

The Scroll

Magazine for the Dedicated Gamer

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No. 12

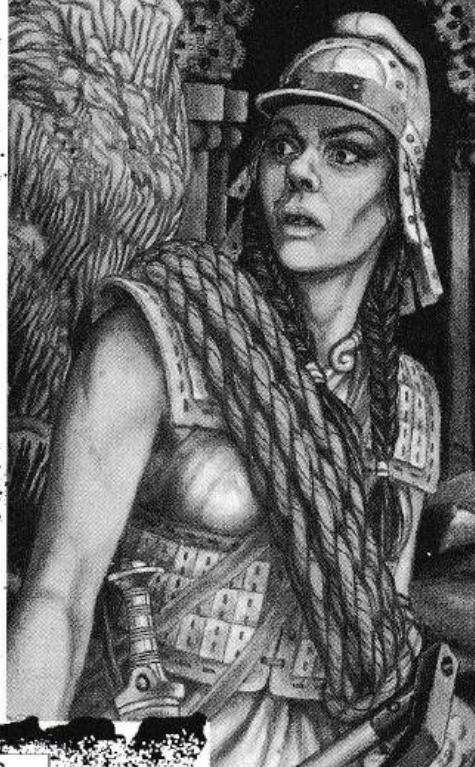


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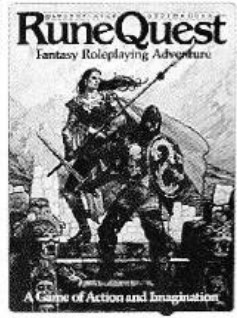
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The Scroll

Magazine for the Dedicated Gamer

Issue #12

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Editorial

Greeting Fellow Adventurers,

For most gamers roleplaying is a hobby, something they do for fun as a break from their everyday lives. But for those who make the games, it's a high-stakes business. Making a living, much less building a large profit base, takes a lot of work and planning. And every time any sort of business makes any sort of plans, there is one thing they have to take into account — the law.

All elements of business have to live up to a basic set of laws. Laws govern the way they manage money, the way they deal with creative talent, who has the rights to what product, where they can do business... anything. Most of the time this is invisible to the customer. For example, if I were to go into a game store and pick up a copy of the upcoming RPG *Prime Directive* the question of just what sort of arrangements with Paramount are needed to avoid a lawsuit don't enter my mind. Game producing is full of invisible legal ties that the customer doesn't notice *until* a dispute makes a product he wants suddenly unavailable. Which often means a public legal squabble, and eventually leads to an actual lawsuit.

In the last six months lawsuits have been really big stories in the industry. Most of these cases have been settled somehow, but how many of these could have been solved without a public stink?

Take a much talked-about suit between Palladium Books and Wizards of the Coast. Wizards, a company based in the Seattle area, was apparently sued over providing a system to convert their stats to stats for one of Palladium's products. Palladium objected and sued. In the office it was easy to take sides on this one. Many game companies provide conversions between systems so that products for one game can be used with another. Suppose you wanted to take a super you saw in a *GURPS*™ supplement and use him in your *Champions*™ game. What do you do? In a back issue of Steve Jackson's *Roleplayer* magazine is a system for adapting *Champions* characters to *GURPS*, and enterprising GMs can reverse the process. Nobody objected either way. Companies inside and outside of product lines frequently publish conversion information. The Palladium suit was against what many considered a common courtesy in the hobby.

Fortunately, the two companies finally came to a settlement. The nasty rhetoric used by both sides suggests it would have been an especially bloody trial if it had gotten that far. What is more, the expense of going to court might

well have financially harmed both companies and kept some intriguing products off the shelves. As Steve Jackson Games can attest after taking the government to court (and winning) over the infamous seizure of their manuscripts and equipment by the Secret Service, going to court costs an enormous amount of money and time that could be far better spent developing games.

This was an especially public example, but there are many such disputes each year. Since they get settled out of court most of the time, the gaming customers never hear about them. I much prefer it that way, and I think most of you do too. But I sometimes think that companies are taking too much time covering their behinds instead of making good products, and even with settlements, a lot of hard feelings lie behind the surface. Yes, gaming is competitive like all businesses, but anybody going on the assumption of "destroy the competition", "let's cheat the writers", or "let's steal this other game in the works and do it ourselves so the other game dies and we make all the money" does not really belong in this field. Whenever you screw the competition, screw the writers, or screw the retailers, you're *really* screwing your customers. And when you do that you screw the entire industry, and ultimately you screw yourselves.

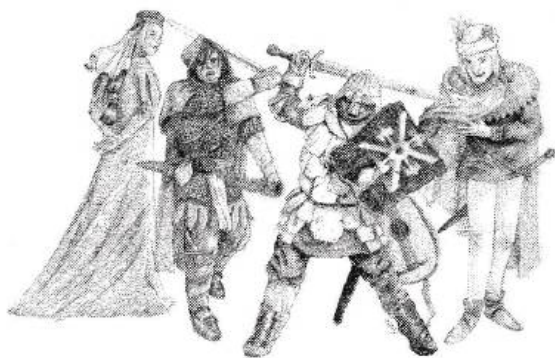
This industry has had enough trouble with law already from outside as well. For example, when the state of New York passed regulations on the use of lead, those regulations included an outright ban on the sale of miniatures containing lead. How can we as an industry explain that miniatures pose no threat when people outside are saying the industry itself is a threat, and have lawyers to back them up? With all the vindictive press and media stacked against us, we don't need troubles between ourselves.

The innovative designers and publishers should be left free to innovate, without having to look over their shoulders worrying about getting sued. Many joint products that are beginning to appear (such as the upcoming *GURPS Vampire*™ and *GURPS Talislanta*™) and look really promising can only happen in a world where companies, writers, and artists can trust each other. All too often this trust is betrayed, and then everyone starts pouring tons of money into law firms to cover themselves until the public recriminations nearly destroy the companies and burn out creative people who still have a lot to offer. The only people who really win legal battles are the lawyers.

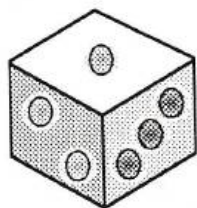
"Never Forget"



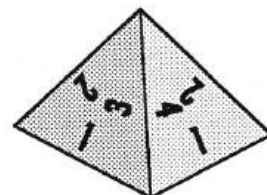
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**And More
To Follow!**

The Lost Monks of Kashikoï-kani



**A Generic Oriental Adventure
for a Single Player or Small
Party**

By Chris Hind

The Lost Monks of Kashikoi-kani is a generic scenario for any fantasy roleplaying game set in the Orient. For this reason, the game master should insert his own rule-related material (stats, skill rolls, etc.) depending on the specific game system. However, basic stats for humans are included, following a set format:

Name; career class; courage; significant attributes; skills; armor; weapons; special information.

Monsters are from actual Far Eastern folk-lore, so most game systems will supply stats for them. If not, the game-master may replace the offending monster with a similar one or create stats from scratch using this scenario's brief description and mythology as guides. Text in boxes is intended to be read to the PC.

The scenario is designed for a single shukenja (a holy person, also called "yamabushi") of great renown and spiritual enlightenment. Optionally, 4-6 characters could participate instead so long as the group includes at least one shukenja. In this adventure, piety and a search for knowledge rather than greed and glory should motivate the PC. Characters should possess a range of skills; the ability to swim would be a particular asset. The gamemaster may locate the adventure anywhere in his campaign world so long as he remembers that the Sea of Chills is a temperate saltwater body fed by occasional cold currents from northern waters. The PC should initially start within 20 miles of Yoake, although not in the village itself because an important encounter occurs as he arrives.

Most of the encounters are designed to test a shukenja's unique, non-violent skills. While some situations may lead to combat, good roleplaying, a show of intelligence, and judicious use of spells (if existent in the game system) will allow a PC to complete the adventure with minimal bloodshed. The gods (i.e. the gamemaster) should allow an otherwise impoverished shukenja to gather about 5 ch'ien (about half the price of a katana) for the upcoming journey.

Adventure Background

You have just returned from the village market with a packet of dried seaweed which you had hoped would add variety to a spartan meal of boiled rice. While preparing the meal, you discover that your purchase is wrapped in an ancient manuscript. Although the writing on the parchment is faded and smeared, you hold what is obviously the historian Rekishi's first-hand report of the Battle for the Golden Disk, which occurred nearly 1,000 years ago.

Curiosity clouds your hunger. Forgetting your dinner, you return to the market intent on discovering how a fish-monger acquired an important historical document. The peasant who sold you the seaweed — a

dignified old woman who carries her poverty like the Emperor his crown — closes her stall for the night as you approach. You show her the manuscript and ask her what she knows of it.

"I found that scrap washed up on shore near Yoake," she replies. "Scribble-words are of no use to me, but the scrap made an excellent wrapper for my goods. It was sealed in this tube."

From her tattered robes, she produces an ivory scroll-case. She allows you to inspect it. The scroll-case is well-made and closes to a water-tight seal. It is clearly of equal age to the manuscript. On the side, you notice newer inscriptions identifying it as belonging to the Temple of Kashikoi-kani — a deity of education, enlightenment and wisdom.

The Temple of Kashikoi-kani in the sea-side town of Yoake was famed for an extensive collection of religious texts and an equal number of historical, philosophical and linguistic works. Its monks claimed that their fore-fathers invented the art of paper-making. Half a century ago, the world of knowledge suffered a terrible loss. A barbarian horde besieged Yoake and razed the temple to the ground. A popular story claims that a dozen monks escaped by ship with the most valuable manuscripts. They were last seen sailing towards the rising sun. Your recovery of a supposedly lost manuscript adds credibility to the story of the monks' escape.

Certain that your discovery is a divine indication that hidden lore must soon be re-discovered, you take it upon yourself to search for the lost monks of Kashikoi-kani. Trusting in your gods to guide you along a fifty-year-old path, you set out for Yoake and the Sea of Chills with only your robes, sandals and the limited supplies you carry on your back.

For the Game Master

The fish monger will part with the scroll case in exchange for a blessing. Spells or powers of divination will prove useful at this point. They might show that the scroll case has been enchanted for water-proofing and buoyancy, and may reveal some of the following information concerning the manuscript's history.

The story of the monk's escape is true, but incomplete. Thirteen monks sailed east from Yoake across the Sea of Chills. After many adventures of their own, they arrived at a remote island called Gakeshima. With the help of native Korobokuru (dwarfish, wild-men), they built a new temple to Kashikoi-kani in which to store those manuscripts they had managed to save. In this temple, the monks have lived contemplating the mysteries of the universe ever since. Yet even the wisest and holiest of monks are but mortal. Now, fifty years later, only one monk remains alive. He was recently driven from his temple by an oni (described later) who preferred manuscripts and silk tapestries to a cold cave floor.



Thus would have ended the story of the lost monks if it wasn't for one young korobokuru. Shortly after the monks settled on Gakeshima, this korobokuru snuck into the temple and stole a scroll on a dare from his fellows. His theft resulted in his falling under a curse. Distaught by this cruel turn of events, he threw the cursed scroll into the sea. For years, the sea buffeted the scroll until washing it up on the mainland shore, ironically, not ten miles from its starting point. Here begins the PC involvement.

The shukenja may or may not learn the entire tale by the end of the adventure, but should be satisfied that higher powers have manipulated mundane events. Since the pilgrimage will be long and difficult, we should forget the future and begin at the present.

Beginning the Adventure

The trip should be uneventful until the PC reaches the outskirts of Yoake:

Few people have traveled the road to Yoake in recent years, though its well-worn surface reveals it was once a major trade route. The smell of salt-spray on the wind indicates that your journey nears an end. Ahead, you see a young man sitting on a rock by the side of the road. He dresses in weather-worn travel clothes and appears to be talking to himself. As you approach, he turns his head in your direction and you realize he is blind.

The blind hermit is Kurai-me. Many years ago, he was struck by lightning, which he believes was the gods' punishment for some unspecified dishonor. In truth, Kurai-me was in the wrong place at the wrong time — sheltering under a tall pine during a lightning storm. This curious behavior followed from one of Kurai-me's taboos which forbids him from sleeping in a permanent shelter despite the weather.

Kurai-me survives by the generosity of a wako (pirate) captain who has his own base motives. In exchange for food, Kurai-me sets-up unwary travelers. He casts spells on approaching travelers to learn their general social level, wealth, and if they carry any enchanted equipment. Striking up a conversation, he asks where an individual is from, where he is headed, and how he plans to get there. If Kurai-me believes a traveler has something of value (including knowledge of lost religious artifacts — usually quite valuable), he waits for the traveler to continue on his way before reporting to his wako companions by means of another spell.

If a shukenja restores Kurai-me's sight through divine means, the grateful wu jen offers his magical Ring of the Carp in thanks. The gift will prove valuable during the upcoming voyage. Kurai-me also warns of a man with a bird's claw instead of a foot.

Kurai-me: Novice wu jen (sorcerer); cowardly; intelligent; herbalism, cooking, fishing, calligraphy; no armor; bo stick; divination and communication spells. He wears a whale-bone *Ring of the Carp* on his left little finger. Kurai-me values a bundle of bamboo strips inscribed with mystic characters above all other possessions. The bundle serves as a braille spell book.

The Ring of the Carp



This magical ring bestows the following properties to the wearer: Allows the character free movement in water, doubled swimming movement rate, and the ability to breath water for 1 hour per day. In addition, once per week allows the character to shape change into a carp for a period of 24-hours.

The Village of Yoake

When the barbarian horde swept through Yoake, every building was destroyed and townspeople who didn't flee were slaughtered. Yoake is only slowly recovering from the destruction. The fifty fisher folk who presently live here are sad shadows of the prosperous two-thousand who once knew Yoake as a wealthy center of culture.

The road tops a ridge and suddenly you stand above a village which lies in a semi-circular depression on the coast. Yoake is easily recognized. Most of the buildings on the upper slope are ruined or uninhabited. Only a scattering of huts near the water remain in good repair by the humbled people of this once prosperous fishing and trading town. As you descend towards the docks, you pass a lone, stone temple-dog standing guard over a pile of blackened rubble. This must once have been the Temple of Kashikoi-kani.

Nothing remains of the temple so the PC should proceed to the wharf. Unless a PC has his own method of traveling across the Sea of Chills (unlikely), he must hire a ship and crew. In Yoake, a crew of wako and a group of fishermen offer their services. The wako are more competent and ask for less money, but are traitorous (see *Sacrifice at Sea* below).

Wako Crew

If Kurai-me has sent a message to the wako captain or the PC inadvertently approaches these pirates seeking passage on their ship, read the following:

When you reach the docks, a tall, raven-haired man approaches. He dresses in the manner of a sailor — loose cotton trousers and robe, no foot-ware — and carries a sword.

"Kurotori greets you," he says. Returning his bow, you see a bird's claw in place of his right foot. He notices your reaction and adds: "My family blood has been stained in a past generation by that of the *hengeyokai*. Please do not let my ancestor's dishonor affect your reaction to me."

Kurotori offers to rent his ship and crew for a reasonable price. He points out that his junk is faster than any fishing craft and that his crew are better able to fight off pirates (ironic, considering their self-granted title of wako).

These men are actually failed wako; sea-going thugs, really. Their total wealth — a mere pittance — is hidden within the hull of their ship. The pirate junk travels 40 miles a day and is 70% seaworthy.

Wako sailors (13): Novice bushi; average courage; no distinguishing attributes; sailing, swimming; light armor; sword.

Kurotori: Skilled bushi; brave; strong, agile, healthy, but rather unwise; navigation, sailing, swimming, weapon repair; do-maru and kote; sword and short bow; blood-thirsty and cruel.

Fishing Crew

If the PC has been warned of Kurotori or would just rather not deal with him, he may proposition some fishermen. Their spokesperson, a short, squinting man named Chiisai, asks for more money than did the pirates, but it's still a fair price. Their fishing junk sails 20 miles a day and has a seaworthiness rating of 50%.

Fishermen (10): Normal humans; cowardly; no distinguishing attributes; fishing, sailing, swimming; no armor; armed with knives.

The Sea of Chills

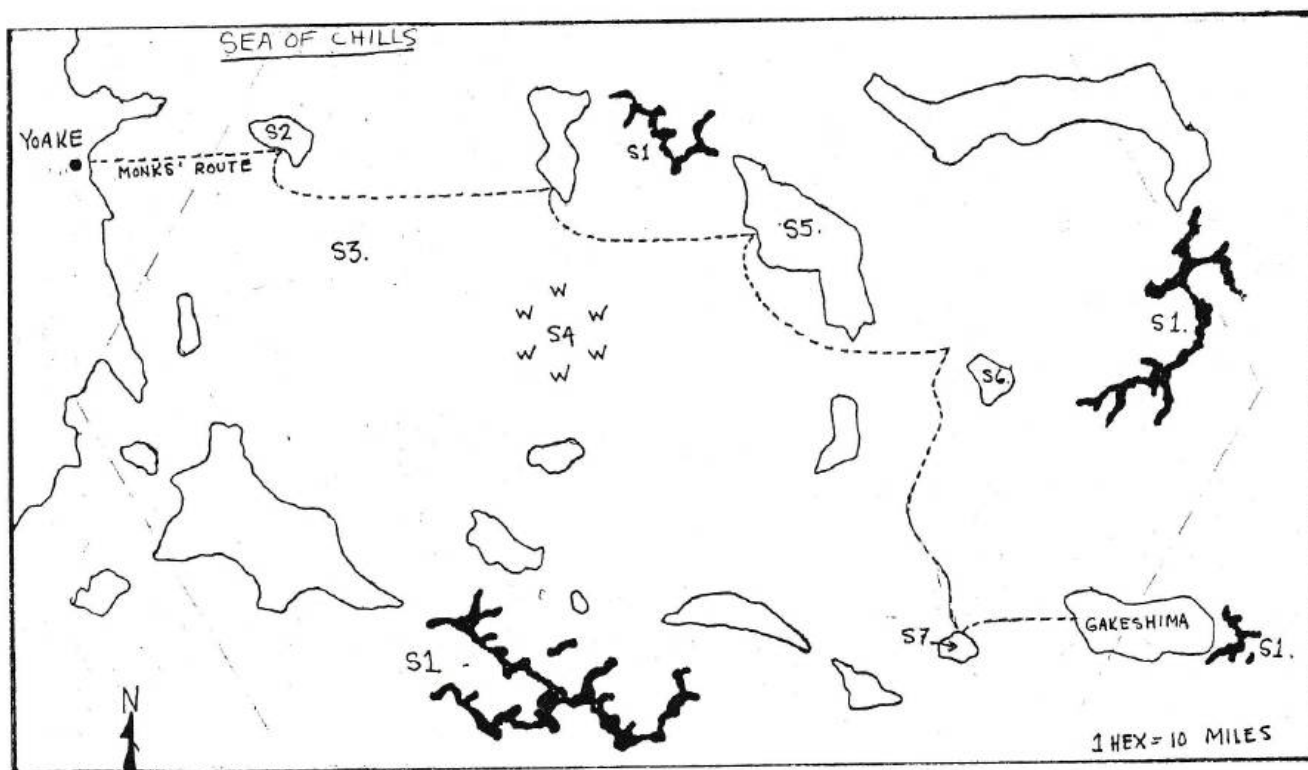
Random Encounters. Each day, the GM should roll percentile dice and consult the Sea of Chills Random Encounters table (Table 1). He should elaborate upon the results to simulate epic journeys like the *Odyssey* or the seven voyages of Sinbad. As well as chance encounters, changes in wind strength are also incorporated into the table. Wind effects last one day.

Sight and Getting Lost. At sea, large or bright objects — such as land or a ship's white sail — are visible from about 10 miles away (one hex on the Sea of Chills map). Aquatic monsters may be sighted only when they surface beside a ship. Between these two extremes, the gamemaster is on his own.

Each day, percentile dice are rolled to determine if a ship becomes lost. Within sight of land, there is a base 20% chance of this happening. The chance of getting lost increases to 70% when a ship travels into open water (i.e. more than one hex away from land). The gamemaster may increase this percentage for poor weather or darkness. A navigator (such as the wako captain Kurotori, but not the fishermen) reduces the chance of getting lost by 30%.

Should a crew lose their way, their ship veers from the intended direction. On a result of 1-3 on 1d6, the ship veers one hex face to the right of the desired direction; on a result of 4-6, the ship veers one hex face to the left of the desired direction. At the beginning of each day, the crew can sight up against the rising sun to continue the quest eastward. Therefore, a new roll for becoming lost is made each day.

Ship Sinking. Storms, shoals, or sea-monsters may sink a ship. When a ship gets into a hazardous situation (as dictated by set and random encounters), roll percentile dice and compare the result to the ship's seaworthiness rating. A roll lower than the seaworthiness rating allows



Map 1: The Sea of Chills

the ship to remain afloat, although a gamemaster may rule that it sustains minor damage or a crew member falls over-board. If the roll is higher than the seaworthiness rating, the relevant encounter describes just what happens. Typically, the ship is crushed, hulled, capsized, or otherwise sunk.

A character thrown into the sea may make some sort of agility or luck test to grab a buoyant object, such as a piece of wreckage or a barrel. Such a flotation bestows a bonus (perhaps +25%) to the character's swimming skill.

A character within 10 miles of shore need make only one swimming check to reach safety. If the shipwreck occurs far from land, even a skilled swimmer will drown unless aided by a buoyant object. Even with such support, one swimming check is required per day, with a cumulative penalty (roughly -5%) applied each day after the first. Thus a character will eventually drown unless rescued or aided by magic. Proficient swimmers may swim five miles per day, although they may lose their direction just as a ship might (see *Sight and Getting Lost* above). Non-swimmers are at the mercy of wind and waves. Also note that food and fresh water are in short supply when floating in the sea and spell casting is virtually impossible. The gamemaster should assume that 50% of a ship's crew survive to reach safety.

Other than drowning, a survivor's most pressing concern is the prospect of rescue. He may be stranded on desolate island or, worse, helplessly floating in the sea. A gamemaster can roll random encounter checks each day until obtaining a suitable result (like sympathetic fishermen) or simply have 5d6 days pass before staging a rescue of his devising. The first method works well when survivors bob about in constant terror of sharks.

While running such an event, the swimming guidelines found in the relevant rule book should also be consulted.

Sacrifice at Sea

This encounter occurs if the PC is sailing with Kurotori's wako crew.

Your ship cuts across the choppy sea, leaving land behind as a green strip on the horizon. Just as you thank the gods for allowing your journey to begin so smoothly, Kurotori and his fifteen cronies surround you on deck.

"Hand over your possessions, holy one," Kurotori snarls, "and we will sacrifice you to the Sea Goddess in a manner most painless."

At this, the crew make crude jokes and gesture menacingly with jagged swords.

Kurotori plans to strip the PC of valuables and sacrifice him to an unnamed evil deity. The method of sacrifice is best left to the game master's imagination, although hopefully he will not need to describe it to the PC. If the character has no valuables, the wako become even more insistent on a sacrifice to compensate for wasted time and effort.

Assuming the shukenja does not jump overboard (which requires a successful agility roll to avoid the grasping crew), he must think quickly — and act even more quickly — to save himself. Combat is suicidal, not to mention uncreative and against the shukenja's best doctrines. A very persuasive individual may talk his way out, but the GM should judge the player's rhetoric rather than leave it to a die roll.

Another method of escape relies on the wako's extreme superstition. A threat of the gods' anger followed by a suitably impressive spell frightens the wako into letting the shukenja live. The wako crew follow Kurotori in any decision.

Set Encounters

Except for those described in the following encounters, the islands dotting the Sea of Chills are rocky and uninhabited by creatures larger than sea birds.

S1. Shoals. In some areas of the Sea of Chills, sharp rocks lie just below the surface of the water. Careful observers may notice these treacherous areas by a light spray in the water above the shoals; good listeners may hear the waves crashing against the rocks (allow an intelligence roll). Apply a considerable penalty (–25%) to the roll during storms or on moonlit nights. A ship may be steered through the shoals with successful navigation (by the watchman) and sailing (by the tiller) skill rolls. If either of these rolls fail or if the crew is ignorant of the shoals, the ship must test vs. seaworthiness or split its hull upon the sharp rocks (see *Ship Sinking*, above).

S2. Island of Suffering. When the PC's ship passes close to this island, one of the crew gives the following warning:

"Mind that island. Silver devils wander those desolate rocks. They've scoured it of all living things — plant, beast and man. Few dare land there and even fewer return. If you plan to go ashore, you'll be going alone — me and my mates won't become their next meal."

The sailor's tale is based on fact. This island once served as a leper colony. In that sense, no-one who was put ashore ever returned. The colony was forgotten after Yoake was sacked. The "silver devils" are seven second-generation

1d100 Random Encounter

01 – 50	No encounter.
51 – 55	<i>Poor Wind:</i> Sailed craft moves at 50% speed.
56 – 60	<i>Fishermen</i> (10% chance of a fishing fleet of 1d6 fishing junks; otherwise a single craft; each craft manned by 5d4 normal men).
61 – 65	<i>Sharks</i> (1–4).
66 – 70	<i>School of Fish:</i> Characters with fishing proficiency can spend the day catching food.
71 – 75	<i>Strong Wind:</i> Sailed craft move at 150% normal speed.
76 – 80	<i>Dolphins</i> (2–5).
81 – 84	<i>Wako</i> (21–30).
85 – 88	<i>Saltwater Demon:</i> A trollish water-spirit.
89 – 90	<i>Storm:</i> Sailed craft move at 200% normal speed and must test vs. seaworthiness or capsize (see <i>Ship Sinking</i>).
91 – 92	<i>Ghost Ship:</i> An insubstantial junk is seen in the distance seemingly sailing above the water; the ship neither approaches or recedes and any attempt to catch up with it fails; it fades away in 1–6 hours.
93 – 94	<i>Marine Corpses</i> (1–4): Ghouls/zombies.
95 – 96	<i>Ningyo</i> (2–5): Benevolent water-spirits; very magical.
97 – 98	<i>Becalmed:</i> Sailed craft may not move this day.
99	<i>Lesser Seawolves</i> (2–5): Aquatic werewolves.
00	<i>Sea Serpent:</i> If a sea serpent decides to attack a ship (20% chance) it automatically wraps its coils around the vessel (no roll to hit required); a constricted ship capsizes in a number of rounds equal to its seaworthiness divided by 10.

Note: Roll once on this table each day that the PC is traveling on The Sea of Chills.

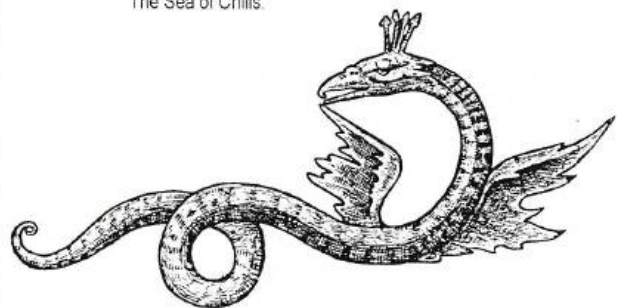


Table 1: The Sea of Chills Random Encounter Table

lepers who remain. They are lean, hungry and half-savage from lack of civilization. Crates of food were once delivered, but no longer. The lepers survive on sea-weed and whatever small creatures they can catch. Despite the sailor's tale, they have not yet been driven to cannibalism, but that day is not far off. If the island is explored, read the following:

Seven figures squat on the beach, apparently scrounging for clams and crabs among the rocks near shore. One catches sight of you, partially rises, and points with a three-fingered hand. His slick, gray skin is covered with warts or scales and hairless except few patches on his head. Glazed eyes peer at you over a bleeding sore which passes for a nose. With a coarse, coughing shout, the silver devil scrambles towards you.

The lepers are not violent but wish to beg for help. They speak in grunts or barely coherent, rasping voices. A successful intelligence/medicine test identifies their disease as leprosy. A shukenja should stop here if he can recognize these pitiful creatures as once-human and in need of pity. The treatment may take some time yet this delay is minor considering the monks have been missing for fifty years. Both wako and fishermen will not allow lepers on board their ship before they are cured.

Three things must be done to completely alleviate the lepers' suffering. First, the leprosy must be cured through divine means or by a very skilled doctor. Second, food and fresh water will fortify the starving lepers. Third, the newly-cured men and women should be transported to the mainland so they may start new lives.

A character who spends any length of time with the lepers has a 10% chance of contracting leprosy — a chronic, connective tissue disease which reduces strength, agility, health and appearance by half while the disease runs its course. A diseased character also has a 65% chance of dying in 1d6 + 10 months. Strength, agility and health return to their original scores once the disease is cured. Appearance returns to only 3/4 initial value due to features lost (sometimes literally) during the illness.

Lepers: Diseased humans; cowardly; below-average attributes; no skills; no armor; no weapons; unable to attack.

S3. Birth of an Island. As far as one hex from this encounter, a PC sees a huge, gray cloud billowing from the sea. The temperature and humidity begin to rise as a ship sails closer. Ships may safely approach within half a mile of the cloud. A closer approach hazards the effects of falling ash. Characters take slight burn damage each minute and must make health tests or take an additional 1d4 points of damage from choking ash and poison gas. Brave, foolish, or dangerously curious characters are rewarded after a

wait of 1d6 hours:

You approach as close as you dare to the cloud, which is now hundreds of feet high. Though ash and noxious gases cause your eyes to water, what you see strikes you with awe. The sea churns and boils. Crashing waves pitch your ship, not yet rough enough to capsize it. Through the obscuring steam, you see — or think you see — a huge, jeweled spear descend from the heavens and dip into the water. Shining crystals droplets break from the spear and sink into the Sea of Chills. In moments, a rocky peak breaks the surface, parts of it red-hot and boiling water off in seconds. It is said that fortunes shines on those who witness an island's birth — a rare example of divine creation.

Witnessing this encounter is an auspicious omen; the character gains a +5% bonus on the next 5 rolls, to represent divine favor. The island continues to rise for the next 4d6 months. The GM should decide how large it grows and what secrets rise with it from the bottom of the sea. Perhaps the remnants of a lost civilization cling to the cooling rocks...but that is another adventure.

S4. Vortex and Ghost Lights. When the PC's ship enters one of the hexes marked with a "W" read the following:

Mist or fog rises from the sea and slowly worsening visibility. Droplets of water speckle your exposed skin and your clothing clings uncomfortably. The crew slows speed and anxiously peer over the rail for any sign of shoals or other dangerous waters. Hours pass. Nervous tension borders on fearful paranoia. Everyone's eyes hurt from straining into white nothingness. Then, some miles away though the mist you see a light. Moisture in the air makes its color uncertain — sometimes it appears orange, other times pale yellow or even white. The light could be a lantern on a ship or perhaps a fire on shore.

The light is actually a will o'wisp, the malicious spirits of drowned sailors. Hidden by the thick mist thrown up by churning waters, a whirl pool drains the Sea of Chills. The will o'wisp haunts the sea around the whirl pool, luring sailors to an azure grave.

The gamemaster should first allow the PC to investigate the light by his own volition. This encounter works better if the player's own curiosity leads to his doom and this creates the delusion of choice. Only if the PC ignores the light should everyone make willpower/intelligence tests. Assume that 25% of the regular sailors keep their wits; roll for only important NPCs. Those who fail their roll are compelled to approach the will o'wisp, steering the ship towards the light under full sail. Meanwhile, the will o'wisp

lures them towards the whirl pool. Those unaffected by the will o'wisp have 15 rounds to free their companions from its influence and steer away from the whirl pool.

The sheer number of entranced sailors means that the remaining crew may have trouble forcibly restraining each of them (not to mention leaving the ship without direction). Mind-affecting spells (or ones which hide the will o'wisp from the sailor's eyes, thus breaking the entrancement) work well. Even if free-willed characters regain control of the ship, the enthralled sailors attempt to jump overboard and swim towards the light.

When control of the ship has been regained, sailors must escape the whirl pool. The probability begins at 150% on the first round and lowers by 10% each round afterwards. Therefore, escape is automatic on the first five rounds (the ship hasn't yet been drawn into the whirl pool's pull), 90% certain on the sixth round, 80% on the seventh, etc., until the ship spirals to its doom on the fifteenth round. If an escape roll fails one round, another attempt may be made in the next at the reduced percentage. On the fifteenth round the ship is locked into its doom and nothing short of a miracle will save her.

Characters in the water cannot swim away from the whirl pool without magical ability (e.g. *Ring of the Carp*), and even then with the escape percentage given above. Swimmers pulled under are crushed by the water pressure as well as drown. Deep beneath the sea, scattered coins, 22 gems, and some mystic objects lie scattered among a graveyard of smashed ships.

Will o'wisp (1): A ghost-light which is very difficult to hit with physical attacks and immune to many spells as well; it can mesmerize its prey or attack with an electrical charge.

S5. Standing Stones and the Talking Colossus.

Visible even from the sea, a row of giant stones stand on shore like shapeless and sightless sentinels of the ages. The stones, varying from thirty to sixty feet tall, are weathered, cracked and speckled with lichen; any distinguishing shape or design which may have once existed is now lost.

If the PC lands, half a dozen primitive humans materialize from the shrubs. They approach warily, keeping their bamboo spears before them. The tribesmen relax somewhat if the PC can persuade them that he is peaceful (unarmed characters have an advantage here). Korobun, their shaman — his half-naked body smeared with dung and his wild hair decorated with feathers — speaks the trade language and is 50% proficient in the local dialect. He wishes to know what brings a stranger to the island. If asked about the monks of Kashikoi-kani, the shaman replies truthfully that he knows nothing about them. Should initial contact go

well, he promises to lead the PC to someone who can answer his questions:

The shaman, Korobun, leads you into a clear trail though a light forest. The five tribesmen follow some distance behind, apparently no longer wary of you. As you walk, you wonder who erected the standing stones since these primitives clearly lack the necessary technology. Korobun, seeming to read your mind, explains that their god is placed the stones as guardians. Furthermore, he claims that this deity speaks to them through a statue. Just then, the trail emerges from the forest to reveal what Korobun calls the *Talking Colossus*. A huge statue sculpted of red stone thrusts from the turf at the crest of a hill. Only the head and shoulders are visible, yet they alone tower sixty feet above you. The statue's sharp-features and shadowed eye-hollows give it an angry expression.

Korobun kneels before it and begins to chant. The other tribesmen look on with expressions of mixed fear and awe. A loud, squawking voice suddenly cuts through your brain: "You seek the lost monks of Kashikoi-kani, that I know. Your offering will decide if you worthy of an answer."



The Talking Colossus is actually a kenku (bird-like spirit) who enjoys duping primitive peoples. The kenku, Bakageta, knows little about anything, and certainly nothing concerning the lost monks. To keep up appearances as an omniscient deity, his telepathic answers are in riddles. For instance, Bakageta's answer concerning the lost monks may be: "The lost are easily found when the found become lost." The gamemaster should be creative with his answers — after all, they don't have to make any sense.

A shukenja's duty is to reveal this false god for what it is and send the tribesmen on a road to spiritual enlightenment. Blasphemy is met by a magical hail of stones but since he considers this a game, Bakageta aims his spells to cause minimum damage. He also intervenes if insulted tribesmen attempt to harm the shukenja. Perception spells cast on or near the Talking Colossus reveals the kenku for one round (to the caster only or to everyone present, depending on the spell).

Once the game is up, Bakageta shows himself. Sitting atop the Talking Colossus and squawking in laughter, the kenku telepathically congratulates the shukenja on his wisdom. He offers the being who bested him a choice of two gifts: an ivory chest or a small wooden box. If the ivory chest is chosen, Bakageta flies off with the wooden box. If the wooden box is chosen, the kenku leaves the ivory chest anyway, hoping that greed prevails. The wooden box is called *Bakageta's Ever-full Box*, because it magically generates a small amount of coins each day. The ivory chest is magically trapped so that, when opened, a skeleton springs up attacks until destroyed. The chest contains no further tricks and is one hundred times more valuable than most chests.

Typical Tribesman: Novice warrior; average bravery; average attributes; hunting, fishing, woodland survival; fur armor, spears.

Korobun: Skilled warrior/shaman; strong, agile, healthy, charismatic, but not too intelligent or wise; dancing, chanting, canoeing, hunting, fishing, woodland survival, legend-lore; no armor; bone club.

Skeleton (1): A supernatural threat; immune to mind-affecting magic and piercing weapons; fights until destroyed.

Bakageta (kenku): Skilled bushi/sorcerer; cowardly; agile, can fly; mimicry, pick-pocket; no armor, but supernaturally hard-to-strike; bo stick; can attack with beak and claws, shape change, become invisible, cast a number of minor earth-element spells, and communicate telepathically.

S6. The Ronin

As you approach this rocky island, a storm quickly gathers. Strong wind and choppy waves soon threaten your ship. Suddenly, a huge wave crashed over the ship, knocking you tumbling.

Characters on deck take concussion damage and must make an agility/luck roll to avoid being swept overboard. Swimming checks are at -25% due to the storm, but only one success is required to reach shore. A ship must make a seaworthiness roll at -40% or capsize. If the ship stays afloat, it travels away from the island at 200% speed. If the tiller successfully rolls against sailing craft skill, he may choose the direction traveled. The storm spreads in a 30-mile radius from the island, lasts 6d4 hours and will not reoccur for at least one week. See Ship Sinking for guidelines on running this part of the encounter.

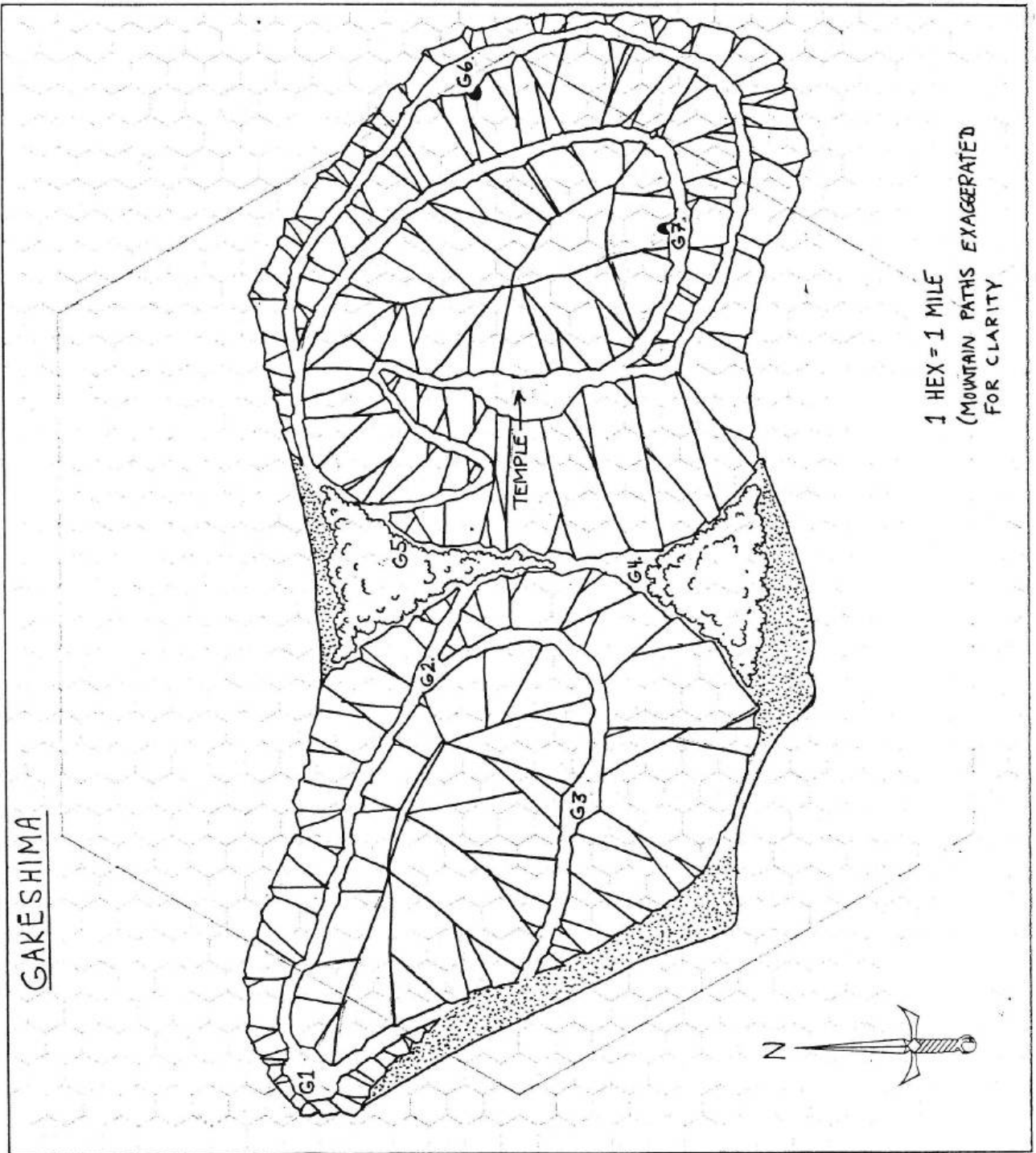
The storm is no ordinary squall but created by a powerful being. Utukushii Ginuroko was born 100 years ago, the daughter of a minor noble and a typhoon dragon. She turned her back on the Lord of the Sea to pursue power in the Imperial court but was subsequently banished by the Emperor for showing too much political ambition. Alienated from both the material or spiritual worlds, she lives alone on this island. She spends her time diving for pearls or wrecking ships with her power to create tempests. Each character who survives the storm may make an intelligence test to remember seeing a serpentine form rolling through the clouds.

When the PC encounters Utukushii, she appears as a beautiful human dressed in silk robes. An observant character may notice the ring on her finger containing a crest; a heraldry check links it to a family deeply entrenched in Imperial administration.

Fifty years ago, Utukushii failed to sink the ship sailed by the monks of Kashikoi-kani. She believes they were under divine protection, although her storm forced them southwards. She is willing to trade this information for news concerning the Imperial family (well-known gossip). The Emperor who banished her is now dead. With this news, Utukushii gathers up her possessions, takes on dragon form and heads for the mainland.

Her home, a cave under the island which can only be reached through an underwater tunnel, contains her belongings: high-quality o-yoro armor, ten perfect pearls, and her katana, wakisashi, and daikyu.

Utukushii Ginuroko (human form): Powerful samurai; brave; all attributes are high, particularly appearance; etiquette, calligraphy, horsemanship, painting, poetry, swimming; none or o-yoro; katana, wakisashi, and daiku; honorable but evil.



Map 2: The Island of Gakeshima

Utukushii Ginuroko (dragon form): a 30'-long typhoon dragon with the ability to fly, swim, and cause a tempest once per week; attacks with claws and bite; immune to water and air attacks; Utukushii can breathe water in both forms.

S7. Wooden Tablet. This desolate island is featureless but for a 20'-tall boulder jutting from its center. PC may have difficulty approaching the rock since the stony beach is slick with gray-green algae and seaweed. Traveling to and from the rock necessitates a roll against agility to avoid twisting an ankle. Such an injury reduces movement to half speed for 1d4 days. A closer inspection shows the stone itself to be a natural although a cairn at its base appears less so. After ten minutes of removing stones, a wooded tablet is found. Carefully carved into one side is the symbol of a crab while the other side bears the following inscription:

We dedicate this site in memory of Hoshi, an enlightened brother drowned at sea three days past during a great storm in northern waters. Though his body sank, may his spirit rise. We now count twelve, the sacred number of Kashikoi-kani. This unfortunate omen indicates that our journey eastward shall soon end.

Gakeshima

Gakeshima is an island of blue-gray cliffs rising out of the Sea of Chills, practically invisible against the horizon until ships are within a few miles. The pines and firs form medium-dense forests in the low lands but grow more sparsely on the upper slopes. The twin peaks are not high enough for snow to form. Parties may land safely on the northern, southern and western beaches. Jagged rocks beneath the water and a sheer cliff makes the eastern shore a dangerous landing spot.

Travel rates on Gakeshima follow (in miles per hour and assuming an unencumbered human): beach 12; forest 6; mountain path 4; mountain cliff 1 if a mountaineering/climb test succeeds (on a failed roll, no movement that hour and a fall of 1d6x10 feet). Gakeshima is densely populated for its size, so the gamemaster should roll on the Gakeshima Random Encounter table (Table 2) every hour.

G1. Korobokuru Village. The roughly two-hundred korobokuru on Gakeshima live in a village situated on a grassy ledge overlooking the sea. The circular houses are soundly-constructed of mortarless stone and timber roofs. The korobokuru fish, grow crops, and raise mangy sheep. They constantly battle bakemono who share their island home. See Gakeshima Random Encounters for korobokuru statistics. The korobokuru speak only their tribal tongue and the trade language, so communication may be a problem.

Visitors to the village inevitably meet Kao-akai, only recently appointed chieftain after the previous one was killed by bakemono. Kao-akai's most obvious feature is his bright red face, the result of a curse. He was the young korobokuru who stole the scroll from the temple all those years ago and still suffers for it. Other korobokuru have found that the curse's most dangerous aspect is its tendency to hide Kao-akai's anger until he shows it physically. He remembers all too well when the monks of Kashikoi-kani arrived on Gakeshima. His tribe helped build a temple on the eastern peak. Since that time, the monks have been reclusive and not one monk has been seen in the last year.

Kao-akai regrets hastily throwing the scroll into the sea. Should he discover that the PC possesses the scroll, he does everything in his power to help return it to the temple, hoping that this will lift his curse.

Kao-akai: Skilled warrior; brave; strong, very agile, healthy, charismatic; canoeing, fishing, tracking, husbandry, carpentry, farming; shark-skin armor; two hand axes and short bow; Kao-akai fights with a hand ax in each hand.

G2. An Ill Quench. Dug into the mountain near a crossroads is one of many cisterns built by korobokuru to catch and store rain water. However, a clever bakemono has poisoned this water by tossing in a small, green snake. The toxic slime oozing from its skin is deadly if ingested. While the large volume of water has diluted the poison somewhat, those who drink from the cistern must make a health roll or become ill for 1-3 days. Weakened individuals have their strength, dexterity, constitution and movement reduced by half. A spell which neutralizes poison makes the water palatable for one hour. Unless the snake is discovered and removed, water in the cistern returns to toxic levels after this time. The snake is otherwise harmless.

G3. Shrine to the Mountain Spirit. A dozen irregularly shaped stones are piled beside the path. Some of the smaller stones are suitable ammunition for slings while a few larger rocks contain veins of what appears to be gold (actually Fool's Gold). On a successful religion roll (at -10%), a shukenja recognizes the pile rocks as a primitive shrine. A character who prays to the island spirit of Gakeshima has a 10% chance (15% if korobokuru are present) of receiving some sort of blessing for 24 hours. Anyone who disturbs the shrine is 80% likely to fall under an curse. This is also a suitable spot to speak with the spirit of Gakeshima.

G4. The Rocks Roll. The rocks which fill the pass between Gakeshima's twin peaks should warn perceptive PC to a recent rock-slide. When a character begins to climb over the rock-pile, small pebbles dislodge from the slope. If the climber quickly retreats, the rocks stabilize. A persistent climber must roll under his agility or damage equal to a 10'

1d100 Random Encounter

01 – 50	No encounter.
51 – 65	<i>Wild Sheep</i> (11-20): Not usually violent, startled sheep may be dangerous on a narrow path.
66 – 80	<i>Wolves</i> (1-6).
81 – 85	<i>Korobokuru</i> (1-4): Dwarfish wild-men armed with spears and armored in shark-skin.
86 – 90	<i>Bakemono</i> (1-8): Oriental goblins.
91 – 94	<i>Jishin Mushi</i> : A giant beetle with the ability to cause earth-quakes.
95 – 98	<i>Tengu</i> : Crow-headed woodland spirits; malicious.
99 – 00	<i>Aoi</i> : Aoi is the foul oni which has taken over the temple of Kashikoi-kani. Presently out hunting for food, he considers weary shukenja to be delicious morsels (although a little on the lean side). Aoi flees if at all wounded or faced with powerful magic. [See area T9 for his statistics].

Note: Roll every hour on this table each day that the PC is traveling on the island.

**Table 2: The Island of Gakeshima
Random Encounter Table**

fall from tumbling rocks before reaching the opposite side.

G5. Drooling Wisdom.

The pine trees grow a little more densely towards the base of the cliff. An old man crouches in the dirt beneath a large pine. His skin is tough and wrinkled with great age but his face holds an expression of child-like innocence. Bare to the waist, blue tattoos of stylized crabs cover his entire upper torso.

A night, an attractive female korobokuru sits near the man. She dresses in a pale-pink, short-sleeved kimono, white socks and sandals. An intelligence test is necessary to notice that her obi (long sash) is tied in a drum knot, signifying marriage. During the day, she hides in the branches of a pine tree and has a 1 in 6 chance of being noticed.

This old man is Gakumon, the last monk of Kashikoi-kani. The female korobokuru is a con-tinh. When the monks first arrived on Gakeshima, a korobokuru girl fell in love with Gakumon. Realizing that her family and the monk's vows prevented them from being united, she threw herself off a cliff. Her spirit claimed a tree and has remained here since. More recently, when Gakumon was driven from

his temple by the oni, he stumbled by this spot and was driven mad by the con-tinh's laugh. In an unnatural way, the lovers are once again united.

During the day, the con-tinh "possesses" Gakumon in order to answer questions in an intelligent manner. At night, the con-tinh communicates directly. In his reduced mental condition, Gakumon thinks that he is in love with the con-tinh so he fights to defend it. The con-tinh does not wish to see its "husband" injured and will use its laugh and possession powers to their best effect. If the con-tinh's tree is threatened, it sacrifices Gakumon to save itself. Some types of spells may lift Gakumon's madness.

Buried at the base of the con-tinh's tree is the skeleton of a female korobokuru, a golden statue of a man-serpent, and a chunk of coral.

Gakumon: Powerful monk; average bravery; wise and intelligent (although currently mad); religion, calligraphy, paper-making; no armor; no weapons but a skilled martial-artist; Gakumon fights with the martial arts style of Kashikoi-kani, the Crushing Claw, which utilizes locks and holds.

Con-tinh: An evil spirit whose laugh can drive mortals insane; somewhat resistant to spells.

G6. Dark Spawn. The mountain trail passes a cave entrance from which wafts the foul stench of rotting meat and offal. Within is the home of thirteen unwashed bakemono. Other bakemono caves exist and may be placed by the gamemaster as he wishes. During the day, the bakemono are inside their cave and have only a 10% chance of noticing someone pass the entrance. At night, that chance that they notice someone passing the entrance increases to 80% since some bakemono may be wandering about outside. The bakemono bully small parties and attack korobokuru on sight.

The bakemono are filthy and possess an assortment of non-communicable diseases and parasitic pets. Their leader is Byoki, a possessive female with gray fur, big ears, and buck teeth. These bakemono have made periodic trips to the temple of Kashikoi-kani in an attempt to persuade the oni to become their leader. They feel that the oni would turn the tide of their battle with the korobokuru and give their band dominance over the other bakemono. So far, the oni has only spurned them, even refusing to eat one of their number offered as a gift! This information may be beaten or bribed out of the bakemono.

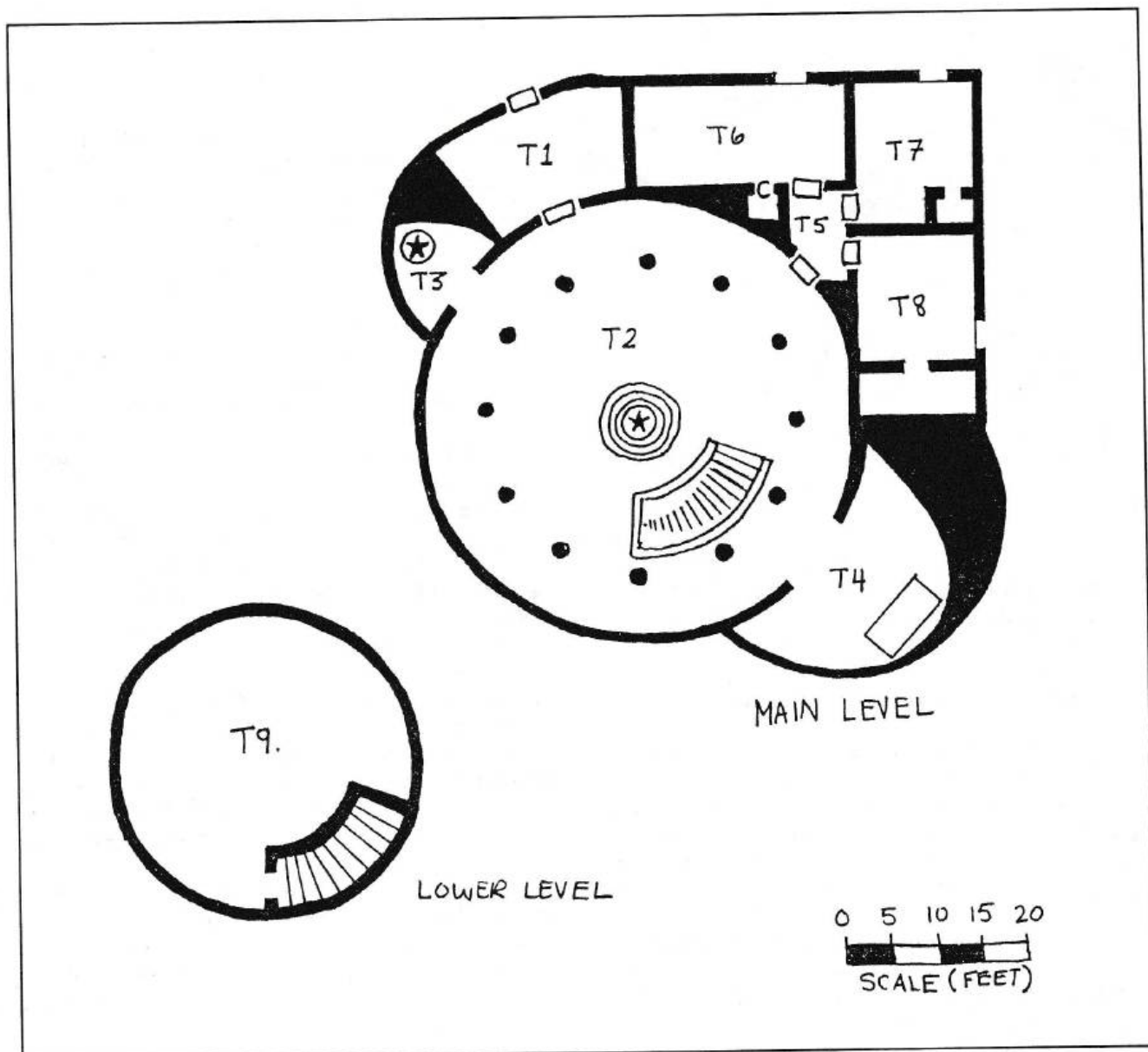
The tunnel is 30'-long and leads to a single cave, used equally as kitchen, sleeping quarters, and latrine. Needless to say, the conditions are unpleasant and unsanitary. Hidden beneath a pile of bones in the back of the cave is the bakemono's treasure: an obsidian statue of a turtle and a huge, rough diamond. While it appears worthless, the diamond could be very valuable if cut and polished by a jeweler.

G7. Cave of the Dead. The stone slab covering the entrance to this cave is sealed with dried clay. If a character breaks the seal and enters, read the following (assuming a light source):

You crack the clay and move the stone slab aside, revealing a narrow tunnel. The seal has apparently been in place for some time, for the air within is dry and stale. After crawling a dozen feet along the rough-hewn tunnel, you enter a 15'x15' cave. Covering the floor are hundreds of broken bones and ten skulls. All have been picked clean of flesh. A fly buzzes annoyingly around your head.

These are the remains of ten monks of Kashikoi-kani. The eleventh has become a jiki-niku-gaki (a ghou) and flies about in insect form. It attacks once the PC is busy examining the remains but will flee if severely wounded. A search of the bones turns up a brass key which opens the tansu in area T6.

The gaki/monk died eleven months ago; his spirit may be spoken to through divination skills. He knows nothing about the oni (having died a little earlier) but can say that he was the second-last monk to die. Obviously, the last monk could not entomb himself, but this information still hints that one monk may yet live.



Map 3: The Temple of Kashikoi-Kani

Jiki-niku-gaki: A ghoulish spirit which attacks with teeth and claws; stupid but cunning; can turn invisible, shape-change into an insect at will, and regenerate.

Temple of Kashikoi-kani

The winding path opens onto a natural ledge, miles wide. The mountain face towers above on one side while a sheer cliff plummets into a valley on the other. Between these two natural wonders squats a large, dome-like structure. Built of bluish stone and totally devoid of ornamentation, it complements its surroundings. While the style and construction of this building is completely foreign, the general layout matches the gutted Temple of Kashikoi-kani in Yoake!

Korobokuru and those who pass a stonemason roll recognize the dwarvish construction. The path to the temple meanders through a small but carefully arranged garden. The shrubbery needs trimming and weeds run rampant among the flowers. A character who makes a landscape gardening test realizes by the amount of overgrowth that the temple grounds have been neglected for about a year.

There is a 10% chance that the oni Aoi is in the temple when the PC arrives. If this is the case, he resides in the library (area T9), eating or sleeping. More likely, Aoi is out hunting or torturing creatures smaller than himself. He returns as the PC searches the library or leaves the temple, whichever is earlier.

T1. Entrance. The only entrance to the temple, a stout pine door, opens into a small entrance hall, perhaps 10' x 15'. The floor consists of polished pine boards. A rack standing against the eastern wall holds twelve pairs of musty slippers. Visitors are expected to change into slippers before entering the main temple. A shukenja who fails to follow this custom, however impractical it may seem, should lose a few experience points at the end of the adventure.

T2. Temple Proper.

Twelve pillars support the domed ceiling of this 100'-diameter chamber. Beside a short pedestal in the center of the room lies a toppled, wooden statue. Twice life-size, the statue has presumably been carved in the likeness of Kashikoi-kani himself. His carved robe is spread open at the chest to reveal the tattoo of a crab. Upright, the imposing god would sit cross-legged, an expression of divine contemplation on his broad face. In its present position, the painted face seems to frown as he stares at the ceiling.

During the day, this chamber is illuminated by a light streaming through a large circular window in the ceiling.

The window is installed in a position a little south from the center so that direct sunlight strikes the statue each day at noon, Kashikoi-kani's holy hour of contemplation. In poor weather, the window could be covered with a wooden shutter, but currently the shutter lies smashed on the floor. The oni Aoi comes and goes through the window because he finds the temple's main entrance a tight squeeze and has trouble working the latch anyway.

The mahogany statue is skillfully painted and inlaid with gold (very valuable but weighing 200 lbs.). If a shukenja replaces the statue on its pedestal (requiring a strength test) and prays to Kashikoi-kani at noon, the following occurs:

Lights stream through the circular window, revealing thousands of skulking dust motes. The statue's bland colors brighten considerably and you would swear that the hint of a smile had crossed Kashikoi-kani's face. A multitude of questions suddenly come, unbidden, to mind and you feel compelled to ask them.

Kashikoi-kani has rewarded the shukenja by answering 10 questions. Kashikoi-kani implants mental answers of "yes", "no" or "perhaps". Being a deity of education, Kashikoi-kani knows much but is far from omniscient.

T3. Minor Statue. This small alcove contains a life-sized, wooden statue of Bijutsu Daishi, the patron saint of art, creativity, and paper-making. No miracles occur here.

T4. Holy Paper. Scores of small, brown bats hang from ceiling in this alcove. Characters who enter this area disturb the bats which flap about the alcove until the intruder leaves. Each round, a character has a 50% chance of being bitten. An ornate wooden box contains a fragment of crude paper made of pressed rags. The monks of Kashikoi-kani claim that this is the first sheet of paper ever made, supposedly by Bijutsu Daishi (see area T3). This treasure has only religious value.

T5. Hall. Four doors lead out of this 5' x 7' hall. The floor in this hall (as well as areas T6, T7 and T8) consists of polished, wooden planks.

T6. High Monk's Room. This sleeping room is completely bare except for a few paintings on the south wall. One *kakemono* (hanging scroll) containing a profound Haiku hides a closet (treat as a concealed door). The closet contains musty bedding and sheets and a tansu (chest of drawers). While poking around in this closet, the PC disturbs two normal scorpions which were fighting over a dead mouse. The scorpions each attempt one sting attack (no physical damage, but poison) before scurrying into hidden crevasses. The tansu itself is locked but not trapped (the key may be found in area G7). The top drawer holds

two plain, brown robes and many rat droppings, while the lower drawer contains a magical writing kit which increases one's writing/calligraphy skill.

T7. Lesser Monks' Room. This room is bare. The closet is in plain view and contains only sheets and bedding.

T8. Kitchen and Stores. A portable charcoal burner rests on a low, 3'x10' table in the center of the room. Twelve ripped cushions lie scattered about the room. A chest in the north-eastern corner holds wooden bowls, plates and chopsticks. The southern part of the room is the pantry, separated from the kitchen by a partition. Most of the foodstuffs were used up before the oni invaded. What remains consists mostly of pickled vegetables contained in ceramic jars. The single remaining sack of rice has been ripped open and a giant rat hides within.

T9. Library.

The door at the bottom of the stairs has been ripped off its hinges and lies just inside the archway. The 30'-diameter chamber beyond is dark stinks of damp fur. Of the hundreds of niches in the wall, only a few hold manuscripts. Instead, the precious scrolls and silk tapestries have been pulled from their places and lie in a ripped and soiled jumble on the floor. Some kind of beast has made its lair here, as evident from the clots of fur and bloody bones mixed with the manuscripts.

Much of the hoarded lore is ruined. The salvageable items include a silk-in-gold painting of Kashikoi-kani, scriptures of many major religions, scrolls containing history of many lands, folklore and poems. One rarity is a bound book — an epic novel about love and hate, honor and deception, and three generations of a noble family. There is even something written in the language of the Gajin. Among the manuscripts still in their niches is a scroll holding a spell (GM's choice). Aoi's personal treasure is mixed in with the bedding, consisting of gold coins, a chunk of obsidian, and a broken, porcelain bowl decorated with scenes of sea life.

If Aoi is not in the temple (see Temple of Kashikoi-kani above), he returns now. If present, he has heard all but the quietest intruders and prepares an ambush. He hides behind the stairs and jumps out to grapple with the intruder, intent on meeting the individual bold enough to invade his lair. Only if the PC annoys him will Aoi attempt to kill. In this case, he fights with a huge wooden mallet, believing that armed combat shows he has a measure of sophistication. However, he has a cumulative 20% chance per round of becoming fed up with the weapon and reverting to fighting with teeth and claws. Aoi moves the battle to area

T2 so he may use his powers to greater effect.

Savage and stupid even for a lesser oni, Aoi's face is a puzzle of bulging eyes, protruding tusks and other horrid features. He is stooped, twisted, covered with thick, matted hair and wears only a wolf-skin loincloth. Aoi has been ridiculed by fellow oni for his lack of sophistication. Aoi came to the temple of Kashikoi-kani in the belief that a deity of education would have the best chance of teaching him civilized behavior. Since Aoi cannot read, he sleeps on the manuscripts. So far, he has not learned anything.

When he learns that the PC is cultured (e.g. "Uh...nice clothes...speak big words"), he demands to be taught how to act civilized. Through role-playing or spells the PC should attempt to guide Aoi on the path to civilization. Aoi is easily upset so this could be difficult. The GM should milk this encounter's absurdity for all its worth. If the PC succeeds in his task (to the GM's satisfaction, at least), Aoi leaves the temple with a sense of superiority, if not actual culture.

Aoi (lesser oni): A barbaric, dull-witted oni with the ability to fly, shape-change, and become invisible; he is very frightening to behold; Aoi speaks a number of tribal languages.

Concluding the Adventure

If Kao-akai accompanies the PC, his curse must be attended to. If the stolen scroll (perhaps still in the possession of the shukenja) is returned and a shukenja performs a purification ritual, the korobokuru's face returns to its original tanned complexion. Kao-akai is supremely grateful and becomes the shukenja's most loyal follower.

The return voyage may be as simple as saying "You return to Yoake after ten days of swift sailing" or played out in full. Back on the mainland, the PC must donate the manuscripts to a temple or (better yet) build a new temple to Kashikoi-kani. If Gakumon is present, he can take over the administrative duties and let the PC get on with other adventures. However, it may be fun for the PC to choose a suitable spot to build the temple, sanctify the land, seek a patron to fund the construction, and so on. Another job which may take months to complete is the salvaging of lore. This includes rewriting some of the more ragged manuscripts, carefully washing the tapestries, and other such duties. Again, this can occupy as much time as the player and gamemaster wish.

The PC may wish to study from the texts he has spent so much time and energy searching for. Enough material exists for a character to learn many different skills: heraldry, calligraphy, poetry, religion, navigator, paper-maker, various written languages, and perhaps others. ☺

Can you spot the player character?



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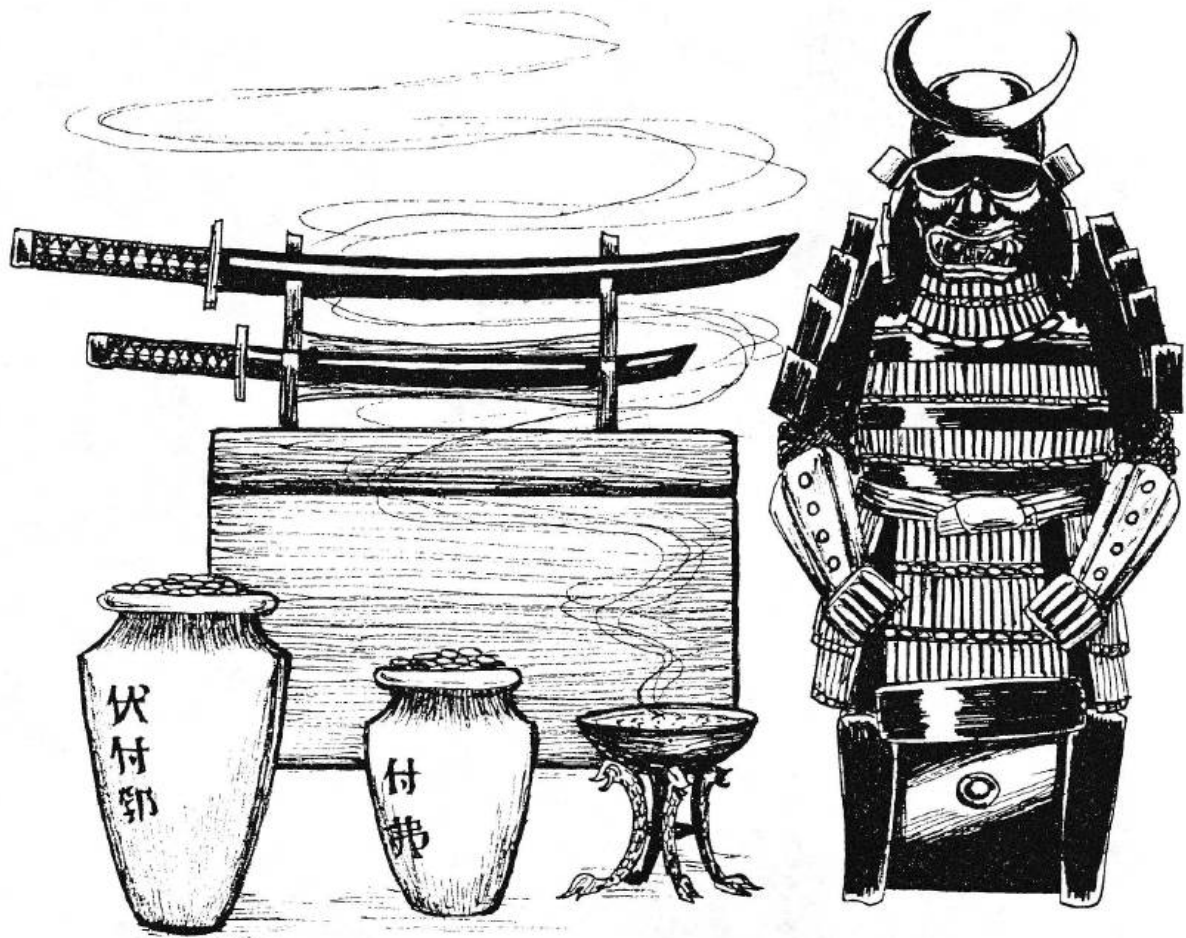
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Treasures of the Far East

A Collection of Rare and Exotic Treasures for any Oriental Campaign

By Kathy Luzzi

The following is a table of 100 items for game masters who want to roll up treasures unique to the far eastern world. These will help provide a variety of items for any Oriental Adventure campaign. The GM should feel free to alter any of them to suit his or her own campaign.

Most of the items in this table are non-magical. Those that are magical are indicated in the Trade Value column of the table.

The following sources were used to create this article:

Osborne, Harold. The Oxford Companion To The Decorative Arts. Oxford, 1975.

Shoten, Kadokawa. The Pictorial Encyclopedia of The Oriental Arts. New York, 1969.

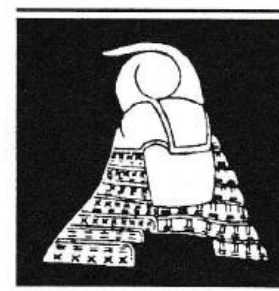
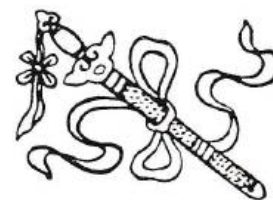


1d100	Description of Item	Trade Value
01	Incense Burner. 7" high x 12" long, copper in shape of a crouched dragon with blue-green zircon eyes (50 gold pieces each), hinged back lid, holds block of jasmine incense (1 silver piece value).	105 gold
02	Coat. Made of crimson brocaded silk accented with gold threads, in good condition.	150 gold
03	Fan. 11" long, gilt paint on white paper on mother-of-pearl stripes held by gold ring with braid silk cord and tassel. When open, shows waterside scene in summer.	15 gold
04	Scroll Tube. Carved ivory with scene of learned men looking at scroll, 10" long x 3" diameter (2 gold value). This sacred scroll contains a treatise illustrated with ink drawings of various diseases and their cures. Careful reading of the scroll will require two weeks.	Magic
05	Mirror Box. 8" diameter, eight-lobed, made of black-lacquered wood with gold hinges and catch. Cover design of gilded orchids.	80 gold
06	Urn. With two snake handles, bronze, 14" tall, 7" diameter.	350 gold
07	Horse Trappings. Bridle and harness of white leather, ornamented with gilt-edged designs and inset red gemets (seven in bridle, twelve in harness, 100 gold value each). In good condition.	2400 gold
08	Bowl. Carved brown jade, 5" diameter, center design of a dragon in clouds with a border of trailing vines. Small rim chip.	250 gold
09	Belt Buckle. With design of two fighting dragons, of gold.	5 gold
10	Pipcase. Staghorn carved in low-relief of dragonflies.	25 gold
11	Statuette. Carved gray-brown jade foo dog, 4" tall.	125 gold
12	Lute. Five strings, made of carved red sandalwood with mother-of-pearl inlay.	500 gold
13	Tsuba (Sword Guard). Gold, 3" round, openwork design of a crab.	150 gold
14	Necklace. 24" long, of granulated emerald green jade beads with gold clasp.	5250 gold
15	Octangular Box. 5" diameter, 1 1/2" tall made of tortoise shell over wood with mother-of-pearl inlay. Contains two dozen mother-of-pearl gaming chips (1 silver value each).	130 gold
16	Gong. Gilt bronze with design of lion's head in bas-relief.	160 gold
17	Sword Handle. Carved of white jade in shape of horse's head (195 gold value), turquoise inlaid eyes (10 gold value each), with bridle of inlaid gold wire (5 gold value), and 50 tiny rubies (50 gold value each), mane of inlaid silver wire (5 gold value) decorates horse's neck.	2725 gold
18	Jar. Black enameled with gilt lotus blossom, with lid waxed shut. Contains several lotus petals.	70 gold
19	Ritual Vessel. 8" tall bronze pot on three legs and cover, dragon-shaped handles, used for ceremonial ablutions. Dented but usable.	1250 gold
20	Bowl. 6" diameter carved white jade flecked with green, with four feet, shallow carved relief design of a carp.	400 gold



1d100	Description of Item	Trade Value
21	Cabinet. For books, with brass handles, gold lacquered design of a pine tree with soaring hawks, drawer contents determined by GM. 9" x 13" x 14".	1000 gold
22	Bolt of Silk. Gold and silver threads on a purple ground. 20 yards of material, bound with leather thongs and canvas outer wraps.	30 gold
23	Chariot Axle Caps. Made of gilded bronze, design of stylized lion heads in low-relief.	140 gold
24	Yabate. (Portable container for writing equipment), gold foil over lacquered wood in design of entwined snakes, with gold silk cord and tiger head netsuke of gold (netsuke worth 5 gold, inlaid eyes of yellow jade, 10 gold each).	65 gold
25	Knives. Set of two, 7" long blades, rhinoceros horn hilts and two silver-inlaid black leather 8" long scabbards, set with one jewel each (a black sapphire worth 5000 gold on one and a black opal worth 1000 gold on the other). Practical weapons rather than merely ornamental.	10,125 gold
26	Covered Vase. 9½" tall of white jade, two elephant's headed-ring handles, one side shows low-relief carving of woman playing the lute. Crest of a prince (two phoenixes) carved into the foot of the vase.	1400 gold
27	Haramaki. (Chest armor piece). With lacing in bluejay-bird's feather pattern, and two matching sode.	25 gold
28	Backgammon Board. Wooden with gold lacquer and mother-of-pearl inlay design.	80 Silver
29	Scroll Tube. Black lacquered wood with gold cap ends, containing scroll of color wood block prints and written text of bushido (the code of the samurai).	10 gold
30	Seal. Square-sided of white carved jade, 2" Long with finial of a mystical lion. Chipped and scratched, but wax impression of seal reveals crest of a ruling family.	90 gold
31	Hanging Lantern. Brass, 10" tall x 18" diameter, pierced with four barred apertures (one hinged for placement of candle), dented; bamboo finial for carrying.	40 gold
32	Cosmetic Box. Gold-lacquered wood ornamented with inlaid cypress-wood strips in the design of folding fans. Contains assorted cosmetics.	100 gold
33	Libation Vessel. Pale green jade, 12" tall, decorated with climbing dragons in high relief, one forms handle.	5500 gold
34	Saddle. White leather and wood, without stirrups. Saddle leather is decorated with gilt leaves and entwining vines.	5 gold
35	Incense Burner. 5" tall x 8" diameter, on tripod feet, cloisonne enamel with two handles and lid, decorated with three gilded guard tigers, surrounding the lid opening, and with stylized lotus blossoms and leaves in red, gold, yellow and black.	20 gold
36	Chest. Plain wooden with brass handles and hinges. Contains: Noh-play robe of silk for female roles with design of pine and butterfly roundels on white ground (5 gold value), Noh-play mask of painted paper for male role (1 silver value), carved painted wood play masks: one for ugly-woman roles, one for drunken attendant roles, and one for young woman's roles (3 silver each).	10 gold

1d100	Description of Item	Trade Value
37	Ewer. Glazed ceramic, phoenix head, with splayed feet supporting a pear-shaped body decorated on both sides with dancing phoenixes. A loop handle attaches phoenix head to body. 13" tall, 3" diameter at mouth	55 gold
38	Box. Silver in the form of a tortoise, with two tiger eye-inlaid eyes (10 gold value each), 9" long, 6" tall at crown point of shell. Removable shell cover.	25 gold
39	Quiver. White leather over wood, with gilded design of pheasants. Two dozen arrow capacity.	30 silver
40	Inro. (Small wooden box). Used for pills or powders, 5" long x 3" wide x 1" deep, divided into four separate hollow sections. Exterior is painted and lacquered to imitate leopard skin. Inro is suspended by a braided gold silk cord, with yellow glass bead ojime, and coiled snake netesuke of carved ivory (50 gold value) tied at end.	110 gold
41	Priest's Baton. Made of rhinoceros horn and silver inlay with design of five lions, 14" long x 3" wide. (Non-magical, but may have trap at GM's option).	90 gold
42	Hanging Scroll. Made of woven silk, embroidered with colored silk, gold and silver threads, depicting scene of a waterfall. 42" drop x 22" wide	25 gold
43	Tray. Gold-Lacquered wood decorated with birds in flight holding flowered branches in beaks (flower petals of inlaid mother-of-pearl), 15" diameter, 2" thick. Slight chipping.	40 gold
44	Kozuka. (Small utility knife worn with sword). Copper and silver with low-relief carving of figure by a waterfall. Backside having a dragon carved in low-relief.	190 gold
45	Netsuke. Silver, in shape of a samurai helmet with an engraved dragon design.	45 gold
46	Dagger Box. Gold-lacquered wood with horse race scene painted on top in silver. Can hold two daggers, side-by-side, in two inner boxes.	50 gold
47	Statuette. Of a monkey, carved of brown jade, 3" tall	100 gold
48	Temple Bell. Dilated bronze, 9" tall.	60 gold
49	Screen. Eight-fold, of embroidered silk on lacquered wood frames, showing an important battle. Each panel set with gemstones of alexandrite (100 gold value), garnet (100 gold value), jet (100 gold value), tourmaline (100 gold value), jasper (50 gold value), and lapis lazuli (10 gold value). Entire screen measures 78" tall x 233" long.	4480 gold
50	Jar. Carved rock crystal in shape of carp. 8" tall x 7" diameter.	40 gold
51	Box. Carved emerald green malachite in form of lotus flower.	25 gold
52	Crown. Gold with pendants of gold and carved green jade (65 jade pieces, 5 gold value each). 22" tall.	27,500 gold
53	Coat. Gold and silver silk brocade on pale blue ground.	180 gold
54	Prayer Beads. Carved citrine, strung on cord of yellow braided silk with tassel.	500 gold
55	Writing Box. Gold-lacquered wood, cover decorated with design of boats among reeds. Box contains: ink block, brushes and inking stone.	5 gold
56	Flask. For medicine, red lacquered wood over glass, 3" tall with stopper. Empty.	10 silver

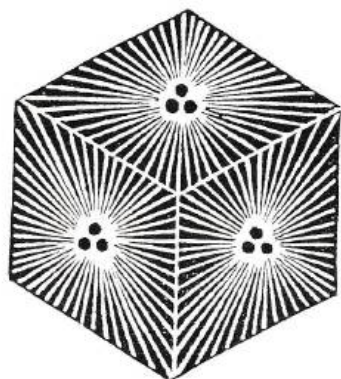




1d100	Description of Item	Trade Value
57	Box. Small, made of beaten gold with ring on top lid (1000 gold value). The box contains a set of six thin gold tablets, held by tiny gold hinges. Each tablet is inscribed with one magical spell (GM's choice). When spell is memorized from one tablet, and then cast, the inscription vanishes forever but the tablet will remain intact. However, only an extremely powerful wizard can attempt to have each tablet inscribed with a spell.	Magic
58	Short Cylindrical Bars of Jade. Red jade (300 gold value), golden jade (200 gold value), and lavender jade (100 gold value).	600 gold
59	Hara-ate. (Chest armor). With gold tiger head designs.	10 gold
60	Chest. Plain wood, with two brass handles and hinges (5 gold value). Contains Three silk kimonos embroidered with gold and silver threads: one with design of flowers and birds of the four seasons on white ground (250 gold value), one with design of flowers and birds in panels at shoulders and skirt only, on white ground (200 gold value), and one with design of flying herons on dark blue ground (150 gold value).	605 gold
61	Figurine. Ceramic-glazed, of woman with face of an owl 14" tall x 8" wide, upper torso is removable, and reveals a hidden compartment (empty).	5 gold
62	Bowl. Glazed porcelain with chrysanthemum design, 4" diameter, 2" high	10 gold
63	Bonsai. 12" tall Japanese red maple, in red glazed ceramic bowl. The tiny tree is a century old.	50 gold
64	Earring. Gold with oval water jade cabochon in platinum setting.	100 gold
65	Box of Pearls. Gold-lacquered wood with flower designs, contains 24 pearls (100 gold value each).	2405 gold
66	Mirror. Polished bronze with low-relief casting on back, displaying design of two cranes and cherry blossoms. 10" diameter. A perforated knob at center back allows for hanging.	325 gold
67	Pearl Necklace. 30" long, with green jade pendant and gold clasp.	250 gold
68	Short Coat. Silk, worn over kimono, design of snow-laden willows on red ground. Stained.	450 gold
69	Cabinet. Black persimmon wood, 20" x 18" x 12", with gilded bronze hinges, 7 drawers and lock on bottom drawer. Key missing.	800 gold
70	Comb. Mother-of-pearl, inlaid with pieces of coral and pearls.	10 gold
71	Kabuto. (Helmet). Gilt bronze, engraved with filigree designs.	100 gold
72	Bangle Bracelets. Apple-green jade (2 - 20 4" diameter jade hoops, with rounded edges).	10 gold each
73	Banner of Silk. Embroidered with gold and silver threads in peacock design, 60" drop x 24" wide.	5500 gold
74	Jar. Small, four-sided, vermillion lacquer on glass with gilded design of horses galloping over waves.	5 gold
75	Lantern. Red paper over melon-shaped wood frame, with brass hanging ring and red silk tassel. When candle is lit - inside - a concealed map fragment is revealed.	20 silver
76	Fur-Trimmed Robe. White silk with phoenix design, embroidered with gold and silver threads, in frayed, age-stained condition.	420 gold

1d100	Description of Item	Trade Value
77	Mirror. Polished bronze, back lacquered with silver paint and inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Back design of lotus blossoms, on one petal is an inscribed love poem. 12" diameter.	115 gold
78	Tsuba. (Sword Guard). Iron, square with rounded edges, engraved with design of an archer on a horse.	75 gold
79	Ninja Box. [Appears as old wooden box] Has three locks. Contains: 50' silk rope, 2 eggshell grenades of flash powder, and kawanaga (grappling hook). GM's option: may have traps on locks.	30 gold
80	Folding Mat. Bamboo, painted with realistic-looking orange and black tigers. Measures 6' long x 3' wide.	10 silver
81	Cabinet. Red-lacquered zelkova wood, with gilt bronze hinges and nine drawers. Cabinet painted in gilt design of swallows flying in the rain. Top, middle drawer has lock with key and contains a love poem written by a courtier to a court lady. Cabinet measures 29" x 27" x 12".	1625 gold
82	Robe. Silk, with long train, decorated on back with large peacock embroidered in colored silk, detailing in gold and silver threads, feathers of tiny green jade pieces (2500 gold value) on white ground.	4000 gold
83	Katana. 26" long, inlaid silver flame patterns along the length of blade. Black lacquered wood scabbard with silver-inlay dragons.	80 gold
84	Fan. 7" long, carved strips of sandalwood, has yellow silk tassel. When the fan is opened and waved, the air fills with sandalwood fragrance.	3 silver
85	Screen. Six-fold, of embroidered silk on lacquered wood frames, 88" tall x 181" long, showing one large male ki-rin, galloping among clouds. When the screen is opened, and powerful evil comes within a 100' radius, the ki-rin will come down from the screen to either defend or attack. If the paper screen is torn and ki-rin is defaced, the ki-rin will vanish. However, if the ki-rin is defeated in combat, he will return to the screen, ready to do combat again in the future.	Magic
86	Scroll Tube. Carved rhodochrosite, contains two scrolls of illustrated poems of flowers and birds of the 12 months	15 gold
87	Flat Gong. Gilded bronze with engraved design of two peacocks.	50 gold
88	Reliquary. Ceramic, in shape of five-storied pagoda gilded gold and silver, 7" tall.	5 gold
89	Dish. Black-enameled with design of orange tiger, 14" diameter, 2" deep.	20 gold
90	Jewel box. Wood, painted with gold lacquer and inlaid with mother-of-pearl in the design of a nightingale in a plum tree. 5" x 8" x 6". Contains: hairpins (set of seven, 20 silver each), of carved coral with gilt filigree design.	10 gold
91	Sandals. Black lacquered wood, painted with white and pink cherry blossoms and gilt leaves.	10 silver
92	Tile Roof Ornament. Ceramic glazed red dragon with yellow-orange scales and curling tail, hollow, 12" tall x 25" long.	150 silver
93	Chopsticks. Carved ebony with mother-of-pearl inlay and gold filigree.	1 silver
94	Umbrella. Paper, with painted designs of orange chrysanthemums. Dirty and water-stained, but wood parts are in good condition.	10 copper





1d100	Description of Item	Trade Value
96	Chariot's Frontispiece. Hawk's head of carved and lacquered wood, painted gold.	30 gold
97	Bamboo Cage. Pagoda shape, containing a fighting cricket.	20 silver
98	Statuette of a Nightingale. Cloisonne enamel with gold, silver and platinum wires, set with gemstones (dozen small diamonds 12,000 gold value, 6 emeralds 6,000 gold value, 2 aquamarine eyes 1000 gold value, 7 amethysts 700 gold value, 5 jade pieces 500 gold value), stabbing on gold base with turnkey (removable). The statuette is a mechanical music box and is non-magical. When turnkey is wound the statuette will sing for 20 minutes, and animates like a real bird (flutters wings, turns head, etc).	36,700 gold
99	Snuff Bottle. Carved lapis lazuli in form of a swimming couple rising from waves.	20 gold
00	GM's Invention. A unique magical item, artifact or relic. Roll again and alter the item as the GM chooses (example: The item could be magical in some way, or be charged with spells). Or the GM can simply ignore rolls of '00'.	Varies

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Cat Play

Part 4

Fiction By Ken St. Cyr

Our Story So Far: Petty crooks Gallien and the Baron had been making a nice haul impersonating the dreaded Cat assassins of the Cult of Clister, until they were discovered by the Little Hill city watch. After being attacked by unnatural creatures seeking a glowing gem they were arrested and accused of a series of brutal murders. The owner of the gem has realized it has changed hands and continues his efforts to find it, while Captain Gurn of the watch seeks the real murderers.

Gurn came to visit a room in the Wild Elcas that had been turned into a cross between a hospital and a holding cell. Gallien was conscious and quite alert when the Captain of Little Hill pulled up a stool beside his couch.

Gurn stared at the little man a few moments without speaking, settling comfortably on the stool. He felt much more at ease talking with common men like Gallien than under the pressure of his aristocratic patrons. Here he had the upper hand. Still, he kept in mind that Gallien was indeed a wily rogue. When he had finally ordered his thoughts together he cleared his throat and posed his first question. "Your attackers, Gallien, did you get a good look at them?"

The rogue shrugged and regarded his interrogator warily. "They were monsters. Hideous ghouls."

"You don't see those wandering about the city much, even at night, do you?"

"But they wore dark hoods and robes, so at a distance they looked like men. Truthfully, you couldn't tell them from any other gang of hoodlums in Bourdonne, heh. That's what I thought they were until one of them stuck his face at me."

Gurn rested his fist on his thigh and stared at the floor. He grunted.

"Hard to believe, but not unheard of. There has always been cultist activities in Bourdonne, many of them criminal." He had a hunch about the particular cult involved and what



other activities they were up to, but so far what additional information he had gotten only complicated things further. He needed to know what the cult was up to.

"Let me tell you something, Gallien, in the hopes that maybe it help you to help me. I believe these creatures are part of a plot to abduct the young women of Bourdonne's aristocracy. To what end I cannot say, but what I need to know from you is why they would attack you."

"Eh, do ghouls need a reason?"

"Did they want something from you? They certainly didn't make sure you were dead, so obviously they did not want to kill you."

Gallien shrugged once more.

"If they wanted something," he said, "they might have taken it. Hattedran knows anyone could have cut with everything I was carrying as I lay near death. I'm only lucky I wasn't carrying much."

"And I am surprised at that," Gurn said as he rose.

"But maybe the reason you are such a good thief is that you aren't too careless."

"Ah, but I'm not a thief," Gallien replied.

As Gurn left, Gallien remembered

having secreted an object in a safe spot before leaving the Wild Elcas on the night of the assault. Despite the pain of his wounds, he dragged himself across the floor and with trembling fingers eagerly dug out the hole he had made in the wall at the foot of the couch. Then he choked and beat his fist against the floor. The little yellow stone was gone.

* * * * *

Captain Gurn made a call upon the house of Lord Arrenes the next morning. The aristocrat was having breakfast, before getting into the business of the day, but he eagerly accepted Gurn's presence into his salon.

Gurn stood uncomfortably near the door, opposite where Lord Arrenes sat silhouetted by the sun-less light of dawn coming through a window. The aristocrat invited him closer, but did not offer a seat.

"So what brings you here so early, good captain?"

"This is merely the first item on my agenda, lordship. I like to get an early start."

"Hmm, so I see." Lord Arrenes chewed on a piece of bread and washed it down with wine. "Well, go ahead, then."

"Ah, yes, sir. Due to the laws of this city, lordship, I have been unable to track down the whereabouts of your daughter. It falls into the jurisdiction of other watch companies as well, and in particular a certain rival company of the Forum."

"I see," replied Lord Arrenes. "So you require me to pull some strings for you? That is not difficult captain. But what is troubling you? You look ill."

"I have doubts as to the successful resolution of this affair, your lordship."

Lord Arrenes grunted as he bit into a small fruit, its juices flowed over his jaw and dripped into the bronze dish he held beneath his chin. He licked his fingers and handed the dish to an attendant, exchanging it for a towel.

"Those," said the aristocrat, "do not sound to me like the words of a captain of the watch."

Gurn balked. "I must apologize, your lordship, but I believe you have a rival plotting against you and certain other members of the Antegene." He gambled, fumbled, made up sentences. "A greedy man, unscrupulous in his dealing and ruthless with those who stand in his way. He is the head of a secret cult of demon-worshippers that I have been investigating for some time now. They have been relatively quiet until lately, but I am sure it is them.

And if I am correct as to who is behind this affair, then this man's crime fall on a level well above my authority."

"Humph," said Lord Arrenes. "I see your problem. Well, let's see what we can

do."

Just past midday the Baron lay upon the cold pallet of his cell, his fingers laced across his chest, his eyes half closed through boredom or langor. Then a sound snapped his eyes awake and he rose as four guardsmen of the watch entered the dungeon of Garrex Tower and approached his cell.

"It'll be time for you," said one of them, the first speech the Baron had heard since being locked up.

The lead guardsman unlocked the cell door and the other three escorted the Baron from his cell. As soon as he had left the bars behind, the Baron leapt into action, tossing one watchman against the wall and struggled with two others as they attempted to subdue him. He slipped free of their grasp and bounded up the stairs toward freedom. A leveled crossbow met him at the door.

It was Commander Dide Cardean who held the weapon and spoke to him coolly. "Come peacefully Andalorian," he said. The Baron submitted, and the watchmen escorted the man onto the ground floor of the tower, followed by Commander Cardean.

The northerner was greeted there by a richly dressed man who announced himself as Scavis Arrenes, aristocrat of the Paladean. The Baron eyed him suspiciously.

"You don't look like an executioner," he said. "And besides, I thought the Grivellians handled capital punishments."

Arrenes laughed merrily, spreading his arms wide.

"As a matter of fact, it has been known for the Paladean to handle executions in certain special cases, but I have not come here to discuss decollation or the specifics of Sadarian legislation."

Lord Arrenes confidently regarded the massive frame of the Baron. Even though Arrenes was tall for a Bourdonnese, the Baron topped him by a hand's breadth.

"I have seen you fight, White Lion," he said casually. "Never lost a bet on you. Captain Gurn told me you could be trusted."

"My honor bounds me to be trustworthy, but I must warn you, any deals you make with me are made through Gallien first. It's an arrangement we have and never break."

"I have already spoken with your convalescing friend," said Lord Arrenes, eyes brightening. "So this is in full agreement with his wishes."

The Baron could have asked to see Gallien first, and hear it from him, but he realized that Lord Arrenes, too, had a sense of honor. He decided not to risk affronting the man, just as Lord Arrenes strode up close and looked him in the eye. The Baron grimaced under the aristocrat's arrogant smile.

"I have some work I want you to do for me."

The Baron frowned.

"What kind of work?"

"The kind of work I suspect you have some experience at. Less than legal work."

The Baron shrugged. "You must mistake me for someone else."

"Oh, no, Gurn was quite clear in his descriptions of you and your alleged activities."

"What is it you want exactly?"

"We will discuss this in private."

Lord Arrenes commanded the guardsmen to escort him into one of the upstairs offices and to leave them in privacy, save for a guard at the door. Once inside Lord Arrenes made his intentions clear.

"I want you to assassinate an aristocrat."

The Baron started, his mouth agape in shock. He started to spurt something out, but Arrenes waved him down.

"Let me explain, and perhaps you will understand why I have chosen to take such an extreme action. My daughter has been kidnaped, as well as the daughter of a merchant from another city, we believe they were taken by the same cult responsible for your friend Gallien's present condition. These cultists have apparently tapped into a source of potent witchcraft, which they are using to break all the rules we play by. Hence the pair of you, who will serve as our rule-breakers."

Lord Arrenes explained the details, how the Baron was required to deal with the ghouls, and above all, deal with Lord Merides.

"Why not just hire an Assassin from the cult of Clister? They're the experts at this sort of thing."

"My friend! I offer you freedom in return for your help. The murderous cultists of Clister would merely take my wealth. And for all I know, they could be behind this."

"Then you have my word, Lord Arrenes," said the Baron. "I shall do as you wish."

The Baron wandered out of Garrex Tower as if seeing daylight for the first time in his life. Having spent so many years confined or enslaved, freedom always felt new to him. As he strolled toward Burdivane North he realized there was much information Lord Arrenes had not told him. Muttering his discontent with the Bourdonnese officialdom, the Baron resolved to recruit Sailor, Gallien's childhood buddy.

Sailer could always be found loitering with one or two members of his large gang around Burdivane's busiest — and therefore most profitable — squares and marketplaces. Sailer and the Baron were acquaintances, not friends, but Sailer could always be counted on to help out a friend, even by proxy. And indeed, Sailer proved to be very willing to assist the Baron with the skills of his trade.

The Baron bayed farewell to Gallien, who smiled feebly and waved them off.

The two entered the temple at night, when the Forum was deserted and the streets were quiet.

Unbeknownst to either of them, however,

was the presence of Dedrinti, who had been keeping surveillance over the temple and now tailed the two as they passed into the depths. And behind him, wrapped in dark cloth and heavy bandages, limped a small drooling man whose desperate eyes saw a little yellow light at the end of a tunnel.

The entrance from the surface led to a long tunnel which wound its way between shadowy alcoves filled with the ancient dead. The Baron and Sailer passed through quickly, finally coming to a lighted chamber where sat a blind old crone. The chamber was comfortably furnished with a bed, a couch, several stools, and a chest of drawers. Two other doors led from the chamber. The crone, sitting upon the couch and wrapped in a woolen shawl, busied herself with a needle and coarse thread. As the two entered she spoke aloud.

"Vithi, is that you?" she asked. "Have you come with my birthday gift after all, my dear little one?"

The Baron and Sailer cautiously edged around the room, keeping silent. The crone raised her face as if to smell the air.

"Ah, there are strangers here..." She threw her head in the direction first of Sailer, then of the Baron, then back at Sailer. Then she smacked her lips and seemed to smile. "You may pass...and your friend too, since you are together. Hurry along now, through that door."

Sailer looked at the Baron and shrugged. The Baron nodded and both proceeded through the door the crone had indicated.

Moments later Dedrinti was surprised when she suddenly turned upon him. Rising from her chair, she spat out vile venom from between her teeth, a toxin which burned the skin of the mercenary lieutenant. The old woman spat once more, cursing the agile Dedrinti, who tried in vain to escape through the far door. The acid spittle struck the wall behind him and stuck there burning. She finally netted the man with her shawl and tethered him to the foot of a large amphora. Then she pulled a velvet cord beside her chair. Swiftly responding to her summons, a servant entered through a side door and bound Dedrinti with silk cord.

"Take this fool to your master," she commanded. After the servant left came the drooling wounded man. He smiled at her and she smiled back.

* * * * *

As the Baron and Sailer continued to creep through the underground passageways, a bell boomed deeply from somewhere above them. Instantly the two thieves darted to either side of the passage, hoping to conceal themselves as much as possible.

Continued on Page 52

Non-Tastie Art





NEW RELEASES

Fasa Corporation

Available: February

Paranormal Animals of Europe

A sourcebook for Shadowrun, with many creatures and 16 pages of color art.

Available: March

Battletech Intelligence Operations Handbook

Before the smallest skirmish takes place in the Inner Sphere, spies wage a fierce war for information. Inside information on the intelligence agencies of the five Inner Sphere Houses and ComStar. For Battletech and Mech Warrior.

Dark Angel

When the only known recording of a late, great street musician appears in the hands of a major record company, it's up to the runners to find out the truth. A new adventure for Shadowrun.

Atlas Games

Available: April

Thicker than Blood

A mother wants help getting her child back in this Cyberpunk adventure.

Unauthorized Broadcast

On Al-Amarja a new drug

broadcasts the user's innermost thoughts to all around. The PCs find themselves in the center of the chaos in an adventure that is definitely Over the Edge.

Palladium Books

Available: March

Rifts World Book Three: England

Rifts England is a magical place covered by towering forests and inhabited by a menagerie of strange and magical creatures - human and inhuman. Lots of new material for any Rifts campaign.

Sage Lore Productions

Available: Now

Lost Souls, 2nd Ed.

This expanded 2nd edition includes over 60% new material. In this game, players play ghosts of the newly dead and seek to gain karma so as one day to be reborn a higher being than pond scum.

Available: Spring

Dens of Iniquity

This package contains 12 seedy establishments ready to come alive in your fantasy town.

CONVENTIONS

Anglicon VI

May 14 - 16, 1993

Sea-Tac Radisson

Fees: \$35 until April 1, 1993; \$40 at the door.

The Northwest's annual British media convention runs its sixth show next year. This year's convention will feature *Dr Who's* Colin Baker, video galore, costumes, gaming, and a casino. All proceeds are donated to public television in the Seattle-Tacoma area.

For more information contact Anglicon VI at PO box 75536, Seattle, WA 98125. (206) 745-2700

Adventure Game Fest '93

Portland, Oregon

Oregon Convention Center
May 21-23, 1993

Fees: Pre-registration \$15 for 3 days, \$12 for 2 days, and \$7 per day.

This con features tournaments and open play in boardgames, roleplaying, and miniatures. Includes the dreaded Silly Games tournament! It also features a miniatures painting contest, dealers (including Sage Lore) and a game auction.

For more information contact: Adventure Games Northwest, 6527 NE Alberta, Portland, OR 97218, or call (503) 282-6856.

GamesCaucus II

Oakland, California

Oakland Airport Hilton

May 28-31, 1993

This large convention features tournaments in AD&D, Champions, Star Wars, Call of Cthulhu and many more. For more information, contact TerGaming Associates at PO Box 4867, Walnut Creek, CA 94596-0867, or call (510) 798-7152.

D-Cubed '93

Pensacola, Florida

Pensacola Civic Center
June 5-6, 1993

Contact Allied Gaming Interests at P.O. Box 37186, Pensacola, FL 32526-0186, for more information on this convention.

Andcon '93

Independence, OH

Holiday Inn Independence
September 24-26, 1993

For more information, contact Andcon '93 at PO Box 142, Kent, OH 44240-0003.



Game Manufacturers!

Send us information on your latest releases and we will print a notice as a public service.

Planning A
Convention?



Let
Us
Know!

We are happy to print your convention info for free. Please send info at least 4 months prior to the event to assure placement. The Scroll, PO Box 14616, Portland, OR 97214.

May 28, 29, & 30

Held at the Monarch Hotel in Clackamas, Oregon in 1993 !!!



Above: Michael and his wife, Darcie Milburn; who is Director of Registration; prepare Northwest Gamefest organizational plans with Derek Ray, the NRMR Representative. There is surprisingly little blood shed as late nights fray nerves and deaden coherent thought, not to mention common courtesies.

Below: The IDEAL location for a gaming convention. The Monarch Hotel is located right across Sunnyside Road from Clackamas Town Center, and is adjacent to the Clackamas Promenade (remember: Oregon has no sales tax). Just off Interstate 205 and 82nd Avenue, this hotel affords easy access to those who travel from the city of Portland or arrive from outlying areas. Air travelers receive free shuttle service from Portland International Airport.



Enter your name and address in the spaces provided to the right. If you desire information regarding Northwest Gamefest volunteer needs and requirements, then check the box appropriate for you. If not, simply sign this form, then mail it and \$15.00 to the NRMR address listed at the bottom (please make checks payable to the National Registry of Medieval Roleplayers). If you should photocopy the blank, to send as your (or another's) form, please trim it to the half-page dimensions.

Thank You!

Convention Registration Form

cut at dotted line and binding to detach

LAST NAME		FIRST NAME AND MIDDLE INITIAL	
STREET ADDRESS		PHONE NUMBER	
		() -	
CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE	

Check the boxes if you would like information on the following:

☐ Game Mastering ☐ Volunteering-Registration/Courtesy

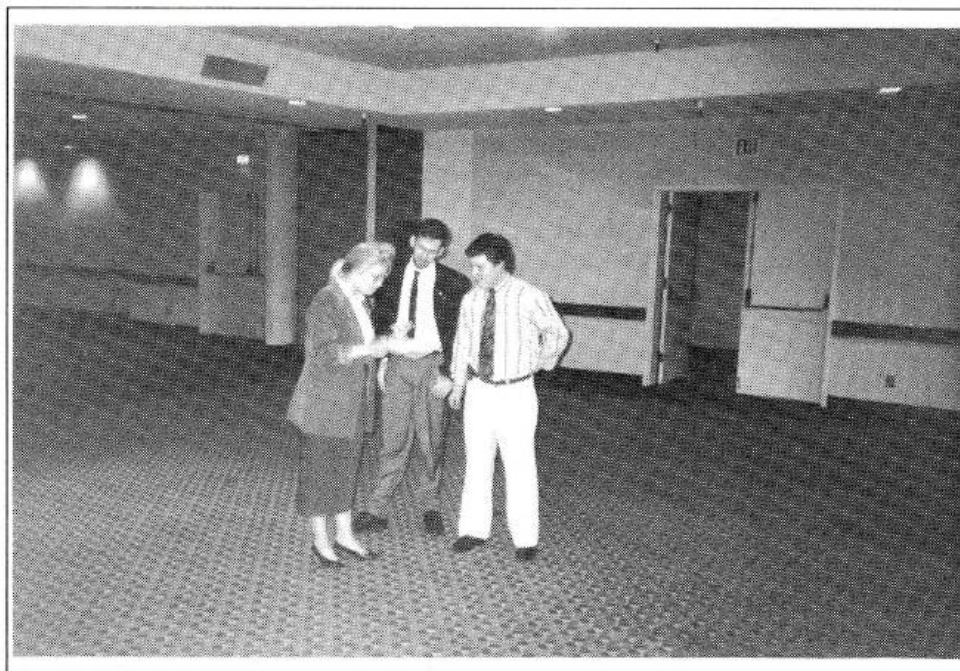
By signing this form, you agree to the following terms. Northwest Gamefest will provide a gaming convention for the agreed pre-registration fee of \$15.00 which is to be sent, accompanied by this form, postmarked no later than April 15, 1993. While attending Northwest Gamefest, you agree not to be destructive or disruptive in any manner, and to do so will result in the immediate loss of registered membership to the convention. You understand that weapons of any form; whether real, costume, plastic, or otherwise; will not be allowed at Northwest Gamefest, and you agree to bring none. All these agreed-to measures are necessary for the mutual enjoyment of all registered guests and you will abide by them in a conscientious manner. Please sign and date below.

SIGNATURE		/ /	
		MONTH	DAY YEAR

send to: NRMR P O Box 6068 Salem, OR 97304

Northwest Gamefest...

Presented by The National Registry of Medieval Roleplayers (NRMR)



Left: Michael R. Milburn, Convention Coordinator conferring with Laurie Stiponi, Catering Director and Brian Bough, Catering Assistant for the Monarch Hotel about the convention space. The 6,000 square foot Pacific Ballroom, shown here is one of the three rooms used for Northwest Gamefest. They have meticulously developed a viable floor plan to cover all foreseeable contingencies. The hotel has been very helpful in developing a healthy working relationship with the intent of providing a unique and exciting convention experience. They have extended to all Northwest Gamefest guests a special room rate that makes the two-night stay both affordable and attractive.

Now there is a true gaming convention coming to the Pacific Northwest! It is named "Northwest Gamefest" and it is a culmination of months of planning and research. Northwest Gamefest brings the best aspects of other conventions, both local and outlying, together into one amazing gathering of gamers and gaming. There is nothing else quite like it in the Great Northwest!!

This convention will be held beginning on Memorial Day Weekend of 1993; the actual dates are May 28, 29, and 30. Thereafter, Northwest Gamefest will be an annual event, occurring every Memorial Day Weekend. This year's convention will begin Friday, May 28 at 6:00 p.m. for entry and game registration; games beginning at 8:00 p.m. The convention will run its course and end Sunday night at 8:00 p.m. after 50 straight hours of gaming and related events. A complete schedule of games and activities will be made available during the registration or pre-registration process.

Northwest Gamefest is designed to be THE convention of gaming, including games ranging from the traditional to the cutting edge of modern role playing. The convention schedule calls for 24 hour-a-day activity with a minimum of sixty arranged games and adventures. Additionally, other activities will include: a costume contest, tournament competitions, a video arcade, panel discussions, seminars, demonstrations, door prizes, and a dealer's room attended by the finest suppliers of gaming accessories and related items. Even still, work is yet underway to double the number of scheduled events.

For the interested gamer, Northwest Gamefest is meant to be very affordable. Prospective guests may pre-register by mail for only \$15.00, which will allow full access to the entire convention (a registration blank is located below). The same access will cost \$18.00 at the door, along with a wait in the registration line. Anyone looking to trade services for entry into the convention might like to apply as either a game master or a function volunteer. For shorter visits, at-door daily rates will be \$10.00 for any of the single days of Northwest Gamefest. Pre-registration deadline is April 15, 1993...so please don't put off mailing your registration request!

The convention will be held at The Monarch Hotel in Clackamas, Oregon; located off Interstate 205 at exit 14. There is free parking, and plenty of it! For those who wish to rent their own hotel room, reservations may be placed by calling this toll-free number: 1-800-492-8700 (be sure to mention the convention for special rates). Please call the hotel at (503)652-1513 should there be any questions about rooms or costs. Remember that the ideal convention experience includes a hotel stay!

If more information on Northwest Gamefest is needed, please write to the NRMR at the address listed on the bottom of this page. Also, those gamers interested in volunteering or dealers interested in renting booths can request information and/or the appropriate applications at the NRMR address.

Please do not let this opportunity for an unique experience pass you by...pre-register today!!

The Promise Ring

An Adventure for Lost Souls



By
**Kathleen Williams
and
Joe Williams**

This adventure is designed for the Second Edition of the Lost Souls game, but is easily compatible with the first edition.

Central Character

This adventure requires the central player to be an Arcane Scholar whose cause of death was: "Swallowed unknown elixir to see what would happen." His unfinished business is: "Unable to finish book you just checked out from the library." The other players can take any characters they choose. The central player receives a copy of the following background story.

Background Story

Life always seemed uncomplicated to you. An only child, your mother doted upon you after your father was killed in a hit-and-run accident. Since you barely remember him, the loss was not such a tragedy. Perhaps your mother was a little over protective while you were growing up, but nonetheless, you were happy within the small seaside town of Baycroft.

One day was pretty much like another until just a few months ago when you graduated from Baycroft High School. Your mom cried at your valedictorian speech. That made you proud, since you were a little unsure about the part concerning the aliens from outer space and the lessons we could learn from them. Afterwards, you had a pizza party with your friends. You decided to live a little, so you didn't get home until after midnight, the smell of lemonade and pepperoni still on your breath. Sneaking into the darkened house, you were surprised to hear your mother's soft voice beckoning you from the darkness.

A nearby lamp illuminated your mother and a small ratty cardboard box. "I've never spoken much about your

father," she began slowly, "since his life's work always embarrassed me and kept us poor. But after listening to your speech tonight I realize that you are truly his child, and it would be wrong to keep his legacy from you.

"Your father was a brilliant scholar, in his way. His specialty was in the area of urban legends, folklore, and the occult. His problem was that he was just too naive — he'd believe anything he heard, and that made him the laughingstock of the scientific community.

"Anyway, your father moved us to Baycroft when you were quite young in order to write a book. It had something to do with the history of the area. I really didn't get involved. Unlike his other projects, he kept this one very quiet. He kept saying that this book would open up a whole new epoch in psychic research. I thought he'd gone crazy, so I wrote to some of his old colleagues to try to talk him out of his delusion. Professor Boris Banner, his old history teacher, came to visit, and spent an entire night talking to him in the study about his theories. But Raymond just wouldn't listen to reason. After Banner left, Raymond got worse. He began to make veiled references to a conspiracy and how his life was in danger. He even accused me of working against him!

"When he completed his book, he was so worried that someone would steal it, he insisted the printing be done here in town where he could supervise every detail. It was a small run, only a hundred copies, which he intended to send to his cronies. When the first book came off the press, your father scooped it up and told the printer he would be back in just a few minutes, after he had hidden the book in a safe place. He never returned. On his way back to the printer, he was killed by a hit and run driver."

She sobbed quietly. "They never caught the man who killed your father. Maybe he did have psychic powers, for he was right, I did betray him!"

Bewildered, you asked her what she meant. After a few moments, she went on. "All his life your father was laughed at, and I didn't want you to grow up with that kind of stigma. The same day he died, I had every copy of his book burned, and the plates destroyed. The only copy I couldn't find is the one he hid before he died.

"But who knows? Maybe his life's work was something great, something really important. Now all that is left is this box of notes. I want you to have it."

You opened the musty old box and discovered a bunch of loose papers. Picking up a few you begin to read. It seemed to be written in some sort of code, with a few scribbled notes here and there. Excitement coursed through your veins. Maybe your father did unlock the secrets of the universe! You started pawing through the box a little more frantically, and your hand brushed against something cold and hard. Pulling it toward you, you discovered a small ring set with a crystal. A chain was threaded through it to form a necklace. Noticing your interest, your mother said, "That was your father's. He called it his lucky

charm and wore it around his neck. He said it was his inspiration to write the book. I don't know why he liked it so much. It couldn't be very valuable. He bought it for only a few dollars in one of the local antique shops."

You decided to wear the chain to inspire you. Maybe it would help you follow in your father's footsteps.

After a sleepless night, you started your research, but your father's notes made little sense to you. One page listed residents of Baycroft, mostly fishermen, but they had all since passed away. Another listed historical sites in the area. You found yourself spending more time in the Baycroft library than on the sunny beach. You read so much about the occult, mysterious creatures, and other dimensions, that your head began to swim. Miss Gertrude, the librarian was sympathetic. "I used to work with your father," she said in her whispery voice. "And I know what his work meant to him. I'll help you in any way I can."

Weeks went by, and you were no closer to interpreting your father's notes. You decided to try a new tact. You wrote Professor Banner, the last man to talk to your father about his theories. Banner was more than eager to talk to you. He arrived in town the next day, and you told him the story your mother had related. He suggested you try to find the one book that had been spared. Since it hadn't been found at the scene of the accident, your father must have deposited it some place safe, and since he had only been gone a few minutes, it must still be in Baycroft.

Professor Banner wasn't able to enlighten you any further on what your father was working on. However, he and your mother hit it off fabulously. He swept her off her feet, and after a whirlwind courtship, married her in the little chapel on the beach. You were a little worried about this sudden romance, but mom seemed happy so you promised to give your new stepfather a fair shake. It was a little weird having a veritable stranger in the house, but you got used to it. Sort of.

In any case, there was little time to worry about your mother, so consumed were you in your search for your father's book. You posted wanted signs on nearly every telephone pole in Baycroft, but to no avail. Finally, just as you were about to give up, Miss Gertrude called. "I found it! Your father must have thought the book would be safest surrounded by other books. It's been in the stacks all these years." In a twinkling, you jumped on your bicycle and pedaled to Baycroft Library. Sure enough it was your father's book: *Mysteries of the Past Explained Today*. Flipping through it, your eyes fell upon this sentence: "... and so, the most important secret of the occult world was revealed to me on Peach Tree Island." Suddenly you remembered vacationing on nearby Peach Tree Island with your family when you were quite young. You and your father used to comb the beach looking for ... what?

Thanking Miss Gertrude, you hurried home, the book clutched to your breast. Your thoughts were far away when Boris interrupted them. "Congratulations!" he boomed

heartily. "I see you found your prize. This calls for a celebration. Come into my study, and let me give you a little something." Although you desperately wanted to read the book, you went into the room with Boris. It wouldn't hurt to be nice to the guy.

"I know you are unlike most youngsters, and never indulge in a drink," Boris went on. "But I really would like you to partake in a toast with me. After all, you are eighteen, and legally able to have a drink now and then, hmm?" Boris poured a strange green liquor into two small glasses. He handed one to you, and you noticed the glass seemed very warm to the touch.

"I propose a toast to you and your future," Boris went on, raising his glass. "May you find exactly what your father found." And with that he drank. You looked down at the drink in your hand. What could it hurt? In one gulp you downed the drink. Instantly, your throat burned and your stomach heaved. As you slumped to the floor, the last thing you saw was Boris ripping open your backpack and extracting your father's book, laughing maniacally all the while.

Possible Vows

In order to return to earth, the central player must make a ghostly vow not to rest until completing a task based on his backstory. Here are some suggestions:

- I will not rest until I find out why Boris killed me.
- I will not rest until I save my mother from Boris.
- I will not rest until I find out the secret of Peach Tree Island.
- I will not rest until I retrieve my father's book.

As part of his gear, the central character has an ectoplasmic copy of the necklace-ring he was wearing at the time of his death. Since the central character knows Baycroft, he should be able to find his way around the town and Peach Tree Island. However, he does not know about the cemetery on Lookout Mountain.

The other characters have been sitting around Limbo, discussing the merits of rap music and watching re-runs of *The Brady Bunch*, when their mentor ushers in the central character. "We have a new guest," the mentor explains. "He's looking for a little help to fulfill a ghostly vow. Any takers?" By the mentor's tone, the other characters know it's in their best interest to agree.

The Banner Residence

The players find themselves in the living room of the central character's home. The sun shines through the cracks in the firmly drawn shades. It's six o'clock, about two hours from sunset, on a very sunny afternoon. The house is utterly silent. Sheets have been draped across the furniture and the closets are bare. A note to the part-time

maid is attached to the refrigerator. It reads: "Dear Peggy, Mrs. Banner is so distraught over the recent death of her son I've decided to take her away for a few weeks. Please continue your chores and forward our mail to The Windswept House, Peach Tree Island. The number is 555-1313, but please call only in case of emergency. Boris Banner."

The central character's room is mostly intact, but his father's book, notes, and necklace-ring are all missing.

The phone is still in working condition, so if the characters wish to use a supernatural power to call, they may. If the caller is successful, he will contact Boris. Tipping Boris off at this time could prove disastrous, allowing him to prepare for the character's pursuit.

A pile of letters is scattered under the mail slot. The name "Miss Gertrude Pickles" is barely visible in the upper corner of the bottom most letter. To extract and open it, the characters will have to use a supernatural power. Her letter reads: "Dear Mrs. Banner, I was so sorry to hear about the death in your family. The suicide of your son was a terrible thing, but you cannot blame yourself. When I found a few torn pages from your dear husband's book in the back of a bookcase, I knew your son must have discovered the book I had given him was incomplete. No doubt the strain of learning his long search had been in vain caused him to snap. The pages make no sense to me, but if you'd like them as a lasting remembrance of your dear husband and child, just stop by the library any evening before seven. Sincerely yours, Gertrude Pickles, Librarian."

If the characters wish to leave the house, they will have to use their supernatural powers to unlock the doors or pass through a wall. To reach the library before it closes at 7pm, they will have to contend with blistering sunlight outside.

Baycroft Library

Baycroft Library is about 15 blocks from the Banner home. It is a small building run solely by Miss Pickles. If the players manage to arrive before closing, they may be able to slip in along with a patron. Otherwise, they will have to use their powers to gain entry, and Miss Pickles will not be present to assist them.

A few minutes before 7pm, Miss Pickles announces over the intercom, "The Library is now closing. Thank you." She will lock up and leave unless prevented from doing so by a supernatural power. Miss Pickles keeps the two pages she found from Raymond's book in a filing cabinet inside her tiny office.

The office is guarded by a barghest, who sits atop the filing cabinet. It will attack any ghost who enters the room, or else it will try to steal the pages if they are taken from the filing cabinet. The barghest has been sent by Boris Banners to find the missing pages of the book.



BARGHEST

Type: Evil entity. **Consistency:** Incorporeal. **Defense:** Good.

Skills: Good Strength, Poor Intelligence, Great Alertness.

Appearance: A fierce dog standing 3 feet at the shoulder with shaggy black fur, fiery red eyes, and a set of six inch horns protruding from its forehead.

Personality: Barghests are very hostile towards spirits of all sorts.

Motivation: To track down and drag ghosts to the nether regions.

Combat: Barghests may attack with either their bite or horns, but not both on a single turn. Their bite does (Defense vs. Passable) x 4 damage. Their horns do only (Defense vs. Poor) x 1 damage, but if the victim takes any damage, he will also be paralyzed for (Stamina vs. Poor) x 2 turns. The barghest will then try to clamp his victim in his jaws and teleport to the infernal regions. It takes one complete turn to do this, and if the barghest takes damage during this time it will drop the victim and teleport alone.

Powers: Three times per day, a barghest's howl can summon a hell hound. The hound will attack the barghest's enemies to the death. See the Lost Souls manual for information on hell hounds.

MISS GERTRUDE PICKLES



Type: Good person.

Consistency: Solid.

Defense: Inferior.

Skills: Inferior Agility, Poor Strength, Superior Intelligence.

Appearance: An older woman wearing her long gray hair in a bun at the back of her neck. She is a little deaf and never speaks above a whisper.

Personality: Helpful and alert. Although Miss Pickles is a little old and slow, she is very aware of her surroundings.

Motivation: To make herself helpful.

Combat: Miss Pickles has a hat pin in her purse, and will use it to inflict (Defense vs. Poor) damage in hand to hand combat. She cannot harm ghosts.

The Torn Pages

Inside the filing cabinet, they find a file marked "Mysteries of the Past Explained Today," and in it are two pages marked: "Chapter 10: The Secret of Peach Tree Island." They read:

"I originally came to Baycroft to study the oral traditions of the seagoing folk. It seemed as though the answer to all my questions could be found in a local legend. Old timers speak of the days when Peach Tree Island was settled by thieves and pirates. They lurked there knowing that ships had to pass close by on their way into the bay, and that the treacherous waters often caused them to sink. These settlers were expert sailors and would go out in their dinghies to meet those who managed to stay afloat. Alas for them, their rescuers would quickly strip them of their goods and leave them to drown.

"One day, a great passenger ship sank in a storm. A beautiful lady was swept ashore and was found by one of the citizens of the island. Looking up into the cut-throat's eyes, the woman must have foreseen her fate for she tried to forestall it: "Good sir, please do not harm me, for I come from a family of wealthy courtiers, and I can promise you riches beyond your dreams if ye spare my life!"

"The pirate might have listened to her, but when she held up her hands to beseech him, he saw a magnificent stone on her finger. Greed overcame him and he sliced her finger off to gain the ring! The woman shrieked and his next move was to cut her throat. It is said that the ghost of this woman still haunts the island, looking in vain for her lost finger and treasured ring.

"When I heard this story, I knew I was close to my goal. I bought a vacation home on Peach Tree Island in order to facilitate my search. I knew the ring must have been found and lost many times over the centuries, until its significance would be all but forgotten. Finally, I tracked it down to an old woman in Baycroft, who willingly sold it to me for fifty dollars.

"All the pieces began falling into place. Now all I needed to prove my theory was to find the location of the threshold, and the 'Legend of the Raven' which had started me on this quest in England, would be shown to be based on fact. My excitement knew no bounds as I asked Max to ferry me across one more time. If my calculations were correct, the answer would be found at the . . ."

The second page ends here.

The Legend of the Raven

Information on this legend can be found at the library in any number of books on English folklore. It is also mentioned in Raymond's box of notes.

"The Legend of the Raven is the story of a princess who fell in love with a raven. The king disapproved of their relationship, and plotted a way to stop it. One night, the raven said to the princess, 'Your father is coming to imprison me. But we will fool him. Use this key to release me, and together, we will rule the kingdom.' And he gave the princess a silver key.

"Just as the raven had predicted, the king sent his soldiers to lock the raven in a gilt cage. There the raven waited until the princess came one night to free him. She turned the key in the lock and the raven flew out. 'Free, free at last!' he cawed.

"But the king was old and wise. He saw the key still in the lock and he threw it into the cage. The raven saw the glitter of silver and, as was his nature, he flew down to pick it up. The door slammed shut behind him, locking him and the key inside, where his key could never do him any good."

Max the Ferryman

Peach Tree Island is a small vacation resort a few miles out to sea. It can only be reached by boat or ferry. Max Cline has been running the ferry to Peach Tree Island for nearly 50 years and has developed a reputation for being a crotchety old man who drinks to excess. Max lives in a hovel on the dock. If the players speak within his hearing, Max Cline will answer. If asked why he has this power, Max will say, "Started happening to me right after the war. Had a steel plate put in. I can pick up radio stations too." It will become evident that Max believes that he is listening to the voices of aliens from other worlds rather than ghosts.

If asked about Raymond, Max will begin to reminisce. "Sure, I remember the Professor. He was real interested in my ability to hear voices. Loaned me old copies of Fate Magazine. A real prince of a fellow. It was a shame that he died so soon after his discovery."

If asked about it, Max will only shrug. "I dunno what it was, only it made him real excited. One day he came back from the island and he said, 'Max, I finally figured it out. At exactly three in the afternoon, I went up to the place where the dead can't rest, and you'll never guess what I saw: the answer to all my riddles. Who would have thought that the darkest secret of the afterlife would be found only in the brightest sunshine? But I mustn't tell you any more. My knowledge could easily destroy all life as we know it.' I never did get the rest out of him." Max chuckles. "And they call me nutty."

Max will agree to ferry the players across.

MAX CLINE

Type: Good person.

Consistency: Solid.

Defense: Passable.

Skills: Passable Intelligence, Good Strength.

Appearance: Crazy old duffer.

Personality: Genial, though a little nutty. Enjoys chatting with those he ferries to the island, or to the voices in his head.

Motivation: To do his job.

Combat: Max cannot harm ghosts.

Lady Mary Sweetchild

Soon after landing on Peach Tree Island, the players will see a vaporous woman dressed in white standing upon the beach. This is the ghost of Lady Mary Sweetchild.

"Kind folk, you are my only chance to find rest. I have been trapped on this island for three centuries. When I was alive, I was falsely accused of witchcraft. The magistrate banished me from my home in England and sent me to the colonies with little more than the clothes on my back. The only valuable I owned was a ring my betrothed had given me. My ship sank in a storm off this tiny island, but I was rescued by a man named Rufus. When I pleaded for mercy he cruelly cut off my ring finger and left me to die. I shall never rest until the ring is returned to me. It is the only memento I have of my lost love."

If the central player offers her the ring on his necklace, she will exclaim, "Yes, that's it!" She eagerly places it on her finger, and then scowling in apparent disappointment, she takes the ring off and hurls it against the ground. "This is just an ectoplasmic copy of my ring! You must help me find my real ring!"

If it's pointed out that she wouldn't be able to wear a physical ring, she will curse soundly and say, "Just help me find my ring, and I will worry about the rest."

After her conversation with the players, Lady Mary vanishes into a cloud of slowly dispersing mist. "If you find my ring, I shall return to retrieve it," she promises. "Bless you all for your kindness!"

LADY MARY

Type: Evil lost soul.

Consistency: Incorporeal.

Defense: Good

Skills: Superior Cunning, Superior Charm, Great Fate, Awesome Occult, Good Intelligence, Good Agility, Poor Dexterity

Appearance: A woman of about 24. She is dressed in the high fashion of the mid seventeenth century. She has an eng-





lish accent and is missing the ring finger from her right hand.

Personality: Very sweet and ladylike until thwarted. The characters will be lulled into believing that she is a helpful NPC.

Motivation: To retrieve her ring so she can open the gate that keeps her demon lover Malphas imprisoned.

Combat: Lady Mary carries a dagger which does (Defense vs Poor) x 2 damage.

Powers: *Compel* (Uses = 4): Compels the victim to perform a simple four word action, such as "drop your weapon," "jump off a bridge," or whatever. The victim must perform the action for (Intelligence vs Great) turns.

Imprison (Uses = 1): The victim is imprisoned in an inescapable coffin for (Fate vs Good) x 10 minutes.

Darkness (Uses = 4): Inky darkness surrounds Lady Mary for 8 minutes per use.

Hallucination (Uses = 3): The target sees an army of ghostly pirates bursting from the sandy ground. The illusion lasts for (Sanity vs Great) x 3 turns. Only the target sees the hallucination, and the hallucination cannot really harm him.

Reverse Intentions (Uses = 4): The target does the exact opposite of what he intended to do that turn, and will continue to do so for the duration. It lasts for (Intelligence vs Good) turns.

Rufus

As the players explore the island, they hear a low moaning. Upon investigating, they find a hunched figure carrying a large sack across his back. The weight of the sack must be tremendous, for the figure stumbles wearily along the path.

This is Rufus, the ghost of the pirate who chopped off Lady Mary's finger. He cannot stop walking, and must always carry his ectoplasmic sack. If someone tries to take it away from him, he will fight to keep it. "I must carry it forever," he moans, "to atone for my evil ways."

If the players ask him about his life, he will sadly elaborate. "In life, I was a pirate, preying upon the unfortunates who wrecked off Peach Tree Island. One evening, a beautiful woman was swept ashore. I didn't kill her — at least, not right away. I was smitten by her beauty! She begged me to keep her safe from the other ruffians in exchange for, well, considerations. So I did. Then she confined in me that she was a witch who had knowledge of the dark arts, and if I helped her, her demon lover would reward me. I didn't actually believe her, but I did as she asked, for more earthly favors.

"She had me swim out to her sunken ship and find the body of the priest. I brought him ashore, and she drained his blood into a bowl. Then she made me build her a pentagram, while she painted symbols with the priest's blood. When I was done, she laughed and said she didn't

need me anymore, her demon lover would soon be by her side. She pointed her finger at me and started mumbling an incantation. I didn't hesitate — I cut off her finger in one swoop. She shrieked and came for me, so I killed her. I buried her in the graveyard, but kept her ring for my troubles.

"But her half-finished incantation didn't stop with her death. Within a few days, I also died from a wasting disease that left me looking like this. But that wasn't the end of the witch's curse. I found I was fated forevermore to carry my sins upon my back."

If the players ask Rufus where the pentagram is located, he answers, "Why, that's easy. It's right here on the island. It's on . . ."

Rufus is cut off by a swarm of funeral butterflies that alights on his ectoplasmic body, while another swarm attacks one of the players. He drops his sack in order to battle the butterflies. Rufus will be reincarnated before the players can rescue him. He screams horribly, assumes his new incarnation as a maggot, and vanishes. Upon his reincarnation, the funeral butterflies may continue to attack the players or fly away, at the referee's discretion. The butterflies were sent by Lady Mary to silence Rufus.

Even after Rufus is reincarnated, the ectoplasmic sack remains behind. If the players peek inside, they discover the sack contains a number of gravestones painted, in old blood, with arcane symbols. The character who first touches the sack will be cursed, his face erupting in open sores. As long as he carries the sack in one hand, the sores will get no worse. But should he set the sack down, the pustules will bubble and he will lose 1 WTL, plus an additional 1 WTL every 5 minutes until the sack is again in his hand.

The only way to break the curse is to reincarnate Lady Mary. Since she is the one maintaining the sack, when she is reincarnated, the sack will vanish.

RUFUS

Type: Neutral lost soul.

Consistency: Incorporeal.

Defense: Good.

Skills: Good Agility, Great Strength, Poor Intelligence.

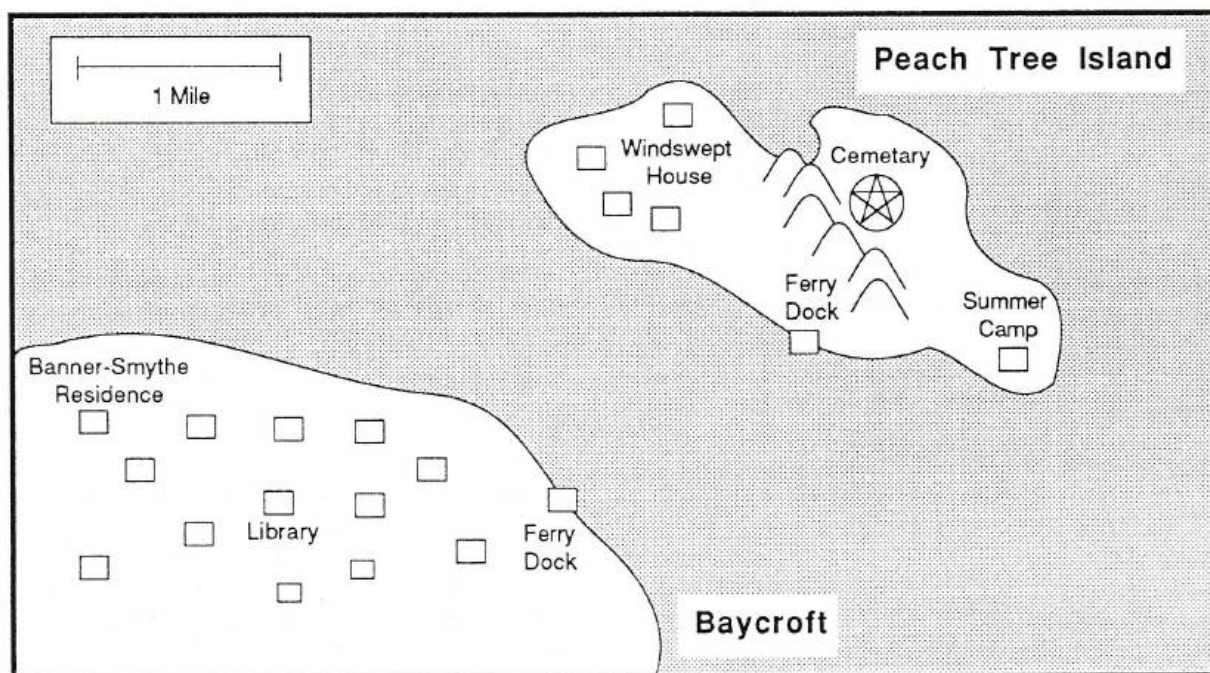
Appearance: A seventeenth century pirate. He carries a cutlass and wears a patch over one eye. His skin is decayed and dotted with open sores. His back is bent under the weight of a bulging sack.

Personality: Cunning, rather than clever. Rufus is a bit of a coward.

Motivation: Rufus is still trying to atone for his sins in life.

Combat: Rufus prefers to attack helpless creatures, and will run away if he can, though his sack slows him. He defends himself with his cutlass for (Defense vs. Poor) x 3 damage.

Powers: None.



FUNERAL BUTTERFLIES

Type: Evil creature.

Consistency: Unnatural.

Defense: Passable.

Skills: Good speed.

Appearance: Small white butterflies which come out only at night.

Personality: Mindless insect.

Motivation: To reincarnate Rufus by nibbling away his ectoplasmic flesh.

Combat: Funeral butterflies travel in swarms of a hundred. A swarm is only affected by area affect weapons. Killing individuals does little to reduce their numbers. A swarm has 20 WTL. For every WTL lost, five butterflies are considered to be slain. The WTL of the swarm determines the damage it is capable of doing:

WTL	Damage per turn
01 - 05	(Stamina vs Inferior) damage.
06 - 10	(Stamina vs Poor) damage.
11 - 15	(Stamina vs Passable) damage.
16 - 20	(Stamina vs Good damage).

Windswept House

This is a small vacation cottage on the far side of the island. It is near the ocean and is well secluded from other houses. Inside, Mrs. Banner is lying in bed, clearly in a stupor. It is apparent that she has been drugged. The living room is strewn with maps of Peach Tree Island, books on the occult

and papers full of occult symbols. A tape recorder lies prominently on a desk next to two empty tea cups; a tape labeled "My Struggle to Attain Greatness" is lying in the recorder. If the players use a power to play the tape, they will hear Boris Banner's voice:

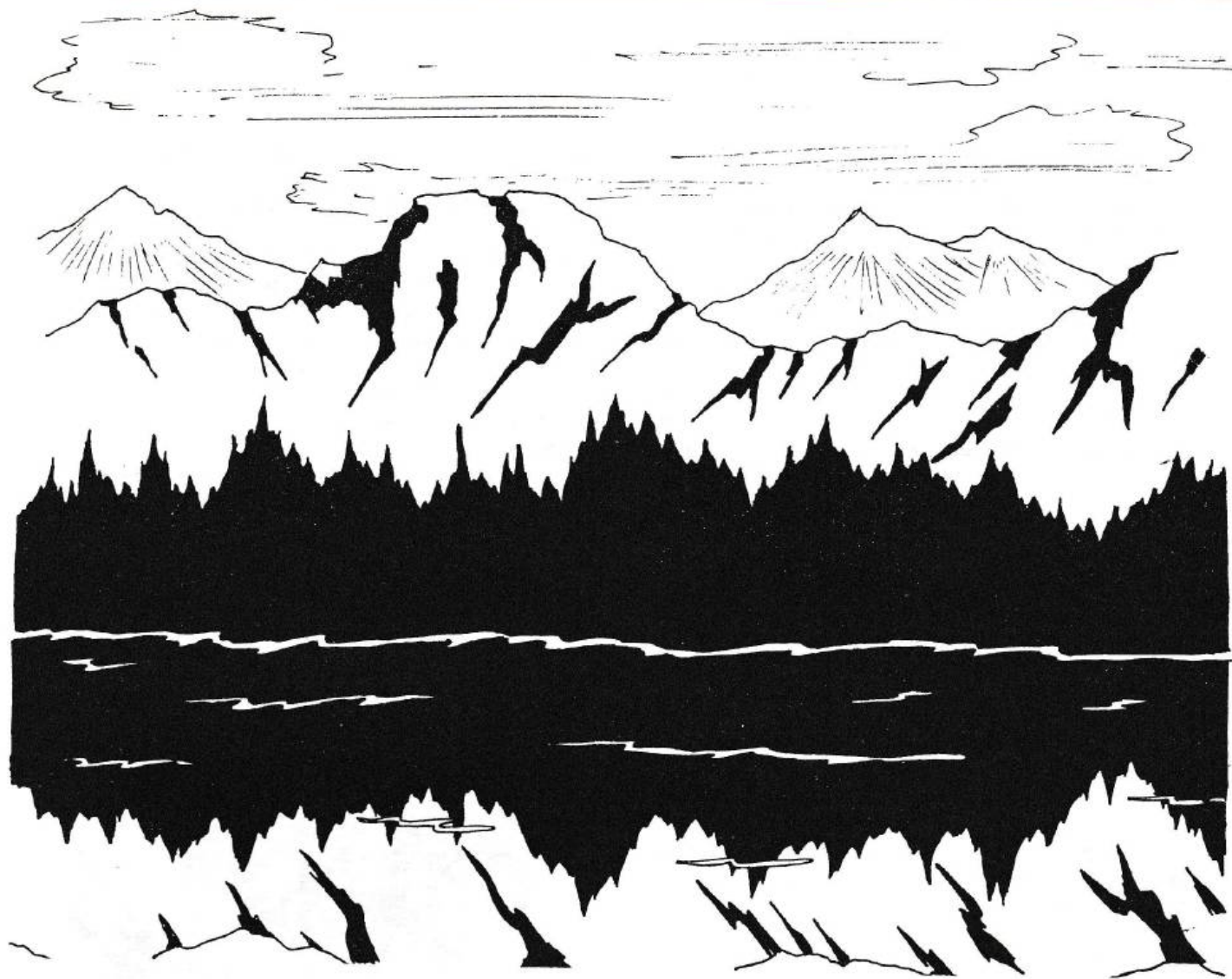
"... Raymond thought to outsmart me by tearing key pages from the book. If they're at the library, my barghest will find them. The wretch may have foiled me for now, but there is one significant passage he missed. It reads: "I have discovered the gate to the afterlife, which was built sometime in the early 1600's. I must keep the secret from people who would misuse it, but I like to muse upon my discovery, so I have a little memento of it at my vacation home. I gaze upon it and laugh at all those poor scientists who will have to eat crow once I've published my book. I must find the clue. I will stop at nothing. After all, the murder of two men was nothing to me ..."

His voice is interrupted by Mrs. Banner's voice. "Boris, what are you doing? What do you mean, you murdered two men?"

"Let me explain over a drink," Boris replies, oozing charm. And there then tape ends.

Mrs. Banner

If Mrs. Banner is revived from her drug induced stupor, she will relate the following information, provided the players can talk to her without frightening her out of her wits:



"I was such a fool to love that man, and to let him use me so. Now I know what a beast he really is! When I came into the room, he was talking into that recorder he always carries with him. I heard him mention something about murdering two people. He said he could explain, and he was so calm that I expected him to amuse me with a reasonable explanation. I sat down and sipped the tea he offered me as I listened to his story.

"He told me that when he learned of Raymond's important discovery, all those years ago, he went mad with jealousy. He couldn't stand the thought of one of his students achieving greatness in excess of his own, and so he came secretly to Baycroft and ran Raymond down! He didn't care about learning Raymond's secrets. He only wanted him out of the way.

"It wasn't until my son called him to ask about Raymond's work that Boris again started to dwell on Raymond's discovery. He decided to let my son continue his research, and then steal it from him when the time was ripe. To gain close access to the boy, Banner courted me. I, the lonely widow, was easy prey for the cultured professor! I had no idea of the monster I was allowing into our household.

"By this time, my mind was growing confused and foggy.

He must have put something in my drink. I don't know what would have happened to me if you hadn't rescued me!"

If asked about where Boris went, she will say, "The last I saw, he was standing by the mantel, looking at one of the pictures. Then I must have passed out."

The Memento

On the mantelpiece is a picture of Raymond. He is standing next to a small stone grave marker that looks to be over a two hundred years old. He's smiling broadly, an open can of paint at his feet. The name on the stone reads, in fresh paint, "Here lies Mary Sweetchild. May her secret rest with her." In the upper corner of the picture is "3:00 p.m." faintly written in pencil.

In the background, other gravestones are visible, along with a glimpse of the sea, and far beyond is Baycroft on the distant shore. By checking the maps on the living room floor, the players will discover there is an old cemetery atop Lookout mountain. This discovery will come at 2:45 p.m., leaving the players just enough time to reach the cemetery.

Lookout Mountain

This is actually a small ridge running down the center of

the Island. A small summer camp is on one side and vacation homes on the other. Campers often ride horses up the trail that leads to the top of the Mountain. There is very little foliage, and during the day, it is quite bright and sunny.

If the characters go to the top of Lookout Mountain, they will see below them valley overgrown with hardy brush. Among the undergrowth, out of range of any supernatural powers, they see an ancient cemetery where victims of the pirates were buried hundreds of years ago. The wind blows constantly along the valley, blowing the sandy soil from the tops of the graves and causing the grave markers to wiggle as though those buried below were struggling to escape.

The stones in the center of the cemetery are laid out in a pentacle. At three in the afternoon, runes drawn on the pentacles will glow faintly. An Arcane Scholar will recognize it as a gate to the nether regions.

From the ridge, the players see Boris standing outside the pentacle, the ring on his finger glowing brightly in the sunlight. His fist is raised, and the runes shimmer with increased brilliance.

Next to Boris is a cloud of pitch blackness. Inside the cloud is Lady Mary Sweetchild, the witch. Unable to wield the material ring in her incorporeal state, she has enlisted Boris' aid by promising him unsurpassed greatness heretofore unknown to mortals. She whispers the incantation to open the gate, and as Boris repeats the words in his booming voice, a whirling dimensional gate appears within the pentagram of tombstones.

Boris Banner and Lady Mary will fight the players to keep the gate open. After a few turns, Lady Mary's demon lover, Malphas will step from the gate. His demonic troops will soon follow him, pouring out of the gate at the rate of one every other turn. The only way to close the gate is to throw the physical ring (not an ectoplasmic copy) into it. Not only will this permanently close the gate, but it will also suck Malphas and his demonic troops back to the nether regions!

BORIS BANNER

Type: Evil person.

Consistency: Solid.

Defense: Good.

Skills: Passable Agility, Good Strength, Great Intelligence.

Appearance: Suave man in early 50's. Tall, with just a touch of gray at the temples. Appealing to women, most men find him a little too arrogant.

Personality: Boris has been involved in the occult for many years. Once a rea-



sonable researcher, he has slowly grown mad over the years.

Motivation: To attain greatness by performing a great work of magic.

Combat & Powers: Boris is wearing a pair of Mystic Glasses which allows him to see (though not touch or hear) ghosts. Lady Mary has enchanted Boris' walking stick, turning it into a magic wand with these powers:

Slow (Uses = 4): The target can only act every other turn for (Agility vs Great) x 2 turns.

Freeze (Uses = 2): The target is paralyzed for (Strength vs Passable) x 2 turns.

Magic Bolt (Uses = 6): Sends a bolt of magical energy at the target, doing (Defense vs Poor) x 3 damage to material or incorporeal beings.



MALPHAS

Type: Evil entity.

Consistency: Dual.

Defense: Superior.

Skills: Passable Agility, Superior Strength, Superior Charm.

Appearance: Normally appears as a eight foot tall knight dressed in black plate mail. A plume of raven's feathers tops his helm, and his shield bears a raven crest. He carries a two-handed sword.

Motivation: To keep the gate open so his demonic troops can enter the physical world.

Personality: Malphas is a notorious liar. His lies will be believed unless (Empathy vs. Great) is achieved. Women are particularly attracted to Malphas. Any female character must roll (Will vs. Great) or fall in love with him.

Combat: His two handed sword does (Defense vs. Great)

x7 damage. Malphas prides himself on his warrior abilities, and would rather fight than use magic.

Notes: If an Aura of Powerlessness power is used on Malphas, he will revert to his true form, that of a giant raven. His armor and sword vanish, reducing his Defense to Great and his damage (from his beak) to (Defense vs. Great) x2. However, he gains the ability to fly. He can be tricked into assuming his raven form by a beautiful woman who makes a Superior Persuade roll.

As a demon, Malphas can easily see and interact with the living and lost souls. Malphas is not harmed by sunlight, and knows that lost souls are.



DEMONIC TROOPS

Type: Evil entity.

Consistency: Dual.

Defense: Passable.

Skills: Poor Agility, Good Strength, Poor Intelligence.

Appearance: Squat, troll-like beings that walk with a rolling gait. They have meat hooks for hands and curved fangs that extend past their chins.

Personality: Brutal and violent.

Motivation: They will fight to help Malphas, and to keep the gate open.

Combat: They fight with their claws, doing (Defense vs Passable)x3 damage. One demon leaps from the gate every other turn. There is a virtually unlimited number of demonic troops.

Rewards

With the destruction of Malphas and the gate, the danger to the world is over. The players receive the following rewards:

+1 karma for destroying the barghest.

+1 karma for reincarnating Boris Banner.

+2 karma for reincarnating Lady Mary.

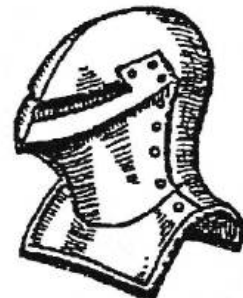
+5 for closing the gate, thereby banishing Malphas and his demonic troops.☺



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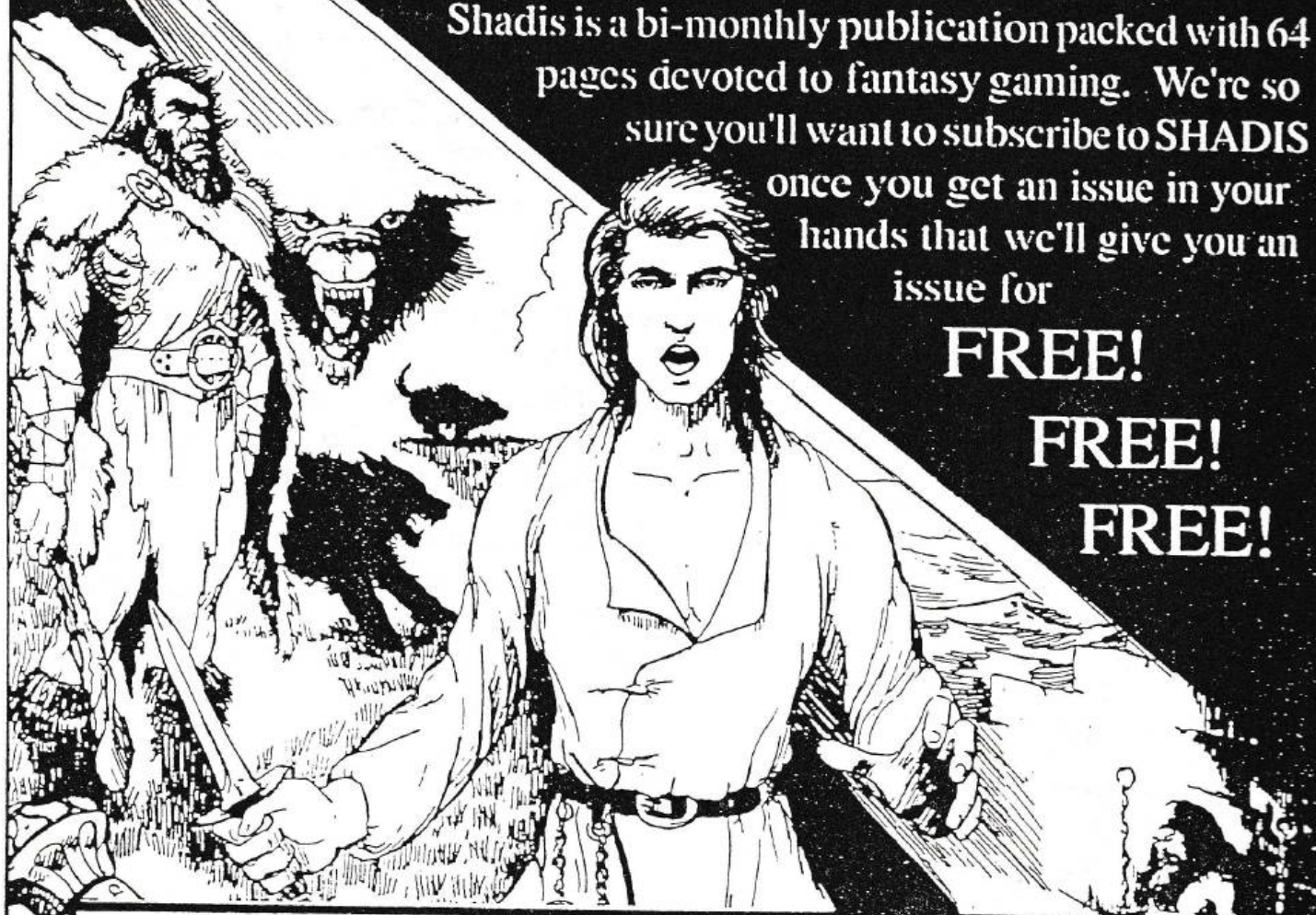
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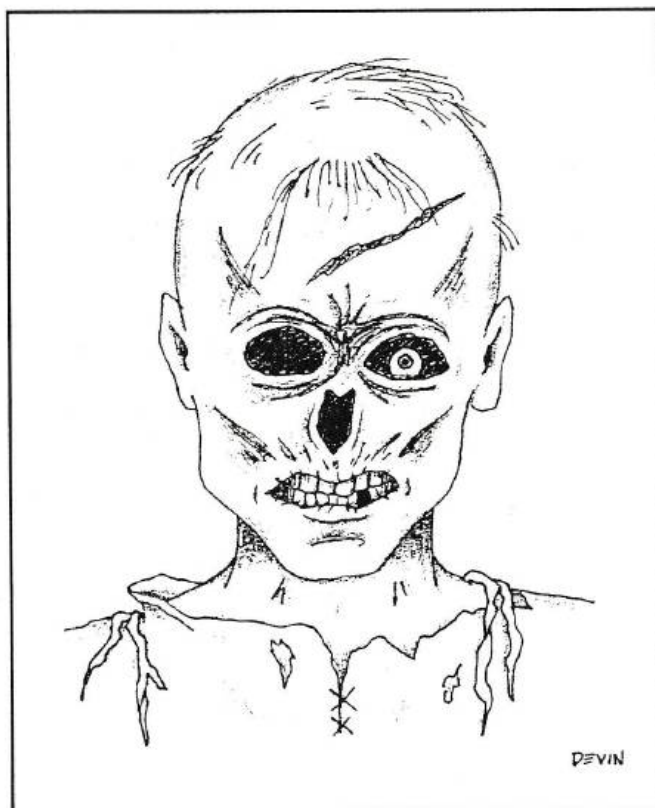
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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Low tides
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi (2-4)
TREASURE TYPE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil
NO. APPEARING:	1-8
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVE:	12
HIT DICE:	3+3
THACO:	12
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-4/1-4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Dragging
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Spell immunities
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5'-6' tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (19)
XP VALUE:	270



Description

Although apparently safer than the high seas, shallow coastal areas can be just as dangerous to an overboard sailor if he cannot swim. Strand varslers (also called Beach Combers and Coast Guards) are the undead spirits of unfortunates drowned within sight of land, forever doomed to prowl the shores they hadn't been able to reach in life, seeking new companions from among the living.

More than anything else, Strand Varslers resemble waterlogged zombies that slowly walk out of the surf to stand on the edge of beaches wearing rotted and rusted examples of the clothing and weapons of sailors or coastal dwellers of the region in which they prowl. They do not speak, but they are often heard mumbling meaningless phrases or sounds that almost make sense in the most common language of the area.

Combat

While they look somewhat zombie-like, Strand Varslers are much more active in combat, attacking with both hands in clutching attacks that cause 1-6 points of damage from cold so intense that it leaves "burn" marks on the victim's clothing or flesh.

In addition, when a Strand Varsler scores a hit, it attempts to drag its victim into the water from which it came from. The drag attempt is successful if the victim fails to roll his strength or less of 1d20, with a penalty of -1 being applied to the target number for every successful strand varsler

attack made on him in that round. For example, if one Strand Varsler was successful in both of his attacks against a STR 12 man, while another Varsler hit the same man once in the same round, the man would have a penalty of -3 on his save. He would need to roll 3 under his strength, a 9 or less, to avoid being dragged by his double-teaming opponents. No matter how many strand varslers are joining together in a dragging attempt, only one saving roll is made by the victim in a round.

The result of the drag is to pull the victim a number of feet closer to the water equal to the amount he failed his strength roll by. Worse yet, unless all the strand varslers attacking are defeated, or unless he has a special success on a strength roll by rolling less than *half* his strength, the victim will find that he cannot retread from a position he's been dragged to; he can advance towards the water, or move sideways along the beach, but he cannot retreat to safety. Thus, if the victim is first hit while standing 8 feet from the water's edge, the Strand Varslers must drag him for a total of 8 on his failed strength rolls before he will touch water.

Strand Varslers are tied as strongly to the sea as they are to the Negative Material Plane, and so are not able to go further from the water's edge than the high tide mark on the shore. Similarly, any victim dragged to the edge of the water will find himself in the Strand Varsler's realm; in the round that they touch the sea, the victim will be able to make one

last save attempt (with no minuses, as the Strand Varslers will no longer be attacking him), failure of which means the victim is plunged into the sea, to drown if no one can rescue him (for he will not be able to do anything to save himself).

As undead, Strand Varslers are immune to the effects of sleep, charm, and illusory spells, as well as hold and cold spells. Because of their water-logged bodies, they take only half damage from fire-based spells (no damage if a saving throw is made). And because of the diluting effects of the water already impregnating them, small amounts of holy water have no effect on them. If one were completely immersed in holy water, it would peacefully die, allowing the Strand Varsler's tormented soul to finally find rest.

Strand varslers can be turned by clerics as if they were Shadows, but with one twist. As they cannot leave either the sea or the tidal shores, a turn performed by a cleric standing seaward of them will not drive them onto dry land, but are trapped instead. The trapped Strand Varslers will take damage equal to the cleric's level every round that they are trapped. (For example, a 5th level cleric inflicts 5 points per turn.) As they will not be able to approach the cleric there is little chance of them surviving this attack. Of course, the cleric in the water will be in considerable danger if more unaffected Strand Varslers happen to attack him from behind.

Habitat/Society

Strand varslers have no society to speak of; they collect in groups only if they were drowned in the same area. In particularly perilous waters, a pack of Strand Varslers could range from the newly-drowned (it takes about seven days for a drowned sailor to become undead) to those drowned in the same area hundreds of years before. Unlike many

other forms of undead, those the Strand Varslers kill do not become undead themselves. Thus, the population of Strand Varslers in an area increases only by way of water-borne incidents; from a few every decade in slightly hazardous waters to possible influxes of dozens in the aftermath of a naval battle.

Being nearly mindless, strand varslers do not communicate with each other. They have no emotions and do not fight over prey; if two Strand Varslers approach the same victim, they will work together to drag the victim to his death more because they fail to notice each other than because they consciously practise group tactics. A Strand Varsler hasn't enough of a mind to retain memories of its living existence (including any skills or spells it may have possessed in life) and precious little memory of events since its death.

Ecology

Strand Varslers have no need for food, nor do they serve as food for other creatures. The unappetizing taste of their flesh is shunned even by the least of underwater scavengers. As most Strand Varslers are poor sailors, and the possessions of those they drown quickly rot in their salt-water environment, only the most recently caught "prey" will have any treasure to speak of. This can be found either on those bodies that wash to shore hours or days after their death, or underwater in the weeds and rocks that trap some of the corpses, and which the Strand Varslers lurk in during the high tides when they cannot roam the beaches.

Credits

The Strand Varsler was created and written by Spike Y. Jones and Illustrated by Devin Van Domelin.

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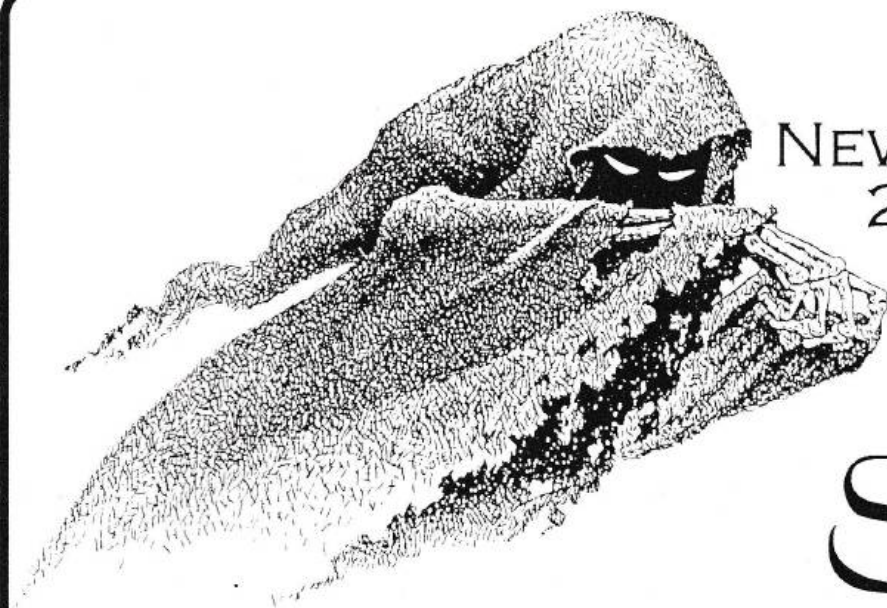
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Cat Play

Continued from page 31

They checked to make sure both ways were clear, then dashed another twenty or thirty feet up the corridor. A sudden scream, coming from directly behind them, froze their steps for the briefest instant before both men broke into a headlong sprint into the darkness.

* * * * *

Two robed and hooded servants escorted Dedrinti into the presence of Lord Merides. The lieutenant of the Forum Guard paled and his hands shook as his guards pressed him to his knees.

"Good evening," said the aristocrat. Lord Merides smiled at the mercenary officer and offered him a drink. Dedrinti accepted the bronze goblet nervously and took a loud sip.

"It is from my own cellars," said the host. "Distilled from the blood of a half dozen noble virgins. Would you like some more?"

Dedrinti bent over suddenly and spewed liquid over the fine carpet of the salon. Lord Merides looked upon him disapprovingly and indicated to his servants that they should help the man to his feet. Having done so, Lord Merides gave a cold stare to the man.

"What were you doing in the catacombs?"

"Following," Dedrinti replied. He coughed twice, paused, then continued. "Following two crooks. They passed through a room where an old blind woman sat. She captured me...."

"And what of the two crooks? Did they not also meet my aunt?"

Dedrinti started. "Your aunt?"

"Answer my question."

Dedrinti swallowed hard and shook his head. "I did not see them after that."

* * * * *

When the Baron and Sailer could run no further and collapsed on the stone floor to catch their breath, torchlight emanating from an open archway ahead caught their eye. In several minutes they had recovered and tiptoed toward the light.

Concealing themselves on either side of the archway, the Baron and Sailer peeked into the chamber to scan its contents. They had come upon a large chamber where a gathering of cloaked and hooded figures were engaged in urgent preparations. For what grand event neither the Baron nor Sailer could guess.

Present and overseeing the others was a tall lean man dressed comfortably in the fashion of a country aristocrat. The Baron and Sailer wrapped themselves in their cloaks and concealed themselves within the gathering. They

watched the proceedings with some interest and slowly began making their way toward a side entrance.

Shortly thereafter Lord Merides entered the chamber. He was followed by Dedrinti and a guard escort. Merides was pale and stiff and looked upon the gathering coldly.

"Lord Brevis," he cried, "I see you are making good progress. And I, too, have not been idle." He indicated Dedrinti, who was sulking under the confines of two strong guards. "He managed to penetrate far into the catacombs, before meeting Auntie."

Dedrinti looked upon the congregation with horror. He had heard reports and rumors about the existence of such groups, but never had he imagined himself witnessing a true cult gathering.

"Release me," he pleaded. "I am an officer of the Forum guard!"

"You are but a mite to us," Lord Brevis laughed briefly before his smile faded abruptly and he attained a more commanding posture. "Please be quiet."

Lord Merides strode forth and held up a hand. Lord Brevis bowed and motioned all activities to stop. All the robed figures put down their work and look upon the head of the room.

"There are thieves among us," said Lord Merides. "But they are not here against our wishes."

The aristocrat snapped his fingers and spoke an eldritch syllable. From behind him emerged four hideous creatures which appeared as men the color of death, but their eyes rolled with delight and yellow fangs extruded from between crimson lips. They shuffled forward quickly, sniffing the people around them grinning feverishly and licking the air.

There was a commotion at the far end of the chamber, when the ghouls were directing their explorations there. A hooded figure had begun to run toward the rear exit, with the ghouls close at his heels.

Lord Merides fidgeted about, craning his neck to see the action under the flickering shadows.

"Have they got him? Where's the other?"

Lord Brevis, tired of watching, pushed his way through the crowd of his underlings. Momentarily, the flurry of robes waxed in intensity and then, as Lord Brevis entered the fray, the flurry died suddenly. The country aristocrat shouted to Lord Merides from behind a pillar.

"Ah, here we have him!"

Brevis and the ghouls emerged into the torchlight escorting a blond-haired man whose disguising robe had been torn away. Lord Merides thought he recognized the man.

"But milords," cried Lieutenant Dedrinti, "there is another!" He frantically searched the cowed faces until his eyes spotted Sailer, who by chance had pulled back his cowl to better see. "He is there!" shouted Dedrinti, pointing wildly. Sailer broke into a run.

Continued on pg. 62

Northwest Gaming News

By Clark Musser

An Interview with David Miller of GMA

When I first met Dave Miller in November of 1992, I had already heard many good things about his product: *Interstellar Elite Combat* (IEC). IEC is a science fiction roleplaying game system of immense proportions with an infinite number of story lines, characters, and roleplaying situations possible. Sadly, I hadn't had the chance to see or play the game myself, though colleagues and friends had been raving about the look and feel of the game since returning from the Dragonflight '92 Convention in Seattle. My standard excuse: "I don't have the game so I can't play it" was destroyed when Dave delivered a copy and suggested I look it over, test it, and tell him what I thought. Oh, the life of a reviewer...

When Dave and I met in my office at TFC Interactive Adventures back in November, we discussed many things about *Interstellar Elite Combat*, as well as the Pilot system under development by GMA, the Universe game system, the condensed miniature battle game, and the possibilities of a second edition of IEC. We also discussed the long term marketability of sci-fi RPGs and the possibility of creating a monthly newsletter for new as well as loyal customers of GMA products. It was the candidness of our first meeting that prompted me to call Dave for a second interview and to write this issues column.

Dave Miller began his association with science fiction back in the 60's, "when space was a big deal", through books, encyclopedias, and any other material that hooked into his expanding imagination. "I was looking at pictures of space in encyclopedias before I could even read," he stated proudly. "I was definitely a child of the 60's," he adds with a laugh, "I really got into sci-fi."

From his love of science-fiction, Dave developed an idea of his own universe by the time he reached Jr. High School. "I wanted to produce a movie, but Star Wars arrived in theaters (1977) and ruined the market, I couldn't compete with Lucas."

He began to reminisce about the past and explained his emerging idea for the game industry. As he tells it, Dave was discouraged with the movie industry but still wanted to do something in the field of science fiction. His desire found a new outlet in a couple of new games created by

TSR: *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Gamma World*. "I found these games inadequate," he tells me candidly, "and I was coming up with my own rules to fill the holes."

Through the years, Dave added many of his own variations to the rules of TSR's games until finally, in High School, he developed his own (unpublished) game system by the name of *Torpedo Fighter*. Over several years, with a growing group of players (mostly friends of Dave's), the game began to evolve and changed significantly.

During the evolution of *Torpedo Fighter*, Dave was reading everything in the field of science fiction as well as any work dealing with our reality as it would effect his new universe. He was reading magazines about both real and fantasy creatures, studies of zoological specimens, and scientific textbooks of all types. The information he gained through research helped to turn his universe into something more realistic and enjoyable for everyone.

As the game grew on scratch paper, note pads, and memory cells, Dave was gathering a group of role players interested in developing the history and background to his universe. From these sessions and meetings they were able to extrapolate and collate the ideas into the product represented by *Interstellar Elite Combat*. "All of these guys were involved in the transformation of *Torpedo Fighter* into *Interstellar Elite Combat*," Dave is quick explain. "The idea of having an Association of Game Masters wasn't how GMA originally started."

From the expansion of *Torpedo Fighter*, Dave (with his fathers backing), built the foundation of the company he now heads as president and produced the first of many products: *Interstellar Elite Combat*. With the untimely death of his father, Dave incorporated the company and added some of the closest collaborators of *Interstellar Elite Combat* as part owners. From this group of four, the Game Masters Association was formed, and a new publisher of game material finally matured.

Dave loves to chat about IEC and seems determined to touch on every detail I might need to know about his game. With candidness, he answers all of my questions with straight forward responses, leaving little to be read between the lines. But there are many people that don't know

anything about Interstellar Elite Combat, and for those people I had to ask one major question.

"Though Interstellar Elite Combat has been selling fairly well," I began the question in my best interviewing voice, "it is a relatively new game system, barely out of its infancy. Tell me, what is Interstellar Elite Combat?"

As we begin the ritual dance of the interview, Dave's voice seems to get a little more serious, "Literally, Interstellar Elite Combat is the culmination of 20 tomes of raw information condensed and extrapolated into a comprehensive yet simple system to play."

Silence prevails as I attempt to digest the statement and return another intelligent and meaningful question.

"But what exactly does that mean?" I blurted before I could control the words.

After an hour of questioning (and a couple days of reading through the game material he supplied back in November) I was finally able to write about the game and its design team with a little more knowledge.

Interstellar Elite Combat is a roleplaying game system based in a universe far more advanced than our own. The setting is an area of disputed space, divided between the Neutral Zone and the Imperial Zone wrought with areas of heavy combat between warriors decked out in ultra-tech suits of armor and weaponry. Beyond the clumsy days of the mechwarrrior, the elite warriors of this game are quick, agile, and increasingly deadly. It is no place for a mere Earth-type mortal, he'd be vaporized in the flash of a laser beam.

But Dave assures me that this isn't just an ordinary space fantasy game of 'Buck Rogers' heroics and 'Star Wars' effects, "One thing where we differ is that we have a lot of real science in our products. Ron Teeter (An engineer from Rockwell International) has helped with the technical designs of our space craft and equipment."

Because of the extensive science background in reality, the overall feel of the weapons, equipment, and space craft in Interstellar Elite Combat are very realistic. Much can be attributed to the thorough research and development of the GMA team. Dave is very proud (and rightfully so) of his products.

This is not to say that IEC is overly complicated, in fact, besides the character generation (which I found a bit tedious), the game has been simplified and explained in laymen's terms.

"We've got a simplified game system but we refuse to falter in our science technology. You won't find a universal tool doing everything we can't explain. We use hard science fiction in our products (meaning they use scientific theory to explain the unexplainable)."

GMA's product line so far has but two entrants, Interstellar Elite Combat and Interstellar Elite Arctic Combat, but the future of the Interstellar Elite game line is divided into the three categories: 'Combat', 'Battle', and 'Pilot', with 'Universe' being the combination of all three (these may change when actually released). Interstellar Elite Combat was marketed in a vinyl binder and a plastic ringed spine, which Dave is quick to point out as a first for any game

company. Arctic Combat is a perfect bound book.

"The vinyl bindery was a great idea," Dave tells me, "but though the quality is higher, it became cost prohibitive and the shrink wrapping kept the gamers from opening the game to see the inside. Our future products shall be perfect bound books which have become standard in the industry."

The first Interstellar Elite category to be developed has been the 'Combat' line, devoted to a microcosm of the universe. "Roleplaying is the core of the game and shows the grid in depth," Dave explains about his first product. "It shows the reality of the society we have chosen to highlight."

He quickly points to the differences between the Neutral Zone society and the Imperial Zone society which bare a striking resemblance to the differences between the two superpowers of the 1980's on Earth.

The Neutral Zone is an expanding, democratic monster of a capitalist society, chewing up the surrounding star systems in the name of freedom and financial gain. Money buys everything that might be in demand: freedom, power, happiness, drugs, weapons, etc. The military is bought and sold as mercenaries by corporate warlords who postulate against one another to test their strength and power. As the empire has expanded to many new worlds, the central banking system has fallen apart and lost much of its original power. It seems that only the military system, high technology, and the opposing theories of the Imperial Zone keep the civilization together.

The Imperial Zone is expanding about as fast as the Neutral Zone, but rather as a hybrid of imperialism and communism. The people must fit the mold of their society or they are eliminated from public scrutiny. All citizens are expected to serve in the military, and in fact everyone is considered a soldier of the emperor. When born into a family of the Empire, the life of the child is predestined to follow in the family footsteps (be that as a garbage collector or a royal heir). Everyone has social status, from the worker bee to the queen bee, and anyone of higher rank may kill a lower ranking citizen without fear of reprisals. There isn't any free thought or free speech in the empire, and perhaps it is this that causes them to attack (on occasion) the Neutral Zone.

With a sage-like voice of wisdom and knowledge, Dave tells me of the long history in his alter-universe, "The time line for 'Combat' starts in Neutral Zone 4,000 years in the past, highlighting history until 4340 where the mini-module Hem-Shalam takes place." The 'Combat' history continues in the first module, Arctic Combat, which highlights a single planet in Neutral Zone, and succeeds in adding the next 16 years of history to the universe. 'Arctic Combat' also expands the game with a few new items of interest including vehicles, weapons, new rules, and a combat system for domes and arctic climates.

"Interstellar Elite Combat is a persona based roleplaying game where a game master sets the stage and one or more people interact with the personality of a persona," Dave explains when I ask him about the general premise behind

the use of 'Combat' in the name of his game. "The game can also work as a battle system on its own or in conjunction with other games. Interstellar Elite Combat was created with combat in mind and possesses a refined, accurate, and simplistic percentile based combat system."

When pressed, Dave revealed a bit of the future, "We're working on the simplified 'Battle' game which will include miniatures from RAFM, a short hand version of our 'Combat' persona sheet, and the ability to incorporate persona's from other systems. The main designer of the battle game is Shawn Gibbs and he's using the same (though revised) combat matrix and rules for the miniature battle system as in the original RPG."

The first release of 'Battle' will be Interstellar Elite Alien Invasion in June of '93. "The release date is very dependent upon RAFM who is producing the miniatures for all of our products. We plan to include some of these miniatures in the Alien Invasion box set when it is released. Other miniatures shall follow and be sold in game and book stores that normally carry these products. All of our miniatures shall be 22mm scale and the 'Battle' game has been designed to integrate miniature play."

The question of compatibility between the 'Battle' and 'Combat' games was squelched by Dave when he relieved my fears with his next statement, "Alien Invasion is a stand alone miniature battle game with references to Interstellar Elite Combat. There can be much crossover between the two systems and in fact we encourage it. Persona's from any of our product lines will be able to jump into Alien Invasion with little difficulty."

And where does Alien Invasion fit into the Universe you have created?

"Alien Invasion will jump a few centuries off the time line," I hear Dave smile as I jot down my notes, "It takes place during 4762 in a completely different area of space, with a lot of changes to the Zones. The entire game is dealing with a new lizard-like race called Zephrix, and their attempt to invade a secret garden planet of Neutral Zone."

Dave was quick to add that the UltraTech Handbook is also under production and should be released soon after Alien Invasion. The UltraTech Handbook takes the persona's deep into the development of the highly technical equipment of the two Zones. The book will introduce new technology and more of the Semi-neutrino impervious equipment called UltraTech. The UltraTech Handbook should do for the Interstellar Elite universe what the Q branch did for James Bond.

Also in the works is Interstellar Elite Pilot. This is the enhanced universe of Dave's creation, or "the macrocosm" as he puts it. Pilot shall add a few centuries to the history of the universe and bring the time line just short of Alien Invasion.

"Pilot will open the universe and add new professions and the pilot persona to the game," Dave tells me. "It will be a stand alone game system like 'Combat' but won't go as far into persona creation. Pilot will add more definition to the game, including pilots, new space craft for both zones, and

new civilian professions."

The largest addition to Interstellar Elite that Pilot will make is in its depiction of the known universe. It will add star systems as well as travel between stars, new technology from different races and old long dead civilizations. And Dave stresses that the artwork will be wonderful.

"Pilot will gloss over the new alien races by giving them backgrounds and neat pictures. The main stress will be the development of the enhanced capabilities of the people. New persona classifications are stressed, including new officers for warrior related classes and new techs for the technician related classes. To highlight the new persona classifications, we're adding new professions and many different outlets for characters to expand."

This brought forth another question that I remembered from our first meeting, "What about cybernetics?"

Dave gracefully danced around the question, "We've been working on an idea that will add black market cybernetics to our game system, but we're a small company and we try not to become too embroiled in one direction. We've got to follow the market, if one product line becomes successful, we'll produce modules for it and delay our other projects. However, I can foresee a future with CyberElite on the market."

"What about a second edition of 'Combat'?"

"Well, we'll have to wait and see," Dave responds with a voice that has grown weary after our long interview. "Combat was our first game and we've found a few things we'd like to change, but we've decided to wait until after Pilot has been released before we begin to do rewrites."

As I look over my notes I ask Dave if he has anything else to add.

"To tell the truth, you've drained me dry," he says as we both chuckle, "and I think you know my whole life history."

I thank him for his time, hang up the phone, and stare at the scratches I've made on a note pad. Perhaps I've come to know Dave Miller pretty well over the past hour, we both have dreams, ambition, and a desire to open our minds to the world for inspection. But then again, with a mind able to contemplate an entire alter-universe, can anyone truly know what he is thinking?

I contemplate this as I begin to arrange the notes. Perhaps Dave's alter-universe is a key to his spirit. Perhaps he is just a man with a dream, a designer with a vivid imagination, or a businessman who had the drive to put a new product into the homes of every american sci-fi gamer. Or perhaps Dave Miller is just a man with a vision, attempting to share with a world that at most times just doesn't care. As I stare out the window, it begins to snow and I realize that it doesn't really matter.

As I begin to write this article I realize that Dave Miller is an import/export consultant from Troutdale, Oregon who has followed a dream and designed a game in his spare time. I only know that I feel better for having met and talked with a man that has laid open his mind, handed the public his heart, and through the fog of a vision; has born himself a bright new future upon the horizon. ☺

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Creative Justice

Game Reviews

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1. POOR. This aspect of the game is far below the average expected by most gamers.
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3. AVERAGE. Nothing exceptional but nothing poor. The Standard game.
4. ABOVE AVERAGE. Some very exciting aspects of this game are present.
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The following categories are rated: EASY TO LEARN indicates how difficult the game is to learn to play, where a '3' rating represents 2-3 gaming sessions. RULES PRESENTATION indicates how well the text is written, how easy it is to locate material during play, etc. COMPARES WITHIN GENRE rates the game with others of the same genre. VALUE FOR COST addresses whether the reviewer feels the game is worth the cover price.

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REICH STAR

Designed by Ken Richardson

Published by
Creative Encounters, Inc.

GENRE: Dark Sci-Fi

EASY TO LEARN: 3

RULES PRESENTATION: 3.8

COMPARES WITHIN GENRE: 3.5

VALUE FOR THE COST: 3.5

REVIEWER'S OVERALL RATING:

3.5

Everybody asks "What would happen if history had gone differently?". Usually the answer does not involve a utopia. Instead it involves a nightmare. The future in Creative Encounter's game *Reich Star* is a prime example of such a nightmare, set two hundred years after Adolf Hitler posthumously wins the Second World War. I must admit the thought of that sort of background makes me a bit uncomfortable. But many gamers think Space Nazis are good villains to have around in a roleplaying game, and love fighting impossible odds if it is "the good fight". This entire game is built around the Space Nazis, with a large generalized background but few de-

tails. The basic idea is that you throw this nightmare world at your players and have them fight to change it. But this world is so horrible, and the forces of evil are so entrenched, that many players are likely to get shell-shocked very quickly.

In the *Reich Star* world, the Germans won the war by dropping atomic bombs on London and New York in 1944. This bold stroke secured the world almost instantly even after reverses in Russia ("Stalin? Who's Stalin?"). Hitler was prevented from turning on Japan when the Japanese also obtained the bomb from American scientists. Over the next two centuries a cold war and technology race developed between the two superpowers, and one of the discoveries was a stardrive. So Germany and Japan started colonizing all the habitable worlds they could reach, subduing the alien inhabitants as they went and never facing serious opposition. By the time of the game the Nazi empire covered most of Erde (German for Earth) and about a hundred other star systems. The Japanese also have a thriving space empire, which gives the two powers more to feud over. The two powers walk a tightrope, each trying to gain advantage without toppling into a disastrous general war.

Even with the passage of two hundred years, the Nazis are still monstrous. They still measure everything and everyone based on their own twisted racial philosophy. "Inferior" races are routinely enslaved (a category which includes blacks, who are bound to servitude in the former United States) or destroyed. But the Nazis have still been unable to totally obliterate their targets. And underground resis-

tance flourishes and grows, as groups labeled as "terrorists" by the state-controlled media strike back however they can. Someone was even able to assassinate the current "fulhrer" a few years ago. Internal rivalries within the German and Japanese governments can also catch people in the middle as leaders struggle for power. The vast and potent mechanisms of the totalitarian state are still unable to totally silence the cry for sanity and freedom.

Reich Star has a panoramic background that would fit many different types of campaigns. The content of these backgrounds is, naturally, disturbing. This is "the nightmare future that might have been". Player characters, even if they try to isolate themselves from it, will always find the government willing to do horrible things to them. Eventually they will be forced to stand and fight. The background is the selling point for this game, and mechanics are secondary to mood and effect.

The character creation system is nothing spectacularly new. 180 points are first divided among the nine basic attributes. This is standard stuff - strength, intelligence, willpower and so on. Most checks against attributes are rolled on 2d20. A pool of life points is figured from three of the characteristics. Typical characters are in the 15-20 Life Points range, and an attribute over 30 is really impressive but rare.

After this is done skills are selected from a list. Each skill has its own cost, and the number of skills a character can take is determined by his intelligence. In this game being strong is not nearly as important as being smart and cunning, especially when the shocktroopers come after you. Skills go up by level, and one can buy a skill multiple times to get better at it. Skill levels are added to the attribute used in a skill check, so the maximum skill level of 5 adds five to the roll needed to succeed. There are 72 skills of varying utility. One interesting one is "Silent Kill" - if you sneak up to a guard and make your roll, he dies without a

sound just like in commando movies. A set of "professions" are provided, but they don't have specific things to build a character around - only suggestions of what that sort of character might have. Any reasonable character conception for this background can be done with few restrictions. Advantages and disadvantages are also available to provide edges or extra skill points. There are also psychic powers available; all psychics are "drafted" by the military and tattooed, so psychic PCs are probably deserters (giving the Gestapo one more reason to hunt down the party - as if they needed another one).

Combat in this game is complex, probably a bit more complex than it needs to be. Initiative always goes to the first party aware of a situation, giving attackers a massive advantage. Characters firing ranged weapons always have the choice of aiming for a specific spot or "just shooting". A specific shot takes three seconds to aim, giving a wary target a chance to act. After a shot hits, hit location is determined. When "just shooting" the location is random, but an aimed shot will go to the general area or the specific target. Some areas of the body are critical and serious. Any shot to a "critical" area (the head, heart and lungs) that does damage will be eventually fatal; if it does two or more points it is an instant kill. Hits to serious areas incapacitate the target permanently. Player characters can expend "luck points" to move hits to less important body parts or reduce damage. Still, a sniper in ambush has a pretty good chance at killing his target with one shot. Melee and hand-to-hand combat work in similar ways with the same hit location rules applying. For the hard-core combat wombat with visions of scores of corpses at his feet this system will serve the purpose quite nicely. Weapons in this game are quite deadly, but the personal armor frequently worn by shocktroopers will absorb some damage. Not that it's going to stop shocktroopers from dropping like flies if it suits the GM's

purpose. In addition to the standard slug-throwing gun there are plasma and gyrojet weapons that do lots of damage, along with grenades and neural whips and implants (used by slaves). A satisfyingly large selection of weapons is provided.

There are a lot of futuristic things thrown into the mix. Robots are relatively common, and guard dogs often have cybernetic attachments. For some strange reason robots outside the military in this game always follow Asimov's Laws of Robotics (making them incapable of directly harming humans). Starships are available to characters if they can afford them and somehow manage to keep them; the construction rules are complex but samples are provided including the main starfighters of both superpowers. Starships fight like characters, with the first aware ship getting initiative and with a complex hit location system.

Only a few star systems outside Earth's are laid out in the game, but they do show some of the patterns of "space exploration Nazi style", including wars of conquest followed by slavery and extermination. Aliens who hear about this are likely to think *all* humans act that way - which can lead to serious problems for PCs. Several top leaders in both regimes are described along with the current intrigues. Several sample characters are provided as NPCs, including general stats for the typical foes likely to be faced. A sample adventure is provided, and the book does offer some hooks which can be used to advantage in a campaign. The most interesting is the recent disappearance of an entire Reich fleet; what did it meet up with?

In all, this game has been put together fairly well. It has a specific objective and has been somewhat successful in achieving it. I am still bothered by the subject matter, especially since some people will want to run Gestapo campaigns and the like. To their credit, the designers do not pull punches on just how horrible these regimes are or how their cruelty

affects daily life. And to their credit the PCs are supposed to be fighting back. But I am still uncomfortable gaming in a world in which many of my friends would be enslaved or killed because of their skin color or who their grandparents were. And the Northwest has had serious problems with real-life Neo-Nazis in recent years, adding to my anxiety. *Reich Star's* dark future is linked to the horrifying reality of our past and present. I sometimes wonder what it is really meant to be – a “mere game” or a warning to a generation that has not experienced the horror for themselves. ☹

DEMONS

Designed by Mike Mystul

Published by Mayfair Games, Inc.

GENRE: Fantasy

EASY TO LEARN: 3

RULES PRESENTATION: 3

COMPARES WITHIN GENRE: 3

VALUE FOR THE COST: 3

REVIEWER'S OVERALL RATING:

3

Just when you thought it was safe to play AD&D, the demons are back.

One of the most common complaints about the first edition of AD&D was its handling of demons. Any fundamentalist who wanted a sure target in popular culture had only to look up the *Monster Manual* and find a large assortment of demons with detailed descriptions of Hell and their powers. This probably wasn't the direct cause of the anti-gaming attacks we have been subjected to for the last fifteen years, but it did provide ammunition. Even to this day the game is described

as “an indoctrination tool into the occult”, a tag it certainly does not deserve. Well, TSR's final embarrassment was so strong that they took demons entirely out of the second edition. And so it has been until now, as Mayfair has used their most ambitious Role Aids product yet to put the demons back. Look out, Pat Robertson! The *Demons* campaign pack offers lots of demon characters, along with new character classes and spells which can be fit into any campaign. Whether the typical campaign needs this pack isn't clear. Some DMs might be able to handle it properly, but there are a lot of things that can go wrong. It is creative in a twisted sort of way, but there are some serious problems.

Before anyone gets upset, I must point out that these demons are not the familiar Christian demons (such as Satan). They are all (hopefully) fictional. They are also powerful, scheming, and really nasty. These demons are built entirely around one specific role that doesn't appear often in current AD&D: they are tempters, trying to lure mortals to their doom. Why do they do this? As Mephistopheles told Faust, “Misery loves company”.

To fit these creatures into the typical campaign, a background has been given; eons ago, the demons lured the gods into fighting among themselves. When the destruction finally settled down, the gods banished the demons to “the Infernus” for their crimes. But eventually they reached a compromise with them, in the form of “the Compact”, under which the demons can still seek the power of mortal souls.

Under the Compact, demons cannot allow themselves to be seen by mortals and cannot force mortals to “sin”. But they can use subtle influence to tempt someone into sin, and frequently do. All bets are off when some amazingly stupid magic-user summons them; although they must still “bow to divine influence”, they can wreak all kinds of havoc in the mortal world.

The pack is in a folio, and the most obvious feature is the selection of de-

mons in Compendium format ready to be placed into your binder. Each of the demons have one or two areas of influence they can use to tempt mortals, and all of them seek to promote certain flaws in human character. Just about all of the traditional vices are here. If there is any bad thing characters might do, here are beings to tempt them into it. The demon character sheets include their stats, all of their character-class abilities, and an overview of the demon's personality. All the important ones also include an “Inquiries” section, stating whether the demon lies or tells the truth about certain subjects. Is this in case the PCs are stupid enough to summon one of these creeps?

The demons also have their own political hierarchy, and constantly scheme to increase their power. There is some discussion of where the demons fit on this scale.

Not all the parts of the folio are that useful. There is a play handout in the form of the “*Infernium Mallemania*”, a book about demons that the PCs might find. This gives the roster of major demons to the players in a less accurate form. It also includes a set of spells of uncertain nature, described as they would be described in a spellbook with explicit casting instructions. I have no desire to check these for accuracy! I have to presume they do not work. The information in this booklet is meant as much to deceive the players as to inform them. Presumably the PCs will find the spellbook in one of their early adventures against the demons and the DM gives them this booklet.

The GMs book offers the “true” origins of the demons and the Compact. It also presents adventure seeds to bring the demons into a long-running campaign, and three rather dire master-plots that can fuel campaigns. Since they involve saving the world these are for high-power characters.

It also introduces two character classes directly related to demons. The Slayer is a paladin-style character who has devoted himself to destroy-

ing demons. Slayers wander the world seeking their eternal foes, and are not universally welcome. This class has the potential to be really powerful. Thaumaturgists are mages who specialize in infernal magics. They know all sorts of things about demons, and have lots of spells relating to them. There can be good thaumaturgists, who devote themselves to protection from demons. But many of these characters will be working for the demons or trying to control them for their own ends. This section also adds the race of half-demons, unfortunate creatures indeed who are linked to the dark powers whether they want to be or not.

The new spells form a school of magic to themselves, the Infernal School. The lower-level spells in this school are summon, control, and dismiss demons, as well as to protect yourself from them. As a catalog they are fairly efficient. Very few of them are spells most PCs would be eager to learn or cast (and if they are, you've got the wrong kind of campaign).

In addition, three ultra-powerful spells granted by demons are given. All three of these can be effectively considered "kill campaign" spells, as their casting always leads to total disaster. Genocide allows the caster to wipe out an entire species instantly by banishing them to an extra-dimensional prison similar to the Infernus. Eternal Night is just what it says - it means that the entire world is plunged into darkness forever. Lesser Apocalypse doesn't destroy the world, but it does totally destroy an entire realm. These spells can only be cast like they were on scrolls by 27th-level magic users. This is fortunate because I don't know any DMs who would even consider allowing a 27th-level magic user in their campaign. These are plot-device spells, to be prevented or undone by PCs for a really high-stakes adventure.

The magic items included are pretty standard stuff, and there is also a description of the current state of affairs in Infernus.

To round out the package is a poster-sized map of the Infernus. I have no idea why anyone, whatever their degree of sanity, would want a map of a fictional hell on their wall. I know I wouldn't.

Demons is called a "campaign pack" with good reason. The only way to get full use out of the entire package is to make the demons close to the center of your campaign. They are meant to be the foes your PCs devote most of their time to thwarting. These are not simple monsters to encounter. A campaign that shifts to this is going to turn dark and grim. If your campaign can handle such a change then *Demons* is an option. Otherwise I would pass it by for now.

Demons is available for \$20.00 plus shipping from Mayfair Games at P.O. Box 48539, Niles, IL 60648. ☺

ADVENTURE MAXIMUM

Designed by Dennis McDonald

Published by Worldmaster
Designs.

GENRE: Generic

EASY TO LEARN: 3

RULES PRESENTATION: 2.3

COMPARES WITHIN GENRE: 2.5

VALUE FOR THE COST: 2.5

REVIEWER'S OVERALL RATING:

2.5

What kind of game do you want to make? Game companies always seem to be asking that question, especially when they are starting out. "Do we want a game that will work anywhere, or do we want to concentrate on our really unique setting and build the game from there?". Worldmaster Designs in Oklahoma answered this question by releasing a generic system in the form of *Adventure Maximum*. This is another game

that tries to be usable in just about any setting ala *GURPS*, and no settings or adventure ideas are provided. This game is clearly meant to be a game for experienced role-players. Unfortunately, its appeal to those experienced gamers is questionable. What I see when I look at *Adventure Maximum* is some good ideas executed clumsily and some bizarre design and production elements that reduce the game's appeal. I see a first game, which shows some potential but requires a lot of work before it will become a viable contender in the generic market.

Let me address first of all the two best elements of the design. AM is one of those games that uses a "Master Chart" to determine whether an action succeeds. It is a common approach that has several advantages, mainly making it simpler to figure out the chances of success. The AM chart refers to the rank of the ability being used against the difficulty of the task. The higher the skill rank, the more likely success is. Most of the time the table gives a number that the player must roll lower than on a percentage die. This is always a number between 10 and 90. In situations where an unskilled person attempts an utterly formidable task, only a critical will succeed. If the character's skill is far more than equal to the task, only a fumble will fail. But there is always a chance if the character is lucky.

Which brings me to the most interesting part of the design, the way it handles luck. In AM critical successes and fumbles are based on the luck of the character rather than the skill. Each character starts the adventure with a Luck Score somewhere between 0 and 10 (three to five is suggested), and the character gains luck for role-playing his character well. He can expend this luck in important situations, to remain alive or to enhance his performance at a skill. The new luck points the GM awards a character take effect *immediately*! This means a character's luck will ebb and flow based on what he does. Being lucky is an essential part of being heroic in this

game.

The luck award is not based on any sort of tangible effort, like gaining a luck point for silently finishing the guard. Instead it is awarded for role-playing the character. When a character is first created the player determines his attitudes on a variety of topics. These attitudes are totally independent of his stats and skills, and range from love of an idea to hatred. For example, a WWI flying ace may love Duty, tolerate authority, and dislike foreigners. In addition the player must also rate his character on a set of emotional traits such as greed, anger, curiosity and pride. There are 33 such questions in all, and the player gains luck when his character acts in line with his chosen traits. The flying ace who flies into battle to destroy the vital strongpoint even if it seems like a suicide mission will gain luck for role-playing his traits. This is a good idea, which many games could benefit from, and defines the game. If only the other elements didn't have such large problems.

One big area of trouble is character creation. This is a game where you start with a character concept and build the character accordingly, but for some bizarre reason you roll for your basic stats! There are ten basic attributes, which you roll a percentage die for while checking a table. This can give you a starting score as low as 10 or as high as 40, and the lower the percentile roll the better the stat you got. This can be annoying when the WWI flying ace I want to play starts out with a Dexterity score of 15! In the next step you are given points to add to the attributes, which can repair the damage from bad rolls somewhat, but you still won't have the character you originally wanted at the end of the process. The relative experience of the character, Novice to Expert, determines just how much stat repair you can do.

After the basic attributes are finally determined a set of "Base Abilities" is figured from them. This immediately brought *Champions* to my mind, as the

base abilities are what matter most when skills are chosen. A set of resistances is also figured out. The "Learning" base ability is the most important, as its "rank" determines how many skills you get in the next step. There are fourteen specific steps in designing a character, and early ones can take a while.

All of the attributes, abilities, and skills work during play on "Ranks". For example, my pilot is shooting at a Yankee spy at the aerodrome. His Pistol skill is 120. To actually play out the shot, the last digit is discarded for a rank of 12. This rank is then checked against the Master Chart along with the difficulty of the action. The last digit seems to be only a way to keep track of how much experience you need to get to the next rank - in play it means nothing.

Each character's set of skills is chosen from a list, not purchased with points. A character gets a certain number of skills at a certain level. The level is a number which is added to the base ability. For example, when the fighting ace added 50 to his Movement ability of 34 to get a final Stealth score of 84. This is marked as (8)4 on the character sheet; he is at Rank 8, and needs six more accomplishment points (awarded for adventuring as usual) to reach Rank 9. When he was created, he got four skills at +80, six at +50, and eight at +30. He could choose from any skill that was available at the tech level of his campaign. The skills cover a fairly wide range.

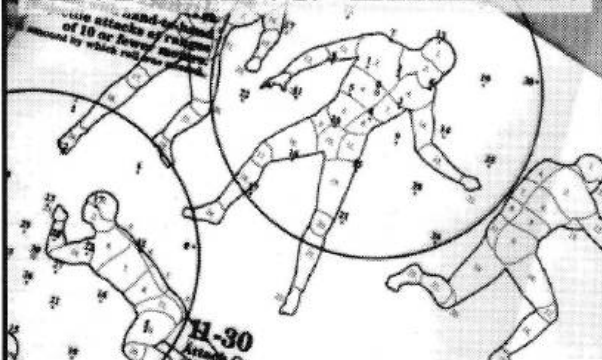
If I thought rolling for stats in a generic system was odd, I was surprised that character disadvantages were rolled as well! In the typical generic game such as *GURPS*, players choose disadvantages for their characters to get point and build custom characters. In AM die rolls determine how many disadvantages a character gets and what they are. This can throw the character conception into turmoil if the wrong thing is rolled up. The player does get to buy special abilities for the character from a pool of points based on relative experience.

Actual play of the game is fairly simple. The GM (called WorldMaster here) assigns the difficulty of each task and uses the Master Chart to figure out what the player has to roll. A normal task is fairly simple to resolve, but combat isn't quite so simple. On each attack the attacker and defender have several modifiers to their ranks based on the techniques they are using. It isn't enough to simply state "I am attacking". Each attack has a specific technique, with the defender also choosing a technique to prevent being hit. If there is a hit, the attacker must roll a percentile die again to find out where he hit, usually with some precision. It isn't just a general "I hit him in the head" - the roll also shows almost exactly where on the head he was hit. How much damage was done depends entirely on the location and on the weapon. Weapons have a Base Damage Rank which is modified by the hit location. Damage that gets through armor and the natural toughness of the target is applied to a Trauma Level which is kept on the character sheet - each rank of damage adds to that level. Any character whose Trauma Level has reached 10 is dead, and a character with any trauma at all loses some skill, including attacks and defense. Damage is of four different types, and different types of armor protect from them. Combat with guns is quite deadly, and combat with sci-fi weapons is *really* deadly. It is also a bit slow from the number of modifiers.

There are fairly detailed rules on vehicles, and sections on such diverse topics as magic and cybernetics. The GM section mainly covers the technique of handling combat and the luck system. Experience awards are a bit stingy, and advancement is likely to be slow in a campaign. Neither the cybernetic enhancements offered or the spells are particularly creative or handled particularly well. No example settings are offered, nor is there much comment on designing campaigns. This is a rulebook, and just about everything in it is rules.

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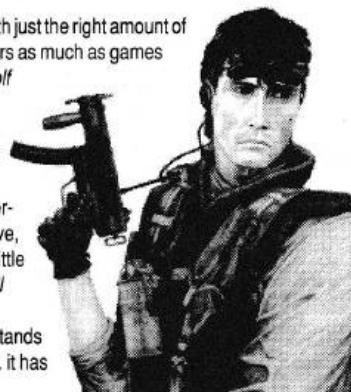
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Millennium's End is Chameleon Eclectic's trademark for its contemporary roleplaying system.

this game is in order. The type is small and not very clear, and the selection of interior art is uniformly poor. The cover is an especially poor example of its kind, with two women in garb that must have come from the fantasy-world and SF equivalents of Frederick's of Hollywood. Better choices in art would make the game much easier to sell, as right now it just wouldn't look good on the shelves.

All in all *Adventure Maximum* is at best a mixed bag of stuff, some good and some poor. It seems to have "first game" written all over it, and if it's to compete for the *GURPS*-style market substantial improvements will be required. Some of the ideas here are good, and the ideas of the luck system are worth exploring, but the game as a whole is dragged down by strange rules. It is an intriguing failure that doesn't quite carry through on its promise to "put pulse-pounding ACTION and ADVENTURE into your gaming", and right now there is very little to this game that demands my dollar. ☹

Cat Play

Continued from page 52

A handful of cultists managed to block the archway and as Sailer paused to redirect his flight, another cultist grabbed him from behind and wrestled him to the ground. Immediately others clustered around to bring the youth under control. The one who had first nabbed Sailer emerged from the group and held something high.

"Lord Merides," he cried. "He was carrying the cat's eye talisman!"

Murmurs rose as the hooded figures parted to make way for the man who strode forth to return the gem into the hands of Lord Merides. Enough people had cleared around Sailer that the Baron could see the man's embarrassed shrug.

"I don't know how that got there," Sailer said, with a sheepish glance to the northerner.

"You can save the explanations," shot back the Baron, who then exploded into a berserk rage and tore through the crowd and leapt toward Lord Merides. Instantly a dozen cultists were upon him, pummeling him with fists and boots. Dedrinti, seizing this opportunity for escape, began sprinting for the far exit. He was stopped by Lord Brevis, who dealt him a double blow to the back and slammed him against a wall. In the commotion, the wily thief Sailer escaped and fled into the catacombs. The Baron was eventually subdued into unconsciousness. Lord Merides stood unharmed, swinging the talisman from his fingers. ☹

Concluded Next Issue

ALSO SEEN

By Michael Hopcroft

Other Noteworthy Products

Well, it's been an interesting month here. Some long-awaited stuff appeared, and some of it came out pretty well.

The traditional three-release *GURPS* month had some interesting stuff. A review of *Fantasy II* should be in the next issue. The other two releases were directly related to their time travel campaigns. Time travel is a natural *GURPS* subject, as they try to have rules for just about any setting you can imagine and a time travel campaign can encompass everything (well, maybe it would be a bit hard to work in the skewy wabbits...). One very interesting book that a lot of people will overlook is *Timeline*. Don't overlook this book if you're planning to run time travel. This is a basic chronology of Earth history written with time travelers in mind. Although the timetable of history is somewhat helpful, there are many adventure hooks presenting easily usable plot elements and devices, and interesting places to explore in history. Some of them are quite specific, such as time-traveling bigots going back to America in 1809 to destroy four people they are deeply offended by as infants - Abraham Lincoln, Charles Darwin, Felix Mendelssohn and Edgar Allen Poe are the targets. Other hooks feature interesting people time travelers might like to meet, protect, destroy or recruit; from technical innovators and powerful rulers to mystic charlatans and telepathic Neanderthals. (I kid you not. Neanderthals had a bigger relative brain capacity than we do. They didn't develop high technology; maybe they didn't need to!) A creative GM could keep a time travel campaign going for quite a while on what's provided in this book.

For those GMs who need their adventures provided whole, or even want a model to work from, *GURPS Time Travel Adventures* has also been released. This book contains three fairly complete modules of varying quality. I don't think anyone needs to ask where "Titanic!" is set. The adventure involves a Stopwatch incursion into the past to you-know-where, which Timepiece agents must foil. It is more a setting and a situation than a story, and there is very little plot to speak of. The characters get to the ship, look around for a while and bide their time. Then the ship starts to sink and all hell breaks loose, with both sides struggling to insure the survival and non-survival of several passengers

(and the agents of the other side). It's an interesting approach, but not the one I would take. "A Nile Elation" involves a nuclear explosion in Egypt that is part of the PCs past. But it wasn't *supposed* to happen! This is a more traditional adventure featuring several red herrings that can annoy players no end.

The final adventure, "Soulburner", is easily the most interesting. This is written for the dimension-hopping campaign rather than the time travel one, but since the two campaigns are fairly interchangeable that shouldn't be a problem. The story is simple; a dimension-hopper has been trapped in an alternate universe and needs to be rescued. The setting is the really interesting part. In this world, man unintentionally brought magic back into the world in 1945, when the first atom bomb was detonated and Oppenheimer accidentally started a ritual using that energy. From there the culture and history of that world have made several interesting alterations. Even when this plot falters - and falter it often does - this world can easily become a setting for other adventures. The campaign-specific material is a weakness in all three adventures; the first two are part of a time war, and the third is part of a dimensional war. Other sorts of campaigns won't find a lot here to feed off of. This is a generic book that is not quite generic enough to work.

On the fantasy front, The next release in the *Dangerous Journeys* line brings a strong sample adventure. *Necropolis* is a "campaign scenario" set in Egypt. The HPs start out in a village with minor league opponents and work their way up to saving the Triple Kingdom. The adventure was written entirely by Gary Gygax, and is full of traditional Gygax labyrinths and detailed locations, with specific monsters that are found in these locations at any reasonable time. In this case it's actually an advantage; DJ GMs and players already have a great deal to absorb and this campaign is relatively easy to run. This line is becoming more solid with each new release. And GDW's second magazine, *Journeys*, is also becoming more solid gradually. This could be cause for optimism.

With *MegaTraveller* riding off into the sunset in preparation for *Traveller: The New Era*, one final release has been *Diaspora Sector*. This is a war-torn sector in the aftermath of the Great Rebellion (consensus result: the war is over and

everyone lost). It has lots and lots of planetary profiles and maps, with a few adventure seeds in the book. The sheer volume of worlds and the relative sketchiness of each one is in the *Traveller* tradition. I used to be really fond of that approach because it let me tailor each individual world to the needs of the adventure. Now I'm not so sure it's good to have that little information. Ideally I'd have it both ways.

Mayfair has been keeping up with DC comics, or attempted to, and the new *Legion of Super Heroes* sourcebook shows some of the perils of this pursuit. The Legion is a huge group of teenage heroes in the 30th century, who came from all over the galaxy to protect it. At their peak they had thirty active members! Four years ago the Mayfair sourcebook on them showed an optimistic, lively group of characters with all sorts of neat gizmos and a lot of public adulation. Superboy even showed up frequently (via time travel) to help them out (although they never explained

what use the 20th century Superboy made of all the information he must have gotten about the course of history, including his own).

Now everything's changed. The universe has gotten a lot uglier by the year 2995, when the sourcebook is set. Earth has been conquered, the legion outlawed, and most of the familiar bad guys are changed dramatically. To top things off, duplicates of the Legion also recently showed up! The result is very confusing. Someone who has been gobbling up Legion comics for the last four years might have a shot at understanding this sourcebook well enough to campaign with it. Others, like myself, will have serious trouble. But there are still lots of characters here that GMs might like to bring into the 20th century (assuming time travel still works, and at least one legionnaire is actually using the 20th century as a refuge). ☹

Sneak Preview!



Issue #13 Contains:

- *Anagathics: Doping the Inevitable*. The definitive guide to aging drugs in the Traveller universe.
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- 10 A new poison system usable with the AD&D™ game, "The Starlight Horizon Formula" - A GURPS™ Illuminanti adventure, "Dreamspinnners Art Gallery" for Quest of the Ancients™, "Halloween Horrors" for Lost Souls™, a new fantasy monster, fiction, and more! (\$2.95).
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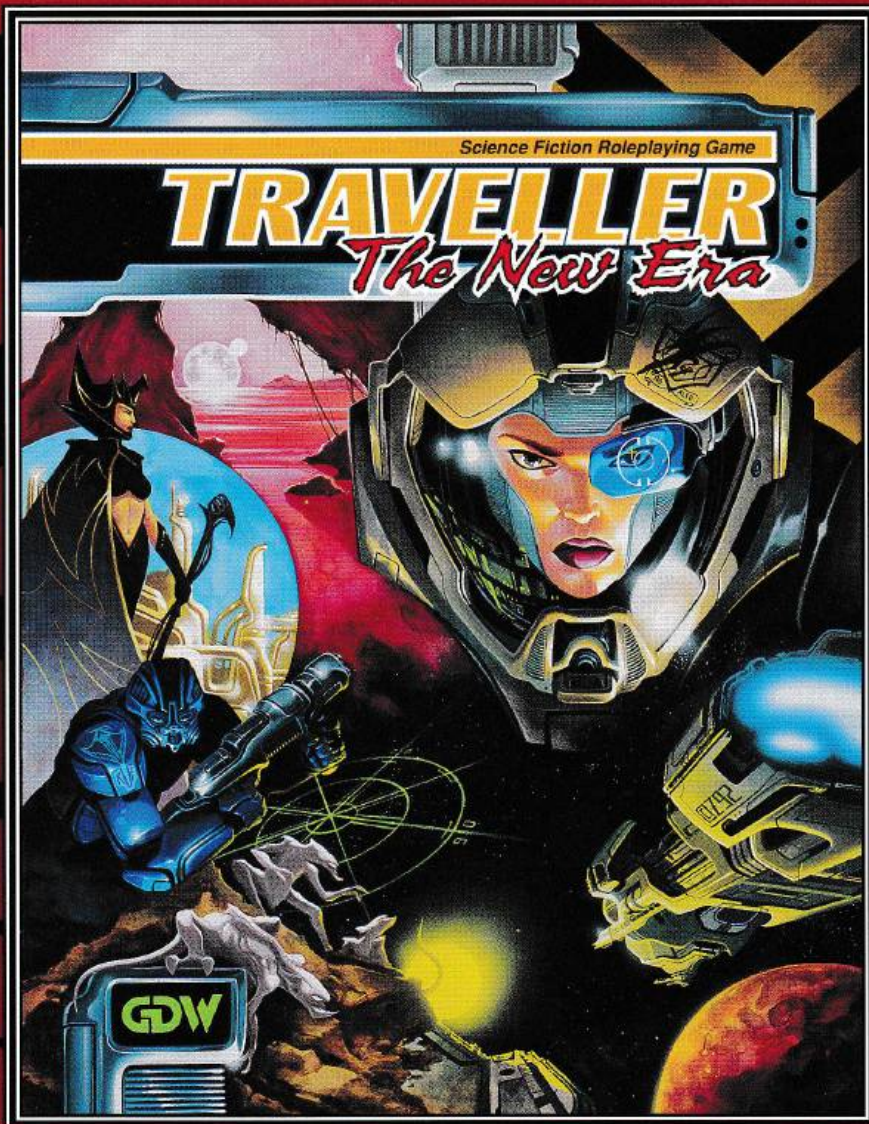
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