficult prey. A tentacle attack strikes at -2 to hit; if successful, all further attacks that round are made at +2 to hit. The victim must make a successful Strength check in order to break free of the shadow panther's tentacle the following round. The tentacles are sensitive, so shadow panthers do not use them in combat unless absolutely necessary. They are, however, often used to carry their cubs on their backs when fleeing, or to drag away slain prey to devour it in the safety of their lairs.

Because of their dark color, shadow panthers have an innate ability to hide in shadows. They use this ability to sneak up on prey, and also to escape if they find themselves overpowered by a stronger foe. While the ability to hide in shadows neces-



sarily depends upon the terrain and lighting, shadow panthers have an overall success rate of about 75%.

Perhaps because of their close genetic ties to the beasts, shadow panthers can ignore the displacement effects of displacer beasts. This ability is not appreciated by the displacer beasts, who go out of their way to attack shadow panthers.

Habitat/Society: Shadow panthers live in small packs, with a dominant male, his mate, their children, and his siblings. They are savage yet show an intelligence beyond that of their animal nature. In any case, the pack works remarkably well together, using teamwork to corner and trap prey with deadly efficiency.

Ecology: Most of the shadow panthers' time is spent in their mountain habitat, where they lair in hidden caves. They are exceptional climbers, using their hooked tentacles to find the narrowest of purchases. Their agility allows them to prey upon mountain goats and sheep, which make up their primary food source. They do not seem to fear humans or demihumans and have been known to attack not only livestock but also farmers.

The pelts of shadow panthers are prized because of their rich, sleek fur and ink-black coloration. A shadow panther skin in good condition can sell for as much as 3,000 gold pieces. A cloak made of shadow panther fur can add 5% to a rogue's hide in shadows ability but does not allow someone without the ability to hide in shadows.

So far, all attempts at domesticating shadow panther young have failed. The cubs seem too savage to train, and—worse yet—shadow panthers have an uncanny ability to track others of their kind. Even if the rest of a newborn cub's pack is slain and the cub is taken to be raised as a guard beast, before too long, a shadow panther "strike team" hunts the creature down to rescue it, slaying its captors if possible. Such cubs are then adopted into the new pack and raised as one of their own.



Dungeons & Dragons[®]

WORLDS OF ADVENTURE

Fast-Play Game

Your portal to the AD&D[®] game!



by Jeff Grubb

The warrior shouldered the door open, and it creaked on hinges unused for centuries. The air smelled of damp earth and ancient, unspoken secrets. Ahead of them, a stone-lined hall disappeared into the darkness beyond.

"Let's go," said the wizard, consulting his map.

"Hold on," said the rogue. "Listen!"

From the hallway ahead came the soft scraping of bone against bone, and out of the darkness stepped a skeleton, the torchlight reflecting off its polished bones. Another skeleton joined it, and then a third. Their lower jaws opened in a voiceless battle cry, and the undead warriors raised their rusted swords and charged the adventurers. . . .

Welcome to the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Fast-Play Game. This 16-page special inclusion in *DRAGON® Magazine* is an introduction to the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game—the world's most popular roleplaying game. If you're an experienced player who knows all this stuff, share it with someone who hasn't played before. If you're interested in how to play the D&D game, read on.

What Is a Roleplaying Game?

In a roleplaying game, each individual involved pretends to be an imaginary character, much the same as an actor plays a part in a film or a play. The big difference is that in a film, the actors are following a script—but in a roleplaying game, you and the other players are writing your own lines as you play out an adventure, and the ending of the story is not determined until you get there.

One of the individuals in a D&D game is the Dungeon Master (DM for short), the person who knows what the adventure is all about and tells the players what's happening as the story moves along. It's always necessary for someone to be the DM, but this doesn't have to be the same person every time you play. The other individuals are players, each one playing the role of his or her own player character (PC for short). The adventure included with these rules, titled "The Ruined Tower," is for one DM and up to four players.

In the D&D game, player characters are heroic fighters, mighty wizards, and cunning rogues. They journey into lost ruins (the "Dungeons" of the game's title) and battle fierce monsters (sometimes, though not always, "Dragons"). To play "The Ruined Tower," each player picks one of the characters from the sheets on pages 5–6. If you want to play more adventures, you can use this character over and over—you don't have to use a new character every time you play a new game.

The DM should read over all of these rules and the adventure before starting play. The players should read pages 2–4 and look over the character sheets on pages 5–6—but don't read any farther, or the surprises of the adventure will be ruined!

What Are Characters Made Of?

Take a minute to look at the character sheets on pages 5–6. Make photocopies of those pages if you want, cut each of the pages in half, and make sure that every player in your group has the sheet for the character he or she wants to play. Here's what all the information on the character sheets means.

Name: The character's name, already written in.

Player: That's you, the player "running" this character. Put your own name here.

Class: D&D characters fall into general classes. Each class has advantages over the others. The character classes in this adventure include fighters (who are good at fighting with swords and other weapons), wizards (who can't fight with swords but can cast spells), and rogues (who are okay with swords and can also do sneaky stuff like picking locks).

Race: In the D&D game, characters can belong to different races. In this adventure, most of the characters are human. Niles is a halfling, which is a diminutive race of beings who are known for their bravery and cunning.

Level: Characters can be carried over from one adventure to the next (like a "saved game"). As they have more adventures, they become more powerful. Level is a measure of how powerful the characters are. In this adventure, all the characters are level 2, which means they are still fairly inexperienced and can grow more powerful.

Ability Scores: These numbers are the heart of a character's description. They tell what the strong points and weak points of the character are. (Just like real people, most characters are better at some things than others.)

Strength is how strong your character is.

Dexterity is how quick your character is.

Constitution is how healthy your character is.

Intelligence is how smart your character is.

Wisdom is how much common sense your character has.

Charisma is how appealing your character is.

Ability scores range from 3 to 18, with 3 being the lowest (and weakest), and 18 being the best.

Fighters usually have high Strength, rogues have high Dexterity, and wizards have high Intelligence. Your character's ability scores have an effect on how well he or she does at certain things. We've done all the calculations you need to play the adventure, so don't sweat it.

Armor: This line tells you what type of armor your character is wearing.

Armor Class: This number tells you the benefit of the armor your character is wearing. A low number for Armor Class is a good thing—a 3 is better than a 4.

Move: This number describes how fast your character moves. All the characters in this adventure move at the same rate, except for Niles the halfling. He's slower than the rest. That's important if the party runs away from danger, since Niles will lag behind.

Hit Points: Hit points are a measure of how much damage your character can withstand. Weapons, monsters, and falling into deep holes can all do damage to your character.

Wounds: This line is used to keep track of the wounds your character has taken. If this number gets to be more than your character's hit points, he or she is dead and out of the game. Use a pencil to tally your character's wounds, just in case some of them get healed. (Elanna has a healing potion that, if drunk, will restore lost hit points.)

Gold: Money in the D&D game is expressed in gold pieces. Everybody starts out with no money, but characters can pick up gold as a treasure or a reward during an adventure. The amount of gold your character collects goes on this line.

XP: Short for eXperience Points, XP is a measure of how successful you are as a fighter, wizard, or rogue. Everyone has a certain amount of XP (the number varies) so that they are 2nd level.

Next Level: This is the amount of XP your character needs to go to the next level. You get XP by defeating monsters and completing quests.

Weapons: This section tells the types of weapons each character has and how much damage each weapon causes. To find out what things like "1d8" and "1d10" mean, see the box in the next column that talks about "Funky Dice."

Spells: Because Thaddeus is a wizard, he has spells he can cast. His spells are listed here. He can cast one *magic missile* and one *sleep* spell during the adventure.

Abilities: Most of the characters have different abilities, depending on their class, race, and ability scores. These are covered here.

Equipment: This is a listing of other important stuff your character may have. Ordinary items like cloaks or boots aren't mentioned, but things that may be useful, like rope and torches, are.

How the Game Works

In the D&D game, the Dungeon Master and the players team up to tell a story. The DM has a script, also called an adventure, that tells what the characters will face in the dungeon. The players have character sheets, which tell them what their characters can do and what items they can use.

The DM sets the stage, usually by reading a

Funky Dice

Weapons (and a lot of other things in the game) come with a set of numbers, like 1d8, 2d6, and 1d4+1. What do the numbers mean?

They describe different types of dice used in the D&D game. The number after the "d" tells you how many sides the die has. A "d6" is the normal kind of die you're probably used to seeing—a cube with each side representing a number from 1 to 6. Other dice come in different shapes and have different numbers of sides: 4, 8, 10, 12, and 20.

A number in front of the "d" tells how many dice should be rolled, so 1d8 means roll one 8-sided die, and 2d4 means roll two 4-sided dice. A plus sign followed by a number means that the number should be added to the roll: "1d8+1" means roll an 8-sided die and add 1 to the result.

A lot of games use these dice. If you don't have them, you can get them at a game store or maybe a bookstore. If you can't get them right away, here's how to use 6-sided dice to take the place of all the other sizes.

d4 – Roll a 6-sided die; roll over if the result is a 5 or 6.

d6 – Roll a 6-sided die normally.

d8 – Roll two dice of different colors. Roll one to get a d4 number (roll over on a 5 or 6). Roll the other one, and if the result is 4, 5, or 6, add 4 to the total.

d10 – Roll two dice of different colors. Roll one to get a number between 1 and 5 (roll over on a 6). Roll the other one, and if the number is 4, 5, or 6, add 5 to the total.

d12 – Don't worry about a d12 right now; you won't need one in this adventure.

d20 – This one is a little complicated. Roll three dice (or one die three times). The first roll gives you a number from 1 to 5 (roll over on a 6). If the next roll is 4, 5, or 6, add 5 to the total. If the third roll is 4, 5, or 6, add 10 to the total. (Yeah, it's a pain, but at least you don't have to buy any dice until you decide if you like the game or not.)

An easier way to get a result that's kind of like rolling a d20 is to roll a 6-sided die and multiply the result by 3. If you like that better, no problem—the adventure you're going to play works the same either way.

prepared bit of text, telling the players what their characters see. This might be a brief description of the area where the characters are, or an old legend being told by the fire, or a passage from a book. The players then can ask questions and tell the DM what they want their characters to do. The DM tells the players what their characters see and hear. Here's an example of how that works:

DM: You see a corked bottle sitting on a shelf.

Player: I pick up the bottle and look to see what's in it.

DM: The bottle is corked, and you can't see through the glass.

Player: I pull the cork out of the bottle.

DM: A black mass of smoke swirls out of the bottle, and from the heart of the smoke a voice thunders, "At last I am free! Now I can conquer the world!"

Player: Uh, is it too late to put the cork back into the bottle?

You get the idea. Sometimes there is some doubt about if a particular action is successful, if you hit an opponent, or how much damage you cause. For that you need the funky dice (see the previous page). Sometimes the players will roll the dice and sometimes the DM will roll the dice, depending on the situation.

Combat

The players are running characters who are going into a dungeon in order to defeat the monsters and take their treasure. The monsters aren't happy about this, and as a result . . . we have combat.

The players roll the dice when their characters are doing things. The DM rolls the dice for the things he controls, like the monsters, or when he wants to keep the results secret from the players. If there's any question about who rolls, the DM decides (making decisions is part of the job). In combat, players always roll for their characters.

When combat starts, each player needs to say what weapon his character is using. Darkblade, for example, may use his long bow or his long sword. Both have advantages and disadvantages.

Each of the players needs to make an "attack roll," trying to get a particular number or higher on 1d20 (a 20-sided die). In general, fighters are best at combat and wizards worst, and characters with high Strength do better than weaker ones. Each player gets to roll to see if his or her character scores a hit. In the adventure, we summarize all this and tell you what number each of the characters needs in order to hit. If you miss, there is no penalty, except that the monster is still there and takes a swing at your character in return.

On a hit, your character's weapon causes a cer-

What Is All This Stuff?

The D&D game is set in a fantasy world, a lot like our world back in the Middle Ages. D&D characters use swords instead of guns, ride horses instead of cars, and fight monsters instead of rush-hour traffic. In the game, we throw around a lot of words describing stuff from that age. In case you're not sure what we mean . . .

Swords are good weapons, but not all swords are equal. Niles has a **short sword**, which is best for him because he's not very big. Darkblade has a **long sword**, which is longer and has a better reach. Elanna uses a **two-handed sword**, which causes the most damage of the three.

Daggers are sharp knives, handy for cutting things and stabbing monsters. Daggers can also be thrown to do damage.

A **quarterstaff** is a pole about seven feet long, useful for bashing opponents and testing the ground ahead.

Armor comes in several different styles. **Chain mail** is made of loose links of metal. **Scale mail** is made of overlapping metal sheets. **Leather armor** is more flexible and quieter (and therefore better for rogues to sneak around in), but it doesn't protect as well as chain mail or scale mail. Wizards don't wear armor—it messes up their ability to cast spells.

Thieves' tools are handy to have because sometimes it's easier (and smarter) to open a door by picking a lock instead of bashing it down. A set of tools includes bits of wire, clip-pers, metal picks, and other small items that a rogue uses to do all sorts of crafty things.

tain amount of damage. The long sword, for example, causes 1d8 points of damage to an opponent. The DM keeps track of damage to the monsters—when a monster's wounds are greater than its total hit points, the monster is dead.

After the characters each get a chance to hit, the DM makes attack rolls for the monsters. Again we've done the calculations already in the adventure, and we just give you the number required.

If a character is hit, the monster does an amount of damage determined by another die roll. The player marks this damage as wounds on his or her character sheet.

What's Next?

You've got the character sheets, you've got the basic info about how the game is played and how combat works, and now it's time to get into the real action. The person who's going to be the DM should read the rest of this booklet. The rest of you will be players, so don't read any farther. When the DM is ready, you can begin the adventure.

Dungeons & Dragons

Character Sheet

Name: **Darkblade** Player: _____

Class: Fighter Race: Human

Level: 2

Ability Scores

Strength	17
Dexterity	15
Constitution	14
Intelligence	11
Wisdom	13
Charisma	15



Armor: Chain mail

Armor Class: 4

Move: 12

Hit Points: 12

Wounds: _____

Gold: _____

XP: 2000 Next Level: 4000

Weapons:

Long bow
Damage 1d8

Long sword
Damage 1d8

Spells:

Darkblade has no magical spells.

Abilities:

When attacking with his bow, Darkblade makes two attacks each round. He cannot use his bow if he is in close combat.

When attacking with his sword, Darkblade does an additional point of damage. (Roll damage, then add 1 point.)

Equipment:

Torch
50-foot coil of rope
Backpack

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Dungeons & Dragons

Character Sheet

Name: **Elanna** Player: _____

Class: Fighter Race: Human

Level: 2

Ability Scores

Strength	15
Dexterity	17
Constitution	15
Intelligence	13
Wisdom	11
Charisma	16



Armor: Scale mail

Armor Class: 3

Move: 12

Hit Points: 14

Wounds: _____

Gold: _____

XP: 2000 Next Level: 4000

Weapons:

Two-handed sword
Damage 1d10

Dagger
Damage 1d4

Spells:

Elanna has no magical spells.

Abilities:

Elanna has three daggers. She may fight with one of them, or throw up to two per round. She cannot throw her daggers if she is in close combat.

Equipment:

Torch

Potion of Healing: This is a small bottle of liquid that, if drunk, heals 2d4+2 hit points of damage (or 1d4+1 points if half is drunk). It will not raise the drinker's hit points above their original level. The potion smells of peppermint.

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Dungeons & Dragons

Character Sheet

Name: **Niles** Player: _____
Class: Rogue Race: Halfling
Level: 2

Ability Scores

Strength 11
Dexterity 18
Constitution 13
Intelligence 12
Wisdom 10
Charisma 12



Armor: Leather armor

Armor Class: 6

Move: 6

Hit Points: 7

Wounds: _____

Gold: _____

XP: 1250 Next Level: 2500

Weapons:

Short Sword
Damage 1d6

Dagger
Damage 1d4

Spells:

Niles has no magical spells.

Abilities:

Niles has two daggers. He may fight with one of them, or throw up to two per round. He cannot throw his daggers if he is in close combat.

If Niles attacks a humanoid creature from behind, he hits more easily and doubles his damage roll.

Equipment:

Lantern

Thieves' tools: Niles may open a locked door using his tools, and will succeed on a roll of 4 or less on 1d10.

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Dungeons & Dragons

Character Sheet

Name: **Thaddeus** Player: _____
Class: Wizard Race: Human
Level: 2

Ability Scores

Strength 9
Dexterity 12
Constitution 15
Intelligence 18
Wisdom 16
Charisma 13



Armor: None (robes)

Armor Class: 10

Move: 12

Hit Points: 6

Wounds: _____

Gold: _____

XP: 2500 Next Level: 5000

Weapons:

Quarterstaff
Damage 1d6

Dagger
Damage 1d4

Spells:

Thaddeus may cast each of these spells once per day:

Magic missile: This spell automatically hits a creature and inflicts 1d4 +1 points of damage.

Sleep: This spell causes living things to fall into an enchanted sleep. Sleeping creatures are helpless, but can be awakened normally.

Equipment:

Lantern

Magical Scroll: Thaddeus has a scroll with a *knock* spell on it. When he reads the scroll aloud, the spell causes a stuck or locked door to automatically open.

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The Dungeon Master's Section

This part of the booklet is for the DM, and contains information that the DM should know, but the players should not (like what monsters are lurking behind which doors). If you just want to be a DM, keep on reading. Otherwise, pass these rules back to your DM.

What the DM Does

The Dungeon Master is part director, part storyteller, part central processing unit for the game. The DM is responsible for telling the players what their characters see, telling them what the results of their characters' actions are, and keeping the game moving. The DM runs all the characters and monsters that are not controlled by the players. (That's not as hard as it might seem, because only a few of these characters and monsters are active in the story at any single time.)

This part of the D&D Fast-Play Game is an introduction to being a DM. We walk through a very simple "dungeon" adventure, which you can run for your friends. We cover the basics of combat and movement. There are a lot of numbers and tables in the AD&D game, but we've simplified everything for the adventure you're about to run—we did the calculations so you don't have to.

How do you tell who wins? Well, a roleplaying game is different from a lot of other games because there is no clear "winner." Instead, the characters all grow and improve together, and the players enjoy seeing their characters succeed in one adventure after another. The DM gets his reward by helping that growth, challenging the players as everyone gets together to tell a group story. If you and the players have fun with the game, you're all winners.

What to Tell the Players

Some sections of the text of the adventure are inside boxes. These sections are usually supposed to be read aloud to the players, and are preceded by some line like "If the characters do such-and-such, read the following aloud." This is information that you, the DM, are giving the players—what their characters see and hear.

In addition, the players will have additional questions about what their characters see and experience. You might say, "You see a door," and the players will respond, "What does the door look like?" You check the text of the adventure to see if there's anything special about the door. If there is, you say something like "It's a large oak doors with iron bands." If there isn't, you make something up. This is what the DM is allowed to do. The players won't know if it was in the text or

not (well, if you don't get carried away, that is). The DM is in charge of filling in the blanks. We can't cover everything that might happen in the text of the adventure (though we're shooting for the major ones), so the DM is encouraged to provide his own input into the game.

The DM plays the roles of particular characters from time to time. In this adventure there's an old man, the Patriarch, who sends the player characters off to the Ruined Tower, and a monstrous ghoul that shows up later. At times like this, you are asked to act "in character," as if you were the Patriarch or the ghoul. When you're "in character," you might not know certain facts. (For instance, the Patriarch doesn't know what's inside the Ruined Tower, although you, the DM, do.) Playing the parts of these characters is your chance to do a little roleplaying of your own.

Time and Combat

Time in the game is broken down into rounds—like the rounds of a boxing match, only a lot shorter. In a single round, your character can generally do one particular thing: pull a sword from a scabbard, move around a bit, take a swing at a monster, open a door, and so forth. During most of the adventure you don't have to keep close track of time. But there are certain situations, like combat, when time becomes important.

When the characters are fighting monsters, you need to know what everybody is doing at any certain time. Here's how you keep things straight:

- Decide what the monsters you control are going to do: Who are they attacking? How are they attacking? Are they running away?
- Ask each player what his or her character is doing. Usually allow a character to do only one thing at a time. (Some characters can do some things more than once a round—shoot arrows and throw daggers, for example.)
- After all the players have said what their characters are doing, let them execute their actions. (In this adventure, the players always get to try to hit their opponents first.)
- Then execute your monsters' actions.

That's about it. The rest of what you need to know to run the adventure is in the adventure itself. Go for it.

Getting Started

Let's say you're going to be the DM for this evening. It's always a good idea to read through the adventure before you run it, just so you know what's coming. You bring to the table this adventure, either some 6-sided dice or a set of the funky dice (if you have some), some scratch paper, pencils, and some graph paper (if you want—it's not a necessity). If you can, photocopy the character sheets so the players can use them without writing on the originals. It should take about an hour to play this adventure, more if you take your time, less if you speed right along.

You should have between one and four players for this adventure, three or four being the ideal. If you have only one player, let him run two characters—the monsters in this adventure aren't too tough, but they could be too much for just one character to handle. It's good if the players have a chance to read pages 2–4 of this booklet ahead of time, but that's not a necessity. You can fill them in on things as they go along. It will just be easier for them if they already have a handle on the basics.

Once you get settled, here is what you, the DM, say:

What we're going to do here is tell a story, a story that you're going to help create. Each of you has a character: a fighter, a wizard, or a rogue. The story takes place in a world filled with monsters, treasure, and adventure.

I'm going to be the Dungeon Master, or DM. I'll describe what your characters see, and you're going to tell me what your characters do in response. Do well, and your characters will be rewarded with treasure and increased power. Look at your character sheets and we can run down what the various numbers and items mean.

Give the players a chance to review their character sheets and ask any questions. You should know most of the answers about what the numbers mean from reading the first section of these rules. Ask each of the players to introduce their characters to the rest of the group. For example:

"I've got Niles, a halfling rogue," says one.

"I'm running Darkblade, and he's a fighter, and he's got a bow," says another.

"I'm playing Elanna. She's real strong and has a sword that does lots of damage," says a third.

This would be a good time to explain about the funky dice to the players if they don't already know. Don't worry about when you need to roll them—we'll tell you as the adventure progresses.

Beginning the Adventure

Once the players are comfortable with their characters, read the following aloud.

All of you are natives of the Vale, a small farming community made up of a number of small towns scattered along a broad, wooded valley. The Patriarch is the spiritual leader of the Vale, and he has asked you to come to his shrine when the noon bell sounds.

The noon bell is just striking as a servant ushers you into the Patriarch's study. The old gray-bearded man is bent with age and wisdom. He motions for you to have a seat.

Now you, the DM, are going to speak in the role of the Patriarch. You can give him an "old man" voice if you want, or just talk normally. There's a little bit of acting involved here, but you don't have to do anything you feel uncomfortable with.

"I am pleased to see that you have come," says the Patriarch. "The Vale has need for your talents, and your bravery.

"A week ago, some hunters found the ruins of an old tower in the forest. They did not like the looks of it, and quickly moved elsewhere. Now there are stories that something nasty has been raiding farms, and it might come from that tower. I'd like you and your friends to go to the tower and investigate it. Would you agree to do this for the good of the Vale?"

Now comes the players' chance to respond to the old man's question. They may have other questions about the tower and the raids on the nearby farms. Here's what you can tell them (and you can use the "old man" voice to do it, to show that this is the Patriarch speaking, and not the DM).

- No one knew about the tower before. Some hunters found it while chasing a wounded deer. However, long ago there was a powerful magician who lived in this valley. It might have been one of his towers, or his home.
- No one has seen what is raiding the farms. Several sheep have been carried off, and pens have been broken down. This always happens at night. No farmers have been attacked, but they are worried about their flocks.
- Any treasure they find, in the form of money or magical items, may be kept by the player characters. All the Patriarch asks is that any books or written material be turned over to him so he can learn more about the history of the Vale.

- He tells the characters that the location of the ruined tower is off the beaten track, but easily found. (No map is provided for the Vale in this adventure, so this map is an imaginary one. If you want to have a map of the Vale to show the players, take a moment to sketch one out.) If no one brings it up, merely say, "The Patriarch unfolds a map and shows you the location of the tower. There should be no problem reaching it."
- The Patriarch does not have any guards or assistants to spare for the expedition. If he did, he would have sent them instead of the adventurers.

The Ruined Tower

Once the players get everything squared away with the Patriarch, the group of heroes (known as "the adventuring party" or simply "the party") heads out toward the ruined tower with orders to investigate it and report back. Read the following to the players:

The trail to the ruined tower passes through the rolling farmland of the Vale and into the forest. The trees and undergrowth quickly grow dense, and you hear the sounds of small creatures moving through the underbrush. The thick shade of the forest cuts off a lot of the sunlight, and you move through a twilight-colored world of shadows.

Suddenly you come upon a small glade in the heart of the forest. A squat stone tower has been built into the side of the hill at the far side of the glade. The tower has been shattered, and all that remains is a ragged stump of fitted stone. Large blocks of granite litter the clearing, and some of these are covered with thick moss.

The tower is shown on the map on page 10. Use the information from this text and the map to describe the area. Don't show the map to the players—that would tell them too much about what they are going to discover later in the adventure.

Ask each player what his or her character is doing. Most likely their responses will be along the lines of "I am looking at the tower."

The tower is a wreck—it looks like it has been blasted by a bolt of lightning. Originally it might have been 40 feet tall, but now it is a blasted stump that does not extend more than 10 feet high. The tower wall nearest the characters is no more than a low wall a foot high, and can be easily stepped over.

When the first member of the party enters the

area of the tower itself, read the following to that player. The other players can listen in.

You step over the wall and see that the inside of the tower is filled with rubble and debris. Dead leaves, shattered stones, and rotted timbers are scattered around the floor. You see, partly buried by fallen timbers, a door on the far wall, leading back under the hillside.

As you notice this, you also see a pile of leaves rustle slightly to your left. A large rat pokes its head out from beneath the debris. It hisses a warning at you, showing long, razor-sharp teeth. It lunges forward, and behind it, three more leap from their hiding places.

There are four giant rats among the debris within the tower, and they are defending their territory. The rats are grayish-brown, about two feet long, and have wicked, sharp teeth and red, feral eyes.

They only attack characters in the tower area, and will not climb over the walls. If there is only one character in the tower area, all three attack him. If there are two characters, two attack each character. If there are three characters in the tower area, two attack the first character who entered, and one attacks each of the others. If there are four characters in the area, then one rat attacks each of them.

Each of the players needs to roll a particular number or higher on 1d20 to successfully attack a giant rat:

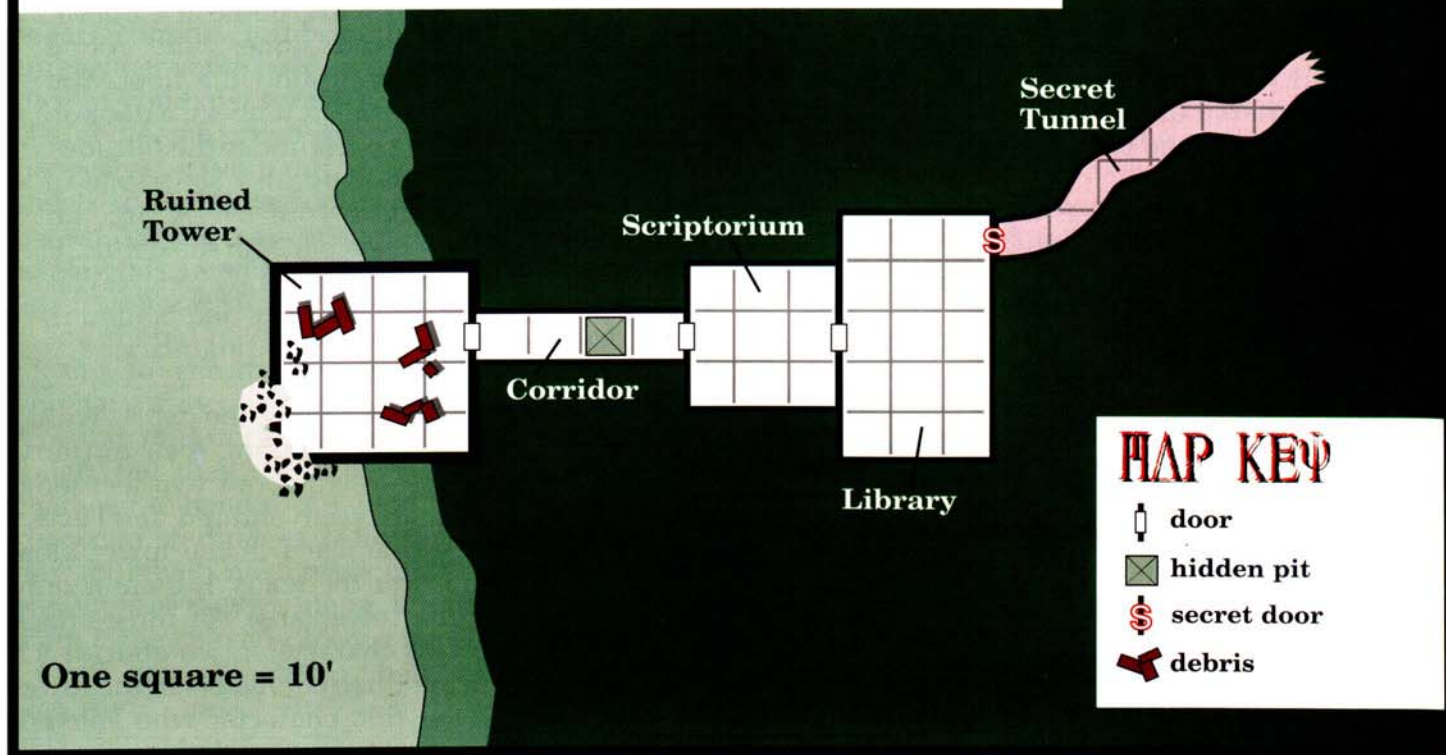
- Darkblade needs an 11 or higher to hit. If he hits with his sword, he does 1d8 damage, and then adds 1 point. If he uses his bow, he can attack twice in a single round, even against different rats, and do 1d8 damage on each hit, but he cannot use his bow against rats that are attacking him.

- Elanna needs a 12 or higher to hit. If she uses her two-handed sword, she rolls 1d10 to determine how much damage she does. If she uses her dagger, she rolls 1d4 to determine damage. She can throw her daggers at rats that are not attacking her directly.

- Niles needs a 13 or higher to hit. He causes 1d6 damage if he uses his short sword, and 1d4 if using his dagger. He causes 1d4 damage if he throws a dagger, but can only throw daggers at rats that are not attacking him.

- Thaddeus needs a 13 or higher to hit. He causes 1d6 damage with his quarterstaff. Thaddeus's specialty is not combat, but magic spells. If he casts his *magic missile* spell, he does 1d4+1 points of damage to a rat of his choice (no attack roll needed). If he casts his *sleep* spell, all the rats immediately fall into an enchanted slumber and are easily defeated.

MAP OF THE RUINED TOWER



Each rat starts with 3 hit points. If a character inflicts 3 or more points of damage, the rat is defeated. If a rat takes less than 3 points of damage, note on a piece of scratch paper how much damage the rat took. Subtract that number from 3, and what remains is how many hit points the rat now has.

Any rats not defeated get their chance to attack back. For each rat, you roll 1d20 to try to hit a certain character. The rats are all equally vicious, but they need different numbers to hit the characters because the characters are wearing different types of armor and have different Dexterity scores.

- To hit Darkblade, the rats need a 16 or higher.
- To hit Elanna, the rats need a 17 or higher.
- To hit Niles, the rats need a 13 or higher.
- To hit Thaddeus, the rats need a 10 or higher.

Needless to say, it's better if Thaddeus stays away from the rats.

A rat attacks a chosen character until that character leaves the area of the tower or is reduced to 0 hit points; then the rat chooses a new target from the remaining characters. If all the characters are reduced to 0 hit points, or if they leave the tower area, the rats burrow under the debris and flee.

It's likely that the characters will kill the rats with minimum damage to themselves. Any dam-

age that was taken by the characters remains until the characters go back to the town or someone uses Elanna's potion of healing to restore lost hit points.

Defeating the rats gains experience points (XP) for the characters. The rats are worth 15 XP each, so four of them are worth 60 points. That means if a single character stayed in the tower area and killed all the rats, he gets all 60 points. If two characters killed two rats apiece, each character gets 30 XP. If three characters took part in the combat, each one gets 20 XP, and if all four characters helped, each one gets 15 XP. Have the players mark the XP earned on their character sheets. Each sheet tells how many experience points that character needs to advance to the next level. (Obviously, no one will get there very fast just by defeating rats.)

There is no treasure among the debris, but if the players want their characters to look, let them do so. When they decide to move on, they should want to investigate the door partly hidden by the fallen timbers, which can be easily moved aside.

The door is a heavy oak door, with a lock that's rusted out and useless. However, the door is swollen in its frame and badly weathered, and the characters will have to use brute strength to open

it. Let the players choose which character will open the door (it makes sense to give this job to the character with the highest Strength score), and have that player roll 1d20 to determine if he succeeds. In this case, a low result is better than a high result, which means:

- Darkblade needs a 10 or less to open the door.
- Elanna needs an 8 or less to open the door.
- Niles needs a 6 or less to open the door.
- Thaddeus needs a 5 or less to open the door.

Any character can try to open the door as many times as he or she wants. There is no penalty for failing—it just takes a while longer to get the door open. Also, Thaddeus may use the *knock* spell on his scroll to open the door. The door opens immediately if he does this, but as Thaddeus reads the spell, the words on the scroll fade from the paper and the spell cannot be cast again. (Make sure the player who's running Thaddeus understands this before the scroll is used.)

When the characters open the door, go to the next section.

The Corridor and the Pit

To start this section of the adventure, read the following paragraph to the players:

You force the door open, and a puff of damp, musty air billows out of the doorway. The dust settles, and you are looking down a long corridor leading back into the hillside. The walls and floor are made of finished stone, and are stained from water damage. The ceiling is supported by heavy oak beams. The corridor disappears into darkness about 20 feet away.

Now would be a good time for the party members to think about lighting their torches or lanterns. It only takes one torch or lantern to throw enough light to see by—but note that anyone who is carrying a lit torch or lantern has to use one hand to do so, so weapons like bows or the two-handed sword cannot be used. A lantern can be set down easily if someone suddenly needs to use both hands, but a torch goes out if it's laid on the floor. If the party heads down the corridor in darkness, tell the players that it's getting harder and harder to see . . .

This is part of roleplaying. You and the players consider the imaginary world as if it were a real one, so little things like what you're carrying in your hands or who's opening the door are sometimes important. Don't get bogged down in the details, but just keep an eye on what is going on and where.

When at least one character lights a torch or lantern, add the following information:

You see that a 10-foot-wide corridor continues into the hillside. The walls and floor have been heavily damaged by water, and the flagstones of the floor are pitched up in places from uneven settling. About 40 feet away, you see a door. There seems to be something written on the door, but you're too far away to make out what it says. What are you going to do?

Ask the players in what order their characters are moving down the corridor. (There's enough room in a 10-foot-wide area for two characters to walk or run side by side. This makes it easy for them to fight without bashing on each other.) One way to arrange the group is to put the well-armored, strong types in front to protect the guys with the lower hit points in the back. If the characters are afraid of being hit from behind, they may put a fighter in the front and one in the back.

The corridor is treacherous and uneven, and has been damaged by water seeping through the ancient walls. About 20 feet from the door, the ground is so badly eroded that any pressure on the floor will cause the floor to collapse. On your

A Map for the Players

The players may choose to start making their own map of the dungeon at some point. A map is often helpful because it's a reminder of how rooms fit together, where things are located, and where the exits are in case of emergency. (Remember, the players don't get to see the map we've provided for you.) If the players bring up the idea of making their own map, and you want to let them give it a try, here's how to do it.

Give them a piece of regular graph paper (four squares to the inch will do nicely), and have each square represent 10 feet. You then describe the room or area based on the text and the map we've provided. For example, there are different ways to describe a corridor, such as:

"The corridor runs ahead of you 40 feet and ends in a door. The corridor is 10 feet wide."

"The corridor runs east 40 feet to a door on the far end. You are at the west end of the corridor."

Or, if you want to be sure the players understand where they are, you can simply make a sketch on the graph paper and let them look at it. As their characters move into a different area, add another piece of information to their map, according to what the characters would see, so that step by step it starts to resemble the map you're using.

map, that place is marked by the big symbol for a pit. (This is one reason you don't show the players the DM's map—you want this place to be a secret until the characters get there.)

If the characters merrily march down the corridor, heading for the door, the characters in front fall into the pit that suddenly appears before them as the floor disintegrates. Read the following aloud if this happens:

You walk down the corridor. About halfway down, the ground suddenly shifts beneath your feet and falls away, revealing a black chasm beneath you. The stones you're standing on slip into the blackness, and you follow.

The pit is 10 feet deep and filled at the bottom with water and soft earth. Each character that falls into the pit takes 1d4 points of damage. They also get muddy from the experience. The edges of the pit are rough and sloped, so it is relatively easy to climb out.

If the characters are a bit more cautious (and if the players listened to you when you told them about all the water damage in the hallway) and indicate that they are checking out the corridor as they move into the hillside, read the following:

You move cautiously down the hallway, making sure you have a firm footing on the uneven flagstones. One of the stones beneath your feet shifts as you touch it, and you pull back quickly. With a deep rumble, a large hole opens directly before you. Another step, and you would have fallen into a large, muddy pit.

If the characters were cautious, give each of them 10 XP. (As the DM, you're allowed to reward players for smart thinking.)

The pit is a ragged hole in the floor, and once it has opened it will remain there permanently. There is enough of a ledge around it that the characters can get past it easily.

Note that this is a natural pit caused by erosion. Some evil creatures put pits in their lairs just to catch those foolish enough to trespass, and sometimes those pits are filled with sharp spikes or poisonous snakes. (Just thought you'd want to know.)

When the characters reach the door at the other end of the corridor, they see it is badly rotted, and its hinges and latch are extremely rusted. There are words carved on the door, almost invisible because of the damage. The sign reads:

**SCRIPTORIUM
DO NOT DISTURB**

A scriptorium is a place where scrolls and books are copied, usually by scribes or monks. (You can tell the players that—it's something that their characters would likely know.)

The door is almost completely rotted out, and will disintegrate at the first touch. Go to the next section.

The Scriptorium

When any character first touches the door (tries the knob, leans against it, knocks on it, whatever), read the following aloud:

The rotted door falls apart at the first touch. The wood cascades into a pile of splinters, and the hinges and knob clatter to the floor.

On the other side of the doorway is a large, square room, about 30 feet on a side. There is another door directly opposite yours at the far side of the room. The floor in here is more level and dry than the corridor was.

The room holds six copy desks and stools. Four of the desks are occupied by what look like robed monks, their bodies hunched over.

One of the monks looks up at you, his hood falling back as he does so. He has no skin or flesh, only a skull with small flickers of red flame burning in the pits of his eye sockets. He raises a bony hand and points at you.

As if by silent signal, the other three monks get off their stools. Their robes fly open, revealing that they are nothing more than animated skeletons. They all carry rusted, triangular daggers. They move toward you.

There are four skeletons, though only two may attack a particular target. If the characters stand their ground in the doorway, then only the front rank may be attacked. The characters get to make their attacks first, then the skeletons.

Because the skeletons are magically animated bones, they are less affected by weapons that cut. Swords, arrows, and daggers cause less damage when used against a skeleton.

- Darkblade needs an 11 or higher to hit. If he hits with his sword, he does 1d8 damage, then adds 1 point for his high strength. Find the total damage he causes, then divide by 2, rounding up (2½ becomes 3). If he uses his bow, he can attack twice, even against different skeletons, and do 1d8 damage. Again, divide the damage by 2 after it is rolled. Once the skeletons get close enough to attack, the bow is useless.

- Elanna needs a 12 or higher to hit. If she uses the two-handed sword, she rolls 1d10 to determine how much damage she does. If she uses her

dagger, she rolls 1d4 to determine damage. Again, divide the result by 2.

- Niles needs a 13 or higher to hit. He will cause 1d6 damage if he uses his short sword, and 1d4 if using his dagger. Divide the result by 2 to determine how much damage Niles does to the skeleton he attacks.

- Thaddeus needs a 13 or higher to hit. He causes 1d6 damage with the quarterstaff—and this result is *not* divided by 2. The quarterstaff is a blunt weapon, not a cutting weapon, so it does full damage to the skeletons. If Thaddeus casts his *magic missile* spell, he does 1d4+1 points of damage to the skeleton of his choice (no attack roll is needed). If the player running Thaddeus wants to cast his *sleep* spell, you should mention that the spell would have no effect because the skeletons are not alive and the magic of the *sleep* spell only works against living creatures.

The remaining skeletons get their chance to attack back after the characters get their chance to hit. For each skeleton, roll 1d20:

- To hit Darkblade, a skeleton needs a 15 or higher.

- To hit Elanna, a skeleton needs a 16 or higher.

- To hit Niles, a skeleton needs a 12 or higher.

- To hit Thaddeus, a skeleton needs a 9 or higher.

A skeleton causes 1d6 damage when it successfully hits a character. The skeletons have 5 hit points each.

The skeletons fight until either they are defeated or the characters are. If the characters flee the room back the way they came, the skeletons will chase them. The skeletons can't catch the human characters, but they are faster than the halfling and will overtake Niles before he escapes the underground area. (The other characters should want to turn around and come back to help if that happens. One way or another, they're going to have to deal with these skeletons.)

Skeletons are worth 65 XP each, so four of them are worth 260 XP total. Just as you did with the rats, divide up the experience points between all the characters who took part in the combat.

When the skeletons are defeated, the players may have their characters search the room. They find nothing in the desks—the scrolls the skeletons appeared to be working on are nothing more than tattered scraps. The triangular daggers the skeletons carried are of an archaic design, and, though stained with rust, are still useful. The Patriarch gives the characters 5 gold pieces per dagger if they bring them back (20 gold pieces total if they part with all of them).

When the characters get around to checking the door out of the room, read the players the following text:

The door at the far side of the room is made of heavy wood and bound with bands of iron. A large plate of metal is mounted to the door, and that plate is inscribed with a symbol of a bull's head. The door has been locked and secured from the other side.

This door is not just stuck, like the one at the start of the adventure—it has been locked by the inhabitants of the room beyond. The characters may think of a number of ways to try opening the door.

- **Force it open:** They can try to force the door open with brute strength, but it is tougher than they are. It will not open, even if two or more characters try to force it open at the same time.

- **Hack it down:** The characters can try to hack the lock and hinges off the door. Up to two characters can hack at the door, the door is hit automatically (it can't get out of the way), and takes 20 points of damage before it springs open. The downside of hacking at the door is that it warns the inhabitants of the library (the room behind the door) immediately, and they can prepare. (See the next page for more information on this.)

- **Pick the lock:** Rogues are very good at opening locks, and if Niles is present, you can tell the players this. The player running Niles needs to roll a 4 or less on 1d10 in order to pick the lock. Niles can try three times to open this door. If he succeeds on one of those tries, he unlocks it without notifying the beings on the other side. If Niles fails to pick the lock after three tries, the lock is too tough for him to open by using his tools. The characters will have to try something else.

- **Cast the *knock* spell:** Thaddeus has a scroll with a magical spell on it. If he casts the *knock* spell, the lock clicks open immediately (and the spell disappears from the scroll).

The Library

As soon as the characters have managed to open the door, read the following to the players:

On the other side of the door is a large, well-furnished room. The walls are lined with shelves that are filled with large, water-stained books. The floor is littered with bones.

Directly before you are three zombies, unliving humans with their flesh dried and pulled tight over their bones. Their bodies are missing chunks of flesh. It looks as if something has taken bites out of their arms, legs, and torsos. They have blank, mindless expressions on their faces.

Behind these three monsters is another

creature that resembles a human, but this one is more savage-looking. Its skin is the purple color of a bruise, its eyes glow with a yellowish light, its hair is mangy and patchy, and its teeth are inhumanly sharp. It is a ghoul, an undead creature of deadly power. The touch of its taloned hands can paralyze a living creature.

The ghoul points at you and hisses, "Kill them! Kill the living intruders!" At his command the zombies shuffle toward you.

The ghoul in the library is the one responsible for the missing livestock on the nearby farms, and the bones scattered around the room are from the goats and lambs that it has stolen. The zombies are in its service, and it uses them as bodyguards.

The ghoul does not want to fight, but instead tries to flee with its treasure. How successful the ghoul is in getting away depends on how much warning he had before the characters entered the room. (If they tried to force the door or hack it down, the ghoul is alerted to their presence.)

Here's what the ghoul would prefer to do. As soon as it realizes that it's about to be visited by the characters, it goes to a shelf along the east wall and grabs a small chest that contains its "treasure." That takes one round. Then it goes to the northwest corner, where there is a secret door covered by a bookcase. That takes another round. It takes two more rounds to shove aside the bookcase and open the door. After the ghoul passes through the secret door into a tunnel that leads to the surface, the monster is gone, leaving the zombies to fight the characters.

Summarizing, here are the ghoul's actions, round by round:

- 1 – is made aware of the heroes outside.
- 2 – goes and gets the small chest from the shelf.
- 3 – goes to secret door.
- 4 – shoves aside the bookcase.
- 5 – opens the secret door.
- 6 (or later) – escapes through the tunnel.

This "schedule" means that if the characters take too long bashing in the door, the ghoul is well on its way to escaping. On the other hand, if the characters pick the lock or use the *knock* spell, they can catch the ghoul flatfooted. Where the ghoul is in the room depends on when the characters enter. If they take a long time to get into the room, they find the secret door open and the ghoul standing in front of it. The ghoul tells the zombies to kill them, and dashes into the tunnel in the next round.

The ghoul tries to escape, letting its zombies handle the adventurers, unless the characters

manage to cause damage to it. If it is damaged (by a hit from a weapon or by the *magic missile* spell), the ghoul gets mad and attacks the party along with the zombies.

The players need to roll different numbers on 1d20 for their characters to hit the zombies or the ghoul. The ghoul's a little tougher than the zombies are.

- Darkblade needs a 10 or higher to hit the zombies, and a 12 or higher to hit the ghoul. If he hits with his sword, he does 1d8 damage, and adds 1 point for his high strength. If he uses his bow, he can attack twice in one round, even against different targets, and do 1d8 damage, but cannot use it in direct combat.

- Elanna needs a 11 or higher to hit the zombies, and a 13 or higher to hit the ghoul. If she uses the two-handed sword, she rolls 1d10 to determine how much damage she does. If she uses her dagger, she rolls 1d4 to determine damage.

- Niles needs a 12 or higher to hit the zombies and a 14 or higher to hit the ghoul. He causes 1d6 damage if he uses his short sword, and 1d4 if using his dagger. As a rogue, Niles gets a special benefit for attacking from behind. If he manages to sneak up behind a zombie, he needs only an 8 or higher to hit, and if he gets behind the ghoul, he needs a 10 or higher. In addition, he does *double* damage—multiply the result of his damage roll by 2.

- Thaddeus needs a 12 or higher to hit the zombies and a 14 or higher to hit the ghoul. He causes 1d6 damage with the quarterstaff. If he casts his *magic missile* spell, he does 1d4+1 points of damage to the zombie of his choice or to the ghoul (no attack roll is needed). If he wants to cast his *sleep* spell, tell the player running Thaddeus that there would be no effect—the zombies and ghoul are not living things, and aren't affected by the magic.

The zombies have 9 hit points each, and cause 1d8 damage when they hit.

- To hit Darkblade, a zombie needs a 15 or higher on 1d20.

- To hit Elanna, a zombie needs a 16 or higher.

- To hit Niles, a zombie needs a 12 or higher.

- To hit Thaddeus, a zombie needs a 9 or higher.

The ghoul has 14 hit points and, unlike the zombies, can make multiple attacks against the same target. The ghoul tries to hurt the character that wounded it, but if it has to fight its way through others it will do so. It can attack with both of its claws, each causing 1d3 points of damage (roll 1d6 and divide the result by two), and its bite, which causes 1d6 points of damage. However, if it is carrying its chest of treasure in one hand, it can only make one claw attack. If the ghoul loses the chest or puts it down, it can use both of its claws.

- To hit Darkblade, the ghoule needs a 15 or higher on 1d20.

- To hit Elanna, the ghoule needs a 16 or higher.
- To hit Niles, the ghoule needs a 12 or higher.
- To hit Thaddeus, the ghoule needs a 9 or higher.

The ghoule also has a special ability. Each time it claws or bites an opponent, it has a chance of paralyzing that individual. A paralyzed character can't fight, move, or talk, and is an easy target for the zombies to hit. This paralysis lasts for 1d6+2 rounds. A character can avoid the effects of this paralysis if the player makes a successful die roll using 1d20. This roll is called a *saving throw*. As with combat, each character has his or her own number to avoid the effect of the ghoule's special ability:

- Darkblade, Elanna, and Thaddeus all need a 14 or higher to avoid being paralyzed.
- Niles needs a 13 or higher to avoid being paralyzed.

If a character makes his saving throw, then the ghoule's touch has no effect. A new saving throw must be rolled every time a character is clawed or bitten by the ghoule—avoiding the paralysis once is no guarantee that it won't happen next time.

The characters can choose to let the ghoule escape, but they won't get any experience points for defeating it, and they won't get its treasure. Defeating the ghoule is worth 175 XP, which means 44 XP for four characters, 58 XP for three, 88 for two, and the full 175 XP for a single character.

The zombies are worth 65 XP each, so three of them are worth 195 experience points total. That breaks down to 49 points per character for four characters, 65 points for three characters, 98 XP for two characters, and 195 for a single character.

The room contains no monetary treasure, but the books are valuable beyond belief to the Patriarch. If the characters bring them back to the

Patriarch (or simply bring news back to the Patriarch of the library's existence), he gives each of them 400 gold pieces.

The chest that the ghoule was guarding contains its personal treasure of gems and magical items. The chest is locked. Niles has a 4 in 10 chance of opening the lock (roll of 4 or less on 1d10), or the *knock* spell can be used, or the lock can be bashed in (one hit from a sword or dagger will do it). Within the box are the following items:

- 12 black pearls.
- A scroll.
- A bottle similar in shape and size to Elanna's potion of healing. If a character pulls the cork, he or she discovers that the liquid inside smells like peppermint.
- A dagger with symbols carved along the blade in an unknown language.
- A sack made of blue cloth.

The characters may play around with the items, seeking to figure out what they are, or they can take them back to the Patriarch. The items are explained in the "Wrapping Things Up" section.

If the characters caught the ghoule by surprise and defeated it before it reached the secret door, they might not find the door (unless someone thinks to move the bookshelf aside). If they find the secret door, it leads into a narrow, dark tunnel that burrows for about 50 feet and finally surfaces on the far side of the hill from the tower. This tunnel is how the ghoule made its entry to and from his lair. Otherwise the characters can get out of the ruined tower by backtracking, and then return to the Patriarch with their information.

Wrapping Things Up

If the characters are defeated in the dungeon beneath the ruined tower, read the following:

The Ghoule Might Fight!

The way we've set up this adventure, getting away is more important to the ghoule than seeing that the characters are defeated—but you, as the DM, can have the ghoule act any way you want. With some lucky dice rolls for the ghoule and some unlucky ones for the characters, the ghoule might be able to paralyze and defeat all the characters if it decides to stay around and fight. This might be a cruel thing to do to the characters (and their players), but it would be a good way to show the players how dangerous a monster like the ghoule can be. (And you can always back up and start the adventure over, or just replay the scene in the library, if you want to give the characters another chance.)

Alas! For all your bravery, you've failed to discover and defeat the secret of the ruined tower. The Patriarch waits a few days, then sadly shakes his head and offers a prayer for you. Then he calls together another band of adventurers, and warns them that those who have previously sought out the secrets have not returned.

If you want to, you can try the adventure again, either from the very beginning, or with whatever changes occurred because of the characters' actions. For example, the corridor may already have the pit in the middle of it, and there may be fewer (or more) rats, and a few of the zombies and ghoules look frighteningly familiar . . .

If the characters discover some of the secrets of

the ruined tower, but then turn back before reaching the ghouls' lair, read the following:

You return to the Patriarch and tell him what you have discovered. The old man is very excited by your news, and believes that there is greater treasure and knowledge beneath the ruined pile of stones. He asks if you will return to finish the job, or if you would prefer that someone else gets the honor of discovering the secret of the ruined tower.

Again, you can run this adventure again, either from the very beginning, or with the changes that have happened because of what the characters did the first time they visited this place.

If the characters found the library (whether or not they defeated the ghouls), read the following:

The Patriarch is extremely pleased with your discovery of the library beneath the ruined tower! He believes that it may have belonged to an ancient and powerful wizard, whose lair has not yet been discovered and whose treasure still lies out there, waiting for brave adventurers to find it! Congratulations!

If the characters defeated the ghouls, add this:

The Patriarch is happy that you have defeated the ghouls that was plaguing the local farms and homesteads. With this menace put to rest, he can turn his attention to other matters, such as finding the hidden tomb of the wizard who once ruled the valley.

As stated above, the Patriarch gives each character 400 gold pieces to reward them for their discovery of the library. If they defeated the ghouls, he gives them an additional 100 gold pieces each.

The Patriarch will gladly identify the magical items the characters found:

- The pearls are worth 100 gold pieces each.
- The dagger is made of magically sharpened and reinforced metal. It is a *dagger+1*, which adds 1 point to a character's attack roll and 1 point to any damage the attack causes.
- The scroll contains spells, which a wizard may cast. It has a *knock* spell, a *magic missile* spell, and a *lightning bolt* spell—which shoots a bolt of lightning that causes 6d6 points of damage.
- The liquid in the bottle is a potion of *extra-healing*, which heals 3d8+3 points of damage, or 1d8 if a third of the potion is drunk.
- The bag is bigger on the inside than on the outside. It is a *bag of holding*, and can hold up to 250 pounds of stuff while still being easily lifted.

The players can work out their own ways of dividing up the treasure. The best way to split up the gold and gems is to give every character an equal share. Magical items can be divided up according to usefulness—the wizard should get the scroll, one of the fighters the potion, the other fighter the dagger, and the rogue the bag, for example. Or, the players can roll dice and the high roll gets the first choice.

Each character has a new XP total now—the original number plus any XP earned during the adventure. When a character goes over the "Next Level" number, he or she gains more power, more hit points, and more abilities.

The number of gold pieces a character has is recorded in the "Gold" blank on the character sheet. As the game goes on and characters have more adventures, they can buy things with their gold—better weapons and armor, magical scrolls, and other handy items.

Once the treasure is divided up and the XP and gold recorded on the sheets, the characters retire to the local inn for a fine meal to celebrate their adventures and brag about their success. The players can bring these characters back to play again, through another adventure, on another day.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Congratulations! You've run your first D&D adventure. If you've had a good time, you might want to know what you can do next.

Other D&D adventures are for sale at your local hobby shop or bookstore. For starters, look for *Wrath of the Minotaur* and *Eye of the Wyvern*.

If you think you've got a handle on playing the D&D game, you might check out *Introduction to ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*. This big box of game materials gives you more of the nitty-gritty of the rules and gets into more detail, while still being easy for a new DM and players to follow.

If you want to leap into the deep end (and admit it, you really want to), you might want to check out the *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*® hard-back rulebooks, also available at many stores. These books contain all the information you need to start and play an entire series of adventures.

To learn more about the D&D game by visiting the Internet, go to our website at www.tsr.com and get a look at everything we've got to offer.

What happens to Darkblade, Elanna, Niles, and Thaddeus? They'll still be around for the next time your players want to run them in another adventure. Or your players may want to create their own characters, have their own adventures, and make their own legends.

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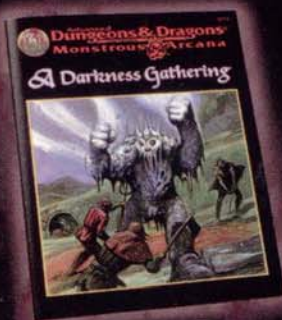
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INFESTATION

THE ECOLOGY OF THE WERERAT

Since the beginning
of Summertide,
our fair city of
Gerlanad has been
infested by a
creature who stalks
the streets at night,
killing and stealing.

—From the journal
of Theona Hawkfeather
Sage to the court in Gerlanad

by
Kristin J. Johnson

illustrated by
Brad McDevitt

NO ONE HAS EVER SURVIVED THE VICIOUS ATTACKS, though one elderly man, Donnal, the retired archery instructor for Her Majesty's forces, lived long enough to describe his assailant. He had come upon the beast as it was pawing through his belongings.

Donnal described the creature that attacked him as "a large monster, not quite a man, but upright with the mannerisms of one. The face of the creature was furred, with large, glowing red eyes, quivering whiskers, erect ears, and very large incisors." Donnal cut off the left paw of the creature he fought. The man-thing appeared to revert to a more animal-like form as it fled. Donnal was mortally wounded by the monster's rusty blade; he died shortly after giving his statement, a dismembered human hand clutched to his breast. His house stank of the sewers.¹

Summertide, Day 18

Today found me crawling through the sewers with two of the Queen's men, hoping to hunt down the creature before it surfaced again. Thinking it some sort of lycanthrope, the men are both armed with silver swords, believed to be the bane of all werecreatures. I am unarmed but carry a softly glowing orb to light our way. At first, it was difficult to determine which way to go through these cata-

combs; however, we noticed rats scuttling off down a certain tunnel. We followed them. Perhaps these resourceful little creatures can lead us to our murderer's den.²

Day 18, Evening

Our assumption proved correct, yet we were still unprepared for the attack that followed. C'nar, the elder of the two swordsmen, was suddenly fighting for his life with the creature that we sought.³ The beast was quick like a rat, scampering out of the way of the silver blade as it passed inches from its whiskered face. It fought like a human, with a blade in each hand.⁴ Though a poorer fighter than C'nar, the ratman was more familiar with the tunnels in which they fought. C'nar slipped on the slick floor, and before he could regain his balance, he was impaled on the filthy blade in the werecreature's left hand.⁵ He was dead before either Goran or I could react. Before the creature could pull its sword free of the swordsman's ribs, Goran moved in and lopped off the creature's

1. Wererats live in communities in sewers or other dark, dank lairs. Like normal rats, they need cramped warrens and long tunnels to feel safe.

2. Normal rats and giant rats are always found where wererats dwell, as they prefer similar habitats, scavenging in the shadows where humans and demihumans live. Wererats prefer to be in the company of their own kind. However, when setting a trap for a victim, they often work alone.

3. Wererats are weak fighters (THAC0 17) but have abilities similar to thieves. The average wererat

has the following abilities: Find/Remove Traps 40%, Detect Noise 70%, Move Silently 70%, Hide in Shadows 80%, and Climb Walls 95%. A wererat's AC is 6. Some wererats have better armor classes due to the piecemeal armor they have scavenged.

4. Most wererats are ambidextrous and can fight with a weapon in each hand without penalty.

5. Unlike other lycanthropes, wererats can infect their victims with a weapon. A wererat's bite inflicts 1 hp damage but does not infect the victim.

head. As it settled down beside its recent victim, both the body and the head slowly reverted to an elven form.⁶ The countenance on the face suggested its bestial nature with a long pointed nose and large bulbous eyes. We knew that Goran had slain a wererat. However, we were looking for a creature missing a left hand. Our quarry had eluded us.

Summertime, Day 19

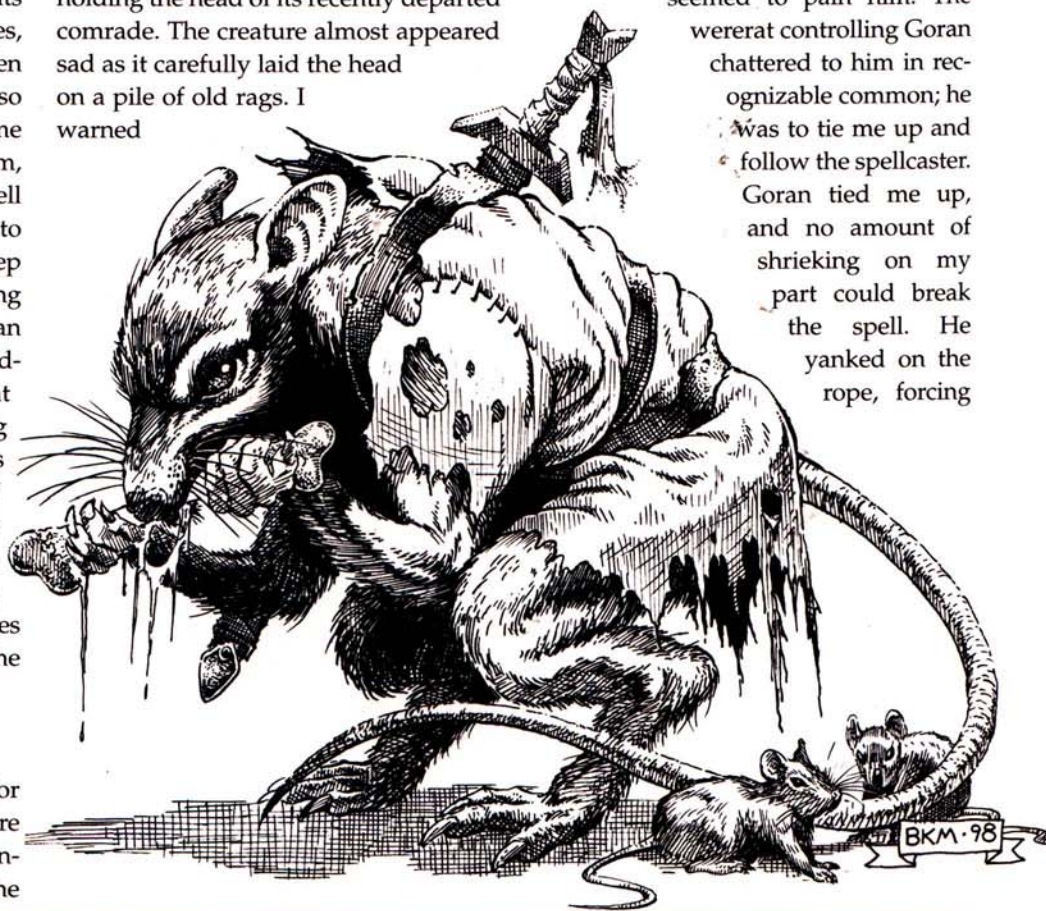
Still following the sounds of squeaking sewer rats, we eventually came to a much wider area in the tunnels. The whole area was cluttered with junk: bits of metal, broken glass, polished stones, and household items, presumably stolen from the citizens of Gerlanad. We also saw hundreds of humanoid bones, some with bits of flesh still clinging to them, scattered throughout the area. The smell of decay was overwhelming; I had to hold my hand over my mouth to keep from gagging.⁷ As I was recuperating from disgorging my latest meal, Goran called me over to his side. He was holding a finely crafted, jeweled dagger that a wealthy merchant had reported being stolen several weeks ago.⁸ It appears that we have found our "thieves' guild" as well as the lair of our nightly marauder. We decided, even though the thought sickened us both, to hide behind some particularly unsavory piles of garbage and await the return of the wererat to its lair.

Day 19, Evening

It seemed as though we waited for hours, squatting in filth. Our efforts were rewarded, however, when a human-sized furred creature appeared in the

tunnel across from us. It squinted into the gloomy corners of its den and sniffed the air inquisitively, though I doubted that it could smell us through the stench of its lair.⁹ It was then that I noticed that the left hand of this creature was pink and malformed, with little buds of flesh where the fingers should be.¹⁰ It carried a rusty shortsword in its good hand. Was this the creature we sought? Goran apparently thought so, as he leapt from our hiding spot, sword drawn, to attack the lone beast. It was not alone for long. From behind us entered another wererat, holding the head of its recently departed comrade. The creature almost appeared sad as it carefully laid the head on a pile of old rags. I warned

Goran that another wererat had arrived, giving away my own position in the process. He had his back to the second creature as I saw the first one going down from a thrust of Goran's blade. It hit the ground, dead.¹¹ Before poor Goran could turn and dispatch the newest threat, the second wererat began chattering.¹² Suddenly Goran had a blank, peaceful look on his face. He did not attack this wererat but laid his silver sword down on the grimy floor. I then noticed that he was bleeding from several wounds, though none seemed to pain him. The wererat controlling Goran chattered to him in recognizable common; he was to tie me up and follow the spellcaster. Goran tied me up, and no amount of shrieking on my part could break the spell. He yanked on the rope, forcing



6. Humans, dwarves, elves, half-elves, halflings, and gnomes can become infected (1% chance per point of damage). "Plane-touched" humanoid races such as aasimar, genasi, and tieflings, have a maximum chance of 50% to contract lycanthropy. Some of the smaller humanoid races are also susceptible to lycanthropy; the DM should decide these on a case-by-case basis. Retaining any racial abilities seems to be the exception rather than the rule for infected wererats.

7. The smell of a wererat's lair can make humans and demihumans with a good sense of smell nauseous, requiring a saving throw vs. breath weapon to avoid the effects. Those who miss their saves must fight at a -2 penalty due to the odor. Just about any item can be found in a wererat's lair; many thieves' guilds are blamed for thefts performed by wererats.

8. Wererats are "pack rats" and have a variety of useless shiny things in their lairs. The chance of finding real treasure is 25% (treasure type C, replacing silver with gold). A lair contains many bones with teeth marks on them. The teeth of a true wererat con-

stantly grow; they gnaw on bones to keep them sharp and functional.

9. Like normal rats, most true wererats see poorly. They can see only about 15 feet clearly in wereform in daylight or strong light. At night or in the sewers, their infravision extends to 30 feet. They make up for their myopia with extra sharp hearing. A wererat can be surprised only on 1 in 6 above ground, or 1 in 10 underground (they are more attuned to being underground). Wererats also have a good sense of smell, but this doesn't prevent them, unfortunately, from smelling like a sewer.

10. All wererats can regenerate lost limbs (10-60% per transformation). They cannot regenerate a lost head, and reverting back to humanoid form upon death does not restore hit points.

11. A true lycanthrope, (as opposed to an infected one) retains its intelligence in all forms. It need not fight like a cornered rat. A wererat that has been severely wounded (or has no hope of escape) has the innate ability to *feign death* (as per spell at the 3rd-level) once per day.

12. Some wererats (approximately 1 in 4) have one (possibly two) of the following innate abilities, any of which can be used three times per day. All spells are cast as a 6th-level wizard. These can be cast while in humanoid or ratman form (not giant rat form): *alarm*, *charm person*, *feather fall*, *misdirection*, *stinking cloud*, *blur*, *darkness* 15' radius.

13. Though communal, wererats move rather than fight for a lair; after all, they can always find more treasure. However, wererats are also self-preserving. In a fight-or-flight situation, they often revert to giant rat form to flee, even leaving behind their own offspring to fend for themselves.

14. Ratlings, the offspring of a female wererat, look like giant rats, but they walk upright and have opposable thumbs on their paws, which their animal brethren lack. The offspring of a male wererat and a human female results in a human baby, with some of the father's features. With the exception of wererat lords, wererats rarely mate with other wererats. (See *DUNGEON Adventures* issue #62, page 55, for details on the wererat lord.)



me to follow the wererat. I vainly struggled to break free, but Goran was oblivious and continued to drag me along. After about fifteen minutes or so, we came to another large area in these underground tunnels. This one is slightly larger, barely cleaner, and has several caged areas, into which the wererats no doubt put victims for eventual consumption.¹³ The area was lit with several guttering candle stubs. I was led into one cage, Goran, still charmed, into another. When we were safely locked in our cells, glowing eyes began to appear in the shadowy recesses of the cavern. Four child-sized rat creatures scurried out from behind the omnipresent piles of rotting refuse. One of these "ratlings" studied me for several moments, then smoothly transformed itself in to a small human girl.¹⁴ One of the other young rats squealed something at the girl-rat that I could not understand, and she quickly shifted back into her

previous form.¹⁵ The adult wererat chattered something in the same unrecognizable language, and the rat-children departed from the area down the tunnel we had recently traversed.¹⁶ I did not see them again.

Day 20

After shoving a pan of brackish water into my cell, the spellcasting wererat left us to go back down the tunnel through which we arrived, followed by nearly a dozen rats that seemed to pour out of the walls.¹⁷ Goran is no longer enchanted, though I can tell he is still suffering from our encounter with the two wererats. He is alternately flushing, then turning pale, and now he appears to have passed out, no doubt from his wounds.

Day 20, Moonrise?

After several hours, Goran began to whimper. Trapped in my cell, I was powerless to help him; I could only watch in horror at what happened next. He began to flail his arms, then he ripped away his leather armor, as if it pained him. The cuts of the wererat's sword were livid, angry marks against his now pale flesh. It appeared as if his very bones and muscles were writhing beneath his skin. Goran screamed in agony, his teeth sharp and long.¹⁸ His scream became a



high-pitched squeal. His face seemed to elongate, and his body grew brown hair right in front of my eyes! His hands twisted into claws, also covered with the same brown fur that matched the color of Goran's natural hair.¹⁹ Next, he ripped his remaining clothing away. A long, scaly snake-like tail had grown, completing his transformation into one of the creatures he had fought.²⁰ This transformation was too much for me; I passed out from fright. When I regained consciousness, Goran was gone.

Day 21, Morning?

When I awoke after an uncomfortable night of sleeping in this underground prison, Goran was back in his cell. He was unresponsive, naked, and covered with gore from head to foot. I noticed that the wounds which had looked so painful yesterday were completely gone. His cell door was open, and at first I thought he was dead. After a while, he did wake but would not speak to me. He eventually noticed that he held a blood-stained hair ribbon in his right hand.²¹ A haunted look flickered across his face. He was weeping bitterly. I couldn't find the proper words of condolence.

Day 21?

The two wererats we encountered earlier returned to the den. The one that I was sure Goran had killed actually looked quite healthy, and the fingers on its left hand appeared normal sized; a light down of fur covered that appendage now.²² The rat-men seemed satisfied upon seeing Goran back in his open cell, but they ignored me. I realized that I had been left here in case Goran transformed and needed a first meal, and the thought

15. Ratlings normally stay in giant rat form for the first two years after birth. At this point, a ratling can transform itself into a humanoid child. The humanoid form is usually a human of five or six years of age, though there may be characteristics of other races. The race is the same every time a particular creature transforms. All ratlings retain their original genders when they transform.

16. While ratlings are capable of speaking the common tongue, they rarely choose to do so. A person seeing a ratling in its "human" form might suspect the child to be mute, but this is far from the case. In any form, ratlings prefer communicating by high-frequency squeaks, much of which is inaudible to humans and demihumans.

Wererats speak their own language and can communicate with rats as well as with humans, some of which may be audible chattering.

17. A wererat is usually followed by small rodents that consider the wererat the "alpha" rat of their colony (which is called a mischief). The wererat can be in any form; it still smells like the leader to the smaller rodents. Wererats can also summon and control 2d6 giant rats if they choose.

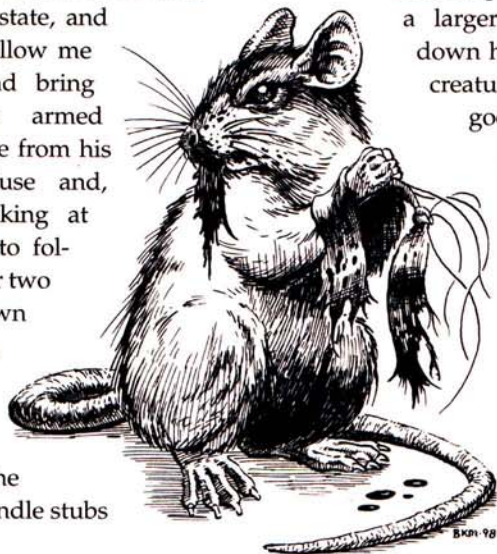
18. Wererats, like rats, have a space between their incisors and molars called a diastema. There are no teeth in this space, which allows the wererat to draw its lips in behind its incisors, resulting in a "dry" bite. Although their saliva contains the parasite that causes lycanthropy, the dry bite does not pass infectious saliva to the victim. Most often the parasite carries the disease from the wererat to an open wound on the victim, resulting in the victim's infection. The parasite is "species specific" and infects only humanoids; the disease does not infect normal rodents, nor can normal rodents carry the parasite.

19. A wererat's fur is usually the same color as its hair in humanoid form. Colors range from the lightest brown to black. On the rare occasion that an albino ratling is born, the mother may kill it, as it would not survive long with that coloration. An adult albino wererat is extremely rare.

20. An infected lycanthrope will change involuntarily. The full moon can trigger the transformation, but so can very strong emotions or pain. An infected wererat is not in control of its hunger for humanoid flesh. It attacks friend and foe alike, preferring victims that are known personally by the infected wererat. True lycanthropes enjoy scavenging as much as hunting; it helps keep a low profile.

21. An infected lycanthrope may not remember its night as a monster at all; some have dream-like memories of their depredations.

sickened me. Goran would not help me escape; he wanted to live, even in a cursed state, and would not allow me to leave and bring back more armed men. He rose from his bed of refuse and, without looking at me, turned to follow the other two wererats down the tunnel. Shortly afterward, the faint light from the last of the candle stubs died.



Summertime, Day 25?

After hours, maybe days, of clawing at the damp floor of my cell with my bare hands, I managed to make a hole under the bars large enough to crawl through. The wererats have not returned and no doubt left me down here to die. After leaving the cell room behind, I have been walking for what seems like hours and am completely lost. There has to be a way to leave these infernal tunnels! I occasionally hear footsteps, but I have not yet encountered another soul. I haven't eaten in days, I'm afraid to drink the water, and I have no light, magical or otherwise. I cannot see my hand as I write this, nor can I tell whether my words are legible. When I return to the



22. Wererats are immune and vulnerable to many different items, making it difficult to harm them permanently. In a case where silver doesn't work, cold-forged iron weapons or even a chemical may prove to be the wererat's bane. (See page 94 of *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts* for examples of vulnerabilities.) Usually, all wererats in a particular lair are vulnerable to the same substances.

palace library, I must find the architect's map of these sewers and lead a larger group of swordsmen down here to exterminate these creatures and collect the stolen goods. I shall remain here in this dead-end for a few hours to rest, and then continue my search for a way out.



To Her Majesty, Queen Alanar of Gerlanad, Wearer of the Sacred Crown of Nestal, From His Royal Highness, Prince Ardon of Rintley, Heir to the Sapphire Chalice of Iralon:

We have recently come into the possession of a journal written in the hand of your royal sage some two years past. It was found near the opening of an underground river just outside Rintley by some fishermen, and hence brought to our palace.

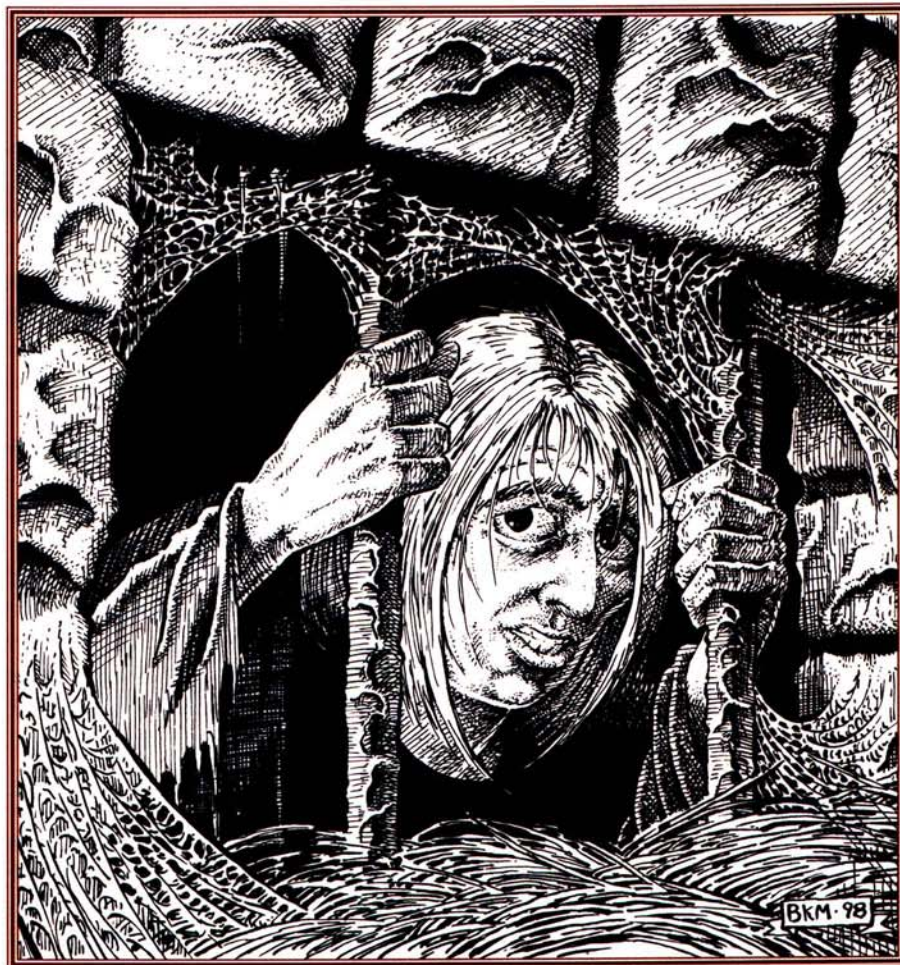
We had recalled that your sage had gone missing some time ago, and we believe that these pages explain what happened to her during her last, unfortunate expedition.

Hoping that this missive finds you and your city prosperous,

His Royal Highness, Prince Ardon



Kristen enjoys roleplaying games so much that she married her favorite DM. They live in Pennsylvania and are owned by several pet rats.





Thornhold: The Harpers at Twilight

Khelben Arunson's
past—as the past is
wont to do—
is about to catch up
with him

DEDICATED TO KEEPING THE BALANCE AND preserving the memory of great deeds, the Harpers have served for hundreds of years as warriors, heralds, bards, informants, and spies. The heroism of individual Harpers is celebrated in bardic verse and fireside tales. But a group—any group—is more than the sum of its parts.

Some try to control such groups. Chief among them is Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunson, whose titles include Master Harper, archmage, Lord of Waterdeep, and a host of other, informal titles too pungent to quote. Despite his various and well-documented faults, Khelben is a strong man—strong enough to carry a burden of hidden knowledge and dangerous secrets.

Sometimes a single person from the common folk can trigger an important chain of events. Such a person is Bronwyn, a young woman raised in slavery. Her search for her lost past stirs a rivalry begun centuries before, when Khelben was no stranger to deeds that owed more to pride than to wisdom.

In those days, an ambitious mage known as Renwick Caradoon enspelled three rings, artifacts of mysterious origin. These he used to enhance his own spells and to empower certain magical objects. One such device ensured the escalation of the fortress Thornhold and established the fame of Renwick's brother, the paladin Samular. Hundreds of years later, Samular's legacy is continued by the

Knights of Samular, a paladin order devoted to the service of Tyr and to safeguarding the bloodline of their founder. Samular and his wizard brother bequeathed to their descendants a legacy of enormous power.

When Bronwyn learns of her heritage and receives one of the ancient rings, she becomes the focus of those who wish to control her. Her long-lost brother, Dag Zoreth, a priest of the evil god Cyric, possesses both a ring and the will to use it. The race is on to find the third and final ring—and the great artifact the reunited rings can unleash. Caught between the single-minded zeal of the paladins and the cruel ambitions of the Zhentarim, Bronwyn finds that maintaining the Balance is not what she'd had in mind when she signed up with the Harpers.



Elaine Cunningham is the author of Thornhold as well as three other Harper novels and several other, elf-infested stories. She is about one book away from needing to file the points off her ears on a daily basis.

by
Elaine Cunningham

illustrated by
Steven Schwartz

8TH-LEVEL BARD
(Loremaster kit, specialist in history,
languages, and ancient treasures)

Strength:	10
Dexterity:	17
Constitution:	13
Intelligence:	17
Wisdom:	14
Charisma:	15
AC:	7
THACO:	12
Hit Points:	42
Alignment:	NG
Special Attacks:	Nil
Special Defenses:	Detect magic (20% chance)
Size:	M (5'4")

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient history (16), forgery (16), gem cutting (15), modern languages—Thorass, Alzhedo, Dethek, and Espruar (17), reading/writing (18), riding—land-based (17), tracking (14).

Weapon Proficiencies: Short sword, dagger, garrote, improvisational street fighting. Though not a highly trained fighter, Bronwyn is very good at thinking on her feet and making use of whatever "weapon" comes to hand.

Appearance: Bronwyn is a human woman, not quite 25 years old. She is small and slim, with a build more appropriate to an athlete than a courtesan. Her face is triangular, with a sharp, determined chin and high cheekbones. Her large, chocolate-brown eyes are her best feature. She has very thick, very long brown hair, which she usually wears pulled back in a single braid. Despite her love of fine things, she dresses simply.

Magical Items: A *bag of sending* transports her hard-won treasures to the safety of Waterdeep. She recently acquired a Ring of Samular, one of three artifacts that, when combined, can unleash or enhance powerful spells. (One of these is described in the novel *Thornhold*.)

Background: Captured by Zhentarim slavers in early childhood, Bronwyn was raised in Amn. She became an adept counterfeiter of jewelry and coins, and an expert on the real thing. After purchasing her freedom, she became an antiquities dealer. Recruited to the Harpers, she moved to Waterdeep, where she divides her time between tending her shop and adventuring in search of new treasures.

Roleplaying Notes: Bronwyn deals skillfully with people from many races and from all walks of life. She is equally at ease discussing a lost family artifact with Moonshae nobility, or bargaining with duergar thieves or Ruathym smugglers. Her



knowledge and contacts can provide a number of services to treasure-hunting adventurers: information and lore on little-known treasures, translation of ancient texts and inscriptions, or discrete introductions to "collectors" who operate somewhat left of the law. Bronwyn "hears things," so adventurers hired to find lost or stolen objects would do well to check in with her. She might also arrange to have sensitive goods or persons in need of discretion smuggled into or out of the city.

Dandies, socialites, and others who possess an excess of coin will find her shop, the Curious Past, a rich trove of unusual jewelry and curiosities. As a member of the Harpers, Bronwyn carries messages and information and gives aid to Harpers passing through Waterdeep. Given her wide range of contacts, she might be able to introduce a PC to a Waterdhavian merchant, a discreet fence, or a smuggler.

On the lighter side, socialites, dandies, and others who possess excess coin find Bronwyn's shop, the Curious Past, a rich trove of unusual jewelry and curiosities. The shop is also a popular, clandestine meeting place for halflings and gnomes whose lives are more complicated than appearances would indicate. Bronwyn's shop assistant, a gnome woman named Alice, is a Harper agent and a former fighter, and she is active in aiding the adventures and aspirations of Waterdeep's "vertically challenged" citizens.

10TH-LEVEL CLERIC (Strifeleader, Specialty Priest of Cyric)

Strength:	13
Dexterity:	10
Constitution:	11
Intelligence:	17
Wisdom:	14
Charisma:	17
AC:	5
THACO:	14
Hit Points:	47
Alignment:	CE
Special Attacks:	Nil
Special Defenses:	+1 to saving throws against spells using illusion/phantasm magic. Immune to <i>fear</i> spells and other emotion-altering magic.
Size:	5'5"

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Modern languages—Common, Elvish (17), military history (17), reading/writing—Common, Elvish (18), riding—land-based (17).

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword, footman's mace, footman's flail, short sword.

Appearance: Dag Zoreth is Bronwyn's older brother. There is a family resemblance: like her, he is dark and slight. He is a small, slender man, with dark brown eyes and a narrow, handsome face. His hairline dips to a pronounced "widow's peak." He had a fondness for luxury and fine clothes, and he always wears black and purple, the colors of Cyric.

Magical Items: He communicates with his henchmen through several spheres of speaking, small crystal globes in which the speaker appears, backlit by purple flames. He also owns a scrying bowl for divination and a vest of elven chain mail. For a short time, he possessed one of the three Rings of Samular, and he will not be content until he gains possession of all three—and the power they wield.

Background: Like Bronwyn, Dag was captured by Zhentarim slavers in early childhood, but he remained under the eyes and influence of the Zhentarim. Recruited by Malchior of Zhentil Keep to the service of Bane, Dag became a priest and later "converted" to the worship of Cyric. He has served at Darkhold for several years and has a dangerous, volatile personal relationship with Ashemmi, the elven sorceress who rules the fortress as second-in-command. His current ambition is to find and secure a stronghold of his own, one that will add to the power of the Zhentarim while giving him his own command.



Roleplaying Notes: Dag Zoreth is a capable leader, an intelligent and dangerous man who can conceive and carry out complex plots. He is loyal to the goals and the leaders of the Zhentarim—a rare trait among the members of that particular organization—and remains firmly in the good graces of the Zhentarim power structure. (This may change, since he and Ashemmi have come to conflict over a highly sensitive issue: who will control their half-elven daughter and benefit from the girl's considerable magical talent?) Loyal though he might be, Dag is also determined to carve out a personal power base. He is willing to make alliances with any evil power for the sake of power and wealth. He especially desires to gain control of fortresses on valuable trade routes. Dag has a deep hatred of paladins, especially the military orders.

4TH-LEVEL PALADIN

Strength:	18/12
Dexterity:	17
Constitution	16
Intelligence:	11
Wisdom:	13
Charisma:	17
AC:	6
THACO:	16
Hit Points:	39
Alignment:	LG
Special Attacks:	Standard paladin abilities
Special Defenses:	Standard paladin abilities
Size:	6'2"

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Modern language—Common (12), military history, especially as pertains to the Knights of Samular (17), reading/writing—Common (12), riding—land-based (16), cartography (11), tracking (13), survival (11), set snares (16), hunting (12).

Weapon Proficiencies: Broadsword, dagger, javelin, lance, quarterstaff, spear.

Appearance: Algorind is an earnest young man, full of certainty and strong in faith, and his countenance reflects this: his features are strong, his blue-eyed gaze direct and guile free. He is in his early twenties, tall and fit. His hair is short, curly and very fair. Algorind wears leather armor covered by a white tabard bearing the symbol of Tyr in blue: a balanced scale atop a war hammer.

Equipment: As a young paladin and an aspirant to the military order known as the Knights of Samular, Algorind has little use for personal possessions. He carries a broadsword and a spear, the only items of value he can call his own. Even his white horse, Icewind, is on loan from the Order's stables. (Icewind is not a true paladin's mount but is nonetheless a swift and well-trained battle mount.)

Background: The third-born son of a minor noble house of Cormyr, Algorind was turned over to the Knights of Samular before his tenth winter to serve as a page. By sheer happenstance, this fit young Algorind perfectly. His only desire was to become a paladin, and a full member of the Knights of Samular. Raised in Summit Hall, a monastery dedicated to the training of priests and paladins of Tyr, Algorind is on the verge of realizing that dream. Unfortunately, he recently ran afoul of both the Zhentarim and the Harpers, and he has made a powerful enemy in Sir Gareth Cormaeril, a once-great warrior now serving as the Exchequer of the Knights of Samular. It is possible that Sir Gareth will take steps to have Algorind discredited, banished from the Order, or worse.



Roleplaying Notes: Notice that Algorind's Wisdom score is as low as it can be, and still allow him to be a paladin. Algorind is earnest, dedicated, and sincere, but he follows orders without question. This has brought him to grief and may continue do so in the future. He is a central figure in the strife between the paladin order and the Harpers. Although he does not realize that Sir Gareth is a fallen paladin, he might uncover this secret and throw the order he loves and serves into chaos. Until then, he is the unwitting pawn of Sir Gareth—and the evil master that Sir Gareth secretly obeys. Algorind will never knowingly commit an evil deed, but he is living proof that the best of intentions do not always have a guarantee that good will result.

13TH-LEVEL WARRIOR/13TH-LEVEL THIEF (WAYFINDER)

Strength:	18/35
Dexterity:	15
Constitution	18
Intelligence:	13
Wisdom:	14
Charisma:	13
AC:	4
THACO:	16
Hit Points:	79
Alignment:	CN
Size:	M (4')

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Endurance (18), hunting (13), modern languages—Common, Deep dwarf, Duergar, Undercommon (13), navigation—both surface and underground (11), reading/writing—Common, Dethek (14), riding—land-based (17), tracking (14), survival—underground(13), set snares (14), weaponsmithing (10), whittling (14).

Weapon Proficiencies: Axe, war hammer, footman's pick, light crossbow, knife.

Magical Items: Ebenezer wears a suit of *ring mail* +2 into battle and wields a *hand axe* +2 in melee.

Appearance: Ebenezer is a dwarf, not quite 200 years old and thus in his prime. He is about four feet tall and very broad through the chest and shoulders. He has curly auburn hair that tends to embarrass him in humid weather or during strenuous exercise, when it springs up into wild ringlets. His red beard, on the other hand, is long and full and almost straight, and it has the decency to just hang there. He shaves his mustache off, which lends his face an almost-boyish aspect. He is very fond of horses and often wears a pendant fashioned from an old horseshoe and a leather thong. Ebenezer likes an occasional pipe and smokes when deep in thought. Fortunately for his health, Ebenezer is not given to frequent bouts of introspection.

Background: Born to Clan Stoneshaft, an extended family of miners, weaponsmiths, and gem cutters, Ebenezer heartily dislikes mining and smithing, so he became involved in the clan's trading activities and soon left the clanhold altogether to travel on his own. Ebenezer is exceedingly restless and curious, and he seeks out opportunities to explore the world—both above and below the surface. For the past century, he has been variously employed as a guide, scout, spy, and guard. Although Ebenezer has worked independently, he recently threw his lot in with the equally restless and trouble-prone Bronwyn.

Roleplaying Notes: Although most dwarves are distrustful of any dwarf who lives in an independent and solitary fashion, Ebenezer's high charisma and personal charm serve to miti-



gate this handicap. His reaction penalty is reduced to -1 when dealing with other dwarves. He is a sociable dwarf and unusually tolerant of other races.

Ebenezer has a keen eye for dwarven beauty, but he happily flirts with halfling and gnome women, as well. His open-mindedness is not without limit: Ebenezer is highly suspicious of elves and cynical when it comes to humankind. He is fond of children and often whiles away time on the road by carving ingenious little toys.

Unlike most dwarves, Ebenezer enjoys riding and is extremely fond of horses. (He considers the human taste for horsemeat just more proof of their innate barbarity.) He does not swim and has a profound dislike of water and an incurable, chronic tendency toward seasickness.

Ebenezer has a wry, earthy sense of humor and the knack for turning a good tale, and he can be good company on the road or over a few mugs. His loyalty, when given, is fierce and absolute. Adventurers who hire him receive their money's worth and more, and those who earn his friendship could not want a better, more steadfast companion.

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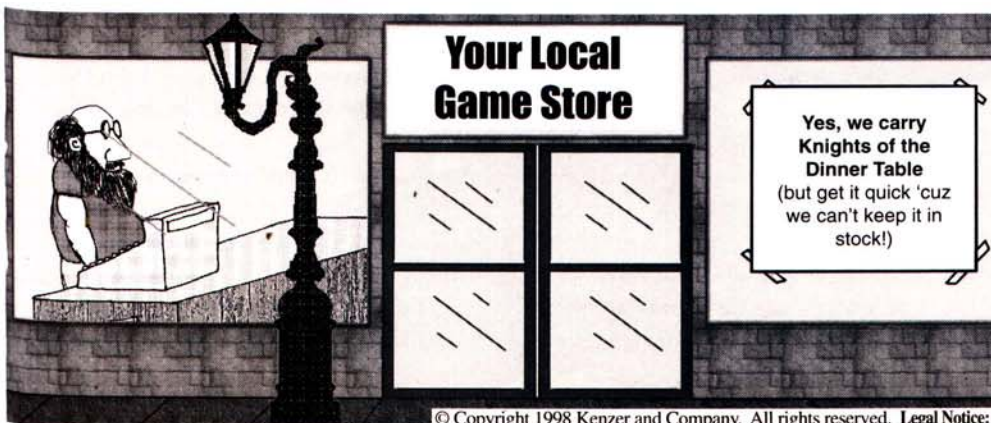
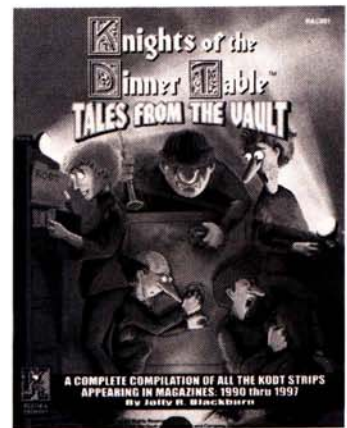
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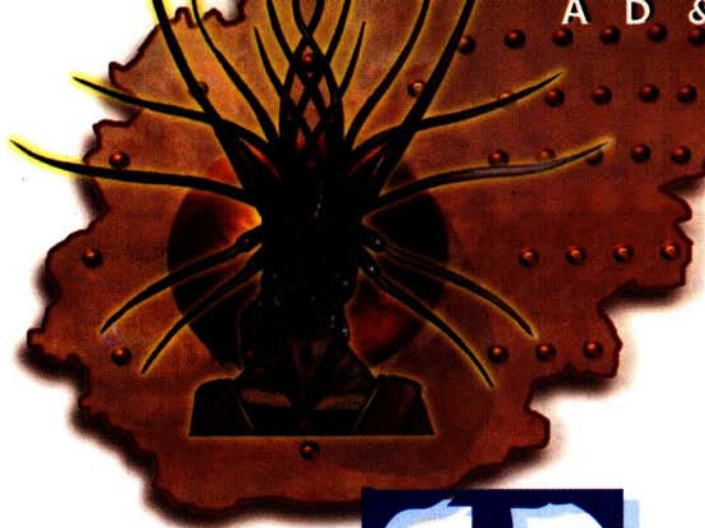
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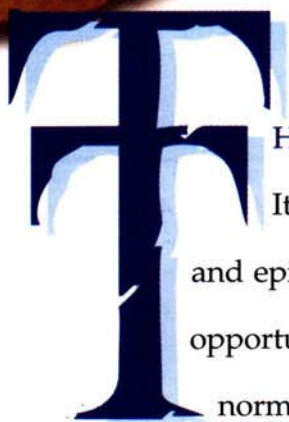


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The SESHEYANS

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Sesheyans are a race of winged humanoids who typically live in tropical regions. They're a primitive people, hunting with bone knives and sharpened spears. Fortunately for those who visit them, they're also a friendly folk who open their villages and huts to gracious visitors who respect their spiritual beliefs and customs.

Ability Score Adjustments: A sesheyan's initial ability scores are modified by a +1 to Dexterity and a -1 to Constitution. Sesheyan PCs must obey the ability score maximums and minimums in Table 1.

Thieving Skill Racial Adjustments: pick pockets: +5%; open locks -5%; find/remove traps -10%; move silently +5%; hide in shadows +10%; detect noise +5%; climb walls —; read languages -10%.

Class Mixing: A sesheyan PC may become a fighter/druid, ranger/druid, or fighter/thief. Obeahs are a special form of shaman; all obeahs are single-classed. Single-classed sesheyans with extremely high ability scores in their prime requisites may gain levels above

given racial maximums, as per Table 8 in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.

Sesheyan PCs cannot be mages or specialty priests. Shamanic and druidic magic are the only forms of spellcasting known to the race. Sesheyans who advance to 8th level or beyond as rangers can cast spells normally.

Suggested Kits: Sesheyan PCs emerge from a primitive but peaceful stone age culture, and the choice of kits and backgrounds should reflect their unusual and limited upbringing.

Fighter—tribal defender (*Complete Book of Humanoids*), wilderness warrior, (*Complete Fighters Handbook*).

Ranger—None.

Druid—savage (*Complete Druids Handbook*).

Obeah—None.

Thief—acrobat (*Complete Thieves Handbook*).

Bard—skald (*Complete Bards Handbook*).

Skills & Powers Kits—mystic, savage, scout.

Hit Dice: Sesheyan PCs receive hit dice by class; because of their limited

by
David Eckelberry

illustrated by Jim Holloway

Constitution, it's impossible for a sesheyan to gain additional hit points as a result of an exceptional ability score.

Typical Alignments: As a race, sesheyan tend toward a neutral alignment, but sesheyan PCs can select any alignment.

Natural Armor Class: 10.

Age Categories: Starting Age = 10 + d4 years; Maximum Age Range: 64 + 2d6 years; Average Maximum Age: 71 years; Middle Age = 33 years; Old Age = 49 years; Venerable = 61 years.

Average Height and Weight: 51 + 2d6 inches; 80 + 2d8 lbs.

Movement Base: 12, Fly 24 (C). Sesheyan fly unassisted by magical spell or device. They're more natural gliders than pure flyers, however, and after an hour of constant flight must rest for a period equal to the time spent flying. Typically, a sesheyan uses flight during the hunt and to escape enemies, not for long travel.

Appearance: "Sinister" is the first word that's most likely to come to mind upon viewing a sesheyan. "Demonic" might be another. A sesheyan has a thin humanoid figure with black or brown skin, a pointed muzzle and tail, eight eyes, and batlike wings—it's no wonder that the ignorant mistake sesheyan for fiends.

In reality, sesheyan, no matter their origins, are particularly adapted to their environment. Their delicate frame, 20' wingspan, and fan-shaped tails are necessary instruments for flight. Most of the time, however, a sesheyan's wings rest unfurled, awaiting a moment's need to extend themselves. When unextended, these wings shrink to only a yard over each shoulder.

Sesheyan wear loincloths and other

similarly simple garments. In winter and under other extremes of weather, they cloak themselves in heavier garments.

Habitat: The natural habitat of a sesheyan is a jungle or rain forest. There, sesheyan build simple dwellings of leaves, thatch, and compressed jungle wood. Above the jungle floor, sesheyan hunters provide meat for the community—bird, mammal, and reptile—while other members of the tribe scour the ground and the trees above for fruit, nuts, grubs, and other nourishment.

For all this activity, a sesheyan village languishes during most of the day. It is only with the setting of the sun that the average sesheyan rises from his daytime slumber. The species is naturally nocturnal; a sesheyan's eight eyes take in enough light that even on moonless nights a sesheyan can find its way on ground or in the air.

Sesheyan have never been found in large numbers outside their home territory, but individual sesheyan can endure any environment hospitable to humans. Given a choice, sesheyan

Table 1: Sesheyan PCs
Starting Ability Score Range

Ability	Min	Max
Strength	5	16
Dexterity	6	19
Constitution	3	14
Intelligence	3	16
Wisdom	9	15
Charisma	3	16

Class Restrictions

Class	Max. Level
Warrior	
Fighter	14
Ranger	12
Priest	
Druid	8
Obeah*	14
Rogue	
Thief	Unlimited
Bard	6

* New class.

demonstrate a marked distaste for all forms of deserts.

Likely homes for the sesheyan include the Malatran plateau in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, the Amedio Jungle in the GREYHAWK® setting, or somewhere in Aduria in the BIRTHRIGHT® setting.

Society & Religion: Although they are not a young race of the known world, the sesheyan have yet to develop the simple technology that many others take for granted. Production of iron and steel are unknown; even bronze has yet to be discovered. Instead, sesheyan society relies on the crudest tools and weapons of stone, flint, or wood. Most sesheyan wield only a crude spear that amounts to little more than a sharpened stick.

Sesheyan civilization has remained stable for countless generations and despite occasional contact with more advanced peoples. While not without curiosity or an interest in learning, sesheyan culture has proven



resistant to change. This stasis is due largely to the society's fragmented nature. Sesheyan villages tend to be isolated outposts rarely numbering more than a couple hundred. Travel between communities is rare, even when they lie only a few miles away. Given the independent nature of these settlements, changes in one have little effect on others.

Despite the distance between their homes, all sesheyans share a common background. Their beliefs are remarkably similar. Their mythology is dominated by ancestor worship. A sesheyan sees the world as full of the spirits of the departed. The wind, the animals, and even the land itself are a sesheyan's departed kindred.

Sesheyan theology is further confused by a sort of totemic animism. After death, a sesheyan's ancestors assume archetypal roles that bear something in common with the departed's life. For example, a skilled weaver might become the Weaver, the spirit a sesheyan would call upon for assistance when building a new home. More symbolically, a lost sesheyan might call on the dead Weaver to guide his life, weaving it in with a loved one or keeping it close to the village.

Ultimately, a sesheyan calls upon the leadership of the ancestors to guide his or her actions. It might seem like a form of possession or charm to others, but when an ancestral hunter guides the hand of a spear-thrower, a sesheyan finds it a blessing, not a curse.

Obeahs, the spiritual leaders of the sesheyans, live especially close to the ancestors. According to the obeahs, the ancestors remain all around, and a powerful Obeah can rouse them to take an

interest in mortal affairs. Obeahs are both revered and feared by their people.

In addition to spiritual leaders, these primitive priests are the storytellers and keepers of sesheyan culture.

Regardless of which hunter is strongest, a tribe's Obeah must be heeded.

One conjecture about sesheyan history is that sesheyan villages didn't use to exist independent of one another. Any suppositions about sesheyan history are difficult to prove. The sesheyans themselves possess no written records, and oral histories are unreliable beyond two or three generations.

Language: Sesheyans share a single language, although individual sesheyans have proven that they can learn additional tongues.

Sesheyans have difficulties forming certain common human language sounds, especially "f" and "v."

Special Advantages: Sesheyans enjoy two advantages over the typical human or humanoid. First and most obvious are the wings that allow a sesheyan to fly. Unfortunately, sesheyans are heavy for flight, even given their small size and wingspan. They're more likely to glide and leap from the high branches of the rain forest than to stay in constant flight. A sesheyan can fly for up to an hour; after this, apply the exhaustion rules from *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Combat & Tactics*. Alternatively, allow the sesheyan to continue flight with a successful Constitution check. For each additional hour spent flying, the check is made at a +2

penalty. When a check fails, the sesheyan must land for a period equal to the time spent flying, wing muscles fatigued.

The nocturnal hunters of the jungle are also blessed with extremely good night vision. As long as a minimal light source is available—as little as a bit of starlight on a cloudy night—a sesheyan can see normally.

Special Disadvantages: The same eight eyes that convey advantages in darkness are vulnerable to bright light. In any light greater than twilight, a sesheyan suffers penalties to actions. In illumination such as that of an overcast day, a sesheyan suffers a -2 penalty on all actions, include attack rolls. In brighter light, the penalty is -3. Sesheyans suffer a -4 penalty on saves against blinding effects and spells such as continual light.

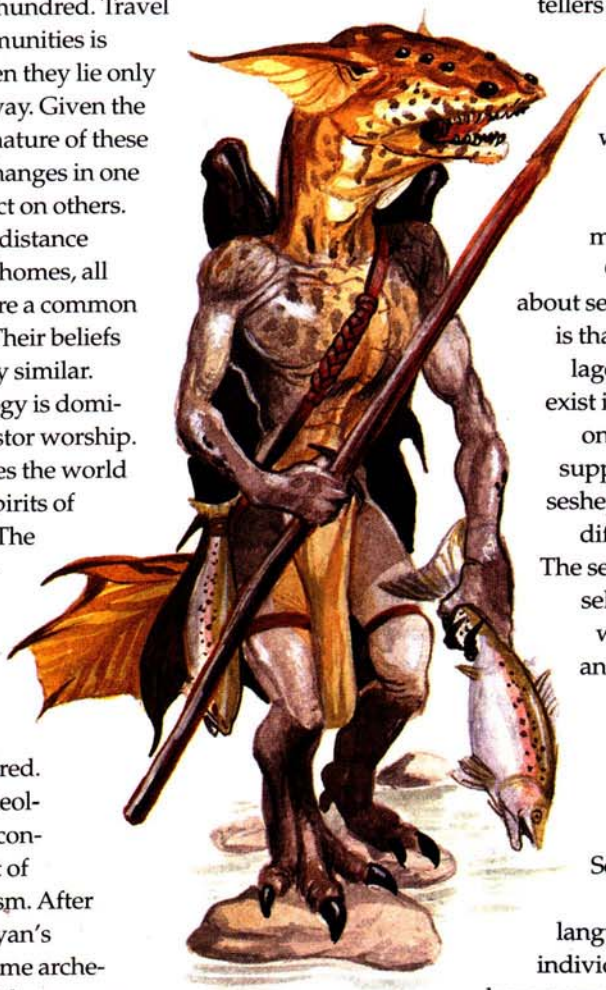
As noted, sesheyan culture is primitive. Sesheyans have no knowledge of more advanced skills and lack advanced equipment and weapons.

Weapon Proficiencies: Only crude weapons are common among the sesheyans, especially spears, quarter-staffs, whips, and knives of flint. More rare is the occasional ranged weapon, such as the short bow, blowgun, or dart. Sesheyan PCs should begin play with proficiency only in the weapons listed here, although through their adventures they might eventually acquire other weapon proficiencies.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Many proficiencies are unavailable to sesheyan PCs at the start of their careers. This includes some of most mundane proficiencies and more exotic ones. A complete list of forbidden proficiencies listed in the *Player's Handbook* appears below. DMs should consider other proficiencies on a case-by-case basis.

Agriculture	Mining
Armorer	Navigation
Blacksmithing	Reading/writing
Charioteering	Riding (all forms)
Engineering	Seamanship
Forgery	Spellcraft
Gem cutting	Stonemasonry
Heraldry	Weaponsmithing

Starting Possessions: Sesheyan PCs begin play with no gold or coins of any kind. However, it's reasonable to assume that a PC has used the barter system



common in sesheyan villages to acquire some essentials of equipment. Assume that a sesheyan, regardless of class, begins with 5d4 gp value of equipment.

None of this equipment should represent technology beyond sesheyan understanding. For example, a sesheyan shouldn't begin play with writing ink, a lantern, or a sword.

Roleplaying Suggestions: Even more than most races, a sesheyan sees the supernatural—the dead—all around him. Ill omens, bad weather, and good luck can all be ascribed to the sentiments of the ancients looking down and expressing their advice, their caprice, and their goodwill.

At times, humans find sesheyans distant, as they contemplate the signs of the otherworld or carefully consider actions. Sesheyans don't brood over this, though. They're headstrong creatures with a strong dose of independent spirit running through them. A sesheyan thinks nothing of days or weeks spent alone far from the comforts of home. Wandering is common for hunters and those whose curiosity leads to exploration.

Other Information: Sesheyans are omnivores, although they prefer meat when it is available. Sesheyans have a normal chance to become wild talents or psionicists, if these are present in the campaign.

Sesheyan Obeahs

An Obeah is an optional subclass presented specifically for sesheyan spellcasters but open to use among any race. While not exceptionally powerful in their own right, a player should check with his or her DM before creating an Obeah (sesheyan or non-sesheyan).

Obeahs share characteristics with druids, specialty priests, and the shaman kit, as presented in the *Complete Book of Humanoids* (PHBR10). First and foremost, an Obeah represents a link

between the supernatural and the mundane. While the average sesheyan divines the will of the ancestors in the world around him, an Obeah speaks to the spirits and, to a limited degree, commands them.

In order to qualify as an Obeah, a character must have a minimum Wisdom and Charisma of 12. Obeahs receive hit points, saving throws, and THAC0s as clerics do. They gain the standard spell bonuses for exceptional Wisdom and can use (and eventually create) magical items as normal. Obeahs cannot turn undead, never attract followers, and can-



not found a religious stronghold.

Obeahs advance more slowly than the standard priest. Obeahs use wizard experience totals (Table 20 in the *Player's Handbook*) to determine their level.

Obeahs gain priest spells as normal, but their choice of spells is limited. All Obeahs have access to the following spheres: All, Animal, Divination, and Summoning. Each Obeah can choose one additional sphere; once it is chosen,

an Obeah's spheres never change.

A form of spellcasting is the most interesting of the Obeah's abilities. Through a link to spiritual world around him, an Obeah can spend a round to request favors from ancestral spirits.

In order to successfully call upon a favor, an Obeah must roll a successful Charisma check. The Obeah receives a -1 bonus to the roll for each experience level, but a +2 penalty for each favor attempted previously in the same day. The Dungeon Master is encouraged to add additional modifiers to reflect the seriousness or whimsy of the situation, the needs of the tribe, and so forth.

With each experience level, an Obeah can ask for one favor per week. For example, a 8th-level Obeah can call upon eight favors per week. With the completion of unusual quests or tasks, it's possible that an Obeah temporarily be granted a number of favors above his normal maximum. This blessing is especially rare. Certain favors cost more than others, and more powerful favors can only be gained by higher-level characters.

Obeah Favors

The following favors are standard boons that ancestor spirits grant to their followers. DMs should feel free to create additional favors, or to allow heroes to spend favors to create effects equivalent to those listed below.

Ancestral Prayer (1 favor):

The simplest of favors, this one provides a +2 bonus attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and proficiency checks. The effects last for a full turn on a single target.

Appear (1 favor): This favor calls on an ancestor to make his presence visible briefly. The spirit appears only as a ghostly visage and can't affect the physical plane of reality; indeed, it can't even be heard. Typically, this power is used to impress or distract. The image lasts five rounds, plus one round per level.

Endure (2 favors): By calling upon the iron will of the dead, an Obeah can persist through exhaustion and fatigue. For a period of 24 hours, the Obeah is immune to effects of exhaustion and feels no need for sleep. At the end of this period, the Obeah must rest for at least 12 hours. This power can't be used more than once per week.

Hex (2 favors): The reverse of *Ancestral Prayer*, *Hex* applies a -2 penalty to attack rolls, damage rolls, saves, and proficiency checks. The favor affects one target for one turn.

Guide (3 favors): The most famous of Obeah powers, this favor invites an ancestor into the body of the Obeah or a willing target. Calling upon a well-known ancestor whose puissance at arms or experience is well known. For the duration of the favor (one round per level), the target temporarily gains an increase in levels (hit points, combat ability, and saves) For every three levels of the Obeah, the target gains one level. At the end of the duration, the target loses any bonus hit points that remained.

If the target of the favor engages in actions that are in opposition to the character of the ancestor, or against the tribe in general, the favor immediately ends.

Delegate (3 favors): This favor calls upon the will of the dead to control a spell that otherwise requires the concentration or direct control of the Obeah. For a number of rounds equal to the Obeah's level, the spirit maintains the spell.

Lesser Manifest (3 favors): The spell brings an ancestor spirit's energy into the physical world. In game terms, the Obeah commands a *dust devil* (see the second-level priest spell) for a number of rounds equal to his level.

Reincarnate (5 favors): This favor functions exactly like the fifth-level priest spell with the same name.

Manifest (6 favors): The spell recalls an ancestor spirit partially into the physical world. The spirit can once again affect objects and take actions. In game terms, the spirit takes on the powers and abilities of an air elemental (although the spirit cannot form whirlwinds). The spirit obeys commands (within the lim-

its of its character) for one round per level. It will not turn on the Obeah but may refuse commands that oppose its desire or endanger the tribe.

Messenger (7 favors): An Obeah can use this favor to send a short message (less than 100 words) to any being on the same plane, delivered by the spirit. The Obeah must know the location of the target, and the spirit cannot penetrate magically protected or isolated locations. The message is delivered one turn per league between the Obeah and the target.

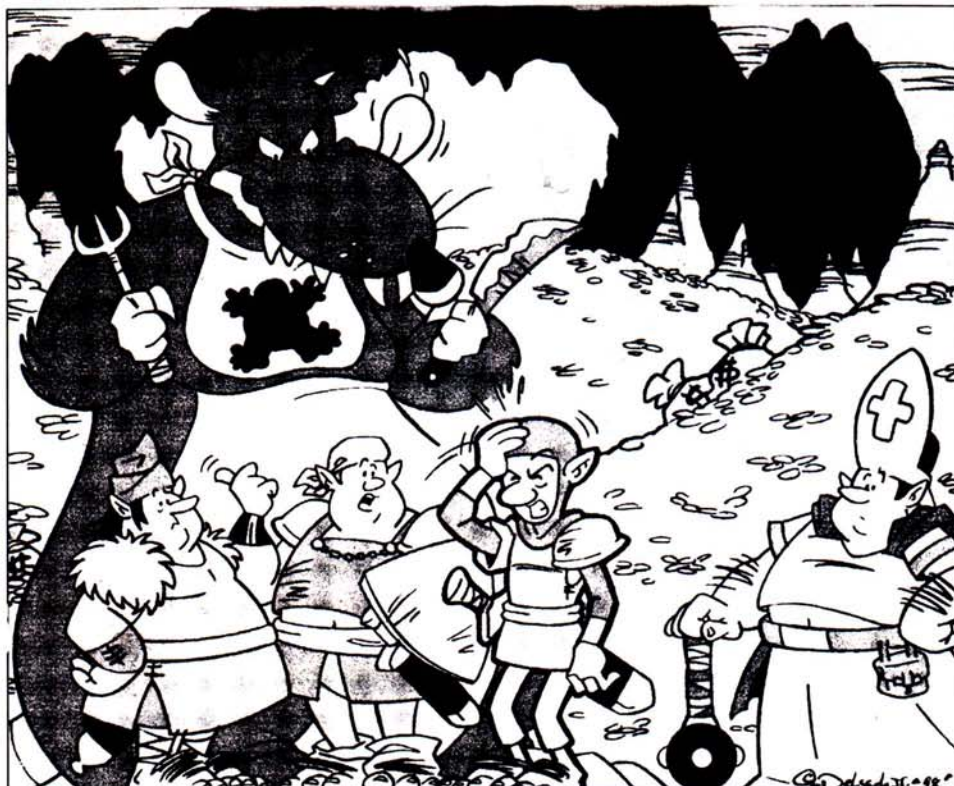
Request (9 favors): This favor calls upon the strength of many ancestors to alter reality. In essence, the Request has power equivalent to a *limited wish* spell. The command must be the general interest of the Obeah's ancestors. and can be attempted only once per month.

Curse (10 favors): Calling upon the righteous fury of the dead, the Obeah casts a malediction at a single target, who may roll a saving throw vs. spell. Possible curses are listed under "Cursed Scrolls" in Chapter 10 in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*.

Greater Manifest (12 favors): Similar to *Manifest*, above, *Greater Manifest* brings an ancestor more completely into the physical world, giving it additional power. The spirit has abilities equivalent to an aerial servant. Much like an aerial servant, it fulfills a single command, but it does not turn upon its summoner.

Fulfillment (14 favors): The most powerful of Obeah favors, this favor calls upon the strength of all an Obeah's ancestors to alter reality. In essence, the *Fulfillment* has all the power equivalent to a *wish* spell. This favor can be attempted only once per year.

By Peter Delgado, Jr.



"He said he'll give us the treasure— if we let him eat one of the 'fat, juicy butter balls'... I think he means you, Carl."

David Eckelberry is a designer for the *ALTERNITY*® team. His previous work includes contributions to the *ALTERNITY* rules and the *STAR*DRIVE*® Campaign Setting.

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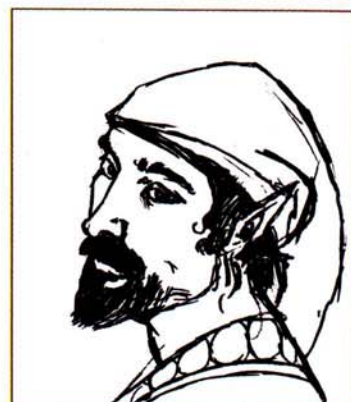
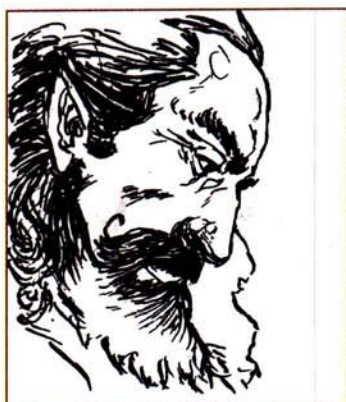
PC Portraits

ELVENKIND

Illustrated by Rebecca Guay

"The best part about creating these characters is imagining all their different personalities," writes Rebecca. "Who is mysterious or sly? Who is wild or demure?"

Of course, that's up to you, once you choose an illustration for your own PC. As Rebecca notes of her own creations, "In each of them is a little of me."





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Convention Calendar

October

September

ConQuest 98

September 4-7 CA
Clarion Hotel, Milbrae, CA. Events: roleplaying, miniatures, live action, board games, computer games, TCGs, flea market, auction, painting contests, dealer's room and more. Contact: ConQuest, 467 Saratoga Ave. Ste. #1422, San Jose, CA 95129. Email: info@con-quest.com. Web: www.con-quest.com

CogCon 6

September 25-27 MO
University Center-East, Rolla, MO. Events: *Earthdawn**, *AD&D**, *CoC*, *LIVING CITY*, *LIVING DEATH*™; also *In Nomine**; *GURPS*; *Champions**; *Warhammer** *Fantasy Battles* and *FRP*; *Starfleet Battles**; sanctioned *Magic**; and *Star Wars** TCG. Other activities: network computer gaming, charity raffle. Registration: \$10 pre-reg, \$13 at the door. Contact: Cog-Con, P.O. Box 1939, Rolla, MO 65402. Email: cogcon@rollanet.org. Web: www.rollanet.org/~cogcon.

KarmaCon

Oct. 16-18 NC
WNC Agricultural Center, Asheville, NC. Guests: Sean Patrick Fannon, Jackie Cassada, Nicky Rea, and Jim Crabtree. Events: White Wolf LARP, masquerade ball, *Magic* tournament, *Warhammer*, *Warhammer 40K*, dealer's market, charity merchandise and auctions, roleplaying games, RPGA® tournament, Magic 8-ball tournament, and more. For more information contact: KarmaCon, P.O. Box 19866, Asheville, NC 28805. Email: info@karmacon.org. Web: www.karmacon.org

Archon 22

Oct. 2-4 MO
Gateway Convention Center and Holiday Inn, Collinsville, IL. Guests: James P. Hogan, John Sies, Lester Smith, Ricky Dick, and Karen Dick. Events: writers' workshops, panels, presentations, videos, grand masquerade show, art show, and gaming. Gaming events include: RPGA sanctioned roleplaying, miniatures, boardgames, and trading card games. Registration: \$25 until 8/31, \$30 afterward. Contact: Archon 22, P.O. Box 8387, St. Louis, MO 63132-8387. Web: www.stlf.org/archon/index.html

Necronomicon '98

Oct 9-11 FL
Radisson Inn-Sabal Par, Tampa, FL. Guest of Honor: C.J. Cherryh. Other guests include Jane Fancher, Barbara Delaplace, and Jack Haldeman. Events: writer and artist panels, art show, radio theater, Ygor party, masquerade, trivia quiz, charity event, dealer's room, ice cream social, Carnival of Souls, and more. Membership is \$18 until September 15, 1998 and \$25 after. For more information contact: Necronomicon, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview, FL 33568. Email: raggedyann@compuserve.com. Web: www.stonehill.org.

November

Carnage at the Crossroads

Nov 6-8 NH
Radisson Inn, Lebanon, NH. Events: miniatures, roleplaying, card games, board games, sanctioned Type II Magic tournament, *Puffing Billy* tournament, L5R sword tournament, LARP, *Warhammer*, *Starfleet Battles**, and more. For more information contact: Carnage at the Crossroads, R.F.D. #1 Box 592A, Windsor, VT 05089. Email: carnagecon@aol.com. Web: http://members.aol.com/carnagecon/index.htm.



Convention Calendar Policies

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

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

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

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)

4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) 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.

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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 must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON* Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

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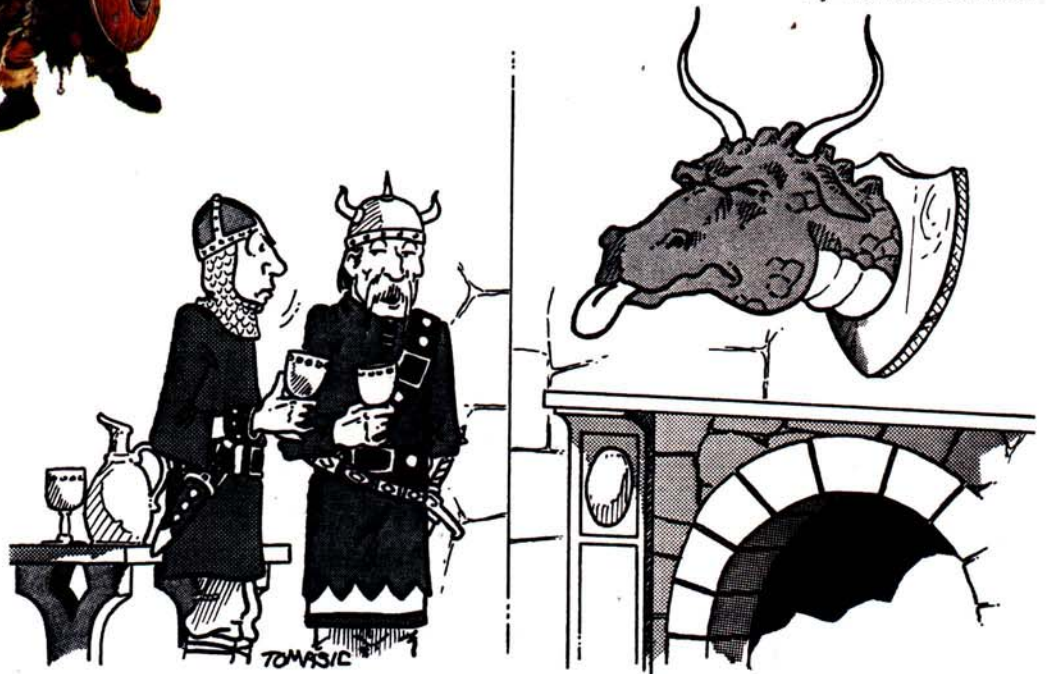
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"Yup, he was defiant to the very end."



By Mathew Guss



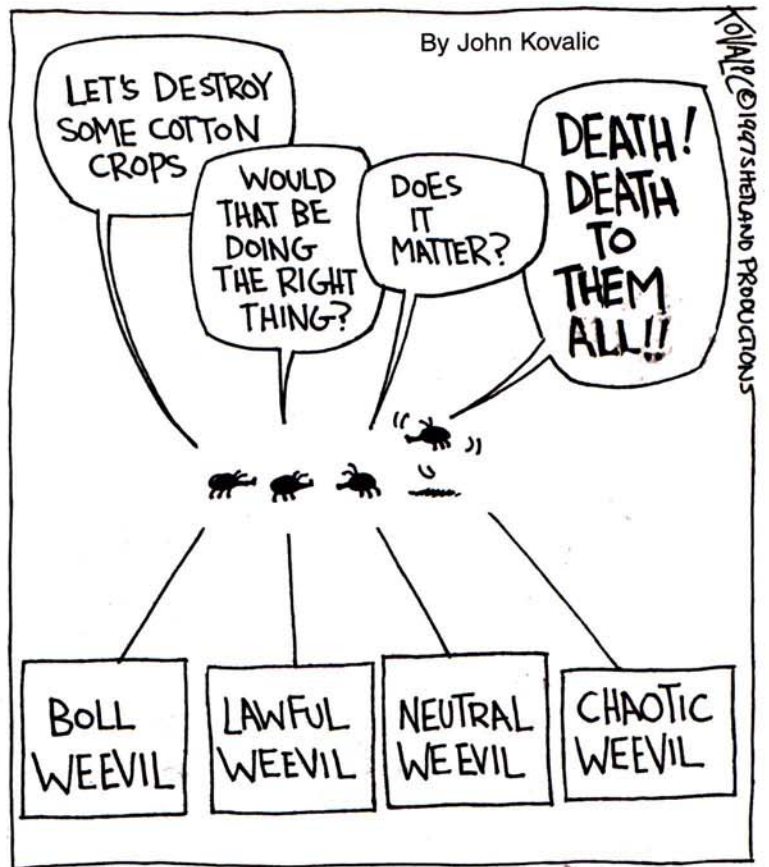
By Bill Cavalier



"Junior, don't forget your lunch box!"

-INDY-

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Pillsbury

SLEEPING DRAGON INN

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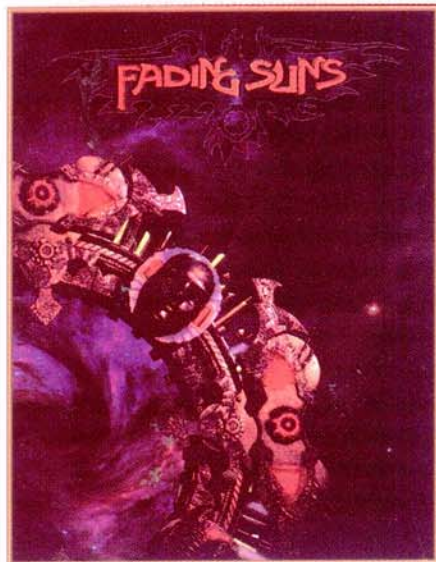
Roleplaying Reviews

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Exploring the Final Frontier, PART TWO

Last month, we looked at the *ALTERNITY*® and *Blue Planet** games. This month, we finish our roundup of the latest science fiction games with in-depth looks at *Fading Suns**, *The Babylon Project**, and the *STAR*DRIVE*™ setting.



Fading Suns

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game

276-page b&w rulebook
Holistic Design Inc.

\$25.00

Design: Bill Bridges and Andrew Greenberg, based on a concept by Ed Pike

Written by: Bill Bridges, Andrew Greenberg, Rob Hatch, Jennifer Hartshorn, Chris Howard, Samuel Inabinet, Ian Lemke, and Jim Moore

Development: Bill Bridges



Art: John Bridges, Tim Callender, Jason Felix, Sam Inabinet, Andrew Kudelka, Larry MacDougall, Ron Spencer, Ken Spera, Joshua Gabriel Timbrook, Jason Waltrip, and John Waltrip.

Cover: John Bridges, sculpture by Jay Marsh, photography by Karl Hawk

The founders of Holistic Design, Bill Bridges and Andrew Greenberg, are expatriates from White Wolf, where Greenberg was instrumental in the success of the *Vampire** line and Bridges directed the successful *Werewolf** line. It's no surprise, then, that *Fading Suns* (which they created with the help of fellow WW alums Rob Hatch, Jennifer Hartshorn, Ian Lemke, Chris McDou-nough, and Josh Timbrook) noticeably displays White Wolf's trademark sensibility. From its familiar layout and art stylings, to its organization, mechanics, and spiritual underpinnings, in many ways, *Fading Suns* employs more of the traditional White Wolf approach to RPGs than does *Trinity**, WW's own SF game (reviewed by Rick Swan in issue #244). To the vast majority of the audience, this is a huge asset—Bridges and Greenberg know exactly what made the early *World of Darkness** games great, and they clearly call upon all of that experience to produce a similarly solid effort here. On the other hand, the sort of story-heavy, roleplaying-oriented campaigns that White Wolf has always favored are certainly not equally beloved by all players.

In both world background and game mechanics, *Fading Suns* is an interesting combination between White Wolf's Storyteller games and Greg Stafford's *Pendragon*, the Arthurian RPG published by Chaosium. Although a series of horror games and a game of romantic chivalry might seem like unusual source material for a science fiction space opera, their various concepts fit together remarkably well and combine to produce a unique, playable, and interesting setting. While it's obvious that *Fading Suns* was partially assembled from mechanics, concepts, and trappings that the designers recognized and enjoyed in other games, each of these details was carefully thought out and reworked to fit a seamless whole. The result is a fresh and interesting twist on tried-and-true concepts, the closest thing to a formula for surefire success in the entertainment industry.

The *Fading Suns* background begins in the year 2305, when humanity discovers an unusual alien artifact orbiting the sun, just beyond Pluto. Eventually, human scientists realize that the device is a "jumpgate" capable of catapulting starships to distant star systems. Using the gate, human pioneers are soon able to explore interstellar space and make contact with a variety of alien species, but not without enduring some unusual side effects. Everyone who passes through the jumpgate, for instance, experiences a strange ecstasy and visions of a shared, deeply metaphysical

truth. Although the euphoria and hallucinations are always fleeting, they mysteriously leave the same nonsense word on the lips of all space travelers. The inexplicable elation of space travel combined with a desire to get to the bottom of the mysteries it unveils soon results in the foundation of a new religion and causes several travelers to become addicted to the journey, driving them deeper and deeper into unknown space.

Eventually, human engineers figure out how to build dampers capable of blocking out the visions and sensations that accompany space travel, and the jumpgate religion is discarded in favor of a new sect, headed by a prophet who successfully adapts ancient Christian beliefs to a world in which the existence of extra-terrestrial life is a certainty. Two thousand years later, this Church and the several splinter groups that break away from it compete with a brace of noble houses descended from ancient planetary rulers and a collection of merchant guilds evolved from terrestrial mega-corporations to influence a vast star empire. Typical adventures and campaigns (renamed "dramas" and "epics" in the rules) revolve around the internal strife within the star empire, conflicts between the star empire and a handful of alien races, and attempts to probe the various mysteries cleverly embedded in the setting—what lies at the heart of the spiritual truths glimpsed during jumpgate travel? Why are stars all over the empire inexplicably fading away and dying out? And what is the nature of the forbidden knowledge possessed by the ancient peoples who constructed the first jumpgates?

The Storyteller sensibilities enmeshed in the background are readily apparent. Not only does *Fading Suns* adopt Storyteller's spiritual themes and motifs, the noble houses, merchant clans and religious sects that dominate the game world function in much the same way as *Vampire's* clans, *Werewolf's* tribes, and *Mage's* traditions, etc. Each player character's chosen house, clan, or sect acts as a sort of shorthand for his or her place in the game universe and introduces a host of potential conflicts between that character and others, each of which is capable of serving as a springboard to

adventures. Since all of the factions are more or less described by archetypal behaviors, less experienced players can even call upon a house, clan, or sect to serve as a sort of personality template in much the same way that beginning AD&D® players tend to use character classes. A few of the more interesting factions include the haughty nobles of House Hawkwood, the scheming rogues of House Decados, the warrior monks of the Brother Battle order, the fanatic inquisitors of Temple Avesti, the space-faring Charioteers of the Traveler's Guild, and the moneylenders of the Reeves Guild.

Pendragon's influence on the world

Some roleplaying purists don't like the idea of dice rolls dictating their characters' actions, but *Fading Suns'* rules are flexible enough to provide plenty of opportunity for creative roleplaying.

background is reflected in the codes of conduct covering behavior among the noble houses and religious orders. Most of *Fading Suns'* player characters are subject to an unwritten code of chivalry straight out of Mallory and the legends of the Round Table. Deeply ingrained social customs govern dress, hospitality between nobles (even enemies), the relationship between nobles and the lower classes, heraldry, and courtly love. Anachronistically added to the traditional medieval chivalric code is the eighteenth century concept of settling disputes between nobles by staging ritualized duels. Although strict realists might find the concept of mankind retreating to such archaic codes of conduct implausible, there's no doubt that the chivalry and dueling concepts game very well and provide lots of opportunities for entertaining roleplaying.

Fading Suns' game system is as solidly designed as its background. Attributes are divided into three categories: body, mind, and spirit. Body and mind attributes are measured (for the most part) on a scale of one to ten, and include Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, Wits (intelligence and quick-thinking), Per-

ception, and Tech (the ability to build and use machines). Spirit attributes are opposing pairs of traits that compete against each other—Passion vs. Calm, for example. A character with a Passion of four cannot have a Calm rating of greater than six. Later, in key game situations, a character might be forced to make opposing dice rolls between his Passion and Calm attributes to see how he'll react in special situations—a concept borrowed from *Pendragon*. Some roleplaying purists don't like the idea of dice rolls dictating their characters' actions, but *Fading Suns'* rules are flexible enough to provide plenty of opportunities for creative roleplaying. The

benefit gained by such a system is the way it allows Gamemasters to design situations and adventures in which each character's inner struggle is as important as the conflict between the character and others. This notion of the hero overcoming his own shortfalls before he can triumph is as old as literature itself, and it explicitly serves as one of *Fading Suns'* defining themes.

Fading Suns' character generation system is point-based and similar to the Storyteller system. Players divide a pool of points between their attributes and use a second pool to purchase skills. Players then select Benefices and Afflictions, which are minor perks and flaws tied to the character's background and/or history such as an "Ally" in a position of power or a "Dark Secret." Finally, the player spends a pool of "Extra Points" on Attribute and Skill increases and/or additional Benefices. Extra Points can also be used to purchase occult powers (psionics, religious miracles and enigmatic magical rites tied to the spiritual mysteries that pervade the *Fading Suns* setting), Wyrd points (a measure of the character's spiritual energy, used to fuel occult powers), and Blessings/Curses

(minor perks and flaws not tied to the character's background, such as "Beautiful Appearance" or "Clumsy"). Each player also claims membership in a noble house, religious sect, or merchant guild of choice. While this selection doesn't play a role in determining the character's game statistics, the description of each faction provides a list of suggested skills and benefices that might help the player fit into his chosen role.

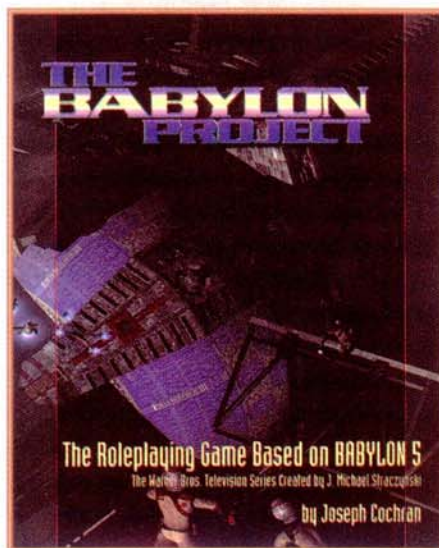
Fading Suns resolves all actions using the same system: to succeed at a task, a character must roll less than the total of an appropriate attribute and an appropriate skill on a d20. To throw a punch, for instance, you might roll a d20 against your total Dexterity attribute plus Fight skill. If your action succeeds, the actual number you rolled on the d20 indicates just how successful you were—the higher the number, the better. Thus, highly skilled characters have a better chance of attaining more spectacular success; a character with a total Dexterity plus Fight of nineteen, for example, still succeeds on a roll of eighteen, which translates into an incredibly effective (and damaging) punch. The idea of basing all actions on an attribute added to a skill is borrowed from *Storyteller*, while the mechanic for measuring success is an expansion of an idea that sits at the heart of *Pendragon's* combat system. In any case, the two concepts are skillfully melded to produce an extremely intuitive and flexible system that doesn't require complex charts or play aids. Particularly interesting is an optional rule that allows a character to add or subtract an arbitrary total from his or her die roll before resolving the action. Adding to the roll decreases the chance of success, but yields a more potent result if the action is successful. Subtracting from the roll, increases the chance of success, but decreases the likely impact of that success. In essence, the optional rule gives the players a strong feeling that their destiny is in their own hands and makes the resolution of critical actions much more dramatic by allowing the player to employ guesswork and tactics in addition to dropping the die on the table.

Evaluation: *Fading Suns* may be the most interesting and "gameable" science fiction setting on the market. Its sophisti-

cated approaches to theme and drama will interest players who like to emphasize roleplaying and storytelling in their game sessions. If you're a fan of the White Wolf Storyteller games and have an interest in space opera, the odds are good that you'll devour *Fading Suns*.

Of course, *Fading Suns* isn't for everybody. Like most science fiction games, its sheer sense of scale can make it enormously difficult to run. As I noted in part one of the SF roundup last month, most space opera games allow the players to move from world to world easier than fantasy characters can move from village to village. To keep up, the GM must be ready to flesh out and game a whole new planet based upon a one- or two-paragraph description at a moment's notice. One advantage that *Fading Suns* holds over its rivals in this department is a proven commitment to providing a steady line of support products that are slowly but surely detailing an ever-expanding portion of the game's unique setting. HDI already has nine or ten sourcebooks on the store shelves.

One more glaring deficiency of *Fading Suns* is the lack of rules for handling combat between starships. Fortunately, by the time you read this, HDI should release a new supplemental game that takes care of this problem.



The Babylon Project

Science Fiction
Roleplaying Game

196-page full-color rulebook.
Chameleon Eclectic
Entertainment



\$28.00

Design: Joseph Cochran and Charles Ryan with additional design by Ronald Jarrell and Zeke Sparkes

Written by: Joseph Cochran with additional material by Ronald Jarrell, Charles Ryan, and Zeke Sparkes

Art: Joe Bellofatto, Catherine Burnett, Bill H. Burt, Shane Colclough, Audrey Coleman, Jonathan Darkly, Chris Impink, Veronica V. Jones, Shane Magill, Mark R. Poole, Charles Ryan, Theodor Schwartz, Douglas Schuler, and Christina Wald.

Cover: Netter Digital Entertainment Inc.

The most successful science fiction games published to date were based on popular licenses from other media. FASA's *Star Trek: The Role Playing Game* (published in 1983, now out of print) and West End Games' *Star Wars Role Playing Game* (first published in 1987) are both among the top ten best-selling RPGs of all time. Of course, it's not surprising that such popular licenses yielded best-sellers, but there's probably another factor that helps explain their runaway success. A familiar license makes a science fiction RPG much easier to play by helping the gamemaster cope with the "epic scale" issue unique to SF games. *Star Trek*, for example, essentially furnishes GMs with two or three free sourcebooks every week, detailing an ever-increasing chunk of the fictional universe and giving the GM plenty of fall-back material that proves useful when dealing with players who decide to make unexpected visits to alien locales.

Chameleon Eclectic's *Babylon Project* RPG is based on the cult favorite *Babylon 5* television series. For those of you unfamiliar with the program, its premise revolves around an enormous space station (the titular *Babylon 5*) on which representatives of a handful of alien races attempt to coexist peacefully and resolve any difficulties that arise between their peoples. The characteristic meant to distinguish *Babylon 5* from other science fiction programs is its true serial nature—each episode continues a story arc that runs across the entire series and, unlike most television shows, *B5* allows its characters to change and grow. *B5's* creators insist that they have a single five-

year story in mind and promise to wrap up the series once that story has run its course.

Unlike both FASA's *Star Trek* and West End's *Star Wars* RPGs, *The Babylon Project* seems to be the victim of some rather unusual licensing restrictions. None of the characters from the television series are featured (or even significantly mentioned) in the rulebook. In fact, the rules explicitly state that *Babylon Project* adventures aren't meant to dovetail with the storylines featured on the television series. Instead they should "tell the same types of epic stories against the same broad background." Given that the serial nature of *B5*'s storylines along with the gradual evolution of its characters are the most appealing facets of the series, these restrictions immediately diminish *Babylon Project*'s usefulness. Because most of the series' action is set aboard the Babylon 5 space station and all of the station's most important personnel are beyond the scope of the game, it's difficult for fans of the series to recreate their favorite situations. Of course, an enterprising GM and *Babylon 5* fan could probably fill all these holes on his own, but anyone who aims to do so could almost as easily start with any other game system. In fact, stripped of its characters and over-arching storylines, *Babylon 5*'s setting is remarkably banal and unimaginative—there's very little left that isn't cliché, and since the bulk of *B5*'s action is set aboard the space station, the series isn't even very useful as a "living sourcebook" that might prepare GMs for the "epic scale" problem. Exactly how the GM is expected to use the included background materials to craft adventures set in the thin slice of the *Babylon 5* universe that doesn't use any of the television material is left unclear. The designers of the enclosed sample adventure resorted to setting their story several years before the television episodes take place. In fact, the odd sentence here or there seems to indicate that this era is the intended setting of all *Babylon Project* adventures, though this intention isn't explicitly stated, and there's plenty of evidence in the rulebook to suggest that it may not be the designers' intent after all. Firmly fixing the game in the series' past might have

vastly increased its utility, as it would have allowed the game designers to replace the series' characters and intricate storylines with story springboards and characters of their own creation.

That said, diehard *Babylon 5* fans are likely to find plenty of interest in the *Babylon Project* rulebook. The book's centerpiece is a detailed (though somewhat dry) history of the program's deep back-

attribute (*a la* Storyteller), adding a die roll and attempting to exceed a target number determined by the difficulty of the task at hand. (An Average task has a target number of seven, a Difficult task has a target number of eleven, etc.) The dice roll consists of two differently colored d6s, one representing a positive result and the other representing a negative result; the die that comes up with

Some players will admire this system for its comprehensive resolution.

Others will curse it for the tendency of its chart-flipping to steal the focus away from roleplaying and plot.

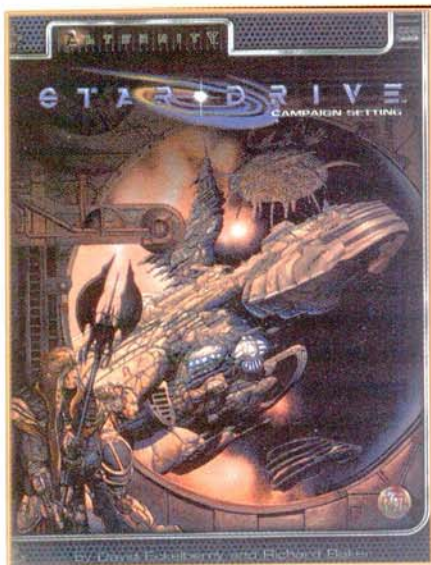
story. Included are notes on the various alien races that crop up on Babylon station, notes on the series' futuristic technology, an account of the program's future society, and even a nice diagram of space station Babylon 5 itself. While none of this material is terribly "gameable," it does contain a few tidbits never revealed on television (approved by the series creators), and it's generally much more thorough than similar materials found in other licensed games. All of the material is very well-presented and accompanied by excellent, full-color illustrations.

Mechanically, *Babylon Project* is solidly designed, though its systems are definitely slanted toward players who prefer detail and complex combat resolution. Each character has twelve attributes (Charm, Finesse, Presence, Xenorelation, Intelligence, Insight, Wits, Perception, Strength, Agility, Endurance, and Coordination) rated on a scale from one to nine and a body of skills rated one to five. Character generation is handled via point allocation, but the designers employ an interesting system that asks players to generate their characters in stages that correspond to the various phases of the character's life (i.e., select some skills and personality characteristics that your character picked up in childhood, now select skills and personality characteristics picked up in school, etc). Tasks are resolved by adding an appropriate skill to an appropriate

the highest face value is added (or subtracted) from the task resolution total. In other words, if the negative die comes up a four and the positive die comes up a two, the task resolution total is equal to the character's attribute plus skill minus four, since the negative die came up with the higher face value. This system is simple and intuitive, though it can lead to some pretty extreme and unpredictable results.

Babylon Project's combat system is more detailed than most and employs a complex hit location system. Combatants select an ideal aim point on a hex-grid silhouette of a human body, and the quality of their task resolution rolls indicates the exact body part struck by the attack, greatly influencing the damage inflicted. Some players will admire this system for its comprehensive resolution. Others will curse it for the tendency of its chart-flipping to steal the focus away from roleplaying and plot. Like *Fading Suns*, *Babylon Project* is surprisingly silent on the subject of space combat.

Evaluation: While certainly not of interest to those who don't count themselves among the *Babylon 5* faithful, *The Babylon Project* undoubtedly contains more than enough information to justify \$28 from hardcore fans. GMs looking to run a *Babylon 5* campaign have a lot of work ahead of them, but this book should help even those interested in adopting *Babylon 5* to a different game system.



STAR*DRIVE Setting

Science Fiction Campaign
Setting

256-page full-color book

TSR Inc.,

\$29.95

Design: David Eckelberry and Richard
Baker

Additional Design: Jim Butler

Concept & Creative Direction: Bill
Slavicsek

Art: Doug Alexander, Charles
Bernard, Tom Gianni, Nemo Halverson,
Hannibal King, Andrew Robinson, Dave
Seeley, Ron Walotsky

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The STAR*DRIVE setting is the first campaign for use with the ALTERNITY game, TSR's new "generic" science fiction gaming system (reviewed last issue). Judging by how well it melds with the concepts presented in the ALTERNITY core rulebooks, it looks like TSR is positioning STAR*DRIVE as the ALTERNITY game's "signature setting," in much the same way they've positioned the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting as the AD&D game's default universe. Like the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, the STAR*DRIVE universe is a relatively flavorless campaign background filled with familiar concepts and ideas.

Which isn't to say it's bad. This sort of familiarity only helps more casual players (the STAR*DRIVE target audience) comprehend the setting and get into the game faster and easier. It's probably impossible to design a campaign setting for the kind of mass consumption a

product this ambitious needs without giving gamemasters the opportunity to take center stage and inject their own flavor. The STAR*DRIVE designers wisely focused their own efforts upon creating a flexible world that would accommodate a wide variety of players and guaranteeing that there are plenty of little mysteries embedded in the game universe that enterprising GMs might unearth and use as fuel for their own campaigns and adventures.

To briefly summarize, the STAR*DRIVE environment is comprised of fifteen competing interstellar nations, each based upon its own familiar and recognizable archetype. Austrin-Ontis is the empire of gunrunners and mercenaries, the Nariac Domain is the collective run by workers who treasure laborers' rights and suppress philosophy and religion (intergalactic communists), while VOIDCORP is the shady galactic empire based entirely on commerce and run more like a business than a government. While these concepts are far too trite to make for interesting fiction, they're remarkably well-suited to a certain style of role-playing and capable of supporting an enormous variety of characters and adventures. And of course, outside the interstellar nations is a wild frontier region known as the Verge, which is shrouded in mystery and serves as a stomping ground for pioneers from all the various space empires, as well as assorted rogues and adventurers. Practically every open-ended RPG setting ever designed has featured such an environment. (Old timers will remember the Wild Coast on the original GREYHAWK® campaign maps.) Guess where you're supposed to set your campaign?

The STAR*DRIVE setting does a pretty fair job of giving the Gamemaster the guidance he needs to get a campaign up and running. Early in the book is a brief chapter that explicitly suggests four different models a STAR*DRIVE campaign might follow: exploration, intrigue, military, and trade. In each case, the GM is advised what sort of characters to encourage the players to create and what sections of the STAR*DRIVE book are likely to prove most interesting. A GM wishing to run a military campaign, for instance, is given several suggestions for

how the player characters might fit into the various armed forces that patrol the setting, and he is referred to the chapter describing the various interstellar nations for potential campaign and adventure springboards. As useful as this advice is, it could (and probably should) be much more comprehensive. Given the broad audience targeted by the ALTERNITY game and the STAR*DRIVE campaign, it wouldn't be unreasonable to expect each of these campaign models to receive its own chapter, complete with more concrete advice and specific suggestions for adventures to get things moving.

Although the history of the setting, the current state of various technologies, and a handful of religions and credos are given fairly comprehensive treatments, the bulk of the STAR*DRIVE campaign book is devoted to lengthy descriptions of the fifteen interstellar nations and even lengthier descriptions of the major planets comprising the Verge. The entry for each of the interstellar nations includes a history, an overview, notes on how to play natives of the nation, and a description of a concrete game benefit enjoyed by the natives. (Austrin-Ontis natives, for example, can develop special weaponry skills, while members of the VOIDCORP are used to climbing the corporate ladder and thus earn experience levels faster than their counterparts.) The descriptions of the Verge worlds focus on places of interest and mini-mysteries that might propel an adventure or campaign. Examples include the Lighthouse, an enormous mobile space station that serves as a center of commerce as well as a self-propelled temple for one of the setting's major religions; Depth Epsilon, a ruined undersea city that houses an interesting secret; and Algemron, a lush star system plagued by mysterious invaders. The STAR*DRIVE setting does an excellent job of conquering the "epic scale" problem, providing the GM with surprisingly detailed descriptions of dozens of worlds and locales within the Verge.

Rounding out the STAR*DRIVE campaign book is a useful and meaty chapter on character creation that gives comprehensive guidance on creating PCs tailored for the setting. Much of this

chapter is comprised of ALTERNITY Careers tailor-made for the STAR*DRIVE setting, each including notes and suggestions indicating exactly how such a

space opera setting with long-term play potential aimed at such a broad audience. It will be interesting to see what some of the forthcoming STAR*DRIVE

well-written book full of obvious enthusiasm for its subject matter. The game statistics for Wong Fei Hong and Fong Sai Yuk (the Chinese folk heroes often portrayed by Jackie Chan and Jet Li on the silver screen) are alone worth the price of admission.

Deadlands: Fire & Brimstone*, by John "Salman" Goff (Pinnacle Entertainment Group, \$20). *Fire & Brimstone* is a treatise on how to create and run preachers and other holy men in the *Deadlands* campaign setting. Inside you'll find rules for handling matters of faith in play, new character archetypes, a huge list of new miracles, rules for divine intervention and a descriptions of various holy relics. Like most *Deadlands* sourcebooks, *F&B* is written in an infectious and entertaining "old west" tone and includes a chapter of special information for the GM's eyes only. This is about as useful and entertaining as character handbooks get.



Ray Winninger is a 15-year veteran of the game industry and steadily recovering complainer. Although he makes his living "in the corporate space" (as his co-workers say), he's having so much fun writing this column that he's lining up a few game projects.

There's probably never been a better space opera setting with long-term play potential aimed at such a broad audience.

character might fit into the campaign. A player interested in creating a "Brawler" Combat Specialist, for instance, is advised to consider creating a "pit-fighter from the planet Penates in the Lucillus system" and given a bit of background about these infamous rogues.

Evaluation: The STAR*DRIVE is a solid design effort that does a much better job of providing players and GMs with concrete usable material than most similarly broad supplements detailing entire settings (the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, for instance). Although its familiarity makes it easy to run and easy to play, one or two genuinely innovative twists on some of its core concepts would have helped capture players' imaginations. Still, there's probably never been a better

supplements will add to the setting.

Short & Sweet

Feng Shui: Blood of the Valiant, by Chris Pramas (Ronin Publishing, \$19.95). Finally, after an almost interminable lag, Ronin Publishing steps in to rescue *Feng Shui** from obscurity. *Blood of the Valiant* details The Guiding Hand, *Feng Shui's* secret society of kung fu warriors. Included are comprehensive details on the history and philosophy of the Hand, locations of interest, important NPCs, new PC archetypes, new kung fu powers, lots of new weapons for *Feng Shui's* 1850 era and a complete adventure. Although a few more specific suggestions for adventures and campaigns would have been nice, this is a solid,

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Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
BASED ON A STORY BY JAMES MISHLER

OKAY, THIS IS THE **TWELFTH** DAY YOU GUYS HAVE GONE WITHOUT FOOD, AND YOU ARE **STILL** LOST IN THE **FOREST LABYRINTH!!** YOU EACH LOSE **THREE MORE HIT POINTS** DUE TO **STARVATION**. YOU ARE NOW **TOO WEAK** TO TRAVEL ANY LENGTH OF TIME.

DAMN!! I'M DOWN TO **SIX** HIT POINTS!!

I'M DOWN TO **FOUR!!**

IT CERTAINLY LOOKS BAD FOR US.

AFTER ALL OUR **GREAT EXPLOITS**, WHO EVER THOUGHT IT WOULD END LIKE THIS?

WAIT A SECOND!!! WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?? I'M A **BARBARIAN!!** ONE OF MY **PRIMARY SKILLS** IS HUNTING **SMALL GAME!!** I BET THIS **FOREST** IS FILLED WITH **RABBITS, SQUIRRELS, GAME FOWL**, NOT TO MENTION **'POSSUMS!!**

GOOD IDEA SARA BUT WHO NEEDS A PRIMARY SKILL TO DO THAT?? ALL YA GOTTA DO IS WALK UP AND **BASH** ONE OF THE VARMINTS ON THE HEAD.

A LITTLE **SQUIRREL STEW** WOULD SURE HIT THE SPOT!!

HUNTING IS **MORE DIFFICULT** THAN YOU MIGHT THINK, GUYS. A RABBIT ISN'T GOING TO WALK UP TO YOU AND STAND THERE SO YOU CAN KILL IT. SARA'S SKILLS INVOLVE TRACKING, READING SIGN, MAKING SNARES, MIMICKING ANIMAL CALLS, AND A HOST OF OTHER THINGS.

PUT A **CORK** IN IT, WILL YA, BA?? ABOUT ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HUNTING IS **WHERE TO AIM!!** SO BRING ON THE **WOODLAND CREATURES!!!** IT'S MEAL TIME!!

I'M LOOKING FOR **SQUIRREL TRACKS!!**

I'M LOADING MY CROSSBOW WITH A **BOLT OF SLAYING!!** THEN I'M GOING TO **HIDE** IN A BUSH. WHEN SOME **BAMBI-TYPE** COMES WALTZING BY, I'LL **WASTE IT!!**

I'M GOING TO SEARCH FOR SOMETHING I CAN USE TO IMPROVISE A SIMPLE TRAP OR SNARE USING MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE FOREST.

I'M SORRY, BOB, YOU'RE TOO WEAK FROM STARVATION TO COCK YOUR CROSSBOW.

FINE!! I'LL USE MY **-4 DAGGER**. THEN, I'M GOING TO **HIDE IN SHADOWS** AND **BACKSTAB** THE FIRST **DEER** THAT COMES ALONG.

LOOK, THIS AIN'T **MS. SUNSHINE'S PETTING ZOO!!** THESE ARE **WILD ANIMALS!!**

I'M MAKING SQUIRREL NOISES TO TRY AND DRAW SOME OUT IN THE OPEN!!

GOOD IDEA, DAVE. YOU LURE 'EM OUT, AND I'LL **FIREBALL 'EM**.

YOU ... YOU'RE GOING TO **BACKSTAB** A DEER??

ANY SQUIRRELS YET??

A FEW MINUTES LATER...

EVEN THOUGH YOU SUCCEEDED IN **HIDING IN SHADOWS**, BOB, I'M AFRAID THE **EIGHT-POINT BUCK** DETECTS YOUR SCENT. AS YOU ATTEMPT TO **BACKSTAB** HIM, HE GORES YOU FOR **FOUR POINTS** OF DAMAGE.

BA, I'M TAKING THE **WILLOW BRANCHES** I FOUND AND **WEAVING A BASKET!!** I'LL USE IT TO BUILD A TRAP AND ATTEMPT TO CATCH SOME **GAME FOWL**.

I'M STILL IMITATING A SQUIRREL. ANY LUCK??

LET'S TRY ANOTHER TREE, DAVE. THIS ONE'S OBVIOUSLY EMPTY!!

THAT'S NOT FAIR!!

LATER STILL...

BOB THAT **MUDDY PASTE** YOU APPLIED TO YOUR FACE AS **CAMO** IS CAUSING AN **ALLERGIC REACTION**. YOUR FACE HAS BROKEN OUT WITH A BAD **OOZING RASH**, CAUSING AN ADDITIONAL **ONE POINT** OF DAMAGE.

GAAA!! WHA ... WHAT?? YOU'RE JUST MAKING THAT UP. WHO EVER HEARD OF AN ALLERGIC REACTION TO **MUD??**

HEY, **YOU'RE** THE ONE WHO PICKED **ACUTE ALLERGIES** AS A CHARACTER FLAW, BUDDY-BOY.

SQUEAK! SQUEAK!

DAVE, A VERY **ANNOYED SQUIRREL** HAS SCURRIED OUT OF A TREE TO INVESTIGATE THE **NOISE** YOU'VE BEEN MAKING OUTSIDE HIS NEST. HE BARES HIS TEETH AND MAKES THREATENING GESTURES TOWARD YOU.

HOLD ON THERE A SECOND!! A SQUIRREL IS TRYING TO INTIMIDATE THE MIGHTY **EL RAVAGER??**

YOU'D BETTER BACK OFF OR HE MAY ATTACK!!

THIS IS **WHACKED!** I DON'T THINK SQUIRRELS ARE TERRITORIAL!!



BACK OFF?? **ME??** NO WAY IN HELL!! I'VE SLAIN **DRAGONS** AND DEFEATED **GREAT ARMIES!!!** I'M NOT LETTIN' SOME **STUPID SQUIRREL** PUSH ME AROUND!!

UH ... DAVE, DON'T FORGET YOU'RE DOWN TO **FOUR HITPOINTS!!** MAYBE YOU SHOULD JUST WALK AWAY FROM THE **NICE SQUIRREL!!**

SO ... IT'S A **STAND OFF** THEN. YOU'RE NOT BACKING OFF??

DON'T WORRY DUDE!! I'M ON MY WAY!! I'LL BACK YOU UP!!

THIS RODENT IS **LUNCH!!** I WASTE HIM WITH MY **HACKMASTER!**

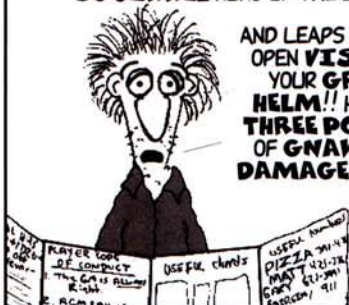
TRY SCRATCHING HIS BELLY, DAVE. I THINK IT PUTS THEM TO SLEEP!!



A FEW SECONDS LATER...

SORRY, DAVE. LOOKS LIKE YOU **FUMBLE!** YOUR SWORD WEDGES INTO THE TRUNK OF THE TREE, AND YOU'RE TOO WEAK FROM **HUNGER** TO REMOVE IT. THE **ANGRY SQUIRREL** RUNS UP THE BLADE

AND LEAPS INTO THE OPEN **VISOR** OF YOUR **GREAT HELM!!** HE DOES **THREE POINTS** OF **GNAWING DAMAGE** TO YOU!!



HE **SEVERS** YOUR **LEFT EAR**. THE **PAIN** OF THE ATTACK CAUSES YOU TO **PASS OUT!!** **BOB** AS YOU RUN UP TO JOIN BATTLE THE **SQUIRREL** POPS HIS HEAD OUT OF **DAVE'S HELMET**, FLASHES ITS LONG **INCISORS**, AND **LUNGES** FOR YOU!!

HORRID BEAST!!! I THROW MY **DAGGER** AT IT AND RUN AWAY!!!

B.A., ARE YOU **SURE** YOU'RE USING THE **RIGHT STATS** FOR **SQUIRRELS??** THIS ONE SEEMS AWFULLY **HOSTILE!!**

YOU MISSED, **BOB!!** THE **SQUIRREL** GIVES CHASE!!

MAYBE IT'S **RABID!!**



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

BOB AS YOU CRAWL OUT OF YOUR HIDING PLACE UNDER THE FALLEN LOG THE **SQUIRREL** AMBUSHES YOU AGAIN!! JUMPING FROM A LOW OVERHANGING BRANCH, HE **LEAPS** ONTO YOUR BACK AND STARTS **GNAWING** AT THE STRAPS OF YOUR **LEATHER ARMOR!!**

GEEZE LOUEEZE!! HE HAS IT IN FOR ME **BAD!!** I STAB AT HIM WITH MY **DAGGER!!**

HE DODGES YOUR ATTACK WITH **GREAT DEXTERITY!!** ROLL TO SEE IF YOU STABBED YOURSELF IN THE BACK!!

STABS HIMSELF IN THE BACK??

IS THAT POSSIBLE??



I AIN'T BELIEVING THIS!! **WHAT THE HELL IS THIS THING??** THE **CUJO** OF **RODENTS??** HE'S **RELENTLESS!!** BRIAN WE COULD USE SOME **FIREPOWER** DOWN HERE!!

HAND ME THE **HACKLOPEDIA OF BEASTS!!** I WANT TO LOOK AT THE STATS FOR **SQUIRREL**.

WILL YOU SEW MY EAR BACK ON??

THAT'S IT!! I'M **TORCHING** THE FOREST.



THE NEXT DAY...

FAVOR?? WHAT KIND OF **FAVOR** B.A.??

IF ANY OF MY PLAYERS HAPPENS TO ASK, **SQUIRRELS** ARE RATED AS A **FIFTH-LEVEL MONSTER** IN **HACKMASTER**, BUT SOMEHOW THE **STATS** GOT **SCREWED UP** IN THE BOOKS. JUST TELL THEM YOU SAW THE **ERRATA SHEET** SOMEWHERE, BUT YOU LOST IT.

SQUIRRELS?? FIFTH LEVEL MONSTER?? WHAT THE HELL IS THIS ALL ABOUT??

JUST COVER ME ON THIS ONE, **PETE**, AND I'LL **OWE** YOU **BIG TIME!!**





Previews

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Wizard's Spell Compendium, Vol. IV

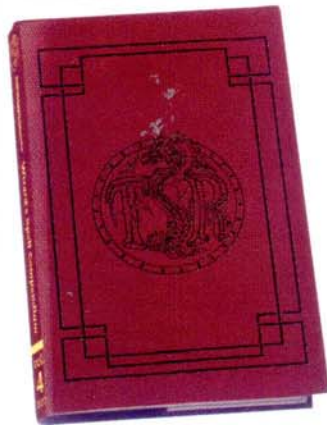
A 288-page AD&D® Game Supplement
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Wizard's Spell Compendium, Volume IV completes the monumental collection of every official wizard spell for the AD&D game. Spells were collected from the *Player's Handbook*, *Tome of Magic*, *Complete Wizard's Handbook*, *DRAGON® Magazine*, *POLYHEDRON® Newszine*, and a multitude of other AD&D game resources. It is the official reference book and definitive source for wizard spells in the AD&D game.

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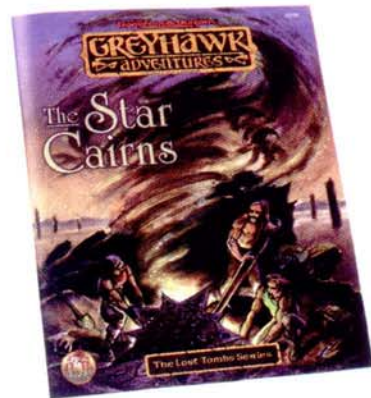
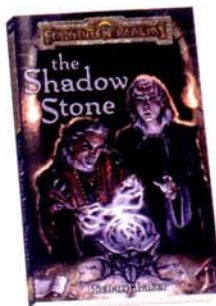
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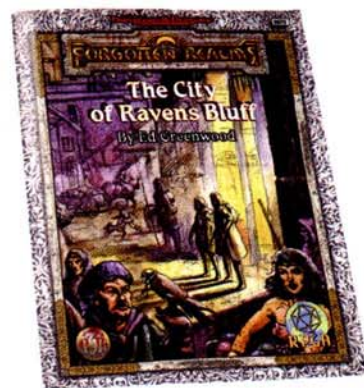
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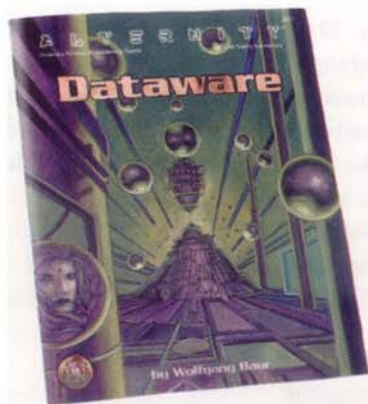
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DRAGONLANCE

This month, the complete text of the LEGENDS OF THE LANCE™ newsletter, Issue 1, will be uploaded to the DRAGONLANCE® area of the TSR web-site. The issue features an interview with Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weis; a profile of artist Jeff Easley; a mini-adventure by Chris Perkins titled "The Wyrms of Icewall Glacier"; a look at Ansalonian winter sports by Mary Kirchoff; "The Herald's Report," featuring the latest news from Krynn; and more items of interest to DRAGONLANCE fans and game players everywhere.

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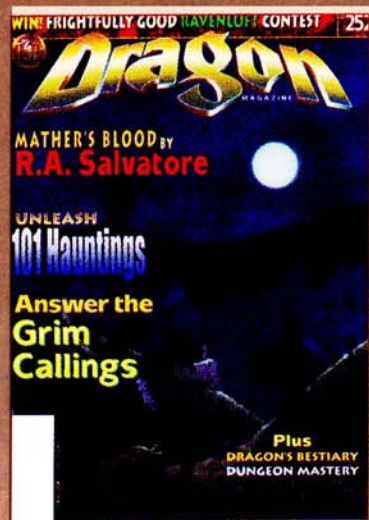
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Profiles

by Allen Varney

Photography by Kim Pilla



TONY DITERLIZZI

This issue's cover artist, well known to AD&D players for his PLANESCAPE® work, says he tries to make his covers "so nice that the readers go, 'Wow! I want that hanging on my wall!'"

"I really appreciate my fans. I am a big fan myself. I get googly over the newest Brian Froud book, I sweated bullets when I met Moebius, and I still can't believe I know Brom. I think that perspective helps fans see that I understand where they're coming from."

Tony DiTerlizzi (the name means "from Terlizzi," a village in southern Italy's Pulia province) has been a fan—of fantasy, games, and art—all his life. Now 29, DiTerlizzi strives for an "evergreen, timeless" look in his inspired artwork. "Many good fantasy artists will tell you their influences are Frazetta or Boris Vallejo. Realizing this, I went for more diverse influences, since it seemed to me that most current fantasy work has that same oil-painted feel." He lists "silent teachers" ranging from Heironymus Bosch and Leonardo da Vinci to early 1900s magazine artists (Maxfield Parrish, Heinrich Kley) to classic children's book illustrators (Arthur Rackham, Ernest Shepard, John Tenniel) to offbeat modern fantasists (Brian Froud, Moebius, William Stout, Muppet creator Jim Henson) to David Trampier.

Remember Trampier? Along with *DRAGON® Magazine's* 1970s "Wormy" comic strip, he illustrated much of AD&D's first *Monster Manual*. "That was my fave book when I was a kid," DiTerlizzi recalls. "I would copy Trampier's drawings over and over. I was so psyched when I got a chance to work on [the 1993 *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome]. My entire goal was to 'blow away' the other artists. It helped me in getting the job for the PLANESCAPE® setting."

DiTerlizzi's work for the 1994 PLANESCAPE campaign set and supplements brought a fascinating new vision of the eons-old Outer Planes. "Not only buildings but the people had to have a worn, rusted, organic look. This seemed to come naturally in my art style. When I went to work on PLANESCAPE, I looked at anime and Japanese fantasy art like Yoshitaka Amano." In the first PLANESCAPE MC, check DiTerlizzi's hamatula and osyluth illos, labeled "after DAT" in tribute to Trampier.

DiTerlizzi's mixed-media look remains unique in the field. "I love trying new media and techniques, and oil

paints are about the only thing I don't use. Usually I lightly pencil the drawing, then go in with inks (usually sepia). Next I fill in color with watercolors or gouache, and intensify hues with colored inks. A little airbrush for special effects—some detail with colored pencil—the last thing I do is add that shine in the eyes with opaque white ink."

After his work for TSR, White Wolf's *Changeling** and *Werewolf** Storyteller games, and many cards for *Magic**, DiTerlizzi has branched out. He illustrated last year's *Giant Bones* by Peter Beagle, and Greg Bear's recent *Dinosaur Summer*. Now he's returning to his roots—not gaming, but children's books. *Jimmy Zangwow's Out-of-This-World Moon-Pie Adventure*, due from Simon & Schuster next fall, is a picture book for youngsters. A young boy flies to the moon for his favorite snack, Moon-Pies, but gets sidetracked to Mars. "I love *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, and *Willy Wonka*—all the good, fantastical stuff. I am hoping this passion for juvenile fantasy will come across in my books."

After years in south Florida, DiTerlizzi has moved. "New York City is a great place. I think everyone should visit at least once. I really dig the rhythm of the city"—and, just as important, he can hang out with the artists he admires. "When artist friends come in from out of town, I drag them to life drawing so they can meet the locals."

"That is the one great thing about living in the publishing capital of the world: Quite a few big-name artists will breeze through and stay in town, which is a great opportunity for us art-lovers. At an opening in Soho, I met the wonderful Michael Kaluta, which led to a warm friendship and a neat collaboration on a few *Magic* cards. Last year he and I drove upstate to meet the super-talented, and very cool, James Gurney [*Dinotopia*], which was awesome!"

DiTerlizzi issues a quarterly newsletter (available at arcane.eng.ohio-state.edu/tonyd/) and answers fan mail to DiTerlizzi@aol.com. Adroit publicity? Maybe—or maybe it's one fan responding to others. "If it were not for the fans' appreciation, I don't think I would be where I am today. It really is a big energy circle—you only receive what you have given."



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