

# OLYMPUS

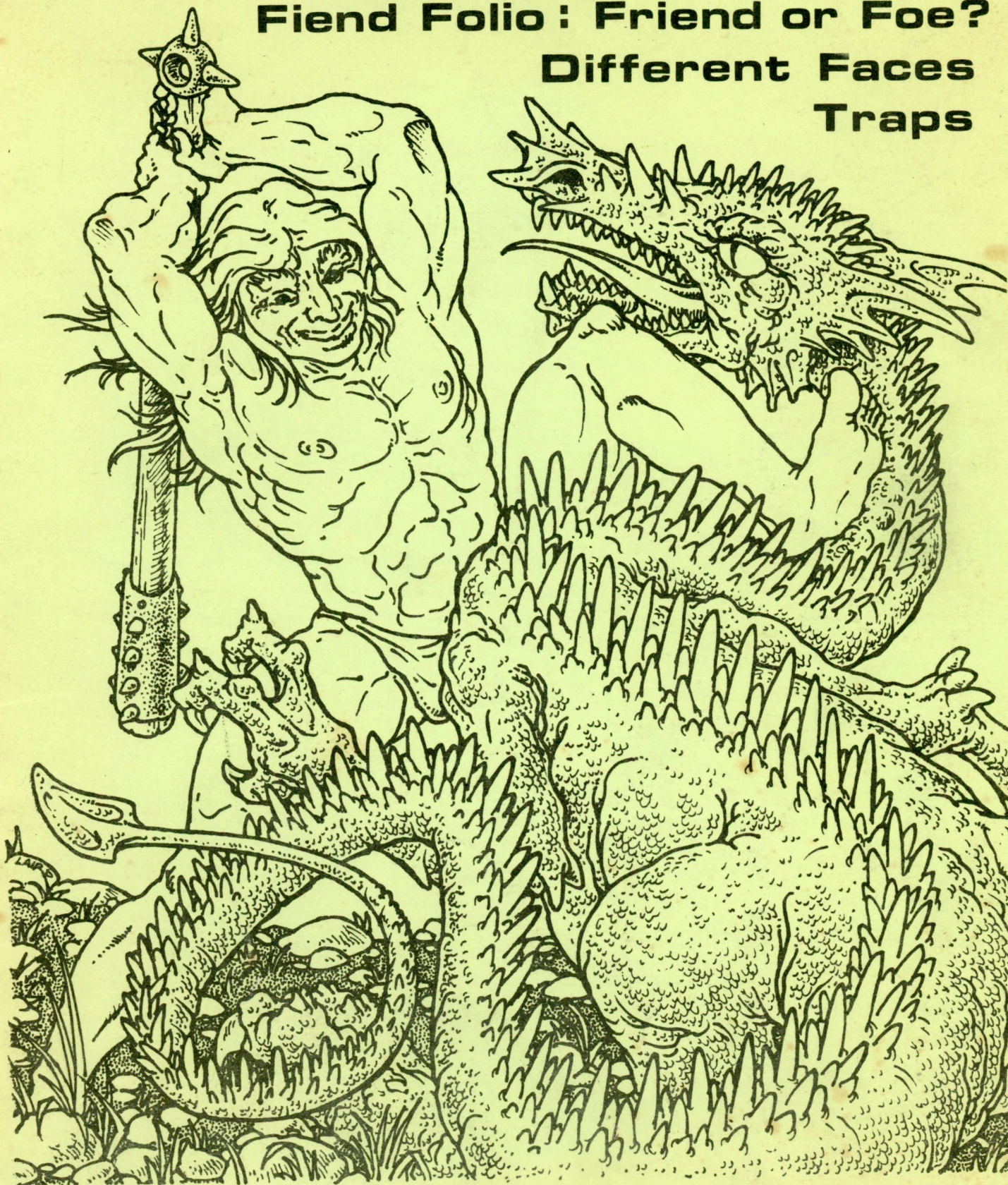
No. 4  
\$1.75

Fiction by Mike Stackpole

Fiend Folio: Friend or Foe?

Different Faces

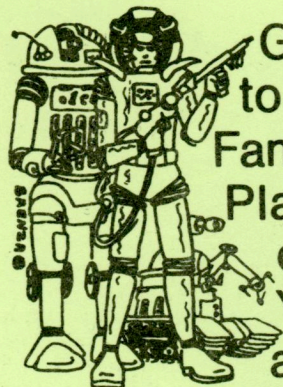
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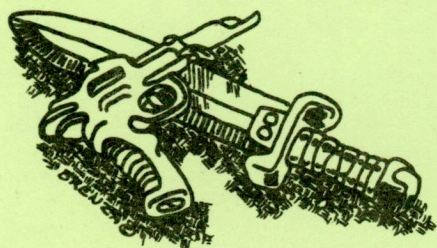
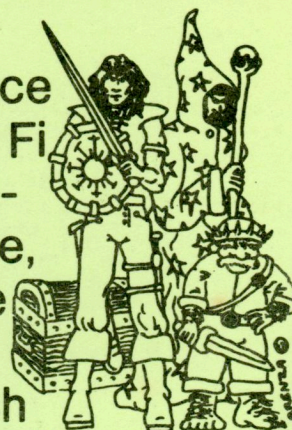


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# Fleeting Thoughts

## OLYMPUS JAN.—FEB. 1983

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Hello again! Finally we editors have recaptured the editor's column from the fiendish publisher, Royce. Never again will we relinquish it (I will return!—R.K.)! Now on to the important stuff. We have gone full size (Like you didn't know). Since Issue #2, our content has doubled. Unfortunately, we had to boost the price up to \$1.75 to sustain this new full size, three column format. Oh, well! One must make sacrifices. Seriously, our writing staff is increasing, but we do need more submissions.

Indeed, this is a special issue for Olympus. Not only have we gone full size, but we have gained a new staff member. Andrew Oleksiuk (YEAH!) is now Associate Editor of Olympus, as well as the head of Olympus Publishing's new division, Labyrinth Games (See their ad in this issue). With him, Andrew has brought us numerous contributions and his presently heading the publication of "In Pursuit of Gnolls," a new scenario from Labyrinth. We also welcome a few new artists: Anthony Orzech, Steve Wender, Stephan Lefour, and this issue's cover artist, Peter Laird. Also, an all-around whole-hearted welcome to all of the staff at Labyrinth. Moreover, a special thanks to all of our adherents and contributors, old and new.

Onward, to the contents of this issue. We have more fiction, this time from Mike Stackpole, entitled "Double or Nothing." Also we present "Different Faces" coupled with "Fiend Folio: Friend

or Foe." We have an article from Scott Roy (Remember him from the first issue?) entitled "Damage Vs. Hit Points," as well as "Traps: A Touch of Spice" from none other than me (Yes, an article, not a scenario. None of those for a little while. I'm taking a break!). Also, this issue has a couple of the regular columns: Mercury and Arcane Items, but no Apollo-gies (Guess that shows something)! In addition, we are airing a new column, In Review... This issue we are reviewing the Arms Law system, TSR's recent module S4: The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth, and the magazines Wyrms Claw and DragonLords. Far more important than these is the triumphant return of our cartoons. Now we have Putzo the Wizard and hope to receive more cartoons in the future.

Just because we have all of this does not mean that we do not need your submissions. The more the merrier, especially when it comes to submissions. Please send us comments, opinions, or anything else for that matter. Our next issue may be released a little earlier than our previous issues because we have to meet an early deadline (In other words, it might come out right on time!). You never know, we might even get a glossy cover (No, really!). Until then, enjoy!

*Blues*

Olympus is published bi-monthly by Olympus Publishing, 3114 Riverfalls Drive, Northbrook, IL 60062.

Olympus is available at better hobby stores. Subscriptions are \$9.00 for 6 issues and single copies are \$1.75. Olympus #2 and #3 are still available at \$2.00 each. Olympus #1 is sold out. Oversea rates are \$20 by air-mail and \$15 seamount.

Submissions are accepted for publication in Olympus. Articles should be double-spaced with 1 inch margins. Articles and artwork should be accompanied with an SASE for their return. All submissions become the property of

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# "Different Faces"

By Royce Kallerud

There is a problem common to many campaigns: players know just about everything there is to know about monsters. Whether characters are veterans, or they GM their own campaigns, something should be done to keep them on their guard when they meet monsters.

Appearances can be deceiving, and by making some slight changes in the appearance of a monster, players might not know what they are fighting. Reasons for these changes are many. Genetic foul-ups can be responsible for making a monster look strange. Offshoots of a race can also look considerably different than their relatives.

Members of sentient races may develop strange habits in order to acclimate to a foreign environment. For example, a tribe of orcs could be stranded on an island for a century or two. While marooned they will have to make some changes if they wish to survive. These orcs may become peaceful as a result of their need to be self-sufficient. When a few characters stumble upon these, orcs they could be quite surprised (Strange? These orcs aren't as savage as normal). This method can be used especially well in an established campaign when the monsters start to become nothing more than statistics. Unintelligent races can develop differing habits to adapt to unusual climates.

Changing the powers of monsters works well and can subject a group of adventurers to some general confusion. Imagine a group of characters attacking what "looks" like a werewolf with silver and later finding out that they need bronze, not silver, to kill this particular breed. A monster that has one of its defenses taken away or has a special attack modified may create an interesting situation. Minor changes in a monster's basic statistics can also be slightly confusing at times. A lizard man who has 3HD or does extra damage on one of his attacks can confuse characters who like memorizing details.

Changing monsters at the beginning of a campaign to confuse the players is fine, if the changes are logical. Needless to say,



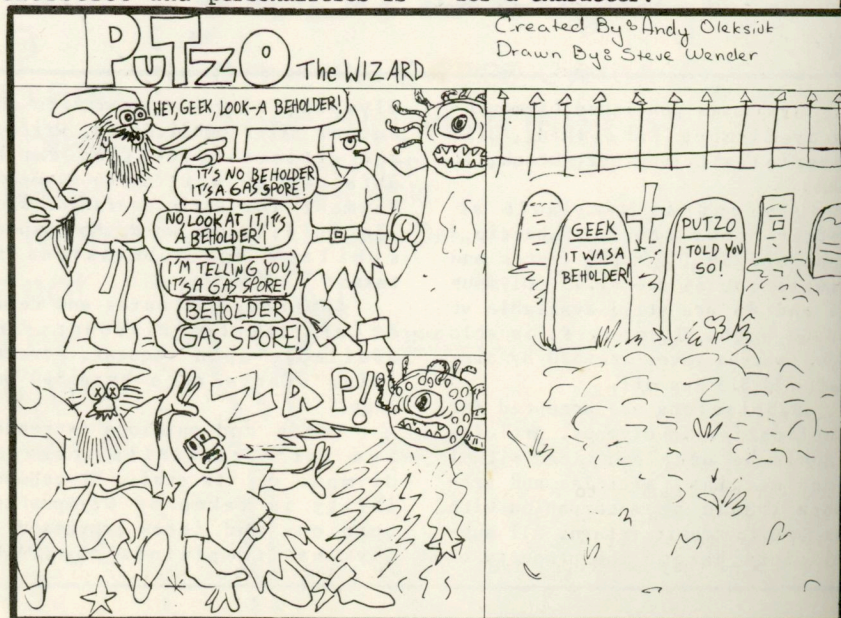
players will be upset if they meet fire-breathing bunnies that can kill a person with a single swipe of their poison-injecting, lucky foot. With a few monster alignment changes, the mighty paladin will be careful before he starts attacking dangerous-looking monsters. Changing statistics and personalities is

one of the best methods to alter monsters for veteran players that are starting anew with novice characters.

When modifying monsters the most important thing to remember is to be consistent and logical. Give monsters abilities they can use. Do not change the monsters again once you have decided to make them different. If every monster a party meets is radically altered, nothing will be gained. A canary that can kill dragons is not at all logical and will not work well. Is a fire-breathing bunny logical?

Instead of changing old monsters you can use totally new monsters. GMs can provide their own, find them in a magazine (Menacing Monsters and Curious Creatures!-ed.), or obtain one of the many gaming products that supply you with new monsters. When using new monsters be sure that they will fit in a campaign. Dropping a hundred new types of monsters into a campaign overnight can confuse players and upset the continuity of a well developed gaming world.

After using these ideas characters will catch on and be ready for the unexpected. This will create an increased sense of adventure and promote role-playing. The addition of new and exciting monsters could transform old, run-of-the-mill monsters into new, enjoyable adversaries for a character.





# Mercury

**Author's Note:** last issue, in the first installment of Mercury I made two mistakes. First, Mike Cook, not Mike Carr is the new publisher of Dragon. Also Grenadier Models will continue producing official AD&D figures until their license with TSR runs out. My apologies to all parties involved-RK.

## Heritage Folds

Heritage USA recently announced its demise: after poor sales in 1982 and a dim outlook for 1983 company officials decided to cease operations. Assets will be sold to pay creditors.

Heritage USA is acting under a Chapter 11, "a forestalling of debts and reorganization under the auspices of a federal judge". All bids solicited by Heritage must be approved by the court and creditors before they sell anything. At the Hobby Industry of America show Heritage contacted many prospective buyers. Heritage USA was a prominent miniature figures manufacturer and publisher of the Dwarfstar line of minigames.

## Fire at Martian Metals Offices

On January 30, 1982 the Austin based offices of Martian Metals burnt down. Reportedly the fire was caused by an electrical short, but the cause is not known for sure. All miniatures and molds in the offices were destroyed by the fire, but the masters for the miniatures were not in the offices. The offices were insured and Martian Metals will be back in operation in the near future.

## Flying Buffalo Forms New Division

Flying Buffalo Inc. recently announced that they have formed a new division, BLADE. This was done to separate their PBM games from their RPG's, modules, boxed games etc. New logos for BLADE have already started to appear in their advertisements and new products. New logos will appear on old games as they are reprinted.

The first release under the new logo was Grimtooth's Traps Too, and debuting this month is Mike Stackpole's Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes, a contemporary RPG for solo and group play. Citybook II: Port of Call will be released this spring. It will be slightly smaller than Citybook I bringing the cover price down to \$9.95.

## The Oracle Magazine Officially Folded

In a recent notice from Horizon International it was announced that The Oracle has officially ceased operations because of financial problems. Unused subscription money was credited towards turns in their new PBM game, Bladequest.

## Steve Jackson Games Releases Car Wars Magazine

Due to the recent success of Car Wars, Steve Jackson Games will be publishing their third magazine, Autoduel Quarterly. It will be digest-sized. Steve Jackson Games compares it to a Journal of The Travellers' Aid Society for Car Wars enthusiasts. Subscriptions will be \$10 and the first issue was released in January 1983.

## New PBM Firm forms

John Carver, a former employee of Flying Buffalo Inc. has left Flying Buffalo to start a new PBM firm, Mobius Games. The first game by Mobius is Mobius I, a fully computer moderated space PBM. Flying Buffalo has announced that they have no connection with Mobius.

## Game Companies Start Sweepstakes

Entertainment Concepts Inc., the moderators of the Silverdawn and Star Trek PBM's will begin the Silverdawn Quest tournament for Players of ECI games in the near future. Entry is \$3.00 plus \$.50 per turn. First prize will be \$5,000, second \$500, third \$50, and several smaller prizes.

Judges Guild will be enclosing 100 gift certificates in 5000 products. The total value of these gift certificates be \$400 in various prizes.

Viking Games will be giving away a one ounce gold Krugerrand, two 1/4 ounce Krugerrands, and five 1/10 ounce Krugerrands in their Fantasia Gold Rush. The winners will be chosen randomly from entry blanks sent in from 4000 copies of their game, Fantasia.

## Netherworld Continuum Purchased By Cataphract Games

Netherworld Continuum, a magazine previously owned by The Twin Cities Game Masters' Association, is being purchased by Cataphract Games. Cataphract is a new game company based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The current editor, Dave Semkow, will cease to be editor of Netherworld Continuum but will design games for Cataphract Games. The new editor of Netherworld Continuum is Dana Erlandsen.

## TSR Re-releases ARES and Strategy & Tactics

After the fall of SPI, their three magazines ARES, Strategy & Tactics, and Moves ceased publication. TSR permanently ended Moves, but has now resumed publication of S&T and ARES.

The first two issues of both magazines will consist of material left over from SPI. TSR plans to release four quarterly issues of S&T and ARES, and 2 semi-annual special editions of both.

## Close Simulations to Release Alert Force

Close Simulations, a new gaming company, will be releasing Alert Force in May. This is a new minigame in which an Air Force base fights off terrorists, in May. Previous games by Close Simulations have been The Falklands War, the most comprehensive wargame on the subject, and Hover-tank, a game of tank warfare in the future. Alert Force will retail at \$5.00.



# FIEND FOLIO: FRIEND OR FOE?

by Andrew Oleksiuk

Now that TSR's **Fiend Folio** tome has been out for a few years, I begin to question its usefulness. I obtained a copy of this tome just after its release, thinking "Oh, good! New monsters!", like most other AD&D players. After eagerly reading through the FF, I was amused at the variety and creativity of the creatures therein. However, none of them really fit into my present campaign, so I set the book aside.

Up until then I had been very satisfied with the **Monster Manual**. Indeed, the only reason I bought the FF was because of the extensive advertising. The MM is very complete and only a very uncreative GM will find the need for a whole tome of new monsters. With literally hundreds of new creations found in assorted gaming magazines and the infinite resource of the GM's own imagination always at hand, the FF is unnecessary. If you do decide to use the FF, notice some problems that can occur.

A few months after I bought the FF, I decided to try to infuse some of the creatures into my world. Many of the creatures, such as jermlaines and gorbels were listed as "uncommon"; but if they are just "uncommon," why hasn't anyone ever heard of them before? Can a whole tribe of ogrillons just move in to the middle of your campaign? Where did they come from? If your campaign has any uniformity whatsoever, trying to populate it with monsters from the FF presents a real problem.

Similarly, I would like to know if any of our readers have used the scarecrow. I am sorry, Mr. Turnbull, but that was very uncalled for! That brings up another point. Many of the monsters are totally useless. I would much rather see playable monsters than ones just included for variety. Many of these fiends are merely cross-overs or mutations of creatures presented in the **Monster Manual**. Others just don't have any place in the game. The al-mi'raj is only a rabbit with an evil disposition, and the enveloper is just plain silly. It

also seems that the whole work was just an excuse to throw unknown monsters at the players. By "excuse" I mean that a large number of the monsters in the FF

## "...THE ONLY REASON I BOUGHT THE FIEND FOLIO WAS BECAUSE OF THE EXTENSIVE ADVERTISING"

are ugly bipedal creatures with differing special abilities. Only a few are really meshed out to fit their surroundings. For exam-

ple, the norker, meazel, dark creeper, xuart, killmoulis, and gibberling are just a cross between a kobold and a master thief. I think one such two-legged rat would suffice.

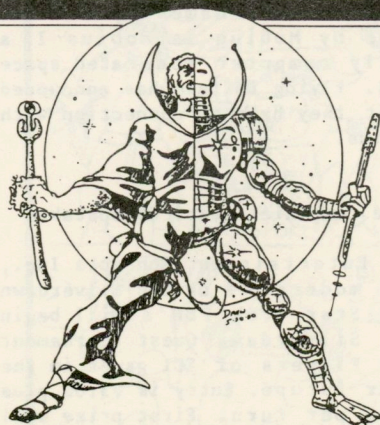
There are only a few notable exceptions to the overall mediocrity of the FF. The githyanki and githzerai are both very well developed species. Similarly, the monsters that were included in earlier TSR releases, such as the drow and kuo-toa were notably better than the average. Throwing a few FF creatures into your campaign will not hurt, but place large populations warily. The only real good use for the FF is fitting a large, multi-populated area with strange, new monsters. An example of this would be a new plane, world, or an unmapped continent.

I do hope TSR's new expansion volumes will offer some creatures that are more playable. Although the UK modules are pretty good, it seems that our friends across the sea blundered a bit with this project. But the staff at TSR UK -they are honorable men!

Cheerio!



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# Double or Nothing

Fiction by Michael A. Stackpole

The drum beat hammered its way through the boisterous crowd to where Orsamus sat at the side of the stage. The thief could clearly see the flautist next to the drummer, blowing himself red in an effort to be heard; but the small musical instrument had no chance in competition with the cat calls and screeching of the patrons. Orsamus wondered if any of the female dancers could actually hear the music they moved to on stage.

Orsamus tipped his stool back against the wall and held a bunch of grapes up to his mouth with his right hand. He popped a grape into his mouth, chewed, and spat the seeds out just past the ear of a small, bookish man standing beside him.

"Alright, weasel, what do you have for me?" Orsamus parted his lips in a mock smile. His teeth were white and even, his moustache and goatee blonde like the long hair on his head.

"You'll never manage to steal

the Star of Chala. They've done their research. They've gotten as much information about you as possible. They know things and they've designed the vault to hold it with you especially in mind." The little man wiped the sweat from his bald head and broke eye contact with Orsamus so he could watch the woman on stage.

Orsamus followed the clerk's gaze. Llana was dancing, and she was very easy to watch. Her face held just the right look of innocence coupled with the desire to inflame the passions of her audience. Her body was very fine, "taut" was the word that came to Orsamus' mind. Her hair was dirty blond and carefully cut to seem sensually neglected. She ground her hips in a circle to the music, causing every man watching to need her.

A massive, hairy, scarred hand reached up to grab the long, white leather thongs swinging from Llana's G-string. She took a quick step back, Orsamus noting unconsciously her move was in time to the music. She shot a worried glance at the thief. The hand followed her retreat.

Orsamus' left hand plucked a grape from the bunch and launched it across the room into the face of the man who belonged to the hand. The man turned, upset, and began to wade through the tables towards the thief. Fifteen inches of steel formed into a dagger materialized, in Orsamus' hand, slowing the man's advance.

The man and Orsamus locked eyes for a second, the crowd quieted. Llana kept dancing, her body moving to the beat of the drum by impulse while she watched the two men. The flautist faltered when he heard himself.

One of the man's companions grabbed the offending hand and tried to drag the man back to his seat. The man resisted until his companion spoke Orsamus' name. The man paused and seated himself.

Sighing silently, Orsamus waved one of the barmaids over. "Ghenet, give that man a mug of whatever he's drinking. Tell him I'd rather he enjoyed himself then forced me to earn my measly pay."

Ghenet, an olive skinned, dark haired beauty, flashed Orsamus a smile and wove her way through the crowd to the bar. Orsamus watched her vanish into the smokey distance of the common room and then turned back to the clerk. "So, they're planning against me. What can they do that they have not tried before?"

The clerk smiled the grin of a torturer entering the cell of a noble and overconfident victim. He hated being forced to spy for Orsamus. The thief had managed to obtain a gift from him which had been bestowed, unwisely, on a courtesan. Orsamus simply threatened to turn the favor over to the clerk's battle axe wife if the clerk did not provide him with all the information on the Gem Merchants the thief desired. The clerk swallowed hard as the thought of his wife wrapping her meaty paws about his scrawny neck began to choke him.

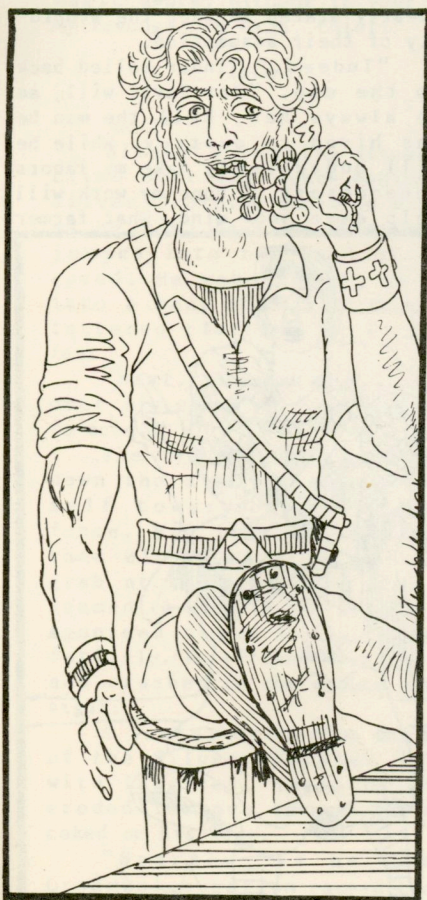
"The Gem Merchants have hired a thief expert from the northern continent to stop you. He has an unblemished record and he has constructed a simple trap certain to stop you. His vault has two locks, each one located twelve feet from the other. Two keys must be used to unlock it at the same time, or the vault jams shut and must be opened by a powerful sorcerer."

Orsamus decided he did not like the sound of that, and the grin on the clerk's face hinted at further problems. Despite his unease he decided to bluster his way past the clerk's grin. "Is that all? Surely they do not imagine I could not get a partner to help me."

The clerk had not expected that response, still every torturer has seen at least one brave attempt to deny the pain. More pain cures that type of courage.

"They've also hired Bar Tavis, the bounty hunter known as The Reaper. He's a lefty like you."

Orsamus slumped back against the wall. Bar Tavis was well known for having brought in a number of very dangerous criminals. While being left handed was an advantage Orsamus enjoyed when fighting most swordsmen, The Reaper would know all of his tricks.





Bar Tavis was acknowledged by many to be one of the finest, if not the finest, swordsmen in the world. No one had actually ever seen him fight, but his skill was measured by his kills, and a grand measure it was.

"There it is, thief! Your boast that you were going to steal the Star of Chala is just that, a boast. The emerald is safe, no one is going to touch it, least of all you."

"How little you have learned during our association, Hairless One." The thief refused to be cowed by the words of a mere clerk. "No man who wears two swords was ever born that could beat me in a swordfight. When does the gem get into Gull?"

The clerk was not fooled by Orsamus' false bravado. If Orsamus was to try to steal the gem he might be slain, then the clerk's troubles would be over. He chuckled. "It reaches the city in two days. The Reaper is already in Gull."

The thief nodded as Llana stepped from the stage. She paused to thank Orsamus, her hand resting on the inside of his thigh with enough familiarity to excite the clerk. She kissed the thief on the cheek and took the towel he offered her. She moved on to the dressing rooms behind the stage, Orsamus grinned at the naked lust on the clerk's face.

"In two days I will have a partner and a day later I will have the gem." The clerk still studied Llana's departure. Orsamus laughed.

"And there's more chance of my getting my prize than you getting yours."

\*\*

"I am afraid this demand is one I cannot agree to. I cannot order my guards to stay in their barracks while you choose to patrol the grounds. That is utterly out of the question." The Gem Merchant paced before his desk and avoided eye contact with Bar Tavis.

The third man in the room cleared his throat. "Sir, You brought me all this way south to design for you a way to thwart Orsamus. I offer you a chance to prevent his stealing the Star of Chala and Tavis offers you a way to prevent him from ever stealing anything again. Such a bargain will have a steep price, but is it one you can afford to not pay?"

The Gem Merchant seated himself behind the massive oaken desk and studied The Reaper. The man stood over six and a half feet tall, easily a head taller than Orsamus. The man was built strongly, the build of an ox for the man with the eyes of an ox, the merchant thought silently. His face was a patchwork of scarred flesh, he had not shaved in days. His arms were folded across his chest and he was wearing two swords.

The Gem Merchant turned to the vault maker. "I understand Bar Tavis is the best, but so is Orsamus. I do not doubt your

ability, or The Reaper's skill, but I feel uneasy. Even farmers with good dogs lock up their chickens when a fox is about." The Gem Merchant's tone challenged Tindar to defend his plan for Orsamus' demise.

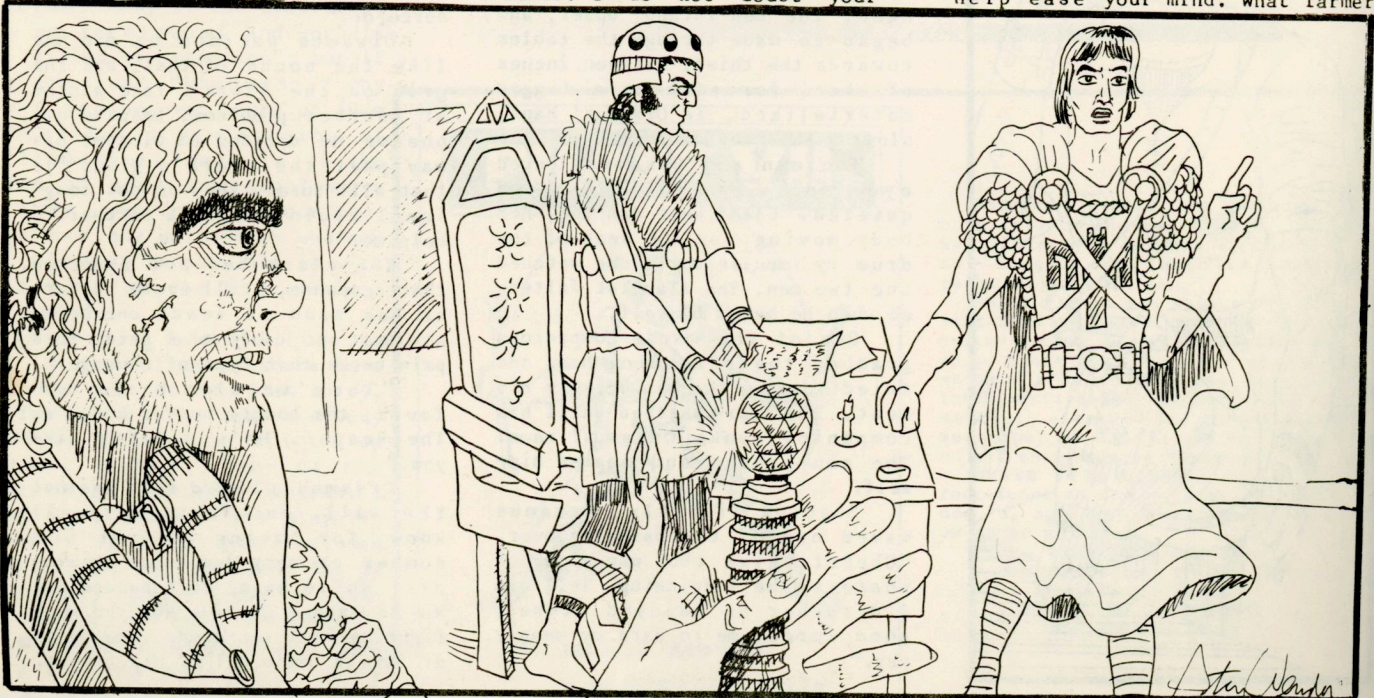
The younger man smiled lightly. "An apt analogy, my lord, but you underestimate your servants." Tindar unrolled a parchment sheet bearing the design plans for the vault and the reinforcement of the room holding it.

"As you know we have reinforced the walls with a metal bar gridwork overlaid with a layer of plaster a foot thick. The ceiling was lined with sheet steel an inch thick, the floor was similarly treated then recovered with a wooden deck. The locks, twelve feet apart and needing to be unlocked at the same moment, are of a type that previously foiled a robbery attempt by Orsamus."

"While the room and the vault might be in jeopardy if assaulted by a magically silenced troop of miners, Orsamus will find it frustrating."

"A course dat's asumin' he'll get to da room." The Reaper's interjection startled both men. His voice was a rough and crude as his use of language. His tone clearly stated as fact the stupidity of their assumption.

"Indeed." Tindar rolled back up the map. "Bar Tavis will, as he always has, kill the man he was hired to destroy. While he will undoubtedly make my labors unnecessary, I hope my work will help ease your mind. What farmer





would fear a fox if he had such a dog and such a chicken coop?"

The Gem Merchant smiled and steepled his fingers. "I hope you are correct. It was at great expense that I brought you here. One way or another I will have satisfaction out of you."

\*\*\*

The sorcerer dragged his twisted leg along as he wandered. The dark hooded cloak he wore totally obscured his identity and made him very warm in the bright sunlight. He was tired, but he refused to stop with his quarry so close.

Proceeding at a pace that would have had the most patient of men utterly frustrated, the sorcerer worked his way through the crowd. Finally he squirmed to the edge of the circle that the crowd had forged around two men. One was huge and wore two swords, the other was blonde, slender, and smaller. They were dueling with words, the blond man attacking viciously.

The sorcerer enjoyed himself a relieved smile. "Leave me for dead, eh? Steal from me!" His fingers writhed forming a spell. "There, that should fix your magic sword. Without it your end, my revenge, is nigh, thief!"

\*\*\*\*

"Oof!"

Blinky's running attempt to climb over the fence behind the Silver Scorpion ended in a crash as he misjudged the distance and jumped into the wall at full speed. He rebounded, melting into a heap of angular limbs and tattered clothing at Orsamus' feet.

"Next." Orsamus places a hand over his eyes, his head beginning to ache.

The next man in line scurried down the alley and launched himself towards the top of the fence. His leap took him higher than Blinky's, but he missed his grab at the top of the fence. He seemed to hang in the air for one agonized second as flailed about futilely. He pitched over the top and crashed to the ground out of sight.

A youth, seated on the roof of the Silver Scorpion, rolled with laughter. Tears of mirth eroded furrows through the dust caked on his face.

"Sparrow, is he dead?" Orsamus' question caused the

young man to pause long enough to shake his head no. Then he burst into a new round of chuckling, rolling from side to side, holding his stomach.

Blinky straightened his eye patch and shook a fist at the kid. "You punk! I've got half a mind to skin you alive."

"You've only got half a mind if you think you can catch me. You can't even make it over that wall."

"And you can?" The dozen men lined up to audition as Orsamus' partner glowered at him.

Sparrow vaulted himself from the roof. He ignored Blinky and the others, speaking only to Orsamus. "I can clear that wall, and I can do all of the other things you need." Before the thief could reply or comment, Sparrow dashed from the alley and flew over the fence with ease.

Blinky saw Orsamus' left eyebrow arch. "You can't use the kid, 'Sam! He doesn't have any experience. He's a street rat, he ain't one of us."

Orsamus played with his goatee unconsciously. "Blinky, it's time the boy got some training. He's got potential."

Sparrow caught the last part of Orsamus' statement and beamed. Before Orsamus could add anything, a beggar came through the back door of the Silver Scorpion and tugged on Orsamus' sleeve.

"He's in the streets, like you suspected. You'll find him in the market."

Orsamus flipped the beggar a silver coin. He dashed past the beggar, who clutched greedily at the coin and moved quickly through the streets. Those who had gathered to audition with him straggled along behind.

Bar Tavis was not hard to pick out of the crowd. The people flowed away from him like a flash flood gushing down a dry riverbed. Orsamus waded forward on a collision course with the bounty hunter. The crowd pulled back and stranded them both on a deserted island in the middle of the open market.

"So you're Bar Tavis? They've hired you to keep me away from the Star of Chala?"

The Reaper fixed Orsamus with a hard gaze, flint eyes dull but alive. The sword at his right boasted a jeweled hilt, the second sword was plain. Despite their differences both looked utilitarian. "I doan imagir da Star bein' anythin' yer goin' ta get yer hands on. I'll kill ya

first."

Orsamus grinned and played to the crowd. "I have been threatened. He has sullied by implication my skill at arms." He eyed Bar Tavis. "I call you a coward and a backstabber. I call you a blood-sucking butcher who has not looked a dying foe in the face."

Bar Tavis was clearly agitated by Orsamus' remarks but he held his tongue.

Again the thief appealed to the crowd. "No challenge to a duel? Are you afraid of me? Do you fear I would demand we settle this matter here and now, before honest folk? I'd let you use both of your swords against my one, but it is clear you are a coward. Everyone here can see that, you are afraid you could not beat me in a fair fight."

A few cat calls accompanied Orsamus' taunts. Braver as a mob than they were as individuals they began to chant "Coward!" The ring hardened and Orsamus thought he saw something--fear--flash through the bounty hunter's eyes.

"Yer a sharpie, ain't cha? Me and you'll have a reckoning, and only one of us'll walk away. Mark me words."

The Reaper turned and walked directly at the smallest man he could see in the crowd. Isolated from the mob, his valor failed him and he moved from Bar Tavis' path. This broke the crowd's spell and the bounty hunter passed unharmed.

"Orsamus, that was pretty stupid." Sparrow had caught up with him and stared in the direction of Bar Tavis.

The thief smiled down at his dangling partner. "No, very smart. Right now he wants to kill me so badly he can taste it. He knows that he has to calm himself before we fight, and that will make him even madder. Lastly he'll try to fight so clean that his honor is not in doubt. That means I will be free to cheat."

"Great. What do I do if he kills you?"

The thief superimposed a mental picture of Bar Tavis over Sparrow. "Run."

Sparrow mulled this advice over in silence as they headed back to the Silver Scorpion. Neither one of them noticed the cloaked figure who limped away into the crowd and obscurity.

\*\*\*\*\*

"I don't like it, not at all." Orsamus and his young part-



ner waited in the shadows across the street from the building complex housing the Star of Chala. "Normally they have guards swarming all over the low out building roofs because of the causeways connecting them with the main tower."

"So the gods are smiling on us."

Orsamus looked sharply at Sparrow. "The gods never smile on thieves."

A chill ran down Sparrow's spine, but the memory of it barely outlived its passing. "Last minute check. I've got candles and my lock picks. I've also got the heavy rope and grappling hook."

"Fine. I've got the crowbar, lock picks and a smaller coil of rope." Orsamus had given Sparrow the heavy rope and the hook because he did not want to hurt the youth's pride by denying his ability to carry equipment. Orsamus knew the hook and rope would be hidden after they got to the roof of the first building, thereafter not being a burden for Sparrow. "Let's go."

Sparrow darted across the street and flattened himself against the wall of the building. Orsamus quickly crossed after him and found Sparrow readying the padded hook for the cast to the roof. The youth handed it to Orsamus and the senior thief snagged the roof with his first try.

The hook had barely settled in place before Sparrow flew up the rope. Orsamus wanted to shout a caution, but the warning would have been more dangerous than the youth's quick action. The only thing he could do was ascend as quickly as possible, which he did.

Orsamus' face popped over the lid of the roof, a smile lighting his features. Sparrow had preceeded to flatten himself against the wall of a building section that rose to a second story. Orsamus gained the roof and coiled the rope, pleased with how quickly his apprentice was learning.

Orsamus patted himself down to make certain he had everything. He turned to Sparrow who gave him an "all clear" sign and began to move beyond the edge of the building wall.

Suddenly the youth's movements became jerky. A darkened steel blade stretched, strained and ripped through the front of his shirt. Ruthlessly Bar Tavis

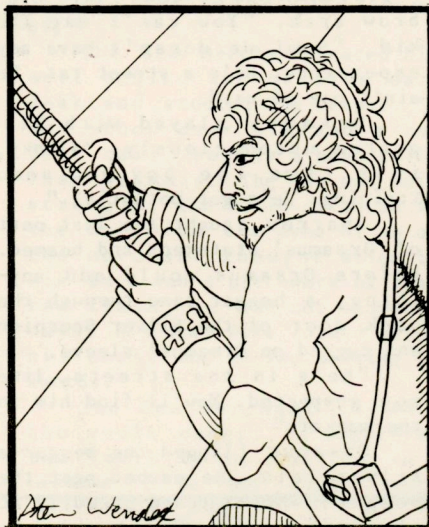
withdrew his blade by kicking Sparrow's body free.

"Now we see if ya can fight as good..." The bounty hunter drew his second blade as he spoke.

As the bounty hunter went for his second blade, Orsamus drew his crowbar from the belt loop where it hung. He arced it through the night sky, the blackened metal all but invisible. It collided with Bar Tavis' thick skull and the big man crumpled.

Orsamus ran to Sparrow. A black flood of blood bubbled up through his chest with each breath. The boy pawed at his lock picks and pressed them into Orsamus' hand. "For your new partner." A cough racked his thin frame and he lay very still.

Orsamus stood and spat at the bounty hunter. The crowbar had bounced two feet away after open-



ing a bloody wound in Bar Tavis' forehead. The thief picked up the crowbar and left Bar Tavis for dead, but then he had never been a good judge of who was living and who was dead.

Under normal circumstances Orsamus would have fled, but these circumstances were far from normal. There were no guards on duty, hence no one to bother him in his inspection of the locks and other protective devices set up to frustrate his attempt at taking the Star. He had promised he would steal the Star within two days and he harbored a slim hope that he might be able to steal the item alone. If nothing else he could force the Gem Merchant to have to hire a wizard to open the vault, a partial recompensation for Sparrow's death.

The vault room, lacking windows, was totally dark. Instead of lighting a candle, Orsamus

drew his sword and brushed his thumb along a rune carved in the base of the blade. "Light!"

A nimbus of blue light played along the blade. Orsamus would have been forced to use candles if Sparrow had been along. He was reluctant to reveal the fact he owned a magical sword, even to his partner. The fewer the people who would want to get it. He admitted it wasn't much in the way of magic, but there were still those in Gull who would kill for it.

The thief crossed the room to face the double locked steel door. The steel door was actually a double door, each with its own lock set twelve feet from its twin on the other door. He recognized the style of the lock and smiled. Though he had never actually gotten one of those locks open, he was fairly certain he could, given enough time.

Orsamus began to scan the floor for anything that looked like a trapdoor or a trap of some sort. He ran the tip of his rapier along a crack in the floor and the magic on his blade faded. The darkness that flooded the room was defied by an occasional spark coming from his sword.

"What in the seven hells is going on here?" The clerk had never said anything about magical protection and the sword had never failed him before. He touched the rune and urged it to light again. It did, but faded after a short time.

"Need light?" The Reaper flashed open a lantern and hung it upon a peg inside the doorway of the vault room. His face was a mask of blood, the sidelong shadows cast by the lantern making it look like a grotesque form of camouflage.

Orsamus stood and raised his sword to a guard position. A blue spark spider-scurried towards and leaped at Bar Tavis. "We can kill each other or..."

The bounty hunter drew his jeweled sword. "Or?"

"Or we can join forces and crack this vault wide open. There'll be more than enough money to keep the both of us in wine and women for a long time." Orsamus had bought guards off before, but he did not lower his blade.

"Yer offer touches me, but I were planning to do that anyway. I'll kill ya and say yer confederate got away wit de gem." Bar Tavis smiled a broad grin.

"You filthy..." Orsamus was



going to call him a thief, but thought better of it. "How dare you use me to start a life of crime!"

"Don't flatter yerself. Dis ain't dat ferst time."

"You're forgetting something. You can't get the gem without two people, and I'm sure not going to help you."

"Two I got." Tavis reached his right hand over to the jeweled hilt of his drawn sword. He plucked a gem from the end of it and split into two people, identical twins, standing side by side. "Three we doan need."

Suddenly a great deal began to make sense to the thief. Bar Tavis was very effective because there were two of him, Bar and Tavis. For the same reasons that kept Orsamus' blade secret, the bounty hunter never fought in public. His wearing two swords also made grim sense.

Bar nodded as if he could read Orsamus' thoughts. "Dey figure my thefts to be de work of a pair of thieves, no suspicion comin' my way." Bar moved to the

thief's left while drawing his sword. Tavis moved to Orsamus' right. "Prepare ta die."

Tavis initiated an attack which Orsamus parried harshly. Orsamus feinted an attack which drove Tavis back, then the thief dove forward into a prone position as Bar lunged from behind. Before Bar could recover from his lunge, Orsamus rolled right onto his back, his right leg rising to kick Bar in the chest.

Bar gasped and the thief spun into a sitting position to parry the attack by Tavis. Orsamus took Tavis' blade high and tried to slash his misdirection, but the bounty hunter jumped out of his range. Orsamus rose to his feet again, still being stuck with one man on each side.

Suddenly Bar and Tavis both screamed. Bar dropped the nonmagical sword, and the pair of them paled. "This can't be happenin', sumpthin' is wrong! The split is fadin'!" Bar's urgent complaint oozed terror.

"Know fear and die!" A ghostly voice filled the room,

and the bounty hunters recognized it.

"No, yer dead. We, I killed ya." Agony gushed over the faces of the men.

Orsamus watched the outlines of the two men blur. Their forms flickered like flames in a wind. They writhed with pain while the voice laughed.

"The gem, quickly!" Bar flicked the magical stone to Tavis, his underhand toss carefully weak. The gem never got to his other half.

Orsamus was unsure if he grabbed the gem because of its importance, or merely because it was a shiney object in the lantern light. Ultimately his reasoning, or lack of it, did not matter. Both men screamed horribly, a scream that sometimes echoed in nightmares Orsamus never wanted to remember.

In death their forms resolidified. Bar remained to the thief's left, Tavis was fallen to the right. He looked as if he had been drawn and was awaiting quartering.

Orsamus picked the sword from Tavis' hand and reattached the gem to the pommel. He left his own sword in its place.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tindar was roughly awakened by guards sent by the Gem Merchant. He dressed quickly and hurried to the vault room. He knew Orsamus' success was impossible, but his heart rode in his throat nonetheless.

Your swordsman is dead." The Gem Merchant stood beside the closed vault door, two minor officials of his house and a robed wizard's form beside him. The parts of Bar Tavis were two sheet shrouded lumps on the floor, but Tindar had no doubt what they covered.

"The vault?"

"The locks are jammed shut. We found the body of another thief, struck from behind. Orsamus must have tried the vault alone after his partner was killed. He and the bounty hunter fought here, Tavis died but the locks foiled him."

Tindar smiled and gestured the wizard. "Open the vault."

It took the wizard a half an hour to open the vault, which was twice as long as it took Orsamus to steal the Star and jam the locks. Orsamus got quite a bit of satisfaction from his new toy. So did the Gem Merchant. □





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# IN REVIEW...

## ARMS LAW By R. B. Chipman

Iron Crown Enterprises, PO Box 6910, Charlottesville, PA 22906. \$10.00

Some gamers find the D&D and AD&D armor/combat systems rather irksome. This is primarily due to an oversimplified approach that places undue restrictions on armor types and turns combat into a tedious affair marked by many die rolls, during which attackers attempt to bludgeon each other into oblivion. The I.C.E. rules for armed and unarmed combat provide a more realistic substitute. They attacked the problem by designing a system based on ten second battle rounds and one minute turns. Each round sequence entails nine phases:

- 1) Spell Phase
- 2) Spell Results
- 3) Spell Orientation Phase
- 4) Missile Phase
- 5) Missile Results
- 6) Movements and Maneuvering
- 7) Melee
- 8) Melee Results Phase
- 9) Final Orientation Phase

The resolution of the movement and maneuvering phase is somewhat similiar to one used by a Dragonquest GM in evaluating the use of a skill. The judge determines the difficulty of the task which the

player wishes to attempt (ten increments from easy to absurd). The attacker then rolls percentile dice. The result is modified by applicable penalty or bonus factors, and the final result is found by cross-indexing the net roll with the degree of difficulty on the maneuver table.

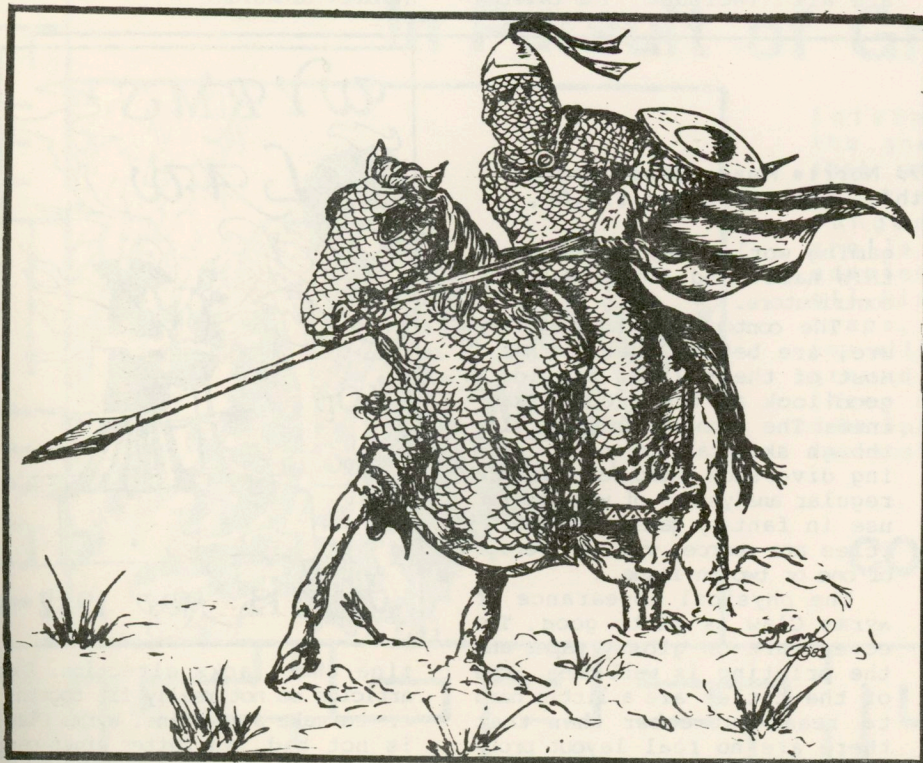
Arms Law provides the hardy adventurer with twenty types of armor to choose from. There are four types in each of the following categories: cloth-skin base, pliable leather base, rigid leather base, chain mail base, and plate base. Any armor greater than leather jerkin requires training in. Those characters who attempt combat while wearing an armor type which they are not familiar with will attack under the maximum maneuver penalty for that armor type. While those who are fully trained receive a minimum penalty, which ranges from 0 to -5 (for leather coat and leather breastplate respectively) to a whopping -45 for full plate. Most armor types result in one or arm protection is worn a missile attack penalty is incurred.

Players must pick and choose their protective outerwear very carefully. Some armor types are ideal for relatively unskilled lower level characters, while other types will facilitate an unglorious end. The same is true for mid and high level characters. Thus, it behooves the fair-minded gamemaster to give his players at least a glimpse of what lays before them...

The thirty weapon types provided in this publication, though well detailed, limit players to a somewhat narrower range of death dealing implements than most fantasy frameworks. Claw Law, besides providing the data necessary for combat resolution with unarmed opponents, brings the number of medieval type weapons up to sixty-two and adds a small selection of fantasy ones to show how the tables may be modified in such cases. This work also includes martial arts systems and a good selection of animals and often used monsters.

After becoming familiar with the weapon table format in Arms Law, the Claw Law approach is a little bit disconcerting. Let me explain. In Arms Law each weapon has its own sheet of heavy paper. On these sheets are printed its type (one or two handed), range, length, weight, and fumble range (more about that later), plus an illustration of the item and a basic description of all combat results that could be possible achieved vs. any of the twenty armor types. In Claw Law all of the forty-plus new listings are all on one page. Instead of having an exhaustive combat result table for each weapon the gamemaster is referred to one of the Arms Law tables, and is directed to make the specified modifications. These changes are ranked according to the base armor categories only. These two changes in format result in at least some degree of over generalization for the weapons listed in Claw Law. This gives the Claw Law weapon table a "tacked" on quality which detracts from an otherwise high quality product line.

The open ended combat roll and the fumble table are two of more of these modifications. When





Arms Law's most commendable aspects. The most salient feature of the former is that it allows a PC of any level a chance to inflict a fair amount of damage on any given opponent, if the initial "to hit" roll is 96 or higher. When this occurs, a second roll is made and the results are totalled. If the results of the unmodified second roll also fall within the above mentioned range, a third roll is made, and its results are added to the total. In theory this could go on forever, but in practice the result falls somewhere between 96 and 151 (the maximum score the tables allow for is 150). Needless to say, the results which follow a roll of this type can be awe-inspiring, with certain weapons, fatal to

most mid and low level characters. Such high damage weapons are usually more difficult to wield properly and therefore relatively easy to fumble. A morningstar, for instance is fumbled on a roll of 1-8, while a dagger is mishandled only on a roll of one. When a fumble is indicated and a second roll is made, and its result is subtracted from the first attempt (this may happen more than once, as per the 96-100 roll). The end result is then read off the fumble table. The best a butter-fingered fighter can hope to be let off with is a missed opportunity. At worst...

If your net combat roll is high enough you will achieve a critical hit. When this occurs it will be one of three types: slash, crush, or puncture. Each

type has its own table. The only time these normal critical strike tables are not used is when the opponent is a large or superlarge creature. Special tables are provided for the beasties which fall into either of these categories. Many interesting effects are achieved through the use of these tables. Each result is tailored to both the type of damage, and its severity.

If the system you are using now lacks realism, and you are willing to spend some "tailoring time," and money to achieve a cure, I suggest you buy the Arms Law-Claw Law package. It stimulates the kind of swashbuckling adventure that forms an important part of any successful expeditions into the realms of the fantastic.

## S4 The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth

TSR Hobbies, PO Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. \$7.50

The latest of TSR's special "S" series modules is The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth. It has 64 pages and a two-fold cover, which includes three maps for the GM, and one for the player. The mission is to investigate and loot the legendary lair of a long-dead Arch-mage. To reach this goal, players must search an area of the mountains, defeat rival expeditions, and barter with resident nasties for information. This wilderness section is well

done and promotes role-playing. When players finally find the caverns, the fun continues. Most of the monsters that inhabit the two levels are new. This means that "know-it-all" players will be somewhat inhibited. These creatures are fully detailed in the "New Monsters" booklet. This mini-Monster Manual has over has over twenty new monsters, some of which are not even used in the module. New magic items are also included. The caverns

themselves are colorful and exciting for players and DM's alike. It can be used as a single adventure or it can be easily adapted into an existing campaign.

To sum it up, this module is an excellent role-playing aid, and all DMs should obtain a copy of this adventure. The material contained is well thought out and should be considered as one of TSR's best modules yet. (Andrew Oleksiuk)

## Wyrm's Claw

Wyrm's Claw, Original Thought, 93 Norris Road, Brooklands, SALE, Cheshire, M33 3Gs. Bi-monthly, Subscriptions \$15.00, 8-1/4"x6".

Wyrm's Claw is a fairly old British fanzine. They have been around for a little over two years, which is fairly good considering most fanzines fold before the end of their first year. Nevertheless, the contents are not amazing.

Wyrm's Claw has a limited view of the gaming world at-large. Coverage is basically limited to reviews, scenarios, and game variants. Other than the reviews Wyrm's Claw does not give the rest of the gaming world a passing glance.

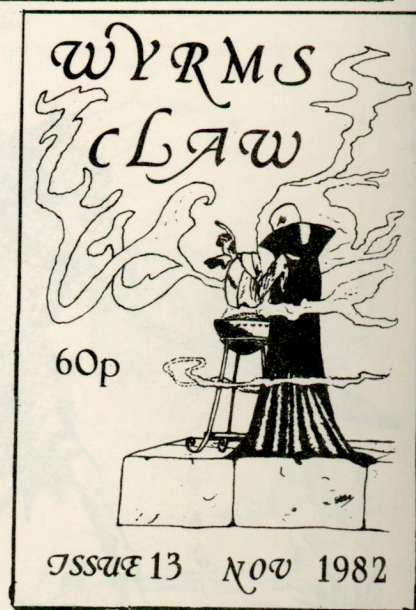
Another problem with Wyrm's Claw is the concentration of additions to game systems, such as their constant barrages of new weapons, and scenarios. Perhaps if they began to associate more freely with the rest of the

gaming world they could break this habit and find some steady contributors.

The contents, being what they are, are better than the norm. Most of the reviews provide a good look at the product examined. The scenario in issue #12, though skeletal, is an interesting diversion. Also featured are regular analyses of weapons for use in fantasy games. Other articles are scarce, with an average of one or two an issue.

The physical appearance of Wyrm's Claw is quite good. The covers are on glossy paper and the printing is well done. Some of the titles are a little hard to read, but other than that there are no real layout problems.

Overall Wyrm's Claw is a fan-



zine that lacks direction. The articles do not really fit together to make a magazine. Wyrm's Claw is not bad, but better zines can be found elsewhere. (Royce Kallerud)



## DragonLords

Obtainable in the US from Ragnarok Enterprises, 1402 21st St. N.W., Washington D.C. 20036. Bi-Monthly, Issue \$2.00, Subscription \$7.00. 8-1/4"x6".

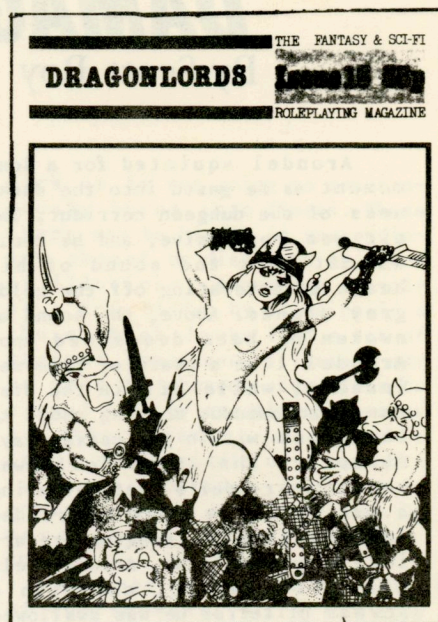
This small, British magazine was recently voted The Best Fan-zine at Games Day in London after only two years of publication. This zine is tabloid sized, with reduced type, and is usually about 32 pages long. The artwork ranges from fair to very good, tending towards the latter.

Issue #15 contains an article concerning what characters eat during adventures and other suggestions about the use of food in FRPG's. Also, there is an article about postal gaming, a number of magazine, game, and game supplement reviews, a letters column, and an interview with Chaosium's Greg Stafford (a bit tedious, but

quite interesting). Also, it hosts an excellent town/wilderness adventure which has both AD&D and RuneQuest stats. The staff of this magazine express their opinions freely and add a bit of sarcasm and British humor to the zine, making it quite friendly.

It costs 55p or roughly \$1.00, but unfortunately, it is increased to \$2.00 per issue in the U.S. due to shipping and handling. At any rate, if you want some good, mature ideas in a flippant and slightly humorous format, the price is well worth it.

(Stephen Breeser)



## LABYRINTH GAMES PRESENTS... In Pursuit of Gnolls



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### COMING SOON!



# DAMAGE VS. HIT POINTS

By Scott Roy

Arondel squinted for a long moment as he gazed into the darkness of the dungeon corridor. The air was oppressive, and he could almost hear the sound of his heart reverberating off the cold, grey stones. Above, the sound of awakening bats descended upon Arondel like a swarm of incensed insects, while off in the distance an ominous moaning added to the gloom within the passageway. Abruptly, the stone fell away beneath Arondel's feet revealing a gaping chasm that descended into blackness. Hanging precariously on the brink, Arondel felt himself falling, and with a scream of terror he was swallowed by the darkness of the pit. A breathless second passed as Arondel's screams faded from the hallway, until they abruptly ceased with a loud thud. At the bottom of the thirty foot deep crevasse, Arondel's bloodied and broken body lay silent and unmoving.

"What the heck," exclaims Arondel's player, "a thirty foot deep pit can hardly scratch my tenth level lord."

Aargh!!! How often have you as a dungeon master cursed the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons hit point system for allowing such atrocities? Common sense dictates that a tenth level lord and a first level character should have equal chances to break their necks upon falling into a pit. Unfortunately, however, this is untrue in the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons gaming system. The problem arises in that Advanced Dungeons & Dragons does not distinguish between physical damage and skill damage. No character should be able to get up and walk away from a thirty foot fall, yet the person playing Arondel is correct; a tenth level lord could have over a hundred hit points, and a thirty foot fall could at most inflict thirty-six hit points of damage. Arondel could easily get up and walk away from his fall.

The severity of the problem becomes even more appalling when one realizes that falling is not the only area where the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons hit point system is inadequate. When taking damage from such things as flam-

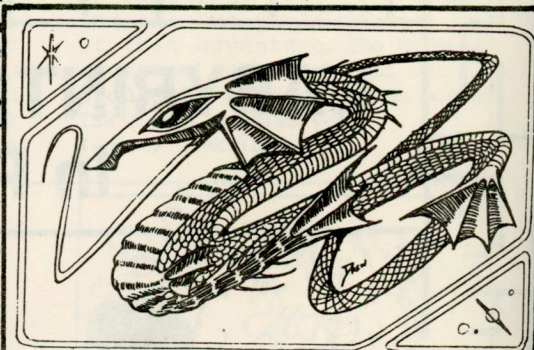
ing oil or poison, the high level character has a far better chance of survival than his first level counterpart. However, in both these instances, the damage is purely physical. No amount of training in combat techniques is going to aid a character when he begins to get sick from a poisoned apple. Clearly, whenever damage is physical damage, the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons hit point system falls short of what is required.

Unfortunately, correcting this problem is difficult at best. One possibility would be to assign two different hit point values to a character. One value would represent a character's physical hit points, whereas the other would indicate the amount of skill damage the character could sustain. However, such a system would necessitate a complete restructuring of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons combat system. Rather than attempt such a difficult proposition, this article presents a much simpler system that can be applied to virtually all aspects of damage. An example is also given to illustrate how this system can be implemented with regards to falling. The method used allows the amount of damage inflicted to be variable with regards to the level of the character sustaining the damage. Rather than eliminating a fixed number of hit points, this system advocates the removal of a certain percentage of hit points. For the first level character, this might mean a loss of only one hit point, whereas for the tenth level lord, perhaps ten hit points would be lost. Using this idea, a tenth level character would be equally likely to die in a fall as a first level character, as losing a hundred percent of their hit points would be fatal to both.

When a character falls down a pit, percentile dice should be rolled to obtain a base percentage. Add one to this number for every two feet the character falls (The Dungeon Master may instead wish to develop a system that accounts for the fact that objects accelerate exponentially rather than linearly). Then sub-

tract one for every point of constitution possessed by the character. If the percentage is equal to or greater than one hundred, the character is dead, regardless of the number of hit points he has (The Dungeon Master can optionally allow bonuses for thieves and assassins, as falling is part of their art. At the Dungeon Master's discretion, these two classes can subtract ten from their base percentage for every five levels of experience).

It is noteworthy that this system of removing a percentage of damage rather than a fixed amount can be applied to other types of damage as well. In situations where damage would be inflicted irrespective of level, such a system could be implemented. Never give characters a break just because they happen to be a bit better at fighting than their buddies who are still struggling to obtain second level. ☐



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# TRAPS

## A TOUCH OF SPICE

By Stephen Breaser

In AD&D a trap is simply a tool used to make players think or to give a disadvantage to the side of greater strength. A pit in the middle of the corridor immediately poses a problem to the party: "How are we going to cross the pit?" A covered pit in combination with a rear assault can make kobolds five times as deadly. The party retreats around a corner and sets an ambush for the overwhelming number of foes which follow. All of these examples show how a trap may be used. Whether it is a simple pitfall or an intricate tripwire/lever combination which squirts acid, the trap is still a problem. Traps enhance the play in any adventure and are practically a necessity in any campaign.

### The Key

In every trap there is a key element that is used. These elements are often very basic, yet

such simplicity is often the best basis for even the most ornate traps. The most obvious is the element of surprise. Anything unexpected does not allow characters time for advanced preparation. Thus, surprise limits the number of possible actions which can be taken in response. For instance, if you walk on a covered pit and fall through, there is not much you can do except wait until you hit bottom. Moreover, surprise often gains time and, thus, allows more opportunities for attack. During a rear ambush, a character could be a sitting duck for two or three rounds before he fully understands the situation.

Another style of traps which utilizes the element of surprise is that which makes the obvious dangerous. These traps take characters by total surprise since they assume that the chair they

pick up is not going to spontaneously burst into flames. These traps may be hidden in any ordinary object or disguised by means of illusions. A perfect example of a trap hidden by illusion is a chute which looks like a set of stairs. Sometimes, illusions may be used to channel characters to a real trap by creating illusions of other deadly, uncrossable traps in the middle of a perfectly normal corridor. Ignorance of coming danger may sometimes be more deadly than the danger itself.

Another common motif is that of confinement. A trap may stop the party from continuing forward or from retreating back. A pit in itself may be boring, but if the pit covers over, it might be a bit more difficult to get out. A simple trap of confinement can turn "walking down your average dungeon corridor" into "Escape from Alcatraz." Confinement traps may be used to make players think, for if they can not figure a way to escape from their "prison," they will sit and rot for the rest of their short lives. Furthermore, if a portcullis falls in front of or behind a group, they must find a way to continue forwards or backwards, as the case may be.

A more specific type of confinement trap is the "divide and conquer" style of traps. A trap of this sort separates the party by confining one group from another. This type of trap is often very deadly, especially when the divided groups must then fight alone. As everyone knows, a balanced party is quite helpful when adventuring. When this balanced party is divided into two or more separate groups, the strength of the party is reduced, because each group is now smaller, and does not have the ability of all its party members at their disposal. Picture a party of four brave adventurers: a ranger and a fighter in the front row, and a mage and cleric in the back. If both rows are distracted for a moment and a stone block slides betwixt them, the party is divided. After their separation, a giant spider drops on the cleric and begins to munch on his arm. Usually at this point the ranger and the fighter would exclaim,





"This is a job for the 'Deadly Duo,' Zog and George." Then the two would hack and slash at the poor spider, desimating it before any serious harm came to the cleric. Unfortunately, the "Deadly Duo" stand confused on the other side of four feet of solid rock, leaving the mage and cleric to fend for themselves. The mage draws his dagger and continues to repeatedly miss the hairy, black menace. The cleric starts to pray! Such is the strength of the "divide and conquer" motif.

#### Types of Traps

Aside from the basic elements, many different traps exist. The most common is, of course, the pitfall. Pits are just that—pits. They may have various additions such as spikes, trap-door covers, covers which cover over after someone has fallen into the pit, or giant stone

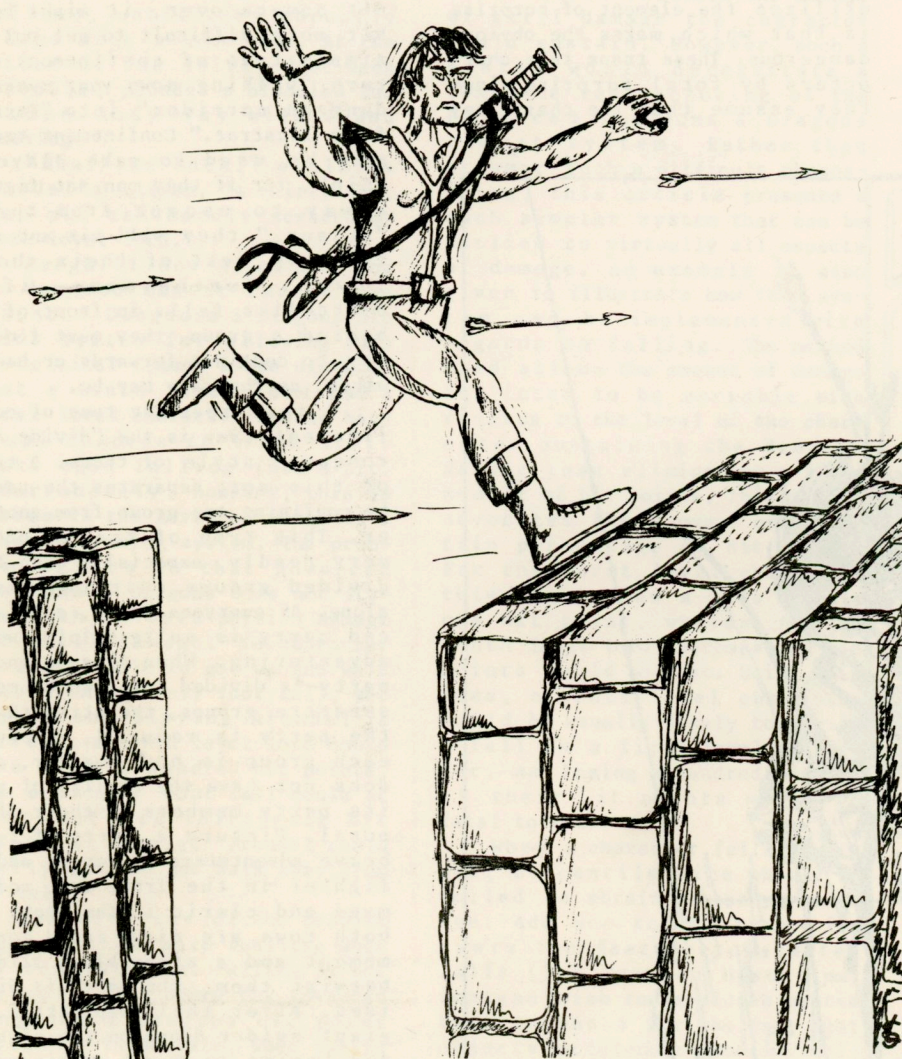
blocks which fall on those in the pit. These assorted spices just augment the effectiveness of the basic pit. Another variation of the pit is the collapsing floor, the chute, or the pit within a pit. Other popular traps include the arrow, spear, or any other missile trap. Also, there is the ever-present room filling with gas, liquid, fog, fire, sand, etc. Moreover, that favorite trap of cartoons and the "big screen," the scything pendulum.

As mentioned previously, the above list of traps can be increased exponentially by adding various spices to regular, old, run-of-the-mill traps. For instance, a pit could be covered and might have twenty spikes implanted in the bottom which are doused with poison. Then, after the initial fall, a button on the wall may be found which, when pushed, causes the floor of the

pit to open, plunging the characters into the pool of water filled with carnivorous fish below. Of course while all this is going on, the pit has been sealed over by a ceiling block which lowered to ground level; not to mention the fifteen ogres ambushing from behind, and the four highly proficient halfling thieves which sneak out of the secret door revealed when the ceiling block lowered. With such a trap on hand the players will be awed if they ever encounter it (that is if they stay awake through the stupendously long description of this monstrosity)! This example sits a little on the edge of ludicrous, yet is almost believable. The frills and little catches which make things difficult for the player, which also make the adventure more interesting. Such details complicate matters for the players, making them think more and making play more exciting.

When constructing traps to place in dungeons or in the wilderness, two rules exist that should be followed in order to obtain the best play. The first rule is very simple: do not make "killer" traps which characters have no chance of avoiding. Players become quite upset when you explain to them that their sixth level druid, two years of work and adventure, is being catapulted towards a sphere of annihilation at a speed of 250 miles per second. There is no hope! Death traps are effective only if the smart player can logically reason why the trap should be avoided, such as a warning of some kind. Otherwise, sure-fire death traps should be kept to a minimum, if any exist at all. Moreover, all traps should have a logical basis: why are they there and how do they work? All traps should be thoroughly described, and actions which may foil a trap should be recorded. For extremely intricate traps, a diagram may be helpful. With these thoughts in mind, the traps constructed will be more enjoyable for both the DM and the players.

Traps can be easily constructed using the basic elements and ideas as well as adding various tricks and spices. Traps, when constructed carefully with proper discretion, can add immeasurably to the substance of your campaign. Be tricky, be creative, and then sit back and watch the result. Whatever you do, enjoy! ☐





# ARCANE ITEMS

## Torch of Vesta

This most valuable torch was taken from the hearth of the honorable Vesta, Goddess of the Home and Hearth. Afterwards, the torch was carved into a perfect cone and given a sparkling, golden torch holder by Vulcan, God of Fire and the Anvil. When lit, the torch will form a magical flame which can be adjusted at will to illuminate an area with a radius of 1 to 50 feet. The torch can be extinguished only by magical means. The torch gives off light in all planes of existence. In addition to this, the torch gives the bearer the following powers:

Power	Frequency	Charges Used
Dancing Lights	Once/day	1
Burning Hands	Once/day	2
Pyrotechnics	Once/day	3
Flame Arrow	Once/week	6
Fire Trap	Once/week	10
Fireball	Once/week	10
Wall of Fire	Once/week	15
Flame Strike	Once/week	20

The torch may have up to 25 charges at a time. It may be recharged by donating a minimum of 150gp in crushed rubies to the Temple of Vesta per charge restored. The donation must be made in secret, at night, and the owner must bear both the magic torch and a lit, regular torch. If ever the number of charges is reduced to zero, the flame will be doused and a delayed blast fireball spell must be cast upon it in order to relight the torch. If there are not enough charges left for the desired power, the bearer will incur 1d10+30hp of damage. Furthermore, the power used will backfire and the torch will disintegrate.

After a while, the bearer of the torch will become very possessive of the torch. The bearer will never part with the torch and will insist on carrying the torch himself, even if it hampers him in combat (For instance, a

fighter will get rid of his two-handed sword in order to carry the torch). The bearer will become paranoid and merely touching him may cause him to act irrationally (Stephen Breerer).

Sale Value --- 25000g.p.  
XP Value --- 8000x.p.

Note: The Torch of Vesta is a holy artifact and there is only one in the cosmos.

## Staff of Dehydration

This short, twisted staff is of unknown origin. Only a few are known to exist. The staff has the power to dehydrate any opponent. The magic-user or illusionist wielding this item must first roll to hit. If it does hit, a charge is expended and the opponent must make a saving throw vs. staves or be dehydrated. An affected creature will be reduced to a pile of worthless dust. Since 90% of the body is water, the amount of dust will be 10% of the body mass. Note, however, that only the body will be affected, not weapons and armor. If the dust is not dissipated over a large area immediately thereafter, it will combine with moisture in the air and reform the creature. Dispersing the dust can be difficult in the case of a dragon or a similar opponent. Creatures such as sandmen and fire elementals are not affected by the staff. Water-based creatures such as water elementals or water weards, if struck, will cause the staff to overload and explode, causing eight points of damage per charge left in the staff. The radius of explosion is twenty feet and is of magical nature. The water creature will not be affected. Dehydrated beings may be sealed in an airtight container for transport if a such a container can be obtained. This staff may be recharged (Andrew Oleksiuk).

Sale Value --- 45000g.p.  
XP Value --- 10000x.p.

## Oil of Masking

The Oil of Masking is a unique salve that masks the scent of its wearer. The oil can be used only once, and when the duration is over it will flake off of the body. The masking effects of this oil will last 2-5 turns. The recipient of this oil will be completely sterilized after its application. The wearer cannot contract normal, non-magical disease for six months. If magic is used to inflict the disease, the recipient of the oil will gain +1 on his saving throw vs. disease.

This item can also be used to rid the smell of skunk and other such creatures. When used with silence and invisibility the person using the potion is virtually undetectable (Royce Kallerud).

Sale Value --- 1750g.p.  
XP Value --- 1000x.p.

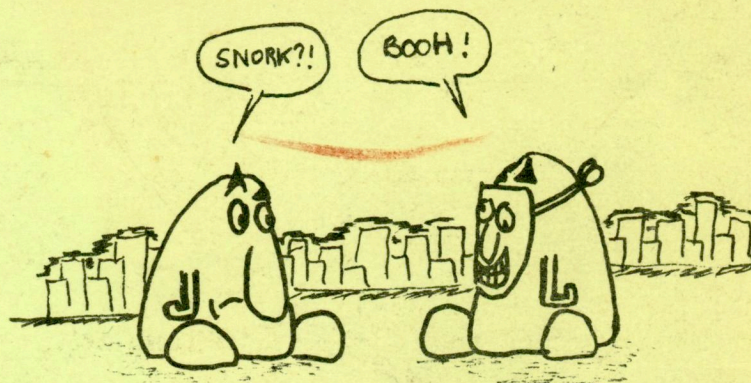
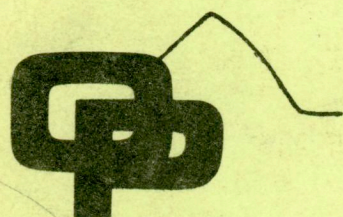




# OLYMPUS

3114 RIVERFALLS DRIVE

NORTHBROOK, ILLINOIS 60062



## Feedback

Please rate the following items on a 1-100 scale, 100 being superb, and 1 being terrible. Everyone sending this questionnaire in by May 15th will be eligible to win a free issue of Olympus. Your response is appreciated.

Fleeting Thoughts	_____	Different Faces	_____	Mercury	_____
Fiend Folio: Friend or Foe	_____	Double or Nothing	_____	Arms Law Review	_____
Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth	_____	Wyrm's Claw Review	_____	DragonLords Review	_____
Damage Vs. Hit Points	_____	Traps	_____	Torch of Vesta	_____
Staff of Dehydration	_____	Oil of Masking	_____		_____
Artwork:					
Cover	_____	Steve Wender	_____	Anthony Orzech	_____
Heath Yonaites	_____	Stephan Lefour	_____	Overall Artwork	_____
Other:					
Olympus Ad	_____	Labyrinth Games Ad	_____	Olympus Overall	_____

Thank You!

Mercury Update: The Explorer Magazine advertised in Olympus #2 and #3 has folded. This was due to lack of funds and support.